



The paradigm shifts in senior high schools' history education in the *Merdeka Curriculum*

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the fundamental change contained in history learning in the Merdeka Curriculum compared to the earlier curricula. The research questions posed are: 1) What is the position of high school History education within the Merdeka Curriculum when viewed from the global curriculum developments? 2) How has the pedagogical paradigm of History instruction at the high school level shifted as a consequence of the implementation of Merdeka Curriculum? The method used is a documentary study that draws on both primary and secondary sources. The primary sources are two history curriculum documents for senior high school, published by the Department of Education: Curriculum 2006, 2013, and the Merdeka Curriculum. Analysis uses Paul H. Hirst's curriculum framework, i.e., curricular objectives, content, and pedagogical orientation. The results show that the Merdeka Curriculum emphasizes a shift toward an outcome-based curriculum framework. History education focuses on four competencies: historical thinking, historical literacy, historical

consciousness, and historical empathy. The shift implies that history teachers need to move away from chalk-and-talk and focus on developing students' skills in the four historical competencies.

Keywords: *curriculum change; history education; Merdeka Curriculum; paradigm shift; pedagogical reform.*

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INTRODUCTION

During the New Order administration, education primarily emphasized the development of cognitive skills. Students were driven to achieve higher-order skills such as analysis, evaluation, and creation (Ulu-Kalin & Kumandaş-Öztürk, 2024). But in practice, Indonesian education largely only gets the lowest cognitive levels, memorization. For instance, students' competencies in historical education were mostly limited to memorizing facts about who, when, and how historical events occurred (Susilo & Sustianingsih, 2021).

The fall of the New Order regime in 1998 significantly opened avenues for Indonesian education to align more closely with international developments, both in terms of curricula and teaching methodologies. The Ministry of Education, from 2004, gradually began introducing a competency-based curriculum. But numerous challenges and obstacles arose during its implementation, leading to less-than-successful outcomes, if not outright failure. Reflecting on this, the Ministry of Education noted a stagnation in Indonesian education from 2000 to 2018 (Anggraena et al., 2022). This stagnation is clearly reflected in the results of the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), where Indonesia has always ranked near the bottom. In mathematics, Indonesian students scored between 360 and 396, while in science, scores ranged from 382 to 403. Reading proficiency scores ranged from 371 to 402.

The PISA results 2018 and 2022 show that Indonesian students' scores were extremely low in reading competencies. The score in 2018 was only 371, and dropped to 359 in 2022 (OECD, 2023). Approximately 70% students are at Level 1, and only 30% achieving Level 2 or above (OECD, 2019). Thus, 70% of Indonesian students failed to identify main ideas or explicitly provided information, prompting the World Bank to categorize 55% of Indonesian students as functionally illiterate, capable of reading but unable to comprehend the meaning of texts (World Bank's Jakarta Office, 2018).

Table 1. Scores and rankings of Indonesia in the PISA test

Years	Mathematic	Sains	Read	Average	Rangings	Number of Participating Countries
2000	367	393	371	377	38	41
2003	360	395	382	379	38	40
2006	396	393	393	394	50	57
2009	371	383	402	385	60	65
2012	375	382	396	384	64	65
2015	386	403	397	395	62	70

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Years	Mathematic	Sains	Read	Average	Rangkings	Number of Participating Countries
2018	379	396	371	382	72	77
2022	366	383	359	369	69	81

Source: Yusmar & Fadilah (2023)

Based on PISA scores from 2000 to 2018, Indonesian education has struggled to develop the academic skills needed for the 21st century. The result shows that Indonesian students lacked adequate information literacy and numerical skills. This situation poses risks to both the individuals and their surrounding communities, as susceptibility to unverified information can lead to instability and societal conflicts.

Similar to its failure to develop academic skills, Indonesian education also fails to develop students' character. A study by Anggraena et al. (2022) found that 41% of Indonesian students experience bullying. This finding supports a survey conducted by Microsoft, which ranked Indonesian netizens as the most likely perpetrators of hate speech, cyberbullying, online harassment, the dissemination of personal data, and threats to civility (Hawaari, 2021; Indrawan, 2021). This failure indicates that Indonesian education contradicts UNESCO's fourth pillar of 21st-century education: learning to live together in a diverse society, both nationally and globally. From this perspective, it is understandable that Indonesia ranked 80th out of 156 in the 2024 World Happiness Report.

