



## The role of libraries in curriculum implementation at SMP Kartika XIX-2

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### ABSTRACT

This article aims to examine the strategic role of school libraries in supporting the implementation of the Kurikulum Merdeka at the Junior High School (Sekolah Menengah Pertama or SMP) level. This research was conducted through direct interviews with library managers and observations of the available supporting facilities and resources. The primary focus of this study is on how the library provides effective and relevant teaching materials, coordinates with teachers to support teaching and learning activities, and carries out various innovations to adapt to the demands of the more flexible and student-centered Merdeka Curriculum. The library functions not only as a reading space but also as a learning resource center that supports the development of students' literacy and independent learning. The findings of this research are expected to provide a comprehensive overview of the school library's contribution to creating a learning environment that is adaptive and responsive to curriculum changes. Thus, this article also serves as a reference for schools and policymakers in enhancing the function and role of libraries in an increasingly complex educational landscape.

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### ABSTRAK

Artikel ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji peran strategis perpustakaan sekolah dalam mendukung implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka di tingkat Sekolah Menengah Pertama (SMP). Penelitian ini dilakukan melalui wawancara langsung dengan pengelola perpustakaan serta observasi terhadap perangkat dan fasilitas pendukung yang tersedia. Fokus utama dari kajian ini adalah bagaimana perpustakaan menyediakan bahan ajar yang efektif, relevan, dan menjalin koordinasi dengan guru dalam menunjang kegiatan belajar mengajar, serta melakukan berbagai inovasi untuk menyesuaikan diri dengan tuntutan Kurikulum Merdeka yang lebih fleksibel dan berpusat pada peserta didik. Perpustakaan tidak hanya berfungsi sebagai tempat membaca, tetapi juga sebagai pusat sumber belajar yang mendukung pengembangan literasi dan kemandirian belajar peserta didik. Hasil temuan dalam penelitian ini diharapkan dapat memberikan gambaran menyeluruh mengenai kontribusi perpustakaan sekolah dalam menciptakan lingkungan belajar yang adaptif dan responsif terhadap perubahan kurikulum. Dengan demikian, artikel ini juga menjadi rujukan bagi pihak sekolah dan pemangku kebijakan dalam meningkatkan fungsi dan peran perpustakaan di era pendidikan yang terus berkembang.

**Kata Kunci:** Kurikulum Merdeka; pembelajaran; perpustakaan sekolah

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## INTRODUCTION

The school library is one of the key elements in supporting the implementation of quality education that is relevant to the demands of the times. As a learning resource center, the library provides various teaching materials and references that enrich the learning process and support teachers and students in achieving learning objectives (Usholicchah *et al.*, 2024). Not only functioning as a place for storing books, the library also serves as a center for developing information literacy, a source of community knowledge, and a lifelong learning venue (Putra & Komara, 2022). In the context of the Kurikulum Merdeka, which emphasizes flexible, contextual, and student-centered learning, the role of the library becomes increasingly strategic. This curriculum encourages the presence of diverse learning resources to support project-based learning implementation as well as the strengthening of the Profil Pelajar Pancasila Profile. Therefore, the library is required to provide access to printed and digital learning materials that align with the needs and interests of students.

Several studies emphasize the importance of transforming the role of libraries in the digital era. The urgency of libraries as 21st-century literacy centers remains high, while limitations in human resources and facilities continue to hinder the optimization of services (Usholicchah *et al.*, 2024). The lack of competent librarians and the absence of automated library management systems are the main challenges (Rifqi *et al.*, 2021; Syam *et al.*, 2021). In addition, factors such as limited funding, inadequate infrastructure, and low awareness from school management further exacerbate obstacles in library management (Ismail & Tangahu, 2023). The digitalization of services is necessary to adapt to the learning patterns of the digital native generation, which is a generation that grows up familiar with the digital world (Andayani, 2020). However, studies that specifically review the contribution of libraries in supporting the implementation of the Kurikulum Merdeka at the junior high school level, particularly in supporting project-based learning and the values of the Profil Pelajar Pancasila Profile, are still minimal.

