



## Analysis of elementary teachers' challenges in implementing Kurikulum Merdeka in social studies

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### ABSTRACT

The implementation of the Kurikulum Merdeka in elementary schools requires teachers to have innovation and adaptation competencies, particularly in social studies learning. It emphasizes student-centered learning and allows teachers the freedom to choose learning methods and media. However, during its implementation, teachers face various challenges that need to be identified in order to improve the quality of learning. This study aims to describe the problems faced by teachers in implementing the Kurikulum Merdeka in social studies learning and examine the role of supervision at Gugus Dua Bintang Bayu Elementary School. The method used is a descriptive qualitative approach, with data collected through interviews, observations, questionnaires, and documentation involving teachers and the principal. The results indicate that the main challenges for teachers include low competency in learning innovation, limited understanding of the curriculum, lack of technology as a learning medium, difficulties in developing learning tools such as lesson plans and modules, and inadequate facilities and learning resources. Existing supervision is more administrative in nature and lacks ongoing practical guidance. These findings emphasize the importance of increasing teacher capacity and strengthening supervision for effective implementation of the Kurikulum Merdeka.

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### ABSTRAK

Penerapan Kurikulum Merdeka di sekolah dasar yang menuntut guru memiliki kompetensi inovasi dan adaptasi, khususnya dalam pembelajaran IPS menekankan pembelajaran berpusat pada murid dan memberi kebebasan pada guru dalam memilih metode dan media pembelajaran. Namun, pada pelaksanaannya guru dihadapi dengan berbagai tantangan yang perlu diidentifikasi untuk meningkatkan kualitas pembelajaran. Penelitian ini bertujuan mendeskripsikan masalah yang dihadapi guru dalam implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka pada pembelajaran IPS serta mengkaji peran supervisi di SD Gugus Dua Bintang Bayu. Metode yang digunakan adalah deskriptif kualitatif dengan pengumpulan data melalui wawancara, observasi, angket, dan dokumentasi yang melibatkan guru dan kepala sekolah. Hasil menunjukkan bahwa tantangan utama guru meliputi rendahnya kompetensi inovasi pembelajaran, pemahaman kurikulum yang terbatas, kekurangan teknologi sebagai media pembelajaran, kesulitan dalam menyusun perangkat pembelajaran seperti RPP dan modul, serta fasilitas dan sumber belajar yang kurang memadai. Supervisi yang ada lebih bersifat administratif dan kurang memberikan bimbingan praktis berkelanjutan. Temuan ini menegaskan pentingnya peningkatan kapasitas guru dan penguatan supervisi agar implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka berjalan efektif.

**Kata Kunci:** implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka; pembelajaran IPS; tantangan guru

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## INTRODUCTION

Education plays an important role in human life and is a strategic factor in creating quality human resources capable of competing in the global era. This is supported by research stating that the quality of education is highly determinant of a nation's competitiveness (Oktavia *et al.*, 2020). In legal terms, education in Indonesia is defined as a conscious and planned effort to create an effective learning environment and teaching process, which is realized through the curriculum as the main planning tool, as regulated under *Undang-Undang Nomor 20 Tahun 2003 tentang Sistem Pendidikan Nasional*. Therefore, the development of a quality curriculum is essential to ensure that the learning process runs effectively and is able to produce competent graduates who are ready to face global challenges.

Despite numerous changes in education policy since independence, the reality is that the quality of Indonesian education still faces significant challenges and needs continuous improvement (Oktavia *et al.*, 2020). The government is also continually updating, particularly in curriculum development, to ensure it remains relevant to contemporary contexts and students' needs (Cholilah *et al.*, 2023; Erlistiana *et al.*, 2022). The curriculum is understood as a set of plans and arrangements that include educational goals, content, materials, methods, and evaluation, serving as the main guide in the learning process (Assyifa & Hadi, 2024; Julaeha *et al.*, 2021).

