

EVALUATION OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MERDEKA CURRICULUM USING THE CIPP MODEL IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

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ABSTRACT

This study evaluates the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in four elementary schools in Baguala District, Ambon City, namely SD Negeri 1 Lateri, SD Negeri 2 Lateri, SD Negeri 2 Passo, and SD Negeri 77 Passo. Using a qualitative evaluative design based on the CIPP model, data were collected through interviews, observations, and documentation involving principals, teachers, and students. The findings show that the context dimension is relatively supportive because schools understand the curriculum as flexible, student-centered, and character-oriented. In the input dimension, training, teaching modules, and principal support are available, but teacher readiness, digital facilities, and learning media remain uneven. The process dimension shows the most critical gap: active learning, projects, and formative assessment have begun, yet differentiated instruction is not consistently guided by diagnostic data. In the product dimension, students show improvement in confidence, cooperation, literacy, numeracy, and Pancasila Student Profile values, although outcomes vary across schools. This study contributes by identifying differentiation and assessment literacy as the strategic bridge between curriculum policy and classroom transformation in elementary schools.

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INTRODUCTION

Curriculum reform is a central instrument for improving educational quality because the curriculum determines learning objectives, learning experiences, assessment practices, and the direction of student competency development. In Indonesia, the Merdeka Curriculum was introduced to strengthen learning recovery, give schools greater flexibility, and encourage learning that is more responsive to students' needs. Its main orientation includes student-centered learning, essential competencies, differentiated instruction, diagnostic and formative assessment, project-based learning, and the strengthening of the Pancasila Student Profile (Mulyasa, 2021; Ardianti & Amalia, 2022).

At the elementary school level, the Merdeka Curriculum is expected to move learning away from uniform, teacher-centered routines toward more flexible and meaningful learning. Teachers are encouraged to diagnose students' readiness, map learning needs, design teaching modules, provide varied activities, and give feedback that helps students progress. This shift is not merely administrative. It requires a change in pedagogical thinking, classroom

management, assessment literacy, and school leadership. Therefore, curriculum implementation must be read as a management and pedagogical process, not only as compliance with national curriculum policy.

Field conditions in SD Negeri 1 Lateri, SD Negeri 2 Lateri, SD Negeri 2 Passo, and SD Negeri 77 Passo indicate that the Merdeka Curriculum has begun to be implemented through teacher training, workshops, teacher working groups, initial assessment, active learning, and project activities. Nevertheless, implementation remains uneven. Some teachers still experience difficulty preparing teaching modules, designing differentiated activities, using assessment results as learning feedback, and integrating Pancasila Student Profile values into daily classroom practice. Limitations in digital facilities, learning media, classroom space, learning time, and parent-school collaboration also influence the quality of implementation.

These problems show that curriculum implementation cannot be evaluated only by asking whether schools have adopted the Merdeka Curriculum. A more comprehensive evaluation is needed to understand how the curriculum is supported by policy context, resource readiness, classroom processes, and learning outcomes. Evaluation is a systematic process of collecting and interpreting information to judge the value, effectiveness, and improvement needs of an educational program (Arifin, 2017; Arikunto & Jabar, 2018; Mardapi, 2017). In this study, the CIPP model is used because it examines four interrelated dimensions: context, input, process, and product (Stufflebeam, 1971).

The context dimension evaluates school understanding, policy support, and the relevance of the curriculum to students' learning needs. The input dimension evaluates teacher readiness, training, teaching devices, facilities, learning media, and school support. The process dimension evaluates the actual implementation of learning, differentiated instruction, assessment, classroom interaction, and the Project for Strengthening the Pancasila Student Profile. The product dimension evaluates the perceived effects of the curriculum on students' learning participation, literacy, numeracy, confidence, cooperation, and character development.

Previous studies have discussed the Merdeka Curriculum in terms of implementation challenges, teacher readiness, principal leadership, and differentiated learning. However, many studies remain limited to a single school, a single implementation aspect, or a general description of obstacles. Studies that compare several elementary schools within one local context using the four CIPP dimensions in an integrated manner are still limited. This creates a research gap: there is a need for an evaluative study that not only describes implementation, but also identifies which CIPP dimension becomes the strongest and weakest point across schools.