Stagnation since 2000 demonstrates that Indonesian education has failed to develop critical, problem-solving-oriented, meaningful, and contextual learning (Pratiwi et al., 2023). From this perspective, the Ministry of Education made a breakthrough to resolve the existing impasse during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. The breakthrough was achieved through introducing a new emergency curriculum named the Recovery Curriculum. The Recovery Curriculum was officially implemented nationwide in the 2024/2025 academic year as the Merdeka Curriculum following several revisions (Capaian Pembelajaran pada Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini, Jenjang Pendidikan Dasar, dan Jenjang Pendidikan Menengah pada Kurikulum Merdeka, 2024).

The Ministry of Education's curriculum innovations have attracted attention and generated considerable research. Bahri's (2022) study found that the Learning Recovery Curriculum provides opportunities for students to develop their problem-solving skills, increase engagement with the learning process, and foster sensitivity to diversity. Similarly, Hamzah et al. (2022) stated that the new curriculum could foster student growth and development according to their innate potential, both physically and psychologically. On the other hand, a study by Nisa & Andaryani, (2023) found that the innovation provided greater autonomy for education providers, particularly principals and teachers. Although conceptually promising, curriculum innovation is not necessarily capable of solving the problem of educational stagnation. A study by Efendi & Wiradimadja (2024) warned that there is a gap between curriculum policy and classroom implementation.

Curriculum innovation is primarily intended to address national-level educational issues. However, innovation also needs to consider global scientific developments to ensure it remains

up to date with the latest trends. Therefore, this study analyzes history lessons in the Merdeka Curriculum from the perspective of international developments in history education curricula. One development since the end of the 20th century is the shift from a Content-Based Curriculum to a Competency-Based Curriculum, which later evolved into an Outcome-Based Curriculum. The questions posed in this study are: 1) What is the position of high school history education within the Merdeka Curriculum when viewed through the lens of global curriculum developments? and 2) how has the pedagogical paradigm of history teaching at the high school level shifted as an iconic sequence of the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum?

By understanding the development of history education worldwide and its paradigm shifts, educational institutions and stakeholders can design more appropriate training and workshops to develop history teachers' knowledge and skills regarding the competency-based curriculum.

METHOD

This documentary study employs a qualitative research design using document analysis as its primary method. In this context, documents are treated as artifacts in written form, produced for specific purposes (Mogalakwe, 2006). Document collection was conducted from two types of sources: primary and secondary. Primary sources refer to firsthand documents that were obtained directly from the original producer, while secondary sources are those that have been processed by other parties, either as research data or as the basis for policy-making. Nowadays, institutions make various curriculum-related documents, especially those from the Department of Education, available in digital format for online access. Therefore, source collection in this study was carried out using digital tools. In this study, the primary sources used include:

Table 2. Some primary sources and URLs accessed

No.	Author	Year	Title	Publisher	Url sources
1	BSNP	2006	<i>Panduan Penyusunan Kurikulum Tingkat Satuan Pendidikan</i> (The Guidelines for Developing Curriculums at the Educational Unit Level)	Badan Standar Nasional Pendidikan	https://repositori.kemendikdasmen.go.id
2	Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan	2013	<i>Peraturan Menteri Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan Republik Indonesia Nomor 69 Tahun 2013 Tentang Kerangka Dasar dan Struktur Kurikulum Sekolah Menengah Atas/Madrasah Aliyah</i> (The Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia Number 69 of 2013 Concerning the Basic Framework and Structure of the Senior High School/Islamic Senior High School Curriculum)	Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan	https://biologi.fkip.uns.ac.id/

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No.	Author	Year	Title	Publisher	Url sources
3	Badan Standar, Kurikulum, dan Asesmen Pendidikan	2024	<i>Kajian Akademik Kurikulum Merdeka (Academic Study of Merdeka Curriculum)</i>	Pusat Kurikulum dan Pembelajaran, Badan Standar, Kurikulum, dan Asesmen Pendidikan, Kementerian Pendidikan, Kebudayaan, Riset, dan Teknologi	https://kurikulum.kemdikdasmen.go.id/
4	Kepala Badan Standar, Kurikulum, dan Asesmen Pendidikan	2024	<i>Keputusan Kepala Badan Standar, Kurikulum, dan Asesmen Pendidikan, Kementerian Pendidikan, Kebudayaan, Riset, dan Teknologi Nomor 032/H/KR/2024 Tentang Capaian Pembelajaran pada Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini, Jenjang Pendidikan Dasar, dan Jenjang Pendidikan Menengah pada Merdeka Curriculum (Decree of the Head of the Board for Standards, Curriculum, and Education Assessment of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology Number 032/H/KR/2024 about Learning Achievements in Early Childhood Education, Elementary Education Level, and Secondary Education Level in the Merdeka Curriculum).</i>	Badan Standar, Kurikulum, dan Asesmen Pendidikan, Kementerian Pendidikan, Kebudayaan, Riset, dan Teknologi	https://lmspada.kemdiktisaintek.go.id/

