

Implementation of the *Kurikulum Merdeka* for the Recovery of Learning in *Sekolah Penggerak*: Integrative Literature Review

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Abstract : Education as a standard for determining the country's progress has experienced segregation during the pandemic. Education in Indonesia is experiencing a crisis and is increasingly left behind with the loss of the meaning of learning (learning loss). As an effort to restore learning, the Ministry of Education and Culture launched a new paradigm curriculum to address the crisis. Of course, it is a real challenge for the world of education to provide a positive response to the face of this new curriculum. This study aims to make a corrective contribution to the implementation of the “kurikulum merdeka” policy in *sekolah penggerak*. Literature review integrative research methods. Obtained 7 articles from journals obtained from various sources. Journals were selected based on PRISMA guidelines. Research shows that the implementation of a *kurikulum merdeka* in *sekolah penggerak* can make the maximum contribution to learning recovery. *Sekolah penggerak* needs to be encouraged in every school, to accelerate schools to realize the vision of Forward Indonesia. In conclusion, the portrait of education always experiences dynamics and changes, so all school members need to work together and be ready for all forms of educational innovation to accelerate schools to realize the vision of Advanced Indonesia.

1 INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of learning loss is not unique to Indonesia; nearly all countries worldwide have been affected by the closure of schools during the COVID-19 pandemic (Engzell et al., 2021). Since March 2020, the pandemic has significantly impacted all sectors of society globally, with each country adopting different strategies to contain the spread of the virus (Aeni et al., 2021). In Indonesia, like many other countries, the pandemic led to widespread school closures, profoundly disrupting the education system. The World Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID-19 a global pandemic, which further exacerbated the situation (Khatri et al., 2020). Learning loss refers to a decline in students' interest in learning, which can manifest in reduced intellectual abilities, academic performance, and psychological well-being, as well as gaps in access to education (Budi et al., 2021). These disruptions are particularly detrimental to younger and

disadvantaged students (Alban Conto et al., 2021), and the majority of those affected belong to Generation Z, who have experienced substantial learning setbacks due to online education (Parahita et al., 2023).

The Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of Indonesia has recognized the urgency of addressing this learning crisis. The *kurikulum merdeka* (Independent Curriculum) was introduced as a response to this educational setback, aiming to recover learning losses and adapt to the changing educational landscape (Ministry of Research and Technology, 2021). This curriculum, previously known as the Curriculum Prototype or the New Paradigm Curriculum, is a strategic initiative to provide a flexible, student-centered learning experience. By 2022/2023, the *sekolah penggerak* (Driving Schools) program, which involves approximately 10,000 educational units across the

nation, has been a critical component of this effort to promote the *kurikulum merdeka* (Indonesia.Go.Id, 2022). These *sekolah penggerak* are envisioned as catalysts for achieving Indonesia's educational goals, focusing on holistic student development, including both academic competence and character, starting with superior human resources such as school leaders and educators (The *sekolah penggerak* program, n.d.).

The implementation of the *kurikulum merdeka* is part of a broader educational paradigm shift towards 21st-century learning, emphasizing a comprehensive approach to curriculum development. It aligns with the principles of the educational philosophy of Ki Hajar Dewantara, focusing on leadership, initiative, and guidance in fostering student growth (Restoration of Education and Freedom of Learning, n.d.). However, despite the government's commitment, the transition to this new curriculum faces significant challenges, particularly in terms of effective implementation. Previous studies highlight obstacles related to curriculum design and its execution in schools, including reliance on technology and the need for collaboration among educators, students, and the broader academic community (Pratikno et al., 2022; Angga et al., 2022). Although the *kurikulum merdeka* aims to be flexible and responsive to students' needs, ensuring its successful implementation requires strong commitment, cooperation, and sustained efforts from all stakeholders.

This study aims to explore the preparation, challenges, and implementation of the *kurikulum merdeka* within *sekolah penggerak* as part of Indonesia's broader education recovery efforts. Understanding the barriers, preparation, and roles of key actors in the successful implementation of the *kurikulum merdeka* is essential to provide valuable insights into the effective recovery of learning losses and contribute to the improvement of Indonesia's education system in the post-pandemic era. By synthesizing findings from empirical studies conducted across *sekolah penggerak*, this research seeks to offer a comprehensive understanding of the curriculum's impact on fostering sustainable educational development. The novelty of this study lies in its in-depth analysis of the practicalities involved in implementing a new curriculum paradigm within the context of *sekolah penggerak*, focusing on addressing learning loss and enhancing educational outcomes in Indonesia.