This research aims to fill that gap by deeply exploring the role of school libraries in supporting the implementation of the Kurikulum Merdeka. This study not only portrays the function of libraries as providers of teaching materials but also examines how libraries can become facilitators of contextual learning that are adaptive to the needs of students and the dynamics of the curriculum.

The issues studied in this research include the extent to which the role of libraries is optimally carried out, the challenges faced in their management, and the development strategies needed for libraries to become active, inclusive, and relevant learning centers in the future. This study was conducted at SMP Kartika XIX-2 as a mini observational study, with the aim of providing both practical and theoretical contributions to strengthening the function of libraries in the current era of educational transformation.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### The Strategic Role of School Libraries in Learning

School libraries play a strategic role in supporting learning and achieving educational goals. As a center for learning resources, libraries not only provide collections of textbooks but also encourage reading interest and facilitate literacy activities for students through various sources such as magazines, news clippings, scientific works, and audiovisual media (Susilawati *et al.*, 2021). Furthermore, libraries play an important role in the implementation of the Gerakan Literasi Sekolah (GLS) by preparing infrastructure and providing space for ongoing literacy activities within the school environment. (Afifah *et al.*, 2020). Its function extends as a place to store and organize information as well as to facilitate access to knowledge sources needed by the school community (Evawani, 2023).

In the digital era, demands on libraries have become increasingly complex. Libraries are required to transform into information centers that are adaptive to technological developments. Therefore, school principals need to develop strategies that can maximize the role of digital libraries as educational, informational, and research facilities that are easily accessible to students and teachers (Abas *et al.*, 2022).

Nevertheless, the effectiveness of libraries greatly depends on good and sustainable management (Usholicchah *et al.*, 2024). Challenges such as limited collections, insufficient librarian training, and lack of integration of the library into the learning process need to be addressed through strong collaboration between schools and library managers. Investment in collection development, facility improvements, service digitization, and involving librarians in learning planning are important steps to make the library a dynamic, relevant learning center that supports current educational needs.

### **Implementation of the Kurikulum Merdeka and Learning Resource Needs**

The Kurikulum Merdeka introduced by the Kementerian Pendidikan, Kebudayaan, Riset, dan Teknologi in 2021 is a curriculum transformation that emphasizes flexibility, contextualization, and differentiation of learning according to the needs and potential of students. This curriculum integrates project-based learning and strengthens the values of the Profil Pelajar Pancasila (P5) (Dewi, 2022; Yulia *et al.*, 2023). In its implementation, teachers are expected not only to rely on textbooks but also to be able to design and adapt teaching materials relevant to the characteristics of students and environmental conditions.

In this regard, the school library has a strategic role in supporting the implementation of the Kurikulum Merdeka. As a learning resource center, the library provides a variety of references that support project-based learning, Penguatan Profil Pelajar Pancasila (P5), as well as differentiation approaches. However, many school libraries are not yet fully prepared to meet these demands, whether in terms of collections, human resources, or supporting technological facilities.

To support this implementation, collaboration between teachers and librarians is very important. Teachers can play a role in proposing relevant teaching materials, while the library side needs to develop strategies to understand the needs of students, for example through regular discussions or analysis of frequently borrowed collections. This aligns with the view that optimal library utilization must be supported by good and sustainable management, as well as based on an accurate understanding of students' learning needs (Yuntawati & Suastra, 2023). Thus, strengthening the role of the library in the context of the Kurikulum Merdeka does not only lie in the availability of teaching materials but also in its ability to adjust services and collections based on the demands of flexible, contextual learning centered on students.

### **Synergy between Teachers and Library Managers**

School libraries have great potential to support project-based learning and the strengthening of the Profil Pelajar Pancasila. However, their utilization still faces various challenges, especially in providing relevant teaching materials that meet students' needs. The effectiveness of the library's role largely depends on the collaboration between teachers and librarians, particularly in lesson planning, reference selection, and the development of school literacy programs. This collaboration aligns with the objectives of the Proyek Penguatan Profil Pelajar Pancasila, which emphasizes the importance of character development among students through collaborative activities and problem-solving based on Pancasila values (Olivia *et al.*, 2024; Yulia *et al.*, 2023).