Both primary and secondary sources were tested and selected as research data only if they fulfilled four criteria: authenticity, credibility, representativeness, and meaningfulness (Tight, 2019). Documents that failed to meet one or more of these criteria were excluded.

Authenticity testing ensures that the document is genuine and originates from an undisputed source. Credibility testing, on the other hand, assesses the trustworthiness of the document's content. Representativeness ensures that the documents adequately reflect the broader category of similar materials, while meaningfulness refers to the document's clarity and comprehensibility (Hartono et al., 2022).

In this study, authenticity testing was conducted by comparing multiple URLs that contained the same document. If there were differences in document content, testing was conducted by selecting the official website of the institution that published the document. For example, a curriculum document is considered authentic if accessed from the Ministry of Education's official website. On the other hand, credibility testing involved comparing the content of one

document with several similar documents. The same information in most documents was categorized as credible.

Meanwhile, representativeness testing in this study was conducted by comparing the content of several narratives based on the sources and evidence cited. Narrative content is considered representative when supported by adequate data and sources, both quantitative and qualitative. Meanwhile, meaningfulness testing was conducted by comparing interpretations from various documents discussing the same topic. Interpretations are categorized as meaningful if they are thoughtful and down-to-earth.

This study adopts the theoretical framework of curriculum change and design proposed by Paul H. Hirst (2010). From a philosophical standpoint, he explains that the curriculum has to comprise three essential components: objectives, content, and methods. Among these, objectives, specifically curricular objectives, are considered the most fundamental, as content and methods are designed to achieve these goals (Hirst, 2010).

Data analysis used the model developed by Miles et al. (2014), which comprises three main stages: data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. The data condensation replaces the earlier term data reduction, which was perceived as implying a loss or weakening of data during processing. In contrast, data condensation more accurately reflects the processes of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and/or transforming data that emerge from the complete data corpus (Miles et al., 2014).

In qualitative research, data display refers to the organized presentation of data in accordance with the research questions and data types. Given that the data in this study consist of documents, a thorough reading and content selection were conducted before data organization, focusing on relevance to the research problems (Mezmir, 2020). In this study, document content summaries were grouped into three broad categories: KTSP (School-Based Curriculum), Curriculum 2013, and Merdeka Curriculum. Within each category, there are subcategories: objectives, content, and methods. Data display was performed by opening all summaries within each subcategory to gain a comprehensive understanding of their contents.

The third stage is conclusion drawing, which involves constructing a series of meaningful statements that provide a comprehensive picture of the research problem. The conclusion is drawn by extracting meaning, structure, or processes from the data display. This stage is interpretation, which can be defined lexically as the process of assigning meaning to a set of research data (Ivey, 2023). This stage involves connecting the understanding of one subcategory with the understanding of other subcategories within the same category. Furthermore, understanding within one category is linked to other categories to gain insight into the paradigm shift from the KTSP to the Merdeka Curriculum.

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RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Curriculum Orientation Shift

The analysis of curriculum documents shows that the Merdeka Curriculum represents a further shift toward an outcome-based curriculum model. The learning outcomes of history education are to develop students' ability in interpreting historical events, analyzing sources, and constructing historical arguments. The shift indicates an orientation shift of history education from content coverage toward competency outcomes (Khoeriyah & Winoto, 2025; Sari et al., 2025).

Historically, this shift did not occur suddenly. The Merdeka Curriculum represents a further development of Indonesia's effort in implementing a competency-based curriculum. The effort began in the early 21st century. Numerous challenges and obstacles have hindered the full adoption of a competency-based approach, primarily because Indonesia has relied on a content-based curriculum for over 30 years (Purwanta, 2024). In 2004, a competency-based curriculum was piloted. However, due to significant resistance from various stakeholders, the final version implemented in 2006 was a hybrid model combining both content-based and competency-based elements (Fitriani & Afrilianti, 2025; Soehendro, 2006).

