

# **Merdeka Curriculum Development in Primary and Secondary Education (Schools and Madrasah)**

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## **Abstract**

The development of the Merdeka curriculum in the context of primary and secondary education plays a crucial role in forming character and preparing students to face future challenges. This research aims to provide insight and inspiration to educators and educational institutions regarding developing the Merdeka curriculum, especially in madrasahs and school environments. The research method used is historical or document study, which involves collecting data from various sources such as scientific journals, news, and official documents. Implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in the Indonesian education system marks an essential step towards improving the quality of education, giving schools the authority to adapt the curriculum to local needs and competencies. By emphasizing the development of student competence and character, flexibility in curriculum design, and emphasis on essential content, the Merdeka Curriculum aims to create a learning experience that is meaningful, fun, and relevant to current developments.

**Keywords:** education system; independent curriculum; primary and secondary education

## Introduction

The education system in Indonesia has undergone a significant transformation, including implementing an independent curriculum to improve student-centred learning.<sup>1</sup> This shift allows schools the autonomy to adapt the curriculum to local needs and competencies, aiming to improve the quality of education.<sup>2</sup> However, challenges remain, such as limited teacher competence, suboptimal differentiated learning, and incomplete technology integration in teaching activities.<sup>3</sup> Research that focuses on the role of school principals in implementing an independent curriculum at the primary and secondary levels is very important. The developing educational paradigm in Indonesia underscores the need for continuous evaluation of the relevance of the curriculum to meet contemporary demands and student requirements. Conducting in-depth studies on the effectiveness and control of independent curricula is critical to addressing these challenges and improving educational outcomes.

Implementing the independent curriculum in Indonesia aims to address diverse student backgrounds while combining local values and technological advances.<sup>4</sup> Challenges include teacher readiness, school support, and student diversity, highlighting the need for continuous optimization and improvement.<sup>5</sup> Several schools have successfully implemented an independent curriculum, emphasizing soft skills and character development through projects.<sup>6</sup> Teachers play an important role in preparing the independent curriculum by

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<sup>1</sup> Friska Amalia and Lutfi Asyari, "Analisis Perubahan Kurikulum Di Indonesia & Pengembangan Pendekatan Understanding By Design," *CaXra: Jurnal Pendidikan Sekolah Dasar* 3, no. 1 (2023): 65–72, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.31980/caxra.v3i1.2590>.

<sup>2</sup> Erik Hidayat, Anggiat Pardosi, and Irwan Zulkarnaen, "Efektivitas Kepemimpinan Kepala Sekolah Dalam Penerapan Kurikulum Merdeka," *Jurnal Studi Guru Dan Pembelajaran* 6, no. 1 (2023): 9–18, <https://doi.org/10.30605/jsgp.6.1.2023.2339>.

<sup>3</sup> Mila Yaelasari and Vera Yuni Astuti, "Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka Pada Cara Belajar Siswa Untuk Semua Mata Pelajaran (Studi Kasus Pembelajaran Tatap Muka Di SMK INFOKOM Bogor)," *Jurnal Pendidikan Indonesia* 3, no. 07 (2022): 584–91, <https://doi.org/10.59141/japendi.v3i07.1041>.

<sup>4</sup> Jaka Warsihna et al., "Tantangan Dan Strategi Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka Pada Jenjang Sd: Sebuah Temuan Multi-Perspektif," *Kwangsan: Jurnal Teknologi Pendidikan* 11, no. 1 (2023): 296, <https://doi.org/10.31800/jtp.kw.v11n1.p296--311>.

<sup>5</sup> Widya Lestari et al., "Analysis of Implementation of the Independent Curriculum in Science Learning at SMP Negeri 1 Tanah Grogot Kalimantan Timur, Indonesia," *Journal of Advances in Education and Philosophy* 7, no. 06 (2023): 199–207, <https://doi.org/10.36348/jaep.2023.v07i06.001>.

<sup>6</sup> Fadila Ti Allutfia and Maryanti Setyaningsih, "Analisis Kesiapan Guru Dalam Menghadapi Kurikulum Merdeka Mata Pelajaran Ips Kelas Iv," *Academy of Education Journal* 14, no. 2 (2023): 326–38, <https://doi.org/10.47200/aoej.v14i2.1656>.

attending workshops and seeking information to effectively convey science and technology material. Evaluation of the learning process is very important to measure the effectiveness of the independent curriculum in meeting education quality standards.

