

# Comparison Of The Similarities And Differences Between The KTSP (2006) Curriculum, The 2013 Curriculum, The Merdeka Curriculum, And The 2025 Curriculum

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KEYWORDS	ABSTRACT
<p><b>Keywords:</b> Comparison; Curriculum Comparison; Curriculum Changes; Differences and Curriculum Changes; Educational Policy and Development.</p> <p><b>Conflict of Interest Statement:</b> The author(s) declares that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.</p> <p>Copyright © 2026 EDU. All rights reserved.</p>	<p>This study aims to analyze the similarities and differences among the 2006 School-Based Curriculum (KTSP), the 2013 Curriculum, the Merdeka Curriculum, and the 2025 Curriculum (Deep Learning) by examining their characteristics, objectives, learning competencies, assessment systems, and the roles of teachers and students. This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach using a literature review method. Data were collected from books, scientific journal articles, government regulations, and other relevant academic sources. The collected data were analyzed through comparative content analysis to identify the development, continuity, and transformation of curriculum policies in Indonesia. The findings indicate that each curriculum reflects different educational priorities and approaches. The KTSP (2006) emphasizes school autonomy in curriculum development, while the 2013 Curriculum focuses on character education and scientific learning. The Merdeka Curriculum provides greater flexibility through differentiated learning and competency-based education. Meanwhile, the 2025 Curriculum (Deep Learning) strengthens meaningful learning experiences by integrating critical thinking, problem-solving, collaboration, digital literacy, and technology-assisted instruction. These curriculum transformations demonstrate Indonesia's continuous efforts to improve educational quality in response to changing societal and technological demands. The findings provide valuable insights for policymakers, educators, and curriculum developers in designing more adaptive and sustainable curriculum policies. The study also highlights the importance of comprehensive teacher training and effective policy dissemination to ensure successful curriculum implementation.</p>

## Introduction

Education constitutes one of the foundational pillars of national development. As a nation committed to advancing its human capital, Indonesia has enshrined education as a strategic priority explicitly stated in its constitution. The Preamble of the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia affirms that one of the primary objectives of the Indonesian government is to educate the nation (Republic of Indonesia, 1945). This mandate is further reinforced in Article 31 paragraph (3), which requires the government to establish and implement a national education system that promotes faith, piety, and noble character (Republic of Indonesia, 1945). This constitutional mandate serves as the normative foundation for all educational policies in Indonesia, including curriculum development, which functions as the primary instrument in the organization of formal education.

At the operational level, Indonesia's national education system is further governed by Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System (Sistem Pendidikan Nasional—Sisdiknas). This law defines education as a conscious and deliberate effort to create a learning environment and process whereby learners actively develop their potential (Republic of Indonesia, 2003). This formulation underscores that education is not merely the transfer of knowledge but a comprehensive transformative process encompassing the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor dimensions of learners. In practice, Indonesia's national education system has continuously evolved in response to advances in science and technology, changing societal needs, and global challenges. One of the most

significant manifestations of these developments is curriculum reform, which serves as the primary guideline for organizing teaching and learning activities in schools.

Curriculum cannot be separated from the social, cultural, and political context of a nation. Tyler (1949) posited that curriculum must address four fundamental questions: what educational purposes should the school seek to attain, what educational experiences can be provided to attain these purposes, how these educational experiences can be effectively organized, and how we can determine whether these purposes are being attained. Beauchamp (1975) defined curriculum as a written document that serves as a plan for the education of pupils during their enrollment in a given school. In the Indonesian context, Mulyasa (2013) describes curriculum as a set of plans and arrangements concerning the goals, content, and learning materials as well as the methods used as guidelines for the implementation of learning activities to achieve specific educational objectives. These theoretical foundations collectively underscore the central role of curriculum as the primary vehicle through which educational goals are articulated, operationalized, and evaluated.

Curriculum reform has become an integral component of Indonesia's educational policy. Since the implementation of the 2006 School-Based Curriculum (Kurikulum Tingkat Satuan Pendidikan—KTSP), the government has introduced several curriculum reforms, including the 2013 Curriculum, the Merdeka Curriculum, and, more recently, the 2025 Curriculum, which emphasizes the Deep Learning approach (Kemendikbudristek, 2022; BSKAP, 2024). Each curriculum reflects distinct educational priorities, learning orientations, and instructional strategies designed to address the demands of its respective period. According to Soetopo and Soemanto (1993), curriculum change is influenced by multiple factors, including the rapid advancement of science and technology, social transformation, political dynamics, and national development priorities. Consequently, curriculum reform should be understood not merely as an administrative adjustment but as a strategic effort to enhance educational quality and develop graduates equipped with the competencies, character, and skills required in the twenty-first century.

