

The implementation of the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum Management at Lentera Harapan Tomohon High School

Anastasya Millanisti Mutiara Runtulalo, Joulanda A.M Rawis, Romi J. Mongdong
Universitas Negeri Manado, Indonesia

Email: tasyamillanisti@gmail.com, joulanda_rawis@unima.ac.id, romimongdong@unima.ac.id

ABSTRACT

The Merdeka Belajar Curriculum, introduced as a pivotal educational reform in Indonesia, emphasizes student-centered learning, flexibility, and the strengthening of character through the Pancasila Student Profile. However, its implementation at the school level faces various challenges, particularly in management and teacher readiness. This research aims to analyze the implementation of the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum at Lentera Harapan Tomohon High School. The specific objectives are to examine: (1) curriculum planning, (2) supporting factors, (3) inhibiting factors, and (4) efforts to overcome obstacles in its implementation. This research employed a qualitative method with observation, interviews, and documentation as the main data collection techniques, while the researcher served as the primary instrument. Data were analyzed through data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The results show that the implementation of the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum has been carried out through three major stages: preparation, learning implementation, and evaluation of learning outcomes. Supporting factors include adequate learning facilities and infrastructure, as well as school programs that align with the Merdeka Belajar concept. Meanwhile, inhibiting factors consist of limited teacher competence, funding constraints, time allocation issues, and students' readiness for independent learning. The study provides several recommendations. For teachers: increasing understanding of the curriculum through seminars and workshops, developing creative teaching modules, and using innovative learning media. For the school: continuously conducting professional development programs related to Merdeka Belajar and ensuring the availability of learning tools and resources.

Keywords: Independent; Learning; Curriculum.

INTRODUCTION

The curriculum in Indonesia has undergone various revisions and improvements and is currently known as the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum (Hunaepi & Suharta, 2024; Simarmata & Mayuni, 2023). Its implementation is supported by the Merdeka Mengajar platform, which helps educators obtain reference sources, inspiration, and understanding to implement this curriculum effectively (Kartika, 2024; Ramadhani, Indrawadi, Ananda, & Moeis, 2024). The Merdeka Curriculum offers three main advantages: it is simpler and more in-depth, as well as more flexible in three crucial aspects (Darussalam & Toyyibah, 2024; Syamsidar, Rahmah, AR, Rizal, & Wilade, 2025). First, there are no specialization programs at the high school level. Second, students are free to choose subjects according to their interests and talents. Third, teachers teach based on the achievements and development of individual students (Akiba & Liang, 2016; Bhardwaj, Zhang, Tan, & Pandey, 2025).

The development of teaching modules aims to provide a variety of references for teachers in their learning activities (Abdullah, Yusuf, & Buhungo, 2025; Saputri & Wisudawati, 2025). In addition, with school-based management and a competency-based curriculum, assessment

must be carried out comprehensively by involving the empowerment of teachers and schools. In the Merdeka Curriculum, learning is student-centered, with teachers as facilitators (Ridho, Aryaningrum, & Dedy, 2025; Suyantiningsih, Budiningsih, & Haryanto, 2025). This curriculum also adopts project-based learning (P5, Pancasila Strengthening Profile Project), and the assessment is divided into two types: formative and summative (Kristiyuana, Wuriningsih, Idammatussilmi, & Agung, 2025; Sari, Giatman, & Adri, 2025; Zahara & Nugraha, 2025).

In Indonesia, including the city of Tomohon, Lentera Harapan Tomohon High School is one of the schools that implements the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum (Senduk, 2024; Zaki, Wiwit, Marsevani, & Pratiwi, 2025). The management of this curriculum has been running for about three years, although it has not been entirely successful (Andersen, Grude, & Haug, 2025; Junga et al., 2025). The main obstacle is that teachers do not fully understand how to create teaching modules for each subject (Nasir & Muhamad, 2025). They only rely on the modules available on the Merdeka Belajar Platform application. In fact, with the new curriculum, teachers are expected to compile their own teaching modules based on guidelines from the National Education Standards Agency (Badan Standar Pendidikan Nasional, BSPN).

Similarly, in the division of learning time with the allocation of time to implement P5, which must be in accordance with the specified hours, teachers sometimes feel confused about this division (Mellyzar, Rochintaniawati, Riandi, Fakhrah, & Virijai, 2025). The same applies to students because this curriculum is a student-centered curriculum, so students are expected to be active in learning, seek and solve problems in learning, and then implement them in the form of a project. Parents also have an important role in coordinating with teachers in preparing all student equipment for learning, as well as knowing the progress of students during learning with this independent curriculum (Andrada & Barrot, 2025; Basri & Ab Rahman, 2025).

