



Implementing the Merdeka Curriculum to Foster Self Directed Learning: A Foundation for Strengthening Pancasila Character

I. I. Megasari*, Adhisty Tinka Pramesty

Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, Indonesia

Correspondence: E-mail: intanindah@upi.edu

ABSTRACT

This paper examines the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in fostering students' self-directed learning and explores its role as a foundation for strengthening Pancasila character. The Merdeka Curriculum addresses the challenges of modern education by placing students at the center of the learning process. It empowers both teachers and students to collaborate in designing, delivering, and adapting learning experiences that are tailored to the unique needs and potential of each student. This study employed a literature review methodology, drawing on various scholarly sources and official websites that provide relevant data on the Merdeka Curriculum. The findings indicate that the Merdeka Curriculum is designed not only to enhance academic competence but also to cultivate essential self-directed learning skills. Such autonomy in learning serves as a critical prerequisite for the development of Pancasila character, encompassing dimensions such as independence, critical reasoning, and responsibility. Furthermore, self-directed learning supports the growth of students' civic literacy, equipping them to participate actively and critically in civic life. Ultimately, the Merdeka Curriculum contributes to the development of a generation that is not only academically capable but also morally grounded and socially responsible.

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ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Submitted/Received 11 Jun 2025

First Revised 13 Jun 2025

Accepted 28 Jun 2025

First Available online 28 Jun 2025

Publication Date 28 Jun 2025

Keyword:

Learning Independence,
Merdeka Curriculum,
Pancasila Character.

1. INTRODUCTION

In contemporary education, self-directed learning is recognized as a critical competency that students must develop. This concept aligns with Knowles' theory of self-directed learning as cited in ([Hariyadi, et al, 2023](#)), which defines it as the capacity of individuals to initiate the identification of their learning needs, set goals, select appropriate resources, and evaluate outcomes autonomously. Such skills are highly relevant to the demands of the 21st century, which call for critical thinking, creativity, and adaptability in response to global change and technological advancement. According to Garrison as cited in ([Ismail, et al, 2024](#)), self-directed learning not only enhances students' competence but also strengthens their confidence in navigating complex learning environments. However, cultivating this form of learning in schools presents significant challenges. These include students' limited intrinsic motivation, the persistence of teacher-centered pedagogies, and a prevailing passive learning culture. Zimmerman as cited in ([Laili, et al, 2023](#)) notes that many students struggle with time management, goal setting, and self-monitoring. Additionally, constraints on teachers' professional capacities further hinder the effective implementation of autonomy-supportive strategies.

The Merdeka Curriculum offers a potential response to these obstacles. It provides educators with greater flexibility to design and deliver instructional approaches tailored to students' diverse needs, while promoting active student engagement. One of its core objectives is to cultivate self-directed learning through project-based instruction, differentiated learning, and formative assessment ([Farid, et al, 2024](#)). This approach is consistent with Piaget's constructivist theory as cited in ([Royani & Muafia, 2024](#)), which emphasizes that effective learning occurs when learners actively construct knowledge through meaningful experiences. Under the Merdeka Curriculum, students are encouraged to engage in creative and critical learning while taking responsibility for their academic growth. Beyond enhancing academic competence, the curriculum also plays a pivotal role in fostering national character. Specifically, it aims to develop the Pancasila Student Profile, which includes values such as faith, moral integrity, appreciation of cultural diversity, mutual cooperation, independence, critical thinking, and creativity. In this framework, self-directed learning functions not only as a cognitive skill but also as a foundational element that supports the formation of these broader character dimensions. Students who are autonomous in their learning are better equipped to internalize and enact Pancasila values in everyday life and to make ethical and responsible civic decisions.

Aligned with this goal, ([Sukmayadi, et al, 2024](#)) self-directed learning within the Merdeka Curriculum facilitates students' active engagement in exploring, evaluating, and applying information related to civic issues. It encourages democratic dialogue and the formation of well-informed opinions grounded in the principles of Pancasila. These competencies are increasingly vital in the digital age, where individuals must navigate an abundance of information and exercise independent judgment. Despite its promise, the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum continues to encounter significant challenges, including limited teacher readiness, resource constraints, and the need for systemic cultural shifts in educational practice. Accordingly, this paper seeks to critically analyze how the Merdeka Curriculum supports the development of self-directed learning and how this, in turn, serves as a foundational mechanism for strengthening Pancasila character through civic literacy. The aim is to provide both conceptual insight and practical recommendations for educators, policymakers, and other stakeholders working to enhance the relevance and quality of national education.

