



## **Substantial Feasibility of Implementing the Merdeka Curriculum: Analysis of Teachers' Teaching Perspectives in Elementary School**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum aims to ensure common understanding in improving the quality of education at all levels of education. This curriculum model underscores fostering students' independence, creativity, and learning skills, positioning students as active learners. Assessing the understanding of teachers and students as respondents' representation of the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum at SDN Warungdowo 1 is the main objective of this study. Mixed responses from respondents who revealed the substantial feasibility of implementing the curriculum and acknowledged its flexibility in tailoring the learning experience to student needs, challenges remain, including inadequate training, support, resource constraints, and curriculum adjustments are the findings of this study. Overcoming these hurdles requires additional support through the provision of resources and teacher training. In addition, encouraging effective collaboration between schools, educators, students, parents, and government is essential to strengthen the effectiveness of the Merdeka Curriculum. The contribution of research provides a comprehensive understanding of the application of the Merdeka Curriculum which is essential in improving the effectiveness of adapting curriculum policies that are not partial in the context of learning in elementary schools.

### **Informasi Artikel**

#### **Kata Kunci:**

*Kurikulum Merdeka; Perspektif Pengajaran Guru; Sekolah Dasar*

### **ABSTRAK**

Penerapan Kurikulum Merdeka bertujuan untuk memastikan kesamaan pemahaman dalam peningkatan kualitas pendidikan pada semua tingkatan pendidikan. Model kurikulum ini menggarisbawahi pembinaan kemandirian, kreativitas, dan keterampilan belajar siswa, memposisikan siswa sebagai pembelajar aktif. Menilai pemahaman guru dan siswa sebagai representasi responden terhadap pengimplementasian Kurikulum Merdeka di SDN Warungdowo 1 adalah tujuan utama dilakukan penelitian ini. Beragam tanggapan dari responden yang mengungkapkan kelayakan substansial pengimplementasian

kurikulum dan mengakui fleksibilitasnya dalam menyesuaikan pengalaman belajar dengan kebutuhan siswa, tantangan tetap ada, termasuk pelatihan yang tidak memadai, dukungan, kendala sumber daya, dan penyesuaian kurikulum merupakan temuan penelitian ini. Mengatasi rintangan ini memerlukan dukungan tambahan melalui penyediaan sumber daya dan pelatihan guru. Selain itu, mendorong kolaborasi yang efektif antara sekolah, pendidik, siswa, orang tua, dan pemerintah sangat penting untuk memperkuat efektivitas Kurikulum Merdeka. Kontribusi penelitian memberikan pemahaman yang komprehensif tentang penerapan Kurikulum Merdeka yang esensial dalam meningkatkan efektivitas pengadaptasian kebijakan kurikulum yang tidak parsialistik dalam konteks pembelajaran di sekolah dasar.

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## INTRODUCTION

Education is a very important aspect in the development of a nation. Education ensures that the younger generation develops optimally and becomes high-quality human resources. To achieve this goal, the Indonesian government continues to strive to improve the quality of education through related ministries. This is mainly concerned with realizing the national vision towards a golden Indonesian generation. The government's role in this case is to introduce the Merdeka Curriculum as a new curriculum that is expected to develop the potential of learners holistically and increase the nation's competitiveness.

Curriculum Merdeka is a curriculum approach concept that aims to develop students' independence, creativity, and skills in learning (Baharuddin, 2021). The results of the current education curriculum policy update in Indonesia remain consistent in prioritizing a student-centered approach, where students are considered as active and creative learners. The curriculum teaches students critical thinking, working collaboratively, and learning contemporary skills such as problem-solving, communication, and cooperation (Pratiwi et al., 2023). The Merdeka curriculum also emphasizes student character development (Ramadhan & Sentosa, 2023). Through this curriculum, students are expected to develop positive attitudes, morals, ethics, and good personalities. The ideal curriculum is one that emphasizes the importance of cross-

disciplinary learning, where students can integrate a wide range of knowledge and skills in real and meaningful contexts (Dvořák, 2023; Hamna & BK, 2023; Tröhler, 2023).

