

### EVALUATION OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MERDEKA CURRICULUM IN EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT AT SENIOR HIGH SCHOOLS

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#### ABSTRACT

The *Merdeka Curriculum* is a strategic policy of the Indonesian government aimed at transforming the education system to be more flexible, student-oriented, and capable of answering the challenges of the times. However, the implementation of the *Merdeka Curriculum* at the Senior High School (SMA) level is not free from various challenges, particularly regarding the readiness and effectiveness of education development management at the educational unit level. This study aims to evaluate the implementation of the *Merdeka Curriculum* within the framework of education development management in SMA by systematically examining the aspects of planning, execution, and curriculum evaluation. This research uses a qualitative approach with a library research method, reviewing various scientific literature sources such as Google Scholar-indexed journal articles, academic reference books, and official government policy documents relevant to the *Merdeka Curriculum* and secondary education management. Data collection techniques were carried out through documentation, while data analysis used content analysis, which included stages of data reduction, theme categorization, synthesis, and conclusion drawing. The results indicate that conceptually, the implementation of the *Merdeka Curriculum* in SMA has encouraged learning flexibility and student character strengthening; however, in practice, it still faces obstacles in the aspect of education development management, such as suboptimal planning, human resource readiness, and a curriculum evaluation system that has not been fully integrated. The evaluation of the *Merdeka Curriculum* implementation has not yet been fully utilized as a basis for managerial decision-making for sustainable education development. Therefore, a comprehensive and sustainable evaluation within the framework of education development management is needed so that the *Merdeka Curriculum* implementation can proceed more effectively and provide a real impact on improving the quality of education in Senior High Schools.

**Keywords:** Merdeka Curriculum, implementation evaluation, education development management, Senior High School.

#### INTRODUCTION

The Merdeka Curriculum is a strategic policy of the Indonesian government aimed at transforming the national education system to be more adaptive to student needs, contemporary developments, and global challenges. This curriculum emphasizes learning flexibility, character reinforcement, and competence development based on students' interests and potential. However, in practice, the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum at the Senior High School (SMA) level faces various challenges, particularly regarding educational development management, which encompasses systematic curriculum planning, implementation, and evaluation (Melati et al., 2023, pp. 29478–29480). One of the primary issues in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in Senior High Schools is the suboptimal managerial readiness of schools in handling curriculum changes. Schools are required to possess adaptive management capabilities, including human resource management, the development of instructional tools, and decision-making based on student needs. Several

studies indicate that weak planning and school management coordination result in inconsistencies in the execution of the Merdeka Curriculum in the field (Siswanto & Kintoko, 2025, pp. 28–30).

Furthermore, the roles of the principal and the education management team are key factors in the successful implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum. Principals function not only as administrators but also as **instructional leaders** capable of guiding teachers in understanding the philosophy and practices of the Merdeka Curriculum. However, there are still limitations in the conceptual and technical understanding among school management regarding curriculum evaluation based on **learning outcomes** and **diagnostic assessments** (Zulfina et al., 2025, pp. 3–5). Another issue that has emerged is the lack of integration of the Merdeka Curriculum implementation evaluation system within educational development management in Senior High Schools (SMA). Evaluations are often conducted administratively without touching upon substantive aspects, such as learning effectiveness, the achievement of the **Pancasila Student Profile**, and the curriculum's impact on improving the quality of school education. This indicates that curriculum evaluation has not yet been optimally utilized as a basis for managerial decision-making (Soadikini et al., 2025, pp. 112–115).

Evaluating the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum is crucial as it serves as a reflective instrument for schools to assess the extent to which curriculum policies have been implemented in accordance with established goals. Comprehensive evaluation can assist schools in identifying obstacles, strengths, and opportunities for improvement in educational development. Without systematic evaluation, the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum risks proceeding in a merely normative manner, without delivering a significant impact on improving the quality of learning in Senior High Schools (Rizki & Fahkrunisa, 2025, pp. 6–8). In the context of educational development management, evaluating the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum is also closely linked to efforts to enhance teacher professionalism and the effectiveness of school curriculum management. Effective management enables schools to align curriculum development strategies with student characteristics and the school's environmental context. Therefore, evaluation focuses not only on learning outcomes but also on the managerial processes that support successful curriculum implementation (Hasan & Abdullah, 2025, pp. 41–43).