Previous studies have also highlighted the relevance of the Merdeka Curriculum in promoting self-directed learning. ([Raini, 2022](#)) found that project-based approaches significantly enhanced students' self-reflection, decision-making, and problem-solving abilities. ([Dini, 2023](#)) also argue that student-centered and project-based models are effective strategies for fostering self-directed learning in today's educational landscape. Building on these findings, this paper explores how the Merdeka Curriculum enables students to become autonomous learners while simultaneously fostering Pancasila character. It also examines implementation challenges and proposes viable solutions, offering a framework for educators and policymakers committed to nurturing competent, independent learners equipped for the demands of a rapidly changing world.

2. METHODS

This study aims to examine the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in promoting self-directed learning among senior high school students, with a particular focus on its role in developing Pancasila character. The research employs a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative insights from purposively selected teachers with a comprehensive literature review. As described by Sari and Asmendri in ([Indarta, et al., 2022](#)), literature-based research enables a systematic exploration of documented sources relevant to the study's focus.

Data were analyzed using Miles and Huberman's (1992) in ([Safira, et al, 2023](#)) interactive model, which involves data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Purposive sampling was used to select senior high school teachers as key informants, providing experiential insights into the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum and its effectiveness in fostering both self-directed learning and Pancasila values.

In addition to teacher interviews, data were obtained from diverse sources, including academic books, peer-reviewed journal articles, official educational documents, and relevant websites. These materials were reviewed, coded, and thematically analyzed to understand how the Merdeka Curriculum is being implemented and to identify its strengths and limitations in building student autonomy and civic character.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Data Collection

The Merdeka Curriculum addresses the challenges of modern education that places students at the center of the learning process ([Ismail, 2025](#)). This approach aims not only to improve academic competence but also to foster self-directed learning skills that are essential for facing an ever-changing world. The following are key components of the Merdeka Curriculum that support the development of student autonomy:

(i) Project-Based Learning (PBL)

Project-Based Learning is a central strategy in the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum. Through this method, students engage in projects that are relevant to their lives and contexts, encouraging them to identify real-world problems, design solutions, and manage their time and resources independently. Bell as cited in ([Ismail, et al, 2024](#)) notes that PBL cultivates essential skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and informed decision making core attributes of self-directed learners. In addition, collaborative projects provide opportunities for students to work together while maintaining accountability for their individual contributions

(ii) Flexible Instructional Design

The Merdeka Curriculum empowers schools and educators with the autonomy to design instructional approaches tailored to students' diverse needs and interests. Teachers can implement strategies that actively engage students in directing their own learning. This flexibility encourages learners to explore personal interests, while also training them to develop structured learning plans, set specific goals, and monitor their academic progress. As emphasized by Knowles in [\(Hariyadi, et al, 2023\)](#), providing learners with autonomy in shaping their educational journey is a cornerstone of self-directed learning theory.

(iii) Differentiated Instruction to Support Individual Potential

Differentiated instruction is a key principle in the Merdeka Curriculum, which enables educators to tailor learning experiences to students' individual needs, interests, and abilities. This approach ensures that students are engaged at their own pace and according to their personal learning profiles. For example, students who grasp material quickly may be encouraged to take on more advanced challenges, while those requiring additional support receive targeted assistance. Such differentiation fosters a sense of ownership and autonomy over the learning process. According to Tomlinson as cited in [\(Fauzi, et al, 2023\)](#), differentiated learning promotes student confidence and encourages the development of self-regulation, both of which are essential to cultivating self-directed learners

(iv) Formative Assessment as a Tool for Self-Reflection

Formative assessment is another integral element of the Merdeka Curriculum, designed to provide students with continuous feedback throughout the learning process. Rather than focusing solely on summative outcomes, this type of assessment guides learners in identifying their strengths and areas for improvement. As a result, students are encouraged to take responsibility for their progress and refine their learning strategies. This reflective process empowers students to engage in metacognitive practices that support long-term academic development. [\(Fajar et al, 2024\)](#) emphasize that formative assessment plays a critical role in enhancing students' motivation to learn autonomously and contributes significantly to the formation of effective self-directed learning habits.

(v) Alignment with Constructivist Learning Theory

The Merdeka Curriculum aligns closely with the constructivist learning paradigm proposed by Piaget and Vygotsky, which emphasizes that learners actively construct meaning through experiential engagement and social interaction. This theory posits that meaningful learning occurs when students are encouraged to connect new information with prior knowledge through exploration and critical inquiry. Project-based and collaborative learning activities in the curriculum are structured to facilitate this process. Additionally, peer interaction within group settings enhances idea exchange and supports the development of critical thinking and deeper understanding [\(Zein, 2024\)](#). By situating students as active participants in their own learning, the Merdeka Curriculum reinforces core tenets of constructivist pedagogy and encourages sustained learner autonomy.

3.2. Data Analysis

This section presents case studies from schools that have demonstrated success in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum. These schools illustrate how effective application of curriculum principles can contribute to the development of student self-directed learning.

