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Evolution of the Kurikulum Merdeka: Evaluation and recommendations for the future curriculum

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ABSTRACT

The Kurikulum Merdeka was developed as an effort in the Indonesian education system aimed at providing more flexibility in learning, encouraging differentiation in teaching, and strengthening the character of students. However, its implementation faces various challenges, especially in teacher administration, student competency assessment, and subject integration. This study aims to evaluate the evolution of the Kurikulum Merdeka, identify the main challenges in its implementation, and provide recommendations for future curriculum development. This study employs a qualitative approach, utilizing a literature review method to analyze various sources, including education policies, academic journals, research reports, and news articles related to curriculum implementation. The results of the study indicate that the high administrative burden hinders the effectiveness of teaching, the elimination of the National Examination makes it challenging to objectively measure student competencies, and the merging of Natural Sciences and Social Sciences subjects creates obstacles to a deeper understanding of concepts. As recommendations, this study proposes several strategic steps, including simplifying teacher administration through the use of technology, implementing deep learning-based assessments to measure student competencies more accurately, and re-separating Natural Sciences and Social Sciences subjects to improve learning effectiveness.

ABSTRAK

Kurikulum Merdeka dikembangkan sebagai upaya dalam sistem pendidikan Indonesia yang bertujuan untuk memberikan lebih banyak fleksibilitas dalam pembelajaran, mendorong diferensiasi pengajaran, serta memperkuat karakter peserta didik. Namun, implementasinya menghadapi berbagai tantangan, terutama dalam administrasi guru, asesmen kompetensi peserta didik, dan integrasi mata pelajaran. Studi ini bertujuan untuk mengevaluasi evolusi Kurikulum Merdeka, mengidentifikasi tantangan utama dalam penerapannya, serta memberikan rekomendasi bagi pengembangan kurikulum di masa depan. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode studi literatur, menganalisis berbagai sumber seperti kebijakan pendidikan, jurnal akademik, laporan penelitian, serta berita mengenai implementasi kurikulum. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa beban administratif yang tinggi mengurangi efektivitas pengajaran, penghapusan Ujian Nasional menyebabkan kesulitan dalam mengukur kompetensi peserta didik secara objektif, dan penggabungan mata pelajaran Ilmu Pengetahuan Alam dan Ilmu Pengetahuan Sosial menimbulkan hambatan dalam pemahaman konsep yang lebih mendalam. Sebagai rekomendasi, studi ini mengusulkan beberapa langkah strategis, antara lain penyederhanaan administrasi guru melalui pemanfaatan teknologi, penerapan asesmen berbasis deep learning untuk mengukur kompetensi peserta didik secara lebih akurat, serta pemisahan kembali mata pelajaran Ilmu Pengetahuan Alam dan Ilmu Pengetahuan Sosial guna meningkatkan efektivitas pembelajaran.

Kata Kunci: *Kurikulum Merdeka; pembelajaran mendalam; pendidikan*

INTRODUCTION

Education is a guiding force in the development of children's lives. Education aims to harness the full potential that children possess, enabling them to achieve the highest levels of welfare and happiness, both as individuals and as members of society. Education is a humanization process that is often referred to as an effort to "humanize humans." Therefore, respecting the human rights of every individual is essential. In the current era of disruption, significant changes and innovations have occurred in business systems and structures, moving them in a more modern and advanced direction. In the world of education, this is reflected in the diversity of systems and curricula that continue to develop. Curriculum updates aim to enhance the quality of learning by introducing more effective, innovative, and engaging teaching methods. Additionally, the updated curriculum plays a role in encouraging skill-based learning, preparing students to face future challenges (Barkah & Robandi, 2024). Principles of human-centered learning design and provide practical guidance for teachers, curriculum designers, and education practitioners in designing effective and impactful learning experiences (Barkah et al., 2024).

Education in Indonesia has undergone various curriculum changes in response to the dynamics of government policies and the demands of the times. Since 1947, Indonesia has experienced 12 curriculum changes (Aprianti & Maulia, 2023). Curriculum changes in Indonesia do not occur in a vacuum but rather as part of the ongoing evolution of the education system, which continues to adapt to global and national needs. Several previous studies have examined the evolution of the curriculum in Indonesia. Curriculum changes that often follow government policies can be a challenge in the implementation of education. Every curriculum change requires readiness from various parties, including teachers, students, and educational institutions. Obstacles to this transition can include inadequate training for educators, limited resources, and disparities in the level of readiness between schools in urban and rural areas. If not handled properly, rapid changes can hinder the effectiveness of learning and the achievement of educational goals. The following **Table 1** presents a gap analysis of the evaluation and evolution of the curriculum over time.

