

# The Implementation of Merdeka Curriculum to Realize Indonesia Golden Generation: A Systematic Literature Review

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## ABSTRACT

The Merdeka Curriculum serves as a pivotal framework for cultivating a resilient and socially adept golden generation, aligning with the cherished principles of Pancasila. This study endeavors to evaluate the efficacy of the Merdeka Curriculum in fostering Indonesia's golden generation, gauging its influence on soft skills and character development as per the Pancasila learner profile, and identifying obstacles encountered during its implementation across diverse educational settings in Indonesia. Employing a systematic literature review approach following the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines, this research sourced pertinent articles from the "Semantic Scholar and Google Scholar" platforms, yielding 20 articles meeting the criteria spanning from 2022 to 2023. Findings reveal that the Merdeka Curriculum's implementation holds immense promise in nurturing Indonesia's golden generation, facilitating the cultivation of 21st-century skills, granting educators autonomy in pedagogical design, and leveraging digital media. Its holistic approach fosters an educational milieu emphasizing students' character and social competencies grounded in Pancasila values. Despite encountered challenges, educational institutions are emerging as hubs of innovation and catalysts for positive transformation. Nevertheless, delving deeper into the specific components and enduring impacts of the Merdeka Curriculum is imperative. Recommendations for future research entail comprehensive examinations of participation across various educational tiers and geographic regions, alongside longitudinal studies to elucidate its sustained effects.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Education has an important role in shaping the basis of a country's development (Hoang & Nguyen, 2023). In the midst of global dynamics and technological advances in the field of education (Alfaro-Ponce et al., 2023), there are challenges, such as an education system that is not relevant to the

demands of the times (Wahyudiono, 2023), limited education infrastructure in some regions, as well as low teacher competence (Bungawati, 2022). These limitations can lead to disparities in the field of education (Hanafiyah et al., 2023). Therefore, comprehensive, equitable and equitable education reform is needed as a step to overcome these problems.

Various policies issued by the Indonesian government to support the advancement of education, such as the education budget of 20 percent of the state budget (Puslapdik & Kemendikbudristek, 2024), facilities and infrastructure assistance through special allocation funds (Kemendikbudristek, 2021), school operational assistance fund (BOS) program (Ditpsd.kemdikbud, 2022a), smart Indonesia program for students, scholarship programme for teachers, lecturers and education personnel (Puslapdik, 2023), certification allowances for teachers and lecturers (Puslapdik, 2022). These policies demonstrate the government's commitment to supporting and improving the quality of education in Indonesia.

However, after looking at global challenges, education in Indonesia is facing a crucial phase that demands substantive changes to the education system (Kaliionga et al., 2023). Therefore, the independent curriculum program is presented as a potential solution to the challenges of education in Indonesia (Gandasari et al., 2022). Nadiem Anwar Makarim, Minister of Education, Culture, Research and Technology (Mendikbudristek), 11<sup>th</sup> February 2022 said that the Merdeka Curriculum is structured with a simple, straightforward. In addition, the Independent Curriculum serves as a means of bridging the gap between Indonesian education and other countries' education. In addition, the Merdeka Curriculum serves as a means to bridge the gap between Indonesian education and that of other countries (Ditpsd.kemdikbud, 2022b). The Merdeka Curriculum is expected to be an effective instrument in providing an equal educational foundation that can compete at the international level. A key factor in adapting the education system to today's needs is the implementation of an Independent Curriculum that ensures every Indonesian child has equitable access to quality education (Indarta et al., 2022). To improve adaptability to students' learning needs, giving schools and instructors greater autonomy in curriculum design is expected to be beneficial (Rahayu et al., 2022).

Furthermore Handayani., (2023) asserts that the implementation of the Independent Curriculum fosters the acquisition of 21<sup>st</sup> century learning skills (Voogt & Pareja Roblin, 2023), while fostering the character and mental resilience of a generation that is expected to have global competitiveness (Dilekçi & Karatay, 2023). The implementation of the Independent Curriculum in Indonesia aims to produce a high-calibre generation capable of making significant contributions both nationally and globally (Muliaman et al., 2022). This objective is in line with the goal of national education, which is to produce a superior generation in Indonesia that not only has academic skills, This goal is in line with the goal of national education, which is to produce a superior generation of Indonesians who are not only academically and morally sound but also have a high level of moral character (Depdiknas, 2003). Based on the overall picture of the Indonesian education scenario that has been given previously, the researcher proposes the research title "Fostering a Generation of Indonesian Achievers Through the Implementation of an Merdeka Curriculum". The purpose of this study is to test and assess the influence and significance of the implementation of the Independent Curriculum in achieving the goal of forming the Golden Generation of Indonesia (Zufiyardi et al., 2023).