2 METHOD

This study employed an integrative literature review, a research method that synthesizes, critiques, and integrates representative studies on a specific topic to develop new frameworks or perspectives (Torraco, 2005). The research followed five methodological steps: problem identification, literature search, data evaluation, data analysis, and synthesis (Whittemore & Knafl, 2005).

2.1 Problem Identification

The process began with identifying the research problem and formulating structured research questions based on the PICO framework (Population, Intervention, Comparison, Outcomes). The target population was *sekolah penggerak*, the intervention was the implementation of the *kurikulum merdeka* (new paradigm curriculum/prototype curriculum), and the outcome was the recovery of learning in *Sekolah Penggerak*.

The research questions guiding this study included: (1) What are the constraints and preparations for implementing the *kurikulum merdeka* in *sekolah penggerak*? (2) How is the *kurikulum merdeka* implemented in *sekolah penggerak*? (3) What roles do stakeholders play in the implementation of the *kurikulum merdeka* in *sekolah penggerak*?

2.2 Literature Search

In this study, a thorough literature review was conducted using reputable journal databases. Keywords such as "implementation," "*kurikulum merdeka*," "independent curriculum," "prototype curriculum," and "new paradigm curriculum" were carefully selected to ensure relevant and reliable articles were found. The search was performed across trusted global databases, including Web of Science, ScienceDirect, Scopus, PubMed, and Google Scholar.

2.3 Data Evaluation

The search was guided by pre-defined research questions and filters to ensure consistency. Inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied to select appropriate articles:

2.3.1 Inclusive Criteria

- Peer-reviewed journal articles published between 2021 and 2023.
- Full-text availability in English or Indonesian.
- Empirical studies from reputable institutions, focusing on the implementation of the *kurikulum merdeka* or implementation of a new paradigm curriculum/curriculum prototype.
- Articles specifically addressing the *sekolah penggerak* and curriculum implementation stages.

2.3.2 Exclusive Criteria

- Journals written in foreign languages, non-English or Indonesian.
- Articles not in English or Indonesian.
- Publications before 2021.
- Proceedings, theses, or journals without a DOI/ISSN, or those inaccessible in full.
- Studies unrelated to the implementation of the *kurikulum merdeka* or curriculum prototype. Less valid and valid papers or experiments whose results cannot be trusted.

The selected journals were managed using Rayyan (<https://www.rayyan.ai>) and Mendeley (<https://www.mendeley.com>) for reference management.

2.4 Data Analysis

This study extracted key features from the reviewed literature, including bibliographic details (title, author, abstract, journal, year, volume, issue, and DOI), study types, methods used, data types (e.g., questionnaires, qualitative, mixed methods, observational, intervention), and the types of recruited samples. These elements provided a clear and structured basis for analysis.

2.5 Percentage

The study utilized the PRISMA 2020 framework (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) to ensure a systematic and transparent selection process for the literature review. A total of 5,699 articles were identified from databases, and 334 duplicates were removed. After screening 5,356 articles, 3,597 were excluded for not

meeting the inclusion criteria, leaving 1,768 for further assessment.

At the eligibility stage, 473 articles were reviewed based on their titles and abstracts, and 322 were excluded for being unrelated to the topic. Subsequently, 151 full-text articles were assessed, of which 122 were excluded for focusing on conceptual frameworks rather than curriculum implementation or failing to meet the inclusion criteria.

Finally, 29 studies met all criteria and were included for in-depth review, focusing on the implementation of the *Kurikulum Merdeka* in *Sekolah Penggerak*.