(i) SMK Al-Asyari Bangkalan

A study conducted by [Fuaida, et al, 2024](#) at SMK Al-Asyari Bangkalan found that the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum significantly enhanced students' self-directed learning. Teachers adjusted instructional strategies, methods, and learning models to align with the developmental stages of students, as outlined in the curriculum framework, in order to achieve Competency Standards (CP). As a result, students exhibited increased engagement and independence throughout the learning process.

(ii) Transformative Independent School in North Tapanuli District

Another case study by [Saragih and Marpaung, 2024](#) examined an independent school in North Tapanuli District, which achieved positive educational outcomes despite limited infrastructure and facilities. The school successfully applied the Merdeka Curriculum through flexible curriculum planning and increased teacher collaboration. Teachers observed improvements in student character formation, talent development, and classroom autonomy. This case reflects the school's strong commitment and adaptive capacity in overcoming implementation barriers.

These examples demonstrate that the application of core principles within the Merdeka Curriculum can effectively support the development of self-directed learning across different educational contexts. The success of implementation is closely tied to the proactive role of teachers in modifying instructional practices and the institutional willingness to invest in supportive learning environments. Rather than being limited by structural constraints, these schools illustrate how the curriculum can be adapted to foster meaningful student autonomy and character development aligned with Pancasila values

3.3. Independent Curriculum as the Architect of Student Learning Independence

The Merdeka Curriculum is inherently designed to foster self-directed learning among students. Rooted in the Merdeka Belajar philosophy, the curriculum marks a paradigm shift from traditional teacher-centered instruction to a student-centered approach. This transformation is operationalized through several key components :

(i) Curriculum Flexibility and Humanistic Foundations

The Merdeka Curriculum grants schools autonomy to develop operational curricula that reflect the unique characteristics and potential of their students, as well as contextual environmental conditions. This structural flexibility aligns with the principles of Humanistic Learning Theory Rogers & Maslow, which emphasize learner agency, self-actualization, and intrinsic motivation [\(Kumari, 2024\)](#). When students are given the freedom to explore their interests and talents, they are more likely to take ownership of their learning processes and act responsibly within them.

(ii) Pancasila Student Profile Projects (P5) and Differentiated Learning

A distinguishing feature of the Merdeka Curriculum is the implementation of the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5) alongside differentiated instructional strategies. These approaches are grounded in Constructivist Theory (Piaget & Vygotsky), which asserts that learners construct knowledge through direct, meaningful engagement with their environments [\(Syafila & A'yun, 2024\)](#). Through P5, students engage in planning, executing, and evaluating real-world projects individually and collaboratively thus developing skills in self-regulation, problem-solving, and teamwork. Differentiated instruction, moreover, ensures that students receive learning support aligned with their readiness levels and learning preferences. This fosters confidence and a sense of self-efficacy, consistent with the principles of Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura).

(iii) The Teacher as Facilitator and Learning Partner

Under the Merdeka Curriculum framework, the role of teachers evolves from content transmitters to facilitators, mentors, and motivators ([Maulidah, et al, 2024](#)). Rather than merely delivering material, teachers guide students in discovering solutions and navigating challenges. This shift is critical in cultivating self-directed learning, as teachers model autonomous learning behaviors and provide scaffolding appropriate to students' developmental levels. Over time, this enables students to gradually assume greater responsibility for their own learning trajectories.

Empirical support for these principles can be found in various case studies. At SMK Al-Asyari Bangkalan, for instance, ([Fuaida, et al, 2024](#)) report that teachers effectively adapted learning strategies, methods, and models to the developmental stages of their students, resulting in increased student engagement and independence. Similarly, research by ([Saragih and Marpaung, 2024](#)) in an independent school in North Tapanuli Regency demonstrated that, despite infrastructural limitations, the school's commitment and teachers' alignment with Merdeka Curriculum principles significantly promoted self-directed learning. These cases collectively illustrate that the student-centered orientation of the Merdeka Curriculum when implemented with fidelity can meaningfully foster learner autonomy and character development.

3.4. Learning Independence as the Foundation of Strengthening Pancasila Character

Self-directed learning, as cultivated through the Merdeka Curriculum, holds significant relevance for the development of Pancasila character ([Turasmu, et al, 2025](#)). The Pancasila Student Profile emphasizes independence as one of its core dimensions manifested through self-awareness, contextual sensitivity, and the ability to engage in self-regulation. These competencies are foundational for internalizing and practicing the values enshrined in Pancasila.

(i) Independent Decision-Making

Students who engage in self-directed learning are accustomed to seeking information, evaluating diverse perspectives, and making decisions based on critical reasoning rather than passively accepting instructions. This capacity is aligned with the fourth principle of Pancasila democracy guided by the inner wisdom of deliberation and representation which requires individuals to think reflectively, act responsibly, and engage constructively in democratic processes.

