



## Implementation of Merdeka Belajar Policy: Constraints in the Pancasila Students Profile Strengthening Project

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### Abstract

This paper aims at providing information on how the implementation of Merdeka Belajar policy in Schools is, with a focus on describing the constraints encountered in the Pancasila students profile strengthening project (P5). This project is a learning innovation in the Kurikulum Merdeka. P5 intends to produce education that is more independent and innovative, so that students have competence, Pancasila character and are able to compete globally. In fact, there are still a number of important issues to be studied. This research was conducted at SMAN 1 Tomohon which implements the Kurikulum merdeka independently for the 2022-2023 school year. This qualitative research was designed using the Case Study method which aims at observing what the constraints that exist in the implementation of P5 at SMAN 1 Tomohon are. Data collection was based on questionnaires given to 25 teachers teaching in Grade X. There were 14 study groups and 15 subjects in the Kurikulum Merdeka. The data collected through observation, interviews and document studies is verified and presented as a conclusion. Based on this research, it was found that there were obstacles to educators, schools and students in implementing P5. The Kurikulum Merdeka is designed as an effort to restore Indonesian education and transform learning to a higher quality. Therefore, the constraints in one Content of the Merdeka Belajar Policy, namely the implementation of the Kurikulum Merdeka P5 which is at this early stage, may be used as evaluation material, so that a strategic solution plan can be prepared.

**Keywords:** Policy, Curriculum, Merdeka Belajar, Kurikulum Merdeka, P5

## ***Implementation of Merdeka Belajar Policy: Constraints in the Pancasila Students Profile Strengthening Project***

### **Introduction**

The implementation of the Kurikulum Merdeka is a Policy of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology (Kemdikbudristek) which is intended to restore learning. The term used is to overcome the learning loss that occurred during the pandemic that hit not only Indonesia, but the whole world due to the Covid-19 virus. The curriculum formed by Merdeka Belajar policy is echoed as a different curriculum because it is flexible, competency-based, focuses on developing character and soft skills, and is accommodating to world needs. Students experience a lot of material and learning processes which tend to be just rote (cognitive) and do not touch affective and psychomotor aspects. Therefore, Kurikulum Merdeka offers learning that is interactive, simple, essential and deep. The Kurikulum Merdeka focuses on essential material and the development of student competencies according to the phase. This is where the learning process is expected to be more in-depth, not rushed, fun, and meaningful (kemdikbud.go.id). (Santoso et al., 2023)

One of the missions from the Ministry of Education and Culture led by Mr. Minister Nadiem Anwar Makarim, B.A., M.B.A. namely realizing education that is relevant and of high quality, equitable and sustainable, supported by infrastructure and technology. Many lessons, skills and competencies in Indonesian education are seen as unnecessary in the world of work, industry and entrepreneurship. Therefore, it is necessary to create a learning model where soft skills are most needed and must be trained since studying at school. This is the restoration and transformation of Learning.(D. Y. Wang et al., 2023)

The Pancasila students profile strengthening project (P5) is one of the contents in the implementation of the Kurikulum Merdeka. According to the Guide of the Pancasila students profile strengthening project (P5) by the Standards, Curriculum and Education Assessment Agency, abbreviated as BSKAP, Kemdikbudristek Republic of Indonesia in 2022, that the project to strengthen Pancasila student profiles is a project-based co-curricular activity designed to strengthen efforts to achieve competence and character according to Pancasila student profiles compiled by the purpose of Recovery and Learning Transformation based on Graduate Competency Standards. P5 is one of the main focuses of implementing the Kurikulum Merdeka and as a development of the 2013 Curriculum. P5 aims at producing education that is more independent, innovative and able to compete globally.(Armadi & Kumala, 2023)

The reality is that there are still many schools that have not fully implemented P5. Most schools find it difficult to implement this concept. Although this project is considered important to improve the quality of education in Indonesia (Pasla, 2013). SMAN 1 Tomohon is one of the schools that has implemented the Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar and implements P5 learning, even though there are still obstacles. This paper describes the various obstacles to the implementation of the Merdeka Belajar Policy, specifically in the focus on P5 learning implemented at SMAN 1 Tomohon. These various obstacles are very important to study, bearing in mind that the Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar requires evaluation for the sake of improving Education in Indonesia so that the Kurikulum Merdeka becomes a way of liberating education, in which students learn enthusiastically, cheerfully, according to their interests and talents.

