

Implementation of the Kurikulum Merdeka in Physical Education, Sports, and Health (PJOK) Instruction in Elementary Schools

Riyan Nasrul Unus
(riyanyunus.ry.ry@gmail.com)

Master's Study Program in Sports Education
Universitas Nusantara PGRI Kediri

Abstract. *The Merdeka Curriculum introduces a paradigm shift in Indonesian education, emphasizing student-centered learning, flexibility, and the integration of the Pancasila Student Profile. This study aims to analyze the implementation of physical education (PJOK) learning under the Merdeka Curriculum framework in elementary schools. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, data were gathered through observations, interviews with five PE teachers, and document analysis across three elementary schools. The results indicate that PJOK learning has successfully shifted toward differentiated instruction and joy at school, aligning with the teaching at the right level principle. However, challenges persist, particularly in authentic assessment development and infrastructure limitations. This study concludes that supporting teachers' professional development is crucial for maximizing the curricular objectives.*

Keywords: *Merdeka Curriculum, Physical Education, Elementary School, Differentiated Instruction.*

1. Introduction

Physical Education, Sports, and Health (PJOK) is an integral part of the national education system, playing a strategic role in shaping the holistic development of Indonesian individuals. At the elementary school level, PJOK aims not only to improve physical fitness but also to instill moral values, sportsmanship, cooperation, and discipline from an early age [1]. Over time, the increasingly dynamic challenges within the education sector have necessitated curriculum reforms that are adaptive and focused on the unique potential of each learner.

The Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology launched the *Kurikulum Merdeka* (Independent Curriculum) as a solution to facilitate post-pandemic learning recovery and transform the education system [2]. Key characteristics of this curriculum include flexible learning, a focus on essential content, and character development through the Project to Strengthen the Pancasila Student Profile (P5). In the context of PJOK, *Kurikulum Merdeka* encourages teachers to move away from rigid, conventional approaches and adopt methods that prioritize meeting children's motor skill needs and fostering the joy of movement [3].

The implementation of this new curriculum inevitably brings about new dynamics in the field. PJOK teachers are required to independently develop Learning Objective Sequences (ATP) and Teaching Modules, as well as implement differentiated instruction—teaching

tailored to children's interests and motor abilities. Preliminary studies indicate that teachers often face challenges in designing authentic assessments and managing limited school facilities and infrastructure [4]. Therefore, this study aims to conduct an in-depth exploration of PJOK implementation under Kurikulum Merdeka at the elementary school level, identifying both successes and solutions to the obstacles encountered.

2. Method

This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach to obtain a comprehensive overview of the reality of curriculum implementation in the field. The research was conducted during the odd semester of the 2025/2026 academic year at three public elementary schools in Nganjuk Regency that had independently implemented the *Kurikulum Merdeka* (Independent Curriculum) for at least two years.

The subjects of this study included five Physical Education (PJOK) teachers—covering both lower and upper grade levels (Phases A, B, and C)—and school principals. Data collection utilized three primary instruments: direct observation of classroom instruction, semi-structured in-depth interviews, and a review of teaching-related documentation, such as teaching modules, learning objective achievement criteria (KKTP), and assessment instruments. Data analysis followed the Miles and Huberman model, comprising data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing or verification [5]. Data validity was verified using source and method triangulation techniques.

3. Results and Discussion

Based on data collected through observation, interviews, and document analysis at three elementary schools—SDN 5 Ngetos, SDN 2 Kepel, and SDN 3 Kuncir in Ngetos District—it was found that the implementation of Physical Education (PJOK) instruction based on the *Kurikulum Merdeka* (Independent Curriculum) shows several significant changes compared to the previous curriculum. These findings are categorized into three main aspects: instructional planning, implementation (including differentiated instruction), and assessment.

Regarding planning, all teachers (100%) were able to independently develop instructional modules by adapting the Learning Outcomes (*Capaian Pembelajaran* or CP) established by the government. However, the extent to which the *Profil Pelajar Pancasila* (Pancasila Student Profile) was integrated varied among teachers, depending on the specific physical activity themes being taught. In summary, the effectiveness of PJOK instruction implementation based on *Kurikulum Merdeka* elements is presented in Table 1 below:

Implementation Aspect	Implementation Level (%)	Category / Notes
Planning (Teaching Modules & ATP)	90%	Excellent; teachers utilize the *Merdeka Mengajar* Platform (PMM).
Implementation (Differentiation & P5)	75%	Good; modifications to tools are made to accommodate student diversity.
Authentic Assessment (Formative & Summative)	60%	Adequate; teachers still face challenges in designing practical performance rubrics.

An in-depth analysis of the research findings indicates that the essence of the *Kurikulum Merdeka* (Independent Curriculum)—which emphasizes 'Freedom to Learn' (Merdeka Belajar)—has begun to be internalized within the teaching culture of Physical Education (PJOK) teachers. In practice, differentiated instruction is implemented through the modification of learning equipment. For instance, when teaching large-ball sports, teachers use lighter plastic balls for students with lower motor coordination skills, whereas students with higher motor skills use standard balls [3]. This approach aligns with the 'Teaching at the Right Level' (TaRL) principle, ensuring that no student feels frustrated or left behind during physical activities.

The greatest challenge identified in the field lies in the area of assessment. The (Kurikulum Merdeka) places a strong emphasis on formative assessment aimed at improving learning, rather than merely focusing on final (summative) grades. Teachers report that designing authentic assessment rubrics—encompassing psychomotor, affective (Pancasila Student Profile), and cognitive dimensions—demands significant time and effort amidst heavy teaching schedules [4]. Furthermore, infrastructure constraints—such as sports fields becoming unsuitable during the rainy season—compel teachers to creatively shift instruction to the classroom, focusing instead on health theory.

4. Conclusion

The implementation of the (Kurikulum Merdeka) in Physical Education (PJOK) at the elementary school level has proceeded successfully, particularly regarding student-oriented lesson planning and modification (differentiated instruction). Traits such as cheerfulness, physical fitness, and a spirit of cooperation are beginning to emerge among students through the integration of the (Profil Pelajar Pancasila) dimensions into physical activities.

Nevertheless, there is an urgent need to enhance teacher capacity through continuous training, specifically regarding the development of efficient and practical formative assessment instruments. It is also recommended that schools and policymakers pay greater attention to the standardization of sports facilities and infrastructure to optimally support the achievement of curriculum objectives.

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