Based on the preceding discussion, it can be concluded that evaluating the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum within educational development management in Senior High Schools (SMA) is a crucial and relevant issue requiring in-depth study. This inquiry is necessary to provide empirical insights into the effectiveness of school management in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum, as well as to serve as a basis for recommending improvements in educational policy and practice at the senior high school level. Ultimately, this research aims to contribute to the development of more adaptive and sustainable education management (Siswanto & Kintoko, 2025, pp. 31–33; Melati et al., 2023, pp. 29484–29486).

Beyond school managerial aspects, the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in Senior High Schools (SMA) also faces challenges regarding the readiness levels and perceptions of teachers as the primary implementers of the curriculum. Teachers are required to design **differentiated instruction**, independently compile **teaching modules**, and conduct continuous formative and diagnostic assessments. However, several studies indicate that not all teachers possess adequate competence or managerial support to fulfill these demands optimally. This

condition leads to variations in the quality of Merdeka Curriculum implementation across schools, which ultimately affects the overall effectiveness of educational development (Meidi kulsum & Suloso, 2025, pp. 58–60; Angelika & Setiawan, 2025, pp. 14–16).

Therefore, the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum must be evaluated comprehensively, involving all elements of educational development management in Senior High Schools—ranging from curriculum planning and instructional implementation to evaluation systems and **academic supervision**. Evaluation based on data and empirical evidence is expected to provide strategic input for school policymakers in sustainably improving the quality of education. Thus, the discussion regarding the evaluation of the Merdeka Curriculum is not only academically relevant but also holds significant practical implications for enhancing education management quality and achieving national education goals (Soadikini et al., 2025, pp. 116–118; Hasan & Abdullah, 2025, pp. 44–46).

Based on the preceding discussion, evaluating the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum within the context of educational development management in Senior High Schools (SMA) is an urgent necessity to ensure the effectiveness of curriculum reform. Consequently, this study adopts a library research approach. Through a systematic review of scientific literature, prior research, and relevant policy documents, this study aims to establish a comprehensive understanding of the interconnection between the Merdeka Curriculum and educational management. The findings are expected to provide a robust conceptual and analytical foundation for policy recommendations and the improvement of school managerial practices to foster sustainable quality enhancement in education.

### **Problem Formulation**

Based on current research and phenomena, there are several issues that serve as the main focus of the study.

1. How are the concepts and principles of evaluating the implementation of "Kurikulum Merdeka" framed within the management of educational development in Senior High Schools, based on a scientific literature review?
2. How do findings from previous research describe the evaluation of "Kurikulum Merdeka" implementation across the aspects of planning, execution, and assessment within the context of educational development management in Senior High Schools?
3. According to the literature review, what factors influence the effectiveness of evaluating "Kurikulum Merdeka" implementation within the management of educational development in Senior High Schools?
4. Based on a synthesis of existing literature, what are the implications of the evaluation results of "Kurikulum Merdeka" implementation for improving the quality of educational development management in Senior High Schools?

### Research purposes

Based on the above problem, the researcher has a goal.

1. To analyze the concepts and principles of evaluating the implementation of the "Kurikulum Merdeka" within the framework of educational development management in Senior High Schools, based on a scientific literature review.
2. To systematically examine previous research findings regarding the evaluation of "Kurikulum Merdeka" across the stages of planning, execution, and assessment within the context of educational development management in Senior High Schools.
3. To identify the factors influencing the effectiveness of evaluating "Kurikulum Merdeka" implementation in Senior High School educational development management, based on a synthesis of literature review results.
4. To formulate theoretical implications and practical recommendations for the development of educational management in Senior High Schools, based on the evaluation results of "Kurikulum Merdeka" implementation derived from the literature study.