Relevant to the purpose of carrying out this research in order to find a more comprehensive understanding of how the Merdeka Curriculum should be implemented at SDN Warungdowo 1 in order to effectively learn and realize the expectations of an adapted curriculum. In the context of its implementation at SDN Warungdowo 1, there are several problems that need to be identified and solved. First, how is the teacher's understanding in interpreting the concepts and principles of the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum that should be applied? Second, the need to understand the challenges faced by teachers in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in all its dynamics and consequences? Third, how is the response and real impact on the student's learning experience, is it in accordance with the expectations of the Merdeka Curriculum?

Teachers' understanding of the concepts and principles of the Merdeka Curriculum at SDN Warungdowo 1 is an important issue that needs to be researched because it will affect the way teachers design learning and involve students in the learning process. Therefore, research on teachers' understanding of this curriculum is very important. Similarly, the way teachers handle the Merdeka Curriculum is another issue that must be examined. Identifying these challenges is important in order to find the right solutions to overcome the obstacles faced by teachers. Moreover, students' responses and experiences to learning using the Merdeka Curriculum are also issues that will be discussed. Student responses and experiences can provide valuable information about the effectiveness of this curriculum in developing students' potential holistically. Evaluation of student responses and experiences is also important to identify the advantages and disadvantages of implementing the Merdeka Curriculum at SDN Warungdowo 1. Evaluation of the results of curriculum implementation can at least bring together solutions to various obstacles in its application (Berger et al., 2020; Utamajaya et al., 2020).

Some previous research results have provided an overview of research on the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum. In this context it has been studied by Shihab et al. (2023) with Ariesanti et al. (2023) which has the same research focus that explains the adaptation model of the Merdeka Curriculum in the management of learning planning in elementary schools. In other relevant research results that specifically analyze the difference in the effectiveness of the 2013's Curriculum with the Merdeka Curriculum in the context of its evaluation management as examined by Firdaus et al. (2022) and (Prayoga & Achadi, 2023). In other studies, Syaripudin et al. (2023) which is more focused on analyzing the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in the context of operations, administration, implementation, constraints, excellence, and activities in the Merdeka Curriculum. The results of his research show that the Merdeka Curriculum can be implemented appropriately, but it needs special attention to several aspects. Research on the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in the perspective of strengthening the Pancasila student project (Aulia et al., 2023). In this study, it is

explained about the role of curriculum in education, the importance of strengthening the value profile of Pancasila students in the context of multiple learning situations, the diversity of students and the environment, and the curriculum development process. [Andina et al. \(2022\)](#), The results of his research specifically examined the readiness of teachers in adapting independent learning at SDN 47 Pananjung Sekadau based on the flow of the mechanism for implementing the Merdeka Curriculum, the results found showed that the Merdeka Curriculum in this school prioritized active, creative, effective, and fun learning activities, and integrated national values.

All the results of this previous research each recommend that a comprehensive study related to the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in elementary schools recommends to be developed in a more specific context. Referring to this review, it was inspiring to conduct research that specifically analyzed the substantial feasibility of adapting the Merdeka Curriculum at SDN Warungdowo 1. As the ultimate goal of this study is to provide a representative picture obtained from the results of the analysis of the perspectives of teachers involved in implementing how the Merdeka Curriculum is implemented in the school. This study recommends that curriculum adaptation can better deliver students to become ready, valuable, and competent learners as well as adaptive towards the golden Indonesian generation in 2045.

## **METHODS**

This research uses a qualitative approach to gain an in-depth understanding of the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum at SDN Warungdowo 1, Pasuruan Regency, East Java Province. The qualitative method was chosen because it facilitates the description of research related to the analysis of perspectives from the research subject. The choice of location for this research is based on the empirical fact that the Merdeka Curriculum has been implemented at SDN Warungdowo 1. The study was conducted over six months, from August 25, 2023 to February 25, 2024.

This time frame was chosen to provide sufficient time for researchers to collect data thoroughly and understand how the Merdeka Curriculum was implemented at SDN Warungdowo 1. During the study period, various activities, such as interviews, observation, and data analysis have been carried out. Research respondents consist of various parties involved in the school environment who have knowledge and experience relevant to the research topic studied. These include principals, vice-principals, homeroom teachers from Grade 1 to Grade 6, teachers of certain subjects such as Teaching Professors, computers, and religion.

