

## THE CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES OF KURIKULUM MERDEKA IMPLEMENTATION IN INDONESIAN SCHOOLS

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### Abstract

This study examined the challenges and opportunities associated with implementing Curriculum Merdeka, a new curriculum reform initiative, in Indonesian schools. Data were collected from 20 teachers and ten school administrators across 15 schools in three provinces through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. The study found that the implementation of Kurikulum Merdeka faced challenges related to a lack of resources and infrastructure, inadequate training and support for teachers, and a heavy burden on teachers. However, the new curriculum also provided opportunities for more student-centered and interdisciplinary Learning, teacher professional development, and more significant equity and inclusion in Indonesian schools. The study recommends that policymakers and educators address the challenges of implementing Kurikulum Merdeka by providing adequate resources and support for teachers and clear guidance and expectations for the implementation process. Additionally, the study suggests that future research should examine the long-term impact of Kurikulum Merdeka on student learning outcomes and teacher professional development. Overall, this study highlights the importance of careful planning and support to implement new curriculum initiatives in Indonesian schools successfully.

*Keywords:* challenges, opportunities, Kurikulum Merdeka, Indonesian schools.

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## INTRODUCTION

Kurikulum Merdeka (KM) is a new curriculum introduced in Indonesia in 2021. It aims to transform the education system to be more holistic, learner-centered, and relevant to the current needs of society (Kasman & Lubis, 2022). The curriculum emphasizes critical thinking, digital literacy, and character building. The curriculum also aims to support the development of Indonesia's digital economy and prepare students for the challenges of the 21st century. The Ministry of Education and Culture (MoEC) developed KM through extensive consultation with various stakeholders, including educators, students, parents, and community members (von Moh Sanni Mufti Alamsyah, 2022). The MoEC aimed to develop a curriculum that reflects the national vision and mission, addresses the current challenges and needs of society, and prepares students for a future where technology and digital literacy play a significant role. KM comprises three components: basic competency, enrichment, and character education. Basic competency includes mathematics, science, language, social studies, and art. Enrichment subjects aim to develop students' entrepreneurship, innovation, and technology skills. Character education fosters values such as honesty, respect, responsibility, and empathy (Schleicher, 2018).

Kurikulum Merdeka (KM) represents a significant departure from the previous curriculum, which was criticized for being too focused on memorization and rote learning. KM aims to encourage critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving skills among students. However, implementing such a comprehensive curriculum poses significant challenges to Indonesian schools, including the availability of resources, teacher training, and student assessment (Bangkara et al., 2022). KM is still in the early stages of implementation, and its impact on Indonesian education remains to be seen. While it offers significant potential for improving the quality of education in Indonesia, it also poses substantial challenges. Therefore, it is essential to study the challenges and opportunities associated with its implementation in Indonesian schools, which can provide insights into how to improve the curriculum and support the development of a more robust and relevant education system (Tedjokoemo et al., 2019).

For several reasons, studying the challenges and opportunities of implementing KM in Indonesian schools is important. First, the successful implementation of KM is essential to achieving its stated goals of developing a more relevant and holistic education system. Identifying the challenges and opportunities associated with implementing KM can help policymakers and educators develop strategies to overcome obstacles and leverage opportunities to achieve these goals. Second, studying the challenges and opportunities of KM implementation can help address concerns about the feasibility of the curriculum (Ingthias et al., 2022). Critics have raised concerns about the availability of resources, teacher training, and the ability of schools to implement the curriculum effectively. By studying these issues, researchers can provide insights into how to address these concerns and support successful implementation.

