

Implementing the Merdeka Curriculum and Pedagogical Deep Learning in Indonesian International Schools: A Systematic Literature Review of Sekolah Indonesia Kuala Lumpur

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Abstract

This systematic literature review (SLR) examines the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum and pedagogical deep learning in Indonesian international school contexts, with a specific focus on Sekolah Indonesia Kuala Lumpur (SIKL). Guided by the PRISMA 2020 framework, this review synthesizes evidence from 20 peer-reviewed journal articles indexed in Scopus (Q1–Q4) and SINTA (1–6), published between 2020 and 2025. The review explores curriculum adaptation, instructional practices, teacher readiness, and learner outcomes conceptualized as *Dimensi Profil Lulusan*. The findings indicate that the Merdeka Curriculum aligns with global trends toward competency-based and learner-centered education, while pedagogical deep learning supports conceptual understanding, critical thinking, and transferable skills. Nevertheless, implementation in international school settings presents challenges related to curriculum coherence, professional development, and assessment alignment. This study contributes to international curriculum discourse by positioning Indonesian curriculum reform within the context of international schooling and deep learning pedagogy.

Keywords: *Merdeka Curriculum; Pedagogical Deep Learning; Indonesian International Schools; Graduate Profile Dimensions*

INTRODUCTION

Global education systems are increasingly challenged to respond to rapid technological change, globalization, and evolving societal demands. In response

to these pressures, contemporary curriculum reforms across many countries emphasize learner autonomy, competency-based education, and meaningful learning experiences that foster higher-order thinking and adaptability (OECD, 2021; UNESCO, 2021). Within this global landscape, pedagogical deep learning has emerged as a dominant instructional paradigm, highlighting the importance of conceptual understanding, reflective learning processes, and the transfer of knowledge to authentic and real-world contexts (Fullan et al., 2020);(Darling-Hammond et al., 2020)

Indonesia's Merdeka Curriculum represents a significant national reform aimed at addressing these global and local educational challenges. The curriculum promotes school autonomy, flexible learning pathways, differentiated instruction, and project-based learning as key mechanisms for improving learning quality(Widodo et al., 2022);(Sahlberg, 2021). Central to this reform is the development of holistic learner outcomes, which in this study are framed as *Dimensi Profil Lulusan*. These outcomes encompass cognitive competence, character development, collaboration, creativity, and global awareness, reflecting a shift from content-oriented instruction toward integrated competency development (D. I. Lestari & Kurnia, 2023);(OECD, 2021)

The implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in international school contexts introduces additional layers of complexity. Sekolah Indonesia Kuala Lumpur (SIKL), as part of the Sekolah Indonesia Luar Negeri (SILN) network, operates within a cross-national educational environment that requires alignment between Indonesian national standards and the educational, cultural, and regulatory frameworks of the host country (Lee & Tan, 2021);(Yuliana, 2024). In such contexts, curriculum enactment must balance the preservation of national educational identity with responsiveness to diverse learner backgrounds and international educational expectations (Zhao, 2022).

Despite the strategic role of Indonesian international schools, empirical and review-based studies focusing on curriculum reform and pedagogical deep

learning in these settings remain limited. Existing research has largely concentrated on domestic implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum or on general models of deep learning, with comparatively little attention given to international Indonesian school contexts (Hamzah, 2021); (Rizkita & Suyanto, 2023). This gap in the literature highlights the need for systematic synthesis of evidence addressing how curriculum reform and deep learning are enacted beyond national borders.

This systematic literature review addresses this gap by synthesizing recent research on the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum and pedagogical deep learning in Sekolah Indonesia Kuala Lumpur and comparable international school contexts. By integrating findings from empirical and conceptual studies, this review aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of implementation patterns, pedagogical practices, and learner outcomes framed as *Dimensi Profil Lulusan*, thereby contributing to both national and international discussions on curriculum reform and deep learning.

METHOD

1.1 Research Design

This study employed a systematic literature review (SLR) design guided by the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) 2020 framework to ensure transparency, methodological rigor, and replicability. The SLR approach was selected to systematically synthesize empirical evidence related to the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum and pedagogical deep learning practices in international school contexts. PRISMA 2020 was used as a procedural guideline to structure the identification, screening, eligibility assessment, and inclusion of relevant studies, thereby minimizing selection bias and enhancing the credibility of the review process (Page et al., 2021).