It was not until the Curriculum 2013 that Indonesia fully adopted a competency-based curriculum (Rawung et al., 2021). This curriculum categorizes competencies into two main groups: Core Competencies (Kompetensi Inti) and Basic Competencies (Kompetensi Dasar) (Peraturan Menteri Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan Republik Indonesia Nomor 69 Tahun 2013 Tentang Kerangka Dasar dan Struktur Kurikulum Sekolah Menengah Atas/Madrasah Aliyah, 2013). Core Competencies were applied across all subjects and included religious attitudes, social attitudes, academic behavior, and the ability to apply knowledge. In contrast, Basic Competencies were developed based on the epistemological characteristics of each subject. For example, in the subject of History, Basic Competencies were broadly divided into two categories: historical thinking and historical consciousness.

From the perspective of global curriculum development, the Curriculum 2013 still faced several limitations. Bahri's (2022) identifies weaknesses both in its construction and implementation. In terms of design, the curriculum contained too many detailed and fragmented competency components, making it difficult for teachers to interpret. The huge challenges occur in the implementation of the curriculum, including insufficient dissemination, limited training, weak mentoring systems, and a lack of understanding of the curriculum's core structure and implementation strategies. These limitations cause further refinement toward an outcome-based model as a necessity.

The curriculum innovation can be analyzed from a theoretical perspective through Hirst's framework (Hirst, 2010). The curricular objectives are the reference in developing both content and teaching methods. When objectives prioritize interpretive and analytical skills, the structure of content and instructional strategies must also change accordingly (Gakuru et al.,

2024). In this sense, the Merdeka Curriculum reflects a broader transition from competency-based to outcome-based curriculum design.

This finding is consistent with international developments in history education. Seixas & Morton (2013) highlight that historical understanding is developed through inquiry, source analysis, and interpretation, rather than memorization of facts. The fundamental shift influences the teaching and learning of history in Latin America and Africa (Kasuga & Kalolo, 2025) and Asia (Laksana, 2020). Compared to these studies, the Indonesian case demonstrates a similar direction, but with a stronger emphasis on policy-driven reform, as the shift is explicitly embedded in national curriculum documents.

Paradigm Shift in Teaching History

The Merdeka Curriculum brings a significant shift in how historical knowledge is conceptualized. In the previous curriculum, historical narrative was largely treated as a body of fixed knowledge or final truth that must be conveyed to students. In contrast, historical knowledge in the Merdeka Curriculum is viewed as discourse (Purwanta, 2024). The historical narratives are writings that contain the author's opinions and interests. Therefore, students are trained to develop historical thinking and literacy so they can question, reinterpret, and critically examine historical narratives (Gibson et al., 2025). From this perspective, learning history involves examining how narratives are constructed, including the sources used, the methods applied, and the interpretations produced.

The perspective shift in viewing and treating historical narrative aligns with constructivist theories in education, which emphasize that knowledge is actively constructed rather than passively received. From this point of view, students are trained to construct their knowledge by engaging in class activities. In history class, students are actively involved in collecting historical sources, evaluating competing interpretations, and developing their own understanding of the past. Such an approach is widely supported in the literature, which views historical thinking as a disciplinary practice rather than a set of facts to be memorized (Purwanta, 2024).

The perspective shift can be found in the teaching approach and methods recommended and favored by the curriculum. The Curriculum 2013 recommends the scientific approach, which includes: observing, questioning, gathering information, associating, and communicating. On the other hand, the Merdeka Curriculum extends the teaching approach by adding a reflection in the last step. The Merdeka Curriculum recommends that the teaching-learning process use Project-Based Learning (PjBL) and Problem-Based Learning (PBL) (Suradika et al., 2023). The PjBL and PBL are viewed as models that can provide students with opportunities to develop competencies through active engagement (Suradika et al., 2023).

The teaching-learning approaches and models recommended by the competence-based curricula drive history teachers to exploit the historical method, which includes: source collection, criticism, selection, interpretation, and historiography (Herlina, 2020; Padiatra,

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2020). It also aligns with broader perspectives in history education that emphasize inquiry and critical engagement.