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### Fundamental Concepts of Evaluation

Educational evaluation is a systematic process designed to collect, analyze, and interpret information to determine the extent to which educational objectives have been achieved and the effectiveness of various educational components within the system. Evaluation does not focus solely on final learning outcomes but also encompasses a comprehensive assessment of educational inputs, processes, and outputs—including curriculum, teaching methods, and educational management—thereby serving as a basis for strategic decision-making (Lazwardi, 2017). In the context of curriculum evaluation, the process is designed to identify the consistency between curriculum objectives, subject matter content, and student learning achievements, while also serving as a tool for reflection on the successes and challenges of the curriculum program's implementation in Senior High Schools (JIIP, 2024)."

Moreover, evaluation in education serves a strategic function in enhancing educational quality through continuous feedback, whereby evaluation results can be utilized as a basis for the improvement and development of policies, programs, and educational practices (JIIPP, 2024). In widely used educational program evaluation models, such as the CIPP model (Context, Input, Process, Product), evaluation is conducted comprehensively, ranging from the planning context and available resources to the implementation process and the final product or outcome achieved (Lazwardi, 2017). This approach is particularly relevant for research evaluating the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in Senior High Schools (SMA), as it enables the researcher to measure the success of educational development management in a more holistic and systematic manner.

Educational evaluation is a systematic process designed to assess the entire educational spectrum—inputs, processes, and outputs—to ensure effectiveness and inform strategic decision-making. By utilizing comprehensive frameworks like the CIPP model (Context, Input, Process, Product), evaluation provides continuous feedback necessary for policy improvement. This holistic approach is essential for analyzing the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum

in Senior High Schools, as it allows for a systematic measurement of educational management success from planning to final outcomes.

### **Curriculum Implementation within the Educational Context**

Curriculum implementation within the educational context is a strategic process that transforms curriculum plans into actual instructional practices within school environments. This process encompasses planning, resource organization, instructional delivery, and the evaluation of learning outcomes conducted by educators and other educational stakeholders (Farid, Yulianti & Nulhakim, 2022). In practice, implementation involves not only teachers as learning facilitators but also school principals, students, and other parties within the education system to ensure that curriculum goals are achieved effectively and efficiently. Collaboration and support from all parties are critical factors in ensuring the curriculum is implemented in accordance with the characteristics and needs of students at school (Farid, Yulianti & Nulhakim, 2022).

As the latest educational policy in Indonesia, the Merdeka Curriculum requires a flexible and contextual implementation, prioritizing competency-based learning, differentiation, and student character strengthening through contextual approaches and project-based learning (Syafriana et al., 2025). Literature reviews indicate that while the Merdeka Curriculum holds great potential for fostering active student participation and teacher creativity in instructional design, its execution still faces challenges, such as educator readiness, institutional capacity building, and the availability of adequate infrastructure (Syafriana et al., 2025). Consequently, evaluating this implementation is crucial to understanding the extent to which the curriculum concepts have been applied and have yielded a tangible impact on educational development in Senior High Schools, particularly within the context of educational development management.

Curriculum implementation is a strategic process that transforms educational plans into practice through the collaboration of teachers, principals, and stakeholders. In the context of the Merdeka Curriculum, this implementation requires flexibility, prioritizing competency-based and project-based learning to strengthen student character. While the curriculum holds significant potential for fostering creativity and active participation, it faces challenges such as educator readiness and infrastructure limitations. Therefore, evaluating this implementation is crucial to measure its tangible impact on educational development management in Senior High Schools.

### **Merdeka Curriculum**

The **Merdeka Curriculum** is the latest curriculum policy developed by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia in response to contemporary educational challenges and the needs of students in the era of globalization. This curriculum emphasizes flexibility, the adaptation of learning to local school contexts, and student character strengthening through competency-based and **Project-Based Learning (PBL)**. It focuses on developing 21st-century skills, such as critical thinking, collaboration, and creativity (Syafriani, Dawolo, Butar Butar, Batubara & Silitonga, 2025). The Merdeka Curriculum is also designed to grant greater autonomy to educational institutions in designing their operational curricula, including the determination of essential materials and pedagogical strategies suited to student needs and local regional characteristics, thereby aiming to improve overall learning quality.