In a global perspective, Indonesia's curriculum reforms are consistent with broader international trends in education. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), through its Education 2030 framework, emphasizes the importance of curricula that equip learners with twenty-first-century competencies, including critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication—widely known as the 4C competencies (OECD, 2018). Similarly, UNESCO (2017), through its Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) framework, encourages curriculum transformation that extends beyond academic knowledge to encompass character formation and global citizenship. These international orientations have significantly influenced Indonesia's curriculum policy direction, particularly in response to the results of the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), which have consistently highlighted the need for sustained improvements in Indonesian students' literacy and numeracy competencies (OECD, 2023).

Previous studies have extensively examined the implementation of the 2013 Curriculum and the Merdeka Curriculum, particularly in terms of instructional practices, assessment systems, and teacher readiness. Most findings suggest that both curricula contribute positively to improving students' competencies while simultaneously presenting implementation challenges, such as teachers' preparedness, the availability of educational resources, and varying levels of understanding regarding curriculum policies (Sukmadinata, 2019). For instance, Sari and Wijayanti (2022) found that teachers in remote areas faced considerably greater obstacles in implementing the 2013 Curriculum compared to their urban counterparts, largely due to limited access to training and supporting facilities. Kurniawan (2023) similarly noted that while the Merdeka Curriculum offers greater institutional flexibility, it simultaneously demands a higher level of managerial capacity from schools to optimize its implementation. Nevertheless, studies providing a comprehensive comparison of the KTSP (2006), the 2013 Curriculum, the Merdeka Curriculum, and the emerging 2025 Curriculum remain limited. Existing research generally focuses on comparisons between only two curricula, leaving the broader trajectory of curriculum development in Indonesia insufficiently explored.

To address this research gap, the present study offers a comparative analysis of the four major curricula implemented in Indonesia. The analysis focuses on their characteristics, educational objectives, learning competencies, assessment systems, and the evolving roles of teachers and students. Through this approach, the study seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of the evolution of Indonesia's curriculum policies and their implications for educational practice.

Based on the foregoing discussion, this study addresses the following research questions: (1) How have the KTSP (2006), the 2013 Curriculum, the Merdeka Curriculum, and the 2025 Curriculum (Deep Learning) evolved, and what are their similarities and differences within Indonesia's national education system? (2) What are the implications of these curriculum reforms for teaching and learning practices,

teachers' professional roles, and students' competency development? This study contributes to the literature by providing a comprehensive mapping of curriculum development in Indonesia while offering valuable insights for policymakers, educational practitioners, and researchers in designing more adaptive, sustainable, and future-oriented curriculum policies.

### **Research Design and Methodology**

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach as its primary research methodology. Qualitative research, as defined by Creswell (2014), is an inquiry process of understanding that explores social or human problems, in which the researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyzes words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting. In the context of this study, the descriptive qualitative approach is utilized to describe and explain phenomena related to curriculum reform in Indonesia as they naturally occur, without manipulation or artificial control of the research variables (Sugiyono, 2019). This approach is considered most appropriate given the complex and contextual nature of curriculum development, which requires in-depth interpretation rather than mere numerical measurement. In addition to the descriptive qualitative approach, this study incorporates a literature study (*studi kepustakaan*) as a complementary data collection strategy. According to Zed (2008), library research is a series of activities related to the methods of collecting library data, reading, and processing research materials. The literature study in this study involves the systematic collection and analysis of various written sources, including academic books, peer-reviewed journal articles, government policy documents, official curriculum frameworks, and other materials directly relevant to the research topic, with the primary purpose of constructing a solid theoretical foundation and identifying existing research gaps (Darmalaksana, 2020).

This study also employs an interview method as a primary instrument for gathering empirical data from the field. According to Sugiyono (2019), an interview is a data collection technique in which the researcher conducts a direct dialogue with the informant to obtain information relevant to the research problem. The interview was conducted using a structured interview sheet designed to elicit detailed responses regarding the respondent's lived experiences with curriculum changes across different periods. The respondent selected for this study is an elementary school teacher who has served for an extended period and has directly experienced multiple curriculum transitions in their teaching practice. The selection of this respondent reflects the principle of purposive sampling, in which informants are chosen based on specific criteria relevant to the research objectives rather than random selection (Creswell, 2014). This teacher's long professional experience and first-hand exposure to successive curriculum reforms from the KTSP (2006) through to the most recent curriculum developments render them a highly credible source of practical insight, offering a ground-level understanding of how each curriculum was received, interpreted, and implemented within the actual classroom context. This study further employs a documentation method, encompassing official curriculum documents, government regulations, school-level implementation plans, and other official records that provide direct evidence of curriculum content and policy directives across the four curriculum periods under examination (Sugiyono, 2019).