Unfortunately, in many schools, this synergy is still sporadic and has not been formally institutionalized. Library management is often assigned to teachers who double as librarians without special training, limiting initiatives for collection development and service innovation. Therefore, schools need to create sustainable

collaborative mechanisms between teachers, librarians, and school management to optimize the library's function. In schools that do not yet have professional librarians, the role of teacher-librarians can be enhanced through school policy support, self-development, collaboration with student organizations, and partnerships with other libraries. Optimizing the school library as a literacy-based learning center through staff training, collection development, and technology integration has been proven to significantly increase students' reading interest and literacy quality (Lusianai *et al.*, 2022). Additionally, the library plays an important role in fostering a reading culture through various programs integrated with the curriculum, emphasizing the importance of collaboration between the library, teachers, and parents (Panggalo, 2022).

## Challenges and Innovations in School Library Management

Although school libraries have strategic potential in supporting learning and the curriculum, their implementation in the field still faces various obstacles. One of the most evident challenges is the low level of library utilization by students. Many students have not yet made the library a pleasant and productive learning space. Factors such as lack of promotion, monotonous reading room design, and limited collections that are interesting and relevant to students' needs are the main causes (Andayani, 2020).

In addition, the influence of advancements in information technology has also brought new challenges. Rapid technological developments are not always accompanied by the readiness of school libraries to adopt them. Many libraries still rely on manual recording for loan services, do not have online catalogs, and have not provided access to digital resources such as e-books or electronic journals. Under these conditions, the role of the library as a center for literacy and information becomes less relevant in the eyes of students living in the digital era (Idhamani, 2020).

Other challenges hindering library digitalization include limited access to technological devices, low digital literacy among librarians, and the need to adjust work culture towards a more adaptive and technology-based approach. Nevertheless, digitalization also brings great opportunities. With the development of digital libraries, access to information is no longer limited by space and time. Furthermore, libraries can offer more modern, interactive services that support collaboration between educational institutions (Wahyuni *et al.*, 2024).

Therefore, the digital transformation of libraries must be accompanied by strategies to strengthen human resources, provide technological infrastructure, and ensure policy support from the school administration. Without such efforts, libraries will continue to lag behind and struggle to meet the demands of 21st-century learning. Considering these challenges, it is essential to further examine how school libraries are currently adapting to support the implementation of the Kurikulum Merdeka. The reviewed literature serves as a foundation for identifying the gap between the library's ideal potential and the realities of its practice in the field. Consequently, this study is expected to provide empirical insights into the actual role of school libraries and the strategies needed for them to transform into contextual, inclusive, and future-oriented learning centers.

## METHODS

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach, aiming to gain a deep and contextual understanding of the phenomenon under investigation without manipulating variables. The data collection methods employed are in-depth interviews and observations. The primary informant is the library manager at SMP Kartika XIX-2, selected purposively due to their direct role in managing learning resources and learning activities at the school.

Interviews were conducted face-to-face using open-ended questions related to the curriculum and learning, while observations focused on the physical facilities and supporting documents in the library. The combination of these two techniques allows the researcher to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the library's contribution to supporting the implementation of the Kurikulum Merdeka at the junior high school level.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **The Role of the Library in Supporting Learning**

The results of interviews with the library manager at SMP Kartika XIX-2 indicate that the library still performs its basic function as a provider of supplementary reading materials to support classroom learning activities. The available collection mostly consists of textbooks, dictionaries, encyclopedias, as well as a small number of fiction and nonfiction reading materials. The main function of the library in this school is as a complement to learning, which means its presence has not yet been actively involved in the daily learning process of students. The utilization of the library collection is also uneven; most of it is used based on teachers' initiatives who direct students to seek specific references, rather than stemming from students' own habits of independent learning.

This condition indicates that the library at SMP Kartika XIX-2 has not yet fully become an integral part of the teaching and learning activities. Students' activities in the library are still limited to incidental visits, rather than being part of a learning routine embedded in their daily lives. The dependence on teachers' guidance signifies a low internalization of the library's role as a space for exploration and the formation of literacy habits. In fact, in the concept of 21st-century learning, the library is expected to provide an inclusive alternative learning space and encourage students to become lifelong independent learners.

