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Kurikulum Merdeka: Readiness in facing curriculum changes at SMAN 1 Lembang

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ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to determine the readiness of SMAN 1 Lembang to implement the Kurikulum Merdeka. It is a quantitative study that uses surveys, document analysis, and interviews for data collection. The subjects of the study include teachers and students in SMAN 1 Lembang. The results indicate that the teaching activities at SMAN 1 Lembang are generally ready for the independent curriculum. However, there are some challenges in its implementation, leading to some areas of improvement that need to be completed. This demonstrates that the performance of the constructivist learning environment in implementing the independent curriculum at SMAN 1 Lembang is relatively low. The school's readiness to implement the independent curriculum can be shown through teachers' average ability to prepare lesson plans (RPP) and manage the teaching process in the classroom. Additionally, the increasing motivation of students, evidenced by the high percentage of social interaction, compared to four other aspects, further demonstrates this readiness.

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ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini dilakukan untuk mengetahui kesiapan SMAN 1 Lembang dalam menghadapi kurikulum Merdeka. Penelitian ini adalah penelitian kuantitatif yang menggunakan metode survei, studi dokumentasi, dan wawancara sebagai cara pengumpulan datanya. Subjek penelitian terdiri dari guru dan peserta didik di SMAN 1 Lembang. Hasil penelitian terhadap kegiatan pembelajaran di SMAN 1 Lembang tergolong siap untuk kurikulum mandiri, walaupun masih terdapat beberapa kendala dalam pelaksanaan kurikulum mandiri, sehingga masih ada pencapaian yang belum sempurna. Hal ini dapat membuktikan bahwa kinerja lingkungan belajar konstruktivis dalam implementasi kurikulum mandiri di SMAN 1 Lembang tergolong rendah. Untuk menunjukkan bahwa SMAN 1 Lembang merupakan sekolah dengan kategori siap dalam implementasi kurikulum mandiri, dapat ditunjukkan dari rata-rata kemampuan guru dalam mengolah RPP dan mengelola proses berjalannya pembelajaran di kelas. Termasuk perkembangan motivasi belajar peserta didik yang semakin meningkat yang dibuktikan dengan tingginya persentase interaksi sosial dari perbandingan empat aspek lainnya.

Kata Kunci: *evaluasi kurikulum; konstruktivisme; Kurikulum Merdeka; motivasi belajar peserta didik*

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INTRODUCTION

Education in Indonesia has undergone a significant transformation with the introduction of the *Merdeka Curriculum* at the Senior High School (SMA) level. This curriculum, which grants schools greater freedom and flexibility in curriculum development, serves as a response to the dynamics of the times and global demands. The main focus of implementing the *Merdeka Curriculum* at SMAN 1 Lembang is to provide flexibility in adapting learning to local needs and global developments.

The *Merdeka Curriculum* challenges traditional paradigms by freeing schools from rigid curricular frameworks. SMAN 1 Lembang, as an educational institution in Indonesia, faces both unique challenges and opportunities in applying this curriculum. The primary challenge lies in shifting from conventional teaching approaches to ones that are more responsive to the individual needs of students. Meanwhile, the opportunity lies in producing graduates who possess not only knowledge but also skills relevant to the demands of the global job market.

In facing globalization, SMAN 1 Lembang utilizes the flexibility provided by the *Merdeka Curriculum* to align its curriculum with global demands. Learning is not only focused on academic aspects but also on the development of 21st-century skills such as critical thinking, collaboration, and creativity. This is done to ensure that graduates of SMAN 1 Lembang are well-prepared to compete not only at the national level but also on the international stage.

Previous research has shown that curriculum policy reforms in Indonesia are driven by both internal and external challenges aimed at preparing a generation capable of thinking creatively, productively, and innovatively. The new curriculum aims to address weaknesses found in the previous curriculum (Machali, 2014). These changes can have both positive and negative effects on the quality of education. The positive impact is that students can learn in alignment with the ever-evolving demands of the modern era. However, the negative impact is that frequent curriculum changes may lead to new issues, such as a decline in students' academic achievement (Setiawati, 2022).