Changes and updates to the national curriculum are inseparable from various factors that influence political, social, cultural, economic, scientific, and technological dynamics. Therefore, the effectiveness of curriculum implementation is highly dependent on the presence of competent educators, adequate facilities, funding support, management, and educational leadership that is visionary and responsive to change. These factors contribute to the evolution of the curriculum to align with societal needs and the progress of the times (Almarisi, 2023). Furthermore, the effectiveness of curriculum implementation heavily relies on the availability of competent educators, adequate facilities, funding support, and visionary educational management and leadership that are responsive to change. Curriculum transformations, such as the *Kurikulum Merdeka*, emphasize the use of technology and project-based learning approaches, which require teachers to have a high capacity for innovation and adaptation in their implementation (Septiana *et al.*, 2024). Thus, the successful implementation of the curriculum depends on teacher readiness, facility support, and an education management system that is adaptable to social and technological changes (Nissa & Suastra, 2023; Sulianti *et al.*, 2024).

*Kurikulum Merdeka* was launched in response to the learning crisis faced so far, emphasizing student-centered learning and strengthening the *Profil Pelajar Pancasila* (Damayanti *et al.*, 2023; Sullanmaa, 2024). To support the implementation of this curriculum, the *Platform Merdeka Mengajar* (PMM) was developed as a means for teachers to access learning resources, conduct lessons, and share best practices (Nugraha, 2022; Sulistiyoawati *et al.*, 2021). PMM provides student assessment features and collaboration spaces that help improve teacher competence and cooperation. However, in practice, the implementation of the *Kurikulum Merdeka*, especially at the elementary school level, still faces various significant obstacles, such as teachers' lack of understanding of the curriculum's principles and concepts, limited learning resources, and difficulties in adapting to the new learning paradigm that demands creativity and innovation, particularly in Social Studies subjects (Ariga, 2023; Maulidia *et al.*, 2023).

Previous studies that have also examined the role of *Platform Merdeka Mengajar* (PMM) found that PMM serves as an important platform for accessing self-directed training, teaching resources, and sharing best practices, thereby supporting the improvement of teachers' competencies (Nugraha, 2022; Sulistiyoawati *et al.*, 2021). In addition, *Kurikulum Merdeka* plays an important role in developing students' critical, creative, and innovative thinking skills, while also requiring teachers to be able to adapt to technology and digital-based learning (Maulidia *et al.*, 2023). However, most of these studies focus on school contexts

that already have optimal readiness and adequate access to resources, and therefore have not examined in depth the challenges faced by elementary schools that have recently adopted *Kurikulum Merdeka*, particularly in resource-limited areas.

Teachers' understanding of the principles and content of *Kurikulum Merdeka*, particularly in developing instructional documents such as Learning Objective Flow (*Alur Tujuan Pembelajaran/ATP*), teaching module (*modul ajar*), and Learning Implementation Plan (*Rencana Pelaksanaan Pembelajaran/RPP*), remains limited. These instructional documents are required to be developed in accordance with a student-centered learning paradigm; however, existing misalignments may hinder teachers in designing and implementing innovative and contextual learning activities (Maulidia *et al.*, 2023; Oktavia *et al.*, 2020). Primary data from Gugus Dua Bintang Bayu Elementary School also indicate that the majority of teachers experience these challenges simultaneously, resulting in the implementation of *Kurikulum Merdeka* not yet being carried out optimally (based on the attached interview, observation, and documentation results).

In addition, teachers' limited technological competence constitutes a significant barrier to the effective use of digital learning media, including *Platform Merdeka Mengajar (PMM)*. Insufficient digital skills among teachers, along with supporting facilities such as unstable internet access, further constrain the optimal implementation of the curriculum (Nugraha, 2022; Sulistiyoawati *et al.*). Limitations in learning resources, particularly the limited availability of student textbooks and relevant instructional materials, also have a direct impact on the smooth implementation of the learning process (Damayanti *et al.*, 2023). In addition, existing supervision and mentoring tend to focus on administrative aspects without providing the technical and practical guidance needed by teachers to implement the new learning paradigm, thereby hindering teachers' adaptation to the demands of innovation and the optimal use of technology (Sulton & Maunah, 2022).

