

# The Effectiveness of Independent Curriculum Implementation in SMA Negeri 5 Rejang Lebong: A CIPP-Based Evaluation

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**ABSTRACT.** This study evaluates the implementation of the Independent Curriculum at SMA Negeri 5 Rejang Lebong using the CIPP (Context, Input, Process, and Product) evaluation model. A qualitative evaluative research approach was employed, with data collected through direct observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis. The findings reveal that: (1) The context evaluation indicates that the school's Operational Curriculum (KOSP) aligns with established standards. (2) The input evaluation highlights that infrastructure does not fully meet standards, teachers demonstrate strong academic, personal, and social competencies but lack professional competence, students exhibit readiness for learning but limited engagement, and the availability of teaching modules remains insufficient. (3) The process evaluation shows that interactive and engaging learning environments meet expectations, yet inspirational and student-motivating aspects, as well as teachers' roles in guidance and facilitation, are not fully realized. Assessment and reflection processes comply with the standards, and the implementation of the P5 (Strengthening Pancasila Student Profile) project meets the required criteria. (4) The product evaluation reveals that students' academic reports do not meet the expected standards, whereas P5 reports comply. These findings underscore the need for enhanced infrastructure, teacher professional development, and comprehensive curriculum evaluation to ensure the Independent Curriculum's effectiveness..

**Keywords:** *CIPP model, curriculum evaluation, educational assessment, independent curriculum*

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## INTRODUCTION

Curriculum evaluation is crucial in assessing an educational program's effectiveness, relevance, and impact (Stufflebeam, 2000; Chen, 2005; Martone & Sireci, 2009; Agus et al., 2023). As an integral part of educational development, evaluation aims to measure the extent to which learning objectives are achieved and identify aspects that need improvement (Sharma & Petosa, 2014; Tam, 2014; Mohan, 2023). Stufflebeam (2000) emphasizes that evaluation is a systematic process that includes describing, collecting, and providing information to support decision-making. In education, evaluation is essential to ensure that curriculum implementation aligns with institutional goals, national education policies, and community needs (Skager & Dave, 2014; Chan et al., 2017).

In Indonesia, the Merdeka Curriculum was introduced as part of education reforms to promote student-centered and competency-based learning (Muraraneza & Mtshali, 2018; Ansyar, 2022; Zidan & Qamariah, 2023; Shalihin, 2023; Wahyudin & Hidayah, 2024). This curriculum provides greater flexibility in learning design, allowing schools to customize educational programs

based on student needs and local contexts (Isnawan et al., 2022; Shalihin, 2023; Syahrir et al., 2024). However, implementing this curriculum is still debated, especially regarding school readiness, teacher competence, and the availability of supporting facilities and infrastructure (Aziz et al., 2018). Although the Merdeka Curriculum has been implemented in various schools, empirical evidence regarding its effectiveness is still limited, so evaluative studies are needed to assess its impact.

The CIPP (Context, Input, Process, and Product) evaluation model developed by Stufflebeam provides a comprehensive framework for assessing curriculum implementation (Hasan et al., 2015; Warju, 2016; Stufflebeam & Zhang, 2017). The model offers a systematic approach to evaluating various aspects of an educational program: Context evaluation examines institutional goals and external conditions; input evaluation assesses resources and school readiness; process evaluation analyzes teaching strategies and student learning experiences; and product evaluation measures learning outcomes and long-term impact (Aziz et al., 2018). Several studies have successfully applied the CIPP model in assessing curriculum effectiveness (Priantini et al., 2021; Agus et al., 2023; Dizon, 2023; Agustin, 2024). However, specific studies regarding evaluating the Merdeka Curriculum in the Driving School, especially at the senior high school level, are still very limited.

