

Systematic Literature Review: Problematics of Implementation the Merdeka Curriculum in Social Studies Learning

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Abstract: Various problems arise from the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in various subjects, including Social Studies. This study explores the problems of implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in Social Studies learning through the systematic literature review (SLR) method. Researchers reviewed various literature to identify the challenges faced in implementing this curriculum in schools. The results of the study indicate that teachers' readiness and understanding of the Merdeka Curriculum are still limited, with many teachers having difficulty applying curriculum concepts, especially in evaluation and learning planning. In addition, the integration of local and religious values in learning has not been fully effective, while limited infrastructure and digital access hinder the interactive learning process. Monotonous learning methods and minimal use of learning media make students less enthusiastic and have difficulty understanding the material. Teachers also face technical constraints in time management and limited references. Learning evaluations that focus on formative assessments and group projects are still constrained by limited resources and infrastructure. Therefore, increased training and technical support are needed to optimize the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in Social Studies learning.

Keywords: Merdeka Curriculum; Systematic Literature Review; Social Studies.

Introduction

The presence of the Merdeka Curriculum in Indonesia is an important breakthrough in the national education system. This curriculum emphasizes the importance of character education, creativity, and 21st century skills, all of which aim to prepare the next generation to face various global challenges (Ainissyifa, 2017; Windayanti et al., 2023). The aim of the Merdeka Curriculum is to provide freedom for schools and teachers to develop a curriculum according to the needs of students and the conditions of each region (Rahmadayanti & Hartoyo, 2022). Of course, in terms of implementation, the Merdeka Curriculum is expected to be able to overcome problems with

the conventional education system, such as limited teaching materials and learning methods that are less relevant to current development. Anggraena, et al (2021) also emphasized that this curriculum is expected to be able to present learning that is more relevant, contextual, and based on local potential, so that students can be more involved and motivated in the learning process.

The implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in the field does not always run smoothly. There are various challenges faced by schools and teachers in implementing this curriculum. These challenges include the lack of teacher understanding of the concept and implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum (Miladiah et al., 2023; Rusmiati et al., 2023). In addition, there are also

limited resources and resistance to change from conventional learning methods (Ningsi et al., 2024). Adaptation of this new curriculum also requires time and adequate support from various parties, including the government, schools, and the education community. In addition, limited resources, such as textbooks, teaching aids, and access to information technology, are also significant obstacles in supporting the optimal implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum (Winarno & Mujahid, 2024).

The implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in the context of learning Social Studies at the secondary school level, such as Middle Schools, Madrasah Tsanawiyah, and the like, turns out to face the same or even more complex challenges (Karsiwan et al., 2023). Ideally, social studies learning is dynamic and contextual, but is often hampered by limited time, resources, and teachers' understanding of effective learning methods. The Merdeka Curriculum, which should be able to improve the quality and relevance of social studies learning, often cannot be implemented properly due to these various constraints. As a result, the goal of implementing social studies learning to develop students' understanding of the social, cultural, and civic environment is often not optimally achieved (Hasibuan et al., 2024).

Findings from several cases show that the availability of resources in schools is often inadequate to support the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum (Luthfia et al., 2024). Limited textbooks, teaching aids, and access to information technology are serious obstacles in the learning process (Basri & Rahmi, 2023). In addition, resistance to change from teachers and students can also be an additional challenge in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum.

Given the above conditions, this study aims to explore and analyze the obstacles or challenges faced in the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in social studies learning at the junior high school level. The urgency of this study lies in the importance of ensuring that the Merdeka Curriculum can be implemented effectively to improve the quality of education on a national scale. Given the importance of social studies as a subject that teaches social, cultural, and citizenship

values. The successful implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in social studies lessons will contribute to the formation of a young generation that is more critical, creative, and has a strong national insight. By conducting a literature study, it is hoped that effective solution view can be found to overcome various challenges and obstacles in the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum while providing recommendations for the development of better education policies in the future.