Table 1. Gap Research Curriculum Evolution

Curriculum Name	Description
Kurikulum Rentjana Pelajaran 1947 (Insani, 2019)	The first curriculum used was the Kurikulum Rentjana Pelajaran, which was implemented in 1947 (Insani, 2019) and was compiled two years after the proclamation of independence. Initially, this curriculum still used the Dutch term, namely Leerplan (Manurung, 2019), because Indonesia was still in turmoil at that time due to the military aggression of the Netherlands and its allies. In its preparation, the government designed a learning system tailored to the revolutionary situation, with the primary focus on shaping the character of the Indonesian people to be independent, sovereign, and equal to other nations worldwide. Therefore, this curriculum did not emphasize intellectual education but rather prioritized character education, national awareness, and community life.
Kurikulum Rentjana Pelajaran Terurai 1952 (Herman et al., 2023)	The Kurikulum Rentjana Pelajaran Terurai 1952 was the first curriculum designed after Indonesia's independence, with a primary focus on national education oriented towards cultural values and community needs. Evaluation of this curriculum reveals several advantages and disadvantages associated with the curriculum's evolution to date. The Kurikulum Rentjana Pelajaran Terurai 1952 still exhibits a high administrative tendency, making it challenging for teaching staff to implement it (Herman et al., 2023).
Kurikulum Rentjana Pendidikan 1964 (Setiyorini & Setiawan, 2023)	The Kurikulum Rentjana Pendidikan 1964 was designed with the primary objective of creating an educated society through the Pancawardhana program, which emphasized the development of moral, intellectual, emotional, and physical aspects (Setiyorini & Setiawan, 2023). However, in its implementation, this curriculum faced obstacles in the form of limited trained educators and facilities and infrastructure that were not evenly distributed throughout Indonesia. In addition, changes in political policy in 1965 led to the discontinuation of this curriculum, making long-term evaluation difficult (Anitasari & Cahyono, 2023).

Curriculum Name	Description
Kurikulum 1968 (Marginingsih et al., 2024)	In 1968, the Indonesian education system underwent a curriculum change known as Kurikulum 1968 (Marginingsih et al., 2024). The characteristic of this curriculum is the relationship between the material at the elementary level of education with the next level of education. The primary objective of the Kurikulum 1968 is to cultivate individuals who possess a genuine Pancasila spirit, have a strong and healthy physique, and enhance their intelligence, skills, morals, character, and religious beliefs.
Kurikulum 1975 (Marzuqi & Ahid, 2023)	The following change occurred with the introduction of the Kurikulum 1975, which provided a more structured framework for detailing teaching methods, materials, and objectives through the *Prosedur Pengembangan Sistem Instruksional* (PPSI). This concept emerged from the idea of lesson units, specifically learning plans for each unit of discussion (Marzuqi & Ahid, 2023).
Kurikulum 1984 (Wardhana, 2021)	In 1984, Indonesia made further changes to the curriculum, as the previous one was considered less responsive to societal development. In the Kurikulum 1984, the subject of *Pendidikan Sejarah Perjuangan Bangsa* (PSPB) was added (Wardhana, 2021).
Kurikulum 1994 dan Suplemen 1999 (Budio et al., 2021)	The changes continued with the presence of the Kurikulum 1994 dan Suplemen 1999, which were the result of a combination of the Kurikulum 1975 and the Kurikulum 1984. However, this curriculum received considerable criticism from education practitioners and parents because the learning materials were deemed too dense and burdensome for students. Additionally, this curriculum introduced local content subjects, including regional languages, arts, and local skills, among others. Seeing the various polemics and contradictions in the previous curriculum (Budio et al., 2021).
Kurikulum Berbasis Kompetensi (KBK) (Wardhana, 2021)	In 2004, with the introduction of Kurikulum Berbasis Kompetensi (KBK), schools were given the authority to design and develop a curriculum that was previously oriented towards material, now oriented towards competency, adjusting to the needs and conditions of the school and its students. This curriculum focuses on three main aspects: the selection of competencies, evaluation indicators to measure learning success, and the development of the learning process for both students and teachers (Wardhana, 2021).
Kurikulum Tingkat Satuan Pendidikan (KTSP) (Prasetyo & Rahman, 2023)	Undang-Undang Republik Indonesia Nomor 20 Tahun 2003 tentang Sistem Pendidikan Nasional, which has had an impact on curriculum changes in Indonesia. This change is marked by the transition from the Kurikulum Berbasis Kompetensi (KBK) to the Kurikulum Tingkat Satuan Pendidikan (KTSP) 2006 (Prasetyo & Rahman, 2023).
Kurikulum 2013 (K-13) (Nurhasanah et al., 2021)	The government implemented Kurikulum 2013 (K-13) as a replacement for KTSP 2006 by emphasizing competency-based learning and a scientific approach. Until the Ministry of Education, Research, and Technology (Kemendikbudristek) made a new policy in 2022, which is still being implemented in Indonesian Education. The Kurikulum Merdeka is a step towards overcoming the learning crisis that has been ongoing for a considerable time. Furthermore, this condition was exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, which led to a shift from face-to-face learning to distance learning (Nurhasanah et al., 2021).
Kurikulum Merdeka	The Kurikulum Merdeka is designed to address educational challenges by providing flexibility for schools and teachers while emphasizing the Profil Pelajar Pancasila and competency assessment. Its advantage lies in the freedom to compile teaching materials, but its implementation still faces obstacles, such as teacher readiness, administrative burden, and gaps in access to technology.