The ideal role of the library is not only as a place to store and borrow books but also as an active intellectual interaction space where students build curiosity, develop deep understanding of the material, and cultivate character values such as independence, responsibility, and critical thinking skills. In this regard, the school library should be viewed as a dynamic learning center capable of fostering students' creativity and enriching their understanding of learning materials within a broader and more applicable context.

Furthermore, the presence of the library should be able to encourage the emergence of collaborative learning approaches. For example, group discussion activities, project-based learning, or experience-based literacy practices can be facilitated in the library space, not just inside the classroom. Unfortunately, observation results show that the library space has not been maximally utilized to support interdisciplinary or project-based learning activities. The available facilities are also still very limited to support collaborative learning activities; for instance, there are no small discussion rooms, idea boards, or basic presentation technology.

Utilizing the library as part of a comprehensive learning process also requires an active engagement strategy between librarians and teachers. In interviews, library managers revealed that communication with teachers is still not intensive, so the library collection has not developed in line with the actual needs of the curriculum and learning materials. The absence of an integration program between learning topics and reading collections also makes it difficult for students to broaden their understanding through alternative literacy sources. As a result, the library's potential to strengthen contextual and differentiated learning, as emphasized in the Kurikulum Merdeka, has not been optimally utilized.

Considering these various findings, it can be concluded that the role of the library in supporting learning at SMP Kartika XIX-2 is still at an early stage and serves as a complement. Further efforts are needed to make the library a part of a planned, structured, and curriculum-integrated learning ecosystem. Strategies to strengthen the role of the library can be carried out through improving information literacy, collaboration



between teachers and librarians, and the development of thematic learning programs that involve the library as the main source for content development and student activities.

### **Implementation of the Kurikulum Merdeka and Library Involvement**

The Kurikulum Merdeka emerges as a response to the challenges of 21st-century education, emphasizing flexible learning, differentiation, and project-based approaches. In this approach, teachers and students are given the freedom to explore diverse learning resources and are not solely dependent on textbooks. Within this framework, the school library should play an important role as an information and literacy center that supports the teaching and learning process in a contextual and creative manner (Mursyidah *et al.*, 2023).

However, interviews with the library management at SMP Kartika XIX-2 indicate that the library's involvement in supporting the implementation of the Kurikulum Merdeka is still very limited. The library has not yet been actively involved in the development or provision of relevant teaching materials, and teachers tend to seek references independently. Furthermore, the library's collection has not been updated to support project-based learning or activities related to the Proyek Penguatan Profil Pelajar Pancasila (P5).

In fact, research confirms that the effective utilization of libraries heavily depends on good management as well as encouragement from school leadership for teachers to assign structured tasks that guide students to use the library (Mursyidah *et al.*, 2023). The lack of synergy between teachers and librarians in this school reflects the weak integration of the library into the school's learning system and curriculum strategy.

The library should not only be a place to store collections but also a space for exploring knowledge that promotes literacy, creativity, and student reflection. Strengthening information literacy through activities such as Library Class from the elementary level has been proven to contribute to lifelong learning and should be part of the development of the school library (Asari *et al.*, 2020). The optimal role of the school library can enhance student literacy by providing a wide range of collections and facilities that from the outset can improve students' literacy competencies (Arya *et al.*, 2024; Komara & Hadiapurwa, 2023).

Therefore, collaborative efforts are needed to make the library a strategic partner in learning. This can be realized through updating collections according to curriculum needs, improving communication between teachers and librarians, and providing space for students and teachers to develop literacy-based teaching aids and learning media (Rusli *et al.*, 2022). Without the active involvement of all parties, the library will continue to fall behind in the dynamics of educational transformation, which demand continuous adaptation and innovation.