The data collected through these three methods—literature study, interviews, and documentation were analyzed using thematic analysis, a method that involves identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns or themes within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The analysis process followed several sequential stages: data reduction, in which irrelevant information was filtered out; data display, in which the organized data were presented in a structured and interpretable form; and conclusion drawing, in which meaningful interpretations were formulated based on the patterns identified across all data sources (Miles et al., 2014). To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, the study applied triangulation specifically source triangulation by cross-checking and comparing data obtained from the literature, interviews, and documentation to arrive at consistent and well-grounded conclusions (Sugiyono, 2019). Through this integrated methodological approach, the author anticipates that the data gathered will serve as a valuable empirical reference and an important basis for future development in curriculum design, particularly in understanding the practical challenges and opportunities associated with each curriculum reform in Indonesia.

## Findings and Discussion

### A. Definition and Concept Of Curriculum

A curriculum is a set of plans and arrangements regarding the objectives, content of subject matter, and methods used as a guideline for implementation to achieve learning activities for specific educational purposes (Mulyasa, 2013). In a broader sense, curriculum encompasses not only the formal content of what is taught in schools but also the underlying values, competencies, and experiences that educational institutions seek to cultivate in their learners. Tyler (1949) asserts that a well-designed curriculum must clearly define its educational purposes, identify the learning experiences necessary to achieve those purposes, organize those experiences effectively, and establish mechanisms for evaluating whether the intended outcomes have been attained. Similarly, Beauchamp (1975) emphasizes that curriculum serves as a foundational document that guides the entire educational process, ensuring that teaching and learning activities are systematically directed toward meaningful and measurable goals. In the Indonesian context, the term curriculum carries significant legal and institutional weight, as it is formally defined through national legislation and serves as the binding framework for all educational activities conducted at every level of schooling (Republic of Indonesia, 2003). It can therefore be said that a curriculum is not merely a collection of subject matter outlines, but rather a comprehensive and purposeful series of plans, arrangements of objectives, instructional content, and teaching methods that collectively serve as a guide for the implementation of instructional activities in pursuit of broader national educational goals

#### a. Curriculum Change

A curriculum cannot remain static but must become increasingly dynamic, as it is directly related to the changes and progress occurring in social, national, and civic life, as well as keeping pace with global developments such as advances in science, technology, education, arts, and culture (Soetopo & Soemanto, 1993). Curriculum change is, in essence, a natural and necessary response to the evolving demands of society and the world at large. Fullan (2016) argues that educational change is not a single event but a complex process that unfolds over time, requiring sustained commitment from all stakeholders, including policymakers, school administrators, teachers, and the broader community. When a curriculum fails to adapt to new realities, it risks becoming irrelevant and unable to prepare learners for the challenges they will inevitably face in their personal, professional, and civic lives. In the Indonesian context, curriculum change has been a recurring feature of the national education landscape, reflecting the government's ongoing efforts to align educational goals with the nation's development agenda and the demands of an increasingly interconnected global environment (Kemendikbudristek, 2022). Each wave of curriculum reform—from the KTSP (2006) to the 2013 Curriculum, the Merdeka Curriculum, and the forthcoming 2025 Curriculum—represents a deliberate attempt to reorient teaching and learning in ways that are more responsive, more competency-based, and more attuned to the needs of twenty-first-century learners. Curriculum change, therefore, should be understood not as a disruption but as a constructive and forward-looking process that reflects a society's aspirations for the kind of education it wants to provide for its future generations (Sukmadinata, 2019).

#### b. Factors Influencing Curriculum Change

Curriculum change does not occur in a vacuum; rather, it is shaped by a complex interplay of internal and external forces that collectively create the conditions under which reform becomes both necessary and inevitable. As explained above, the main factors influencing curriculum change are as follows.