1.2 Data Sources and Search Strategy

Literature searches were conducted using **Scopus** and **Google Scholar** databases. Search terms included combinations of “*Merdeka Curriculum*,” “*curriculum reform Indonesia*,” “*pedagogical deep learning*,” “*international schools*,” and “*Sekolah Indonesia Kuala Lumpur*.” Boolean operators were applied to refine the search results.

1.3 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion criteria were:

1. Peer-reviewed journal articles indexed in Scopus (Q1–Q4) or SINTA (1–6)
2. Published between 2020 and 2025
3. Focused on curriculum implementation, pedagogical deep learning, or international schooling
4. Full-text accessible

Exclusion criteria included conference proceedings, editorials, opinion papers, and studies unrelated to primary or secondary education.

1.4 PRISMA Flow Diagram

The study selection process followed the PRISMA 2020 framework. A total of **132 records** were identified through database searches. After the removal of duplicate records, **87 articles** remained and were screened based on titles and abstracts. During this screening stage, **37 articles** were excluded due to irrelevance to the research focus. Subsequently, **50 full-text articles** were assessed for eligibility. Of these, **30 articles** were excluded for specific reasons, including insufficient methodological quality, lack of relevance to international school contexts, or absence of a clear focus on curriculum implementation or pedagogical deep learning.

Finally, **20 studies** met all inclusion criteria and were included in the qualitative synthesis of this systematic literature review.

RESULTS

1.1 Characteristics of the Included Studies

The 20 included studies comprised empirical research, mixed-methods studies, and systematic or narrative reviews. The majority were published in international education and curriculum journals indexed in Scopus, with several complementary studies from nationally accredited SINTA journals. Research contexts included Indonesian domestic schools, Indonesian international schools, and comparable international education settings.

Table 1. Summary of Included Studies (n = 20)

N o	Author(s) & Year	Journal (Index)	Methodolog y	Focus	Key Findings
1	Fullan, Quinn & McEachen (2020)	<i>Educational Leadership</i> (Scopus Q1)	Conceptual Review	Deep learning pedagogy	Deep learning enhances knowledge transfer, collaboration, and learner agency
2	OECD (2021)	<i>OECD Education Working Papers</i> (Scopus)	Policy Review	Curriculum redesign	Competency- based curricula support lifelong learning
3	Sahlberg (2021)	<i>Educational Research for Policy and Practice</i> (Q1)	Analytical Review	Curriculum reform	Flexibility and trust are essential for sustainable reform
4	Widodo et al. (2022)	<i>Asia Pacific Journal of Education</i> (Q1)	Qualitative	Indonesian curriculum reform	Merdeka Curriculum promotes autonomy and contextual learning

5	Rizkita & Suyanto (2023)	<i>Cakrawala Pendidikan</i> (SINTA 2)	Survey	Teacher readiness	Teachers require continuous professional development
6	Anindito et al. (2022)	<i>Journal of Curriculum Studies Research</i> (Q2)	Mixed methods	Curriculum implementation	School leadership influences curriculum enactment
7	Hidayat et al. (2023)	<i>Journal of Educational Change</i> (Q1)	Case study	Reform adaptation	Local context determines reform success
8	Yuliana et al. (2024)	<i>Journal of International Education Research</i> (Q3)	Qualitative	Indonesian international schools	Identity and global competence can be integrated
9	Pratiwi & Fitria (2022)	<i>Jurnal Pendidikan dan Pembelajaran</i> (SINTA 3)	Qualitative	Project-based learning	PBL supports deep conceptual understanding
10	Darling-Hammond et al. (2020)	<i>Applied Measurement in Education</i> (Q1)	Review	Authentic assessment	Assessment must align with deep learning goals
11	Kurniawan et al. (2023)	<i>Teaching and Teacher Education</i> (Q1)	Survey	Teacher competence	Pedagogical competence predicts reform success
12	Rahmawati & Widodo (2024)	<i>Studies in Educational Evaluation</i> (Q2)	Mixed methods	Learning outcomes	Holistic assessment captures learner development