Based on the results of research conducted by Zufiyardi et al., (2023), the Merdeka curriculum has a significant role in improving education standards. This is due to the Merdeka curriculum's ability to create an attractive learning environment, where students are motivated to learn, while teachers have greater opportunities to develop their professional abilities. however, this study has not yet provided an overview of the extent of the implementation of the independent curriculum in realizing the golden generation of Indonesia. The Merdeka Curriculum can be implemented optimally to have a positive impact on students and the education system, this is in line with Pratiwi et al., (2023) research, that the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum positively affects students' understanding of P5 (Knowledge, Understanding, Process, Product, and Self-understanding). however, this study has not

discussed in more depth how well the Merdeka Curriculum encourages the development of soft skills and character by the profile of Pancasila students.

In implementing the curriculum, various challenges and obstacles emerged, as revealed in the findings of (Yantoro et al., 2023) research. The results indicate that overall, teachers still face limitations in their readiness to implement the independent curriculum. This study only highlights the importance of teacher readiness and understanding to support the effectiveness of the independent curriculum, while other obstacles such as educational facilities and infrastructure lack training for teachers so further research is needed to find out what obstacles are faced in implementing the Independent Curriculum in schools in Indonesia. the results of (Susanti et al., 2023) research, show that from the results of the analysis, problems were identified in the implementation of the independent curriculum originating from the government, namely a lack of optimal guidance and assistance in implementing the independent curriculum.

Based on previous research, shows that the Independent Curriculum plays an important role in improving educational standards, especially through the ability to create an attractive learning environment for students and provide opportunities for teachers to develop professional abilities. However, this research still does not touch in depth the extent to which the implementation of the Independent Curriculum is creating Indonesia's golden generation. Therefore, the researcher raised the title, "Implementation of an Independent Curriculum to Create Indonesia's Golden Generation", by exploring three aspects of the research question, namely:

1. How can the implementation of the Independent Curriculum create Indonesia's golden generation?
2. How well does the Merdeka Curriculum encourage the development of soft skills and character by the Pancasila student profile?
3. What difficulties and achievements have arisen in implementing the Independent Curriculum in schools in Indonesia?

The difference in focus of previous research has created a research gap which shows that previous research has not fully explored the impact of the Merdeka Curriculum on the development of soft skills and character of Pancasila students. Therefore, this latest research is important to fill this knowledge gap and provide a more holistic understanding of the effectiveness of the Merdeka Curriculum in producing Indonesia's golden generation.

## 2. METHODS

This study utilised a qualitative methodology, specifically using a systematic literature review (SRL) using the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) technique. Systematic literature review methodology as a methodical and organised investigation of the literature, with the aim of providing a comprehensive overview of research progress in a particular area of expertise (Lame, 2019). A systematic literature review (SLR) is an organized set of steps to critically collect, evaluate and present findings from the literature. This approach helps not only to structure the literature search well but also to facilitate the understanding and synthesis of information (Nursalam, 2020).

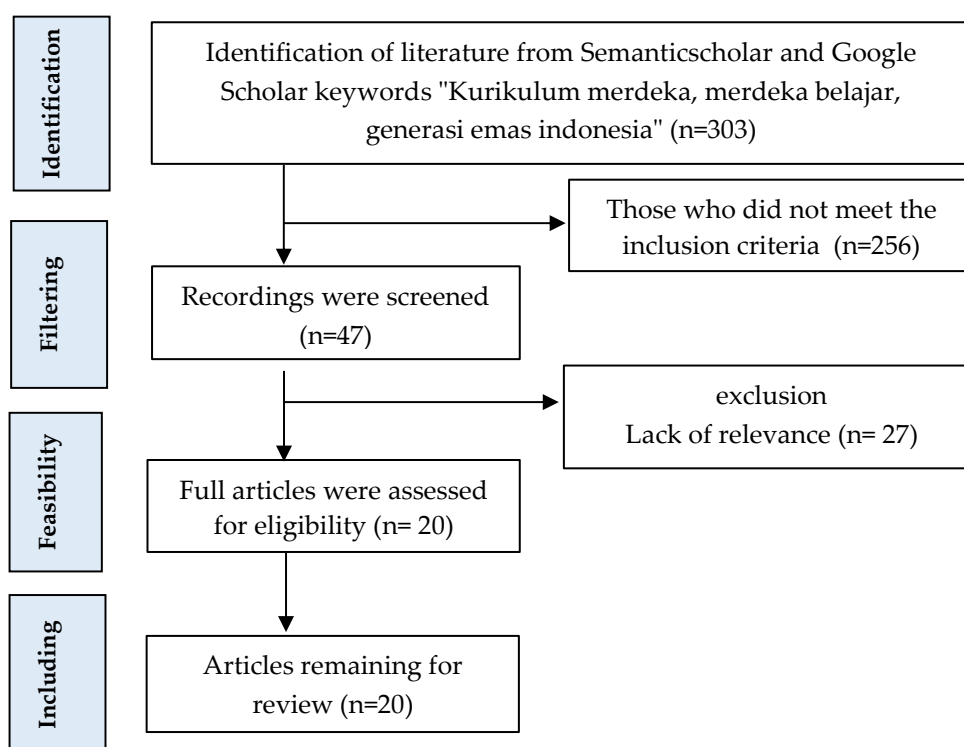
According to (Sastypratiwi, 2020), the PRISMA technique consists of four stages, namely identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion, while these stages are described as follows:

- 1) The identification stage, namely searching for articles or journals through Semanticscholar and Google Scholar based on the keywords "Kurikulum Merdeka, Merdeka Belajar, Generasi Emas Indonesia" In the initial search, 303 articles were obtained.
- 2) The filtering stage was conducted by evaluating the articles found using the inclusion criteria, including title, abstract, and publication timeframe between 2022-2023. Included articles had to be PDF files. As a result, 47 articles were identified that met all inclusion criteria. This screening

process ensured that the articles to be used in the analysis matched the research needs and reduced the risk of irrelevant or out-of-date information.

- 3) The eligibility step refers to the process of determining the suitability of the content of the articles for inclusion in the study, in line with the formulated research questions. This stage involves checking the articles that have been found, and only those that fulfill certain criteria deemed relevant and suitable will be included. At this stage, 20 eligible articles were identified that could be used in the study.
- 4) The summary stage in this study involved a process of reviewing, and analyzing the content of the articles, and creating a summary or synthesis. The researcher reviewed the content of 20 articles that represented findings related to the concept of "independent curriculum, independent learning, Indonesia's golden generation". The analysis process began with an in-depth understanding of the content of the articles, looking for patterns, and identifying key findings related to the concepts described. To analyze and synthesize the data, the researcher used several techniques, namely the categorization technique, in which the findings from the articles were categorized based on certain themes or concepts and the comparative table technique, in which the researcher created a table to systematically compare the findings from various articles.

To illustrate the article selection process can be observed in the PRISMA flowchart Figure 1 below:



**Figure 1.** Diagram of term search and publication selection process (PRISMA Flowchart)

### 3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

#### 3.1. Findings

Based on searching for articles through Semanticscholar dan Google Scholar using the keywords "independent curriculum, independent learning, golden generation of Indonesia". By following the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA)

technique, researchers found 20 research articles that met the criteria and eligibility based on the inclusion criteria published between 2022 and 2023 with the suitability of the title, abstract and topic The Implementation of Merdeka Curriculum to Realize Indonesia Golden Generation. The data is presented in table.1 Article identity as follows:

**Table 1.** Indexed Journal Publications

Year of publication	Name of Journals	Code of Journal	Digital Object Identifier (DOI)	Type of publisher
2023	Jurnal Elementaria Edukasia	A1	10.31949/jee.v6i3.6118	Sinta 3
2023	AL Madrasah	A2	10.35931/am.v7i4.2699	Sinta 4
2022	EDUKATIF (Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan)	A3	10.31004/edukatif.v4i2.2589	Sinta 4
2023	Journal of educational Research	A4	10.37985/jer.v4i3.248	Sinta 4
2022	Jurnal Ilmu Multidisiplin EDUPEDIA	A5 A6	doi.org/10.37329/metta.v2i1.1640	Sinta 5
2023	Jurnal studi pendidikan dan pedagogi Islam		10.35316/edupedia.v8i1.2788	Sinta 4
2023	Jurnal Indonesia Sosial Teknologi	A7	10.36418/jist.v4i1.564	Sinta 4
2022	Jurnal IQRA' Kajian Ilmu Pendidikan	A8	10.25217/ji.v7i1.1708	Sinta 2
2022	Social, Humanities, and Educational Studies	A9	doi.org/10.20961/shes.v5i3.59308	Sinta 4
2023	JIPP	A10	10.29303/jipp.v8i4.1403	Sinta 4
2022	Jurnal Ilmiah Mandala Education	A11	dx.doi.org/10.58258/jime.v8i4.4095	Sinta 6
2023	Jurnal Ilmiah Universitas Batanghari	A12	dx.doi.org/10.33087/jiubj.v23i1.3291	Sinta 4
2022	EDUKATIF (Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan)	A13	10.31004/edukatif.v4i4.3531	Sinta 4
2023	Sarwahita (Jurnal Pengabdian Masyarakat)	A14	10.21009/sarwahita.202.9	Sinta 6
2022	Ar Riayah (jurnal Pendidikan Dasar	A15	10.29240/jpd.v6i2.5432	Sinta 5
2022	Ghancaran Jurnal Pendidikan	A16	10.19105/ghancaran.vi.7587	Sinta 3
2023	Jurnal Elementaria Edukasia	A17	doi.org/10.31949/jee.v6i3.6107	Sinta 3
2023	Jurnal Pendidikan	A18	doi.org/10.31004/joe.v5i4.4139	Sinta 5
2023	Jurnal Basicedu	A19	doi.org/10.31004/basicedu.v7i5.6086	Sinta 5
2023	Resona (Jurnal Stiem)	A20	dx.doi.org/10.35906/resona.v7i1.1266	Sinta 4