(ii) Resilience and Adaptability

The process of autonomous learning often involves confronting academic challenges and learning from failure. Self-directed learners tend to exhibit resilience, adaptability, and the capacity for reflection qualities essential for navigating the complexities of social life. These traits support the realization of Pancasila's third principle: the unity of Indonesia. In this context, learners develop the ability to overcome differences, work through conflict, and foster national cohesion.

(iii) Cooperative Values and Global Awareness

While the Merdeka Curriculum emphasizes autonomy, it also fosters collaboration particularly through the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5). In collaborative learning environments, students are expected to manage their individual responsibilities while engaging with peers from diverse backgrounds and perspectives.

Such interactions cultivate mutual cooperation (gotong royong) and global cultural awareness, both of which are critical dimensions of Pancasila character in an increasingly interconnected world.

An effective learning process is essential in achieving the broader goals of national education namely, the formation of individuals who possess the knowledge, skills, and character aligned with the nation's core values (Disma, et al, 2023). Within this framework, student engagement both physical and cognitive is indispensable. It encompasses active thinking, reflection, and meaningful participation in learning activities.

In the context of the Merdeka Curriculum, the emphasis lies in nurturing self-directed learning while simultaneously strengthening Pancasila character. This is achieved through instruction that leverages students' interests and talents, offers differentiated learning experiences, and fosters the development of critical thinking and problem-solving abilities. The following insights were gathered through purposive sampling interviews with senior high school teachers who have implemented Merdeka Curriculum practices. Their experiences offer a grounded understanding of how this curriculum translates into classroom strategies that promote learner autonomy and character formation.

Table. 1 Indicator Questions for General Perception of The Independent Curriculum

Respondent	Interview Data	Keyword Elements
Q1	"I want to learn more about the novelty of the curriculum"	Help, Facilitate, show, deep
Q2	"This Merdeka curriculum makes it easier for me to understand the learning material"	learning, curriculum novelty
Q3	"The Merdeka curriculum is very interesting and provokes students' enthusiasm for learning, curiosity and experience in understanding the material is very felt"	
Q4	"I think this Merdeka curriculum can help make learning activities more interesting"	
Q5	"In this curriculum there is a strengthening of the profile of Pancasila students in which Pancasila teaching can be developed and developed"	

Source: Research 2025

Based on the interview data presented in Table 1, which outlines general perceptions of the Merdeka Curriculum, respondents were asked to share their experiences in implementing the curriculum in classroom instruction. One of the guiding questions was: "What has been your experience in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in your teaching?" The majority of respondents perceived the Merdeka Curriculum as offering a refreshing and meaningful shift from traditional learning approaches. They highlighted its contribution to fostering student self-awareness and engagement. Rather than positioning learners as passive recipients of information, the curriculum encourages them to actively participate in the learning process. This approach aligns with the student-centered paradigm that underpins the Merdeka Curriculum philosophy.

Furthermore, several respondents emphasized that the curriculum motivates both teachers and students to engage more deeply with the learning material. Teachers observed increased enthusiasm among students when given the autonomy to explore topics based on their interests and learning styles. This reflects the curriculum's emphasis on differentiated

learning and formative assessment as tools to support student growth. Importantly, the Merdeka Curriculum was also seen as a promising model for school-level curriculum development. Its flexibility allows for contextual adaptation, enabling educators to design instruction that reflects students' needs, potential, and the realities of their local learning environments. These findings suggest that the Merdeka Curriculum not only enriches the instructional process but also plays a critical role in promoting self-directed learning, one of the essential competencies for 21st-century education.

Statement:
"I have sufficient resources (books, media, training) to implement the Merdeka Curriculum effectively."

Respondents: 8

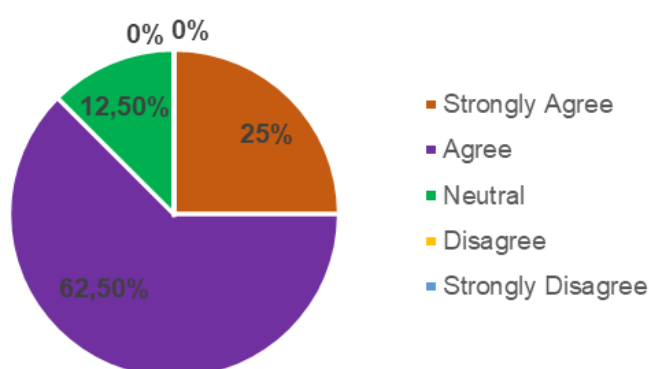


Figure 1. Questionnaire Results Regarding the Effectiveness of the Independent Curriculum

Source: Research 2025

Analysis of the response data reveals that 87.5% of participants those who selected Agree and Strongly Agree perceive the Merdeka Curriculum as being supported by sufficient resources, enabling its effective implementation. This majority response suggests a generally favorable reception of the curriculum and affirms its perceived potential to enhance the quality of instruction. These findings are consistent with previous qualitative feedback from respondents, who highlighted improved comprehension of learning materials, heightened enthusiasm for participation, and increased student engagement as notable outcomes of the curriculum.

