

## Implementation of Literacy-Based Learning Merdeka Curriculum

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**ABSTRACT:** Merdeka Curriculum is a new policy program launched by the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia to improve the quality of education. Literacy learning is the focus of the Merdeka Curriculum because of the importance of literacy skills in facing the era of the industrial revolution 4.0. This study aims to see how the implementation of the Literacy-Based Merdeka Curriculum at SDN 199 Maddukkelleng. The results of the observation show that this school has implemented the independent learning curriculum in stages in grades 1 and 4. Implementation of the literacy-based independent curriculum involves literacy learning skills such as reading, writing, listening, speaking, and writing. The implementation of the independent learning curriculum at SDN 199 Maddukkelleng refers to the stages of explanation, modeling, mentoring and independence. An integrated literacy model based on three literacy scopes, namely functional, informational, and ethical, is used in learning. The implementation of the Literacy-Based Merdeka Curriculum at SDN 199 Maddukkelleng involves the Pancasila learning profile and digital era thinking skills (HOTS). The Pancasila learning profile is implemented through activities that integrate Pancasila values in everyday life. Digital era thinking skills are emphasized through learning that encourages problem solving, critical thinking, creative thinking, argumentation, decision making, collaboration and creativity. The results showed that SDN 199 Maddukkelleng implemented the implementation of the Literacy-Based Merdeka Curriculum by involving the Pancasila learning profile and digital era thinking skills. This implementation is carried out through learner-centered learning methods and in accordance with learning objectives.

**Keywords:** Literacy-Based Learning, Merdeka Curriculum

**ABSTRAK:** Kurikulum Merdeka adalah program kebijakan baru yang diluncurkan oleh Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan Republik Indonesia untuk meningkatkan kualitas pendidikan. Pembelajaran literasi menjadi fokus Kurikulum Merdeka karena pentingnya keterampilan literasi dalam menghadapi era revolusi industri 4.0. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk melihat bagaimana pelaksanaan Kurikulum Merdeka Berbasis Literasi di SDN 199 Maddukelleng. Hasil observasi menunjukkan bahwa sekolah ini telah melaksanakan kurikulum pembelajaran mandiri secara bertahap di kelas 1 dan 4. Pelaksanaan kurikulum mandiri berbasis literasi melibatkan keterampilan pembelajaran literasi seperti membaca, menulis, mendengarkan, berbicara, dan menulis. Pelaksanaan kurikulum pembelajaran mandiri di SDN 199 Maddukelleng merujuk pada tahap penjelasan, pemodelan, pendampingan, dan kemandirian. Model literasi terintegrasi yang berbasis pada tiga ruang lingkup literasi, yaitu fungsional, informasional, dan etis, digunakan dalam pembelajaran. Pelaksanaan Kurikulum Merdeka Berbasis Literasi di SDN 199 Maddukelleng melibatkan profil pembelajaran Pancasila dan keterampilan berpikir era digital (HOTS). Profil pembelajaran Pancasila diterapkan melalui kegiatan yang mengintegrasikan nilai-nilai Pancasila dalam kehidupan sehari-hari. Keterampilan berpikir era digital ditekankan melalui

*pembelajaran yang mendorong pemecahan masalah, berpikir kritis, berpikir kreatif, berargumentasi, pengambilan keputusan, kolaborasi, dan kreativitas. Hasilnya menunjukkan bahwa SDN 199 Maddukelleng melaksanakan Kurikulum Merdeka Berbasis Literasi dengan melibatkan profil pembelajaran Pancasila dan keterampilan berpikir era digital. Pelaksanaan ini dilakukan melalui metode pembelajaran yang berpusat pada peserta didik dan sesuai dengan tujuan pembelajaran.*

***Kata kunci:*** Pembelajaran Berbasis Literasi, Kurikulum Merdeka

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## INTRODUCTION

Education is an effort to develop a smarter and more civilized generation. Education should not only produce a better generation than the previous one but also encourage positive change. Through education, the Indonesian nation seeks to produce a resilient, innovative, and disciplined generation, supported by the ideals of national progress. To achieve this goal, the national education system is structured with a focus on developing capacities that shape the nation's character to educate the life of the nation (Ainia, 2020). Good education begins with a mature and comprehensive curriculum so that its implementation aligns with the desired goals. The curriculum can be described as an educational plan that contains guidelines and principles regarding the type, scope, and sequence of content, as well as the learning process (Jamjemah & Khusni, 2022).