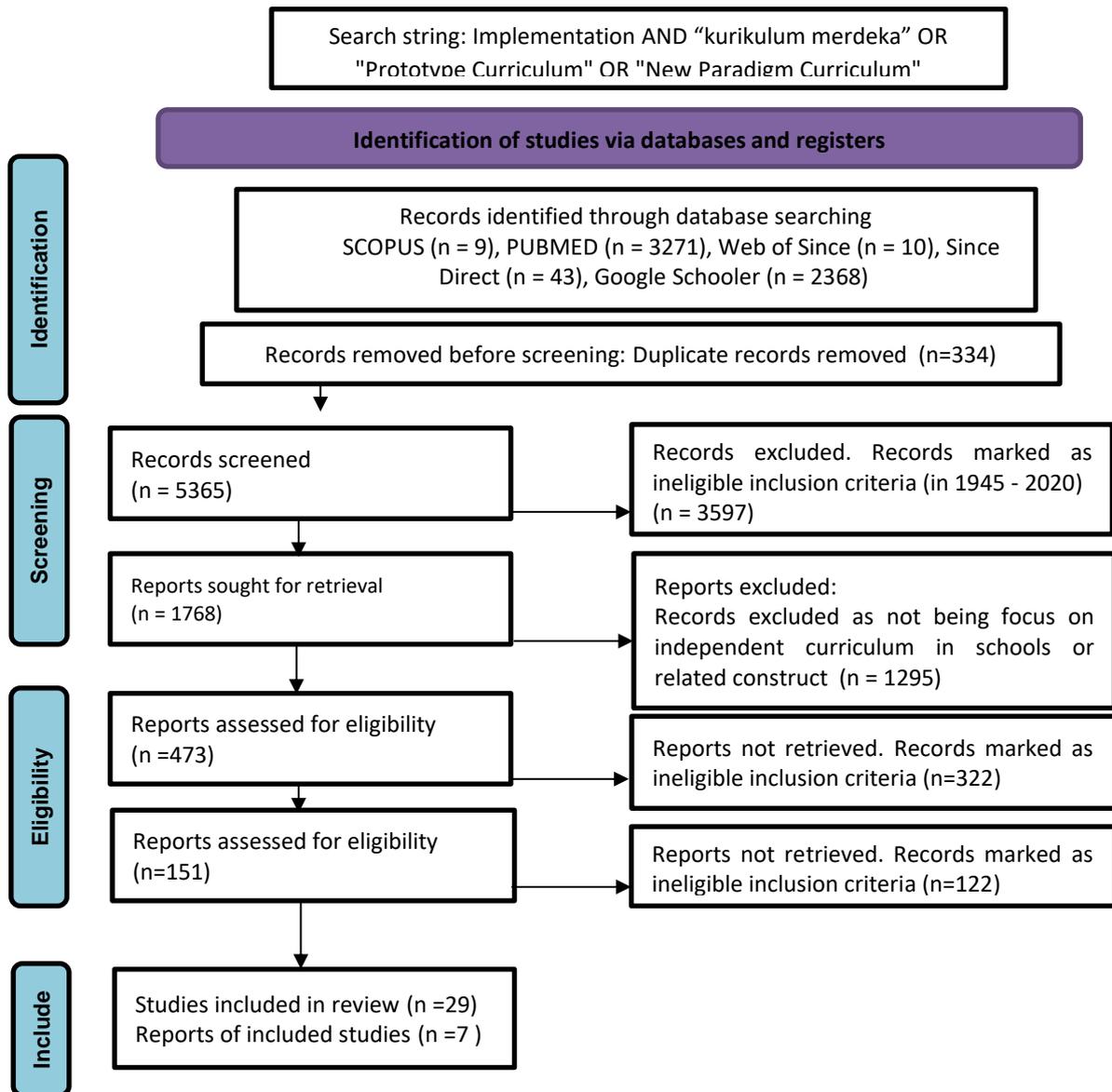


Figure 1. Study Identification Through Database using PRISMA 2020

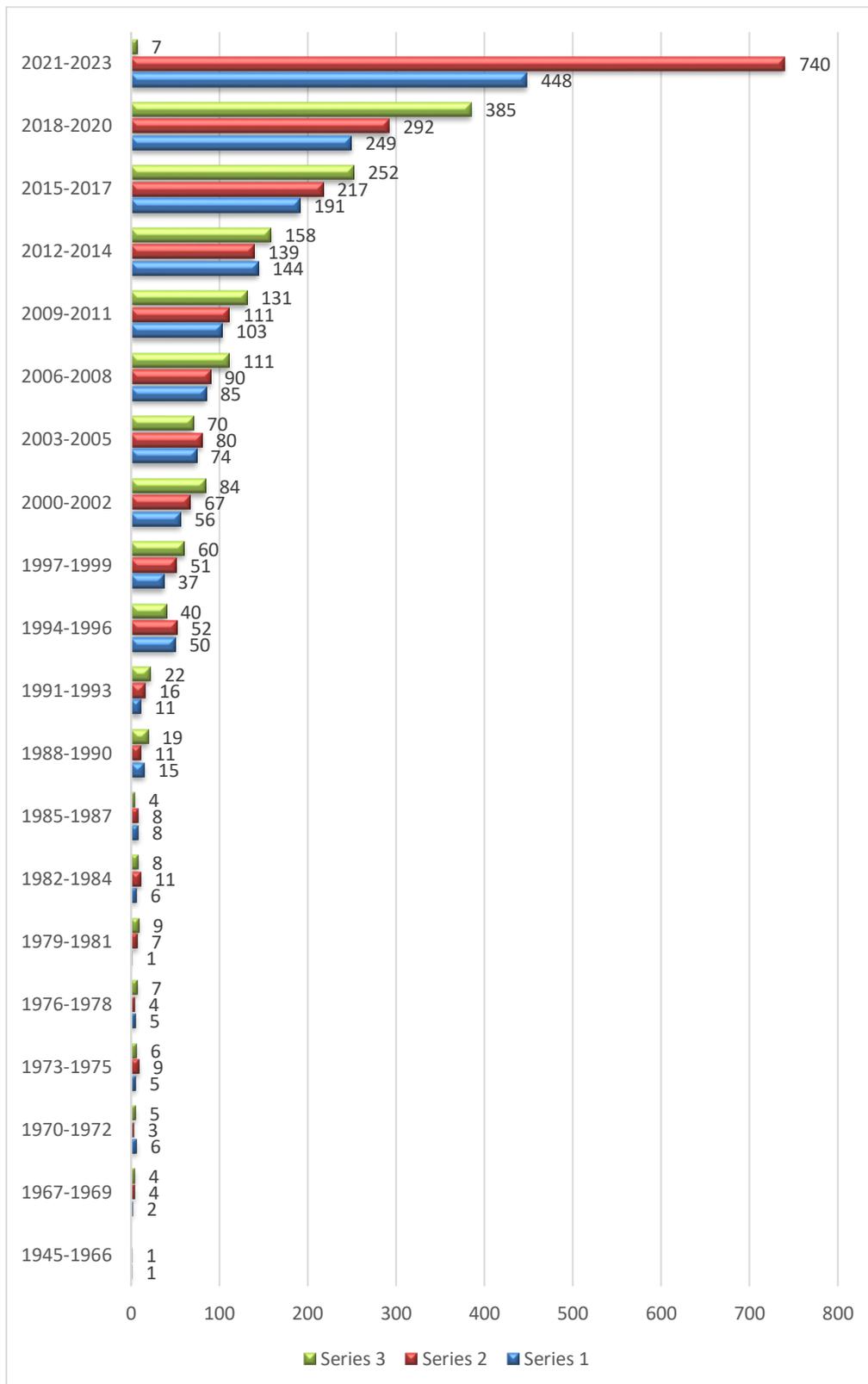


Figure 2. Search results, 1945-2023

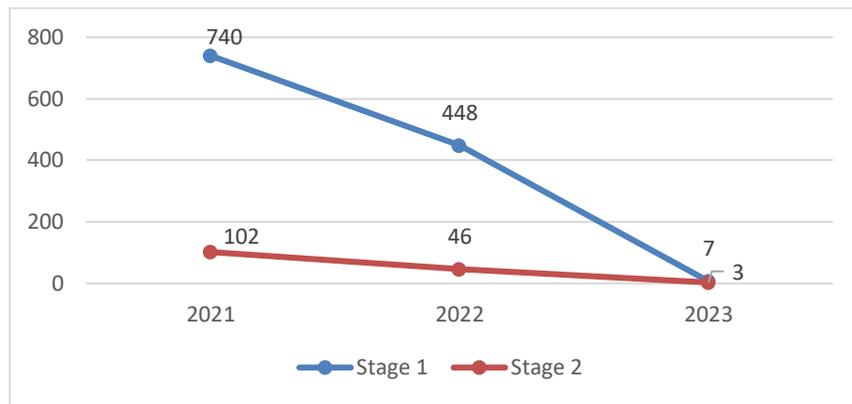


Figure 3. Search results for 2021-2023

Table 3. Topic List

Topic	Frequency Out of 151	Percentage	Primary	Final Selection	
			Paper ID		
			151 P	29 P 7 P	
Implementation of the independent curriculum	36	24	P26-P28, P39, P44-P51, P53, P54, P59, P60, P62-P66, P75, P76, P79, P82, P84-P86, P88, P89, P93, P96-P98, P103, P104	P30, P41, P46, P47, P50, P67, P84, P93, P97	P28, P46, P82, P104
Independent curriculum	62	41	P2-P5, P7, P9, P10, P19, P20-P25, P29-P35, P37, P38, P40-P43, P52, P55, P57, P58, P61, P67, P68, P 69, P70-P74, P77, P78, P80, P81, P83, P87, P90-P92, P95, P99, P100-P102, P105-P109, P142, P148, P149	P20, P22, P22, P24, P32, P41, P57, P90, P101, P102, P108	P22, P43, P57
New paradigm curriculum	12	8	P1, P6, P8, P11-P14, P16-P18, P120, P123	P11, P16, P17	
Prototype Curriculum	32	21	P110-P117, P119, P121, P122, P124-P133, P136, PP140, P141, P143-P147, P150, P151,	P115, P119, P126, P129, P146	
Driving school	10	6	P15, P36, P51, P56, P94, P108, P124, P125, P127, P128, P139	P94	

3 RESULTS

Data from *integrative literature review* carried out with a selection process according to guidelines, from 29 journals that have been reviewed according to the selection results from table 1 above, with various efforts, resulted in the findings of 7 articles that have implemented an independent curriculum in driving schools, as stated in table 4.