However, the 12.5% of respondents who indicated a neutral stance imply that there remain areas for refinement. This minority perspective underscores the importance of ongoing evaluation, particularly in ensuring equitable access to resources and support across diverse school settings. Strengthening implementation strategies and addressing contextual disparities may further enhance the Merdeka Curriculum's impact and ensure that its benefits are experienced more uniformly by both educators and students.

Statement:
"I feel I have sufficient flexibility in developing instructional materials according to student needs."

Respondents: 10

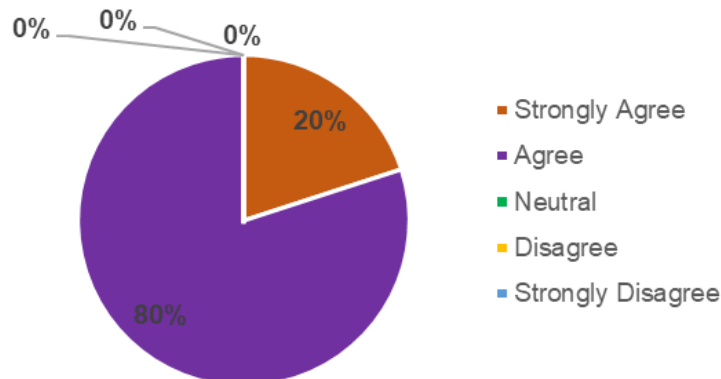


Figure 2. Questionnaire Results Regarding Flexibility in Developing Teaching Tools According to Student Needs
Source: Research 2025

These data indicate that 100% of respondents—comprising those who selected Agree and Strongly Agree perceive the Merdeka Curriculum as providing meaningful flexibility in developing instructional materials tailored to student needs. This unanimous positive response suggests that the curriculum effectively empowers both teachers and educational institutions to innovate and adapt instructional strategies to align with learners' characteristics and contextual conditions.

Such a high level of agreement reinforces the view that curricular flexibility is one of the core strengths of the Merdeka Curriculum. It allows for more relevant, responsive, and effective learning experiences. Moreover, the finding reflects a strong level of institutional trust in the professionalism and pedagogical judgment of teachers to design and implement instructional practices that meet diverse student needs.

Statement:
"The Merdeka Curriculum fosters student autonomy by promoting active engagement in the independent exploration of information and learning materials."

Respondents: 10

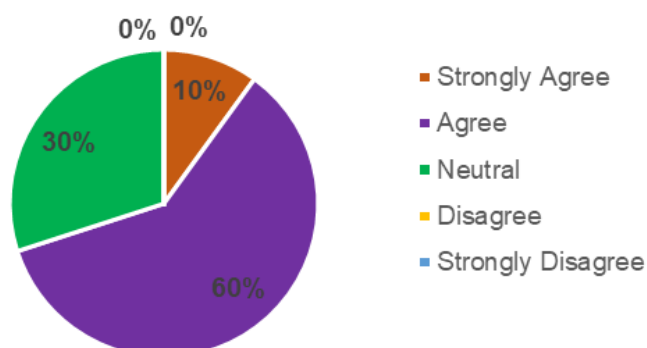


Figure 3. The Results of The Independent Curriculum Questionnaire Encourage Student Learning Independence
Source: Research 2025

Overall, 70% of respondents—those who selected Agree or Strongly Agree expressed the view that the Merdeka Curriculum effectively promotes student autonomy in learning. This represents a strong indication that the curriculum's intended goal of fostering self-directed learning is being realized by a majority of participants. However, the remaining 30% of respondents who indicated a neutral stance highlight an important area for reflection. These responses suggest that the development of student autonomy may be unevenly implemented or that certain educational environments still require more robust and consistent strategies to actualize this aspect of the curriculum.

This finding points to the need for continued efforts in professional development, targeted pedagogical support, and context-specific implementation guidance to ensure that the curriculum's potential for cultivating independent learners is maximized across diverse school settings. Given this variability, further research is warranted to explore the specific factors that contribute to or hinder the successful integration of self-directed learning principles within the Merdeka Curriculum framework.

Statement:
"Project learning in Merdeka Curriculum enhances students' ability to learn independently."