These studies underscore the urgency of the present research as a determining factor in formulating more effective and relevant strategies for improving curriculum implementation, particularly for elementary schools that have recently adopted *Kurikulum Merdeka* under conditions of limited resources. This study not only seeks to identify these issues but also aims to design contextual and sustainable solutions to enhance teachers' competencies and strengthen supervisory support as an integral component of improving learning quality. Furthermore, this research provides an in-depth identification of the specific challenges faced by elementary school teachers in resource-limited areas in implementing *Kurikulum Merdeka* in Social Studies (*Ilmu Pengetahuan Sosial*) learning, which has received limited attention in previous studies that primarily focused on school contexts with optimal readiness.

The main novelty of this study lies in the proposed contextual solutions in the form of intensive training and mentoring based on collaboration with experienced teachers, as well as the optimization of *Platform Merdeka Mengajar (PMM)* utilization. In addition, this study emphasizes the development of learning communities and teachers' digital literacy as sustainable strategies to enhance teachers' readiness and confidence in implementing a new paradigm of active and innovative learning. This approach places practical adaptation in real classroom contexts as the primary focus, and therefore, the findings are expected to provide tangible contributions to improving the quality of Social Studies (*Ilmu Pengetahuan Sosial*) learning in elementary schools located in areas that are not yet fully prepared in terms of resources and competencies.

The urgency of this research refers to the concrete need to improve the quality of basic education in Indonesia, particularly through strengthening teachers' competencies and promoting learning adaptations that are responsive to contemporary developments. The problems encountered in the field become increasingly complex and specific in schools that have recently adopted *Kurikulum Merdeka*, such as Gugus Dua Bintang Bayu Elementary School, which faces limitations across various resource-related aspects. This condition demands special attention to teachers' capacity to understand and effectively

implement the new curriculum. Therefore, it is essential to identify the main challenges faced by teachers in order to design appropriate solutions.

Teachers at Gugus Dua Bintang Bayu Elementary School experience various difficulties in implementing *Kurikulum Merdeka* in Social Studies (*Ilmu Pengetahuan Sosial*) learning, including challenges in understanding the curriculum, limitations in learning resources, and difficulties in adapting to the new student-centered learning paradigm. Although *Kurikulum Merdeka* and *Platform Merdeka Mengajar (PMM)* have been launched and developed, these conditions hinder the effectiveness of curriculum implementation and the quality of education received by students. In this context, the role of supervision becomes crucial in supporting the implementation of *Kurikulum Merdeka* so that it can be carried out optimally.

Based on the background and identified problems, the objective of this study is to describe the challenges faced by teachers in the process of implementing *Kurikulum Merdeka* in Social Studies (*Ilmu Pengetahuan Sosial*) learning and to examine the role of supervision in supporting curriculum implementation at Gugus Dua Bintang Bayu Elementary School. This study also aims to provide contextual recommendations that may help overcome existing barriers and improve the quality of Social Studies learning at the elementary school level.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Implementation of *Kurikulum Merdeka* in Elementary Schools**

*Kurikulum Merdeka* is a curriculum designed to provide greater freedom and flexibility for teachers in the learning process. This curriculum emphasizes student-centered learning, with the aim of developing students' creativity, innovation, and critical thinking skills (Damayanti *et al.*, 2023; Sullanmaa, 2024). As a contextual and inclusive curriculum, the implementation of *Kurikulum Merdeka* at the elementary school level (*Sekolah Dasar*) requires teachers to adapt instructional materials and teaching methods to the needs and characteristics of individual students (Sari & Gumiandari, 2022). This curricular approach is also supported by ease of access through *Platform Merdeka Mengajar (PMM)*, which provides learning features, training, and opportunities for sharing best practices, enabling teachers to independently enhance their professional competencies (Nugraha, 2022; Sulistiyoawati *et al.*, 2021).