In the context of Indonesia, a new policy introduced by the Ministry of Education and Culture (Kemendikbud) of the Republic of Indonesia, known as Merdeka Belajar (Freedom to Learn), has become a significant milestone in educational reform. This program was launched by the Minister of Education and Culture in the Advanced Indonesia Cabinet, Nadiem Anwar Makarim, with the idea that the freedom to think must begin with teachers before they teach it to students. However, based on the results of the 2018 Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), Indonesia ranked 74th internationally, indicating the low literacy, mathematics, and science skills of students in Indonesia (Hewi, 2020). The decline in PISA scores suggests errors in the methodological approach and orientation of educational policy in Indonesia.

In the era of the Industrial Revolution 4.0, literacy and numeracy skills have become essential foundational abilities. The rapid development of technology poses challenges for the education sector, where individuals who are unable to keep up with these developments will be left behind and risk falling into poverty. Therefore, the role of educational institutions is crucial in producing quality graduates. In response to this, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology implemented the Merdeka Curriculum in 2021 by launching “the Sekolah Penggerak” (Driving School) Program. This program involved 2,492 schools in phase I and 6,747 schools in phase II. Schools that met the criteria to become driving schools were selected as pilot projects to implement the Merdeka Curriculum.

The Merdeka Curriculum features simpler but deeper, more relevant, and interactive content compared to the previous curriculum. The selected materials are focused on essential and important teaching content appropriate to the developmental stage of students, making learning less dense. This curriculum also allows schools the

flexibility to collaborate across subjects and create cross-subject assessments, such as summative tests through projects or project-based evaluations. The most important aspect is that education must be designed and translated into a fun approach.

The Merdeka Curriculum is expected to improve students' literacy and numeracy skills because literacy development is considered urgent and crucial, leading to its inclusion in the curriculum with the hope that the resulting output can compete with other nations. The Ministry of Education and Culture explains that there are six basic literacies that students must possess, namely reading and writing literacy, numeracy literacy, scientific literacy, digital literacy, financial literacy, and cultural and civic literacy. However, the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in the field shows that this program has not yet been fully realized due to various problems, such as inadequate human resource preparation and supporting facilities. Every level of education, from basic education to higher education, strives to adjust to the existing curriculum so that the goals of national education can still be achieved (Manik et al., 2022). Retnaningsih & Kahiriyah (2022) have studied the Merdeka Curriculum in Early Childhood Education, while Aprima & Sari (2022) examined the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in elementary school mathematics lessons. In phase II, based on the Decree of the Head of the Education Standards, Curriculum, and Assessment Agency (BSKAP) Number 7883/C/HK.03.01/2022, issued on August 8, 2022, it was determined that 10 schools in Wajo Regency implemented the Merdeka Curriculum, including 1 kindergarten, 1 elementary school, and 8 junior high schools.

Based on this background and supported by previous research, this study aims to examine how the implementation of the Literacy-Based Merdeka Curriculum is carried out by SDN 199 Maddukelleng as one of the schools that graduated from the Sekolah Penggerak program and implemented the Merdeka Curriculum. This study addresses the gap by specifically examining the implementation in elementary schools and contributes novelty by providing an in-depth analysis of the impact of the Merdeka Curriculum on improving students' literacy at SDN 199 Maddukelleng. The research aims to identify the factors that support and hinder the implementation of the Literacy-Based Merdeka Curriculum at the school and to provide recommendations for further improvement.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This research employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive qualitative method. The purpose of this approach is to present a systematic, factual, and accurate description of the facts and phenomena related to the implementation of the literacy-based *Merdeka* Curriculum at SDN 199 Maddukelleng. Unlike quantitative research, this study does not involve hypothesis testing but rather focuses on describing the existing information in line with the research objectives.