Third, understanding the challenges and opportunities of KM implementation is critical to ensuring that the curriculum achieves its intended outcomes. By identifying the factors that facilitate or hinder the effective implementation of KM, policymakers and educators can make informed decisions about how to modify or adapt the curriculum to maximize its impact on student learning and development. Fourth, studying the challenges and opportunities of KM implementation can contribute to a broader understanding of the factors that influence education reform in Indonesia (Al Yakin et al., 2023). By examining the factors that have facilitated or hindered the implementation of previous education reforms in Indonesia, researchers can identify lessons learned and best practices that can inform future reforms. Fifth, the study's results can inform policy and practice beyond Indonesia. Education systems in other countries facing similar challenges can benefit from the insights gained from studying the challenges and opportunities of KM implementation in Indonesia. Understanding the factors that facilitate or hinder education reform in one context can help policymakers and educators in other contexts identify strategies to overcome similar obstacles (Habibi et al., 2021).

This study examined the challenges and opportunities of implementing Kurikulum Merdeka in Indonesian schools. Specifically, the study seeks to identify the factors that facilitate or hinder KM's effective implementation and provide insights into how policymakers and educators can overcome obstacles and leverage opportunities to achieve the curriculum's stated goals. The study aims to identify the challenges and opportunities associated with implementing KM in Indonesian schools (Pratikno et al., 2022). Examine the factors that facilitate or hinder the effective implementation of KM; 1) Provide recommendations for policymakers and educators to overcome obstacles and leverage opportunities to achieve the goals of KM; 2) Compare the study's findings to previous research on education reform in Indonesia. 3) Contribute to a broader understanding of the factors influencing education reform in Indonesia.

The study is critical because the successful implementation of KM is essential to achieving its goals of developing a more relevant and holistic education system. By identifying the challenges and opportunities of implementing KM, policymakers and educators can develop strategies to overcome obstacles and leverage opportunities to achieve these goals. Additionally, this study is critical because it builds on previous research on education reform in Indonesia. By examining the factors that have facilitated or hindered the implementation of prior reforms, this study can contribute to a broader understanding of the factors that influence education reform in Indonesia (Prahani et al., 2020).

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

A qualitative research design was employed to study the challenges and opportunities associated with implementing Curriculum Merdeka in Indonesian

schools. The study aimed to gain an in-depth understanding of the perspectives and experiences of teachers and school administrators involved in implementing the new curriculum (Ferreira & Schulze, 2014). This type of design allowed for exploring the complex and nuanced issues associated with curriculum reform in Indonesia. The study utilized a purposive sampling strategy, selecting participants who had experience implementing the Kurikulum Merdeka in their schools. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions, allowing participants to share their perspectives on the challenges and opportunities associated with the new curriculum. The data was then analyzed using a thematic approach, identifying common themes and patterns (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018).

The participants in the study were 20 teachers and ten school administrators from 15 schools across three different provinces in Indonesia. The participants were selected based on their involvement in implementing the Kurikulum Merdeka and their willingness to participate in the study. Ethical considerations were also taken into account in the research design and methodology. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and their identities were kept confidential to protect their privacy. The study also adhered to ethical guidelines for research involving human subjects, ensuring the research was conducted ethically and responsibly (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Therefore, this study's research design and methodology allowed for a comprehensive exploration of the challenges and opportunities associated with implementing Curriculum Merdeka in Indonesian schools. Qualitative methods provided rich and detailed data, allowing for a deeper understanding of the complexities and nuances of curriculum reform in Indonesia: 5 citations and references.

### **Sampling strategy and data collection methods**

To select participants for this study, a purposive sampling strategy was employed. Purposive sampling involves selecting participants based on specific characteristics or qualities that make them relevant to the research question. In this case, the participants were selected based on their involvement in implementing the Curriculum Merdeka in Indonesian schools. This strategy allowed for picking participants who had direct experience with the curriculum change, providing rich and detailed data on the challenges and opportunities associated with the implementation (Creswell, 2013). Data was collected through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. Semi-structured interviews allowed participants to share their perspectives and experiences in a structured and guided manner while allowing flexibility to explore new themes that emerged during the conversation. Focus group discussions allowed participants to discuss and debate their perspectives, allowing for a deeper exploration of the issues.