First, the independence and sovereignty of a nation. The freedom of a nation from all forms and types of colonization creates both the opportunity and the responsibility to develop an educational system that truly reflects its own values, identity, and aspirations (Soetopo & Soemanto, 1993). For Indonesia, national independence in 1945 marked the beginning of a long journey toward constructing an indigenous educational philosophy rooted in the principles of Pancasila and the ideals enshrined in the 1945 Constitution. As the nation has matured politically, socially, and culturally, the need to continuously refine the curriculum to better reflect evolving national priorities has become increasingly apparent. Curriculum reform, in this sense, is an

expression of national self-determination—an affirmation of the nation's right and responsibility to define what and how its citizens should learn (Republic of Indonesia, 1945).

Second, the rapid and accelerating development of science and technology. The significantly rapid development of science and technology each year demands that Indonesian citizens become more familiar with advancements in information technology (IT), both in terms of how to operate them and their practical value in everyday life and the workforce (OECD, 2018). In the era of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, characterized by artificial intelligence, big data, automation, and digital connectivity, the knowledge and skills required of graduates have undergone a fundamental transformation. A curriculum that was designed for a pre-digital era is inherently ill-equipped to prepare learners for a world in which technological literacy is no longer optional but essential. This reality necessitates that curriculum developers continuously reassess and update the content, methods, and competency frameworks embedded within the national curriculum to ensure that graduates are not only technologically literate but also capable of adapting to technologies that have yet to be invented (OECD, 2023).

Third, the increasingly rapid population growth and rising public awareness of education. Indonesia's growing population brings with it a corresponding increase in the demand for quality education, as more families become aware of the critical role that schooling plays in securing better life outcomes for their children (Sukmadinata, 2019). This demographic pressure creates significant challenges for curriculum planners, who must design educational frameworks capable of serving an increasingly diverse student population with varying needs, backgrounds, and learning capacities. At the same time, rising public awareness of educational quality has elevated societal expectations, compelling policymakers to develop curricula that are not only academically rigorous but also inclusive, equitable, and responsive to the diverse realities of Indonesian society. The growing emphasis on educational access and quality in national development planning further underscores the importance of curriculum reform as a tool for achieving broader social and economic objectives (UNESCO, 2017).

#### **B. History of Curriculum Development in Indonesia**

History notes that the curricula ever practiced in Indonesia range from the 1947 curriculum through the 2013 curriculum. Currently, the 2013 curriculum has been restructured into the Merdeka (Independent) Curriculum, which has even been upgraded with a deep learning method. Through this curriculum and method, students are expected to be more dynamic in receiving material delivered by their teachers, and students are required to be more active in seeking out and carrying out their own learning. Since the founding of the Republic of Indonesia, the implemented curriculum has undergone several changes based on three curriculum pillars: curriculum planning, goal-oriented curriculum, and competency-oriented curriculum.

##### **1. The 2006 Curriculum (KTSP)**

The year 2006 marked a pivotal moment in the history of Indonesian curriculum development, as it introduced the Kurikulum Tingkat Satuan Pendidikan (KTSP), or School-Based Curriculum, alongside the continued trial implementation of the Competency-Based Curriculum (Kurikulum Berbasis Kompetensi KBK) that had been piloted since 2004. The KTSP was formally established by the National Education Standards Board (Badan Standar Nasional Pendidikan BSNP) and subsequently ratified by the Minister of National Education through Ministerial Decree Numbers 22, 23, and 24 of 2006, which respectively governed content standards, graduate competency standards, and the implementation guidelines for the curriculum (Rahman & Prasetyo, 2023). These three decrees collectively provided the legal and institutional framework within which schools across Indonesia were expected to develop and implement their own localized curricula. The compilation of KTSP was carried out by educators at the school level including teachers, school principals, and school committees while continuing to emphasize the core competencies established by the BSNP as the national benchmark for educational quality and achievement.

The School-Based Curriculum (KTSP) is fundamentally a curriculum created and implemented by each individual educational unit, meaning that every school is granted the authority and responsibility to develop its own curriculum in accordance with the

characteristics, needs, and potential of its local community and student population (Rahman & Prasetyo, 2023). This principle of school-level autonomy represents a significant departure from the centralized curriculum models that had previously dominated Indonesian education, in which the central government determined virtually all aspects of curriculum content and delivery. Government Regulation Number 19 of 2005, Article 1 Paragraph 15, formally defines KTSP as an operational curriculum that is created and implemented by the educational unit itself, affirming that each school possesses the agency to translate national competency standards into locally relevant and contextually appropriate learning programs (Rahman & Prasetyo, 2023). This regulatory foundation gave schools the legal authority to make meaningful decisions about how the curriculum would be organized, sequenced, and delivered within their specific institutional contexts.