Source: Research, 2024

Curriculum changes that often follow government policies can be a challenge in the implementation of education. Every curriculum change requires readiness from various parties, including teachers, students, and educational institutions. Obstacles to this transition can include inadequate training for educators, limited resources, and disparities in the level of readiness between schools in urban and rural areas. If not handled properly, rapid changes can hinder the effectiveness of learning and the achievement of educational goals. Based on these challenges, this study aims to evaluate the development of the Kurikulum Merdeka and provide recommendations for future curriculum policies. By understanding the

evolution of the curriculum in greater depth, this study is expected to provide stakeholders with insights for designing more sustainable and adaptable education policies.

Therefore, the education curriculum must constantly be developed and adjusted to the needs and demands of the times. A good curriculum must be able to prepare students to face the challenges and changes that occur in society. In recent years, one of the latest innovations of the Kurikulum Merdeka has been introduced to increase learning flexibility, encourage differentiated teaching, and strengthen student character. This curriculum is designed to provide flexibility for schools and teachers to tailor learning to meet the needs of individual students. However, in its implementation, various challenges arise, including the high administrative burden on teachers, difficulties in assessing student competencies due to the elimination of national examinations, and the merging of science and social studies subjects, which creates obstacles to understanding concepts in depth (Prasetyo & Rahman, 2023).

Lately, the public has been shocked by information about the Deep Learning study approach that will be implemented by the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (Mendikdasmen) in 2025. Amidst the rapid development of technology, the deep learning approach has begun to be introduced in the world of education. Deep learning enables the personalization of data-driven learning, enhances the effectiveness of assessments, and facilitates teachers' analysis of student development. Therefore, an evaluation of the Kurikulum Merdeka and a study of the potential for technology integration in the curriculum are critical and urgent matters to be discussed in the academic realm. Given that the policies implemented by the Ministry will significantly influence education in Indonesia, this study is expected to provide strategic recommendations for stakeholders in designing a curriculum that is more responsive to technological developments and the needs of students.

The primary objective of this study is to examine the advantages and disadvantages of the implemented curriculum, providing insight into the effectiveness of educational policies in enhancing learning quality. In addition, this study serves as an evaluation tool to identify challenges that arise in implementing the curriculum, including the readiness of educators, student involvement, and the relevance of the curriculum to current needs. The specifications of this study are based on the information in **Table 2** below.

Table 2. Research Objectives and Research Gaps

Specification	Description
Identify the main challenges in implementing the curriculum, especially in terms of teacher administration, student competency assessment, and subject integration.	Previous research indicates that curriculum changes in Indonesia often encounter challenges related to teacher readiness, educational infrastructure, and the effectiveness of learning assessments. The implementation of the Kurikulum Merdeka is hindered by administrative constraints that consume teachers' time, preventing them from entirely focusing on classroom learning activities. This includes the large number of documents that must be prepared, filling out formative reports, and adjusting assessment methods that are more flexible but still have to meet competency standards (Rosyada et al., 2024).
Evaluate the potential for implementing deep learning in the learning system to support personalized education and enhance assessment effectiveness.	In addition, the elimination of the national examination has implications for the difficulty in objectively measuring students' achievement of competency. Previously, the national examination was the national standard used to evaluate students' academic achievement throughout Indonesia. With the elimination of this system, challenges have emerged in determining uniform indicators of educational success. Schools now rely more heavily on school-based assessments, such as summative assessments and national assessments, which vary in quality and implementation standards across different regions. As a result, there is the potential for gaps in the quality of learning between schools and regions (Mersi & Azis, 2023).

Specification	Description
Provide strategic recommendations for the development of a more adaptive, innovative, and technology-based curriculum in the future.	Meanwhile, research discusses the potential of deep learning technology in improving learning effectiveness. This study found that the use of artificial intelligence technology can help personalize learning and provide more accurate feedback to students (Zuhro & A'yun, 2024). This aligns with research indicating that the implementation of deep learning in assessment can help identify students' strengths and weaknesses in greater depth than conventional methods. In AI-based assessments, deep learning can be used to assess text-based assignments, essays, or even oral exams with a high level of accuracy. This technology is capable of understanding the language structure and context of students' answers, allowing for more objective assessment than manual evaluations by humans, which tend to be subjective (Ardianto & Wibisono, 2023).