Respondents: 10

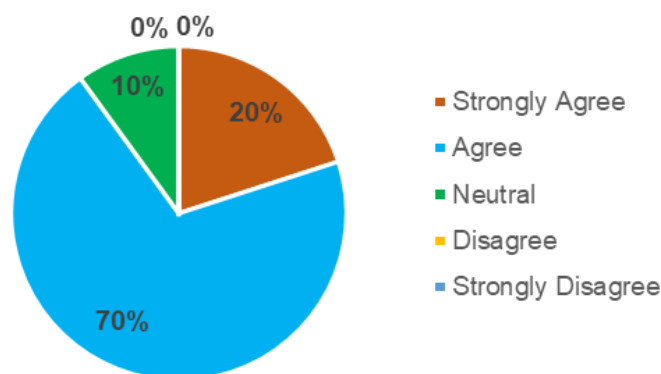


Figure 4. Projects in The Independent Curriculum Improve Students' Ability to Learn Independently

Source: Research 2025

Overall, 70% of respondents expressed a positive perception that the project-based components of the Merdeka Curriculum contribute to the enhancement of students' self-directed learning. This suggests that the curriculum's emphasis on experiential, project-oriented strategies holds considerable promise in promoting learner autonomy. However, the combined 30% of respondents who selected Neutral or similar intermediate responses warrants further attention. These findings imply that the perceived effectiveness of the curriculum's project-based learning features in fostering student independence may not be uniformly experienced across educational contexts.

Several factors may account for this variation, including inconsistencies in project implementation, varying levels of teacher facilitation, or differences in students' readiness to engage with autonomous learning approaches. These challenges highlight the need for ongoing professional development, clearer implementation guidelines, and supportive instructional frameworks. While the overall direction is encouraging, systematic evaluation and targeted support remain essential to ensure that the benefits of project-based learning

within the Merdeka Curriculum are consistently realized across diverse learner groups and institutional settings.

Statement:
 "The project to strengthen the profile of Pancasila students (P5) to form the character of Pancasila students."

Respdents: 10

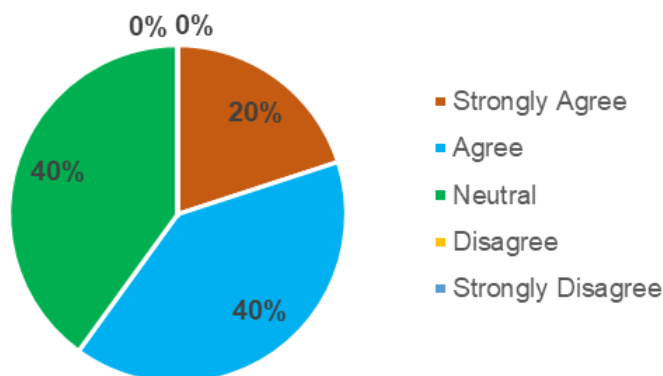


Figure 5. The Project to Strengthen the Profile of Pancasila Students (P5) to Form the Character of Pancasila Students
 Source: Research 2025

The questionnaire results indicate that 60% of respondents those who selected Agree or Strongly Agree perceive the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5) as effective in supporting character education aligned with Pancasila values. This finding suggests that P5, as a core component of the Merdeka Curriculum, is beginning to yield positive outcomes in fostering student character development.

However, the remaining 40% of respondents reported a neutral stance, which warrants further consideration. This substantial proportion may indicate ongoing challenges in the implementation of P5, particularly in achieving consistent and comprehensive character formation across educational settings. Contributing factors may include limited teacher understanding of the P5 framework, insufficient resources, variability in project-based instructional methods, or the extended time required for character-based outcomes to become observable.

These findings highlight the importance of ongoing evaluation and strategic reinforcement of P5 implementation. While the program demonstrates promising results among a portion of respondents, broader success will require targeted professional development, equitable resource allocation, and more structured guidance to ensure that the program effectively reaches all student populations and strengthens Pancasila-based character education in a sustainable and measurable manner.

Table. 2 Indicator Questions The topic of the biggest challenge in building learning independence in the independent curriculum

Respondent	Interview Data	Keyword Elements
Q1	"Time constraints because in a short time should encourage students to be able to be independent"	Encourage student
Q2	"Some students may find it difficult to stay motivated without a strict structure, especially if they are not yet familiar with this level of freedom"	independence, set learning goals, manage
Q3	"The challenge is how teachers can cultivate this internal motivation, helping students set learning goals and manage their time effectively" Encourage independent students, set learning goals, manage effective time	time effectively
Q4	"The time to design a learning plan that builds student learning independence is still limited, because for me an effective learning plan needs intensive mentoring"	
Q5	"Awakens the will to continue learning."	

Source: Research 2025

Based on interview and questionnaire data concerning the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in Indonesia, findings reflect a generally positive perception accompanied by high expectations from stakeholders, although several challenges remain in practice. The responses collected provide valuable insights into how the curriculum is perceived in terms of effectiveness and flexibility.