However, in practice, the implementation of *Kurikulum Merdeka* at the elementary school level (*Sekolah Dasar*) is not without challenges. Changes in the learning paradigm that demand active student participation and the use of technology as a learning medium require adequate teacher readiness and competence (Ariga, 2023; Maulidia *et al.*, 2023). In addition, limitations in facilities, learning resources, and insufficient mentoring constitute barriers that may disrupt the smooth implementation of this curriculum.

### **Elementary School Teachers' Teaching Experiences in the Implementation of *Kurikulum Merdeka***

Teachers, as the primary implementers of the curriculum, play a central role in determining the success of *Kurikulum Merdeka* implementation (Sulton & Maunah, 2022). Teachers' teaching experiences at the elementary school level during the implementation of this curriculum reveal the complexity of challenges encountered, such as difficulties in developing instructional documents aligned with the principles of *Merdeka Belajar*, including *Rencana Pelaksanaan Pembelajaran (RPP)*, *Alur Tujuan Pembelajaran (ATP)*, and the use of relevant teaching modules (Ananda & Albina, 2025; Nengsih *et al.*, 2024; Oktavia *et al.*, 2020). In addition, teachers are required to adjust instructional methods to meet individual students' learning needs, which demands creativity, innovation, and adequate digital literacy (Maulidia *et al.*, 2023).

Another challenge faced by teachers involves adapting to the use of digital media and learning platforms such as *Platform Merdeka Mengajar (PMM)*, which have not yet been fully mastered. Not all teachers possess sufficient technological competence, and they also encounter limitations in supporting facilities for digital learning in schools (Sulistiyoawati et al., 2021). Therefore, the need for training, mentoring, and collaboration among teachers is frequently proposed as a strategy to enhance effective teaching experiences in accordance with the demands of *Kurikulum Merdeka* (Damayanti et al., 2023).

The implementation of *Kurikulum Merdeka* in elementary schools introduces new dynamics for teachers in conducting instructional activities. This curriculum is designed with characteristics such as flexibility, a focus on essential content, the strengthening of project-based learning, and an emphasis on *Profil Pelajar Pancasila*, which is particularly relevant in the post COVID-19 pandemic context (Rizaldi & Fatimah, 2023). However, teachers' experiences in the field indicate that readiness is a key factor in successful implementation. This finding is reinforced by other studies showing that teachers' understanding, school facilities, continuous professional development, and community support significantly influence curriculum implementation (Sephiawardani, 2024).

Beyond readiness, school leadership also plays an important role. Previous studies reveal that instructional leadership encourages teachers to engage more confidently in innovation, implement differentiated instruction, and emphasize essential learning content (Elfira et al., 2024). Teachers are also positioned as agents of change within the *Merdeka Belajar* framework, which provides broader professional autonomy (Prasetia et al., 2024). From a pedagogical perspective, project-based learning strategies (*Project-Based Learning*) have been shown to enhance motivation, collaboration, problem-solving skills, and learning outcomes among elementary school students (Wulandari & Nawangsari, 2024). Nevertheless, classroom practices are not without challenges. Teachers often experience difficulties in implementing differentiation due to limited resources, large class sizes, and complex assessment demands (Intan et al., 2025; Yogi, 2025).

Teachers' reflections on their teaching experiences with *Kurikulum Merdeka* indicate the presence of both opportunities and challenges. On the one hand, teachers experience greater flexibility in designing learning activities and strengthening student-centered learning (Alvarado & Galigao, 2024). On the other hand, constraints emerge in relation to assessment practices, limited facilities, and the need for continuous competency development. Recent studies further reveal that the integration of Global Citizenship Education (GCE) into *Kurikulum Merdeka* can be carried out through *Proyek Penguatan Profil Pelajar Pancasila*, although teachers continue to face challenges in planning and evaluation. Overall, elementary school teachers' teaching experiences in implementing *Kurikulum Merdeka* reflect a complex transitional process that requires systemic support, teacher capacity development, and sustained collaboration within schools.