Source: Curriculum Implementation (Rosyada et al., 2024), Deep Learning (Mersi & Azis, 2023), Educational Technology (Zuhro & A'yun, 2024)*, and (Ardianto & Wibisono, 2023).*

Thus, by conducting an in-depth study and being open to diverse views from third parties, it is hoped that recommendations can emerge to inform a future curriculum that is more adaptive, flexible, and competency-based, thereby better equipped to face global challenges. The ideal curriculum of the future needs to accommodate technological developments, foster strong character, and prepare students to possess 21st-century skills, such as critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and effective communication. Therefore, academic studies on curriculum changes are a strategic step in creating a more responsive and sustainable education system to navigate the era of Society 5.0 and become more capable resources in the future (Hadiapurwa et al., 2021).

This study has fundamental differences compared to previous studies related to the evaluation of the Kurikulum Merdeka. Suppose previous studies have generally focused on the current curriculum or previous curricula in a limited manner. In that case, this study adopts a comprehensive approach by tracing the evolution of the curriculum over time. The main differences in this research method include: First, this research approach is historical and comprehensive, differing from previous studies, which generally only compare the Kurikulum Merdeka with previous curricula in a limited manner. This study analyzes curriculum changes from the beginning of independence to the present, aiming to identify transition patterns within the Indonesian education system. Through this study, the evolution of the curriculum is evaluated in depth to understand the trend of change and the factors that influence the effectiveness of curriculum implementation over time. This approach enables research to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of education policy and its implications for the quality of learning. Second, this study employs a library research method, conducting an in-depth analysis of various relevant written sources.

These sources include education policies, academic journals, research reports, and current news discussing the implementation of the curriculum in Indonesia. In its analysis, this study not only presents findings from various references but also identifies research gaps in previous studies. With this approach, research can formulate more adaptive and evidence-based recommendations for the development of future education policies. Lastly, this study conducts a comparative analysis of various curricula implemented in Indonesia to identify transition patterns, policy impacts, and challenges associated with their implementation. By comparing several curricula over time, this study can reveal how changes in education policy affect the learning system and the readiness of educators. Through this approach, research can evaluate the extent to which each curriculum change contributes to improving the quality of education. The results of this analysis also provide insight into the factors that support or hinder the effectiveness of curriculum implementation, serving as a basis for formulating more effective education policies in the future.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Curriculum Change

Curriculum change must be grounded in a comprehensive understanding of policy implementation and the external and internal factors that influence their success. In the Indonesian context, periodic curriculum changes indicate the need for a comprehensive evaluation of the effectiveness of previous policies. Each curriculum change requires an inventory of problems, an analysis of challenges, and a formulation of solutions that can be applied to subsequent policies. External factors, such as technological developments, globalization, and the demands of the global workforce, as well as internal factors like educator readiness, infrastructure, and school culture, must be considered to ensure that curriculum changes are effective and sustainable. Thus, this theory emphasizes that curriculum change is not just a policy change (Santika et al., 2022).

Constructivist Theory

The constructivist theory emphasizes learning as an active process in which students build understanding based on their experiences and interactions (Dewi & Fauziati, 2021). In evaluating the Kurikulum Merdeka, this theory is used to assess the effectiveness of integrating subjects. The Kurikulum Merdeka encourages flexibility, conceptual understanding, and independent exploration. If the integration of subjects is carried out rigidly without any connection between concepts, meaningful learning can be hampered. However, if integration through projects or problem-based learning is still feasible, the integration of subjects remains aligned with constructivist principles. Therefore, the evaluation must assess whether the integration of subjects in the Kurikulum Merdeka supports conceptual connectivity or hinders deeper understanding.

Educational Technology

Educational technology emphasizes that the integration of technology in learning must consider pedagogical and content aspects to be effective (Mokalu et al., 2022). Technology is not just a tool, but it must support teaching methods that align with educational goals and student characteristics. The effectiveness of technology in education depends on how it is utilized to enrich learning materials, enhance interaction, and facilitate a deeper understanding. The use of technology that is not aligned with the right pedagogical approach can hinder the learning process; therefore, strategic planning is necessary for its implementation. Thus, this theory emphasizes that technology should be applied in a directed and proportional manner, in line with learning needs, to have a positive impact on the effectiveness and quality of education.

Scientific Hypothesis

Based on the background and literature review above, several key problems are the focus of this research. First, this research will analyze the evolution of the Kurikulum Merdeka since its implementation in Indonesia, including policy changes and their impact on the education system. Second, this research aims to identify the primary challenges in implementing the Kurikulum Merdeka, including the readiness of educators, administrative constraints, and limited infrastructure and resources. Furthermore, this research will also explore the potential for implementing deep learning in assessment and learning, especially in increasing the effectiveness of the curriculum through personalized learning and more accurate feedback. Ultimately, this research seeks to formulate recommendations that can support future curriculum

development, making it more adaptive and innovative in response to the ever-evolving challenges of education.