Education experts have given their opinions regarding the Merdeka Curriculum and the urgency to analyze this policy. According to Darmawan and Winataputra, in principle, the Merdeka Curriculum is a form of strengthening student independence and providing learning that places students at the centre of learning by mobilizing the development and empowerment of 21st-century skills.<sup>7</sup> In addition, in Riyanto's opinion, the Merdeka Curriculum aims to free students from the shackles of an overly theoretical curriculum and promote learning that is more contextualized and relevant to real life.<sup>8</sup> The Merdeka Curriculum focuses on a more contextual, inclusive, learner-centred educational paradigm.<sup>9</sup> The Merdeka Curriculum emphasizes a responsive, inclusive and student-centred approach to learning. It is designed to help students develop 21st-century competencies such as problem-solving, creativity, communication and collaboration.<sup>10</sup>

Implementing an independent curriculum requires strong support from various stakeholders, including the government, educational institutions, the public and the industrial world.<sup>11</sup> Effective coordination between these entities is critical to the smooth operation and positive impact of the independent curriculum on the overall quality of education. Furthermore, conducting in-depth research to identify specific barriers to implementing independent curricula in various educational settings is essential.<sup>12</sup> This kind of research can offer valuable insights for policymakers to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of

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<sup>7</sup> D Darmawan and U S Winataputra, "Analisis Dan Perancangan Kurikulum Merdeka," *Jurnal Kependidikan: Jurnal Hasil Penelitian Dan Kajian Kepustakaan Di Bidang Pendidikan* 4, no. 2 (2020): 182–97.

<sup>8</sup> Y Riyanto, "Kurikulum Merdeka: Tantangan Dan Peluang Membangun Pendidikan Di Era Digital," in *Prosiding Seminar Nasional Pendidikan*, vol. 2, 2019, 30–36.

<sup>9</sup> R Agustina, "Model of Learning Empowerment-Based Curriculum 2013 in Elementary School," *Educational Review: International Journal* 15, no. 2 (2018): 176–93.

<sup>10</sup> Joseph D Novak, *Learning, Creating, and Using Knowledge: Concept Maps as Facilitative Tools in Schools and Corporations* (Routledge, 2010).

<sup>11</sup> Arif Rohman Hakim and Maulina Nabila, "Implementation of The Independent Learning Curriculum in Cirebon District," *Journal of Social Science* 3, no. 5 (2022): 1207–13, <https://doi.org/10.46799/jss.v3i5.438>.

<sup>12</sup> Warsihna et al., "Tantangan Dan Strategi Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka Pada Jenjang Sd: Sebuah Temuan Multi-Perspektif."

independent curriculum implementation, ensuring continued improvements in the educational landscape.<sup>13</sup>

Developing the Merdeka curriculum in primary and secondary education fosters character formation and prepares students for future challenges.<sup>14</sup> This curriculum lays a strong foundation for nurturing competitive, ethical, and well-rounded individuals by accommodating diverse individual needs while upholding local values and cultural wisdom. The study of the Merdeka curriculum is not only important to improve the quality of education nationally. However, it also aligns with global efforts to achieve sustainable development goals, ensuring equal access and high-quality education for all segments of society.<sup>15</sup> The emphasis on the Merdeka curriculum reflects the urgency of education and the priority of establishing a more inclusive and effective education system.

Judging from changes in the independent curriculum in primary and secondary school education, it is important to consider the condition of the Indonesian education system, which is characterized by various educational institutions such as state schools, private institutions and madrasas. This research offers a deeper understanding of the implementation, possibilities, and tactics for enacting a relevant and efficient independent curriculum in various educational settings. Therefore, it is hoped that this research will make an important contribution to improving the quality of primary and secondary school education in Indonesia while also serving as a reference point for countries facing similar requirements in crafting curricula that meet local and global demands.