Materials and Methods

Study Area

Researchers apply the systematic literature review (SLR) method to explore the problems of implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in Social Studies learning. SLR is an approach to finding, evaluating, and summarizing empirical evidence comprehensively (Krupinski, 2019). This method provides reliable results to support decision making and serve as a guide for future research. The main focus of this study is to explore the obstacles and challenges faced in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum at the school level. This process includes searching for literature related to this topic (Mahanum, 2021). By examining various articles and journals, researchers identify key themes that emerge in previous research, thereby helping to build a more solid research framework (Hariyati, 2010).

Procedures

Researchers tracked and selected relevant articles with certain criteria, such as the year of publication covering the range of 2022 to 2024. Reliable academic sources, including articles published in leading journals, were the basis for selecting literature to ensure that the data collected was valid and up-to-date (Ajani, 2023). This selection process also includes an analysis of the suitability of the keywords used in the study to ensure relevance to the topic being studied. The advantage of the SLR method is its ability to reduce bias through systematic and structured data selection, and following the Preferred Reporting Items for

Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis (PRISMA) guidelines to increase transparency and reproducibility in research (Agus et al., 2023). Data transparency can be processed to reduce bias from the topic being researched (Mathew, 2022; Sobieraj & Baker, 2021). So these advantages make it easier for academics to understand the results of previous research (Koszytan et al., 2021).

Data search using the help of modern search technology called the Publish or Perish application. Modern search technology is able to drastically increase the efficiency of traditional literature searches, allowing the identification of relevant literature in a shorter time (Schumann et al., 2020).

Data Analysis

After selecting the appropriate articles, researchers conduct analysis and synthesis of the identified literature to produce accurate results (Azarian et al., 2023; Newman & Gough, 2020; Tikito & Souissi, 2019). The researcher evaluates the contribution of each study in the context of the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, focusing on various factors that can influence the effectiveness of the curriculum in social studies learning. This process includes organizing information and presenting findings systematically. In this way, the SLR helps in identifying existing research gaps and recommending areas for further study (Alyari & Jafari Navimipour, 2018). The results of this SLR are expected to provide comprehensive insight into the problems faced in terms of contextuality and relevance to the topic being studied (Cumming et al., 2023). It can also produce a broader and deeper understanding of the issue, which can assist in evidence-based decision-making in education.

Results and Discussion

Results

The data obtained using the SLR method was obtained through Publish or Perish with the Google Scholar database. Data searches were carried out using keywords that were processed into strings (“Problematika” OR “Hambatan” OR “Tantangan” OR “Rintangan” OR “Kendala” OR “Halangan” OR “Kesulitan” OR “Masalah” OR “Gangguan” AND “Pembelajaran IPS SMP” OR

“Pembelajaran IPS MTs” AND “Kurikulum Merdeka”). This data search is also limited from 2022 to 2024.

The findings showed that there were 712 papers obtained from the “string” and the limitations. The researchers then filtered the duplication of the papers found as many as 16 papers. Then the researchers began the screening stage based on the title, abstract, and method. The screening results obtained 29 papers that passed, so there were 683 papers in the record excluded category.

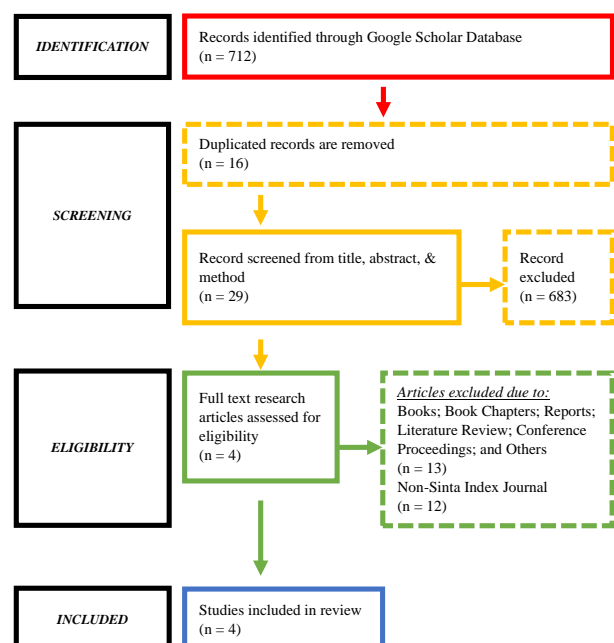
Then continued with testing eligibility, where researchers directly reviewed the paper with the article category. There were 13 papers with categories outside of journal articles. Meanwhile, to be more convincing, researchers also separated articles that were not indexed by SINTA as many as 12 papers. So that only 4 articles remain with the review process by researchers. These criteria can be seen in table 1 and PRISMA in table 2.