Through their participation, researchers can gain in-depth insights into various aspects related to curriculum implementation or other research topics in the context of the school environment. By involving various actors in the learning process, this research can obtain various different and comprehensive perspectives on the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum at SDN Warungdowo 1. In this study, taxonomic analysis was used as a method to sort and select relevant and valid data. Data from interviews, observations, and documentation obtained through research subject

information will be sorted and analyzed systematically. The process of taxonomic analysis involves organizing data, testing the validity of data, and forming thematic categories describing the results of the study. The data collected is then reviewed into information that can support research findings.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### A. Result

Indonesian education has experienced many changes and difficulties along with the times. In an effort to realize the absorption of the nation's generation in the world of work and global competition, aligning the curriculum with technological advances and the demands of the world of work is a major challenge that must be considered (Choi, 2023; Nogueira et al., 2024) as well as being a place to prepare to present the generation towards a golden Indonesia in 2024 (Rokhman et al., 2024). Without adapting the curriculum to these challenges, educational outcomes will be perceived as not making a real contribution to the progress of national and global development (Milosz et al., 2024). The previous curriculum has been designed to improve the quality of education, but along the way there will always be various obstacles in its implementation.

In line with the phenomenological statement of the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum that is currently running in education units in Indonesia. The results of similar phenomenological studies were also analyzed through the context of its implementation at SDN Warungdowo 1 based on the teacher's perspective. The following table presents responses from various teacher respondents involved in research related to the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum at SDN Warungdowo 1. From homeroom teacher to principal, each respondent provided valuable insights into curriculum implementation. Their responses covered a wide range of aspects, from the recognition of freedom in designing learning to the challenges of providing adequate learning resources.

**Table 1. Teachers' Perspectives on the Implementation of the Curriculum at SDN Warungdowo 1**

No.	Respondent Initials	Departments	Teachers' Response
1	LM	Teacher in Grade 1	Have implemented the Merdeka Curriculum well. Teachers recognize freedom in designing learning according to student needs.
2	SMN	Teacher in Grade 2	State that the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum helps in meeting the individual needs of students. However, further support is still needed in providing better learning resources.

3	SLDH	Teacher in Grade 3	Complain about the lack of training and support to implement the Merdeka Curriculum effectively. Teachers feel the need for further guidance and training to understand the concepts and practices of the Merdeka Curriculum better.
4	SRYH	Teacher in Grade 4	Stating that the Merdeka Curriculum provides greater flexibility in designing interesting and relevant learning for students. However, there are still obstacles in meeting the needs of adequate learning resources and facilities.
5	ES	Teacher in Grade 5	Appreciating the school's efforts in adopting the Merdeka Curriculum. Teachers feel they have more freedom in crafting lesson plans that accommodate students' needs.
6	AY	Teacher in Grade 6B	Stating that the Merdeka Curriculum provides opportunities for students to be actively involved in the learning process. However, further efforts are still needed in providing adaptive learning tools that are right for students' learning needs.
7	SPKT	Teacher in Grade 6C	Stating that the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum has helped in building students' skills holistically. However, there are still challenges in tailoring learning to varying levels of student understanding and interest.
8	MW	Computer Teacher 1	Feeling helped by the existence of the Merdeka Curriculum in designing learning that is more relevant to current technological developments. Teachers expressed the need to improve technological facilities and infrastructure to support more effective learning.
9	HB	Computer Teacher 2	Appreciating the school's efforts in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum. Teachers feel they have more freedom in developing interesting and innovative learning materials.
10	SF	Computer Teacher 3	Stating that the Merdeka Curriculum provides opportunities for students to further develop technology skills. However, greater support is still needed in the face of evolving technological challenges.

11	SPRM	Religious Education Teacher 1	Complaining about the lack of attention to religious subjects in the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum. Teachers feel the need for further recognition and support of the important role of religion in the character education of students.
12	HR	Religious Education Teacher 2	Stating that the Merdeka Curriculum provides greater space for religious teachers to develop more experiential and interactive learning. However, better integration with other aspects of character education is still needed.
13	BE	Principal	Stating the school's commitment in adopting the Merdeka Curriculum as an effort to improve the quality of learning. The headmaster plans to provide more training and support to teachers in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum more effectively.
14	EL	Vice Principal 1	Appreciating the efforts of teachers and students in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in learning. The vice principal plans to continue to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum to ensure optimal achievement of learning objectives.
15	EP	Vice Principal 2	Stating the importance of synergy between all relevant parties in the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum. To support the learning process, the vice principal is always committed to encouraging effective cooperation and communication between teachers, students, and parents.