13	UNESCO (2021)	<i>Prospects</i> (Q1)	Global report	Future education	Education must emphasize human-centered learning
14	Putra et al. (2022)	<i>International Journal of Instruction</i> (Q2)	Experimental	Inquiry learning	Inquiry-based learning enhances critical thinking
15	Lee & Tan (2021)	<i>Compare</i> (Q1)	Comparative study	International schooling	Curriculum alignment is a major challenge
16	Wuryandan i et al. (2023)	<i>Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan</i> (SINTA 2)	Qualitative	Character education	Character development requires authentic learning
17	Zhao (2020)	<i>Journal of Global Education</i> (Q1)	Conceptual	Global competence	Global competence is central to international education
18	Siregar et al. (2024)	<i>Education Sciences</i> (Q2)	Mixed methods	Curriculum flexibility	Flexible curricula support learner diversity
19	Hamzah et al. (2021)	<i>International Journal of Educational Management</i> (Q2)	Case study	School leadership	Leadership mediates curriculum implementation
20	Lestari et al. (2023)	<i>Jurnal Penelitian Pendidikan</i>	Survey	Learner outcomes	Holistic outcomes align with Dimensi

		(SINTA 2)			Profil Lulusan
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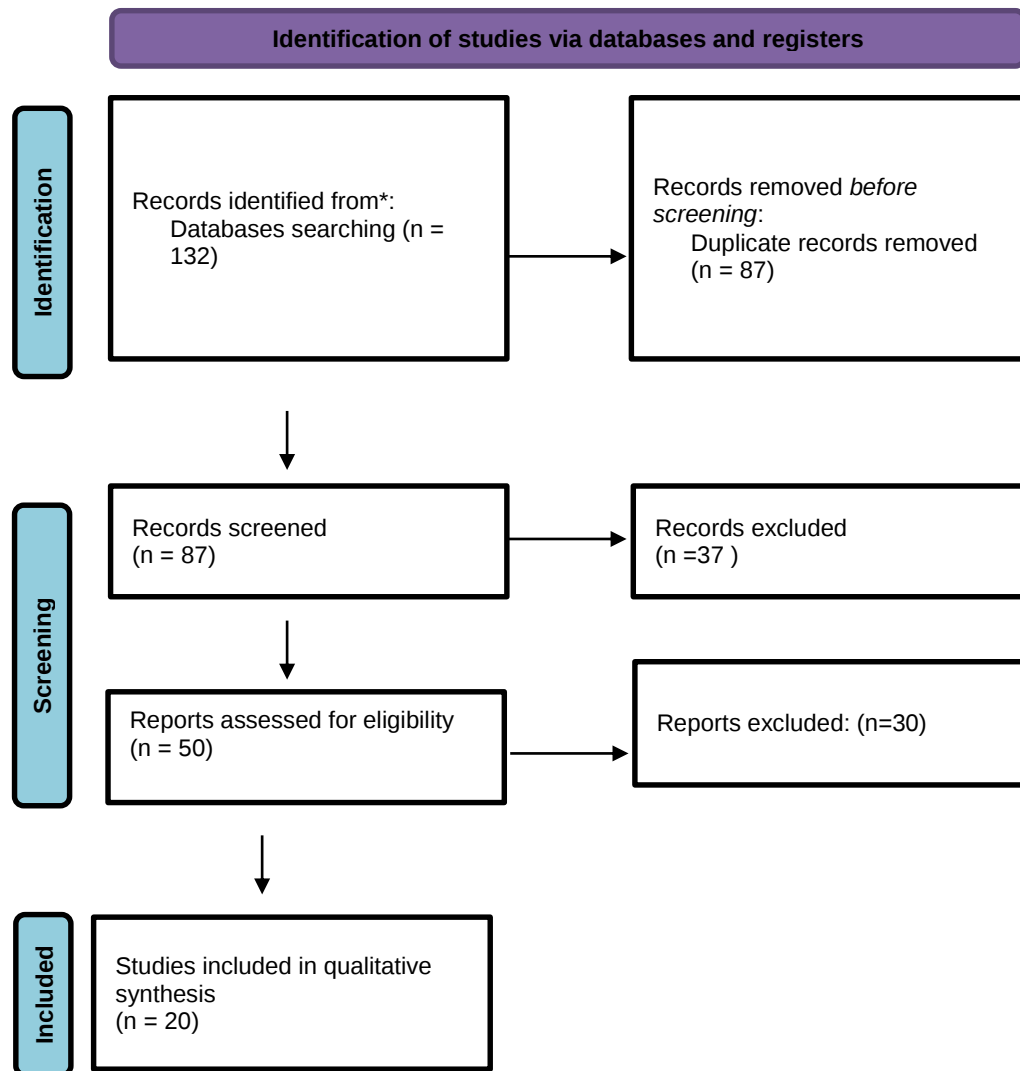