The importance of involving all stakeholders in the implementation of the *Kurikulum Merdeka* (Independent Curriculum) at SMAN 1 Lembang cannot be overlooked. Teachers, students, parents, and the local community play active roles in this process. The success of curriculum implementation depends mainly on how well it aligns with the expectations and needs of each group. Therefore, their active participation in decision-making forms a solid foundation for creating a holistic learning environment that is relevant to local contexts.

The diversity of human resources at SMAN 1 Lembang is a key factor in optimizing the implementation of the *Kurikulum Merdeka*. By granting flexibility in developing teaching strategies, the school can tailor instructional methods to meet the needs and potential of each student. This approach encourages every learner to maximize their abilities according to their individual interests and talents, creating an inclusive and supportive learning environment.

The implementation of the *Merdeka Curriculum* at SMAN 1 Lembang also requires an effective system of evaluation and monitoring. Periodic evaluations serve as an essential instrument to measure the curriculum's impact on learning processes and students' development. By understanding the results of these evaluations, SMAN 1 Lembang can identify potential areas for improvement and enhancement to optimize the quality of education. The implementation of the *Merdeka Curriculum* at SMAN 1 Lembang has produced a significant impact on both learning and student development. This curriculum not only functions as a curricular instrument but also acts as a catalyst in shaping graduates who are ready to face

the challenges of the twenty-first century. This case study aims to explore the impacts of implementing the *Merdeka Curriculum* at SMAN 1 Lembang from various perspectives. One of the most notable impacts is the transformation in teaching and learning approaches.

The *Merdeka Curriculum* encourages SMAN 1 Lembang to shift from conventional learning methods toward more interactive and skill-oriented approaches. Teachers at the school have adopted methods that emphasize problem-solving, critical thinking, and collaboration, providing students with more meaningful and empowering learning experiences. Positive impacts are also evident in the increased engagement of students in the learning process. The flexibility provided by the *Merdeka Curriculum* allows for the development of more engaging and relevant learning strategies that align with students' interests. This creates a more enjoyable and motivating learning environment, thereby enhancing students' participation and involvement in classroom activities. The positive outcomes are also reflected in the improved readiness of SMAN 1 Lembang graduates to face future challenges. The *Merdeka Curriculum* helps shape graduates who are not only academically competent but also equipped with twenty-first-century skills. Graduates from this school are better prepared to enter the dynamic workforce and compete at both national and international levels.

The purpose of this study is to analyze SMAN 1 Lembang's readiness in implementing the *Merdeka Curriculum*, focusing on teachers' ability to design lesson plans and manage classroom learning processes, as well as to understand the perspectives of both teachers and students on the implementation of the curriculum at the school.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Curriculum Implementation

Etymologically, the term *"curriculum" originates from the Greek words "kourios," meaning "runner," and "koura,"* meaning "a place for running." The term was initially used in the field of sports during the ancient Roman period in Greece, referring to the distance that a runner must cover from the starting line to the finish line (Hikmah, 2020). In the context of education, the curriculum refers to the content and learning materials that represent the period of study a learner must complete to achieve an outcome, namely the attainment of a diploma.

The curriculum serves as a tool to achieve the educational and instructional objectives that schools dynamically and progressively formulate and establish (Subandiyah, 2015). This means that the curriculum must continually evolve and be refined to align with the advancements in science and technology, as well as the needs of a developing society.

One of the most crucial yet often overlooked components of education is the curriculum. In fact, the curriculum holds a highly significant and strategic position. Every educational institution has its own vision, mission, and educational goals, and the curriculum essentially represents the operational description of these elements. It serves as a guideline for conducting the teaching and learning process (Cholilah et al., 2023).

The curriculum is not only a reference for students but also fulfills six vital and strategic functions: preparatory, selective, differentiating, adaptive, integrative, and diagnostic functions (Elisa, 2018). Therefore, the curriculum must be continually developed and improved to keep pace with the rapid advancements in science, technology, and societal development. It is thus unsurprising that curriculum

development in Indonesia has undergone frequent changes and refinements; at present, Indonesia is implementing the *Merdeka Curriculum*.

The curriculum serves as an indicator for determining the quality of education and the standard of graduates produced. Based on the theory of *Total Quality Management* (TQM), which discusses the *quality trilogy*, a derivative of this theory identifies that the quality of education can be viewed through three key variables: school culture, the teaching and learning process (curriculum), and school reality (Saifulloh et al., 2012).