This research will examine the effectiveness of the independent curriculum and identify barriers to implementation. The main purpose of this research is to provide insight and inspiration to educators and educational institutions regarding the development of the Merdeka curriculum, especially in madrasah and school environments. This research also

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<sup>13</sup> Saniyatul Hikmah and Alfredo Arianto Permana Putra, "IMPLEMENTATION OF Technology And Vocational Education Management In Facing The Independent Learning Curriculum," *Improvement: Jurnal Ilmiah Untuk Peningkatan Mutu Manajemen Pendidikan* 10, no. 1 (2023): 85–94, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.21009/improvement.v10i1.32657>.

<sup>14</sup> Hakim and Nabila, "Implementation of The Independent Learning Curriculum in Cirebon District."

<sup>15</sup> Pitri Maharani Efendi, Tatang Muhtar, and Yusuf Tri Herlambang, "Relevansi Kurikulum Merdeka Dengan Konsepsi Ki Hadjar Dewantara: Studi Kritis Dalam Perspektif Filosofis-Pedagogis," *Jurnal Elementaria Edukasia* 6, no. 2 (2023): 548–61, <https://doi.org/10.31949/jee.v6i2.5487>.

aims to identify specific barriers to implementing the independent curriculum and to explore more deeply the importance of the involvement of all elements of society.

## **Method**

The research method used in this research is historical research or document study; researchers use this approach to trace the development of these concepts contained in sources such as scientific journals, news, official documents, and others; researchers not only focus on specific events or figures but also on how these concepts develop and change over time. Data sources were selected based on their relevance and validity to the research topic. The selected scholarly journals, textbooks, and official documents have high credibility and have undergone peer review. In addition, the sources should provide deep and relevant insights into the researched concepts.<sup>16</sup> This process involved identifying, accessing, and collecting data from various relevant sources. We utilized multiple databases and academic search engines to locate and access the sources. Once relevant sources were identified, researchers collected relevant data and information for further analysis. This study used content analysis to analyze the collected data and information. This involves critical reading and interpreting texts to identify key themes, patterns, and insights relevant to the researched concepts. This approach is hoped to provide a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of Merdeka Curriculum Implementation, Principles of Merdeka Curriculum Development, and Models of Merdeka Curriculum Development in the context of primary and secondary education.

## **Definition and Dimensions of the Independent Curriculum**

The curriculum functions as a comprehensive framework that organizes the educational process from planning to evaluation stages, encompassing a wide range of activities to enrich students' learning experiences inside and outside the boundaries of the classroom.<sup>17</sup> This involves establishing an educational model that aligns with the institution's vision and mission, achieved through validation, implementation, and evaluation stages. Being dynamic in nature, curriculum consists of the dimensions of planning, implementation, and evaluation,

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<sup>16</sup> Gary McCulloch, *Documentary Research: In Education, History and the Social Sciences* (Routledge, 2004).

<sup>17</sup> Diana Riski Sapitri Siregar and Bahrissalim, "Desain Pengembangan Kurikulum," *Jurnal Mahasiswa Pendidikan* 2, no. 2 (2022): 137–48, <https://doi.org/10.37286/jmp.v2i2.183>.

where determinations are made regarding educational content, structure, and assessment methods, as manifested in documents such as syllabi and textbooks.<sup>18</sup> Curriculum development seeks to adapt education to a developing society, modify existing curricula, and investigate new realms of knowledge, ensuring that the planned curriculum effectively supports the teaching and learning process.<sup>19</sup>

The Merdeka Curriculum in Indonesia focuses on increasing students' learning potential and interests by enabling them to learn based on their interests and talents without excessive academic pressure.<sup>20</sup> This curriculum emphasizes fun and differentiated learning experiences, replaces standardized tests with competency assessments, and promotes lesson planning and student enrolment flexibility. It also includes activities such as Merdeka studies, internships, and village development to improve students' skills and competencies.<sup>21</sup> In addition, the curriculum aims to develop independent learning outcomes, especially in subjects such as music, by fostering creativity, reflection and artistic expression among students.<sup>22</sup> The Merdeka Belajar curriculum seeks to optimize learning content, giving students enough time to understand concepts and build competencies effectively. Educators can choose from various educational tools, allowing for a tailored approach to meet diverse learning requirements and student preferences. This initiative focuses on increasing the achievement of Pancasila student profiles through a thematic framework mandated by government authorities. Notably, this initiative does not seek to achieve specific academic performance goals and is therefore not limited by subject-specific content.

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<sup>18</sup> Diana Riski Sapitri Siregar and Bahrissalim.