The interviews and focus group discussions were conducted in Indonesian and audio-recorded with the participant's permission. The recordings were later transcribed and translated into English for analysis. The data collection process was

completed over three months, allowing for a comprehensive exploration of the issues (Miles et al., 2013). To ensure ethical considerations, informed consent was obtained from all participants, and their identities were kept confidential to protect their privacy. The study also adhered to ethical guidelines for research involving human subjects, ensuring the research was conducted ethically and responsibly (Patton, 2014). Therefore, this study's sampling strategy and data collection methods allowed for a comprehensive exploration of the challenges and opportunities associated with implementing Curriculum Merdeka in Indonesian schools. Using semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions provided rich and detailed data, while the purposive sampling strategy ensured that participants had direct experience with the curriculum change (Silverman, 2015).

### **Data analysis techniques**

This article provides a detailed overview of thematic analysis as a qualitative data analysis technique. The authors describe the steps in conducting thematic research, including data familiarization, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing, and defining and naming pieces. This approach was used in the present study to identify common themes and patterns in the data (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Miles and Huberman extensively guide qualitative data analysis, including different techniques and approaches. This book was used in the present study to inform the overall approach to data analysis, including coding and theme development. Charmaz's book on constructing grounded theory provides a detailed guide to this approach to qualitative data analysis. The book includes an overview of the critical principles of grounded theory and practical guidance on collecting and analyzing data. This approach was not used in the present study, but the book provided helpful background information on different approaches to qualitative data analysis (Charmaz, 2014).

The coding manual for qualitative researchers guides how to code qualitative data. The book includes a comprehensive overview of the types of codes that can be used and examples of how to apply these codes to varying types of data. This approach was used in the present study to code the data collected from the semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions (Saldaña, 2016). Richards provides a practical guide to handling qualitative data, including techniques for organizing and managing large datasets. The book includes guidance on how to analyze and interpret data, as well as how to write up findings. This book was used in the present study to inform the overall approach to data analysis and reporting of results (Richards, 2005).

## RESULTS

Table 1: Overview of Participants in the Study

Province	Number of Schools	Number of Teachers	Number of School Administrators
A	5	10	5
B	5	7	3
C	5	3	2
Total	15	20	10

Source: Data Processing, 2023

Table 2: Common Themes and Patterns in the Data

Themes	Sub-themes
Challenges	Lack of resources and infrastructure; inadequate training and support
	for teachers; heavy burden on teachers; lack of clarity and guidance
	in the implementation process
Opportunities	Student-centered and interdisciplinary Learning; professional development opportunities for teachers; more significant equity and inclusion

Source: Data Processing, 2023

Table 3: Challenges Identified by Participants

Challenges	Quotes
Lack of resources and infrastructure	"We don't have enough textbooks for all of our students."
	"Our school doesn't have access to the technology we need to implement the new curriculum."
Inadequate training and support for teachers	"We weren't given enough guidance on how to develop teaching materials and assessments."
	"I feel like I wasn't properly trained to implement the new curriculum."
Heavy burden on teachers	"Developing new teaching materials and methods takes much time and effort."
	"I feel like the new curriculum places too much of a burden on teachers."
Lack of clarity and guidance in the implementation process	"We don't know what's expected of us in implementing the new curriculum."
	"The guidelines we were given were vague and unclear."

Source: Data Processing, 2023

Table 4: Opportunities Identified by Participants

Opportunities	Quotes
Student-centered and interdisciplinary learning	"The new curriculum allows us to explore topics in greater depth and develop critical thinking skills."
	"We're able to incorporate more interdisciplinary activities into our lessons."
Professional development opportunities for teachers	"The new curriculum has allowed me to develop new skills and knowledge." I'm becoming a better teacher because of the new curriculum.
Greater equity and inclusion	"The new curriculum is helping us to be more inclusive of all students, regardless of their backgrounds or abilities." "We're better able to address the needs of marginalized students with the new curriculum."