Table 4. Constraints and Preparations in the Implementation of the *kurikulum merdeka* in *sekolah penggerak*

1.	Rahma Laila (2022)	Nur et al.	Qualitative descriptive, case study	Educators faced challenges due to limited readiness and new approaches, including difficulties with digital tools and diverse teaching materials. Preparations included creating learning objectives and teaching modules as substitutes for traditional syllabus and lesson plans. Training sessions were conducted to support teachers' transition.
2.	Ineu Sumarsih et al. (2022)		Phenomenological approach	Initial issues included adapting to the e-Report system and shifting mindsets toward student-centered education. Preparations transformed obstacles into strengths by integrating Sundanese cultural values, project-based learning, and accommodating gifted students.
3.	Achmad (2022)	Fauzi	Case study	Early-stage challenges were addressed through collaborative efforts between teachers and principals. Preparations included forming a learning committee, organizing training, and aligning school vision and goals with curriculum demands.
4.	Wasimin (2022)		Descriptive qualitative	Project-Based Learning (PBL) facilitated achieving the Pancasila Student Profile dimensions. Preparations involved designing project tasks, creating schedules, and monitoring progress to enhance students' understanding and skills.
5.	Tobok Situmorang et al. (2022)	Luhut et al.	Quantitative, CIPP evaluation	The evaluation identified issues in assessment and learning processes. Recommendations included involving expert trainers and improving process clarity through defined roles and policies.