Conceptually, the Merdeka Curriculum shifts the national education paradigm from a system tending toward uniformity to a model that is more adaptive and contextual. This approach provides space for educators to implement various creative and innovative learning models and to align them with the profiles and potential of students at each school (Syafriani et al., 2025).

Furthermore, the Merdeka Curriculum is oriented toward **differentiated instruction**, providing distinct treatments for students to ensure every individual can achieve competency according to their learning abilities (Syafriani et al., 2025). With this foundation, the Merdeka Curriculum is expected not only to increase the relevance of learning to student needs and the workforce but also to serve as a crucial instrument in the effective management of education development at the senior high school level.

### **Management of Educational Development**

Educational development management is a crucial component of overall educational management, focusing on the administration of resources, processes, and strategies to systematically and intentionally enhance the quality of education. The concept of educational management emphasizes managerial functions—such as planning, organizing, directing, and controlling educational resources—to achieve established educational goals effectively and efficiently (Nurfazriyatul Jannah, Sandy, Ramadan & Basari, 2024). In the context of educational development, management extends beyond mere school administration; it encompasses strategic efforts to strengthen the quality of learning, educator professionalism, and program innovations that align with student needs and the dynamics of the school's external environment (Nurfazriyatul Jannah et al., 2024). This indicates that educational development management serves as the primary foundation in the process of change and the educational system's adaptation to the demands of new curricula, such as the *Kurikulum Merdeka* (Independent Curriculum), which is characterized by its flexibility and contextual nature.

Furthermore, the literature asserts that educational development must be viewed as a continuous and strategic process, wherein leadership, resource coordination, and system evaluation play significant roles in driving school organizations toward innovation and quality improvement (Nurmalina & Alting, 2024). For instance, educational development management in senior high schools encompasses strategies for strengthening human resources, updating curricula, and evaluating learning programs to ensure that expected outcomes are achieved optimally (Nurmalina & Alting, 2024). Thus, educational development management becomes a critical factor in evaluating the implementation of the *Kurikulum Merdeka*, as it ensures that all educational elements—ranging from planning to control—are capable of supporting the successful execution of the curriculum at the educational unit level.

### **Evaluation of the Implementation of *Kurikulum Merdeka* in Educational Development Management**

The evaluation of the implementation of *Kurikulum Merdeka* within the context of educational development management involves a systematic assessment of the planning, organization, execution, and outcomes of the curriculum's application in schools. According to literature reviews, the evaluation of *Kurikulum Merdeka* implementation can be conducted using evaluation models such as CIPP—covering four main aspects: context, input, process, and

product (Mukhdlor, Syam & Syahri, 2025)—which ensures that the assessment looks beyond learning outcomes to also consider school readiness regarding facilities, human resources, and relevant learning strategies. Such evaluation enables decision-makers at the educational unit level to identify gaps between planning and actual field practice, serving as a basis for formulating more targeted educational development policies within the school management framework (Mukhdlor et al., 2025).

Furthermore, evaluative research on the implementation of *Kurikulum Merdeka* at the school level indicates that evaluation must include periodic monitoring components to ensure educational development remains continuous and adaptive to student needs (Hamidah, Niswah & Kanada, 2025). Findings from evaluation studies in Senior High Schools (SMA), for instance, reveal that evaluation results provide a clearer understanding of teacher readiness to apply student-oriented learning methods, as well as the need to enhance curriculum management competencies among school stakeholders (principals and curriculum teams) as part of educational development management (Hamidah et al., 2025). Thus, the evaluation of *Kurikulum Merdeka* implementation assesses not only the achievement of learning outcomes but also managerial effectiveness in developing education within educational units such as Senior High Schools.

*Kurikulum Merdeka* within educational development management utilizes systematic models like CIPP to assess not only learning outcomes but also school readiness, resources, and planning. By identifying gaps between policy and practice, this comprehensive evaluation guides continuous managerial improvements and enhances stakeholder competencies to ensure the curriculum is implemented effectively and adaptively.