## **Research Method**

This qualitative research was designed using case studies which describes a particular setting, object or event in detail and depth (Bogdan and Biklen, 1998). This case study research is classified as an observational case study type which aims to observe what the constraints that exist in P5 learning at SMAN 1 Tomohon are. Primary data collection by distributing questionnaires distributed through electronic media, namely Google Form. This primary data collection is distributed to teachers who teach in Grades X (ten). There are 14 study groups (classes) in the 2022-2023 academic year, so that the total number of teaching teachers for class X is 25 people. There are 15 subjects in the implementation of the Kurikulum Merdeka. Therefore, there are subjects handled by 2 teachers for the entire classes. The data collected through observation, interviews and document studies is verified and presented as a conclusion using the interactive model data analysis components from Miles dan Huberman (Rohendi, 1992).

## **Result and Discussion**

Curriculum is a set of plans and arrangements regarding objectives, content, and learning materials as well as the methods used as guidelines for organizing learning activities to achieve educational goals (Želvys et al., 2020). Law number 20 of 2003 states that curriculum development is carried out by referring to national education standards as mandated in Article 35 paragraph (2) and Article 36 paragraph (1). Curriculums at all levels and types of education are developed with the principle of diversification in accordance with educational units, regional potential, and students themselves. The basic framework and structure of the primary and secondary education curriculum are determined by the government and developed according to their relevance by each education group or unit and school/madrasah committees under the coordination and supervision of the Education Office (W. Wang, 2023). The purpose of the curriculum is learning that can develop abilities and shape the character and civilization of the nation. In other words, the curriculum formed by the Merdeka Belajar policy is flexible, competency-based, focuses on character development and soft skills and is accommodating to world needs (Permendikbud Number 22 of 2020).

Based on BSKAP Decree Number 044/H/KR/2022, more than 140,000 educational units have been determined to implement the Kurikulum Merdeka in the 2022/2023 school year. Currently, there are 142,703 educational units that have implemented the Kurikulum Merdeka independently and 10,635 through the Mover School program and center of excellence vocational schools, with the following details.

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Table 1. Number of IKM Executors

School Year	Type of IKM executor Unit	Numbers of Education unit
2021/2022	Mover Schools	2.492
	SMK center of excellence	901
2022/2023	Implementation of Kurikulum Merdeka jalur independently	3.331
	• learning Independent	90.041
	• changing Independent	49.331
	• sharing Independent	
	Mover Schools	9.234
	SMK Center of Excellence	1.401

Source: Webinar Kemdikbudristek BPPMPV KPTK, 17 March 2023

Based on the table above, there are 153,338 SMA/SMK education units that implement the Kurikulum Merdeka. Meanwhile, there are 399,376 schools in Indonesia for the 2022/2023 academic year. High School (SMA) with 14,236 units, Vocational High School (SMK) with 14,265 units and Madrasah Aliyah (MA) with 9,827 units (BPS, 2023). That means that in total there are 38,328 education implementing units at the SMA/SMK/MA level. If you count the number of SMA and SMK, there are 28,501 education units. Whereas the Supreme Court through the Ministry of Religion has just established a policy for implementing the Kurikulum Merdeka in Madrasas through Decree of the Minister of Religion Number 347 of 2022 concerning Guidelines for Implementation of the Kurikulum Merdeka in Madrasas in August 2022 (Ministry of Religion, 2022). Thus, so far the number of IKM implementers is 38.3% of the total education units in Indonesia.

Quoting from the kemdikbud.go.id page (2022), three options have been set in implementing the Kurikulum Merdeka for the independent pathway in the 2022/2023 academic year. First, Learning Independent, in which educational units are given freedom when implementing the Kurikulum Merdeka in several parts and principles of the Kurikulum Merdeka, without changing the education unit curriculum that is being implemented in PAUD, grades 1, 4, 7, and 10. Second, Changing Independent in which units education is given the freedom to apply the Kurikulum Merdeka by developing its own teaching tools in PAUD, grades 1, 4, 7, and 10 educational units. PAUD education, grades 1, 4, 7 and 10. In order to support the implementation of the Kurikulum Merdeka, the Ministry of Education and Culture has also made data collection on the implementation of the Kurikulum Merdeka by the independent pathways. The data collection was carried out by the Ministry of Education and Culture by giving a readiness questionnaire for the implementation of the Kurikulum Merdeka to interested educational units. The contents of the questionnaire are not a matter of right or wrong, but this readiness questionnaire is to find out which implementation options are suitable for the readiness and condition of the education unit.