Table 1. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Criteria	Inclusion	Exclusion
Timeline	2022 - 2024	< 2022
Document Type	Research Articles	Books; Book Chapters; Reports; Literature Review; and Conference Proceedings
Source Type	Journals	Non-Journals
Indexing	SINTA	Non-SINTA

Note: Researcher Data Processing Results

Table 2. Flowchart of PRISMA

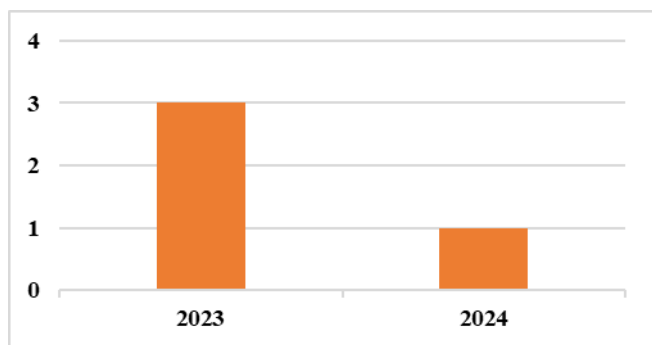


Note: Researcher Data Processing Results

A. Research by Publication Year

2022 is the first year of the launch of the Merdeka Curriculum in Indonesian education. (Kemendikbudristek, 2022). Since that year, researchers have found 4 articles that fit the criteria of this study. 3 articles from 2023 and 1 article from 2024. The distribution of these articles can be seen in table 3.

Table 3. Distribution of Publication Year



Note: Researcher Data Processing Results

B. Research Based on Journal Distribution, Publishers, and Indexing

Researchers also mapped the distribution of journals, publishers, and indexing of the four articles that were studied in depth. The articles were also given article IDs with codes A1 to A4. Indexing plays an important role in maintaining journal quality, expanding reader reach, and providing reliable information for academics (Elizabeth, 2020). So the higher the indexing performance, the better the quality of the research articles being reviewed. The results of the distribution can be seen in table 4.

Table 4. Distribution of Journal, Publisher, and Indexing

Article ID	Journal	Journal Acronym	Publisher	Indexing
A1	Edueksos: Jurnal Pendidikan Sosial dan Ekonomi	E:JPSE	IAIN Syekh Nurjati Cirebon	Sinta 3
A2	Journal of Moral and Civic Education	JMCE	Universitas Negeri Padang	Sinta 3

A3	Jurnal Perspektif Pendidikan dan Keguruan	JPPK	Universitas Islam Riau	Sinta 4
A4	Jurnal Pendidikan Ekonomi (JURKAMI)	JPE	STKIP Persada Khatulistiwa	Sinta 4

Note: Researcher Data Processing Results

C. Research Based on the Distribution of Study Areas

The distribution of the areas of this study is of course in Indonesia, but in different regions as in table 5.

Table 5. Distribution of Region Study

Article ID	Region of Study	Province of Study	Number of Region Studies	Authors
A1	Kudus	Middle Java	1	Sulaswari, Misroh; Priyanto, AT. Sugeng
A2	Agam	West Sumatra	1	Basri, Wahidul; Rahmi, Tya Sofia
A3	Ambon	Maluku	1	Rehalat, Aminah
A4	Sintang	West Kalimantan	1	Darsela, Darsela; Pelipa, Emilia Dewiati; Thoharudin, Munawar

Note: Researcher Data Processing Results

D. Problematics of Implementation the Kurikulum Merdeka in Social Studies Learning

The various findings related to the suitability of the topics/themes studied in the articles studied can be seen in Table 6.