The novelty of this study lies in its multi-school CIPP evaluation in Baguala District, Ambon City. By examining four elementary schools, this study provides a cross-school picture of how the same curriculum policy is translated differently according to school readiness, teacher competence, facilities, and learning culture. The study aims to evaluate the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in elementary schools based on the CIPP model and to identify supporting and inhibiting factors that influence its implementation. The findings are expected to provide practical recommendations for schools, principals, teachers, and education authorities in strengthening curriculum implementation at the elementary school level.

METHOD

This study used a qualitative evaluative approach with the CIPP evaluation model. The qualitative approach was selected because the study sought to understand curriculum implementation as it occurs in natural school settings, including the perceptions, experiences, policies, and classroom practices of school actors. The CIPP model was used as the main evaluation framework because it enables the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum to be examined from the context of needs and policy support, input readiness, learning process, and product or results achieved (Arikunto & Jabar, 2018; Stufflebeam, 1971).

The research was conducted in four elementary schools in Baguala District, Ambon City: SD Negeri 1 Lateri, SD Negeri 2 Lateri, SD Negeri 2 Passo, and SD Negeri 77 Passo. These schools were selected purposively because they had implemented the Merdeka Curriculum and represented different levels of readiness, school support, facilities, and implementation challenges. The use of four schools allowed the study to compare similarities and differences in implementation within the same district context.

The informants consisted of principals, teachers, and students who were directly involved in the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum. A total of 24 informants were involved, consisting of four principals, twelve teachers, and eight upper-grade students. Principals were selected because they are responsible for curriculum policy, supervision, coordination, and school support. Teachers were selected because they directly design teaching modules, implement learning, conduct assessments, and facilitate P5 activities. Students were included to capture the perceived effects of implementation on learning participation, confidence, cooperation, and classroom experience. Informants were determined purposively based on their knowledge, role, and direct involvement in curriculum implementation.

Data were collected through interviews, observations, and documentation. Interviews explored school understanding of the curriculum, principal support, teacher readiness, teaching module preparation, differentiated learning, assessment practice, P5 implementation, supporting factors, and inhibiting factors. Observations were conducted to examine classroom learning practices, teacher-student interaction, the use of media, student participation, classroom management, and the implementation of active and student-centered learning. Documentation was used to examine school curriculum documents, teaching modules, assessment instruments, learning schedules, training records, supervision notes, and other relevant school documents.

The research instruments consisted of interview guidelines, observation sheets, and documentation checklists developed based on the four CIPP components. In the context component, the indicators included school understanding, policy direction, and curriculum relevance to student needs. In the input component, the indicators included teacher competence, facilities, infrastructure, learning media, teaching materials, training, and supervision support. In the process component, the indicators included learning implementation, differentiated instruction, diagnostic and formative assessment, classroom management, and P5 activities. In the product component, the indicators included student activeness, confidence, cooperation, literacy, numeracy, character development, and perceived learning quality.

Data analysis was carried out through data reduction, data display, conclusion drawing, and verification. First, interview, observation, and documentation data were sorted according to the four CIPP dimensions. Second, the data were coded into subthemes such as policy support, teacher readiness, learning media, differentiated learning, assessment practice, student participation, and learning outcomes. Third, findings from each school were analyzed separately and then compared across schools to identify common patterns, distinctive strengths, and shared obstacles. Fourth, conclusions were verified by comparing data from different informants and techniques.

Data credibility was strengthened through source triangulation and technique triangulation. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing information from principals, teachers, students, and school documents. Technique triangulation was conducted by comparing interview results with observation and documentation data. This procedure was used to ensure that the findings did not rely on a single data source and could more accurately describe the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in the four elementary schools.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Context evaluation: understanding, policy direction, and school commitment

The context evaluation shows that the four schools generally understand the Merdeka Curriculum as a flexible, student-centered, and character-oriented curriculum. Principals and teachers stated that the curriculum gives schools and teachers space to design learning according to students' characteristics, local conditions, and school resources. This understanding is reflected in school meetings, curriculum team activities, participation in workshops, and efforts to integrate Pancasila Student Profile values into classroom and school activities.