Based on the table of research results above, it can be stated that this study aims to evaluate the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in learning at SDN Warungdowo 1. This study involved various respondents consisting of homeroom teachers, computer teachers, religious teachers, principals, and vice principals. The results of interviews with respondents showed mixed responses to the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum.

Homeroom teachers, such as LM, SMN, SLDH, SRYH, ES, AY, and SPKT, gave varied responses regarding their experiences in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum. Some acknowledged success in implementing the curriculum, while others revealed challenges they faced, such as a lack of training and support. Meanwhile, computer teachers, such as MW, HB, and SF, revealed that the Merdeka Curriculum provides



opportunities for students to better develop technology skills, although greater support is still needed in the face of evolving technological challenges.

Religious teachers, such as SPRM and HR, highlighted the lack of attention to religious subjects in the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum. They felt the importance of further recognition and support of the important role of religion in students' character education. School principals, such as BE, and vice principals, such as EL and EP, show commitment to improving the quality of learning by adopting the Merdeka Curriculum. They plan to provide more training and support to teachers in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum more effectively, as well as conduct continuous monitoring and evaluation to ensure optimal achievement of learning objectives.



**Figure 1.** Interview Documentation with Respondents of SDN Warungdowo 1

The results of the analysis of the teacher's response found some identifiable information. First, most respondents, including homeroom teachers and computer teachers, stated that the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum has provided benefits in learning. They recognize freedom in designing learning according to student needs. These teachers feel they have more freedom in crafting lesson plans that accommodate students' individual needs and developing engaging and innovative learning materials. They also see that the Merdeka Curriculum provides greater flexibility to determine learning designs that pay attention to the substance, interest, that are educational and relevant to students' learning needs.



**Figure 2.** Implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum through SDN Warungdowo 1 Work Degree Activities



Responding to the findings, the principal and vice principal expressed their commitment and appreciation for the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum. They plan to provide more training and support to teachers in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum more effectively. In addition, they also plan to continuously monitor and evaluate the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum to ensure the achievement of optimal learning objectives. The vice principal also stressed the importance of synergy between all relevant parties, including teachers, students, and parents, in supporting the learning process. They are committed to facilitating effective collaboration and communication among all parties to achieve the successful implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum. According to [Nalbantoğlu & Bümen \(2024\)](#), The readiness of teachers to adapt their learning to the demands of a curriculum that may be new, shows the professional side of teachers in carrying out their role as educators. On the one hand, the reflection of competent teachers will always be ready for change and they are able to adapt well, both in terms of the use of technology, media, and various other positive things ([Borrero & Naidoo, 2023](#); [Grgic, 2023](#)).

Overall, this study provides a fairly comprehensive picture of the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum at SDN Warungdowo 1. Despite some of the obstacles and challenges faced, many respondents saw the benefits and potential of the Merdeka Curriculum in improving learning. With further commitment and support from related parties, it is hoped that the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum can continue to be improved and have a positive impact on learning in schools.

## **B. Discussion**

Important discussions about the results of the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum at SDN Warungdowo 1 have revealed various responses and experiences from class teachers and special subjects. From the table data presented, it can be seen that there is a positive reception to this new curriculum, as well as challenges that need to be overcome to ensure effective and comprehensive implementation. Homeroom teachers such as LM, SMN, and ES showed good acceptance of the Merdeka Curriculum, seeing it as an opportunity to pay more attention to students' individual needs in the learning process. However, there are also challenges faced, such as lack of training and support for some teachers, as revealed by SLDH and SRYH.

From the perspective of teachers of certain subjects, it can be seen that they feel the Merdeka Curriculum provides greater flexibility and relevance in designing learning, especially in the context of technological developments. However, the challenge that arises is the need for further support in the face of ever-changing technological developments, as revealed by SF. The importance of the role of the subject and character of religion is also highlighted in this discussion. While some appreciate the greater space provided by Merdeka Curriculum for the development of religious learning, as expressed by HR, there are also concerns about the lack of attention to religious subjects in the new curriculum, as conveyed by SPRM.