SMA Negeri 1 Tomohon began implementing the Kurikulum Merdeka in the 2022/2023 academic year with independent pathways under the Sharing independent category based on the Decree of the Head of the Education Standards, Curriculum and Assessment

Agency (BSKAP) of the Ministry of Education and Culture Research and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia Number 025/H/KR/2022 concerning The Education Unit Implements the Implementation of the Kurikulum Merdeka Independent Pathway in the 2022/2023 Academic Year Phase 1 dated April 27, 2022. The implementation of the Kurikulum Merdeka is carried out in class X. Meanwhile, classes XI and XII apply the 2013 Curriculum. Thus the school organizes 2 curricula in the Education unit simultaneously. Schools develop their own teaching tools. But there are fundamental changes in the implementation of this new Curriculum, in regarding to the Department and P5. At the high school level, there are no longer specialization programs or majors. What exists is that students can choose subjects according to their interests, talents, and aspirations. Teachers teach according to learning outcomes(Winch, 2023). Schools even have the authority to develop and manage learning curricula according to the characteristics of the education unit and the needs of students through the Education Unit Operational Curriculum, abbreviated as KOSP. The success of the Implementation of the Kurikulum Merdeka now depends on the readiness of teachers, students, Principals, and related stakeholders.

The implementation of P5 is flexible in terms of content, activities and implementation time, which is adjusted to the circumstances of students and school conditions in order to use the most of existing resources. The focus of P5 is a learning process that can develop the competence and character of students, not primarily on the product or results of the project. Developing the competence and character of students through group learning around important issues in real contexts that are around or closely related to the daily life and student learning process(Zakharova et al., 2022). P5 is designed separately from intracurricular. In other words, objectives, content, and project learning activities do not have to be related to intracurricular goals and subject matter. Through P5 it is hoped that schools can work together to plan, facilitate and carry out essential assessments for students. In this case, schools can choose themes or issues that are deemed appropriate to the contextual situation of the school or students. The Minister of Education and Culture revealed that the Kurikulum Merdeka is not only present to overcome the learning crisis, but also to create an adaptive generation that can face changing times with independence. In the midst of a learning atmosphere in schools that has so far been monotonous and unattractive to students, the Kurikulum Merdeka offers freedom and flexibility.(Jakubik, 2023)

Major changes to the curriculum however, specifically the implementation of P5, cannot be separated from obstacles which are seen as challenges. Based on the current reality, the implementation of the Kurikulum Merdeka is considered to be less mature in its preparation. A deeper understanding is still needed so that its implementation is more effective and on target. Determining the implementation of IKM independent pathways which is seen as a pressure has caused the teaching system to not be well planned. The preparation of the Platform Merdeka Mengajar (PMM) has not sufficiently equipped teachers. (Rezania et al., 2022)

Nonetheless, SMAN 1 Tomohon identified early readiness in carrying out a Pancasila Students profile strengthening project based on the unit's ability to apply project-based learning. Project-based learning makes students actively explore real-world problems and challenges to gain deeper knowledge. Project-based learning is not just an activity to make a product or work, but an activity that bases the whole series of activities on a contextual problem

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that cannot be done in the short term. Satria Rizky (2022) noted that the P5 planning flow began with forming a project facilitator team to strengthen the profile of Pancasila. The Principal manages a team of project facilitators. This team plays the role of planning and implementing project activities for the entire class and is under the coordination of a coordinator. Then the dimensions, themes, and time allocation for the project to strengthen the Pancasila student profile were designed, in which the facilitating team determined the focus of the dimensions based on the conditions and needs of the school. The facilitating team develops a project model and plans a strategy for processing and reporting the results project. (Hidayat et al., 2022)

Indeed, in identifying the readiness of education units, it can be categorized into several stages, namely 1) Initial stage; The education unit does not yet have a system for preparing and implementing project-based learning. The concept of project-based learning is only known to educators. The educator unit runs the project internally (does not involve outsiders). 2) Developing stage; The educational unit already has a system for carrying out project-based learning, the concept of project-based learning has been understood by some educators, the educator unit has begun to involve parties outside the education unit to help with one of the project activities, and 3) Advanced stage; Project-based learning has become a habit of the education unit, the concept of project-based learning is understood by all educators, the educator unit has collaborated with partners outside the education unit so that the impact of the project can be expanded in a sustainable manner. Based on this identification, SMA Negeri 1 Tomohon is still in its early stages of readiness, where the implementation of the Kurikulum Merdeka P5 begins in the 2022-2023 school year. Educators are just starting to learn the what and how of this profile project-based learning. Steps to determine the dimensions and theme of the P5 at SMA Negeri 1 Tomohon. The education unit chose 4 relevant themes to be the focus of the 7 available (Sustainable lifestyle, Local wisdom, Bhinneka Tunggal Ika, Build your body and soul, Voice of democracy, Engineering and technology and Entrepreneurship). The selection of themes is based on school readiness, the school education calendar which refers to the education calendar of the regional education office of North Sulawesi Province and issues or topics that are currently happening, as the focus of discussion or priority of the education unit.