KTSP represents a form of modern and progressive thinking in curriculum development, reflecting a broader global trend toward decentralization in education governance and the empowerment of local educational institutions (Nisa, 2021). By entrusting autonomy to educational institutions, the KTSP framework acknowledges that schools are best positioned to understand and respond to the unique needs, cultural backgrounds, and aspirations of their respective student communities. This decentralized approach promotes collaborative involvement among all school stakeholders—including teachers, school leaders, parents, and local government representatives—in the process of curriculum planning, development, and evaluation. Rather than passively receiving a curriculum handed down from the central government, schools under the KTSP framework are active participants in shaping the educational experiences of their students (Sukmadinata, 2019).

In practical terms, the KTSP framework streamlined teaching techniques by allowing schools to determine the most appropriate instructional strategies, learning materials, and assessment methods for their students, within the boundaries set by the national content and competency standards (Nisa, 2021). Teachers under KTSP were given considerably greater professional freedom compared to previous curriculum models, enabling them to adapt lesson plans, select teaching resources, and design assessments in ways that were more closely aligned with the actual conditions and capacities of their classrooms. This flexibility was intended to make the curriculum more responsive, relevant, and effective in diverse educational settings across Indonesia's vast and varied archipelago.

However, despite its progressive intent, the implementation of KTSP was not without challenges. Many schools—particularly those in rural, remote, or under-resourced areas struggled to exercise meaningful curriculum autonomy due to limited teacher capacity, insufficient access to professional development opportunities, and a lack of institutional support for curriculum development processes (Sukmadinata, 2019). The assumption that all schools possessed the human and material resources necessary to develop high-quality, locally designed curricula proved overly optimistic in many contexts, resulting in significant disparities in curriculum quality across regions. These implementation gaps ultimately contributed to the impetus for the subsequent transition to the 2013 Curriculum, which sought to introduce greater standardization while retaining some of the learner-centered principles that had been central to the KTSP philosophy (Mulyasa, 2013).

Nonetheless, the legacy of KTSP in Indonesian education remains significant. It laid the conceptual and institutional groundwork for a more decentralized, school-empowered approach to curriculum development, and many of its core principles including the emphasis on competency-based learning, local relevance, and stakeholder participation have continued to inform subsequent curriculum reforms, including the Merdeka Curriculum and the emerging 2025 Curriculum (Kemendikbudristek, 2022)

## 2. The 2013 Curriculum

The 2013 Curriculum is a development of its predecessor, the KTSP curriculum. Its purpose was to address the shortcomings of the previous curriculum, particularly in terms of the uneven quality of curriculum implementation across schools and the insufficient preparation of students for the demands of the twenty-first century (Mulyasa, 2013). The

2013 Curriculum was designed to improve students' attitudes, knowledge, and skills. Rather than treating these three domains as separate areas of learning, the 2013 Curriculum envisions them as deeply interconnected dimensions of human development that must be cultivated simultaneously through carefully designed learning experiences (Nainggolan et al., 2022). Discussing the 2013 Curriculum cannot be separated from its key outlines, including:

- Demanding greater knowledge and capability from teachers. Teachers under the 2013 Curriculum are repositioned from mere content deliverers to professional learning facilitators who must possess not only deep subject matter expertise but also a strong command of pedagogical strategies, assessment literacy, and the capacity to respond flexibly to the diverse needs of their students. This elevated professional standard necessitates ongoing teacher training, reflective practice, and a genuine commitment to lifelong professional development (Mulyasa, 2013).
- Placing greater pressure on students to be more responsible toward their environment and to develop critical, interpersonal, and intrapersonal skills. Students are no longer positioned as passive recipients of information but as active agents in their own learning. Critical thinking skills enable students to analyze complex problems and construct reasoned arguments, while interpersonal skills such as communication, teamwork, and empathy prepare them for effective participation in diverse social and professional environments. Intrapersonal skills, including self-discipline and emotional regulation, further equip students to navigate challenges with resilience and confidence (OECD, 2018).
- Serving as a means to cultivate a productive, inventive, and efficient generation. By emphasizing creativity, innovation, and the practical application of knowledge, the curriculum aims to produce graduates who are not merely academically proficient but genuinely capable of generating new ideas, solving real-world problems, and adapting effectively to rapidly changing social, technological, and economic conditions (Sukmadinata, 2019).
- One of the main changes from the 2006 to the 2013 Curriculum was a shift in **mindset**. The 2013 Curriculum adopted a Scientific Approach (*Pendekatan Saintifik*), encouraging students to observe, question, reason, experiment, and build networks—structured around five key learning activities collectively known as the **5M approach** (*mengamati, menanya, menalar, mencoba, mengomunikasikan*). This inquiry-based framework encourages students to engage actively with knowledge through structured exploration and discovery, rather than passively receiving information from their teachers (Nainggolan et al., 2022). Another change was that subject matter became deeper and broader, fully entrusted to teachers to meet students' needs, so that students are guided to apply the knowledge they are taught rather than merely memorizing or understanding it cognitively. The learning process also changed in terms of adjusting workloads so as not to burden students, recognizing that sustainable and effective learning requires a balanced and manageable academic environment. The 2013 Curriculum was designed to cover the domains of attitudes (*sikap*), knowledge (*pengetahuan*), and skills (*keterampilan*) through learning outcome assessments using **authentic assessment** (*penilaian autentik*)—a multi-dimensional evaluation approach that captures the full range of students' competencies through varied instruments such as portfolios, project tasks, performance assessments, and observational rubrics, rather than relying solely on written examinations (Nainggolan et al., 2022).