<sup>19</sup> Eli Hinkel, *Handbook of Practical Second Language Teaching and Learning* (New York: Routledge, 2022), <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003106609>.

<sup>20</sup> Yanti Puspita and Cucu Atikah, "Analisis Perubahan Kebijakan Pendidikan Dari Kurikulum 2013 Ke Kurikulum Merdeka," *NOKEN: Jurnal Pengelolaan Pendidikan* 4, no. 1 (2023): 09–21, <https://doi.org/10.31957/noken.v4i1.2888>.

<sup>21</sup> Dian Dian et al., "Implication And Application MBKM's Curriculum In Education (Madrasah And Universities)," *At-Ta'dib* 18, no. 1 (2023): 106–22, <https://doi.org/10.21111/attadib.v18i1.9910>.

<sup>22</sup> Yuli Marlina, Teti Muliawati, and Mohamad Erihadiana, "Implementation of Kurikulum Merdeka in Integrated Islamic School," *Tatar Pasundan: Jurnal Diklat Keagamaan* 17, no. 1 (2023): 69–85, <https://doi.org/10.38075/tp.v17i1.312>.

### **Independent Curriculum Concept and Design**

The Independent Learning Curriculum is implemented to achieve the targets set in National Education and the Pancasila Student Profile. Following Article 3 of Law no. 20 of 2003, national education aims to develop capacity and form noble character and culture to provide a deeper understanding of society, to increase the potential of students so that they become individuals who believe in and obey God Almighty, with good morals, healthy, knowledgeable, skilled, creative, independent, and become democratic and responsible citizens. Meanwhile, the Pancasila student profile refers to the image of Indonesian students as lifelong learners with global abilities and behaviours that align with Pancasila values. These competencies and behaviours cover six main aspects: faith and devotion to God Almighty and good morals, awareness of global diversity, the spirit of cooperation, independence, critical thinking skills, and creativity.<sup>23</sup>

The link between learning and assessment is important in the educational process. Determining learning and assessment principles is the authority of the Central Government, as is the curriculum structure and Pancasila student profile. The relationship between learning and assessment occurs when the evaluation results are used to improve student learning. In this case, the teacher designs the learning process based on the assessment results to meet student's individual needs so that learning becomes more effective and appropriate for their development. Learning that suits your ability level. Students often struggle to complete assignments, even though they should have mastered the assignment material. The factors that cause this can vary, but the basic problem is that the level of student's abilities is not yet in line with the expected level of learning achievement. To overcome this problem, steps that can be taken are to align learning with students' individual abilities. This can be done by paying more careful attention to the level of student's abilities so that learning can be tailored to the needs and abilities of each student.

Serious attention to the development design of the Independent Curriculum is an indisputable necessity. The steps for implementing the curriculum that has been determined by the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia (Kemendikbud RI),

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<sup>23</sup> Kemenag RI, "Modul Teori Belajar Dan Pembelajaran," *Kementrian Agama RI*, 2024, 68–78.

through direction from the Director General of Teachers and Education Personnel (Dirjen GTK), Iwan Syahril, show that in choosing to implement the Independent Curriculum, the Ministry of Education and Culture has prepared various pathways which can help in the readiness stage of each educational unit. These three pathways have been adapted to each academic unit's contexts and circumstances: Independent Learning, Independent Change, and Independent Sharing.<sup>24</sup>

### **Foundation for Independent Curriculum Development**

The curriculum has a very strategic and determining role in the implementation and success of education. Good curriculum development is based on many foundations, namely philosophical, sociological and psychological foundations,<sup>25</sup> conceptual-theoretical, historical, and juridical.<sup>26</sup> The intellectual foundation in curriculum development determines the quality of learning outcomes, sources and content of the curriculum, learning processes, students' positions, assessment of learning processes and outcomes, students' relationships with society and the environment, and the quality of graduates. Sociologically, education is rooted in national culture to build the nation's present and future life. The educational process must pay attention to the level of psychological maturity and physical maturity of students.