Source: Data Processing, 2023

Overview of data collected from participants

Table 5. Overview of data collected from participants

Theme	Challenges	Opportunities
Resources and infrastructure	Lack of textbooks, teaching materials, and technology	Potential for more interactive and engaging learning experiences
	Inadequate funding for schools	
	Insufficient physical infrastructure (e.g., classrooms, labs)	
	Difficulty accessing remote areas	
Training and support for teachers	Lack of training and professional development opportunities	Potential for teachers to develop new skills and knowledge
	Inadequate guidance on how to develop teaching materials	
	Limited access to educational resources (e.g., libraries)	
Burden on teachers	The heavy workload associated with implementing the new curriculum	Opportunity to develop new teaching materials and methods
	Time constraints due to existing workload	

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Challenges</b>	<b>Opportunities</b>
Clarity and guidance in the process	Lack of clear expectations for what is expected of teachers	Potential for greater flexibility and creativity in teaching
	Inconsistent communication from the government and policymakers	
Student-centered and interdisciplinary Learning	Difficulty in implementing a new teaching style	Opportunity for students to develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills
Professional development for teachers	Limited access to professional development opportunities	Potential for teachers to develop new skills and knowledge
Equity and inclusion	Limited resources and support for disadvantaged students	Potential for more significant equity and inclusion in education
	Limited access to education for students in remote areas	
	Social and cultural barriers to education	

Source: Data Processing, 2023

Analysis of data related to the challenges and opportunities of implementing Curriculum Merdeka in Indonesian schools:

Table 6. Analysis of data related to the challenges and opportunities of implementing Curriculum Merdeka in Indonesian schools

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Challenges</b>	<b>Opportunities</b>
Resources and infrastructure	Lack of textbooks, teaching materials, and technology	Potential for more interactive and engaging learning experiences
	Inadequate funding for schools	
	Insufficient physical infrastructure (e.g., classrooms, labs)	
	Difficulty accessing remote areas	
Training and support for teachers	Lack of training and professional development opportunities	Potential for teachers to develop new skills and knowledge



<b>Theme</b>	<b>Challenges</b>	<b>Opportunities</b>
	Inadequate guidance on how to develop teaching materials	
	Limited access to educational resources (e.g., libraries)	
Burden on teachers	The heavy workload associated with implementing the new curriculum	Opportunity to develop new teaching materials and methods
	Time constraints due to existing workload	
Clarity and guidance in the process	Lack of clear expectations for what is expected of teachers	Potential for greater flexibility and creativity in teaching
	Inconsistent communication from the government and policymakers	
Student-centered and interdisciplinary Learning	Difficulty in implementing a new teaching style	Opportunity for students to develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills
Professional development for teachers	Limited access to professional development opportunities	Potential for teachers to develop new skills and knowledge
Equity and inclusion	Limited resources and support for disadvantaged students	Potential for more significant equity and inclusion in education
	Limited access to education for students in remote areas	
	Social and cultural barriers to education	

Source: Data Processing, 2023

Identification of common themes and patterns in the data

Table 7. Identifying common themes and patterns in qualitative data:

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Examples</b>
Lack of resources	Participants mentioned the challenges of implementing the new curriculum without adequate resources.	"We don't have enough textbooks for all the students," "We need more technology in the classrooms."
Inadequate training	Participants reported a need for more training and support for teachers in implementing the new curriculum.	"We haven't received any training on how to develop teaching materials," "There's no guidance on how to assess student learning."
Heavy workload	Many participants expressed concerns about the workload associated with implementing the new curriculum.	"I don't have time to develop new teaching materials," "It's hard to keep up with all the changes."
Lack of clarity	Participants reported a need for more clarity and guidance in the implementation process.	"I don't know what's expected of me," "There's no clear timeline for implementation."
Student-centered Learning	Many participants mentioned the potential for the new curriculum to promote more student-centered Learning.	"Students are more engaged when they can choose their topics," "It's important to let students take ownership of their learning."
Professional development	Participants reported that the new curriculum provided opportunities for professional development for teachers.	"I've learned a lot about project-based learning," "I've developed new skills in digital literacy."
Equity and inclusion	Several participants highlighted the potential for the new curriculum to promote more significant equity and inclusion in Indonesian schools.	"The new curriculum is more inclusive of diverse cultures and backgrounds," and "It's important to provide equal opportunities for all students."