As one of the Mobilizing Schools, SMA Negeri 5 Rejang Lebong has been actively implementing the Merdeka Curriculum. The school has received significant support from the government, including teacher training, infrastructure funding, and assistance in curriculum development. In addition, two certified “Guru Penggerak” teachers play a role in encouraging innovation in learning. However, preliminary observations show that there are still challenges in implementation, such as suboptimal teacher readiness, limited facilities and infrastructure, and no formal evaluation from the government after two years of implementing this curriculum. In addition, preliminary findings show that the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Program has not run optimally due to limited student involvement and resource constraints.

Based on these problems, this study aims to evaluate the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum at SMA Negeri 5 Rejang Lebong using the CIPP model. Specifically, this study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. To what extent is the school's Education Unit Operational Curriculum aligned with the objectives of the Merdeka Curriculum? (Context Evaluation)
2. How is the school's readiness in terms of resources, teacher competencies, and student readiness to support curriculum implementation? (Input Evaluation)
3. How effective are the learning strategies, assessment methods, and learning environment in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum? (Process Evaluation)
4. What are the main learning outcomes and challenges in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum? (Product Evaluation)

By analyzing these aspects, this research is expected to provide empirical insights into the successes, challenges, and areas that need to be improved in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum. The results of this study are expected to contribute to policy recommendations, teacher professional development, and curriculum improvement at the school and national levels.

## **METHOD**

### *Research Design*

This research uses a qualitative evaluative approach by applying the CIPP (Context, Input, Process, and Product) model to evaluate the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum at SMA Negeri 5 Rejang Lebong. The CIPP model was chosen because it provides a comprehensive framework for assessing the effectiveness of a program based on the policy environment (context), resource readiness (input), activity implementation (process), and results achieved (product)

(Stufflebeam, 2000). A qualitative approach was used because this research aims to explore an in-depth understanding of the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, including its challenges, successes, and impacts on schools. This method allows in-depth exploration through direct observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis (Creswell & Poth, 2016).

*Location and Participants*

This research was conducted at SMA Negeri 5 Rejang Lebong, one of the Mover Schools implementing the Merdeka Curriculum since the 2022/2023 school year. The selection of this school is based on its unique characteristics, namely receiving direct intervention from the government in the form of teacher training, operational assistance, and technical guidance in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum. Participants in this study were selected using the purposive sampling method (Ames et al., 2019) to ensure that informants have direct experience and relevance in curriculum implementation. Participants consisted of 1 Principal and 1 Deputy Principal (Curriculum and Infrastructure), 15 Subject Teachers who have implemented the Merdeka Curriculum, 2 Class XI (Class XI.1 and XI.2) with a total of 33 students, and School documents which include the Education Unit Operational Curriculum (KOSP), teaching tools, and student assessment results.

*Data Collection Technique*

Data collection in this study was carried out through direct observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum at SMA Negeri 5 Rejang Lebong. Observations were made to observe the learning process in the classroom, teacher-student interactions, and the utilization of school facilities and infrastructure. In-depth interviews were conducted with the principal, vice principal, teachers, and students to explore their experiences in implementing the curriculum and the challenges faced. All interviews were recorded and transcribed for further analysis. In addition, document analysis was conducted on the Education Unit Operational Curriculum, teaching tools, student assessment results, as well as the implementation report of the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project to identify the suitability of curriculum implementation with the established policies.

*Data Validity*

This study employed triangulation of sources, methods, and researchers to ensure the credibility and validity of the data, yielding objective and accurate findings. By comparing data from several participants, such as principals, teachers, and students, source triangulation was used to provide a more comprehensive viewpoint. Method triangulation was applied by combining observations, interviews, and document analysis to verify the consistency of findings. In addition, researcher triangulation was conducted through discussions with co-researchers to minimize subjectivity in data interpretation. This approach ensures that the research results have a high level of confidence and can provide a comprehensive picture of the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in the schools studied.

**RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

**Result**

Table 1 below presents the results of the evaluation of the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum at SMA Negeri 5 Rejang Lebong based on the CIPP model.