It should be noted that during the Covid-19 pandemic, some educational units implemented a curriculum under special conditions (emergency curriculum) that prioritized the simplification of content from the previous 2013 Curriculum, adapted to the immediate constraints of remote and hybrid learning environments. The emergency curriculum was characterized by a deliberate reduction in the breadth and volume of learning material, retaining only the most essential and foundational competencies that students were required to master within a given academic period (Anggraena et al., 2022). Based on a study conducted by Anggraena et al. (2022), students using the emergency curriculum achieved better learning outcomes than those using the full 2013 Curriculum. This means the emergency curriculum, which prioritized simplicity of content making it more concise, dense, and substantive allowed students to master the material more quickly. This finding carries significant implications for curriculum design, as it provided important empirical evidence that informed the subsequent development of the Merdeka Curriculum, which similarly emphasizes the prioritization of essential competencies and the elimination of excessive content burden as core principles of its design philosophy (Kemendikbudristek, 2022).

### 3. The Merdeka Curriculum

This curriculum was ratified by the Minister of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology. It offers various types of intracurricular learning to maximize the spread of education across Indonesia (Inayati, 2022). Furthermore, the diverse intracurricular learning of the Merdeka Curriculum gives students sufficient time to understand concepts and strengthen their skills. Teachers may choose from a variety of teaching methods so that learning can be tailored to students' learning needs and interests (Khoirurrijal et al., 2022). The Merdeka Curriculum gives schools and teachers greater freedom to develop curricula suited to local needs. However, the success of its implementation is influenced by the challenge of improving teachers' capabilities and the availability of resources (Nisa, 2021).

The Merdeka Curriculum is a curriculum developed to provide meaningful and effective learning experiences that nurture and develop the creativity, feelings, physicality, and intentions of students as lifelong learners with a Pancasila character. In other words, the Merdeka Curriculum refers to the logic of national education policy. The government has therefore formulated the Pancasila Student Profile as an ideal picture of Indonesian learners in response to developments and changes in local, national, and global life.

The Merdeka Curriculum was developed by formulating graduation competency standards, content standards, process standards, and education assessment standards. This is where the basic framework of the Merdeka Curriculum is needed and serves as a reference for developing the curriculum structure, as well as guiding its implementation. The Merdeka Curriculum is used to address the problem of educational lag in Indonesia. It has several advantages, including:

- A simpler yet sufficiently in-depth curriculum. The Merdeka Curriculum deliberately reduces the volume and complexity of mandatory learning content, retaining only the most essential knowledge and competencies that students are required to master at each level of schooling. This simplification is not a lowering of academic standards but rather a strategic prioritization that allows students and teachers to invest more time and energy in achieving genuine depth of understanding, rather than superficially covering an excessively broad range of topics (Anggraena et al., 2022). By concentrating on what truly matters, the curriculum creates the conditions for more meaningful, lasting, and transferable learning outcomes.
- A greater focus on essential knowledge and student development based on processes and stages. Rather than treating all content as equally important, the Merdeka Curriculum identifies and foregrounds the foundational concepts, skills, and understandings that are most critical to students' long-term intellectual development and real-world competence

(Khoirurrijal et al., 2022). Learning is organized around students' developmental stages, ensuring that the curriculum is appropriately calibrated to the cognitive, emotional, and social capacities of learners at different points in their educational journey. This developmental sensitivity reflects the curriculum's commitment to meeting students where they are, rather than imposing a one-size-fits-all standard that may be unrealistic or counterproductive for many learners. Learning that is more enjoyable and unhurried