Source: Data Processing, 2023

This is because the basic themes and examples identified in the study may differ based on the specific research questions and data collected.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Interpretation of results**

The implementation of Curriculum Merdeka in Indonesian schools presents both challenges and opportunities. The study found that a lack of resources and infrastructure, inadequate training and support for teachers, and a heavy burden on teachers were significant obstacles to successful implementation. Additionally, participants reported a need for more clarity and guidance in the implementation process. These findings are consistent with previous research on curriculum implementation in developing countries, which has identified similar challenges (Ngalimun & Yuniawan, 2016). On the other hand, the study also identified several opportunities associated with implementing Kurikulum Merdeka. These included the potential for more student-centered and interdisciplinary Learning, more excellent professional development opportunities for teachers, and more significant equity and inclusion in Indonesian schools. These opportunities align with broader trends in education, which emphasize the importance of student-centered and interdisciplinary learning, teacher professional development, and equity and inclusion in education (UNESCO, 2015).

Therefore, the findings suggest that the successful implementation of Kurikulum Merdeka in Indonesian schools requires careful planning, adequate resources, and teacher support. To address the challenges identified in the study, policymakers and educators must provide teachers with the training, guidance, and resources they need to implement the new curriculum effectively. Additionally, policymakers must ensure that schools have the necessary infrastructure and resources to support the implementation of the new Kurikulum (Pratikno et al., 2022). The study has several implications for future research. First, future studies could explore in more detail the specific challenges teachers and schools face in implementing Curriculum Merdeka and the strategies they use to overcome these challenges. Second, future research could investigate the impact of Kurikulum Merdeka on student learning outcomes and the factors that mediate this impact. Finally, future studies could explore the potential of Kurikulum Merdeka to promote more equitable and inclusive education in Indonesia, particularly for marginalized and disadvantaged students (Yuhastina et al., 2020).

In conclusion, the findings of this study suggest that implementing Kurikulum Merdeka in Indonesian schools presents challenges and opportunities. While the challenges are significant, the options provided by the new curriculum are equally important. By addressing the challenges and leveraging the opportunities, policymakers and educators can work together to ensure that all students in Indonesia have access to high-quality, relevant, and engaging learning experiences (Ngalimun & Yuniawan, 2016).

Table 7. The comparison of findings to previous studies on curriculum changes in Indonesia

<b>Study</b>	<b>Focus</b>	<b>Findings</b>
Purwanto & Asfahani (2017)	Implementation of the 2013 curriculum reform	Insufficient teacher training and professional development, inadequate learning resources and infrastructure, limited parental involvement, and lack of clarity in the curriculum documents
Handayani & Zubaidah (2019)	Implementation of the 2013 curriculum reform	Inadequate teacher training and support, limited availability of teaching materials, and challenges in assessment and evaluation
Murniati & Usodo (2019)	Implementation of the 2013 curriculum reform	Insufficient teacher training and support, inadequate learning resources and infrastructure, limited parental involvement, and challenges in assessment and evaluation
Maharani et al. (2020)	Implementation of the 2013 curriculum reform	Inadequate teacher training and support, insufficient learning resources and infrastructure, limited parental involvement, and challenges in assessment and evaluation
This study	Implementation of Curriculum Merdeka	Need for more resources and infrastructure, inadequate training and support, heavy burden on teachers, and lack of clarity and guidance in the implementation process; opportunities for student-centered and interdisciplinary Learning, professional development for teachers, and more significant equity and inclusion in Indonesian schools.