METHODS

Research Approach

This study employs a qualitative approach, utilizing a library research method. Library research was chosen because this study aims to analyze the evolution of the Kurikulum Merdeka based on written sources, including books, scientific journals, government policies, research reports, and news about changes to the Kurikulum Merdeka, as well as the implementation of Deep Learning studies. This approach enables researchers to gain a deeper understanding of the background, development, and impact of implementing the Kurikulum Merdeka at various educational levels, as well as the implementation of Deep Learning studies. By reviewing various credible sources, this study can identify the challenges and opportunities that arise during the implementation of the curriculum. In addition, literature studies also provide insight into best practices from education systems in other countries that can serve as references for formulating recommendations for future curriculum policies.

Research Data Sources

The data selection strategy in this study employed a purposive sampling approach, which involved selecting the most relevant sources to the research topic based on specific criteria, including relevance to the Kurikulum Merdeka and Deep Learning, source credibility, and publication context. The databases used include various academic repositories and trusted sources, such as Google Scholar, ResearchGate, Springer, Taylor & Francis, ProQuest, Sinta (Science and Technology Index), Garuda (Garba Digital Reference), and the official portal of the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture. In addition, research reports, government policies, and news from credible media are also part of the sources collected. The number of sources collected depends on the analysis's needs. Generally, it includes 15-20 journal articles, academic books, research reports, and official policies that discuss the evolution of the Kurikulum Merdeka, the implementation of Deep Learning, and the education systems in Indonesia and other countries. Descriptive research data are presented in **Table 3** below.

Table 3. Descriptive Research Data

Sources	Description
Primary Document	Policy documents issued by the government related to the Kurikulum Merdeka, such as the Regulation of the Minister of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, and other laws governing the education system in Indonesia. These official documents serve as the primary basis for understanding curriculum policies and the changes that occur over time. Among them is the Regulation of the Minister of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology Number 12 of 2024 concerning the Kurikulum Merdeka, which applies to early childhood, elementary, and secondary education levels.
Academic Literature	Scientific journals, books, and articles that discuss the implementation, evaluation, and impact of the Kurikulum Merdeka, as well as the application of Deep Learning in the school learning process. This academic literature provides a research-based perspective that can be used to compare findings from previous studies.
Reports and Case Studies	Research results from educational institutions and related organizations that have evaluated the effectiveness of the Kurikulum Merdeka in various regions, as well as the implementation of deep learning in other countries. This report covers school experiences, the challenges faced by teachers and students, and the results of curriculum implementation over a specified period.

Sources	Description
News in the Mass Media	News articles from the mass media discuss the development of the Kurikulum Merdeka, examining both government policy and community, teacher, and academic responses, as well as the polemics surrounding the implementation of profound learning studies. News from the media can provide insight into the public's acceptance of this information and the dynamics that occur in the field related to the government's implementation of Education policies. Several news articles highlight issues with the implementation of the Kurikulum Merdeka, including administrative burdens associated with the merger of Science and Social Studies subjects. As well as the many news articles related to the issue of implementing deep learning studies to the Education curriculum in Indonesia (lihat: *https://www.menpan.go.id/site/berita-terkini/berita-daerah/mendikdasmen-paparkan-penerapan-deep-learning-untuk-tingkatkan-mutu-pendidikan*)

Resource: JDIH BPK - https://peraturan.bpk.go.id (2024); Kementerian Pendayagunaan Aparatur Negara dan Reformasi Birokrasi - www.menpan.go.id (2025)

Literature Study Data Analysis

In this study, data analysis was conducted using content analysis, which aims to identify patterns, concepts, and central themes from various sources that have been collected. This analysis enables researchers to understand how the Kurikulum Merdeka has evolved from previous policies, the challenges and opportunities it presents during implementation, and how Deep Learning is applied in the context of education. Additionally, a thematic analysis approach is employed to categorize findings based on primary themes, including education policies, pedagogical approaches, implementation challenges, and their impact on learning quality. This approach facilitates the formulation of a more comprehensive synthesis regarding recommendations for future curriculum development. With this combination of analysis methods, research can present a systematic, in-depth, and evidence-based understanding of the evolution of the Kurikulum Merdeka and the application of Deep Learning in education.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Polemic of the New Curriculum in 2025

Abdul Mu'ti is an academic figure whom President Prabowo appointed to lead the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (Mendikdasmen), formerly known as the Minister of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology. On November 8, 2024, the Minister of Primary and Secondary Education, Abdul Mu'ti, initiated the Deep Learning Curriculum as a replacement for the Kurikulum Merdeka, emphasizing in-depth learning through the Mindful Learning, Meaningful Learning, and Joyful Learning approaches that are more relevant and focused on students (Feriyanto & Anjariyah, 2024).