However, the depth of understanding is not equal across schools and teachers. Some teachers understand the general principles of the Merdeka Curriculum, but still struggle to operationalize those principles into classroom practice. The gap is especially visible in differentiated learning and formative assessment. This finding indicates that the context dimension is already supportive at the level of policy awareness, but still needs stronger internal mentoring so that conceptual understanding becomes consistent pedagogical competence.

Cross-school comparison shows that SD Negeri 2 Passo and SD Negeri 77 Passo demonstrate stronger contextual support through more visible school programs, parental communication, and learning environment support.

SD Negeri 1 Lateri and SD Negeri 2 Lateri have also implemented the curriculum, but require more systematic strengthening in teacher mentoring and curriculum coordination. From the CIPP perspective, this means that a supportive context must not stop at policy acceptance; it must be converted into shared interpretation, school-level strategy, and continuous support for teachers.

Input evaluation: teacher readiness, facilities, training, and learning resources

In the input dimension, the four schools have provided several forms of support for curriculum implementation. These include teacher training, workshops, webinars, teacher working groups, teaching modules, supervision by principals, and the use of available learning media. Teachers have begun preparing teaching modules and adapting learning activities to classroom conditions. Principal support is also visible through coordination, motivation, supervision, and opportunities for teachers to participate in professional development activities.

Nevertheless, teacher readiness remains varied. Some teachers are relatively capable of designing learning modules and facilitating active learning, while others still need guidance in preparing differentiated activities and assessment instruments. The main input problem is not the complete absence of resources, but the uneven distribution of competence and facilities. Several schools still face limitations in digital devices, internet access, classroom space, and learning media. These limitations affect the quality of project activities, differentiated instruction, and technology-supported learning.

The comparison among schools suggests that SD Negeri 2 Passo appears more prominent in school support and parental collaboration, while SD Negeri 77 Passo shows stronger facility and supervision support, although it still faces classroom space limitations. SD Negeri 1 Lateri and SD Negeri 2 Lateri show adequate readiness but need more structured capacity building. These findings confirm that input readiness is a decisive condition for curriculum implementation. Without sufficient teacher competence, learning media, and supervision support, curriculum policy can remain administrative rather than becoming a real classroom transformation.

Process evaluation: learning practice, differentiation, assessment, and P5

The process evaluation indicates that learning has begun to move toward active and student-centered strategies. Teachers use discussions, group work, practice, presentations, and project-based activities to increase student participation. Some teachers have also conducted diagnostic assessment to identify students' initial abilities and formative assessment to monitor learning progress. The implementation of the Pancasila Student Profile appears through activities that encourage cooperation, responsibility, confidence, independence, and creativity.

However, the process dimension is the most critical part of implementation. Differentiated learning has not been implemented consistently across schools and classrooms. In several classes, teachers still provide similar activities to all students even though students' readiness and abilities differ. In other cases, diagnostic assessment has been conducted but has not been fully used as the basis for grouping students, adjusting learning materials, or providing differentiated tasks. This shows that assessment literacy and differentiation literacy are still key weaknesses in curriculum implementation.

Teachers also face obstacles related to large class size, limited learning time, limited media, and limited experience in analyzing assessment results. These obstacles make it difficult for teachers to provide individualized feedback and adjust learning pathways. From a critical perspective, the Merdeka Curriculum requires teachers not only to be creative, but also to be skilled in reading student data. If diagnostic and formative assessment data are not used to guide instruction, differentiated learning becomes a slogan rather than a classroom strategy.

The cross-school comparison shows variation in implementation. SD Negeri 2 Passo demonstrates stronger active learning and parent-school support. SD Negeri 77 Passo shows positive development in literacy and numeracy, but still faces space and class management challenges. SD Negeri 1 Lateri and SD Negeri 2 Lateri have begun implementing active learning, but need stronger technical mentoring in assessment feedback and differentiation. Therefore, process improvement should focus on three priorities: using diagnostic data for learning design, strengthening formative feedback, and developing simple differentiation strategies that are realistic for elementary classrooms.