In addition, the commitment of school leaders, which is reflected through the response of BE as the principal, and from the vice principals (EL and EP) as key holders in supporting the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum at SDN Warungdowo 1. They are not only committed to adopting this new curriculum, but are also actively involved in ensuring its implementation process goes well through constant monitoring and evaluation.

### **1. Acceptance and implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum by class teachers**

Based on the context of acceptance and implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum by class teachers at SDN Warungdowo 1, there are variations in responses reflected in the research table data presented. From homeroom teachers and computer teachers who were respondents, there was a broad understanding of the benefits and challenges associated with the Merdeka Curriculum. First of all, homeroom teachers such as LM, SMN, and ES showed positive acceptance of the Merdeka Curriculum. They feel that this curriculum gives them greater freedom in designing learning according to the needs and interests of students. This reflects an awareness of the importance of personalized learning to increase student engagement and understanding.

However, there are also some homeroom teachers such as SLDH and SRYH who face challenges in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum. Sulidah complained about the lack of training and support to implement this curriculum effectively, while SRYH highlighted obstacles in meeting the need for adequate learning resources and facilities. This suggests that, despite the desire to adopt a new curriculum, a lack of adequate resources and support can be an obstacle in its implementation (Dang et al., 2023). Furthermore, in terms of certain subjects such as computer teachers, it can be seen that they find it helpful with the Merdeka Curriculum in designing learning that is more relevant to current technological developments. However, they also highlighted the need to improve technological facilities and infrastructure to support more effective learning. This shows that despite recognition of the benefits of the new curriculum, it is still necessary to invest in infrastructure to support its optimal implementation.

Meanwhile, from the point of view of religious teachers such as SPRM and HR, there are differences in perception. HR feels that the Merdeka Curriculum provides greater space for religious teachers to develop more experiential and interactive learning. However, SPRM complained of a lack of attention to religious subjects in the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum and highlighted the need for further recognition and support of the important role of religion in students' character education. This suggests that there are differences in how these curricula are viewed and implemented in the context of specific subjects.

In conclusion, the acceptance and implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum by class teachers at SDN Warungdowo 1 reflects various responses and experiences. While many find it helpful and see the benefits in improving the flexibility and relevance of learning, there are still challenges that need to be addressed, such as a lack of adequate training, support, and resources. In facing this challenge, the commitment of school

leaders in providing further training and support to teachers and facilitating collaboration among all relevant parties can be key in improving the effectiveness of the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum.

## **2. Increased attention to individual needs of students**

The implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum at SDN Warungdowo 1 consistently shows increased attention to the individual needs of students by class teachers. This is reflected in the various responses submitted by respondents in the table of research results. For example, LM, a homeroom teacher in grade 1, claimed to have successfully implemented the Merdeka Curriculum well, which indicates that he has been able to pay attention to the individual needs of students in the learning process. In line with SMN as the homeroom teacher of grade 2, stated that the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum has helped in meeting the individual needs of students, although further support is still needed in providing better learning resources.

Furthermore, ES (homeroom teacher of grade 5), appreciated the school's efforts in adopting the Merdeka Curriculum and felt that it had more freedom in developing lesson plans that accommodated students' needs. This shows that the use of the Merdeka Curriculum has provided space for teachers to pay more attention to the individual needs of students in lesson planning. Nonetheless, some responses also highlighted the need for further support. For example, SLDH (homeroom teacher grade 3), complained about the lack of training and support to implement the Merdeka Curriculum effectively. This shows that despite efforts to attend to the individual needs of students, there are still obstacles in doing so that require further guidance and training.

The response from MW (Computer Teacher 1), also highlighted important aspects of the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in paying attention to the individual needs of students. He found it helpful in designing learning that is more relevant to current technological developments but stated the need to improve technological facilities and infrastructure to support more effective learning. This shows that attention to the individual needs of learners is not only focused on academic aspects, but also on developing skills in accordance with technological developments. Thus, it can be concluded that the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum at SDN Warungdowo 1 has brought increased attention to the individual needs of students by class teachers, although there are still challenges that need to be overcome to ensure a more effective and comprehensive implementation. This confirms the school's commitment in caring for each student individually and ensuring that the learning provided is relevant and appropriate to their needs.