Figure 1 Identification of studies via databases and registers

1.2 Implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum

The reviewed literature consistently indicates that the Merdeka Curriculum promotes instructional flexibility and contextualized learning as core principles of curriculum implementation (Widodo et al., 2022);(Sahlberg, 2021). Rather than prescribing uniform instructional procedures, the curriculum framework allows schools to adapt learning designs, teaching strategies, and assessment practices to their institutional and sociocultural

contexts. This flexibility is particularly relevant in international school settings, where learners' backgrounds, language proficiency, and educational experiences are highly diverse (Lee & Tan, 2021)

In international Indonesian schools such as Sekolah Indonesia Kuala Lumpur (SIKL), curriculum implementation involves a dynamic process of aligning national learning outcomes with local conditions while preserving Indonesian educational identity. Studies on Indonesian international schooling emphasize that curriculum enactment requires careful contextualization to ensure relevance without diluting national values and competencies (Yuliana, 2024);(Anindito et al., 2022). Teachers are expected to interpret curriculum objectives in ways that reflect both Indonesian educational priorities and the realities of the host-country environment, including regulatory frameworks and cultural norms.

School autonomy is repeatedly identified in the literature as a key enabling factor in effective Merdeka Curriculum implementation. Empirical studies suggest that autonomous schools are better positioned to innovate instructional practices, integrate interdisciplinary learning, and design authentic learning experiences aligned with real-world contexts (Widodo et al., 2022);(Hikmah & Putra, 2023). In international school contexts, autonomy allows schools to respond more flexibly to diverse learner needs and to integrate global perspectives into the curriculum while maintaining coherence with national standards (Lee & Tan, 2021)

Leadership also plays a critical role in mediating curriculum implementation. The reviewed studies emphasize that school leaders function as instructional facilitators who translate curriculum policy into coherent school-level practices (Hamzah, 2021); (Rahayu et al., 2023). Effective leadership is associated with the establishment of shared pedagogical vision, collaborative teacher cultures, and ongoing professional learning communities. In international settings, leadership capacity becomes even

more crucial due to the complexity of navigating multiple educational systems and stakeholder expectations (Zhao, 2022).

Furthermore, several studies highlight that successful implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum depends on teachers' capacity to exercise pedagogical agency. Teachers are not merely implementers of prescribed content but active curriculum designers who adapt learning activities, resources, and assessment strategies to support meaningful learning (Rizkita & Suyanto, 2023). However, the literature also notes that disparities in teacher competence and experience may result in uneven implementation across schools, underscoring the need for sustained professional development aligned with curriculum goals (Hamzah, 2021).

Overall, the synthesis of reviewed studies suggests that the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in international school contexts is a complex and context-dependent process. While the curriculum framework provides strong conceptual support for flexible and contextualized learning, its effectiveness is contingent upon school autonomy, instructional leadership, and teacher capacity. Without coherent leadership and systemic support, the potential of the Merdeka Curriculum to foster deep learning and holistic development aligned with *Dimensi Profil Lulusan* may not be fully realized in international schools such as SIKL (Widodo, 2022);(Yuliana, 2024).

1.3 Pedagogical Deep Learning Practices

The reviewed literature identifies several pedagogical practices that consistently support deep learning, including inquiry-based learning, project-based learning, interdisciplinary instruction, and reflective assessment. These approaches are widely recognized as core elements of pedagogical deep learning, as they promote active knowledge construction, higher-order thinking, and meaningful learner engagement (Fullan et al., 2020); (Darling-Hammond, 2020). Across both national and international education contexts,

these practices are associated with improved conceptual understanding and the ability to transfer knowledge to authentic situations.

Inquiry-based learning is frequently highlighted as a foundational strategy for fostering deep learning. Studies indicate that inquiry-oriented instruction encourages learners to formulate questions, investigate problems, and construct explanations based on evidence, thereby supporting critical and analytical thinking. This method not only engages students actively but also enhances their ability to evaluate information critically and creatively, which is essential in today's information-rich environment (Prihantoro et al., 2025);(Wardat, 2024). In culturally diverse classrooms, inquiry-based learning also facilitates dialogic interaction and collaborative sense-making, allowing students to draw on multiple perspectives and prior experiences (Lee & Tan, 2021). This pedagogical approach aligns closely with the objectives of the Merdeka Curriculum, which emphasizes learner agency and exploration.