Previous studies, such as those by Fauzi (2022) and Hutabarat et al. (2022), have highlighted both the potential and the challenges in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum, including issues related to teacher readiness and the integration of project-based learning. However, there remains a gap in understanding how curriculum management is specifically carried out at the school level, particularly in private schools with unique characteristics such as Lentera Harapan Tomohon High School.

These factors greatly influence the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum because not all educators have the opportunity to attend training, workshops, or similar activities. As a result, many teachers do not yet understand the Merdeka Curriculum. Therefore, Lentera Harapan Tomohon High School is expected to implement the Merdeka Curriculum to the fullest for the advancement of education at the school. One important step that must be taken is effective school management in organizing data on the subjects taught, the availability of teaching hours, the number of teachers and the distribution of teaching hours, the number of classes, scheduling, teaching and learning activities, the books needed, semester programs, assessments, annual programs, the education calendar, curriculum changes, and innovations in curriculum development. This is because without an educational institution (school), management cannot function, but without management, an educational institution (school) cannot exist.

This research was conducted at Lentera Harapan Tomohon High School because this school is considered one of the leading schools in Tomohon City, with the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum that has been ongoing since 2022. However, behind the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in this school, there are still several aspects that need to be improved, especially related to the process of developing the Merdeka Curriculum itself and the implementation stage of Merdeka Curriculum Management.

This school is different from other schools and can be called an excellent school in Tomohon City, thanks to its uniqueness in extracurricular and intracurricular learning, adequate classrooms, complete school facilities, and teaching and education staff with solid backgrounds. This school has also established summative and formative assessments prior to the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum. In addition, this school produces high-quality, high-achieving graduates who receive scholarships to Pelita Harapan Foundation universities. Thus, this is the reason why the researcher is interested in conducting research at Lentera Harapan Tomohon High School.

Therefore, this research aims to analyze the implementation of the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum management at Lentera Harapan Tomohon High School, with the specific objectives of examining its planning process, identifying supporting and inhibiting factors, and evaluating the efforts made to overcome these obstacles. The findings of this study are expected to provide practical benefits for schools in enhancing curriculum implementation strategies, offer insights for teachers in adapting to the curriculum's demands, and contribute to the broader academic discourse on educational management and curriculum innovation in Indonesia.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach to explore Merdeka Curriculum Management at Lentera Harapan Tomohon High School. The study was conducted in a natural setting without researcher manipulation, where the researcher acted as the main instrument. Data collection methods were triangulated, analysis was inductive, and the research results focused on the process (Creswell, 2014).

The research was conducted at Lentera Harapan Tomohon High School, East Tomohon District, Tomohon City, as the center for the management of the Merdeka Curriculum. The research period was from February to June 2025.

Data and Data Sources

Primary Data: obtained directly from the Principal, Vice Principal for Curriculum, Committee Chair, teachers, and students.

Secondary Data: includes documents, archives, records, photos, and other written materials relevant to the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum.

Data Collection Techniques

Data collection techniques include:

Observation was conducted through direct observation of curriculum management activities at the school. In-depth interviews used a semi-structured format to explore the views of key informants. The interview process was documented through notes and photos as evidence of data validity. Documentation study involved examining official documents, reports, and school archives related to the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted interactively following the Miles and Huberman (2008) model, which includes:

Data reduction – filtering and focusing on important information.

Data presentation – presenting findings in the form of narratives, tables, or charts.

Conclusion/verification – generating new findings based on patterns and relationships between data.

Data Validity

Data validity was tested using four criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Sugiyono, 2008). Credibility was ensured through extended observation, increased diligence, triangulation, peer discussion, negative case analysis, and member checks. Transferability is achieved by compiling detailed and systematic reports so that the results can be applied in similar contexts. Dependability and confirmability are maintained through research process audits by independent supervisors.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

General Description

1. General Description

a. School Vision and Mission

The mission of Lentera Harapan Tomohon High School is as follows:

- 1) True Knowledge,
- 2) Faith in Christ,
- 3) Divine Character

b. School Mission

To proclaim the supremacy of Christ and be actively involved in redemptive restoration in Him through holistic education

The vision and mission of Lentera Harapan Tomohon School are derived from the truths found in Colossians 1:9-2:3.

c. School Objectives

1) Character building based on the Pancasila Student Profile

Implementing the Pancasila Student Profile-based attitude habit formation in an integrated manner in all subjects, both in face-to-face and project-based activities.

Implementing attitude assessments based on the Pancasila Student Profile for classes

that apply the Merdeka curriculum.