Table 1. Evaluation Results of the Implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum at SMA Negeri 5 Rejang Lebong

Evaluation Components	Key Findings	Conclusion
Context Evaluation	The Education Unit Operational Curriculum is in line with national guidelines.	The curriculum's context is in accordance with national

Input Evaluation	<p>The Education Unit Operational Curriculum has integrated the local cultural context and school needs.</p> <p>Preparing the Education Unit Operational Curriculum involves stakeholders such as teachers, parents, and the education office.</p> <p>School facilities and infrastructure are adequate, but science laboratories are under-equipped.</p> <p>Teachers' competencies vary. Their academic qualifications are good, but their use of innovative methods and technology is still limited.</p> <p>Student readiness is good, but there is still a lack of active engagement in learning.</p> <p>Teaching modules are not yet equally available in all subjects.</p>	<p>standards, but implementation still faces challenges in terms of resource and educator readiness.</p> <p>The availability of resources is not optimal, especially regarding laboratory facilities and teacher readiness in implementing technology-based learning.</p>
Process Evaluation	<p>Interactive learning is starting to be implemented, but not yet evenly across all subjects.</p> <p>Physics and Biology teachers use digital technology, while many other subjects still use traditional methods.</p> <p>Formative and summative evaluations have been conducted regularly</p> <p>The Pancasila Learner Profile Strengthening Project has been implemented, but student participation is still mixed</p>	<p>Learning implementation has led to an active approach, but not all teachers have implemented innovative methods. Evaluation and assessment are up to standard, but their effectiveness needs to be improved.</p>
Product Evaluation	<p>Academic report cards are up to standard, but student achievement in some subjects is still low, especially in Natural Sciences and Social Sciences.</p> <p>Documentation of Pancasila Learner Profile Strengthening Project results is appropriate, but learning reflections are not yet optimally documented.</p> <p>Some students still do not achieve the Learning Objective Completion Criteria.</p>	<p>Student learning outcomes still vary, indicating the need for improved learning methods and more effective assessment strategies.</p>

Table 1 above shows that the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum at SMA Negeri 5 Rejang Lebong is by national guidelines but still faces challenges in resource readiness, teacher competence, and student involvement. From the context aspect, the Education Unit Operational Curriculum has been well-designed and accommodates local cultural characteristics, but its implementation has not been fully optimized. From the input aspect, limited laboratory facilities and a lack of teaching modules are the main obstacles. At the same time, teachers' professional competence still needs to be improved, especially when using technology-based innovative methods. From the process aspect, interactive and project-based learning is beginning to be implemented. However, variations in teaching strategies between subjects are still considerable, with science teachers being more innovative than teachers in the social and humanities. In addition, formative and summative evaluations are up to standard, but their effectiveness in improving learning outcomes still needs strengthening. From the product aspect, students' academic results show gaps in learning achievement, especially in subjects that require a practical approach and

active involvement, such as Natural Sciences and Social Sciences. Overall, the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in this school has been running. However, it still needs improvement in the fulfillment of facilities, teacher training, and more effective assessment strategies to improve student learning outcomes.

## **Discussion**

The results showed that the foundation of the curriculum at SMA Negeri 5 Rejang Lebong was by national standards. The school's Education Unit Operational Curriculum successfully integrates local cultural characteristics, which supports previous research on the importance of curriculum adaptation to the sociocultural context in improving student engagement and learning outcomes (Bodycott et al., 2014; Amiruddin et al., 2024; Razali et al., 2024). Although the curriculum design is strong, implementation at the high school level still faces various challenges. One of the main obstacles is teachers' readiness to implement appropriate learning strategies. In addition, the adaptation of teaching methods is also a challenge in achieving curriculum effectiveness. The success of the curriculum depends not only on good design but also on institutional support. Therefore, continuous monitoring and evaluation are needed to ensure the effectiveness of curriculum implementation.