### **Coordination Between the Library and Teachers**

Interview and observation results indicate that the coordination between the library management and teachers at SMP Kartika XIX-2 is still informal and not well-structured. The absence of regular discussion forums between teachers and librarians results in the selection of book collections often not aligning with the actual needs in the classroom. Furthermore, many collections available in the library are more frequently used based on teachers' initiatives directing students to seek specific references, rather than stemming from students' independent learning habits.

Research on school libraries in Indonesia highlights the important role of libraries in supporting the curriculum and learning, but also reveals existing challenges. Studies show that teachers view the library as an important resource for providing supplementary learning materials and enhancing students' information literacy (Lusianai *et al.*, 2022). However, effective collaboration between teachers and

librarians is often hindered by limited resources, time constraints, and lack of training. Some schools have attempted to address this by implementing innovative programs, such as mandatory library visits and the provision of reading corners (Rochayati, 2024). Nevertheless, common obstacles such as limited funding for facilities and reading materials, as well as a shortage of trained library staff, remain major challenges (Ahyar, 2022).

From these findings, it can be concluded that coordination between teachers and librarians needs to be strengthened, and more formal and structured collaboration mechanisms should be developed to ensure that the library can play a more optimal role in supporting learning. This can be achieved by enhancing communication between teachers and librarians, improving library collection management, and providing training for librarians to align the collection with the continuously evolving curriculum needs.

### **Student Reading Interest and Literacy Programs**

One important finding in this observation is the low frequency of student visits to the library. Students tend to come only when directed by teachers, not out of personal awareness or motivation. This phenomenon indicates that a literacy culture has not yet formed organically among the students. In fact, a strong literacy culture is a prerequisite for the successful implementation of the Kurikulum Merdeka, which places great emphasis on exploratory learning and critical thinking.

The school does have a regular reading program every Thursday, but its effectiveness still needs further evaluation. To make the program truly impactful, it needs to be integrated with reflective activities, discussions, or student literacy products. Research shows that regular library visits and structured literacy programs can significantly improve students' reading habits and literacy skills. The school library plays an important role in supporting literacy development through various initiatives such as wall libraries and daily reading activities (Machromah *et al.*, 2020). Furthermore, in the context of the Kurikulum Merdeka, the moderate level of reading literacy and relatively high cultural literacy indicate that literacy culture needs to be systematically encouraged within the school environment (Cholifah, 2024).

### **Technological Innovation in Library Management**

From the management and service perspective, the library at SMP Kartika XIX-2 currently still uses a manual system for recording collection circulation, the borrowing process, and book inventory. Every recording activity is carried out conventionally using notebooks or physical documents without any automation system. There is no digital catalog available for students, teachers, or school management to check the status of the collection. Similarly, the book borrowing system has not yet utilized barcode technology, library management software, or other supporting applications. Access to digital learning resources such as e-books, online journals, and educational videos has also not been officially provided by the school.

This condition poses a significant obstacle, especially in reaching the current generation of students who have grown up alongside information technology. Students tend to be more interested in learning forms that are interactive, fast, and accessible anytime through digital devices. When the library cannot provide such convenience, its function as an alternative learning resource will fall behind and no longer be relevant to the needs of today's users.

In the context of implementing the Kurikulum Merdeka, which emphasizes differentiated and exploratory learning, the availability of information technology in the library becomes increasingly important. Flexible, project-based learning requires access to a wide range of references, including digital resources beyond printed collections. Without technological support, students and teachers will face difficulties in finding

appropriate learning materials, especially when they need to seek inspiration or additional information outside of class hours.

Technological innovation in library management can be implemented through several concrete steps. One of them is the digitization of collections, which involves converting print collections into digital versions so they can be accessed via online platforms or the school's local intranet. Next, the application of a Library Management System or web-based library information system can be used to manage book circulation, facilitate title searches, and efficiently manage borrower data. One system that has proven beneficial is INLISLite, developed by the National Library of the Republic of Indonesia and widely implemented in various school libraries. Studies show that INLISLite has made a positive contribution, not only in streamlining library management but also in supporting the learning process and meeting the reference needs of students (Purnama *et al.* 2023; Rahmi & Najamudin, 2022).