Encouraging all students to achieve at least a GOOD rating on attitude assessments based on the Pancasila Student Profile.

Encouraging and equipping parents to shape students' attitudes based on the Pancasila Student Profile through Parent Seminars.

2) Encouraging student-oriented learning processes

Encourage student active involvement in the teaching and learning process to reach a minimum of 80%.

All teachers conduct a minimum of 2 (two) mapping units for the application of differentiated learning.

All teachers apply more than 1 (one) type of differentiated learning.

Manage the teaching and learning process so that student satisfaction reaches a minimum of 90%.

3) Encourage learning communities and mutual sharing

Encourage open class activities so that other teachers and even other school communities can observe and learn about the learning process in the classroom

Form learning communities in schools with targets that have been formulated for 1 (one) year

Involve teachers in supervising fellow teachers (peer assessment) to cultivate peer evaluation and self-reflection

Teachers share good practices in the classroom through Teacher Professional Development activities.

Each teacher attends at least one seminar/workshop/technical training every semester outside of the seminars/workshops/technical training conducted at the school.

Build capacity building in the learning community through IHT, evaluation, and joint reflection.

Each teacher shares good practices through the Merdeka Mengajar Platform by uploading at least one module and learning video

4) Developing creative and critical thinking skills

Integrating Problem Based Learning, Project Based Learning, and Inquiry into subjects. Facilitating 100% of students to produce at least one creative product per semester from Project Based Learning.

Conducting authentic assessments that challenge students to solve real-life problems and apply knowledge and skills in a meaningful way

5) Numeracy Mastery

- Equipping students so that 40% are at the proficient level of numeracy.
- Equipping students so that 45% are at the competent level
- Equipping 15% of students to be at the basic level
- Minimum high school level knowledge and skills competency.
- Facilitate 100% of students to be able to achieve a minimum final grade point average

of 80 in terms of knowledge and skills.

Handle 100% of students who experience learning problems through pastoral care and counseling guidance.

Collaborate with parents in handling student learning problems.

Research Data Description

a. Planning the Independent Learning Curriculum at Lentera Harapan Tomohon High School

The planning of the Merdeka Curriculum at Lentera Harapan Tomohon High School was carried out collaboratively by the principal, vice principal, teachers, committee, and foundation. The process included analyzing the educational situation, formulating a vision and mission, determining success indicators, and developing an Operational Curriculum for Education Units (Kurikulum Operasional Satuan Pendidikan (KOSP)) tailored to the characteristics of the school and students. Teachers are involved in the creation of teaching modules and learning tools based on Content Standards and Graduate Competency Standards. This planning refers to the 2022 BSNP regulation and Permendiknas Number 24 of 2006.

b. Supporting Factors for the Implementation of the Independent Learning Curriculum

Supporting factors for the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in this school include the competence of the principal and teachers, active student participation, support for facilities and infrastructure, and collaboration between the school, committee, and parents. A conducive learning environment and a positive school culture also play a role in strengthening the implementation of the curriculum. Project-based learning encourages the improvement of students' academic and non-academic achievements at the city, provincial, and national levels.

c. Factors Hindering the Implementation of the Merdeka Learning Curriculum

The main obstacles to the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum include the uneven readiness of teachers, the low motivation of some teachers to adapt, the limitations of training that still focuses on technical aspects, and the lack of utilization of learning media. The transition from the 2013 Curriculum to the Merdeka Curriculum has resulted in some teachers not fully understanding the concepts and philosophy of this new curriculum.

d. Efforts to Overcome Obstacles to the Implementation of the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum

Schools are making various efforts to overcome these obstacles, including ongoing socialization of the Merdeka Curriculum concept, increasing teacher capacity through training and education, and rotating teacher participation in professional development programs. Teachers are also encouraged to utilize media and teaching aids in their lessons. In addition, schools update their curriculum documents every school year to ensure they remain relevant to developments in education and the needs of students.

Data Analysis

1. Planning the Independent Learning Curriculum at Lentera Harapan High School in Tomohon

The Independent Learning Curriculum was developed based on the KOSP document, which contains an introduction, vision, mission, educational objectives, as well as the organization and

learning plan. This curriculum emphasizes integrated, active, inclusive, and flexible learning, as well as projects that reinforce the Pancasila Student Profile. The main concepts include three key aspects, namely learner-centered learning processes, authentic assessment systems, and adaptive curriculum management.

Curriculum development is carried out participatively by involving school principals, teachers, and stakeholders to ensure that it is in line with student needs, science and technology developments, and socio-cultural dynamics in the community.