One of the main challenges in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum is the gap between curriculum expectations and the availability of resources in schools. Limited laboratory facilities hinder students' opportunities to conduct experiments. Experiments support inquiry-based learning approaches and hands-on experiences (Lunetta et al., 2013; Heradio et al., 2016). Other studies show that lack of facilities can negatively impact the effectiveness of curriculum implementation (Albugami & Ahmed, 2015; Agustin, 2024; Rohman et al., 2024). In addition, limited learning tools and materials are also an obstacle to achieving curriculum goals. Therefore, adequate facilities must be prioritized when implementing the Merdeka Curriculum. Support from the government and stakeholders is needed to overcome this problem.

Teacher competence is important in successful curriculum implementation (Halász & Michel, 2011; Zhu et al., 2013; Caena, 2014; Ruaya et al., 2022). Although teachers have good academic backgrounds, their pedagogical skills must be improved. Professionalism in teaching is also a crucial factor in creating effective learning. One aspect that still needs improvement is the use of innovative learning methods. In addition, using digital technology in the teaching and learning process is still not optimal. This finding is in line with the research of Aziz et al. (2018), which emphasizes the importance of continuous professional development for teachers. Therefore, ongoing training programs are necessary to improve teaching effectiveness.

The evaluation results show that interactive learning environments have started to be implemented in schools. However, there are variations in its application across different subjects. Teachers in science and technology are more innovative in using learning methods. In contrast, social and humanities teachers still rely on conventional methods. This difference points to the need for standardization of curriculum implementation strategies. With clear standards, all subjects can apply active and collaborative learning methods. This finding aligns with Fathurrochman (2021), who emphasizes the importance of uniformity in applying learning strategies.

Student engagement is still a major concern in the learning process. Some students showed low participation in learning activities. This finding supports previous research, which states that student motivation is strongly influenced by teaching strategies and teacher interaction (Fathurrochman & History, 2022). More interactive learning methods are needed to increase student participation. A project-based learning model can help students be more active in exploring the material. In addition, the flipped classroom approach allows students to be better prepared before participating in classroom learning. Both methods can be an alternative to increase students' motivation and engagement.

Thus, the implementation of the curriculum at SMA Negeri 5 Rejang Lebong has been by national standards and successfully integrated local cultural characteristics, which supports the improvement of student engagement and learning outcomes. However, challenges are still faced in its implementation, especially regarding teacher readiness in adapting learning strategies and limited supporting facilities such as laboratories. The gap between curriculum expectations and resource availability hinders the effectiveness of inquiry-based and experiential learning. In addition, variations in learning methods indicate the need to standardize implementation strategies, especially so that all subjects can apply active and collaborative approaches. Teacher competence is also a determining factor in the success of the curriculum, so continuous professional development is needed to improve pedagogical skills and the use of technology in teaching. On the other hand, student engagement remains a challenge, where project-based learning and flipped classrooms can be an alternative to increasing their motivation and participation. Therefore, the effectiveness of curriculum implementation depends not only on good design but also on institutional support, provision of facilities, and teacher capacity building to create a more interactive and innovative learning environment.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the results show that the curriculum aligns with national standards but still faces challenges in the availability of facilities and infrastructure, limited teaching modules, and teachers' professional competence in applying technology-based innovative learning methods. From the process aspect, although project-based learning and formative assessment have been implemented, teaching strategies still vary between subjects, so their effectiveness is not optimal. From the product aspect, students' academic achievements show gaps in fulfilling the Learning Objective Completeness Criteria, especially in subjects that require practical and experimental approaches. Therefore, improving the quality of Merdeka Curriculum implementation requires strengthening educational infrastructure, developing teacher professionalism through continuous training, and optimizing technology-based learning strategies and formative assessment. This research provides an evidence-based curriculum evaluation model with practical implications for schools and policy recommendations for the government in supporting more effective and sustainable education reform. Further studies are recommended to explore the long-term impact of the Merdeka Curriculum on students' academic outcomes and competencies, as well as evaluate the effectiveness of educational interventions in various factors.

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