The *Merdeka Curriculum*, previously known as the *Prototype Curriculum*, is an improvement upon the 2013 Curriculum. It is a curriculum designed to be implemented by educational institutions as part of the learning recovery initiative during the 2022/2023 to 2023/2025 academic years. This policy is scheduled for review in 2023, based on evaluations conducted throughout the learning recovery period.

According to information provided by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (*Kemendikbudristek*), the *Merdeka Curriculum* possesses several key characteristics intended to support learning recovery following the pandemic era (Hattarina et al., 2022).

1. Project-Based Learning (PBL) is implemented to develop students' soft skills and character, including faith, piety, and noble morality.
2. The curriculum emphasizes essential learning content, which is expected to allow sufficient time for in-depth learning of fundamental competencies such as literacy and numeracy.
3. Teachers are granted flexibility to design and deliver learning activities that align with students' abilities and to make necessary adjustments accordingly.

The implementation of the *Merdeka Curriculum* involves a reduction in learning loads and instructional hours, such as fewer face-to-face sessions and a decrease in learning materials that may burden students. The *Merdeka Curriculum* now places greater emphasis on the development of competencies, character formation, and students' creativity (Pillawaty et al., 2023).

The implementation of the *Merdeka Curriculum* also strengthens **differentiated learning**, in accordance with the objectives of learning stages and *Capaian Pembelajaran* (Learning Outcomes). The Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (*Kemendikbudristek*) provides various forms of support and assistance to schools, including teacher handbooks, teaching modules, and formative assessment tools, as well as examples of School Operational Curriculum development, to assist teachers and students in the learning process. Ideally, teaching modules should be developed by subject teachers to ensure adaptability and practical application.

At the senior high school level, the *Merdeka Curriculum* eliminates the specialization or tracking system (previously known as *peminatan*). As a graduation requirement, students must complete a scientific essay and participate in *Project-Based Learning* (PBL). This serves as a platform for students to enhance their logical, critical, and analytical thinking abilities. The success of *Merdeka Curriculum* implementation can be identified through the manifestation of *Capaian Pembelajaran* (CP) indicators in students' holistic development. Achievement in character formation, competency development, and creativity can be observed through students' daily behaviors and activities.

Learning

Learning refers to the teaching and learning activities carried out to achieve specific educational objectives through a process that is itself a form of teaching. It is a deliberate, directed, and planned effort, with goals that are clearly defined prior to the start of the process. Its implementation is monitored to ensure that individuals truly undergo the learning experience (Baniaturrohmah et al., 2023). According to Hamdani, from a behaviorist perspective, learning is the teacher's effort to shape desired behaviors by providing appropriate environments or stimuli (Jannah, 2015). Meanwhile, the cognitive perspective defines learning as the process through which teachers provide opportunities for students to think, enabling them to recognize and understand what they are learning (Nurhadi, 2020).

Teaching and learning activities generally involve at least four essential components: teachers, students, learning materials, and the learning process itself. With the involvement of these components, the learning process is deliberately planned and organized to produce meaningful interactions—commonly referred to as *educational interactions*. The interaction that takes place in the classroom is *an educative interaction, in which students are fully engaged through student-active learning, allowing for meaningful learning experiences to be* retained. Furthermore, such interaction should foster practical cooperation among students (*cooperative learning*) (Mahmud & Idham, 2017). Therefore, learning can be understood as a process of transferring information in the form of knowledge or experience that leads to behavioral changes in learners. This process is carried out in a structured, scheduled, and systematically organized manner.

The concept of *Merdeka Belajar* (Freedom to Learn) in the *Merdeka Curriculum* aligns closely with the philosophy of constructivism. This is because constructivist philosophy encourages learners to utilize their abilities to adapt to the demands of scientific and societal development. Constructivism, as a study of learning, focuses on how individuals construct their understanding of the world around them (Singh & Yaduvanshi, 2015). It serves as an explanatory framework describing how learners, as individuals, modify, adapt, and reconstruct their knowledge (Sugrah, 2019). Constructivism is also closely related to *discovery learning* and *meaningful learning* methods (Masgumelar & Mustafa, 2021), both of which are situated within the context of cognitive learning theory.