Thus, education is expected to produce academic and non-academic brilliance in students. Curriculum development must also pay attention to the learning needs of the Industrial Era 4.0 and Society 5.0. Ministry of Education and Culture's independent learning program. Higher education curricula should also be developed by referring to standards-based education theory or outcome-based education and competency-based or outcome-based curricula. Standards-based education sets national standards as the minimum quality, which are then derived into graduate competency standards (graduate learning outcomes), content standards, process standards, assessment standards, standards for educators and education personnel, facilities and infrastructure standards, management standards, and education

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<sup>24</sup> Muhammad Fathur Rozi, "Model Pengembangan Kurikulum Merdeka Berbasis Integrasi Indigenous Knowledge " ( The Model Of Independent Curriculum Development Based On Indigenous Knowledge )," *Global Education Journal* 1, no. 4 (2023): 559–76.

<sup>25</sup> Nana Syaodih Sukmadinata, *Praktik, Pengembangan Kurikulum Teori Dan* (Bandung: PT. Remaja Rosadakarya, 2017).

<sup>26</sup> Zainal Arifin, *Konsep Dan Moden Pengembangan Kurikulum* (Bandung: PT. Remaja Rosadakarya, 2014).



financing standards. The achievement-based curriculum is designed to provide the broadest possible learning experience for students in developing the ability to behave (spiritually and socially), knowledge and skills.

The historical basis for curriculum development refers to various historical experiences that influence the curriculum being developed. Examining the historical foundation will provide a clearer and more complete understanding of the curriculum in the past, present and future dimensions. With this historical basis, curriculum developers will be able to avoid mistakes that have occurred in the past and can provide an understanding of futuristic things that must be accommodated in curriculum development.

The legal basis that is the basis for the development of the Independent Curriculum is changes to the Curriculum Structure According to Level and Type of Education—preamble to the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia.<sup>27</sup> The fourth paragraph emphasizes the national goals of the Indonesian nation, namely improving general welfare and advancing the nation's life through education. To achieve this goal, the Government is trying to create a national education system that increases faith, piety and noble morals by the mandate of Article 31 of the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia. Another foundation for developing the Independent Curriculum is Law No. 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System.<sup>28</sup> The curriculum is a series of plans and arrangements that include objectives, content and learning materials, as well as methods used as a guide in implementing learning activities to achieve certain educational goals, as explained in the General Provisions of Law no. 20 of 2003. The curriculum for all levels and types of education is prepared using the principle of diversification following the characteristics of each educational unit, regional potential and student needs, as stipulated in Article 36 paragraph (2) of Law no. 20 of 2003. The Government determines the basic framework and curriculum structure for primary and secondary education. At the same time, its development is adjusted by each educational group or unit as well as school/madrasah committees with coordination and supervision from the education office or religious department office at the district/city level for elementary

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<sup>27</sup> Nasional, “Undang-Undang Dasar Negara Republik Indonesia 1945,” *Nasional* 105, no. 3 (1945): 129–33.

<sup>28</sup> Hazairin Habe and Ahiruddin Ahiruddin, “Sistem Pendidikan Nasional,” *Ekombis Sains: Jurnal Ekonomi, Keuangan Dan Bisnis* 2, no. 1 (2017): 39–45, <https://doi.org/10.24967/ekombis.v2i1.48>.

education and at the provincial level for secondary education, as mandated in Article 38 of Law no. 20 of 2003. The third basis for developing the Independent Curriculum is Government Regulation No. 57 of 2021 concerning National Education Standards,<sup>29</sup> which has changed to PP No. 4 of 2022.<sup>30</sup> (National Education Standards are updated in a planned, directed and sustainable manner to improve the quality of education following the dynamics of local, national and global life, as explained in Article 3 paragraph (3) PP No. 57 of 2021. This shows that the implemented curriculum can be adjusted in line with changes to national education standards, which serve as guidelines for curriculum development.

### **Principles of Independent Curriculum Development**

Several aspects play a role in formulating the Independent Curriculum in this context. These aspects are based on evaluating the previous curriculum<sup>31</sup> and the basics and approaches used in curriculum development. The principles of curriculum design have many variations. However, to facilitate understanding in the context of the Independent Curriculum, there are three main principles formulated, namely: (1) Ensuring and supporting the development of competence and character, (2) Flexibility, and (3) Focusing on essential load. The explanation is as follows.<sup>32</sup>

In the Independent Curriculum, the focus on developing students' competencies and character is a priority. The main aim is to facilitate the growth of students' creativity, sense and initiative as lifelong learners with the Pancasila character. Competence and character are complementary elements that cannot be separated. Even though learning may be divided into various subjects and activities, the aim remains to form a holistically complete person with strong competencies and character. Flexibility in curriculum development is an important principle, which gives educational institutions and educators the freedom to adapt, complement and integrate the curriculum with the characteristics of students, the vision and

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<sup>29</sup> Presiden Republik Indonesia, "Standar Nasional Pendidikan," no. 102501 (2021).