### **3. Flexibility and relevance of learning**

The implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum at SDN Warungdowo 1 clearly shows increased flexibility and relevance in the learning process, as reflected in the diverse responses of respondents involved in the research. SRYH (Homeroom teacher of grade 4), stated that the Merdeka Curriculum provides greater flexibility in designing interesting and relevant learning for students. This signifies that teachers have more freedom to tailor learning approaches to students' individual needs and interests, which can enrich their learning experience.

Furthermore, the response from MW (Computer Teacher 1), highlights the relevance of learning in the context of current technological developments. He found it helpful in designing learning that is more relevant to technological developments, which shows that the Merdeka Curriculum allows teachers to adapt the curriculum to the reality of the times to increase the attractiveness and relevance of learning materials. Another response from HB (Computer teacher 2), shows that the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum has given more freedom to teachers in developing interesting and innovative learning materials, which also contributes to increasing the relevance of learning to the needs and interests of students.

Nevertheless, apart from increased flexibility and relevance in learning, some responses also highlight the need for further support. For example, the response from SMN (Homeroom 2), shows that although the Merdeka Curriculum has helped in meeting the individual needs of students, further support is still needed in providing better learning resources. Thus, it can be concluded that the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum at SDN Warungdowo 1 has provided more flexibility to teachers in designing learning that is relevant to the needs and interests of students. Nonetheless, the challenge of providing adequate learning resources still needs to be overcome to ensure that every student has an optimal and relevant learning experience.

### **4. Teacher's perception of a particular subject**

The perceptions of subject-specific teachers in the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum at SDN Warungdowo 1 reflect various responses to the flexibility and relevance of learning. From the table provided, it can be seen that computer teachers namely MW, HB, and SF, have a positive view of this curriculum change. MW as computer teacher 1, stated that the Merdeka Curriculum helps in designing learning that is more relevant to current technological developments. He also highlighted the need to improve technological facilities and infrastructure to support more effective learning, showing awareness of the need for adequate infrastructure support.

HB (Computer Teacher 2), also appreciated the school's efforts in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum, feeling that it had more freedom in developing interesting and innovative learning materials. This suggests that teachers of certain subjects feel given the opportunity to adapt the curriculum to technological developments and student needs, thereby increasing the attractiveness and relevance of learning.

However, SF's (Computer Teacher 3), responses also show that although the Merdeka Curriculum provides opportunities for students to further develop technology skills, greater support is still needed in the face of evolving technological challenges. This shows that despite the increased flexibility and relevance of learning, challenges remain in the face of rapid technological developments ([Oeschger et al., 2022](#); [Wibawa et al., 2022](#)).

Overall, teachers' perceptions of certain subjects towards the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum show that they see this change as an opportunity to increase the relevance of learning to the needs and developments of the times. However, challenges remain in terms of providing adequate support to ensure that learning can run optimally in accordance with curriculum objectives ([Arrafi, 2021](#); [Leaf et al., 2024](#)).

## **5. The importance of the role of the subject and the character of religion**

The importance of the role of religious subjects and character in the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum at SDN Warungdowo 1 is reflected in several responses given by respondents, especially from religious teachers, namely SPRM and HR. As a teacher of religion 1 (SPRM), complained of lack of attention to religious subjects in the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum. He felt that the important role of religion in the character education of students did not get enough recognition and support. This highlights the importance of paying attention to the religious aspects of learning as an integral part of student character building.

On the other hand, HR as a religion teacher 2 stated that the Merdeka Curriculum provides greater space for religious teachers to develop more experiential and interactive learning. However, he also highlighted the need for better integration with other aspects of character education. This shows an awareness of the importance of not only teaching religious material separately, but also integrating values and character building into the entire curriculum ([BK et al., 2024](#)).

In addition, the response from the BE (school principal), also emphasized the importance of the role of religious subjects and character in the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum. He expressed the school's commitment in adopting the Merdeka Curriculum as an effort to improve the quality of learning. According to [Priestley et al. \(2023\)](#) by planning to provide more training and support to teachers in implementing the curriculum ensures the success of achieving curriculum objectives more effectively. Overall, respondents' responses indicate that the importance of the role of the subject and the character of religion are recognized as an integral part of the educational process. The implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum at SDN Warungdowo 1 must accommodate the need for strengthening the role and integration of religious subjects as well as character building in this new curriculum, so that students not only acquire academic knowledge, but also strong values and morals.