- Learning that is more enjoyable and unhurried. By reducing content overload and allowing greater flexibility in pacing, the Merdeka Curriculum creates space for learning experiences that are genuinely engaging, exploratory, and joyful (Inayati, 2022). Students are given the time and freedom to immerse themselves in topics that interest them, to ask questions, to make mistakes, and to develop a genuine love of learning qualities that are essential for lifelong intellectual growth but are often crowded out by the pressures of an overly demanding curriculum. This emphasis on the affective dimensions of learning reflects the curriculum's holistic vision of education as an experience that should be personally enriching as well as academically productive.
- Greater flexibility and freedom given to students. The Merdeka Curriculum introduces expanded opportunities for student agency and self-directed learning, including through the Project-Based Learning for Pancasila Student Profile (Projek Penguatan Profil Pelajar Pancasila–P5), which invites students to engage in collaborative, inquiry-based projects that connect classroom learning to real-world issues and community contexts (Kemendikbudristek, 2022). This flexibility empowers students to pursue their interests, develop their strengths, and take ownership of their learning in ways that are meaningful and personally relevant to them.
- Teachers are able to organize instruction based on the achievement levels and development of their students. One of the most significant innovations of the Merdeka Curriculum is its explicit recognition that students within any given classroom will inevitably be at different stages of learning readiness and development (Nisa, 2021). Rather than requiring all students to progress through the curriculum at the same pace and in the same manner, the Merdeka Curriculum encourages teachers to practice differentiated instruction adapting their teaching methods, materials, and assessments to the specific needs, strengths, and learning profiles of individual students. This approach, supported by the concept of teaching at the right level (*mengajar sesuai tingkat capaian*), ensures that no student is left behind due to a mismatch between the curriculum's demands and their actual level of readiness, while also ensuring that more advanced students are appropriately challenged and stimulated.

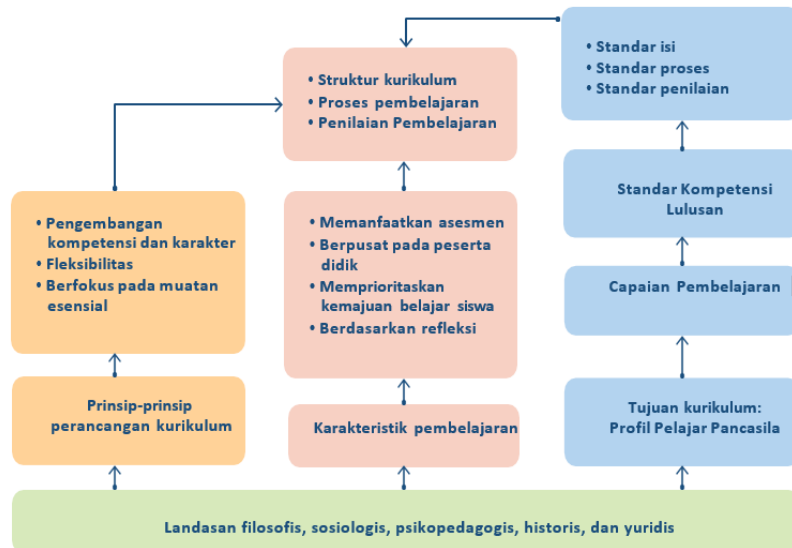


Figure 3.1. Basic Framework of the Merdeka Curriculum

Curriculum implementation (Fullan, 2007), in his book explains what changes can be supported by the leadership of educational units and local governments. Clarity about the expected behavioral changes from each party implementing the policy will encourage a more effective implementation process (OECD, 2019; Fullan, 2007). Table

Table 3.1 shows examples of implementation stages that can be used by educational units or governments as well as organizations or institutions that play a role in supporting curriculum implementation in educational units and regions. These aspects can be seen in the table below:

Table 3.1 Implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum Based on the Readiness Stage of Educational Units and Educators

Aspect	Phase 1	Phase 2
Operational School Curriculum Development	Making minor adjustments to the sample school curriculum document provided by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology ( <i>Kemendikbud</i> ).	Developing the school curriculum based on the sample school curriculum document provided by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology ( <i>Kemendikbud</i> ).
Use of Teaching Materials	Menggunakan Using textbooks and teaching modules as the primary instructional resources, while other teaching materials serve as	Teachers are given the flexibility to select and adapt content from textbooks and other instructional materials to suit the local context and

	supplementary reference	students' learning needs.
Pancasila Student Profile Project (P5)	The teaching team makes minor adjustments to the project modules provided by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology.	The teaching team adapts the project modules provided by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology based on the collective agreement of the teachers facilitating the project.
And So Forth		