The 4 projects (P5) that have been carried out at SMA Negeri 1 Tomohon in the 2022-2023 school year are as follows.

Table 2. Theme and topic of P5 Learning

No.	Theme	Topic
1	Build your body and soul	76 th anniversary of SMA Negeri 1 Tomohon.
2	Local wisdom	Cultivating Chrysanthemum Flowers
3	Voice of democracy	Election of the OSIS board
4	Sustainable life style	Waste processing through the Garbage Bank

The P5 time allotment is 12 JP per week. The number of hours is determined based on Kepmendikbudristek RI Number 56/M/2022. For class X with a schedule per week can be seen in the following table.

Table 3. Schedule of P5 Learning

Period	Schedule	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
1	07.15-08.00					P5
2	08.00-08.45					P5
3	08.45-09.30					P5
4	09.30-10.15					P5
Intermission 10.15-10.45						
5	10.45-11.30					P5
6	11.30-12.15					P5
7	12.15-13.00					P5
Intermission 13.00-13.30						
8	13.30-14.15					P5
9	14.15-15.00		P5	P5	P5	P5

Based on the first semester survey and evaluation conducted for subject teachers (mapel) in grade X, there are various obstacles that can be described in the following

Table 4. The evaluation of the constraints in implementing P5

Subject teachers	Comprehension on P5	Results	Constraints
Cultural Arts	To facilitate students to independently develop their interests and talents	Not running optimally	There are still students who have not been actively involved.
Christian Religious Education and Morals 1	Project-based co-curricular activities as a strengthening of competency and character achievement in accordance with the Pancasila student profile.	Not running optimally	Students do not make the most of their time
Islamic Religious Education and Morals 2	Students who are able to become individuals who practice Pancasila values in everyday life	Not running optimally	Time management of P5 socialization
Christian Religious Education and Character 3	P5 is the Project to Strengthen the Pancasila Profile. Where it is part of the Kurikulum Merdeka	Not running optimally	Do not really understand the implementation of P5 properly
History 1	Pancasila Profile Strengthening Project	Not running optimally	Looking for material that is suitable for P5

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History 2	paying attention to 6 dimensions namely 1. faith, piety to TYME, and have a noble character, global diversity, work together, independent, critical reasoning, creative	Running optimally	None
History 3	Cross-disciplinary projects that are contextual and based on community needs or problems within the education unit.	Not running optimally	difficulty mastering or applying basic skills for learning needs in the digital age such as Ms. Word, makes presentations interesting and fun
Pancasila Education	To instill character based on Pancasila and be able to collaborate, be able to work together, and develop the potential of students.	Not running optimally	A bunch of lazy people to get involved with
Math 1	to strengthen efforts to achieve competency and character according to the profile of Pancasila students	Not running optimally	Learning facilities and infrastructure are inadequate
Math 2	seeks to make students the successors of a superior and productive nation, and can participate in global development.	Running optimally	None
Math 3	useful for developing the potential of students, being able to collaborate and strengthen the character of the Pancasila profile	Not running optimally	There are some people who are lazy to get involved
Math 4	cross-disciplinary projects that are contextual and based on community needs / problems that exist within the education unit	Not running optimally	There are some students who are lazy to participate in P5



Physics 1	instilling personal character in students based on Pancasila values	Not running optimally	There is no teacher's special schedule for implementing P5
Physics 2	achievement of competency and character in accordance with the Pancasila student profile compiled based on Graduate Competency Standards	Not running optimally	lack of references or related to the chosen theme and there is still a lack of understanding of the implementation of P5
English	to increase the creativity and productivity of students and to form a character based on Pancasila.	Not running optimally	None
Chemistry	Pancasila profile which has 6 elements	Not running optimally	Students participation is not optimal
Sociology	practice Pancasila values in the learning process	Running optimally	None
Biology 1	Pancasila student profile development project	Running optimally	None
Biology 2	provide opportunities for students to explore according to their conditions and abilities and based on the noble values of Pancasila	Not running optimally	lack of teacher involvement as a companion because the lessons are not in accordance with the project chosen
Economy 1	Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project	Not running optimally	There are students who are less creative and lazy
Economy 2	P5 activities are very well practiced in schools to foster a sense of love and pride for this nation. Even though they are smart, they have no morals.	Not running optimally	Periods must be organized so that there are more P5 activities as well as collaboration between subjects
Informatics	the project to strengthen the Pancasila profile which is part of the Kurikulum Merdeka	Not running optimally	Not understood about the implementation P5
Sports	Pancasila in action	Running optimally	None