The researcher presents the data through a table, as shown in Table 1, which contains information from 20 articles. The table includes the year of publication, journal name, Digital Object Identifier (DOI), and article code. The benefits of the data presented in this table are very relevant to support the creation of scientific journals. Firstly, the data provides a chronological overview of the publication year of the referenced articles, so that researchers can understand the development of concepts related to independent curriculum, independent learning, and Indonesia's golden generation over time. Secondly, including the journal name and DOI provides transparency into the source of the literature, ensures the accuracy of the references, and provides the necessary accessibility for readers to refer to the reviewed articles. Finally, the inclusion of article codes facilitates the management and re-identification of references in the process of writing scientific journals, improves order, and facilitates the validation of the literature used in the study. to support the data presentation, the researcher also

completed the Title of the article, the author's name and year of publication, Research Methods presented in the Table. 2, below:

**Table 2.** Title, author, year of publication and method

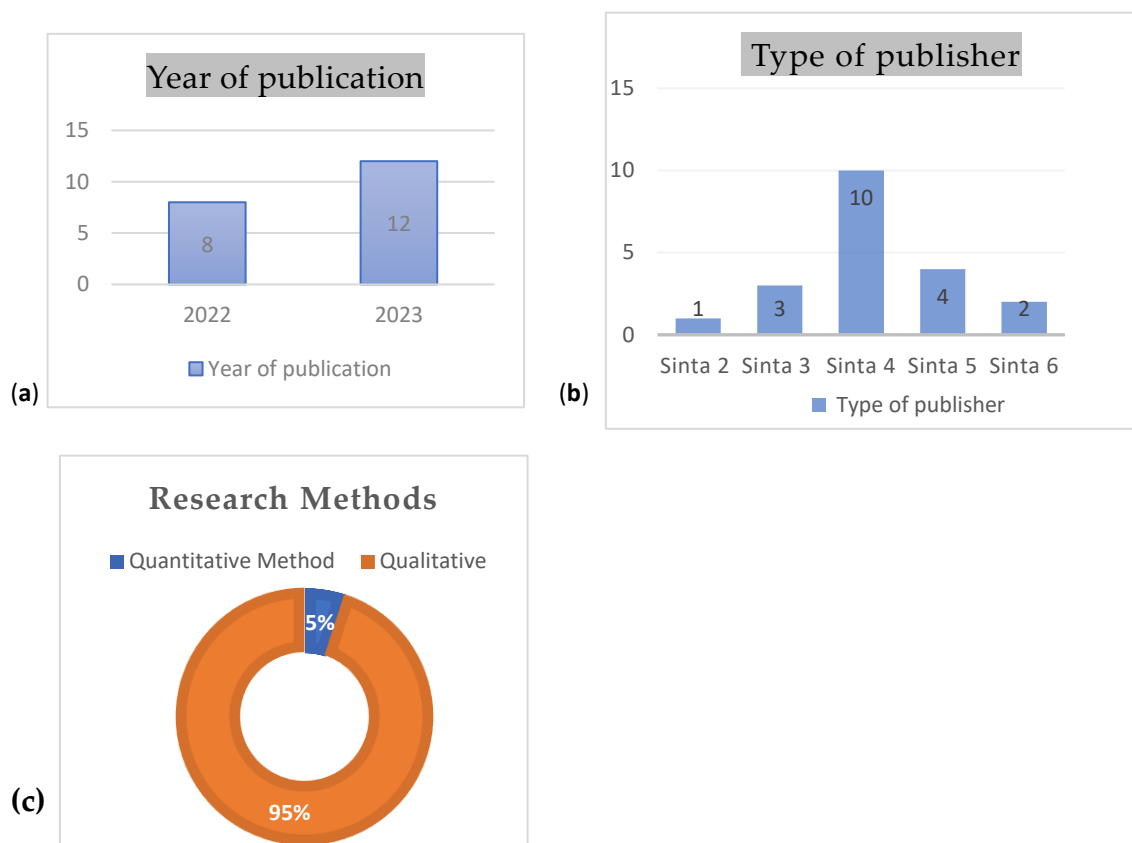
Code of Journal	Article Title	Author's name and year of publication	Research Methods
A1	Makna Dan Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar dan Relevansinya Bagi Perkembangan Siswa di sekolah Dasar : Telaah Kritis Dalam Tinjauan Pedagogis	(Heryanti et al., 2023)	Qualitative Method
A2	Media Pembelajaran Digital Generasi Alpha Era Society 5.0 Pada Kurikulum Merdeka	(Nurlina, 2021)	Qualitative Method
A3	Relevansi Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar dengan Model Pembelajaran Abad 21 dalam Perkembangan Era	(Indarta et al., 2022)	Qualitative Method
A4	Kebijakan Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar di Perguruan Tinggi	(Wati et al., 2023)	Qualitative Method
A5	Efektifitas Sistem Pendidikan Dalam Mempengaruhi Terwujudnya Generasi Emas 2045	(Samadhinata, 2022)	Qualitative Method
A6	Pemikiran pragmatisme Ibnu Khaldun dan relevansinya dengan merdeka belajar kurikulum merdeka	(Firmansyah & Asmuki, 2023)	Qualitative Method
A7	Inovasi Pembelajaran Bahasa Indonesia Dalam Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar Untuk Mewujudkan Profil Pelajar Pancasila	(Sumaryanti, 2023)	Qualitative Method
A8	Human Resource 'Kurikulum Merdeka' from Design to Implementation in the School: What Worked and What not in Indonesian Education	(Pratikno et al., 2022)	Qualitative Method
A9	Implementasi Pendidikan Berkarakter Pancasila dalam Desain Kurikulum Muatan Lokal SD di Kabupaten Sragen: Sebuah Upaya Mempersiapkan Generasi Emas	(Wirajaya, 2022)	Qualitative Method
A10	Profil Pelajar Pancasila Berbasis Kurikulum Merdeka Untuk Membentuk Karakter Gotong Royong Peserta Didik	(Arpianti et al., 2023)	Qualitative Method
A11	Peran Guru Sebagai Aplikator Profil Pelajar Pancasila Dalam Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar	(Setiyaningsih & Wiryanto, 2022)	Qualitative Method
A12	Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar di Sekolah Penggerak	(Suryani et al., 2023)	Qualitative Method
A13	Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka Pasca Pandemi Covid-19	(Alawi et al., 2022)	Qualitative Method
A14	Mengembangkan kompetensi profesional guru untuk pembelajaran inovatif kurikulum merdeka di smp pattimura	(Marta et al., 2023)	Qualitative Method
A15	Peran Guru Penggerak dalam Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar	(Ningrum & Suryani, 2022)	Qualitative Method
A16	Tantangan Implementasi Nilai-Nilai Profil Pelajar Pancasila dalam Pembelajaran Bahasa Indonesia pada Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar	(Amir et al., 2022)	Qualitative Method
A17	Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka (IKM) di Sekolah Dasar dalam Mengembangkan Profil Pelajar Pancasila	(Angga et al., 2023)	Qualitative Method
A18	Hambatan dan Tantangan Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka di MTS Raudlatul Uluum Aek Nabara Labuhanbatu	(Nasution, 2023)	Qualitative Method