Product evaluation: learning outcomes and character development

In the product dimension, the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum has had positive effects on students. Principals and teachers reported that students became more active, confident, creative, independent, and willing to cooperate during learning. Project activities and group learning helped students develop communication skills, responsibility, and social awareness. In some schools, especially SD Negeri 77 Passo, literacy and numeracy abilities were reported to have improved, indicating that curriculum implementation has begun to contribute to academic and character development.

The values of the Pancasila Student Profile have also begun to appear in students' daily behavior, especially cooperation, independence, critical reasoning, creativity, and responsibility. However, these outcomes are not evenly distributed across schools and classes. The product dimension is strongly influenced by the quality of the previous three dimensions. Schools with stronger leadership support, teacher readiness, learning media, and consistent classroom practice tend to show better learning outcomes. Conversely, schools with weaker assessment practice and limited facilities show less consistent outcomes.

This finding shows that the product of curriculum implementation cannot be separated from the quality of the implementation process. Student activeness, literacy, numeracy, and character development will be difficult to sustain if teachers do not receive continuous mentoring and if assessment results are not used for learning improvement. Therefore, product evaluation should not only celebrate positive outcomes, but also identify the implementation conditions that make those outcomes possible.

Table 1. CIPP evaluation synthesis and improvement priorities

CIPP aspect	Main evaluation finding	Cross-school variation	Improvement priority
Context	Schools understand the curriculum as flexible, student-centered, and character-oriented.	SD Negeri 2 Passo and SD Negeri 77 Passo show stronger contextual support; SD Negeri 1 Lateri and SD Negeri 2 Lateri need stronger internal mentoring.	Strengthen shared interpretation of the curriculum through regular school-based reflection and mentoring.
Input	Training, teaching modules, principal support, and basic learning resources are available but uneven.	Differences appear in digital facilities, classroom space, teacher confidence, and parent-school support.	Improve teacher capacity, learning media, digital access, and supervision focused on classroom practice.
Process	Active learning and projects have begun, but differentiation and formative feedback are not yet consistent.	Some schools show stronger active learning, while others still apply uniform activities to students with diverse abilities.	Use diagnostic assessment data to design differentiated activities and feedback.
Product	Students show increased activeness, confidence, cooperation, literacy, numeracy, and character values.	Outcomes are more visible in schools with stronger process quality and support systems.	Connect student outcomes with continuous improvement in teacher competence and assessment practice.

Source: Research findings, processed by the author.

Supporting and inhibiting factors

The supporting factors include principal leadership, curriculum teams, academic supervision, teacher participation in workshops and webinars, teacher working groups, the use of available learning platforms, teacher collaboration, and basic learning media. Parental and community support also contributes to implementation,

particularly in schools where communication with parents is stronger. These factors show that curriculum implementation is not only a teacher responsibility but also a collective school process.

The inhibiting factors include uneven teacher competence, limited ability to implement differentiated learning, limited assessment literacy, inadequate technological facilities, limited learning media, large class sizes, limited learning time, and uneven parental involvement. These obstacles indicate that implementation requires practical capacity-building at the school level. Policy socialization alone is insufficient if teachers do not receive concrete examples, mentoring, and feedback related to classroom practice.

The most important cross-case implication is that differentiation and assessment are the bridge between curriculum policy and learning outcomes. Schools may already understand the Merdeka Curriculum and have participated in training, but the curriculum will not fully affect students if teachers cannot translate diagnostic information into differentiated learning and formative feedback. Therefore, the improvement agenda should prioritize practical mentoring rather than only administrative training.

Discussion: From curriculum adoption to pedagogical transformation

The findings indicate that the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in the four elementary schools has generally been initiated through school policies, teacher training, workshops, and teacher working groups. This shows that schools have entered the adoption stage of curriculum implementation. However, the implementation has not yet reached an optimal transformation stage because teacher readiness, assessment practice, and differentiated learning remain uneven. This condition confirms that curriculum change is not only determined by policy availability, but also by the ability of school actors to translate policy into classroom practice (Mulyasa, 2021; Tomlinson, 2017).