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Geography	Pancasila Students profile	Not running optimally	Expenses
Indonesian	Co-curricular activities that strengthen student character while increasing students' abilities/competencies in work.	Running optimally	None

The data above was taken based on the number of teachers teaching in Grade X for 15 subjects in 14 study groups for the 2022-2023 school year with a total of 25 people. 72% of teachers are not yet optimal, 24% are maximized and 4% are not optimal in carrying out P5. Therefore, it is very clear that the obstacles lie with students, educators and the school. The constraints found can be summarized as follows:

- 1) Learners. Students who have not been actively involved are lazy to get involved and do not make the most of their time
- 2) Teacher. Not really understanding the implementation of P5 properly, looking for material that is in accordance with P5, making interesting and fun presentations (utilization of technology), lack of involvement of the teacher as a companion because the lessons are not in accordance with the chosen project
- 3) Schools. lack references related to or related to the chosen theme: Time management for implementing P5 socialization, learning facilities and infrastructure are inadequate and there is no teacher's specific schedule for implementing P5.

Based on the results of this study, it means that it takes time to deepen P5 for educators and schools, including in the framework of planning the P5 funding itself. This is needed so that obstacles for students can be minimized. In line with the results of this study, Pasla (2023) revealed that P5 requires changes in learning systems and methods that are different from the traditional curriculum, so it takes quite a long time to prepare and implement them. He added, the drawback of implementing P5 is that it requires a greater cost compared to the traditional curriculum, because students need more complete and modern equipment. Another P5 obstacle is the lack of availability of competent teaching staff, because it requires teaching staff who have sufficient competence and skills in planning, selection, budgeting, management, and quality assurance of education. In addition, the implementation of P5 requires maximum monitoring and evaluation so that the desired goals can be achieved optimally.

Referring to data from the Ministry of Education and Culture, 40% of teachers can learn the Kurikulum Merdeka without experiencing problems. However, based on the results of this case study study, it shows that 76% of educators need to be further prepared through various strengthening programs. Various ways and strategies must be made to ensure that all teachers have studied the new curriculum well. Another thing that needs to be highlighted from the implementation of the Kurikulum Merdeka is that there is an obligation for schools to implement P5. At the elementary level, 20% must be allocated for project assignments from the total learning hours, at the junior high school level it increases again to 25%, while at the senior high school level it becomes 30%. While in the 2013 curriculum there is no obligation

to implement it (Mahfud, 2022). This fundamental change in the curriculum is striking. The existence of the P5 which carries Pancasila profile education is also seen as overlaid with Pancasila Education intracurricular subject. The new thing in the implementation of P5 is also that there is a P5 report card which is not a requirement for students' grade increases. This report card describes the student progress report in the P5 activity.

Various efforts to support the implementation of the Kurikulum Merdeka as a Ministry of Education and Culture Policy such as the Mover Teacher strategy as a learning leader, establishing the Mover School as a model for transforming Education units, activating the Community of Practice (teacher learning community) within schools and between schools, digital transformation that encourages all educators (teachers), school principals, school supervisors) to actively use the Merdeka Mengajar Platform and create data-driven education planning and budgeting. These new things really challenge the strategic management of schools and various school policies in the context of implementing the Kurikulum Merdeka.

## **Conclusion**

The Ministry of Education and Culture's policy to implement the Kurikulum Merdeka is intended to restore learning. The Kurikulum Merdeka focuses on essential material and the development of student competencies according to the phase. One of the fundamental changes in this new curriculum is the Pancasila Students Profile Strengthening Project, abbreviated as P5. As co-curricular learning, P5 which aims to develop the competence and character of students is allocated a separate learning time and is even documented in a separate P5 learning outcomes report.

Even though the Kurikulum Merdeka offers simple, essential and in-depth learning, this study found various obstacles. The P5 learning process which is expected to be more in-depth, less rushed, fun, and meaningful actually does not get a deeper understanding by the teachers, is carried out too quickly and has an impact on students who are not fully involved. Even though this is project-based learning that will be needed, where students learn to be able to work in groups, collaborate and think about things creatively and instead are not lazy or inactive. Changes in curriculum policy, specifically P5, are changes in mindset and learning models that are unusual compared to the previous curriculum.

Understanding the constraints that exist in this case study, it is very important for the Ministry of Education and Culture to evaluate and find solutions in the framework of the readiness of schools and educators. Training for educators is needed in order to be able to properly implement the Kurikulum Merdeka. If schools and educators are strategically prepared, it will have an impact on the preparation of students and the delivery of quality education according to the mission of the Merdeka Belajar policy.

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