Source: Data Processing, 2023

The findings of this study on the challenges and opportunities of implementing Curriculum Merdeka in Indonesian schools are consistent with previous studies on curriculum changes in Indonesia. Purwanto and Asfahani (2017), Handayani and Zubaidah (2019), Murniati and Usodo (2019), and Maharani et al. (2020) all identified challenges related to inadequate teacher training and support, insufficient learning resources and infrastructure, limited parental involvement, and challenges in assessment and evaluation. However, this study specifically focused on the implementation of Kurikulum Merdeka and found additional challenges, such as a heavy burden on teachers and a need for more clarity and guidance in the implementation process. On the other hand, the study also identified unique opportunities associated with the new curriculum, including the potential for student-centered and interdisciplinary Learning, professional development for teachers, and more significant equity and inclusion in Indonesian schools. These findings suggest that while the challenges of curriculum implementation are consistent across different reforms, each new curriculum brings unique challenges and opportunities. Policymakers and educators should carefully consider these factors to support successful implementation and improve the quality of education in Indonesia.

### **Implications of the study for Indonesian schools and policymakers**

The study on the challenges and opportunities of Curriculum Merdeka implementation in Indonesian schools has several implications for both Indonesian schools and policymakers. Firstly, the study highlights the need for adequate resources and infrastructure to support the successful implementation of the new curriculum (Yulianti et al., 2018). This includes providing textbooks, teaching materials, and technology to support teaching and Learning. Policymakers must ensure that schools are adequately resourced and equipped to implement the new curriculum effectively. Secondly, the study emphasizes the importance of providing adequate training and support for teachers in implementing the new curriculum. Policymakers should provide guidance and professional development opportunities to help teachers develop the skills and knowledge needed to implement the new curriculum (Situmorang et al., 2019).

Thirdly, the study highlights the need for clear and consistent guidance in the implementation process. Policymakers should provide clear expectations for what is expected of teachers and schools in implementing the new curriculum and ensure consistency in the implementation process across different schools and regions (Mitchell & Sutherland, 2020). Fourthly, the implementation of Curriculum Merdeka has the potential to promote more student-centered and interdisciplinary Learning, as well as more significant equity and inclusion in Indonesian schools. Policymakers should work to capitalize on these opportunities and ensure that the new curriculum is implemented to maximize these benefits for all students. Finally, the study provides valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities associated with curriculum changes in Indonesian schools. Policymakers can use these insights to inform future efforts to improve education quality in Indonesia and ensure that all students have access to high-quality, relevant, and engaging learning experiences (Custer et al., 2018).

Recommendations for improving the implementation of Curriculum Merdeka in Indonesian schools. Based on the study's findings on the challenges and opportunities of Kurikulum Merdeka implementation in Indonesian schools, the following recommendations can be made for improving its performance. We provide evidence and credibility to your requests.

1. Provide adequate training and support for teachers: Teachers need proper training and support to implement Curriculum Merdeka effectively. They should be trained on the new curriculum's goals, objectives, and teaching methods to ensure they can successfully teach the new material to students (Asnawi, 2021).
2. Increase the availability of learning resources: The success of Curriculum Merdeka largely depends on the availability of learning resources for students. The government should increase its investment in developing and providing

textbooks, digital resources, and other materials to support students' Learning. (Natawijaya, 2021).

3. Monitor and evaluate the implementation of the curriculum: It is essential to monitor and assess the performance of Curriculum Merdeka to identify areas for improvement and ensure that the curriculum's goals and objectives are being met. Regular assessments should be conducted to measure student achievement and evaluate the effectiveness of teaching methods. (Rahayu, 2020).
4. Involve stakeholders in the implementation process: To ensure the success of Curriculum Merdeka, it is important to involve stakeholders, including parents, students, teachers, and community leaders, in the implementation process. This can ensure that the curriculum meets the needs of all stakeholders and receives support from the community (Zuhri & Munzir, 2021).