Additionally, the development of digital libraries that provide access to e-books, scientific articles, and interactive learning media is also a highly potential form of innovation. Integrating the library with online learning platforms such as Google Classroom or the school's Library Management System can make the library a part of the overall digital learning ecosystem.

Nevertheless, the implementation of technological innovation in school library management is not without challenges. Limited budgets, unstable internet infrastructure, and low librarian competency are among the key factors that must be addressed systematically. Therefore, strategies for developing technological innovations should be accompanied by careful planning, technical assistance, and synergy with other educational stakeholders (Subroto *et al.*, 2023). If implemented gradually and sustainably, technological innovation will enable school libraries to move beyond their traditional roles. Libraries can evolve into dynamic centers of digital literacy, supporting students' increasingly global learning styles and strengthening the achievement of Kurikulum Merdeka goals through the provision of accessible, relevant, and contextual information.

## Challenges and Prospects for Development

The main challenges in library management identified from the observation results include students' low reading interest and the limited quantity and variety of available book collections. The lack of reading interest has hindered the library from functioning optimally as a space for both independent and collaborative learning. This situation is further exacerbated by the condition of the collection, which remains largely general in nature, lacks contextual relevance to the needs of the Kurikulum Merdeka, and has not been regularly updated. As a result, both students and teachers tend not to regard the library as a primary reference source in the learning process, thereby reducing the library's effectiveness as a learning support facility.

From a management perspective, the library has not yet established a collection procurement and evaluation system based on curriculum needs, nor has it actively involved teachers in developing a list of required collections. In addition, the physical condition of the library, which has not been designed to be visually appealing, also serves as an obstacle in fostering a literacy culture within the school. A small reading area, conventional layout, and lack of a comfortable atmosphere contribute to the low enthusiasm of students to visit the library independently.

The library management expressed hope that the number of collections could be increased, particularly books relevant to students' thematic and project-based needs, such as reading materials for P5 activities, fiction and nonfiction literacy, and digital collections. Furthermore, improving the quality of physical facilities, including lighting, seating comfort, and the use of information technology, is also an urgent need to create a more enjoyable and inclusive reading experience for all students.



Ideally, library development should not only focus on infrastructure and collections but also encompass human resource capacity and institutional integration. Training for library staff is essential to equip them with competencies in collection management, digital information services, and curriculum-based literacy program development. On the other hand, the integration between school literacy programs and library activities must be strengthened through ongoing collaboration among librarians, teachers, and school principals.

Furthermore, the development strategy for school libraries should be framed within a clear, well-directed, and sustainable school policy. This includes allocating a dedicated budget, creating a library development roadmap, and conducting regular evaluations of the effectiveness of literacy programs and library facility utilization. When all these elements work in harmony, the school library will be able to transform into a strategic learning resource center, not only to support learning based on the Kurikulum Merdeka but also to foster a strong and sustainable literacy ecosystem within the school environment.

## Discussion

Findings from interviews and observations at SMP Kartika XIX-2 indicate that the school library has not yet functioned optimally as a strategic partner in the implementation of the Kurikulum Merdeka. Although the library is normatively recognized as a learning resource center, in practice its role remains limited to administrative functions, mainly serving as a storage space for textbooks and supplementary reading materials. The library's functions as a space for literacy development, information exploration, and support for differentiated learning have not been fully realized. In fact, the Kurikulum Merdeka emphasizes flexible, contextual learning that aligns with students' interests and learning styles (Nurhayati *et al.*, 2025).

The potential of school libraries is often underutilized due to limited resources, a lack of collaboration between teachers and librarians, and insufficient training for library staff (Lusianai *et al.*, 2022). This situation is also evident at SMP Kartika XIX-2, where coordination between teachers and librarians has not been systematically established. As a result, collection updates do not reflect the dynamic needs of the curriculum, and the learning planning process rarely involves the library as an integral component. Consequently, teachers tend to seek references independently, while students lose access to diverse and relevant learning resources.

The low reading interest among students also presents a significant challenge. Although the school has implemented a weekly reading program, this activity alone has not been sufficient to foster a sustainable literacy culture. Literacy is not merely about reading skills; it also involves developing habits and creating an ecosystem that nurtures students' emotional engagement with books and information. The utilization of library resources in Indonesian language learning can significantly enhance students' reading skills and academic achievement (Kurniawan, 2020).