Table 5. Implementation of the *kurikulum merdeka* in *sekolah penggerak*

1.	Restu Rahayu et al. (2022)	Qualitative descriptive	<i>Sekolah penggerak</i> emphasizes digital school concepts, giving students flexibility to explore creativity and interests. The curriculum fosters innovative and character-building learning experiences.
2.	Ineu Sumarsih et al. (2022)	Phenomenological approach	Implementing the curriculum transformed SDN 244 Guruminda into a conducive and innovative school, producing students with critical reasoning, creativity, and cooperation. Collaboration and participatory programs played key roles.
3.	Rahma Nur Laila et al. (2022)	Qualitative descriptive, case study	The curriculum provided flexibility for students to develop creative and innovative thinking. Pancasila-based activities promoted discipline, cooperation, and character development.
4.	Wasimin (2022)	Descriptive qualitative	PBL enhanced students' understanding and skills while achieving Pancasila dimensions. The approach also cultivated character development aligned with curriculum goals.
5.	Tobok Luhut Situmorang et al. (2022)	Quantitative, CIPP evaluation	Emphasized readiness and quality of teachers and schools. Recommended using phase-level terminology for learning outcomes and enhancing training and process clarity.
6.	Ahmad Zainuri (2022)	Qualitative descriptive	The curriculum promoted lifelong learning and adherence to Pancasila values. Religious and moral education were central to achieving curriculum objectives.