### Relevant Previous Research

A number of previous studies indicate that the implementation of the *Merdeka Curriculum* in secondary education units has significant implications for the management and development of education in schools. Research conducted by Hamidah, Niswah, and Kanada found that the evaluation of the *Merdeka Curriculum* implementation at the Senior High School (SMA) level showed an increase in learning flexibility and teacher autonomy in lesson planning; however, it is still faced with constraints regarding human resource readiness and school curriculum management (Hamidah et al., 2025, pp. 74–76). The results of this study confirm that the success of curriculum implementation is heavily influenced by the effectiveness of school management in managing the planning, execution, and evaluation of educational programs, making curriculum evaluation an important instrument in sustainable education development. Other research conducted by Mukhdlor, Syam, and Syahri using the CIPP evaluation model shows that the implementation of the *Merdeka Curriculum* is not yet fully optimal in the input and process aspects, particularly regarding the strengthening of teacher competence and school managerial support (Mukhdlor et al., 2025, pp. 569–571). These findings demonstrate that the evaluation of curriculum implementation should not only focus on student learning outcomes but must also assess the education development management system, which includes resource management, school policies, as well as supervision and control mechanisms. Thus, these previous studies reinforce the urgency of conducting an evaluation of the *Merdeka Curriculum* implementation within the framework of education development management, particularly at the Senior High School level.

Current research indicates that while the Merdeka Curriculum successfully increases learning flexibility and teacher autonomy, its implementation at the Senior High School level is hindered by gaps in human resource readiness and managerial support. Therefore, effective implementation requires a holistic evaluation that extends beyond student outcomes to prioritize systemic improvements in school management, teacher competence, and resource planning.

### Research Framework

The conceptual framework of this research is built upon the assumption that the implementation of the *Merdeka Curriculum* is an educational program requiring planned, systematic, and sustainable managerial oversight. From an educational evaluation perspective, curriculum implementation can be understood as a series of processes encompassing planning, resource provision, instructional execution, and the achievement of learning outcomes aligned with curriculum goals (Stufflebeam & Coryn, 2014, p. 309). Therefore, the evaluation of the *Merdeka Curriculum* implementation in this study is positioned as an analytical instrument to assess the extent to which educational development management functions—covering planning, organizing, implementing, and controlling—have been effectively executed in Senior High Schools (SMA) to support curriculum success.

Conceptually, this research framework refers to the CIPP (Context, Input, Process, Product) evaluation model, which is used to evaluate the *Merdeka Curriculum* implementation comprehensively. Context evaluation is used to assess the alignment of *Merdeka Curriculum* policies with the needs and characteristics of Senior High Schools; input evaluation assesses the readiness of human resources and infrastructure; process evaluation assesses instructional execution and curriculum management; and product evaluation assesses the implementation results regarding educational development in schools (Stufflebeam & Zhang, 2017, pp. 15–18). Through this framework, the research is expected to provide a comprehensive overview of the relationship between *Merdeka Curriculum* implementation and the effectiveness of educational development management, while serving as a basis for formulating recommendations for policy and practice improvements at the Senior High School level.

Based on the theoretical review outlined above, it can be concluded that the evaluation of the *Merdeka Curriculum* implementation is a strategic process that cannot be separated from education development management in Senior High Schools. Educational evaluation is understood as a systematic activity to assess the alignment between the planning, execution, and results of educational programs—including the curriculum—with established goals. The implementation of the curriculum, specifically the *Merdeka Curriculum*, demands school managerial readiness in managing resources, coordinating instructional delivery, and conducting continuous supervision and control. Therefore, the success of the *Merdeka Curriculum* is significantly influenced by the effectiveness of the educational management functions executed by the educational unit.