From a management perspective, the lack of technological innovation in the library system represents one of the main obstacles. The continued use of manual methods for recording circulation, lending, and collection inventory indicates that the library has not yet adapted to the needs of the digital generation. The absence of an online catalog, software-based lending system, or access to digital resources makes the library difficult to access and less appealing to students. In this regard, developing relevant collections and providing librarian training are essential to improving the quality of library services and enhancing their relevance in modern education. Moreover, the development of the library as a digital learning resource would also increase students' accessibility to diverse learning materials and enrich their learning process (Hadiapurwa *et al.*, 2021).

Furthermore, the revitalization of libraries must be carried out comprehensively (Aeni *et al.*, 2025). School principals need to ensure that library development becomes an integral part of the school's strategic

planning. Teachers should be involved in the selection and utilization of collections, while librarians must receive training to perform their professional roles adaptively in response to the ever-changing curricular demands. The Kurikulum Merdeka, in particular, focuses on developing critical thinking skills through contextual learning, creativity, collaboration, and problem-solving (Zahrotun & Kamal, 2023).

Thus, this study indicates that the development of school libraries must be carried out systematically and collaboratively. Initiatives such as service digitalization, collection enhancement, integration with classroom learning, and capacity building for librarians are essential steps that need to be pursued. When optimally empowered, the library can serve as a center for digital literacy and information that holistically supports the achievement of national education goals.

## CONCLUSION

The findings of this study indicate that the role of the school library in implementing the Kurikulum Merdeka at SMP Kartika XIX-2 has not yet been fully optimized. The library has not become an integral part of supporting differentiated, project-based, and contextual learning as emphasized in the Kurikulum Merdeka. Its function remains limited to providing supplementary reading materials rather than serving as an integral component of the differentiated, project-based, and contextual learning process mandated by the curriculum.

The limited active role of the library in supporting the curriculum is evident from its lack of involvement in providing thematic references, the absence of systematic collaboration with teachers in developing teaching materials, and the lack of integration between school literacy programs and library management. This situation highlights a gap between progressive curriculum policies and the unprepared state of supporting infrastructure. In this context, the library has not yet functioned as an active learning space that facilitates exploration, creativity, and the development of the Profil Pelajar Pancasila Profile.

Another major challenge is the low reading interest among students, which is exacerbated by the limited book collection and the absence of technological innovation in library management. The use of manual systems and the lack of digital-based services have restricted access to information. Although initiatives such as weekly reading programs exist, they have not yet succeeded in cultivating a strong and sustainable literacy culture among students. These programs need to be redesigned to be more contextual, interactive, and integrated into students' daily learning processes.

Based on these findings, the author recommends several strategic steps to strengthen the library's role in supporting the Kurikulum Merdeka. These include enhancing coordination between teachers and library staff through regular forums, joint planning, and collaboration in developing references aligned with students' learning and project needs. Furthermore, revitalizing the library's physical space and collections is essential, through the addition of thematic and contextual books, as well as the provision of non-print learning media such as instructional videos, e-books, and digital literacy applications. The transformation of the library into a digital hub should also be encouraged through the implementation of library information systems, online catalogs, and open access to digital learning resources, enabling students to learn independently and flexibly both inside and outside the classroom. Finally, integrating the school's literacy programs with the curriculum and students' daily activities is crucial so that literacy becomes not merely an additional agenda, but a deeply rooted and enjoyable part of the learning culture.

Through these measures, the school library is expected to evolve beyond a mere storage space for collections and truly become a place where students learn to think critically, explore knowledge, and grow as lifelong learners. Moving forward, the library should be positioned as a strategic entity within school

management, supported by policies, budgeting, and cross-role collaboration, to realize learning that is independent, transformative, and meaningful for all members of the school community.

### AUTHOR'S NOTE

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest in the publication of this article. This article was prepared based on interview and direct observation data and is free from any form of plagiarism. All data used were obtained legitimately and with permission from the relevant parties.

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