### **Implementation of *Kurikulum Merdeka* in Social Studies at the Elementary School Level**

The implementation of *Kurikulum Merdeka*, particularly in Social Studies (*Ilmu Pengetahuan Sosial*) at the elementary school level, requires teachers to apply learning methods that not only emphasize conceptual mastery but also strengthen students' social competencies and character development (Darlis et al., 2022; Putri & Arsanti, 2022). This curriculum provides teachers with flexibility in selecting instructional materials and methods that align with students' social and cultural backgrounds as well as their environmental contexts, thereby making Social Studies learning more relevant and meaningful (Sari & Gumiandari, 2022).

Social Studies learning under *Kurikulum Merdeka* emphasizes a student-centered approach, in which students actively construct understanding through direct experience, reflection, and dialogue (Trisdiono, 2023). Teachers are expected to act as facilitators who can integrate social themes with local contexts and utilize technology as a supporting medium for learning (Maulidia et al., 2023). The successful

implementation of this curriculum in Social Studies learning is also strongly influenced by teachers' ability to develop instructional documents in accordance with *Kurikulum Merdeka* standards, the use of diagnostic assessment, and the availability of adequate learning resources (Fatonah et al., 2023; Mutia et al., 2023).

Nevertheless, several challenges persist, including a lack of in-depth understanding of *Kurikulum Merdeka* principles, limitations in learning resources, and teachers' low levels of technological competence, all of which hinder the optimal implementation of Social Studies learning. Therefore, strengthening teachers' capacity through intensive training and continuous mentoring is considered essential to improving the quality of Social Studies learning in line with the spirit of *Kurikulum Merdeka* (Damayanti et al., 2023; Maulidia et al., 2023).

## METHODS

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach, which was selected because it allows the researcher to explore and describe phenomena in depth and as they naturally occur within their real-life context, namely Social Studies (*Ilmu Pengetahuan Sosial*) learning activities at Gugus Dua Bintang Bayu Elementary School. According to Creswell in *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* and Merriam and Tisdell in *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation* (fourth edition), the descriptive qualitative approach is considered appropriate for comprehensively understanding the various challenges faced by teachers in implementing *Kurikulum Merdeka*, including influencing factors and the implementation context, without manipulating research variables.

The research participants consisted of elementary school teachers at Gugus Dua Bintang Bayu Elementary School, with a total sample of 18 teachers selected through purposive sampling. This sampling technique was chosen to ensure that the participants had relevant experience and active involvement in the implementation of *Kurikulum Merdeka*, specifically a minimum of two semesters of teaching experience using the curriculum. The selection of participants aimed to obtain relevant and valid data related to the phenomenon under investigation.

Data were collected using several complementary techniques to obtain a holistic understanding of the research context. First, in-depth interviews were conducted to explore teachers' subjective experiences, perceptions, and challenges during the implementation process. This technique was essential for obtaining rich and authentic qualitative data. Second, direct observations were carried out to examine the contextual dynamics of Social Studies (*Ilmu Pengetahuan Sosial*) learning processes in the classroom and to verify data obtained from interviews. Third, questionnaires were administered as supplementary data sources to gain broader qualitative insights into teachers' perspectives and experiences regarding various aspects of curriculum implementation. Finally, documentation in the form of records, instructional documents (Learning Objective Flow, teaching module, and Learning Implementation Plan), and other supporting materials was analyzed to strengthen and validate the research findings.

Following data collection, data were analyzed through systematic and iterative stages. The first step involved data reduction, which entailed selecting and focusing on the most relevant and significant data while eliminating less important information. The next stage was data presentation, in which the data were organized and narrated into themes or categories to facilitate understanding and interpretation. The final stage involved drawing conclusions supported by data verification, including source triangulation and other validation techniques to ensure the credibility and reliability of the findings.