In the *Merdeka Curriculum*, teachers are not merely agents of *knowledge transfer*, but also facilitators who provide students with the freedom to experience more autonomous and meaningful learning. The educational goal of shaping students' character in accordance with the *Pancasila Student Profile* is achieved through a series of cognitive processes, including schema development, adaptation, assimilation, accommodation, equilibrium, and organization, all of which occur through meaningful experiences without coercion, allowing learners to feel freer and happier. The implementation of the constructivist approach in learning is achieved through student-centered learning, where learners actively participate in constructing knowledge. Teachers are expected to create learning environments that promote teamwork and collaboration (*cooperative learning*) (Saifulloh et al., 2012). To create such an environment, teachers must possess the necessary pedagogical competencies to design and facilitate effective classroom interactions, enabling students to learn collaboratively in an enjoyable and respectful (democratic) atmosphere.

The constructivist theory is highly effective when implemented in the learning process. This is because constructivism provides each learner with the opportunity to construct their own knowledge. Moreover, applying constructivist theory in learning can enhance students' ability to communicate their understanding and develop a more profound mastery of concepts (Saputro & Pakpahan, 2021). Another reason is that the application of constructivist theory in the learning process enables instruction to run more effectively, thereby improving the overall quality of education in the future.

Evaluation

Evaluation can be defined as a decision-making process that utilizes information obtained through the measurement of learning outcomes, whether by using test or non-test instruments (Faiz et al., 2022). Evaluation is also understood as a process of making judgments about the value and significance of something being assessed (Guba & Lincoln, 2001). The subject of evaluation may include individuals, objects, activities, conditions, or specific entities. From these definitions, two key conceptual understandings emerge as the foundation of the evaluation concept (Sanjaya, 2011).

1. Evaluation, as a process, requires the implementation of several actions. Therefore, evaluation can be defined as a series of interrelated activities.
2. Evaluation is related to the process of assigning value or meaning, based on the judgment of whether something possesses worth or significance.

It can be concluded from the definitions above that evaluation serves as a tool used to make judgments or decisions regarding activities, objects, or individuals, and to present information based on the data obtained. In the implementation of program evaluation, assessments are conducted based on the established standards and criteria of the evaluation program. From this explanation, it is evident that establishing evaluation criteria is essential, as they must be aligned with the actual needs and conditions in the field. The evaluation criteria are developed based on seven fundamental principles.

1. If the program being evaluated is an implementation of a particular policy, its criteria consist of the provisions or regulations that have been established in relation to that policy.
2. The evaluation criteria may also take the form of guidelines or implementation instructions of a program. The development of these guidelines takes into account the principles, objectives, targets, and implementation parameters of the program.
3. The evaluation criteria are formulated based on established scientific theories.
4. The evaluation criteria can also be developed by referring to research findings that have been published or presented in seminars.
5. The criteria may also be based on expert judgment, namely those determined by specialists in their respective fields.
6. An evaluation team consisting of several members may also collaboratively develop the evaluation criteria, making them the result of a collective agreement.
7. The evaluator may also develop their own evaluation criteria through a series of improvement steps.

The following are the evaluation criteria proposed by Ananda et al. (2017).

1. The relationship between evaluation and curriculum serves as the foundation for determining evaluation criteria, which are used to analyze both internal and external aspects of the curriculum under review.
2. The duration and timing of the evaluation process are also important factors, as they relate to how the evaluation will be conducted. The time frame can be adjusted according to the established criteria, and the implementation of evaluation activities depends on the actual conditions during the evaluation process.

Based on the determination and classification of program evaluation criteria mentioned above, it can be concluded that program evaluation also requires specific approaches to address these criteria. According to Pujiati et al. (2021), there are four main approaches to evaluation criteria: the pre-ordinate approach, the fidelity approach, the combined approach, and the process approach.