A19	Kendala Dan Kebutuhan Guru Sekolah Dasar dalam Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka Bagi Peserta Didik Berkebutuhan Khusus di Lampung	(Herlina et al., 2023)	Quantitative Method
A20	Implementasi Pembelajaran Stem Dalam Kurikulum Merdeka: Pemetaan Kesiapan, Hambatan Dan Tantangan Pada Guru SMP	(Fakhrudin et al., 2023)	Qualitative Method

The presentation of data in Table 2, which includes the article title, author name, year of publication, and research methods, provides profound benefits for the creation of scientific journals. The title of the article provides a brief view of the research focus, while the author names and year of publication provide transparency and integrity to the literature sources. Information on research methods enriches the reader's understanding of the approach used, enabling a more accurate assessment of the research results. Thus, this table not only improves the accuracy and regularity of references but also provides a solid foundation for understanding the context of research in scientific journals.

### 3.2. Figures analyze article data

Data analysis was based on the information listed in Table 1 and Table 2, which yielded data from 20 articles that met the requirements and criteria for further research. Of these, 8 articles were published in 2022, while the remaining 12 articles were published in 2023. These 20 articles are listed in the Science and Technology Index (SINTA), signifying that each article has received accreditation and recognition from the Ministry of Research, Technology and Higher Education of the Republic of Indonesia. The details are, 1 article Scope SINTA 2, 3 articles Scope SINTA 3, 10 articles Scope SINTA 4, 4 articles Scope SINTA 5, 2 articles Scope SINTA 6, It is important to know that the 20 articles consisted of 1 article using Quantitative Method, while 19 other articles used Qualitative Method. These details can be identified through the diagram presented below:



**Figure 2.** Figures analyze article data This is a figure, Schemes follow the same formatting. If there are multiple panels, they should be listed as: (a) Year of publication; (b) Type of Publisher; (c) Research methods.

Based on the background of the problem, the results of the analysis, and the review of articles, the researchers grouped articles that could answer the Research Question (RQ) as follows:

- RQ1. How can the implementation of the Independent Curriculum create Indonesia's golden generation?
- RQ2. How well does the Merdeka Curriculum encourage the development of soft skills and character by the Pancasila student profile?
- RQ3. What difficulties and achievements have arisen in implementing the Independent Curriculum in schools in Indonesia?

### 3.3 Discussion

Curriculum development is a response to the dynamics of the times, science, and technology that have become urgent needs (Sholeh et al., 2023). This continuous adjustment aims to ensure the relevance and effectiveness of education and reflects a paradigm shift in education toward the development of 21st-century skills such as critical thinking, collaboration, creativity and digital literacy (Voogt & Pareja Roblin, 2023). By incorporating these elements into the curriculum, education becomes more responsive to the needs of individuals and society ((Maulana, 2022; Nurasiah et al., 2022).