This approach provides space for an in-depth understanding of the complex realities encountered in the field. Accordingly, the findings of this study are expected to make a significant contribution to the development of effective Social Studies (*Ilmu Pengetahuan Sosial*) learning strategies based on teachers'

authentic experiences in implementing *Kurikulum Merdeka* at Gugus Dua Bintang Bayu Elementary School.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Teachers' Challenges in the Implementation of *Kurikulum Merdeka* in Social Studies Learning

The results of data analysis indicate that the majority of teachers at Gugus Dua Bintang Bayu Elementary School continue to face fundamental challenges related to their understanding of *Kurikulum Merdeka*. Teachers perceive that the shift toward a student-centered learning paradigm and the flexibility in selecting instructional materials have not yet been implemented consistently. Several teachers reported difficulties developing instructional documents, such as Alur Tujuan Pembelajaran (ATP), modul ajar, and Rencana Pelaksanaan Pembelajaran (RPP), that align with the characteristics of *Kurikulum Merdeka* and the needs of students in the classroom. This finding highlights a gap between the curriculum theory outlined in official documents and classroom practices, which require teachers' adaptation and in-depth understanding. One informant stated,

*"I am still confused about how to develop a flexible lesson plan that aligns with this new curriculum because long-standing teaching habits are difficult to change,"* (13).

In addition, teachers' ability to utilize technology as a learning medium constitutes a significant challenge. Observations revealed that the use of *Platform Merdeka Mengajar (PMM)* and other digital media in Social Studies learning remains very limited, primarily due to teachers' insufficient technological skills and inadequate access to supporting infrastructure, such as unstable internet connections and limited availability of computer devices. These conditions restrict instructional innovation that should otherwise support creativity, collaboration, and the empowerment of students' roles. Another informant noted,

*"Although PMM has been provided, I feel that I have not used it optimally due to limitations in my skills and supporting facilities,"* (18).

Questionnaire data further reinforce these findings, indicating that approximately 79.6% of teachers experience obstacles in instructional innovation and the use of technology. These barriers reduce variation in instructional methods and approaches in Social Studies, making classroom instruction more monotonous and less engaging. Moreover, limitations in instructional materials, such as the quantity and relevance of student textbooks aligned with *Kurikulum Merdeka* principles, represent another inhibiting factor, requiring teachers to independently search for or develop alternative learning materials, which inevitably demands additional time and effort (Saputra et al., 2024).

Another issue identified is the complexity of dealing with diverse student characteristics, ranging from differences in motivation and discipline to varying levels of ability. Teachers' lack of readiness to implement student-centered learning and diverse classroom management strategies further increases their workload and stress during the instructional process. Teacher readiness, therefore, emerges as a critical factor that must be addressed in the implementation of the curriculum at the school level (Pebriani et al., 2025).

### Review of the Role of Supervision in Supporting Curriculum Implementation at Gugus Dua Bintang Bayu Elementary School

Supervision and mentoring provided by school principals and school supervisors, which are expected to support the successful implementation of the *Kurikulum Merdeka*, have not yet been carried out optimally. Supervision activities tend to focus primarily on administrative aspects and documentation, resulting in limited practical guidance to help teachers address classroom-level challenges. One informant (17) stated

that regular training programs should be complemented by direct classroom mentoring to ensure that teachers fully understand and implement the curriculum in a contextual and effective manner.

This condition indicates the need for systemic support from school management that not only emphasizes administrative compliance but also provides adequate technical and moral support. Intensive on-site mentoring is considered essential to assist teachers in adapting to the new learning paradigm, maximizing the use of technology, and enhancing teacher professionalism (Tarso *et al.*, 2025). Overall, the findings indicate that current supervision practices have not adequately addressed teachers' needs in addressing the challenges of *Kurikulum Merdeka* implementation. Therefore, strengthening the supervisory role and providing continuous mentoring are crucial to support the successful implementation of the curriculum.

The problem-solving efforts identified in this subsection emphasize the necessity of intensive and continuous teacher capacity development, the provision of practical and applicable training, strengthened direct classroom mentoring, and the availability of adequate infrastructure and learning resources. A holistic approach involving teacher collaboration and the optimization of platforms such as PMM is expected to reduce the gap between policy and classroom practice, thereby enabling the objectives of the *Kurikulum Merdeka* to be achieved effectively and to generate a positive impact on the quality of Social Science learning at Gugus Dua Bintang Bayu Elementary School.