2. Implementation of the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum at Lentera Harapan Tomohon High School

The implementation of the curriculum emphasizes a learning process that allows students to understand the material to the fullest and build personal competencies. Teachers play a crucial role in developing teaching modules, annual programs, and semesters based on BSNP guidelines. KOSP is updated every school year to keep up with advances in science and technology. This implementation is also supported by the availability of adequate facilities and infrastructure.

3. Supporting Factors for the Implementation of the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum

The main supporting factors include:

- (1) the competence and commitment of teachers in applying learning strategies,
- (2) the diverse and active characteristics of students, and
- (3) the availability of supporting facilities and infrastructure, both directly (learning media, educational tools) and indirectly (a conducive learning environment).

4. Factors Hindering the Implementation of the Independent Learning Curriculum

The obstacles faced include the lack of responsiveness of some teachers to curriculum changes, low motivation in professional development, limited opportunities to participate in training, and training that is still technical in nature and does not touch on the philosophical aspects of the Independent Curriculum.

5. Efforts to Overcome Obstacles

Schools have taken several strategic steps, such as conducting ongoing socialization of the Merdeka Curriculum, ensuring the renewal of KOSP at the beginning of each school year, improving the qualifications and competencies of teachers in their respective fields, and encouraging the use of innovative and contextual learning media.

Planning for Independent Learning Curriculum Management

Curriculum management includes the stages of planning, implementation, and evaluation designed to produce graduates who are in line with the school's vision and mission. The planning of the Merdeka Curriculum at Lentera Harapan Tomohon High School is carried out by optimizing school resources while instilling character values such as discipline, responsibility, tolerance, and caring.

The Merdeka Curriculum focuses on students through project-based learning, which provides opportunities for teachers to develop annual, semester, weekly, and daily programs based on BSNP standards. Enrichment and remedial programs are prepared to suit students' learning

needs, while self-development programs are carried out through guidance and counseling so that students can grow in personal, social, and academic dimensions.

Implementation of Merdeka Belajar Curriculum Management

Curriculum implementation is directed at applying learning that emphasizes understanding of the material and maximizing student competency development. Teachers play a role in creating a conducive learning environment to encourage positive behavior. The process of competency formation takes place through the active involvement of students, mentally, physically, and socially, while evaluation is carried out through post-tests to measure the level of competency achievement and determine follow-up in the form of remedial or enrichment activities.

Supporting Factors for the Implementation of the Independent Learning Curriculum

The successful implementation of the curriculum is supported by four main factors:

1. Teachers, as key elements that determine the quality of learning through their competence, motivation, and professionalism.
2. Students, with diverse characteristics and learning abilities, require an adaptive approach from teachers.
3. Facilities and infrastructure, which support the effectiveness of the learning process through the availability of media, tools, and an adequate environment.
4. The school environment, which includes class organization and a harmonious socio-psychological climate, both internally among school members and externally through cooperation with the community.

Factors Hindering the Implementation of the Independent Learning Curriculum

Some of the obstacles faced include teachers' limited time to develop students' potential, economic and social conditions that affect teacher performance, lack of educational facilities, and lack of understanding of the portfolio evaluation system. In addition, training and mentoring for teachers are still limited, so that understanding of the concept and implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum is not yet uniform.

Efforts to Overcome Obstacles

Schools are taking various strategic steps, such as improving teacher competence through continuous training, expanding access to reading materials and educational information, and fostering a culture of lifelong learning among teachers and principals. These efforts aim to strengthen understanding of the Merdeka Curriculum and improve the quality of learning that is adaptive to the times.

CONCLUSION

The implementation of the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum at Lentera Harapan Tomohon High School has been carried out through well-structured planning involving all teachers and

annual revisions of the KOSP document, beginning with identifying challenges in the transition process, setting goals aligned with the Pancasila Student Profile, formulating strategies and action plans, implementing student-centered learning, and conducting continuous evaluation through reflective practices and authentic assessments. Its implementation is supported by adequate facilities, school programs that facilitate curriculum dissemination, and performance assessments for teachers and students. However, several obstacles remain, including limited teacher competence in independent assessment, funding and time constraints, resource limitations, and students' low readiness for independent learning. To address these issues, teachers and school leaders continuously improve competency through reading, workshops, collaboration, and professional development to sustain curriculum innovation. Recommendations include strengthening teacher understanding of the curriculum, enhancing creativity in teaching module development, applying innovative learning strategies supported by pre-assessments, improving assessment skills, and ensuring schools regularly provide training and adequate learning facilities to optimize Merdeka Belajar implementation and learning quality.

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