### Research Focus

The focus of this research is on the implementation of the literacy-based *Merdeka* Curriculum, specifically examining the following aspects:

**Table 1.** Focus of the research

No.	Aspects	Explanation
1	<b>Pancasila Learning Profile</b>	This includes the ability to have faith and devotion to God Almighty, independence, critical thinking, global diversity, mutual cooperation, and creativity.
2	<b>Digital Age Thinking Skills</b>	This encompasses problem-solving skills, critical thinking, creative thinking, argumentation skills, decision-making skills, and collaboration and creativity skills.
3	<b>21st Century Literacy</b>	This includes literacy in reading, writing, arithmetic, science literacy, information technology, culture, and citizenship.
4	<b>Functional Literacy</b>	This involves skills in reading, writing, listening, and viewing.
5	<b>Informational Literacy</b>	This includes the ability to communicate, create, access, explore, and identify information.

### Data Collection Techniques

The data collection for this study was conducted through several methods: 1) **Interviews:** In-depth interviews were conducted with the school principal, two teachers, and student representatives from each class. These interviews aimed to gather detailed information on their experiences and perceptions of the implementation of the literacy-based *Merdeka* Curriculum. **Observations:** Observations were carried out to examine the implementation of learning activities, the school environment, and the availability and quality of supporting facilities and infrastructure. These observations aimed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the actual conditions and practices at the school. **Document Review:** The researchers strengthened the data by reviewing several policy documents and comparing them with the existing documents at the school. This review aimed to assess the alignment and consistency between policy guidelines and their implementation in practice.

The combination of these data collection techniques ensures a thorough and accurate portrayal of the implementation of the literacy-based *Merdeka* Curriculum at SDN 199 Maddukelleng. The qualitative approach allows for an in-depth exploration of the subject, providing valuable insights into the successes, challenges, and areas for improvement in the curriculum's implementation.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The research conducted at SDN 199 Maddukelleng provides an insightful exploration of the implementation of the literacy-based Merdeka Curriculum, focusing on the integration of various key educational components designed to foster holistic student development. This study delves into the Pancasila Learning Profile, Higher Level Thinking Skills (HOTS), 21st Century Literacy, Functional Literacy, and Informational Literacy, all of which play a crucial role in shaping the educational experiences and outcomes of the students.

The Pancasila Learning Profile is at the core of the curriculum implementation at SDN 199 Maddukelleng. This profile encompasses fundamental values such as faith, devotion to God Almighty, independence, critical thinking, global diversity, mutual cooperation, and creativity. These values are not merely theoretical but are actively integrated into the daily routines and activities within the school environment. For instance, the emphasis on the culture of smiles, greetings, and starting lessons with prayer reflects the school's commitment to fostering noble character and faith among students. Additionally, the curriculum encourages project-based learning that aligns with local wisdom, such as recycling waste, allowing students to engage in meaningful activities that resonate with their cultural context. These projects are often initiated by students, facilitated by teachers, and supported by community partners, ensuring that the learning process is collaborative and grounded in real-world applications. By adhering to the guidelines for strengthening the Pancasila Learning Profile, the school ensures that students are not only knowledgeable but also embody the values of Pancasila in their daily lives, preparing them to be responsible and character-driven citizens.

The development of Higher Level Thinking Skills (HOTS) is another significant aspect of the curriculum at SDN 199 Maddukelleng. In the digital era, it is imperative for students to acquire skills that enable them to think critically, solve problems, and make informed decisions. The school's approach to fostering HOTS involves integrating digital technology into the learning process, thereby enhancing students' ability to analyze information, collaborate with peers, and develop creative solutions. For example, teachers use digital media to present information, encouraging students to question the validity of the content and express their opinions. This approach not only develops critical thinking but also teaches students the importance of verifying information before accepting it as truth. Furthermore, the curriculum includes project assignments that challenge students to think creatively and innovate, often through the lens of local wisdom. These projects are designed to stimulate imagination and foster the ability to find innovative solutions using digital tools. The emphasis on diverse and learner-centered teaching methods ensures that students are actively engaged in the learning process, making it possible for them to develop the critical and analytical skills needed to thrive in the digital age.