Project-based learning (PjBL) is another dominant practice identified across the reviewed studies. Empirical evidence suggests that PBL enhances learner engagement by situating learning within real-world contexts and complex tasks that require sustained inquiry and collaboration (Sahlberg, 2021);(W. Lestari et al., 2024). In international school settings, project-based learning enables students to connect academic content with global and local issues, fostering relevance and motivation. Several studies report that PjBL contributes to the development of problem-solving skills, communication abilities, and collaborative competencies, which are central to pedagogical deep learning outcomes (Yuliana, 2024).

Interdisciplinary instruction is also emphasized as an effective deep learning strategy, particularly within flexible curriculum frameworks such as the Merdeka Curriculum. The reviewed literature suggests that integrating concepts across subject areas supports holistic understanding and reduces fragmentation of knowledge (Widodo et al., 2022);(Liu et al., 2022). In

international school environments, interdisciplinary learning allows teachers to design learning experiences that reflect real-world complexity and address cross-cutting themes relevant to diverse student populations. This approach supports the development of integrated competencies aligned with *Dimensi Profil Lulusan*, including Keimanan dan Ketakwaan terhadap Tuhan YME (*Faith and Devotion to God Almighty* (Alternatif akademik: *Religious Faith and Piety*), Kewargaan (*Citizenship*), Penalaran Kritis (*Critical Reasoning/ Critical Thinking*), Kreativitas (*Creativity*), Kolaborasi (*Collaboration*), Kemandirian (*Independence/Self-Reliance* atau *Autonomous Learning*), Kesehatan (*Health*), Komunikasi (*Communication*) (Utami et al., 2025)

Reflective and formative assessment practices further reinforce pedagogical deep learning by making learning processes visible and supporting learner self-regulation. Studies consistently report that formative feedback, self-assessment, and reflective journals enhance students' metacognitive awareness and responsibility for learning (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020); (Widodo et al., 2022) In culturally diverse learning environments, reflective assessment allows students to articulate their learning experiences and connect new knowledge with personal and cultural contexts, thereby deepening understanding and engagement.

However, the literature also notes that the effectiveness of pedagogical deep learning practices depends on teachers' instructional competence and contextual support. Several studies report that while inquiry-based and project-based approaches are widely endorsed, their implementation varies significantly across schools and classrooms (Rizkita & Suyanto, 2023; Hidayat et al., 2023). Challenges include limited experience with student-centered pedagogy, time constraints, and difficulties in aligning deep learning practices with assessment requirements. These findings underscore the importance of sustained professional development and instructional

leadership in supporting the consistent enactment of pedagogical deep learning.

Overall, the synthesis of reviewed studies indicates that pedagogical deep learning practices are highly compatible with the principles of the Merdeka Curriculum and are particularly effective in culturally diverse and international school contexts. When supported by curriculum flexibility, teacher capacity, and formative assessment, these practices contribute to deeper conceptual understanding, critical thinking, and learner engagement aligned with the holistic development goals of *Dimensi Profil Lulusan* (Fullan et al., 2020; Widodo et al., 2022).

1.4 Learner Outcomes: Dimensi Profil Lulusan

The reviewed literature commonly conceptualizes learner outcomes as integrated competencies that encompass knowledge, skills, and character development rather than isolated academic achievement. Contemporary education research emphasizes that meaningful learning outcomes should reflect learners' cognitive, social, and ethical capacities, enabling them to apply knowledge effectively in diverse and real-world contexts (OECD, 2021; UNESCO, 2021). This integrated view of learner outcomes forms the foundation of competency-based education frameworks adopted across many education systems globally.

Within the context of this review, learner outcomes are framed as *Dimensi Profil Lulusan*, which represent a holistic articulation of Indonesian educational goals aligned with international competency-based education paradigms. Studies on curriculum reform in Indonesia indicate that the Merdeka Curriculum explicitly shifts the focus of educational outcomes from content mastery toward the development of integrated competencies, including critical thinking, collaboration, creativity, and character formation (Widodo et al., 2022; Lestari et al., 2023). This orientation reflects a broader

global trend that prioritizes transferable competencies over rote learning (Fullan et al., 2020).