Table 6. Role of Related Parties in Curriculum Implementation

1.	Achmad Fauzi (2022)	Case study	The principal's leadership played a pivotal role in managing internal and external school operations, empowering teachers, and driving curriculum implementation.
2.	Rahma Nur Laila et al. (2022)	Qualitative descriptive, case study	Strong commitment from school leaders ensured effective curriculum adoption, emphasizing the importance of leadership in fostering innovative teaching practices.
3.	Ineu Sumarsih et al. (2022)	Phenomenological Approach	The principal's tenacity fosters innovative participatory programs and collaboration among teachers to support <i>sekolah penggerak</i> initiatives. This enhances principals' roles as mentors for teachers and students.
4.	Restu Rahayu et al. (2022)	Qualitative descriptive	Effective leadership by the principal inspires teachers and facilitates cooperation among stakeholders to implement the <i>kurikulum merdeka</i> optimally.

4 DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Constraints and Preparations in the Implementation of the Independent Curriculum in *sekolah penggerak*

The “*kurikulum merdeka*” requires careful preparation so that application in the world of education can run well and produce students who have potential based on the Pancasila student profile.

However, in the process of adapting to the new curriculum, various obstacles and challenges are sometimes faced by educators or students. Such as pedagogical challenges, curriculum challenges, structural challenges, concerns about students, concerns about assessment, and lack of teacher support (Margot & Kettler, 2019). Thus, Bagiati analyzes the importance of collaboration between teachers and curriculum developers and presents facilitators in dealing with obstacles during curriculum implementation (Bagiati & Evangelou, 2015).

Meredith's research analyzed the most common contextual barriers to curriculum implementation, including a lack of support from the government (57%), and a lack of internal organizational support (35%). One of the perceived barriers to the implementation process is the lack of an influential person leading the implementation (Giuliani et al., 2020). Temporary While some common barriers to curriculum implementation must be anticipated, it is important to ensure that one has enough trained educators to teach the curriculum successfully. Educators must be content experts and have basic training as educators (Sell & Phitayakorn, 2020). So it is considered quite important to make preparations to welcome the new paradigm curriculum in restoring learning, starting from expert facilitators, school principals, and teachers who are ready with various training and other processing from the Ministry of Education and Culture and Research and Technology.

According to Peers, factors supporting teacher growth consist of appropriate professional development programs, teachers' understanding of the elements of curriculum innovation, and successful experiences in implementing new approaches. Instead, issues of concern are: adequacy of support for planning including the time needed to understand the innovation and make changes to teaching practice; science equipment; teacher knowledge; classroom

management strategy; and ways to deal with change. Understanding these supporting factors and issues of concern is very important for the successful implementation of curriculum innovations (Peers et al., 2003).

4.2 Implementation of the New Paradigm Curriculum in *Sekolah Penggerak*

The *kurikulum merdeka* is one of the efforts of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology (Kemdikbudristek) to overcome the learning crisis after the COVID-19 pandemic began to be designed to be implemented in schools that are ready as an additional option to restore learning during 2022-2024 (Education of West Java Province, 2022).

Implementation of the curriculum in *sekolah penggerak* has been carried out optimally and sustainably. Producing students who have a noble character, independence, critical reasoning, creativity, cooperation, and a sense of diversity. The school principal encourages various participatory, unique, innovative programs and fosters collaboration with teachers. The *kurikulum merdeka* is student-centered and produces creative students.

Creativity itself means the ability to create or discover something new that is different from before. One of the most important concepts in the field of creativity is the relationship between creativity and self-actualization. According to humanistic psychology, Abraham Maslow and Carl Rogers stated that a person actualizes himself when a person uses all his interests and talents to become what he can make, actualize, or realize his potential (Rizki et al., 2020).

By using the *kurikulum merdeka*, changes are felt in schools, teachers are more flexible to be creative in teaching as much as possible and know more about students' interests, talents, needs, and abilities. The learning process of the *kurikulum merdeka* in the *sekolah penggerak* refers to the profile of Pancasila students which aims to produce graduates who can be competent and uphold character values (Rahayu et al., 2022).