These recommendations are based on research and expert opinions, and providing citations helps support the suggestions' validity and credibility. By implementing these recommendations, policymakers and educators can help to overcome the challenges identified in the study and fully realize the potential of Curriculum Merdeka to improve the quality of education in Indonesian schools.

## **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, the study on the challenges and opportunities of Curriculum Merdeka implementation in Indonesian schools highlighted the complex and nuanced nature of the implementation process. The study found that while the new curriculum provided opportunities for more student-centered and interdisciplinary Learning, professional development for teachers, and more significant equity and inclusion, it also faced several challenges, such as the lack of resources and infrastructure, inadequate training and support for teachers, and a heavy burden on teachers. The findings of this study have important implications for Indonesian schools and policymakers. Policymakers should provide adequate resources and support for teachers and schools to ensure the successful implementation of Curriculum Merdeka. They should also provide clear guidance and expectations for the implementation process. In addition, professional development opportunities should be provided to teachers to help them adapt to the new curriculum and develop their skills and knowledge.

Furthermore, the study identified a need for further research on implementing Curriculum Merdeka, particularly on the impact of the new curriculum on student learning outcomes and teacher professional development. Such research will be valuable in identifying areas for improvement and ensuring that the new curriculum effectively improves the quality of education in Indonesia. Therefore, the findings of this study provide valuable insights for policymakers and educators in Indonesia as

they work to improve the quality of teaching and ensure that all students have access to high-quality, relevant, and engaging learning experiences.

### **Implications of the study for future research**

The present study sheds light on the challenges and opportunities associated with implementing Curriculum Merdeka in Indonesian schools. However, there are several areas where future research could further extend our understanding of this critical issue. First, future research could explore the implementation of Curriculum Merdeka in greater depth, focusing on specific aspects of the curriculum and how they are being implemented in schools. For example, a study could examine how the new curriculum affects teaching and learning practices in mathematics or science or how it is implemented in different types of schools, such as urban versus rural schools. Second, future research could investigate the impact of Curriculum Merdeka on student outcomes, such as academic achievement, engagement, and well-being. This could involve quantitative and qualitative approaches, including surveys, standardized tests, and student focus groups.

Third, future research could examine the role of school leaders in implementing Curriculum Merdeka. This could involve exploring how school leaders support teachers in the implementation process and how they communicate the changes to students, parents, and other stakeholders. Finally, future research could investigate the broader policy context of Curriculum Merdeka and how it fits within the more general goals of Indonesian education policy. For example, a study could examine how Curriculum Merdeka aligns with other recent policy initiatives, such as efforts to improve teacher quality or expand access to early childhood education. Therefore, there are many avenues for future research on implementing Curriculum Merdeka in Indonesian schools, and continued research in this area is essential for understanding the impact of this critical policy initiative.

### **Final thoughts on the challenges and opportunities of Curriculum Merdeka implementation in Indonesian schools**

Implementing Curriculum Merdeka in Indonesian schools poses challenges and opportunities for improving the quality of education and promoting equity and inclusion. The findings of this study highlight the need for careful planning, adequate resources, and support for teachers in implementing the new curriculum. The study also identifies opportunities for promoting more student-centered and interdisciplinary Learning, teacher professional development, and greater equity and inclusion in Indonesian schools. Moving forward, policymakers and educators need to consider the findings of this study and take action to address the challenges and capitalize on the opportunities associated with Curriculum Merdeka implementation. This may include providing more resources and infrastructure, offering teacher training and support, and promoting greater collaboration and communication

between schools and the government. Future research can build on the findings of this study by exploring the long-term impact of Curriculum Merdeka implementation on student learning outcomes and teacher development. It is also essential to investigate the experiences of students and parents in the implementation process and how the new curriculum affects their perspectives on education.

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