Quantitative data indicate that 87.5% of respondents (Agree and Strongly Agree) consider the Merdeka Curriculum effective in enhancing students' comprehension of learning materials and in increasing engagement during learning activities. This suggests that the curriculum has succeeded in fostering a more dynamic and contextually relevant classroom environment, one that stimulates curiosity and encourages deeper student involvement. Moreover, 100% of respondents (80% Agree, 20% Strongly Agree) acknowledged the flexibility afforded to teachers in designing instructional materials tailored to students' needs. This serves as a strong indication that teacher autonomy and institutional freedom to adapt content are being realized in practice, allowing for a more personalized and responsive learning process.

Despite these favorable outcomes, a number of implementation challenges remain, particularly in cultivating student learning independence. While 70% of respondents agreed that the curriculum supports learner autonomy, the 30% who reported neutral responses (20% Neutral, 10% Very Neutral) suggest that this aspect has not been consistently achieved across all contexts. This neutral perception aligns with qualitative responses indicating that time constraints limit the ability to foster independence effectively within a short instructional period. Additionally, some students struggle to maintain motivation in the absence of structured guidance and may not yet be accustomed to the degree of freedom promoted by the curriculum. Teachers also reported difficulty in designing pedagogical plans that support autonomy, often due to insufficient time and the need for intensive mentoring. These findings underscore the critical need for sustained professional development, time management strategies, and structured scaffolding to support both students and teachers in achieving authentic self-directed learning.

The Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5), a central element of the Merdeka Curriculum's character-building mission, also reflects varied levels of impact. While 60% of respondents (40% Agree, 20% Strongly Agree) acknowledged its effectiveness in shaping student character in accordance with Pancasila values, the remaining 40% provided neutral responses. This indicates that the character outcomes associated with P5 may not yet be fully visible or equitably achieved. Contributing factors may include varying levels of teacher understanding, inconsistent implementation practices, and limited availability of supporting resources.

In summary, the Merdeka Curriculum demonstrates significant promise, particularly in enhancing instructional relevance and providing professional flexibility. However, efforts to foster self-directed learning and implement P5 consistently across institutions require further attention. Specific challenges related to time limitations, students' adaptation to autonomous learning structures, and variation in teacher preparedness must be addressed through ongoing evaluation and targeted intervention. Strengthening civic literacy through interactive, reflective learning methods may further improve engagement and support the curriculum's broader goal of nurturing students who are not only academically capable but also independent and grounded in Pancasila values. As noted by [\(Nurfaizah, et al, 2021\)](#), civic literacy activities can enhance student interest, promote active participation, and support the development of critical thinking within the classroom.

A closer examination of the Merdeka Curriculum (Independent Curriculum) reveals that it is designed to promote students' learning autonomy through a more flexible and student-centered approach. Nevertheless, its implementation in practice presents several critical challenges that require well-planned strategic responses. The following outlines key barriers along with potential solutions:

(i) Teacher Readiness and Professional Competence

Many educators remain accustomed to conventional, teacher-centered instructional methods. As such, transitioning to the Independent Curriculum necessitates targeted professional development and sufficient time for adaptation. In addition, limited proficiency in utilizing educational technology poses a barrier to effective implementation, particularly in integrating digital tools into lesson planning and classroom delivery.

(ii) Inadequate Infrastructure and Learning Facilities

Schools in remote or underserved areas often lack the basic infrastructure needed to support the Merdeka Curriculum. Constraints such as unreliable internet access, insufficient technological devices, and limited availability of instructional resources significantly impede the delivery of flexible and differentiated learning experiences as envisioned by the curriculum.

(iii) Resistance to Pedagogical Change

Resistance from both educators and parents is another notable challenge. This reluctance may stem from uncertainty or a lack of understanding about the curriculum's benefits, leading to hesitancy in adopting new methods. Clear communication, stakeholder engagement, and evidence-based demonstrations of the curriculum's positive impact are essential to overcoming this resistance.

(iv) Limited Resources and Funding

The implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum demands additional support in the form of quality learning materials, sustained teacher training, and administrative infrastructure. However, disparities in resource allocation across educational institutions

often hinder equitable access to such supports, thereby limiting the curriculum's reach and effectiveness.

3.5. Solutions to Overcome Challenges

(i) **Teacher Training and Professional Development**

To enhance teachers' competencies in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum, it is essential for both the government and educational institutions to provide continuous and comprehensive professional development programs. These programs should include training on curriculum design, student-centered pedagogy, and the integration of educational technology into classroom instruction.

(ii) **Improvement of School Infrastructure**

Investments in educational infrastructure are necessary to ensure equitable implementation of the curriculum. These include expanding internet access, increasing the availability of technological devices, and ensuring access to high-quality instructional materials. Infrastructure development is particularly critical in rural and underserved regions, where disparities in access remain a major barrier.

(iii) **Stakeholder Engagement and Public Communication**

Effective implementation also depends on clear communication of the goals and benefits of the Merdeka Curriculum to stakeholders, including teachers, students, parents, and local communities. Outreach efforts such as informational sessions, community forums, and targeted campaigns can reduce resistance to change and build broader support.