Changes in the curriculum provide opportunities to adopt methodological and adaptive learning approaches, as argued by Bungawati (2022) while the utilization of information and communication technology is expected to open the door to more inclusive and innovative education, as highlighted by Rahayu et al., (2022). The implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum marks Indonesia's revolutionary

step in shaping the Golden Generation through the education sector, as asserted by Zufiyardi et al., (2023). This curriculum, by giving freedom to teachers and students, aims to encourage learning that is engaging, innovative, and focused on developing superior human resources, by the research of Rokhman et al., (2014). In this context, it is necessary to conduct an in-depth exploration of the extent to which these steps can be the key to success in forming a superior generation, as stated (Azmiyah & Astutik, 2021). To answer 3 research questions will be described in depth through a review of 20 articles which will be presented below:

### **RQ1. How can the implementation of the Independent Curriculum create Indonesia's golden generation?**

The Merdeka curriculum is an important foundation for giving birth to a generation that excels not only in academics but also has strong personality qualities and social skills to the noble values of Pancasila (Azmiyah & Astutik, 2021). This statement is supported by research results Heryanti et al., (2023) A1, Nurlina, (2021) A2, Indarta et al., (2022) A3, Wati et al., (2023) A4, Samadhinata, (2022) A5, The following is an explanation:

In an era of ever-evolving education, paradigm shifts in curriculum delivery are inevitable. As stated by Samadhinata, (2022) A5, education today makes a positive contribution to shaping the golden generation of 2045. The implementation of an independent curriculum is tailored to meet future needs and prioritizes the use of technology in learning that is oriented towards the development of 21st-century skills, such as problem-solving and creativity. Important cornerstones are character building, environmental awareness, and respect for diversity. This requires collaboration between parties to improve the education ecosystem.

Many recent studies support this statement as revealed by Heryanti et al., (2023) A1 showing that the Merdeka Curriculum gives teachers the freedom to design differentiated learning, this is also in line with the results of research conducted by (Indarta et al., 2022) A3,, that the Merdeka Curriculum gives teachers the freedom to design, create a learning environment that is not only educational but also fun and ensures students get good learning services. By giving freedom to teachers and students, this curriculum can encourage learning that is interesting, innovative, and focused on developing superior human resources (Rokhman et al., 2014).

Differentiated learning is important because learning strategies can be tailored to the unique needs and characteristics of each learner (Wahyuningsari et al., 2022). In this approach, educators have the autonomy to adjust teaching materials, methods, and strategies such as the use of digital learning media to suit the level of understanding, interests, and learning styles of each student (Mastuti et al., 2022). This is also discussed in research Nurlina, (2021) A2, that the use of digital learning media by the Alpha generation of the Society 5.0 era in the independent curriculum can increase student involvement in the learning process, providing a more meaningful learning experience. Moreover, learning design is based on the needs of students as learning subjects such as adjustments to their learning styles (Syahrir. et al., 2023).

Differentiated learning is not only at the level of educational units but also at the tertiary level as stated in the results of research Wati et al., (2023) A4, that the Merdeka Curriculum in higher education provides freedom and autonomy to educational institutions, lecturers, and students in adjusting learning needs, This policy also encourages students to master various sciences that are useful for entering the world of work and allows learners to develop skills that are relevant to the development demands of Era Society 5.0.

Based on the discussion above, the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum marks Indonesia's revolutionary step in shaping the Golden Generation through the education sector (Zufiyardi et al., 2023). Various advantages such as giving teachers the autonomy to create an interesting and enjoyable learning environment through a differentiated learning approach allows teachers to adjust learning strategies according to the unique needs and characteristics of each student. Teachers have the freedom to customize teaching materials, methods and strategies, including the use of digital media, according

to each student's understanding, interest and learning style. All of this is due to the demands of the Alpha generation in the Society 5.0 era. Therefore, Indonesia has a great opportunity to form a golden generation that is not only academically intelligent but also has the character, skills, and ability to adapt to the dynamics of the times. By implementing the Merdeka Curriculum, the country has a great opportunity to form a golden generation.

## **RQ2. How well does the Merdeka Curriculum encourage the development of soft skills and character by the Pancasila student profile?**

The Merdeka Curriculum is an important basis in the development of education in Indonesia, with a focus on character building and strengthening soft skills based on Pancasila's values. To create graduates who are not only academically superior but also have strong personality qualities, this statement is supported by the results of the research Firmansyah & Asmuki, (2023) A6, Sumaryanti, (2023) A7, Pratikno et al., (2022) A8, Wirajaya, (2022) A9, Arpianti et al., (2023) A11, which is outlined as follows:

In an era of ever-evolving education, the Merdeka Curriculum is present as an innovation in shaping a generation that is not only academically superior (Azmiyah & Astutik, 2021), but also has personality qualities and social skills by cultural values, as described by Wirajaya, (2022) A9, that instilling cultural values is key in developing the local content curriculum. This step is considered positive in the context of implementing Pancasila character education, where students are introduced to a diversity of religions and beliefs and encouraged to develop attitudes of tolerance and mutual respect. Setyaningsih & Wiryanto, (2022) A11, argues that achieving the Pancasila learner profile in the curriculum requires the active role of a teacher in providing advice, instilling tolerance, strengthening discipline, and increasing love for the country. This concept can work together, where the Merdeka Curriculum acts as a forum for integrating knowledge, skills and character.