From the context aspect, the schools have shown awareness of the need for flexible and student-centered learning. This awareness is important because it creates the foundation for implementation. However, awareness does not automatically produce quality learning. Differences in teacher interpretation indicate that curriculum socialization must be followed by school-based professional learning. In the CIPP model, context evaluation is not only used to identify needs, but also to ensure that program goals are understood and accepted by implementers (Stufflebeam, 1971; Arikunto & Jabar, 2018).

From the input aspect, training, modules, supervision, and learning resources are available, but their quality and accessibility differ among schools. This finding is consistent with the view that curriculum implementation requires adequate resources, competent teachers, and strong institutional support. Limited digital facilities and learning media do not automatically prevent implementation, but they limit teachers' ability to create varied, interactive, and differentiated learning. Therefore, input strengthening should combine resource provision with teacher mentoring and collaborative lesson design.

From the process aspect, differentiated learning and formative assessment are the weakest elements. This finding is important because these two elements are central to the Merdeka Curriculum. Differentiated instruction requires teachers to understand students' readiness, interests, and learning profiles before designing learning activities (Tomlinson, 2017). If teachers continue to use the same activities for all students, the principle of learning according to students' needs will not be achieved. Similarly, formative assessment should not only be used to record scores, but also to provide feedback and adjust teaching strategies.

From the product aspect, positive changes in students' activeness, confidence, cooperation, literacy, numeracy, and character values indicate that the curriculum has potential benefits. However, these benefits vary across schools because outcomes depend on the strength of context, input, and process. This means that improvement should not focus only on final student outcomes, but also on the implementation chain that produces those outcomes. The CIPP model is useful because it helps identify where improvement should begin: understanding, resources, classroom process, or outcome monitoring.

Overall, this study contributes to the evaluation of the Merdeka Curriculum by showing that implementation quality depends on the alignment of the four CIPP dimensions. A supportive context and available input are necessary, but not sufficient. The decisive factor lies in the process dimension, especially the teacher's ability to use assessment data for differentiated learning. Therefore, schools and education authorities need to move from curriculum adoption

to pedagogical transformation through continuous mentoring, peer learning, collaborative supervision, and practical assessment training.

CONCLUSION

Based on the CIPP evaluation, the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum at SD Negeri 1 Lateri, SD Negeri 2 Lateri, SD Negeri 2 Passo, and SD Negeri 77 Passo has generally been carried out adequately, but not yet optimally. In the context aspect, schools have understood the curriculum as flexible, student-centered, and character-oriented learning. In the input aspect, implementation is supported by teacher training, teaching modules, principal supervision, curriculum teams, and basic learning resources, although teacher readiness and facilities remain uneven.

In the process aspect, learning has begun to use active, student-centered, project-based, and assessment-oriented strategies. However, differentiated learning and formative feedback have not been implemented consistently. In the product aspect, students show positive development in activeness, creativity, confidence, cooperation, literacy, numeracy, and Pancasila Student Profile values. The main supporting factors are principal support, teacher collaboration, training, supervision, and parent-school cooperation. The main inhibiting factors are limited facilities, uneven teacher competence, weak assessment practice, large class sizes, limited learning time, and uneven parental involvement.

The practical implication of this study is that schools need to strengthen school-based mentoring focused on differentiated instruction, diagnostic assessment, formative feedback, and collaborative lesson design. Principals should direct supervision toward classroom improvement rather than only administrative completeness. Education authorities need to support teacher capacity building, digital learning facilities, and simple assessment instruments that can be used realistically in elementary classrooms. The limitation of this study is that it used a qualitative approach in four schools within one district, so the findings cannot be generalized statistically to all elementary schools. Future studies may use mixed methods, involve more schools, and compare implementation across districts to obtain a broader picture of Merdeka Curriculum implementation.

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