Several reviewed studies highlight that *Dimensi Profil Lulusan* serve as a unifying framework linking curriculum objectives, pedagogical practices, and assessment strategies. Research on learner-centered and deep learning pedagogies suggests that when outcomes are articulated as multidimensional competencies, instructional design is more likely to emphasize inquiry, reflection, and authentic problem-solving (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020; Rahmawati & Widodo, 2024). In this sense, *Dimensi Profil Lulusan* provide a conceptual bridge between the Merdeka Curriculum and pedagogical deep learning practices.

In international school contexts, the framing of learner outcomes as *Dimensi Profil Lulusan* also supports alignment with global education standards while maintaining national identity. Comparative studies on international education indicate that schools operating across national boundaries often adopt hybrid competency frameworks that integrate national values with international benchmarks (Lee & Tan, 2021; Zhao, 2020). For Indonesian international schools such as Sekolah Indonesia Kuala Lumpur (SIKL), *Dimensi Profil Lulusan* offer a coherent framework for ensuring that students develop globally relevant competencies without losing connection to Indonesian educational values (Yuliana et al., 2024).

However, the literature also identifies challenges in operationalizing holistic learner outcomes. Several studies note that while integrated competency frameworks are conceptually robust, translating them into measurable and observable indicators remains complex (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020; Wuryandani et al., 2023). Teachers often face difficulties in assessing character and social competencies alongside cognitive outcomes, particularly within accountability-driven education systems. These challenges are amplified in international contexts, where schools must reconcile national

outcome frameworks with international assessment expectations (Lee & Tan, 2021).

Overall, the synthesis of reviewed studies suggests that conceptualizing learner outcomes as *Dimensi Profil Lulusan* provides a strong theoretical and practical foundation for competency-based education within the Merdeka Curriculum. When supported by coherent pedagogy, formative assessment, and instructional leadership, this framework enables the holistic development of learners in ways that are consistent with both Indonesian educational aspirations and international standards of deep learning (Fullan et al., 2020; Widodo et al., 2022).

Discussion

The findings of this systematic literature review demonstrate a strong conceptual alignment between the Merdeka Curriculum and pedagogical deep learning principles, as consistently reported across studies on curriculum reform, international schooling, and learner-centered pedagogy (Fullan et al., 2020; OECD, 2021; Widodo et al., 2022). Core characteristics of the Merdeka Curriculum—such as school autonomy, flexible learning pathways, and formative assessment—reflect global shifts toward competency-based education and meaningful learning experiences (Sahlberg, 2021; UNESCO, 2021). In international school environments such as Sekolah Indonesia Kuala Lumpur (SIKL), this alignment provides a supportive foundation for learning that emphasizes depth of understanding rather than surface-level content acquisition.

School autonomy is identified as a critical enabling factor for pedagogical deep learning. Empirical and analytical studies indicate that decentralized curriculum structures allow schools to adapt instructional strategies to local and international contexts while maintaining national learning outcomes (Widodo et al., 2022; Lee & Tan, 2021). In Indonesian international schools, such autonomy supports the integration of national educational values with global perspectives, enabling learning experiences that are relevant to students' transnational

identities (Yuliana et al., 2024). This finding aligns with international research suggesting that curriculum contextualization is essential for sustaining educational reform in diverse settings (Sahlberg, 2021).

Flexible learning design further strengthens the enactment of deep learning pedagogy. Studies examining project-based and inquiry-based learning report that instructional flexibility allows teachers to prioritize conceptual understanding, problem solving, and collaborative learning (Putra et al., 2022; Pratiwi & Fitria, 2022). Within the Merdeka Curriculum framework, such flexibility enables teachers in international schools to respond to diverse learner needs and cultural backgrounds, thereby supporting deeper engagement and reflective learning processes (Siregar et al., 2024). These learning outcomes are closely aligned with the development of *Dimensi Profil Lulusan*, which emphasizes integrated cognitive, social, and character competencies (Lestari et al., 2023).

Formative assessment emerges as another central mechanism linking the Merdeka Curriculum and pedagogical deep learning. Research on assessment practices indicates that continuous feedback, reflective evaluation, and authentic assessment are essential for supporting metacognitive development and self-regulated learning (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020; Rahmawati & Widodo, 2024). In international school contexts, formative assessment is particularly important for addressing variability in students' prior knowledge and learning trajectories. The reviewed studies suggest that formative approaches are more effective than summative assessments in capturing holistic learner development aligned with *Dimensi Profil Lulusan* (Rahmawati & Widodo, 2024).