1. Pre-Ordinate Approach
   This curriculum evaluation method employs predetermined standards. It is typically used when an evaluation activity has not yet been implemented. The criteria used in this approach are not developed based on the specific characteristics of the curriculum being evaluated, but rather derived from existing literature or standardized evaluation tools that meet specific established benchmarks.
2. Fidelity Approach
   Unlike the previous method, the fidelity approach is based on the curriculum being evaluated. Therefore, the evaluator must thoroughly examine the quality and content of the curriculum before conducting the evaluation. The evaluation criteria are then formulated based on the findings of this analysis.
3. Combined Criteria Approach
   This approach utilizes multiple sources of criteria to assess various dimensions of the curriculum, including the curriculum as a concept, as a program design, as an instructional process, and as an outcome. As its name suggests, the combined approach integrates elements of the pre-ordinate approach (criteria derived from external standards or theories) and the fidelity approach (criteria derived from the evaluated curriculum itself).
4. Process Approach
   Rooted in the naturalistic inquiry method, often referred to as the phenomenological approach, this method emerged due to dissatisfaction with evaluation results that were deemed unhelpful for practitioners—particularly teachers. Since many teachers are less familiar with quantitative evaluation methods that rely heavily on statistics, evaluations that unilaterally determine criteria from the evaluator's perspective are often viewed as having limitations. This approach, therefore, emphasizes understanding the evaluation process as it naturally occurs within the educational setting.

METHODS

The research method employed in this study is a quantitative approach, utilizing the survey method. The quantitative approach emphasizes the use of numerical data or measurable variables. Such data can be obtained through surveys, experiments, or statistical data analysis. This study aims to determine students' assessments of teachers' teaching quality.

The sample consisted of 76 respondents, comprising students and teachers of Science (IPA), Indonesian Language, and History subjects at SMAN 1 Lembang. Data were collected using three approaches: surveys through questionnaires, document analysis, and interviews.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study was conducted with 76 students and three teachers who had experienced the learning process under the Merdeka Curriculum. The research involved administering questionnaires and conducting interviews related to the implementation of the curriculum. The results were presented in the form of bar charts, along with responses to each question. Additionally, the study utilized three teaching modules provided by the interviewed teachers. The collected data were then processed and analyzed to produce descriptive statistics relevant to the research objectives.

Hasil Kuesioner

The first questionnaire indicator is Facilitating the Construction of Students' Knowledge (MKP). This indicator aims to assess the extent to which students can develop their own understanding and knowledge. Based on the study's results, the findings for this indicator are presented in **Figure 1**.

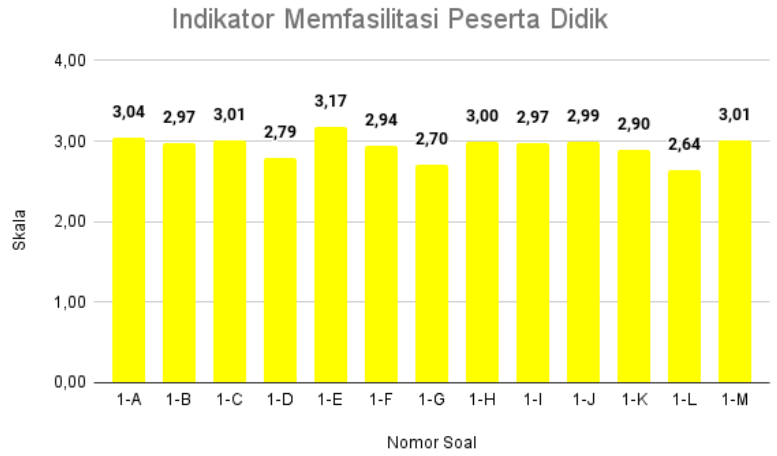

Figure 1. Percentage Diagram of the Indicator on the Process of Students' Knowledge Construction
Source: Research Data, 2023

Based on the figure, it can be seen that the behavioral statement with the highest percentage is *"The problems presented in learning activities encourage me to think and discuss,"* with a mean score of **3.17**. This indicates that students engage in critical thinking and problem-solving when the teacher presents a learning challenge.

The second questionnaire indicator is Relevance and Meaningfulness of Learning Experiences (RKP). This indicator aims to emphasize students' understanding and the significance of the learning materials for them. The results obtained from this indicator are presented in **Figure 2**.