Table 6. Problematics of Implementation the Kurikulum Merderka in Social Studies Learning

Article ID	Authors	Publication Year	Result
A1	Sulaswari, Misroh; Priyanto, AT. Sugeng	2023	The findings of this article mention several main points related to the perceptions of social studies teachers towards the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum at Madrasah Tsanawiyah (MTs) Kudus: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher Readiness for the Merdeka Curriculum: Although most social studies teachers have heard about the Merdeka Curriculum, many

			<p>feel unprepared to implement it, especially in terms of the learning and evaluation process. They also feel that they have not received adequate training related to this curriculum.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integration of Islamic Values: Social studies teachers at MTs Kudus realize the importance of integrating Islamic values in social studies learning. The Merdeka Curriculum gives teachers the freedom to develop learning materials that are in accordance with the characteristics of the school, environment, and students, including including Islamic values in the material. • Constraints in Implementation: Teachers face several difficulties in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum, such as minimal socialization, lack of technical training related to the preparation of lesson plans, evaluation, and development of teaching materials that are in accordance with learning outcomes. • Perception of the Importance of Integrating Science and Religion: Social studies teachers consider it important to integrate science and religion so that science is not separated from religious values. However, strategies for integrating science and religion in learning are still poorly understood by teachers. In conclusion, although teachers at MTs Kudus are open to curriculum changes and understand the importance of integrating Islamic values, they still need further training and support to fully implement the Merdeka Curriculum effectively. 			<p>Merdeka Curriculum, so they are still confused in its implementation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Literacy and Digital Access Issues: Social studies teachers still rely on textbooks as the only source of learning and have not done much digital literacy. Difficult internet access is also a barrier. • Lack of Teacher Competence: Some teachers have not been able to utilize information and communication technology in the learning process, which is an important aspect of the Merdeka Curriculum. • Inadequate Facilities and Infrastructure: Limited learning facilities, such as the minimal number of LCD projectors, hinder the implementation of more interactive learning. This study highlights that these challenges affect the effectiveness of the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum and require solutions such as improving teacher training, providing facilities and infrastructure, and better digital access. 	
				A3	Rehalat, Aminah	2023	<p>The findings of this study include several major problems faced during the learning process, namely:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning Methods: Teachers still predominantly use the lecture method, which is considered monotonous and uninteresting for students. This causes boredom and lack of enthusiasm for learning among students. • Limited Learning Media: Lack of use of learning media such as images, videos, or other aids that can make learning more interesting and help students understand the material better. • Unconducive Classroom Conditions: There are problems such as students who are sleepy, joking, and not focused during learning. This condition hinders the learning process and causes the material not to be delivered effectively.
A2	Basri, Wahidul; Rahmi, Tya Sofia	2023	<p>The findings of this article regarding the obstacles faced by social studies teachers in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum at SMPN 1 IV Koto, Agam Regency, reveal several main challenges:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of Teacher Understanding: Social studies teachers still have difficulty understanding the Merdeka Curriculum, especially in changing the mindset from the 2013 Curriculum (K13) to the Merdeka Curriculum. • Lack of Training and Socialization: Social studies teachers have not received enough training and socialization regarding the 				
				A4	Darsela, Darsela; Pelipa, Emilia Dewiati; Thoharudin, Munawar	2024	<p>The findings of the article on the implementation of the Independent Learning Curriculum in the Integrated Social Studies subject at SMP Panca Setya 2 Sintang are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smooth Implementation: The Independent Learning Curriculum at SMP Panca Setya 2 Sintang has been implemented well, although