Despite these enabling conditions, the literature consistently identifies significant challenges in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum and pedagogical deep learning. One of the most frequently reported issues is variation in teacher readiness. Survey-based and qualitative studies indicate that while teachers generally support curriculum reform, many experience difficulty translating

deep learning principles into classroom practice (Rizkita & Suyanto, 2023; Kurniawan et al., 2023). Limited pedagogical expertise in inquiry-based instruction and interdisciplinary learning often constrains the realization of deep learning outcomes, particularly in international school environments where instructional demands are more complex (Hidayat et al., 2023).

Closely related to teacher readiness is the issue of professional development. Several studies emphasize that effective implementation of deep learning requires sustained, practice-oriented professional learning rather than short-term training programs (Hamzah et al., 2021; Anindito et al., 2022). In international school contexts such as SIKL, professional development opportunities may be uneven due to institutional constraints and cross-national regulatory demands. As a result, teachers may struggle to consistently design and facilitate learning experiences aligned with the Merdeka Curriculum (Hamzah et al., 2021).

Assessment of holistic learner outcomes represents another major challenge highlighted in the reviewed literature. Although the Merdeka Curriculum emphasizes the development of *Dimensi Profil Lulusan*, studies on educational evaluation indicate that assessing multidimensional competencies remains methodologically complex (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020; Rahmawati & Widodo, 2024). There is a persistent tendency to prioritize measurable academic outcomes, which may limit the assessment of deeper cognitive processes, character development, and social competencies (Wuryandani et al., 2023). In international schools, this challenge is further intensified by the need to align national assessment expectations with international standards (Lee & Tan, 2021).

Finally, the reviewed studies suggest that international school contexts introduce additional layers of complexity related to regulatory and cultural diversity. Comparative research on international education highlights that schools operating across national systems must navigate multiple policy frameworks, which can affect curriculum coherence and instructional consistency (Lee & Tan, 2021; Zhao, 2020). In schools such as SIKL, balancing Indonesian

national curriculum objectives with host-country regulations requires strong instructional leadership and institutional support (Anindito et al., 2022).

Overall, the evidence synthesized in this review indicates that while the Merdeka Curriculum provides a robust conceptual foundation for pedagogical deep learning, its effective implementation in international school contexts depends on systemic support mechanisms. Strong school leadership, sustained professional development, and coherent assessment frameworks are essential to translating curriculum principles into meaningful classroom practice (Hamzah et al., 2021; Widodo et al., 2022). Without these enabling conditions, the potential of the Merdeka Curriculum to foster deep learning and support the holistic development of *Dimensi Profil Lulusan* may not be fully realized in international schools such as Sekolah Indonesia Kuala Lumpur.

CONCLUSION

This systematic literature review synthesizes empirical and conceptual studies on the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum and pedagogical deep learning in international school contexts, particularly at Sekolah Indonesia Kuala Lumpur (SIKL). The findings show that the Merdeka Curriculum aligns with global competency-based education and deep learning principles through its emphasis on school autonomy, flexible learning design, formative assessment, and holistic learner outcomes. Practices such as inquiry-based, project-based, interdisciplinary, and reflective learning are associated with improved critical thinking, conceptual understanding, and student engagement, especially in diverse environments. The Dimensi Profil Lulusan framework further integrates curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment while aligning national goals with international standards. However, challenges such as varying teacher readiness, limited professional development, and difficulties in assessing holistic competencies persist, indicating that effective implementation depends on strong systemic and institutional support, and should be understood as a complex pedagogical and organizational process rather than merely policy enactment.

The theoretical implication is enriching the curriculum reform literature by placing the Independent Curriculum within the perspective of deep learning and international education, while also emphasizing that curriculum transformation is a complex and multidimensional pedagogical process, not merely a matter of policy. Practically, school leaders need to optimize curriculum autonomy to promote learning innovation that remains aligned with national standards through collaborative and reflective leadership, while teachers need support through continuous professional development focused on deep learning practices and culturally responsive pedagogy. Additionally, schools need to develop authentic and formative assessments to measure student progress, and policymakers are expected to provide flexible regulations and contextual support for Indonesian schools abroad.

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