## Discussion

### Teachers' Problems in the Process of Implementing *Kurikulum Merdeka* in Social Science Learning

The findings of this study indicate that teachers at Gugus Dua Bintang Bayu Elementary School face complex challenges in implementing the *Kurikulum Merdeka* in Social Science learning. The main difficulties include limited comprehensive understanding of the principles and structure of the curriculum, insufficient competence in instructional innovation, and challenges in developing learning tools (*Alur Tujuan Pembelajaran (ATP)*, *modul ajar*, and *Rencana Pelaksanaan Pembelajaran (RPP)*) that align with a student-centered learning paradigm. These findings are consistent with previous studies, which report that teachers' understanding of the *Kurikulum Merdeka* still requires improvement, particularly in the preparation of learning tools and the implementation of creative learning practices (Nugraha, 2022; Sulistiyoawati *et al.*, 2021).

In addition, limited mastery of educational technology and suboptimal utilization of the *Platform Merdeka Mengajar (PMM)* constitute significant barriers that hinder innovation in Social Science learning. This finding aligns with earlier research indicating that teachers' limited digital literacy and restricted access to technological devices in schools affect the effectiveness of new curriculum implementation (Ariga, 2023; Maulidia *et al.*, 2023). The conditions at Gugus Dua Bintang Bayu Elementary School, which experiences similar facility limitations, further reinforce the understanding that infrastructure and teachers' technological capacity must be key areas of concern.

Another inhibiting factor is the lack of relevant learning resources and the limited availability of contextual teaching materials, which forces teachers to independently seek or develop alternative instructional resources. This finding confirms previous studies emphasizing the importance of providing learning materials aligned with the principles of the *Kurikulum Merdeka* to support effective learning processes (Damayanti *et al.*, 2023). Furthermore, the diversity of students' characteristics adds to teachers' workload in adapting instructional methods, as supported by research indicating that teachers require adaptive competencies and effective classroom management skills to ensure the successful implementation of student-centered learning (Putri & Arsanti, 2022).

## **Review of the Role of Supervision in Supporting Curriculum Implementation at Gugus Dua Bintang Bayu Elementary School**

The role of supervision in supporting the implementation of the *Kurikulum Merdeka* at Gugus Dua Bintang Bayu Elementary School was found to remain predominantly administrative and to provide limited practical technical assistance. Supervision that focuses primarily on administrative documents, without direct field-based mentoring, has prevented teachers from adequately addressing the real challenges encountered in Social Science learning. This finding is consistent with previous studies indicating that effective supervision should include technical assistance and mentoring to enable teachers to implement the curriculum effectively (Sulton & Maunah, 2022).

Intensive and contextual classroom-based mentoring is therefore essential to support teachers in adapting to the active learning paradigm and maximizing the use of technology as mandated by the *Kurikulum Merdeka*. One research informant stated that workshop-based training alone is insufficient without structured on-site mentoring (I7). Darling-Hammond et al., in their book *Effective Teacher Professional Development*, emphasize the importance of coaching and mentoring as integral components of effective professional staff development to improve instructional practices.

### **Solutions and Recommendations to Address Implementation Barriers**

The findings of this study and the literature review reveal several significant barriers faced by teachers in implementing the *Kurikulum Merdeka*. One of the primary challenges is the need to enhance teachers' understanding of curriculum principles and the preparation of learning tools, such as *Alur Tujuan Pembelajaran (ATP)*, *modul ajar*, and *Rencana Pelaksanaan Pembelajaran (RPP)*. This condition highlights the necessity for thematic training that is not merely theoretical but also applicable and oriented toward direct classroom practice. Previous studies have shown that training programs incorporating hands-on practice and mastery of innovative instructional strategies are effective in strengthening teachers' competencies (Hidayat et al., 2023; Ulfadhilah, 2024).