Furthermore, the theoretical review indicates that a comprehensive evaluative approach, such as the CIPP (Context, Input, Process, Product) model, is relevant for assessing the *Merdeka Curriculum* implementation within the framework of education development management. This model enables assessment not only of final learning outcomes but also of policy context, resource readiness, the implementation process, and its impact on educational development in schools. Thus, the evaluation of the *Merdeka Curriculum* implementation provides a

comprehensive overview of the strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities for improvement in educational management at the Senior High School level, while simultaneously serving as a basis for decision-making and policy recommendations to improve education quality sustainably.

## RESEARCH METHOD

### Research Design

This research employs a qualitative approach using the library research method. This approach was chosen because the study focuses on a conceptual and theoretical examination of the *Merdeka Curriculum* implementation within the framework of education development management in Senior High Schools (SMA). Through library research, the researcher systematically analyzes various scientific sources, including journal articles, reference books, and relevant educational policy documents, to obtain a comprehensive understanding of curriculum evaluation concepts, *Merdeka Curriculum* implementation, and management functions in educational development. This approach enables the researcher to synthesize theories and prior research findings to construct a deep and structured analytical framework without involving direct field data collection.

The object of study in this research is the implementation of the *Merdeka Curriculum* in senior secondary education units, with a primary focus on the process of evaluating curriculum implementation within the framework of education development management. The focus of the study is directed toward managerial functions, which include the planning, implementation, and evaluation of educational development in Senior High Schools (SMA), specifically in supporting the successful application of the *Merdeka Curriculum*. Through this study, the research attempts to examine the alignment between curriculum planning, instructional execution, and evaluation mechanisms applied by schools within the context of educational development, so that a conceptual overview regarding the effectiveness of education management in supporting *Merdeka Curriculum* implementation at the SMA level can be obtained.

### Data Types and Sources

The data sources in this research consist of secondary data obtained from various academic literature and official documents relevant to the focus of the study. This secondary data includes scientific journal articles indexed by Google Scholar, academic reference books discussing the fields of curriculum, educational evaluation, and education management, as well as official government policy documents related to the application of the *Merdeka Curriculum* in the context of Senior High Schools (SMA). All data sources were selected selectively by considering their level of credibility, relevance, and contribution to the discussion of the *Merdeka Curriculum* implementation evaluation within the framework of education development management, ensuring that the data used supports a valid and comprehensive analysis.

### Data Collection Techniques

The data collection technique in this research was carried out using the documentation method, which involves searching, collecting, and reviewing various literature sources relevant to the research focus. The literature search process was conducted through the Google Scholar scientific database using keywords related to the evaluation of the *Merdeka Curriculum* implementation, education development management, and the Senior High School (SMA) context. The collected literature was selected based on inclusion criteria: having strong relevance to the research topic, originating from credible and academically accountable publications, and being up-to-date to align with the policy developments and practices of the *Merdeka Curriculum*. Through this technique, the data obtained is expected to provide a comprehensive theoretical and empirical foundation for the research analysis.

### Data Analysis Techniques

The data analysis technique in this research uses **content analysis**, a method conducted by systematically and deeply examining the content of the collected literature. The analysis stage begins with **data reduction**, which involves selecting and filtering information relevant to the research focus within the Senior High School (SMA) context. Subsequently, **data categorization** is performed based on themes, including curriculum evaluation, *Merdeka Curriculum* implementation, and education development management. The final stage is **synthesis and conclusion drawing**, which involves integrating various concepts, theories, and prior research findings to obtain a comprehensive understanding regarding the evaluation of the *Merdeka Curriculum* implementation within the framework of education development management in Senior High Schools.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the literature review indicate that the implementation of the *Merdeka Curriculum* in Senior High Schools (SMA) is conceptually designed to provide greater flexibility to educational units in managing the learning process. This curriculum places the school as the main actor in developing the operational curriculum, so its success depends heavily on the education development management capacity possessed by the school. From various literature sources, it was found that schools with mature managerial planning tend to be more prepared to implement the *Merdeka Curriculum* systematically and purposefully. Regarding the planning aspect, the review results show that the planning for *Merdeka Curriculum* implementation in SMA includes the preparation of the educational unit's operational curriculum, competency-based lesson planning, and the adjustment of the curriculum structure to student needs. However, some literature reveals that this planning has not been fully accompanied by comprehensive resource requirement mapping, particularly regarding the readiness of teachers and learning support facilities. This indicates a gap between curriculum policy and school managerial capacity during the education development planning stage. In the implementation stage, the review shows that the *Merdeka Curriculum* implementation in SMA has driven a shift in instructional practices toward a more student-centered approach, through differentiated learning and project-based learning. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of this execution is significantly influenced by the school management's ability to coordinate teacher roles, manage instructional time, and provide continuous academic support. Several sources indicate that teachers' limited understanding of the *Merdeka Curriculum* concept remains a primary