(iv) **Strategic Use of Educational Funding**

Optimizing the allocation of School Operational Assistance (BOS) and other available funding sources is vital to support implementation needs. Funds should be directed toward relevant areas such as the procurement of instructional materials, teacher training, and curriculum adaptation efforts. Clear guidelines and accountability mechanisms are needed to prevent misallocation and ensure efficient use of resources.

(v) **Collaboration and Mentoring Networks**

Developing collaborative networks among schools, local governments, and the broader education community can foster shared learning and peer support. Such networks enable the exchange of best practices, provide mentoring opportunities for teachers, and facilitate collective problem-solving to address implementation challenges more effectively.

Promoting student learning independence through the Merdeka Curriculum not only enhances academic competence and character development, but also contributes significantly to the cultivation of civic literacy. As one of the essential competencies in 21st-century education, civic literacy involves understanding one's role as a citizen, participating in public discourse, and making informed and responsible decisions. Strengthening civic literacy within the framework of the Independent Curriculum prepares students to engage more critically and constructively in democratic society.

(i) **Accessing and Analyzing Information**

Independent learners tend to be proactive in seeking and critically evaluating information from diverse sources, particularly concerning social and political issues. In the current era of widespread misinformation and disinformation, this competency is essential for cultivating citizens who think critically, resist manipulation, and can discern facts from

opinions. Such skills reflect the application of the fifth principle of Pancasila social justice for all within the context of digital literacy and information ethics.

(ii) Active and Responsible Participation

Learning autonomy also fosters initiative and a sense of responsibility. Students who develop independence in learning are more inclined to engage actively in extracurricular programs, community service, or classroom discussions related to civic issues. These forms of participation demonstrate an awareness of civic rights and duties and a personal commitment to contribute to the common good. This aligns closely with the civic education objectives of Pendidikan Pancasila dan Kewarganegaraan (PPKn).

(iii) Ethical Decision-Making

Independent learning often places students in situations where they must make informed choices. This process strengthens their capacity to consider multiple perspectives, anticipate consequences, and integrate ethical reasoning into their decision-making. It supports the development of citizens who possess integrity and are committed to the principles of justice and civilized humanity, as articulated in the second principle of Pancasila.

Overall, the findings of this literature-based analysis demonstrate that the Merdeka Curriculum, through its student-centered approach, has been effective in fostering learning autonomy. This form of independence extends beyond cognitive development and serves as a foundational pillar for shaping individuals with strong Pancasila-based character and high civic literacy. Such learners are better prepared to navigate the complexities of democratic society and global citizenship. By addressing the identified challenges and implementing appropriate strategies, the Merdeka Curriculum can be further optimized to support the development of independent learners who are ethically grounded, civically engaged, and intellectually capable of contributing meaningfully to the nation's future.

4. CONCLUSION

Drawing from the results of the literature-based analysis, it can be concluded that the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum plays a substantial role in fostering students' learning autonomy at the senior secondary education level. Designed with flexibility and a student-centered orientation, the curriculum integrates project-based learning and differentiated instruction, creating a conducive environment that encourages students to take initiative, plan, implement, and evaluate their own learning processes. This approach aligns with the core principles of Constructivist and Humanistic Learning Theories, which emphasize active engagement and the holistic development of learners' potential.

Furthermore, the cultivation of learning autonomy through the Merdeka Curriculum serves as a foundational element for strengthening Pancasila-based character formation and enhancing civic literacy. Independent learners tend to exhibit critical reasoning, adaptability, and personal responsibility traits that correspond to the competencies outlined in the Pancasila Student Profile. This independence also supports students in proactively engaging with social and political issues, fostering analytical thinking and participatory citizenship, which are indicative of advanced civic literacy.

Illustrative examples from schools such as SMK Al-Asyari Bangkalan and Sekolah Mandiri Ubah in North Tapanuli demonstrate the curriculum's practical potential when supported by committed educators and institutional alignment. While such examples offer preliminary

insights, the successful and sustainable implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum requires continuous professional development, contextual responsiveness, and targeted strategies to address ongoing and emerging challenges within diverse educational settings.

In conclusion, the Merdeka Curriculum should be viewed not merely as a technical revision of educational content, but as a transformative shift in Indonesia's educational philosophy. It aspires to cultivate a generation of students who are not only academically competent and independent learners, but who also embody Pancasila values and possess robust civic literacy preparing them to engage constructively with the complex sociopolitical landscape of the 21st century.

5. ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The author would like to express his deepest gratitude and appreciation to the teachers of SMAN 18 Bandung for their very valuable experience and also to the Pancasila and Citizenship Education Study Program, Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia.

6. AUTHORS' NOTE

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest related to the publication of this article. The author emphasizes that the data and content of the article are free from plagiarism.

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