21st Century Literacy is implemented at SDN 199 Maddukelleng with a focus on developing essential skills that prepare students for the demands of modern society. This includes literacy in reading, writing, arithmetic, science, information technology, culture,

and citizenship. The school employs a collaboration-based learning approach, where students are encouraged to work together on group projects, participate in class discussions, and engage in activities that foster teamwork. This method not only enhances communication skills but also strengthens problem-solving abilities and critical thinking. The gradual implementation of 21st-century literacy aims to equip students with the skills needed to understand, analyze, and present information effectively, both in written and oral forms. By aligning the curriculum with the demands of the 21st century, the school ensures that students are well-prepared to face future challenges and opportunities, utilizing technology and media responsibly and effectively.

The promotion of Functional Literacy at SDN 199 Maddukelleng is achieved through targeted strategies that improve reading and writing instruction, instill a love for reading, and integrate literacy into everyday life. Teachers encourage students to read books for 15 minutes before lessons begin, after which students summarize the content based on their understanding. This practice not only enhances reading comprehension but also develops students' ability to articulate their thoughts clearly. The integration of numeracy literacy, such as memorizing multiplication tables, further reinforces functional literacy skills. The presence of reading corners in each classroom is another important element of the school's approach. These spaces are designed to make reading an enjoyable and accessible activity, with books carefully selected to match students' reading levels and interests. The implementation of functional literacy is crucial in equipping students with the practical skills needed to navigate everyday life, ensuring they are prepared for the demands of the future.

Informational Literacy is embedded into the curriculum through project-based learning that aligns with the objectives of the Pancasila Learning Profile. Students are given assignments that require them to create products or works, after which they present their knowledge and understanding of the process. This approach not only develops students' communication skills but also enhances their ability to access, evaluate, and use information effectively. The integration of informational literacy into the curriculum ensures that students are capable of navigating the vast amounts of information available in today's digital world, making informed decisions, and contributing meaningfully to society.

In conclusion, the implementation of the literacy-based Merdeka Curriculum at SDN 199 Maddukelleng is a multifaceted approach that prepares students to meet the challenges of the modern world. By focusing on the Pancasila Learning Profile, HOTS, 21st Century Literacy, Functional Literacy, and Informational Literacy, the school provides a comprehensive educational experience that equips students with the knowledge, skills, and values needed to succeed in both their academic and personal lives. This holistic approach ensures that students are not only academically proficient but also well-rounded individuals who are ready to contribute positively to society.

### **Integrated Literacy Curriculum Fosters Character, Creativity, and Critical Thinking Skills**

The discussion of the research findings can be explained through various theories and previous studies that support the implementation of the literacy-based independent curriculum at SDN 199 Maddukelleng. These findings align with educational concepts in the literature, emphasizing the importance of developing critical thinking skills, 21st-century literacy, functional literacy, and informational literacy.

*First*, the Pancasila Student Profile implemented at SDN 199 Maddukelleng is strongly rooted in the foundational values of Pancasila as a basis for character education in Indonesia. Lickona's (Pala, 2011) theory of character education states that character education aims to instill habits of virtue practiced in daily life, aligning with the school's efforts to promote the culture of smiling, greeting, and starting lessons with prayer. A study by Sumardjoko & Musyiam (2018) also emphasizes the importance of projects based on local wisdom in strengthening Pancasila values. The engagement of students in a waste recycling project not only hones their creativity but also deepens their understanding of Pancasila values. This implementation demonstrates that good character education can shape students into responsible and virtuous citizens, as advocated by educational experts.

*Second*, the implementation of Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) at SDN 199 Maddukelleng aligns with Vygotsky's constructivist learning theory, which emphasizes the importance of social interaction and the use of cultural tools in cognitive development (Hutchins, 2020). The use of digital technology in the school's learning process reflects a constructivist approach, where students are encouraged to think critically, solve problems, and collaborate in groups. Fitria & Suminah (2020) research supports the importance of critical thinking skills in modern education, showing that students who are trained to question information and verify its truthfulness are better prepared to face challenges in the digital era. Furthermore, the emphasis on creativity and innovation through project assignments that incorporate local wisdom aligns with research showing that project-based learning can enhance students' critical thinking and creativity skills (Putri, dkk., 2021).