The learning approaches and models challenge history teachers to shift their teaching-learning paradigm. Teaching historical controversies provides concrete examples of how the approaches and models can be applied. For example, the narrative of the 30 September Movement (G30S) in 1965 can be questioned for its veracity based on the historical sources used. Many of the sources used in the official history of the G30S were obtained through coercion and violence, which makes the results scientifically inaccurate. As a result, many scientific studies have different results from the official history narrative. Pratama (2026), for example, argues that such historiography of G30S reflects political pressure rather than historical research.

The historical controversy or pros-cons can be applied in almost all historical narratives by developing students' questioning skills to find weaknesses of the narrative, both from logic and the historical sources used. Furthermore, students also train to find different historical sources to make a comprehensive interpretation and understanding of the historical narrative. These skills are the core of teaching historical thinking.

Besides historical thinking, history education also develops students' historical consciousness, empathy, and literacy. In historical consciousness, the past is viewed as a cultural tool for interpreting contemporary realities (Benzie & Poore, 2024). Rüsen (2004) classifies historical consciousness into four types: traditional, exemplary (mirror), critical, and genetic. Traditional historical consciousness views the past as the source of absolute truth, while the exemplary type treats historical events as guidance for present and future actions (Kaal & Van Lottum, 2021). On the other hand, the critical type of consciousness is understanding that historical narrative discourse, so students should emphasize questioning the dominant narratives (Duquette, 2021). The genetic type focuses on interpreting historical change in context (Todd, 2026). These perspectives highlight that history learning involves multiple ways of relating time: past and present.

History education also has an obligation to develop historical empathy and historical literacy. Historical empathy is students' competency in understanding the emotional states of historical figures, their perspectives, and the socio-cultural context that drove them to act and create historical events (Susanto et al., 2025). On the other hand, historical literacy refers to reading and writing proficiency of historical narrative. From this viewpoint, historical literacy is the skill of comprehending historical narratives and producing thoughtful written responses (Kumalasari et al., 2022). Since historical narratives are discursive in nature, students must learn to distinguish between facts and opinions. Facts are verifiable through observation or research, while opinions are subjective beliefs or judgments.

At a more advanced level, students are expected to engage in close reading of historical texts to identify ideological patterns and power relations. Critical discourse analysis, for example, allows students to examine how historical narratives are used to legitimize political agendas.

For example, Purwanta & Novianto (2022) found that Indonesian historiography during the New Order era functioned to support dominant political ideologies. Through reading critical discourse studies in historical narratives, students are reinforced to understand the importance of critically evaluating historical narratives in relation to broader social and political contexts.

The shift from a content-based to a competency-based, and ultimately an outcome-based, curriculum represents a fundamental transformation of history education in Indonesia. History education is no longer about memorizing past events, but about analyzing how the past is presented. From this perspective, students are no longer expected merely to master historical content, but to develop competencies such as historical thinking, historical consciousness, historical empathy, and historical literacy. This shift requires not only changes in curriculum design but also history teachers' perspectives and reorientation of teaching practices.