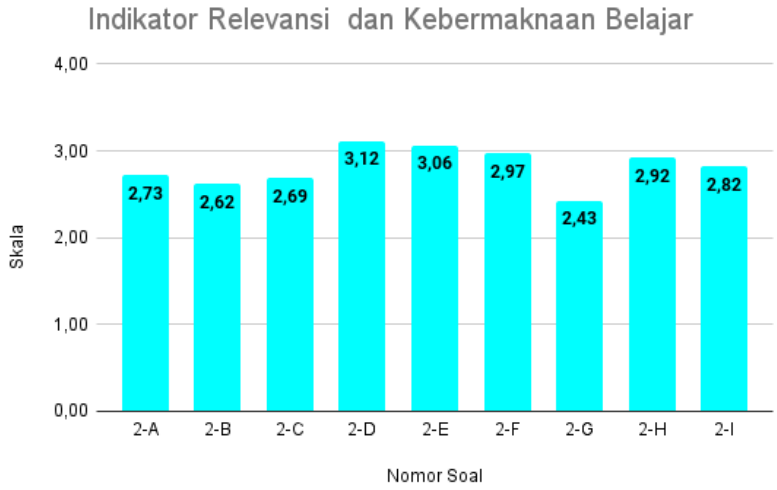

Figure 2. Percentage Diagram of the Indicator on the Relevance and Meaningfulness of Learning Experiences
Source: Research Data, 2023

Based on the figure, it can be seen that the behavioral aspect with the highest percentage is *"The material taught includes many examples relevant to real life,"* with a score of 3.12. This indicates that the material

being studied aligns with examples found in students' daily experiences, enabling them to strengthen the connection between real-life situations and academic content.

The third questionnaire indicator is the nature of science and conceptual change dilemmas (SPK). This indicator aims to develop a deep conceptual understanding of specific science topics. After conducting the research, the results are presented in **Figure 3**.

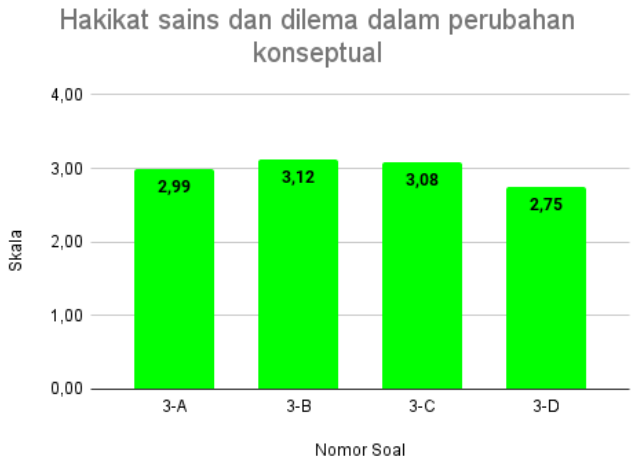

Figure 3. Percentage Diagram of the Indicator on the Nature of Science and Conceptual Change Dilemmas
Source: Research, 2023

Based on the figure, it can be seen that the behavioral aspect with the highest percentage is *"I look for answers to the teacher's questions using various sources"* with a score of 3.12. This indicates that students are enthusiastic and motivated to seek information from multiple sources, demonstrating their independence in understanding and expanding knowledge beyond the classroom.

The fourth questionnaire indicator is students' autonomy in managing the learning environment (OPL). This indicator aims to enhance students' sense of responsibility in the learning process. After conducting the research, the results are presented in **Figure 4**.

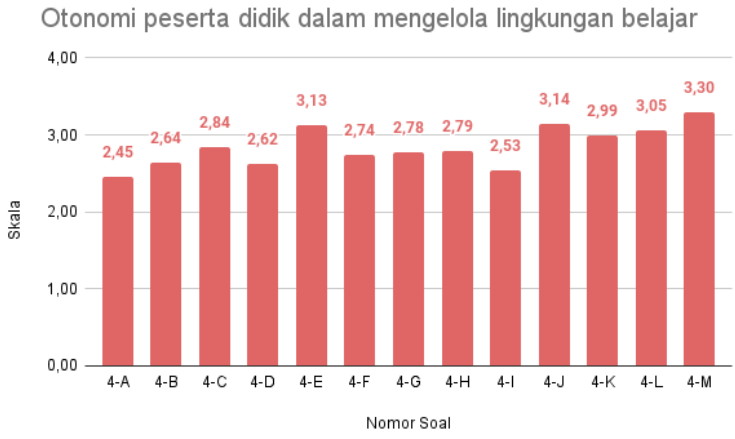

Figure 4. Percentage Diagram of the Indicator on Students' Autonomy in Managing the Learning Environment
Source: Research, 2023

Based on the figure, it can be seen that the behavioral aspect with the highest percentage is *"I submit assignments according to the specified deadline"* with a score of 3.30. This indicates that students

demonstrate responsibility and time discipline by completing and submitting their tasks within the given timeframe.