Aspek	Phase 3	Phase 4
Development of the School Operational Curriculum (SOC)	Developing the School Operational Curriculum based on the template provided by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, as well as other relevant references. The curriculum is structured according to the school's vision and mission, students' needs and interests, and the school's local context and environment.	Developing a contextual School Operational Curriculum that reflects the aspirations of the school community. The curriculum is structured based on the school's vision, mission, and local context, with the active involvement of representatives of students, parents, and the wider community.
Use of Teaching and Learning Resources	Instruction across several subjects varies between the use of textbooks and other teaching resources based on teachers' professional judgment. Some teachers supplement instructional materials with additional validated references beyond those provided by	Instruction is delivered using a combination of textbooks and other teaching resources obtained from various validated sources, selected based on teachers' professional judgment and aligned with the intended learning objectives. Most teachers are

	the Ministry of Education, while others are capable of developing their own teaching materials. <i>For Early Childhood Education (ECE), textbooks refer to the six official teacher guidebooks.</i>	capable of developing contextualized teaching materials and sharing them within professional learning communities and/or through the Ministry of Education's online platforms.
Pancasila Student Profile Project (P5)	The teaching team uses the project modules provided by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology as references to develop more contextualized modules that are aligned with students' needs and interests.	The teaching team uses the project modules provided by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology as reference materials to develop contextualized project modules that are aligned with students' needs and interests. Students and community members (e.g., educational communities and organizations concerned with education) are actively involved in the project design process. The project designs are disseminated through the Ministry of Education's online platform, enabling other teachers and schools to access and adopt them.
And So Forth		

#### 4. Deep Learning Curriculum

The Deep Learning Curriculum represents an enhancement of the Merdeka Curriculum by emphasizing meaningful, reflective, and student-centered learning experiences. In the context of education, deep learning should not be interpreted as a branch of artificial intelligence (AI), but rather as a pedagogical approach that encourages learners to develop conceptual understanding, higher-order thinking skills, and the ability to apply knowledge in authentic contexts. This approach shifts the focus of learning from rote memorization to meaningful knowledge construction.

The implementation of deep learning is guided by three fundamental principles: mindful learning, meaningful learning, and joyful learning. Mindful learning encourages students to

actively engage in the learning process with awareness and self-regulation. Meaningful learning connects new knowledge with prior experiences and real-life situations, enabling students to construct a deeper understanding of concepts. Meanwhile, joyful learning creates an engaging and supportive learning environment that enhances students' motivation and participation throughout the learning process.

Recent educational policies have increasingly promoted deep learning as a strategy for preparing learners to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century. According to Fullan and Langworthy (2014), deep learning contributes to the development of essential competencies such as critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, communication, and problem-solving. Rather than emphasizing the acquisition of factual knowledge alone, this approach enables students to analyze, evaluate, and apply concepts across different contexts.

Within the framework of the Merdeka Curriculum, the Deep Learning Curriculum strengthens competency-based learning through contextual instruction and differentiated learning strategies. Teachers are expected to act as facilitators who design authentic learning experiences that encourage inquiry, reflection, and active participation. Consequently, students become more independent learners who are capable of constructing knowledge, solving complex problems, and adapting to rapidly changing social and technological environments.

Overall, the Deep Learning Curriculum aims to improve learning quality by integrating cognitive, affective, and psychomotor development into a holistic educational experience. By fostering mindful, meaningful, and joyful learning, this approach prepares students not only to achieve academic success but also to become lifelong learners equipped with the competencies require

## Conclusion

In essence, the 2006 School-Based Curriculum (KTSP), the 2013 Curriculum, and the Merdeka Curriculum each possess their own strengths despite their respective limitations. For educators, the primary concern is not determining which curriculum is superior, but rather ensuring that the teaching and learning process is implemented effectively and efficiently to produce learners who are knowledgeable, competent, morally upright, and committed to the values of their faith while fulfilling their role as *\*Khalifatullah fil Ardh\** (vicegerents of God on Earth).

In conclusion, the findings indicate that significant differences exist among the curricula implemented in Indonesia, particularly regarding instructional time allocation, educational objectives, teaching and learning approaches, and assessment practices. These differences have important implications for the implementation of Islamic Religious Education, as they influence instructional strategies, curriculum delivery, and the achievement of students' learning outcomes. Despite these differences, all curriculum reforms share the common objective of improving the quality of education and preparing students to meet the evolving demands of society.

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