Character education is an effort to develop moral aspects, ethics, and positive values in students (Rokhman et al., 2014), Character education in the Merdeka curriculum is considered an important pillar for forming ethical awareness, not only in the development of intellectual intelligence, but also in social and spiritual intelligence (Nurasiah et al., 2022). This is in line with the results of research Arpianti et al., (2023) A10, which confirms that character-building efforts at the school level not only help students become intelligent but also form a strong character through the spirit of Pancasila so that the role of teachers is needed in designing learning that can integrate character values into learning.

In research, Firmansyah & Asmuki, (2023) A6, it is explained that the concept of the Merdeka curriculum emphasizes students' freedom to choose and manage their learning, achieve practical skills relevant to everyday life, optimize intellectual potential, and develop a moral character based on the principles of Pancasila. Meanwhile, the Merdeka Curriculum provides support for the development of soft skills (Sumarmi et al., 2022), the results research Sumaryanti (2023)A7, which states that the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum is effective in encouraging the development of soft skills and character by the profile of Pancasila.

The findings emphasize the focus on independent learning, especially in Indonesian language learning. The curriculum highlights writing, listening, reading and speaking skills, with special attention to educational literacy. Learning innovation through the use of diverse strategies, creativity and technology can shape students' self-confidence, and active participation, and encourage the development of soft skills and character according to the Pancasila learner profile. The view of Pratikno et al., (2022) A8, shows that factors such as self-confidence, communication opportunities, active learner involvement, and the development of innovative teaching materials support the development of soft skills for students.

Based on the explanation above, it can be concluded that the Merdeka Curriculum has such an important role in shaping a generation that is not only academically superior but also has a strong personality and social skills by the values of Pancasila. This holistic approach integrates cognitive learning with character development and interpersonal skills through various extracurricular

activities, collaborative projects, and hands-on experiences. By emphasizing the values of Pancasila as a moral foundation, Merdeka Curriculum creates an educational environment that teaches gotong royong, justice, and unity, making a generation that is not only intellectually smart, but also has moral integrity, social responsibility, and awareness of the importance of national life (Nurasiah et al., 2022). In addition, this curriculum also adapts to global demands and changing times with a focus on developing 21st-century skills, such as critical thinking, creativity, effective communication, and collaboration, thus creating individuals who are ready to face the complexities and dynamics of the future.

### **RQ3. What difficulties and achievements have arisen in implementing the Independent Curriculum in schools in Indonesia?**

The implementation of the independent curriculum in Indonesian schools has been a challenging educational journey. To achieve a more contextualized and relevant vision of education, schools in Indonesia have adopted this concept in the hope of improving the quality of learning and creating excellent graduates. However, as with any change in the education system, it is not free from various obstacles that need to be overcome. In this context, we will explore the challenges faced by schools in the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, while identifying the achievements that have been made through the findings of researchers Suryani et al., (2023) A12, Alawi et al., (2022) A13, Marta et al., (2023) A14, Ningrum & Suryani, (2022) A15, Amir et al., (2022) A16, Angga et al., (2023) A17, Nasution, (2023) A18, Herlina et al., (2023) A19, Fakhruddin et al., (2023) A20 which will be described in depth.

In an effort towards a more independent learning system, the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum is faced with several obstacles, as revealed in recent research, as reported by Alawi et al., (2022) A13, The main obstacles involve inequality of access to education and budget constraints, and research conducted by Nasution, (2023) A18 and Amir et al., (2022) A16 juga also highlighted challenges in schools such as teacher readiness, teacher competence, collaboration, and difficulties in implementing learning evaluations.

Similar research results were revealed in the study Herlina et al., (2023) A19,, which showed that 56% of teachers in primary schools (SD) in Lampung admitted that they did not deeply understand the Merdeka Curriculum for Learners. These teachers face challenges in designing lessons, customizing the curriculum, and conducting learning evaluations. Fakhruddin et al., (2023) A20, emphasizes the importance of deeply understanding and effectively addressing these barriers and challenges, expressed through the conclusions of the research results. Despite efforts to implement the Merdeka Curriculum, improvements are still needed in terms of teachers' readiness, understanding and addressing the issues faced. Therefore, recommendations are given in the form of massive teacher training as a critical step to ensure in-depth understanding and effective implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum at all levels of education.