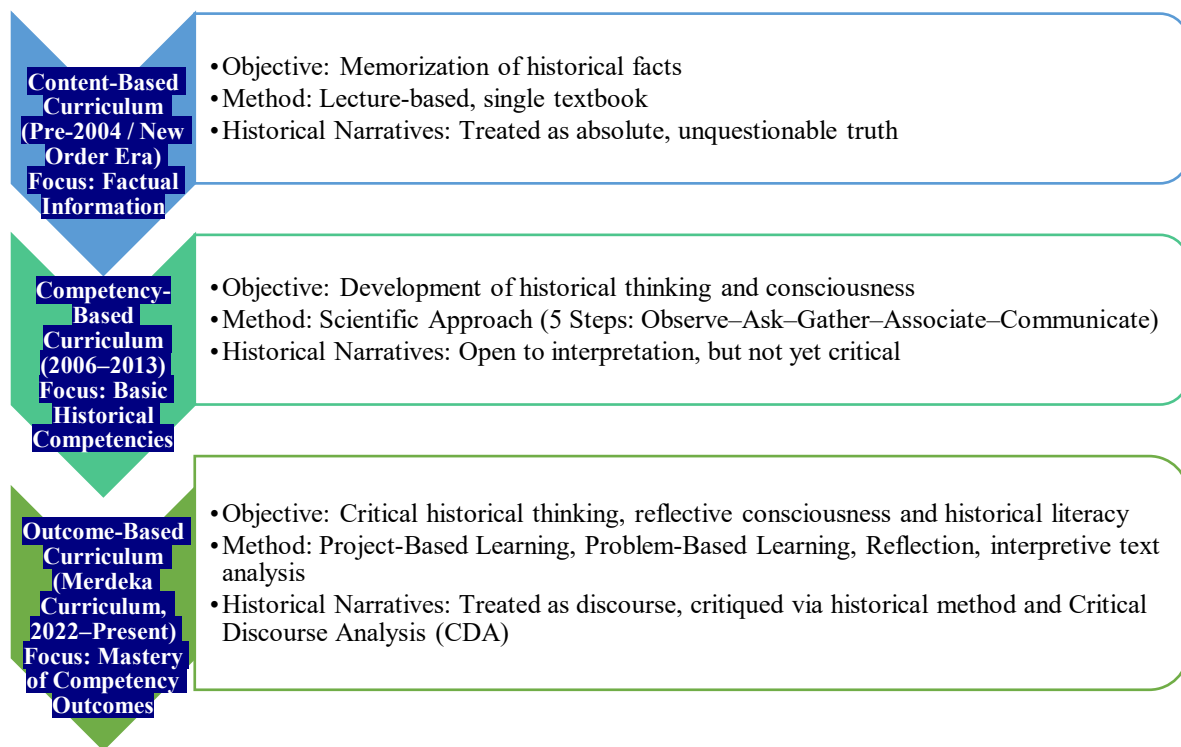


Figure 1. Paradigm shift in Indonesian history education curriculum

The above diagram illustrates the transformation of the curriculum in Indonesian high school history education. It shows the curriculum shift from a content-based curriculum during the New Order administration, to a competency-based model in the Curriculum 2013, and ultimately to an outcome-based framework as embodied in the *Merdeka Curriculum*. Each stage is characterized by different goals, instructional methods, and approaches to historical narratives.

At the practical level, the change in curricular goals has led to a transformation of learning models. Since the primary goal is competency, instruction must provide ample opportunities

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for students to engage in practice. To ensure that students practice and master the competencies demanded by the curriculum, the Curriculum 2013 introduced the scientific approach: observing, questioning, gathering information, reasoning/associating, and communicating the findings of the study.

To ensure the successful implementation of the new curriculum, the Ministry of Education carried out massive dissemination and training programs. During the Curriculum 2013 implementation, dissemination and training were conducted by provincial and district education offices, and through the Teacher Professional Education and Training Program (PLPG) led by lecturers from Teacher Education Institutes (LPTK) appointed by the government. In 2017, PLPG was replaced by the Continuous Professional Development (PKB) program aimed at improving the competencies of certified teachers. From a content perspective, PKB focused more on self-development, scientific publications, and innovative work (Apiyani et al., 2022). On the other hand, the cascade model was used, where knowledge flowed from higher to lower levels. In the Merdeka Curriculum, dissemination and training are conducted through flagship programs such as Sekolah Penggerak, Guru Penggerak, and educational seminars (Marmoah et al., 2022).

An academic review conducted by the Center for Curriculum and Learning found that the implementation of the Curriculum 2013 was less optimal. This result was caused by teachers' misunderstanding of their task. Teachers thought that the goal of teaching is to make students master all the learning material. They do not understand that the goal of teaching is to train students to mastery of core competencies and basic competencies (Wahyudin et al., 2024). At least two factors may have contributed to this misunderstanding. First, the dissemination and training for the Curriculum 2013 were not sufficiently effective. Second, the academic culture among teachers was weak, resulting in a lack of initiative and effort in professional development.

The inadequacy of dissemination and training is most evident in the curriculum's fundamental goal: developing student competencies. In the context of history learning, this misunderstanding is illustrated by the article by Qodariyah & Rizaldi (2021), which explains that the Curriculum 2013 is competency-based and aims to shape student character through the values embedded in the history subject. However, throughout the article, the authors fail to explain the actual curricular competencies, such as historical thinking and historical consciousness, or how teachers train students in these competencies. As a result, the scientific approach introduced in the Curriculum 2013 was used merely to recognize and understand content (Qodariyah & Rizaldi, 2021). Similar misunderstandings of the curriculum goals and practices were found in other cities (Zamista & Deswita, 2023). Teachers' lack of understanding of competency-based curricula and how they differ from content-based curricula led to classroom practices that still focused on content acquisition.