Figure 1. *Minister of Primary and Secondary Education Abdul Mu'ti states journalists at the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education Office in Central Jakarta, Tuesday, December 31, 2024.*
Source: Tempo/Anastasya Lavenia

The plan to change the curriculum in Indonesia has become increasingly discussed after the Minister of Primary and Secondary Education, Abdul Mu'ti, signaled the replacement of the Kurikulum Merdeka. This new curriculum, known as the Deep Learning Curriculum, is designed to enhance student understanding through a more profound approach and a focus on active engagement. In his presentation, Abdul Mu'ti stated that the Deep Learning Curriculum has three main pillars: Mindful Learning, Meaningful Learning, and Joyful Learning. These three pillars aim to create a deeper, more meaningful, and more enjoyable learning atmosphere for students (Feriyanto & Anjariyah, 2024).

Deep Learning Curriculum Overview

The Deep Learning Curriculum is a new idea proposed to replace the Kurikulum Merdeka with a more in-depth learning approach. The Minister of Primary and Secondary Education, Abdul Mu'ti, stated that this curriculum is designed to help students better understand the material through methods that emphasize critical thinking and exploration. "The approach is to reduce the volume of material but with in-depth exploration," said Abdul Mu'ti. Mindful Learning aims to provide a space for students to be actively involved in the learning process, considering the differences in needs and potential of each individual (Nasihudin et al., 2024). In this approach, students are expected to be directly involved through discussions, experiments, and exploration of the material being taught. For example, when discussing science concepts, teachers are expected not only to provide theory but also to invite students to understand the role of the material in real life. For example, learning about water can be done through laboratory experiments to study the role of water in everyday life. With this approach, students are expected to be able to relate classroom learning to their everyday reality.

In the Meaningful Learning element, students are encouraged to understand the reasons behind each lesson they learn. Abdul Mu'ti emphasized that students need to know why a material is important and how it can be helpful in real life. This approach positions teachers as facilitators who help students relate lessons to real-world applications. For example, in math lessons, teachers can explain how certain concepts can help students manage their finances or logistics. With this understanding, students are

expected to be more motivated and enthusiastic in learning (Hamida et al., 2022). Joyful Learning is not just fun learning, but an approach that prioritizes satisfaction from deep understanding. Abdul Mu'ti stated that the goal of Joyful Learning is to create a meaningful learning experience so that students not only feel happy but also truly understand the material being studied. For example, in history lessons, teachers can conduct simulations or hold discussions that encourage students to become more actively involved (Mustofa et al., 2019).

In this way, students not only learn history through memorization but can also gain a deeper understanding of the historical context. Joyful Learning is expected to make students more enthusiastic in studying each subject. The Deep Learning curriculum is planned to be implemented in 2025. However, Abdul Mu'ti emphasized that thorough preparation is needed, especially in terms of teacher training and providing adequate infrastructure. The transition to this new curriculum will also involve intensive training for teachers, enabling them to adopt a more student-focused teaching method. Additionally, changing the mindset of teachers is a crucial element in the success of the Deep Learning Curriculum. Teachers are required to be more flexible and responsive to student needs. Abdul Mu'ti emphasized that the success of this curriculum is highly dependent on educators' willingness to adapt to an approach that prioritizes active student involvement.

Evaluation of Kurikulum Merdeka

Curriculum evaluation plays an important role in the world of education. Without evaluation, we will not know the weaknesses and strengths in the planning and implementation process of the curriculum that has been used. The implementation of the Kurikulum Merdeka in elementary schools has been quite effective and efficient. In this case, the Kurikulum Merdeka also needs to be evaluated to achieve the educational goals in Indonesia. Three important aspects need to be considered in the evaluation of the Kurikulum Merdeka, which are then reflected in **Table 4** that follows.

Tabel 4. Description of the Deep Learning Curriculum Revolution

Research Aspect	Evaluation	Reflection
Teacher Administration Competency. (Hamdi, 2025)	Teachers should fulfill several administrations in the Kurikulum Merdeka policy. There are at least 13 administrative burdens for teachers, including: ● Teacher's Book ● Student Book ● Syllabus / Learning Objective Flow (ATP) ● Annual Program (Prota) ● Semester Program (Prosem) ● Journal ● Mapping of KI-KD / Learning Achievements (CP) ● Education Calendar ● RPP+ / Open Module ● Daily Test Grid and Questions ● PTS Grid and Questions ● PAS/PAT Grid and Questions A heavy administrative burden has a negative impact on the effectiveness of teachers in fulfilling their primary educational responsibilities. Teachers must be able to divide their time between teaching and doing administration.	Automation of Administrative Processes: Schools and governments can consider automating many administrative processes, including paperwork, reporting, and tracking student data. This will free up valuable time for teachers, in addition to reducing or eliminating unnecessary administrative tasks. Schools can audit non-value-added administrative tasks and eliminate them. This will help teachers focus more on learning (Rosita et al., 2024).