Based on the findings of several SMI obstacles, the government has taken concrete steps to overcome these obstacles. For the problem of access to education and budget constraints, the government launched a government assistance program through the Special Allocation Fund (DAK) in the form of educational infrastructure assistance (Kemendikbudristek, 2021), while supporting operations in improving teacher competence, the government allocates a budget through the School Operational Fund (BOS) policy and the Mover School Policy (Ditpsd. kemdikbud, 2022a). The implementation of Merdeka Curriculum (IKM) has begun in selected primary schools, which are appointed as Driving Schools with the Independent Sharing option as an imperative (Angga et al., 2023) A17, Driving schools are not only the best examples in implementing Merdeka Curriculum with a focus on developing soft skills and character in accordance with the Pancasila learner profile (Nurasiah et al., 2022), but also become agents of change that inspire surrounding schools.

For the achievement of IKM, good planning is needed in the education unit, as revealed by Suryani et al., (2023) A12, that the successful implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in driving

schools involves a series of stages, starting from planning, making teaching modules, implementing extracurricular learning, to the project of strengthening the student profile of Pancasila, and ending with evaluation through assessment. Marliyani & Iskandar., (2022) explained that careful planning is the main key to achieving this successful implementation. Driving schools not only provide technical support and resources to schools across the country but also engage the education community in educational reform (Surahman et al., 2022). In addition, the government endeavors to ensure the successful implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum through continuous improvement, monitoring and evaluation from the national to the local level (Indarta et al., 2021).

The government also released the mobilizing teacher program, which has a strategic function in supporting the improvement of teacher competence in understanding the Merdeka Curriculum ((Sholeh et al., 2023). The mobilizing teacher acts as an agent of change at the school level, taking on the role of a learning leader, mobilizing a community of practice, mentoring fellow teachers, encouraging collaboration between teachers, and guiding student leadership siswa (Annisa Alfath et al., 2022). The government released the mobilizing teachers as a measure to ensure that soft skills and character development in line with the Pancasila learner profile occur effectively at the school level (Nurasiah et al., 2022). Through continuous training and development, mobilizer teachers are empowered to understand and implement Merdeka Curriculum principles well.

The mobilizing teachers program also serves as a means to improve the quality of human resources in education (Jannati et al., 2023). Through this program, teachers across Indonesia are provided with the necessary training (Mastuti et al., 2022), support and resources to more effectively adopt the Merdeka Curriculum approach. With these efforts, the government hopes to create an adequate, innovative and highly competitive educational environment, thereby linking the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum with the achievement of Indonesia's Golden Generation.

All of these steps are in line with the results of research conducted by Ningrum & Suryani, (2022) A15, which shows that the important role of "mobilizing teachers" in implementing an independent curriculum can have a positive impact. The driving teacher is expected to be a learning leader, mobilize a community of practitioners, become a mentor for other teachers, and encourage collaboration between teachers (Sholeh et al., 2023). This finding is also in line with research Marta et al., (2023) A14, which states that teacher competency improvement training effectively improves pedagogical skills and teachers' ability to adapt the Merdeka curriculum, having a positive impact on the implementation of a more independent and innovative curriculum in educational units (Mastuti et al., 2022).

Based on the description above, it can be formulated that the Merdeka Curriculum faces several challenges, such as budget constraints, teacher readiness, low teacher competence, collaboration between teachers, and difficulties in evaluating learning. Through the policy of the mobilizing school program and the mobilizing teacher program, it is hoped that it can overcome the various challenges faced in implementing the independent curriculum at the school level. An important step that needs to be taken is thorough teacher training and continuous evaluation as well as increasing collaboration from various parties so that Merdeka Curriculum Implementation can realize the golden generation of Indonesia.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum shows great potential in creating Indonesia's golden generation. Key findings highlight the development of 21st-century skills, such as problem-solving ability and creativity, which are enhanced by giving teachers the freedom to design learning that suits the unique characteristics of each student. The utilization of digital learning media that suits the Alpha generation in the Society 5.0 era also helps students engage and have a more meaningful learning experience. The Merdeka Curriculum's holistic approach creates an educational environment that not only focuses on academic aspects but also prioritizes students' character-building and social skills. Freedom in learning management provides students with opportunities to hone interpersonal skills, and teamwork and understand the values of Pancasila. Although there are challenges in

implementation, the driving school has succeeded in becoming a center of innovation and an agent of positive change through teacher training programs, collaboration from various parties is also recognized as the key to success in overcoming obstacles and achieving the objectives of implementing the Merdeka Curriculum. Thus, the Merdeka Curriculum can be a strong foundation for forming a golden generation of Indonesians who are adaptive, have integrity, and are ready to face future dynamics.

Seeing that the scope of the research only explores the Implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in realizing Indonesia's golden generation, which only focuses on three research questions. Therefore, further exploration of specific elements and the long-term impact of SMI is needed. In addition, the limitations of the study and sample representation are the limitations of this researcher. Recommendations for future research include developing more in-depth analyses of specific aspects of the Merdeka Curriculum, such as participation from different levels of education and regions, and conducting longitudinal studies to understand its long-term impact. It is also recommended that future researchers conduct a more in-depth study with a wider scope that can make a more substantial contribution to understanding the role of the Merdeka Curriculum in Indonesia's education context.

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