The fifth questionnaire indicator is Social Interaction (IS). This indicator aims to develop students' social skills. After the research was conducted, the results are presented in **Figure 5**.

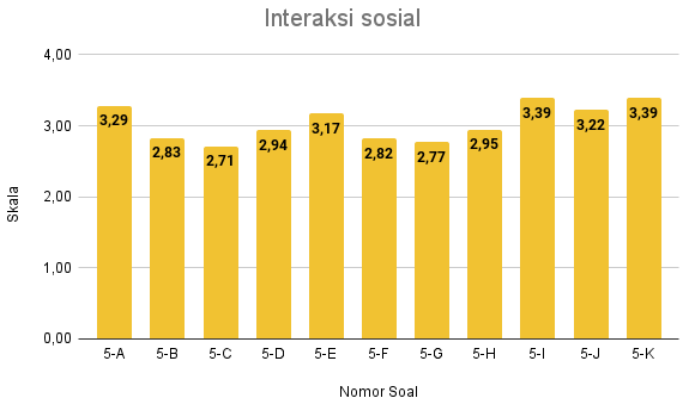

Figure 5. Percentage Diagram of the Social Interaction Indicator
Source: Research, 2023

Based on the figure, it can be seen that the behaviors with the highest percentage are *"Each member of the group has the opportunity to express their opinions"* and *"The final decision in the group is made through deliberation,"* both of which obtain a score of **3.39**. This indicates that within the group, every member is allowed to share their opinions, and final decisions are reached through a process of discussion and consensus. Moreover, this behavior reflects active participation and the practice of democracy in group decision-making.

Interview Results

Based on interviews conducted with three teachers, who teach Indonesian Language, Science, and History at SMAN 1 Lembang and have implemented the *Merdeka Curriculum*, it was found that this curriculum reform involves extensive reconstruction, starting from the planning, implementation, and evaluation stages of learning. Several factors were identified as influencing the success of the learning process, including students' learning motivation, support from parents and teachers, teachers' pedagogical competence, as well as social, cultural, and economic conditions, along with other supporting aspects.

1. Indonesian Language: The Indonesian Language teacher at SMAN 1 Lembang stated that the implementation of the *Merdeka Curriculum* has brought positive impacts for all components, especially for the students. Several improvements have been observed, including increased self-confidence, honesty, and critical thinking skills. Moreover, students' creativity has become more visible, allowing each learner to explore and develop their individual potential.
2. History: The History teacher mentioned that the *Merdeka Curriculum* is easier and more practical to implement. With this curriculum, students are encouraged to explore learning materials more deeply and become more creative, thereby gaining a deeper understanding of what they are studying.
3. Science: According to the Science teacher at SMAN 1 Lembang, the *Merdeka Curriculum* emphasizes the roles, rights, and responsibilities of both teachers and students. Teachers act as facilitators, while students are given the right to participate in determining the learning materials they will study. As a result, the learning content can be managed more effectively and efficiently, with students better prepared and more receptive to the lessons being delivered.

Document Study Results

1. Science Teaching Module
   The percentage obtained from the document study of the Science teaching module ranges from **40% to 70%**, indicating that the Science Module falls into the **"Fair"** category.
2. History (Social Studies) Teaching Module
   The percentage obtained from the document study of the History (Social Studies) teaching module ranges from **55% to 65%**, showing that the History Module is categorized as **"Less Good"** due to several unmet indicators.
3. Indonesian Language Teaching Module
   The percentage obtained from the document study of the Indonesian Language teaching module ranges from **75% to 80%**, indicating that the Indonesian Language Module falls into the **"Very Good"** category, as it has met most of the established criteria.