In public schools, teachers generally lack awareness of the relationship between understanding the curriculum, improving teaching abilities, and career development or school

quality. Student performance, whether strong or weak, has little consequence for teachers or schools. This occurs because professional development is not well integrated into the education system through a strong delegation of instructional responsibility (Revina et al., 2020).

Another factor contributing to the suboptimal implementation of the Curriculum 2013 is the low level of academic culture among teachers. A study by Huang et al. (2020) found that the teacher recruitment system via the pre-service PPG program, which was implemented since 2018, has made a small contribution in improving educational quality. The prospective teachers are primarily motivated by the pursuit of financial stability and the career development offered by civil servant status. They have limited motivation in reaching the social prestige of academic excellence or fulfilling their educational responsibilities to society. Among in-service teachers, academic culture is relatively better developed, particularly among those teaching in urban areas (Miyono & Widiastuti, 2021). However, most teachers lack the intrinsic motivation to develop professionally, especially in exploring new instructional strategies to improve student learning outcomes (Dahlan R et al., 2025).

The various obstacles encountered during the implementation of the Curriculum 2013 must be seriously addressed to prevent their recurrence during the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum. One possible step is to undertake a comprehensive educational reform, from early childhood education (PAUD: Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini) to teacher education institutes (LPTK: Lembaga Pendidikan Tenaga Kependidikan), to foster academic culture through continuous and sustained engagement in scholarly work.

Similar problems are faced by various countries, both in Asia and Africa. A study by (Parada-Ulloa & Burgos-Videla, 2025) on teaching historical thinking skills in the Philippines found that there is cultural resistance, from both students and teachers, to the paradigm shift. Similarly, in Thailand, teachers view official knowledge found in history textbooks as the final truth. They consider questioning and doubting the veracity of official historical narratives to be the core of the new paradigm in teaching history, and consider this disrespectful (Chinakkarapong, 2020). The situation is even more difficult in South Sudan. (Majing & Ding, 2025) found that only 35% of history teachers meet academic requirements, making it difficult for various curriculum innovations to shift the paradigm in line with developments in history education in the global context.

CONCLUSION

The success or failure of implementing the Merdeka Curriculum, including the history subject, largely depends on the stakeholders involved, particularly teachers. The history subject within the Merdeka Curriculum will succeed in improving the quality of education in Indonesia if the dissemination and training programs are able to transform teachers' paradigms by positioning historical narratives as the author's discourse. This new paradigm will lead to a shift in history teaching methods, creating space for students to question the validity of historical narratives from the perspectives of source credibility and accuracy of interpretation.

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Paradigm shifts are inherently difficult to achieve. The experience of implementing the Curriculum 2013 demonstrated that the dissemination and training efforts led by the Ministry of Education failed to alter the cognitive constructs of teachers that had been shaped since the New Order era. If teachers continue to view historical narratives as direct representations of historical events, it is highly likely that the Merdeka Curriculum will suffer the same fate as the Curriculum 2013.

Failure lies not in curriculum design, but in its implementation. Therefore, to ensure the success of the Merdeka Curriculum, priority must be given to implementation. Training in-service teachers on new paradigms for history learning and skills in developing learning methods that enhance students' academic skills needs to be intensive and ongoing. The Ministry of Education needs to provide sustained and practical training for history teachers, particularly in shifting from content delivery toward interpretive and inquiry-based learning. In addition, greater alignment is needed between school-level curriculum and university-level history education. From this point, the changes to the curriculum and paradigms for history learning are also necessary in higher education. Teacher Education Institutions (LPTK) must ensure that their graduates possess new paradigms and are skilled at implementing history learning oriented toward achieving core competencies.

This curriculum study has several strengths. First, the study is a focused analysis of official curriculum documents and connects the Indonesian case to broader discussions on curriculum change, providing a clearer conceptual understanding of the ongoing shift in history education. Second, the study also traces the consequences of curriculum innovation on teaching practices. However, the study is limited by its reliance on documentary sources and does not capture how the curriculum is interpreted and implemented in actual classroom settings. Future research could therefore explore teachers' practices, classroom interactions, and students' experiences to better understand how these curricular changes unfold in practice.

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