<sup>30</sup> Presiden RI, "Peraturan Pemerintah Republik Indonesia Nomor 4 Tahun 2022 Tentang Perubahan Atas Peraturan Pemerintah Nomor 57 Tahun 2021 Tentang Standar Nasional Pendidikan," *Lembaran Negara Republik Indonesia Nomor 14 Tahun 2022*, 2022, 1–16.

<sup>31</sup> Puspita and Atikah, "Analisis Perubahan Kebijakan Pendidikan Dari Kurikulum 2013 Ke Kurikulum Merdeka."

<sup>32</sup> Tim Penyusun, "Kurikulum Merdeka: Manfaat Kurikulum Merdeka," 2024.

mission of academic institutions, and local values and wisdom. This kind of flexibility is necessary so that the curriculum taught to students remains relevant to environmental changes, contemporary issues and their learning needs.<sup>33</sup>

In many countries, flexibility is the main focus of curriculum policy reforms. The aim is to make the curriculum more responsive to environmental changes and the needs of diverse students, as well as provide space for learning appropriate to the local context. For example, in the UK, the main strategy for increasing curriculum flexibility has been to transform rigid regulations into advisory rather than binding guidelines. This indicates a shift from a centralized curriculum paradigm that adopted a "one size fits all" approach. A too dense curriculum can cause gaps in the quality of learning between students, especially for those who experience learning difficulties and come from low socio-economic families. Reducing curriculum density can help overcome learning lags and provide a fairer opportunity for all students to achieve minimum competency standards. Focusing on essential content is also a solution to reduce curriculum density, often caused by demands to adapt to current developments and contemporary issues. By reducing non-essential material, the curriculum can become simpler, and teachers can be more effective in providing learning that supports the development of students' competencies.

Consistent with this paradigm, implementing the learning process in educational institutions that implement the Independent Curriculum must comply with the principles explained in the Decree of the Minister of Education, Culture, Research and Technology Number 56/M/2022 concerning Guidelines for Curriculum Implementation in the Context of Learning Recovery.<sup>34</sup> Some of the principles included include: 1) Learning is designed by considering the current stage of development and level of achievement of students, according to learning needs, and reflects the characteristics and development of diverse students so that learning becomes meaningful and enjoyable; 2) Learning is designed and implemented to build capacity to become lifelong learners; 3) The learning process supports the development of students' competencies and character holistically; 4) Relevant learning, namely learning

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<sup>33</sup> Penyusun.

<sup>34</sup> Kepmendikbudristekdikti, "Pedoman Penerapan Kurikulum Dalam Rangka Pemulihan Pembelajaran," *Menpendikbudristek*, 2022, 1–112.

that is designed according to the context, environment and culture of students, and involving parents and the community as partners; and 5) Sustainable future-oriented learning.

### **Independent Curriculum Development Model**

Various models have been used in the context of curriculum development, such as the Tyler, Taba, Wheeler, and Skillback dynamic models.<sup>35</sup> In addition, the SPICES model, which emphasizes student-oriented learning, problem-based approaches, learning integration, community-based education, choice of elements, and systematic approaches, has been recognized internationally as a relevant framework for curriculum development. According to the educational philosophy of Ki Hajar Dewantara (KHD), education is a process to develop potential or talent which is part of every student's natural nature and conditions.<sup>36</sup> Ki Hajar Dewantara's educational philosophy is the basis for the concept of the Independent Curriculum, which the Government is currently promoting.