Discussion

From the research conducted, several significant findings emerged regarding the implementation of the *Merdeka Curriculum* at SMAN 1 Lembang. The questionnaire results revealed that students were able to develop their knowledge by thinking critically and engaging actively in discussions to solve problems presented during the learning process. This finding aligns with the theory of **constructivism in education**, which emphasizes the importance of active and collaborative learning in developing a deep understanding. In the field of educational philosophy, constructivism is understood as an approach that aims to shape life structures in accordance with modern cultural values and norms (Suparlan, 2019).

Furthermore, the aspect of relevance and meaningfulness of learning experiences showed that the materials taught contained many real-life examples, enhancing the connection between learning materials and students' everyday experiences. The contextual learning theory supports this finding, emphasizing the importance of real-world contexts in understanding and applying knowledge. This concept of teaching and learning enables teachers to connect classroom content with real-life situations. This implies that students are encouraged to understand how school lessons can be applied to their everyday lives and to connect acquired knowledge with its practical applications (Kismatun, 2021).

Additionally, students demonstrated the ability to seek information from various sources and effectively handle dilemmas in conceptual change through independent learning. This reflects the problem-based learning (PBL) approach, which encourages students to become independent learners who actively seek solutions to complex problems. This learning model is used to train students in solving problems presented by teachers, as well as to enhance their understanding and creativity in learning (Rudiyanto et al., 2022). PBL also improves critical thinking, problem-solving, communication, and collaboration skills (Anggraeni et al., 2021; Ghani et al., 2021).

In terms of students' autonomy in managing their learning environment, the high level of responsibility shown by students in submitting assignments on time indicates discipline and independence in learning. The theory of self-regulated learning (SRL) is relevant in this context, as it highlights the importance of time management and personal responsibility in achieving learning goals. Self-regulated learning is a process in which individuals manage their own learning, including planning, monitoring, and modifying their activities. It also involves metacognitive management and a commitment to continuous, disciplined learning (Ayu & Meutia, 2020). The efforts made directly influence the outcomes of self-regulated learning

and are also affected by an environment that supports SRL (Gambo & Shakir, 2021; Wolters & Brady, 2021).

The high level of social interaction within study groups reflects active participation and democratization in group decision-making, aligning with the theory of cooperative learning. By facilitating positive social interactions, this curriculum supports the development of social and collaborative skills among students. Cooperative learning is an approach in which students work together in groups and actively collaborate with peers to achieve shared learning objectives (Shidiq et al., 2024). The implementation of the *Merdeka Curriculum* is fundamentally an effort to recover from the learning crisis (Nugraha, 2022). However, its implementation at SMAN 1 Lembang also faces various challenges encountered by both teachers and students, which ultimately contribute to improving students' character development (Cantika et al., 2022; Kusumawardani et al., 2022).

Therefore, the implementation of the *Merdeka Curriculum* at SMAN 1 Lembang has provided significant benefits in enhancing the quality of learning, as well as developing students' skills and attitudes in accordance with 21st-century demands. Consequently, continuous evaluation and curriculum development are essential to meet the increasingly complex and diverse learning needs.

CONCLUSION

This is evidenced by the analysis of the document study conducted, which shows that SMAN 1 Lembang falls into the category of schools ready to implement the Merdeka Curriculum, as reflected in the average competence of teachers in preparing lesson plans and managing classroom learning processes. This is further supported by statements from several teachers regarding the ease and flexibility of implementing the curriculum program at the school, which provides numerous benefits while also presenting challenges for teachers, students, and other stakeholders. However, these challenges are not major obstacles given the continual improvement in learning outcomes and the significant progress in students' development. This is demonstrated by the students' ability to express their opinions and ideas, which are showcased through the P5 program implemented at the school. Students' learning motivation has also increased, as evidenced by the high level of social interaction, reaching a score of 3.04, compared to the other four aspects. This suggests that the variation and participation of students, both intentional and unintentional, in classroom decision-making contribute to the development of 21st-century skills, including communication, critical thinking, collaboration, and creativity. Moving forward, it is expected that SMAN 1 Lembang will optimize resource management, such as facilities and infrastructure, strengthen collaboration with parents, and conduct regular monitoring and evaluation to further enhance the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

This article can be confirmed to be free of any conflicts of interest in its publication process. We would like to emphasize that all content in this article has been developed **originally** and does not contain any elements of plagiarism.

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