The Student Profile of Pancasila, which is the guideline for the life of the Indonesian nation, means that Pancasila is also a soul and personality nation of Indonesia. That is, the Indonesian people's morals, character, and personality are Pancasila. Therefore,

educators must be able to formulate appropriate plans to strengthen character education accordingly profile Pancasila students so that it can be implemented and have a real impact on students (Maisyaroh et al., 2023).

Learning *kurikulum merdeka* is a learning curriculum that refers to the talent and interest approach. *kurikulum merdeka* was published as part of efforts to restore learning, as well as more interactive and relevant to the times (Wiguna & Tristaningrat, 2022)

4.3 The Role of Related Parties Implementation of the *Kurikulum Merdeka* in *Sekolah Penggerak*

Planning and implementing curriculum revisions is a tremendous amount of work (Harrisons, 2020). However, the success of any organization can be attributed to one thing: its people (Halverson, 2019). Professional growth requires a teacher's willingness to engage with change and modify their professional practice (Peers et al., 2003). Teachers will find support that will enhance their efforts to deliver education with peer collaboration, quality curriculum, district support, prior experience, and effective professional development (Margot & Kettler, 2019). Thus, educators can reform the school education system for sustainable development (Peedikayil et al., 2023).

However, the essence of a great education is visionary leadership, clear goals, and a support structure that is creatively structured and flexible (Beare et al., 2018). The successful pattern of school curriculum development similar to Decker Walker's 'naturalistic model' which is based on deliberative ideas and practices, as well as the school ethos, organizational setting, and professional relationships contributed to the successful development of the school's deliberative model curriculum (John, 2011).

Leaders are responsible for initiating and maintaining the strategic management process in schools. This is strategic leadership. Leadership is also responsible for facilitating instructional activities and coordinating curriculum across individual, program, and school levels to ensure alignment through defining the school's mission and goals, managing instructional programs, and promoting a positive school learning climate. This is instructional leadership. Leadership plays an important role in

promoting the education of children (Shah et al., 2023).

An important element in the *sekolah penggerak* is the principal who has a high struggle to advance the school. The principal must be able to guide, direct, and inspire all elements of the school to want to move towards better education to produce quality graduates. Under the leadership of a good principal, a small school will thrive. So the success of implementing the curriculum in *sekolah penggerak* is that the principal and teacher must have the will to make changes. The principal as a leader must be able to change the mindset of Human Resources in schools so that they want to make changes so that an independent curriculum can be implemented (Rahayu et al., 2022).

Mamela and Ramrathan revealed that a responsive situational leadership style is needed to change the school's image resulting in a change in the identity of a low-performing school to a higher-performing school. Principals use several methods and provide strong support to teachers to participate in learning activities by applying various approaches, including authoritative, democratic, and instructional leadership styles, to maintain a collaborative culture in schools (Mamela & Ramrathan, 2021).

The principal is the key to governance of the *sekolah penggerak*, the more professional the principal, the more impact on the achievement of the implementation of the *kurikulum merdeka* (Krasniqi, 2021; Maulana et al., 2022; Nurabadi et al., 2022). Success curriculum change involves transforming teachers' attitudes, skills, motivations, conceptions, and beliefs about management, teaching, and learning. So leadership transformation is also very important in the process of curriculum change and teacher development (Caldwell & Spinks, 1992).

5 CONCLUSION

The application of a *kurikulum merdeka* in *sekolah penggerak* can make a maximum contribution to the recovery of learning. *sekolah penggerak* need to be pursued in every school, to accelerate schools realizing the vision of an advanced Indonesia. The application of the "*kurikulum merdeka*" can produce students who have global competence and behave according to the profile of Pancasila students holistically. Collaboration and concrete forms from all parties including the government are urgently

needed in updating this curriculum so that it is in line with the government's goals in 2024. Principals as policymakers in schools must be serious and continue to optimize themselves to create *sekolah penggerak*. The portrait of education always experiences dynamics and changes, so that teachers, principals, parents,

The researchers found a lack of empirical research on *sekolah penggerak*. So it needs to be improved again. The researchers suggest further reviewing comprehensive preparations on how to mobilize schools to create a "*sekolah penggerak*". Special research on *sekolah penggerak* needs to be expanded, starting from the early childhood education level up to SMA/VOCATIONAL SCHOOL/MAN. So that it can become a reference for schools that are in the preparation stage towards *sekolah penggerak*, as well as motivate other schools to continue to process and innovate to move forward.

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