The Merdeka Curriculum is a learning framework that provides space for students to hone their natural talents in a calm, relaxed and enjoyable atmosphere without excessive pressure or stress. The concept of Independent Learning emphasizes freedom and the ability to think creatively. Merdeka Belajar aims to explore the maximum potential for teachers and students to innovate and improve the quality of learning. Therefore, equal access to technology is very important in this context. This model promotes creating a student-centred learning environment where students are empowered to take responsibility for their learning process, developing a sense of responsibility and understanding of self. By encouraging freedom and flexibility in the educational context, the Merdeka Belajar curriculum model aims to optimize student learning outcomes and overall development within the framework of the Indonesian education system.

### **Implementation of the Medeka Curriculum**

Implementing the Independent Curriculum has the same position as the National Curriculum in its essence, but the difference lies in the approach taken. In implementing the

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<sup>35</sup> M. Rayhan Ramadhan, Nelliana Pohan, and Abdul Fattah Nasution, "Model-Model Pengembangan Kurikulum Di Sekolah," *Yasin* 3, no. 5 (2023): 788–99, <https://doi.org/10.58578/yasin.v3i5.1408>.

<sup>36</sup> Ki Hajar Dewantara, *Bagian Pertama: Pendidikan*, vol. 1, 1977.

Independent Curriculum, the focus is more on learning that leads to the formation of competent character following Pancasila values. So, in realizing the implementation of the Independent Curriculum, teachers with high professionalism in planning and designing effective and enjoyable learning are needed. The implementation of the Merdeka curriculum is a significant improvement from the previous curriculum, which aimed to give students more autonomy in their learning.<sup>37</sup> In response to the 2013 curriculum, the Merdeka Curriculum offers a new approach to education, focusing on self-actualization and independent learning options.<sup>38</sup>

KBK (Basic Competency Curriculum) serves as a basic reference for educational development, emphasizing students' holistic growth in knowledge, skills and attitudes at all levels of education. Law no. 20 of 2003 underlines the importance of graduate competencies, which include attitudes, knowledge and skills aligned with national standards, highlighting the diverse nature of their educational outcomes. The Ministry of Education in Indonesia has introduced the Independent Curriculum in response to the learning crisis, aiming to improve student learning experiences and outcomes. Implementation of the independent curriculum involves various stakeholders, including the Education Office, teachers, supervisors, Central UPT, and partner organizations. Socialization activities and technical guidance are key components of the program to support the successful launch of the Curriculum independent.<sup>39</sup> This initiative focuses on providing teachers with the tools and knowledge necessary to implement the curriculum effectively, encourage independent learning among students, and overcome challenges such as adapting to new teaching methods and ensuring student engagement.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Musdalifah et al., "Diseminasi Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar Pada Guru-Guru SMK Madani Makassar," *Jurnal Pengabdian Masyarakat Dan Riset Pendidikan* 2, no. 1 (2023): 71–75, <https://doi.org/10.31004/jerkin.v2i1.119>.

<sup>38</sup> Mustafiyanti Mustafiyanti et al., "A Form of Independent Curriculum, an Overview of Independent Learning at State Elementary School 05 Gelumbang Muaraenim," *Pengabdian: Jurnal Abdimas* 1, no. 2 (2023): 82–96, <https://doi.org/10.55849/abdimas.v1i2.185>.

<sup>39</sup> Lestari et al., "Analysis of Implementation of the Independent Curriculum in Science Learning at SMP Negeri 1 Tanah Grogot Kalimantan Timur, Indonesia."

<sup>40</sup> Mohamad Agus et al., "The Impact of Implementation of the 2013 Curriculum Transition to the Independent Learning Curriculum on Learning Interests of SMA Negeri 9 Students in South Tangerang," *Journal of Economics, Finance and Management Studies* 06, no. 07 (2023): 3146–52, <https://doi.org/10.47191/jefms/v6-i7-16>.

## **Conclusion**

Implementing the Independent Curriculum in the education system in Indonesia is a significant step towards improving the quality of education by providing autonomy to schools in adapting the curriculum to local needs and competencies. However, challenges such as limited teacher competency, differentiated learning that is not yet optimal, and incomplete technology integration exist. Through an approach that prioritizes the development of student competence and character, flexibility in curriculum design, and a focus on essential content, the Merdeka Curriculum aims to create learning that is meaningful, fun, and in line with current developments. With support from various stakeholders, including the Government, educational institutions, the public, and the industrial world, as well as taking into account the diverse conditions of the education system, the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum is expected to make a significant contribution in improving the quality of education in Indonesia following local and global demands.

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