## **6. The commitment of school leaders in supporting the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum**

The commitment of school leaders in supporting the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum at SDN Warungdowo 1 is very evident from the response of BE as the principal and also from the response of EL and EP (Vices principal of SDN Warungdowo 1). BE stated the school's commitment in adopting the Merdeka Curriculum as an effort to improve the quality of learning. He also plans to provide more training and support to teachers in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum more effectively. This shows the seriousness of school leaders in ensuring that every teacher in the school understands and is able to implement the Merdeka Curriculum properly.

In addition, the responses from EL and EP also reflect their commitment to the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum. Endang Laras appreciated the efforts of teachers and students in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum, while EP emphasized the importance of synergy between all relevant parties in implementing it. Both plan to continuously monitor and evaluate the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum to ensure optimal learning objectives are achieved. This shows that school leaders are not only committed to adopting the Merdeka Curriculum, but also actively involved in monitoring and evaluating the implementation process.

The curriculum developed is centralized (So et al., 2024), But in its realization, it will be considered good if it is held based on the readiness of the school in its adaptation to be more advanced. It is also said that a good curriculum if it provides flexibility to schools and educators autonomously to design learning that suits the learning needs of students and the times (Hamna & BK, 2022; Zweeris et al., 2023). This granting of freedom is a hallmark of the current implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum. On the one hand, teachers continue to carry out their role as facilitators and mentors of students during the learning process. They are also drivers of educational progress, not only conveying information but also assisting students and other teachers in building positive attitudes, skills, and values, and upholding solid cooperation to achieve educational outcomes that increasingly impact progress.

The curriculum implementation policy update is intended as an effort by the government to create educational output standards that are ready to face global challenges (Fahmy et al., 2015; Mathou, 2023). However, implementing a new curriculum such as the Merdeka Curriculum is not easy if the direction and purpose of its implementation are not clearly understood (Purwasih & Sahnan, 2021; Solikhah & Wahyuni, 2023). The support of various parties from its adaptation is also a determinant of the success of its implementation (Mufanti et al., 2024). So many paradigm changes, approaches, and learning methods will be confusing in adaptation while they need to be adopted in their application in schools (Postlethwaite, 2024). That is why the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum requires sufficient understanding and expertise from teachers, as well as the support of all elements of education observers. In addition, there are also several practical challenges faced in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum. These challenges include limited resources such



as appropriate books and learning materials, lack of training for teachers in implementing this new approach, and adjustments to previous curricula already integrated in the education system.

Overall, the commitment of school leaders, both from the principal and vice principal, is very important in ensuring the successful implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum at SDN Warungdowo 1. The support and guidance they provide to teachers in schools is a strong foundation for achieving the desired learning goals because it is an important factor underlying the decisions of teachers and school leaders in integrating curriculum expectations in educational and learning activities in schools (Muzakkir et al., 2022; Zahid & Neary, 2023). Thus, the results of this discussion provide a comprehensive picture of how the Merdeka Curriculum is accepted and implemented at SDN Warungdowo 1. While there are challenges that need to be addressed, such as lack of training and support, as well as the need for better integration of religious and character subjects, commitment and support from school leaders is key in achieving the desired learning goals (Pang & Ki, 2024).

## CONCLUSIONS

The results of research on the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum at SDN Warungdowo 1, overall, have provided benefits in increasing flexibility, relevance, and attention to the individual needs of students. Teachers of certain classes and subjects recognize the freedom to design engaging and innovative learning, although there are still challenges in providing adequate resources and support. The importance of the role of the subject and the character of religion is also recognized, but better integration is still needed. The commitment and support of school leaders is very important in ensuring the successful implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum. With further efforts in providing training, support, and continuous monitoring, it is hoped that the Merdeka Curriculum can continue to be improved and have a positive impact on learning at SDN Warungdowo 1. To overcome these challenges, there needs to be concrete steps from schools, such as increasing support in providing better learning resources, organizing regular training and guidance for teachers to improve their understanding of the Merdeka Curriculum, and strengthening the integration of aspects of character education with learning materials. In addition, effective collaboration between all relevant parties, including teachers, students, parents, and school leaders, is also very important to support a more optimal implementation process of the Merdeka Curriculum. Thus, it is hoped that the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum at SDN Warungdowo 1 can continue to run well and have a greater positive impact on the progress of education in schools.

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