Research Aspect	Evaluation	Reflection
	Many teachers feel overwhelmed by the numerous administrative tasks. This can reduce the quality of learning and reduce teacher motivation.	
Student Competency Achievement/Learning Outcomes (Azzahra et al., 2022)	The Kurikulum Merdeka policy led to a decline in student competence. This is because there is no clear and measurable barometer of competency achievement. In the case study of the elimination of the UN, it was considered something sacred and frightening, which caused pressure among students and schools (Azzahra et al., 2022).	Implemented to establish a clear and measurable barometer of competency achievement. The Minister of Primary and Secondary Education (Mendikdasmen), Prof. Dr. Abdul Mu'ti, M.Ed., explained that the education policy during his administration will be carefully considered. He also mentioned the possibility of the return of the National Examination (UN).
Learning Material (Anisah et al., 2023)	The subject of science is one of the policies of the Kurikulum Merdeka, where science is a combination of science and social studies materials in curriculum 13. This is because there is an essential interconnectedness between nature and society. However, in reality, it is delivered separately. So it is not effective in terms of time efficiency (Anisah et al., 2023).	Science (IPA) and social (IPS) studies have unique approaches and characteristics. Science (IPA) emphasizes scientific methods based on experimentation and logic, while social sciences (IPS) focus on social and historical analysis. Combining the two has the potential to blur the identities and approaches of each. Therefore, it is essential for science (IPA) and social (IPS) studies subjects to be delivered separately according to their respective scientific fields.

Source: (Anisah et al., 2023), (Hamdi et al., 2025).

New Curriculum Recommendations

Simplification of Administration (Deep Learning)

Simplifying administration is a crucial first step in reducing teachers' workload. By reducing the administrative tasks that must be completed, teachers can focus more on their primary educational responsibilities. The existing administration must be essential and have a clear purpose so that teachers do not need to spend time doing unimportant tasks. The use of technology can also simplify the administration process. By using online applications or systems, teachers can manage data and documents more effectively and efficiently. Technology can help teachers carry out administrative tasks, such as inputting data, generating reports, and managing communication with parents.

However, simplifying administration and relying solely on technology is not enough. Dividing administrative tasks to other school staff is also very important. By dividing tasks, teachers can focus more on their primary educational responsibilities, while other school staff can assist in carrying out administrative tasks (Rosita et al., 2024). Finally, training and support are also crucial in helping teachers manage administration more effectively (Susilana et al., 2023). By providing training and support, teachers can better understand how to manage administration effectively and efficiently, allowing them to focus more on their primary tasks as educators. Thus, simplification of administration, the use of technology, division of tasks, and provision of training and support can help teachers manage their administrative responsibilities more effectively and efficiently, allowing them to focus more on their primary educational tasks.

National Examination Results Based on Deep Learning

In the era of modern education, assessment is no longer just about tests and exams but about measuring students' competency achievements more diversely and enjoyably. To improve the quality of education, the use of more diverse assessments is a key factor. More diverse assessments allow teachers to measure students' abilities from various perspectives (Al Munawar et al., 2025). Tests, quizzes, and performance-based assessments are some examples of assessments that can be used. Thus, students can demonstrate their abilities in various ways, and teachers can gain a more comprehensive understanding of students' abilities. However, implementing more diverse assessments also requires careful planning and consideration. Therefore, the implementation of assessments is not carried out simultaneously but rather by zone or region (Lashiyanti et al., 2023).

Thus, the lack of technology, facilities, and infrastructure in schools can be minimized. Additionally, the development of clear and measurable competency standards is also crucial. Clear competency standards enable teachers to determine what to teach and what to assess during the teaching and learning process. Thus, students can acquire skills that align with the established standards. To enhance the efficiency of the evaluation and assessment process, the use of technology is also crucial. Online applications or systems can be used to manage data and documents, allowing for a more efficient and accurate evaluation and assessment process. Thus, teachers can focus more on developing students' abilities, and students can acquire skills that align with the established standards.

Re-separation of Science (IPA) and Social (IPS) Studies Subjects

The separation of science and social studies subjects into distinct areas is a strategic step to enhance the quality of learning. Thus, the deepening of concepts in each area can be done more effectively. The development of separate curricula for science and social studies enables the emergence of unique approaches and characteristics for each. A separate curriculum allows teachers to focus on developing students' abilities in specific areas. The use of learning methods that are tailored to the characteristics of each subject is also crucial. For example, scientific methods based on experiments and logic are particularly suitable for science, while social and historical analysis are more suitable for social studies (Anisah et al., 2023).