		<p>teachers and students still need to adjust to this curriculum change.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning Planning: The planning process involves the preparation of teaching modules, which include learning objectives and learning objective flows, with a focus on essential materials and projects to develop student competencies. • Implementation Stage: Learning is carried out through preliminary steps, core activities, and closings, with an emphasis on formative assessments to monitor student progress during the learning process. • Learning Evaluation: Evaluation is carried out through formative assessments, group-based projects, and student assessment instruments that include assessments of attitudes, knowledge, and skills. • Curriculum Advantages: The Merdeka Curriculum provides more freedom to schools and teachers in determining learning methods that suit the needs of students, with a focus on competency development through projects and deeper learning. • Disadvantages and Challenges: The challenges faced include difficulties in following the literacy movement, the need for a deeper understanding of the material, and the difficulty of teachers in creating a creative learning atmosphere. • Technical Barriers: Teachers face obstacles such as limited reference sources, uneven digital and internet access, and difficulties in time management to update learning methods. • Efforts to Overcome Barriers: To overcome these obstacles, schools utilize the Merdeka Mengajar platform, which helps teachers in creating learning content, as well as efforts to increase digital and internet access to support learning.
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Note: Researcher Data Processing Results

Discussion

Based on the findings from several articles above, the following are the problems that arise in the

implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in social studies learning.

A. Teacher Readiness and Understanding

Many teachers are not ready to face the change from the 2013 Curriculum (K13) to the Merdeka Curriculum. They have difficulty understanding the concept of the Merdeka Curriculum and how to apply it, especially in terms of evaluation and learning planning (Basri & Rahmi, 2023; Sulaswari & Priyanto, 2023). Teachers have not received sufficient training so they feel confused about how to implement it (Sulaswari, 2023; Basri, 2023). There is an urgent need to increase training and outreach related to this curriculum.

B. Integration of Local and Religious Values

Teachers in several madrasahs are aware of the importance of integrating Islamic values in social studies learning. However, the implementation strategy for integrating religious values and social materials is still not fully understood (Sulaswari & Priyanto, 2023). This shows the need to develop materials that are appropriate to the characteristics of schools and students, including the integration of local and religious values.

C. Infrastructure and Digital Access Limitations

Infrastructure problems, such as the lack of adequate learning facilities and infrastructure (LCD projectors, internet access), hinder the interactive and effective learning process (Basri & Rahmi, 2023; Darsela et al., 2024). The problem of unequal digital access is also a major challenge in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum.

D. Monotonous Learning Method

Teachers still predominantly use the lecture method which is considered monotonous, causing students to be less enthusiastic about learning (Rehalat, 2023). This shows that innovation in learning methods is still very much needed to create a more interactive learning atmosphere that is relevant to the needs of students. The ability of teachers to carry out interactive learning in the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum is very much needed. By implementing a variety of learning methods, such as discussions,

collaborative projects, to the use of technology, it can motivate students to be more active. Of course, this is in line with the objectives of the Merdeka Curriculum, namely to form students who are independent, creative, and highly competitive.

E. Limitations of Learning Media

Minimal use of learning media, such as images, videos, or other aids, makes social studies learning less interesting and difficult for students to understand (Rehalat, 2023). The Merdeka Curriculum provides the freedom to create more varied materials, but its implementation has not been maximized because teachers are still limited in using varied learning media.

F. Technical Constraints and Time Management

Teachers face difficulties in time management, especially in updating learning methods and following literacy movements (Darsela et al., 2024). Limited reference sources are also an obstacle in developing learning materials that are in accordance with the Merdeka Curriculum.

G. Learning Evaluation

Evaluation in the Merdeka Curriculum tends to focus more on formative assessment and group-based projects (Darsela et al., 2024). In its implementation, the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum still faces technical obstacles, especially in the implementation of projects that require adequate infrastructure and resource support.

Conclusions

Based on the results and discussions above, the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in social studies learning faces various challenges, especially related to the readiness and understanding of teachers which are still limited, so that further training and socialization are needed. In addition, the integration of local and religious values has not been fully effective due to the lack of a clear strategy. Limited infrastructure and uneven digital access are also significant obstacles, hindering the creation of interactive learning. Monotonous learning methods and

minimal use of media make students less interested and have difficulty understanding the material. Teachers also experience obstacles in time management and limited references, while learning evaluations that focus on formative assessments and group projects are still limited by inadequate infrastructure and resource support.

The Merdeka Curriculum holds great potential, but its success depends on addressing these constraints. Without them, the curriculum's goals of promoting creativity, local relevance, and student engagement will be difficult to achieve.

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