*Third*, the 21st Century Literacy Components implemented at the school are supported by theories that emphasize the importance of collaborative, communication, and problem-solving skills in modern education. According to the Partnership for 21st Century Skills (2009), 21st-century literacy encompasses the skills needed to succeed in the workplace and daily life, including digital literacy, effective communication, and critical thinking. The collaborative-based learning approach at SDN 199 Maddukelleng, which involves group projects and class discussions, reflects these principles. Research by Dishon & Gilead (2021) also shows that students trained in 21st-century skills are more adaptable to change and better prepared to face future challenges. This indicates that the school's approach is consistent with theories and research emphasizing the importance of developing 21st-century skills in the education curriculum.

*Fourth*, the Functional Literacy implemented at SDN 199 Maddukelleng, through regular reading, writing, and numeracy literacy, aligns with UNESCO's (2006) functional literacy theory, which defines functional literacy as the ability to use reading, writing, and

arithmetic skills to function effectively in society. Research by Alghonaim (2020) indicates that regular reading habits can improve reading comprehension and student engagement in learning. The implementation of reading corners in classrooms at SDN 199 Maddukelleng also reflects an approach supported by research, showing that providing easy and appealing access to reading materials can encourage students' interest in literacy (Akmal, dkk., 2020).

*Finally*, the implementation of Informational Literacy at SDN 199 Maddukelleng aligns with the concept of informational literacy as defined by Al-Zou'bi (2021), which emphasizes that informational literacy involves the ability to access, evaluate, and use information effectively. In the context of this school, students are taught to develop these skills through projects that require them to seek information, evaluate its relevance, and present it meaningfully. Research by Noerjanah & Maulidah (2021) also supports the importance of informational literacy in education, stating that students skilled in informational literacy are better equipped to actively participate in a knowledge-based society. Thus, the implementation of informational literacy at SDN 199 Maddukelleng reflects an effective approach to preparing students to play an active role in the information age.

These research findings are consistent with various theories and previous studies that support the importance of developing literacy and critical thinking skills in education. The literacy-based independent curriculum implementation at SDN 199 Maddukelleng demonstrates that a holistic and integrated approach can produce students who are not only academically intelligent but also possess the character, creativity, and skills needed for success in modern life.

## CONCLUSION

Based on research conducted, it was found that the implementation of an independent literacy-based curriculum at SDN 199 Madukkelleng gave positive results. Teachers at the school implement this curriculum by focusing on various types of evaluation and adapting teaching methods to each student's competency level. The implementation of the independent learning curriculum is adopted in accordance with literacy learning achievements, including the Pancasila learning profile, higher order thinking skills (HOTS - Higher Order Thinking Skills), 21st century literacy, functional literacy, and information literacy. In strengthening the Pancasila Project, all these indicators are considered and implemented based on the established guidelines for strengthening the Pancasila Project. Teachers focus on developing students' Pancasila learning profiles, where Pancasila values and principles are instilled through learning activities. Apart from that, students are also encouraged to develop critical thinking skills, apply literacy in the digital era, acquire 21st century literacy, and develop functional literacy and informational literacy skills. The implementation of the independent learning curriculum at SDN 199 Maddukkelleng refers to the stages of explanation, modeling, guidance, and independence. Literacy learning for elementary school children in the independent curriculum is not the addition of new material, but rather the integration of subjects that focus on children's literacy skills. The



implementation of the Literacy-Based Independent Curriculum at SDN 199 Maddukkelleng involves the Pancasila learning profile and digital era thinking skills (HOTS). The Pancasila learning profile is implemented through activities that integrate Pancasila values in daily life. Digital era thinking skills are emphasized through learning that encourages problem solving, critical thinking, creative thinking, arguing, decision making, collaboration and creativity.

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