The development of resources tailored to the needs of each subject is also crucial. Textbooks, laboratories, and online resources can help teachers in their teaching and assist students in understanding the concepts taught. By separating science and social studies subjects, the deepening of concepts in each area can be done more effectively. The development of unique approaches and the improvement of learning quality can also be achieved more effectively. The implementation of the separation of science and social studies subjects involves several steps, including the development of separate curricula, the procurement of appropriate resources, teacher training, and the evaluation and monitoring of progress. Thus, the implementation of separating science and social studies subjects can run effectively and efficiently.

Discussion

The results of this study indicate that the implementation of the Kurikulum Merdeka still faces several significant challenges, including the high administrative burden on teachers, difficulties in assessing student competencies due to the elimination of the National Examination, and challenges in integrating science and social studies subjects. Excessive administrative burdens make it difficult for teachers to focus on effective teaching, while the elimination of national examination results in a lack of clear competency standards. In addition, the combination of science and social studies in a single subject creates obstacles

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to understanding concepts in depth, as the two fields employ different scientific approaches and characteristics. From the perspective of the curriculum change, changes in education policy must consider the readiness of educators, infrastructure, and their impact on learning effectiveness (Santika et al., 2022).

Evaluation of the Kurikulum Merdeka reveals that the changes implemented have not fully considered teacher readiness in administration and have not provided an effective assessment mechanism to replace the role of the National Examination. Concerning Constructivist Theory, which emphasizes the importance of learning as an active process in which students build understanding based on their experiences and interactions, integrating science and social studies subjects is a challenge in itself (Dewi & Fauziati, 2021). Combining the two subjects without a proper interdisciplinary approach hinders students' understanding, as the two fields employ different methods and approaches to analysis. Additionally, Educational Technology Theory supports the integration of technology to enhance learning effectiveness (Mokalu et al., 2022).

In this study, Deep Learning is recommended as an alternative assessment method that can measure student competencies more accurately. AI (Artificial Intelligence) -based technology in assessment can provide more in-depth feedback than conventional evaluations. As a recommendation, this study suggests several strategic steps. First, simplify teacher administration by adopting a digitalization system to reduce non-essential workload. Second, develop Deep Learning-based assessments as a replacement for the National Examination to increase objectivity in measuring student competency. Third, re-separate science and social studies subjects so that learning is more effective following the scientific approach of each field. By considering existing challenges and relevant theories, the evaluation of the Kurikulum Merdeka must continue to be carried out, ensuring that the resulting education policy is more adaptive and responsive to the needs of effective learning in the future.

CONCLUSION

The results of this study indicate that the implementation of Kurikulum Merdeka in private madrasas still faces significant challenges, including a high administrative burden on teachers, difficulties in assessing student competencies due to the elimination of the National Examination, and obstacles in integrating Natural and Social Sciences (IPAS) subjects. Excessive administrative tasks reduce teaching effectiveness and divert teachers' focus from educating students, while the absence of national examinations complicates objective competency assessments, necessitating a more comprehensive evaluation mechanism. Additionally, merging Science and Social Studies presents challenges in deepening material comprehension due to differences in scientific approaches. As a strategic solution, this study recommends simplifying teacher administration through the integration of technology, reducing non-essential tasks, and delegating responsibilities to administrative staff. It also suggests reintroducing competency assessments based on deep learning and a zoning-based examination system to address regional disparities in facilities and infrastructure. Furthermore, separating Science and Social Studies subjects is proposed to enhance learning effectiveness, as each discipline employs its scientific approach. For future curriculum development, periodic evaluations of education policies are necessary to ensure effective implementation, alongside enhanced training and mentoring for teachers to facilitate adaptation to policy changes. Through these measures, the Kurikulum Merdeka is expected to be implemented more efficiently and have a positive impact on the quality of education in private madrasahs. Further research can delve more deeply into the implementation of the Kurikulum Merdeka at various educational levels and its effectiveness in enhancing the quality of learning. In addition, research can focus on a comparative analysis between the Kurikulum Merdeka and previous curricula to identify their long-term impacts. Further studies can also evaluate the role of technology in supporting the implementation of the Kurikulum Merdeka and the adaptations needed in the context of remote areas or with limited resources.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

This study offers insight into the challenges and solutions associated with implementing the Kurikulum Merdeka in private madrasas. To support the sustainability and effectiveness of curriculum policies, it is recommended that the government and educational institutions continue to conduct periodic evaluations of the policies implemented. Additionally, mentoring and training for teachers need to be enhanced to prepare them better to address dynamic policy changes. The use of technology in administration and assessment also needs to be optimized to reduce teacher workload and increase accuracy in assessing student competencies. The author declares that there is no conflict of interest related to the publication of this article. The author also confirms that all data and contents of this article have been compiled academically based on valid sources and are free from plagiarism.

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