challenge in execution, which ultimately impacts the consistency of curriculum application in the classroom.

From the perspective of education development management, the *Merdeka Curriculum* implementation demands schools to manage change in a planned manner. The review results show that school principals and management teams hold a strategic role in directing, facilitating, and monitoring the curriculum implementation process. Schools that apply participatory and collaborative management principles tend to be more adaptive in facing curriculum changes compared to schools that still apply conventional administrative management patterns. Regarding the evaluation aspect, the literature review results indicate that the evaluation of *Merdeka Curriculum* implementation in SMA has not yet been fully conducted comprehensively and sustainably. The evaluations conducted still focus more on student learning outcomes, while evaluations of the context, input, and implementation process have not yet become a main priority. In fact, a comprehensive evaluation is necessary to assess the extent to which education development management has operated effectively in supporting the *Merdeka Curriculum* goals.

Model-based evaluation approaches such as CIPP (Context, Input, Process, Product) are considered relevant for use in evaluating *Merdeka Curriculum* implementation in SMA. The review results show that this model allows schools to identify the strengths and weaknesses of curriculum implementation more systematically, ranging from policy alignment with school needs to the impact of implementation on educational development. Thus, evaluation is not only summative but also formative for continuous improvement.

The discussion also shows that the *Merdeka Curriculum* implementation cannot be separated from the factor of school organizational readiness as a system. Effective education development management is characterized by strategic planning, human resource capacity development, and clear monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. When these management functions do not operate optimally, the *Merdeka Curriculum* implementation has the potential to become a mere policy formality without producing significant changes in education quality.

Overall, these results and discussions confirm that the evaluation of *Merdeka Curriculum* implementation within education development management in SMA is a strategic necessity to ensure the success of curriculum reform. A comprehensive evaluation can serve as a basis for schools and education policymakers in formulating improvement steps, strengthening school management, and fostering sustainable education development in accordance with the goals of the *Merdeka Curriculum*.

### **Research Discussion**

The discussion of this research shows that the implementation of the *Merdeka Curriculum* in Senior High Schools cannot be understood solely as a change in curriculum structure, but rather as a process of transforming education development management as a whole. The findings of the literature review show that the success of *Merdeka Curriculum* implementation is significantly influenced by the quality of school managerial planning, particularly in compiling the educational unit's operational curriculum and preparing supporting resources. This strengthens the view that curriculum and education management are two aspects that are interrelated and cannot be separated in the effort to improve education quality.

Furthermore, the discussion of the research results indicates that the execution of the *Merdeka Curriculum* in SMA still faces challenges in the aspects of coordination and control of education development management. Although this curriculum provides flexibility for teachers and schools to innovate, such flexibility requires a management system that is adaptive and oriented toward human resource capacity development. The lack of process evaluation and continuous monitoring has the potential to cause the curriculum implementation to run inconsistently across educational units. Thus, education development management plays a role as a key factor in bridging the gap between curriculum policy and learning practices in schools.

Moreover, this research discussion emphasizes the importance of a comprehensive and sustainable evaluation of the *Merdeka Curriculum* implementation as part of education development management. Evaluation functions not only to assess the achievement of learning outcomes but also to identify weaknesses in the context, input, and process aspects of curriculum implementation. In this framework, evaluation becomes a strategic instrument for schools to conduct continuous improvement and ensure that the *Merdeka Curriculum* truly contributes to education development in Senior High Schools effectively and sustainably.

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