In addition to competency-related issues, the supervision of instructional practices also requires reconsideration. Supervision that has predominantly focused on administrative aspects has tended to provide insufficient technical and moral support for teachers. Prior research emphasizes the importance of supervision that adopts contextual mentoring and continuous guidance, enabling teachers to receive direct support in navigating instructional challenges, particularly in Social Science learning aligned with the *Kurikulum Merdeka* (Sulistiyoawati et al., 2021).

Another challenge identified relates to limitations in digital literacy and technological infrastructure. Teachers who have not yet developed adequate digital competencies, combined with limited access to the internet and supporting devices, face obstacles in utilizing the *Platform Merdeka Mengajar (PMM)* as an innovative learning medium. Enhancing digital literacy alongside infrastructure improvements represents a strategic step toward expanding access to digital learning resources and optimizing technology use (Nugraha, 2022). Furthermore, the concept of "merdeka" within the *Kurikulum Merdeka* should serve as both an enabling framework and a guiding principle for teachers to innovate in accordance with the needs and characteristics of their students (Purwati & Arifin, 2023; Salsabila et al., 2024).

Moreover, limitations in learning resources, particularly instructional materials that align with curriculum principles and student needs, remain a critical issue. Previous research indicates that the development of alternative learning resources adapted to local contexts is a key factor in ensuring smooth instructional processes (Damayanti et al., 2023). Teacher collaboration networks have also emerged as an effective mechanism for facilitating the exchange of experiences and strengthening pedagogical capacity. Such

learning communities enable teachers to support one another and innovate collaboratively in addressing curriculum implementation challenges.

Overall, these findings underscore the need for a holistic approach that integrates the enhancement of teacher competencies, intensive mentoring, the development of digital infrastructure, and the strengthening of learning resources that are responsive to local contexts, so that the implementation of the *Kurikulum Merdeka* can be carried out optimally.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study reveals that teachers at Gugus Dua Bintang Bayu Elementary School face various complex challenges in implementing *Kurikulum Merdeka* in Social Studies (*Ilmu Pengetahuan Sosial* [IPS]) learning. The main challenges include low levels of competence in instructional innovation and an insufficient understanding of curriculum content. In addition, teachers' limited ability to operate technology as a learning medium constitutes a significant barrier that restricts the variety of instructional methods and media, resulting in classroom environments that are less engaging and less responsive to students' needs. In terms of instructional planning, teachers continue to experience difficulties in developing *Alur Tujuan Pembelajaran (ATP)*, *modul ajar*, and *Rencana Pelaksanaan Pembelajaran (RPP)* that align with the student-centered learning paradigm. Limited availability of relevant student textbooks also serves as an inhibiting factor in the learning process.

On the other hand, despite these challenges, teachers have implemented diagnostic, formative, and summative assessments reasonably well as part of a continuous learning process. The role of supervision has become highly strategic in supporting the implementation of *Kurikulum Merdeka* through a gradual adoption approach, the provision of adequate assessment tools and instructional materials, independent training, and the utilization of information technology. The provision of specialized resource persons has also been shown to assist teachers in understanding and applying the curriculum. However, some teachers perceive that instructional materials and learning media need to be simplified to facilitate implementation, particularly in remote areas with limited resources. Such simplification is considered essential to enable teachers to perform their roles optimally, thereby allowing Social Studies learning to take place effectively and meaningfully.

Accordingly, the findings of this study underscore the need for continuous teacher capacity building, the strengthening of supervision through practical mentoring, and the development of contextual and simplified instructional materials and learning media to ensure that the implementation of *Kurikulum Merdeka* at Gugus Dua Bintang Bayu Elementary School can proceed optimally and generate positive impacts on the quality of basic education.

Future researchers are encouraged to focus on the development of teacher training programs aimed at enhancing technological proficiency and innovation in *Kurikulum Merdeka* instructional methods. In addition, further studies should examine collaborative strategies among teachers, school principals, and parents to support curriculum implementation, particularly in remote areas with limited facilities. Research on the simplification of instructional materials and learning media is also important to ensure that the curriculum can be implemented more effectively and contextually.

## **AUTHOR'S NOTE**

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest related to the publication of this article. The authors also confirm that the data and content of this article are free from plagiarism.

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