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Analysis of the Merdeka Curriculum in Enhancing Student Competencies in the Digital Era

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Abstract

The rapid development of digital technology has compelled the education sector to undertake curricular transformation in order to prepare students for the challenges of the twenty-first century. The Merdeka Curriculum has emerged as a strategic policy that emphasises learning flexibility, character development, and the strengthening of digital literacy competencies as essential prerequisites for navigating the modern era. This study aims to analyse the contribution of the Merdeka Curriculum to enhancing student competencies in the digital era. A qualitative approach with descriptive analysis is employed through library research methods, encompassing an in-depth review of relevant literature, analysis of official curriculum documents, and participatory observation of learning practices in the field as supporting secondary data. The findings indicate that the Merdeka Curriculum possesses strong potential to foster digital competencies, including critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, communication, and technological literacy skills. However, its effectiveness is highly dependent on teachers' pedagogical readiness, the quality of instructional resources, the availability of technological infrastructure, and an adaptive school culture that embraces innovation. This study underscores the importance of strengthening teacher capacity, providing adequate digital facilities, and systematically integrating technology-based learning to ensure the optimal achievement of the Merdeka Curriculum's objectives. These findings contribute to the development of educational policy and enrich scholarly discourse on the implementation of competency-based curricula in the digital era.
Keywords: Merdeka Curriculum, digital literacy, student competencies

Introduction

The advancement of digital technology in the twenty-first century has had a profound impact on the education sector, particularly in relation to the competencies that students must master in order to compete and adapt within an increasingly dynamic global environment. These changes demand a renewal of learning systems that are more open, adaptive, personalised, collaborative, and aligned with contemporary needs. Education is no longer oriented solely towards the transmission of knowledge; rather, it must equip students with a set of twenty-first-century skills, such as critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and digital literacy (Rosdiana et al., 2024). Within this context, the Merdeka Curriculum has been introduced as a strategic governmental initiative to align national education with technological developments and the growing complexity of learning challenges. This policy provides greater autonomy for schools and teachers to innovate in the learning process (Pratami. W., et al., 2025), while positioning students at the centre of the learning experience.

The Merdeka Curriculum emphasises several core components, including differentiated instruction, character education, project-based learning, and the development of literacy and numeracy. It is designed to ensure that students acquire essential competencies that are relevant to the demands of the twenty-first century. The approach adopted is competency-oriented and places emphasis on assessment that considers learning processes rather than merely final outcomes. In the digital era, these competencies extend beyond cognitive aspects to include technological proficiency, creativity, problem-solving abilities, collaborative skills, and digital ethics. The Merdeka Curriculum opens opportunities for more optimal use of technology, enabling students to access online learning resources and engage through various digital platforms. In its implementation, teachers are granted flexibility to design learning experiences that align with the needs and characteristics of students in their respective educational contexts (Zulqaidah et al., 2024).

Furthermore, the Merdeka Curriculum integrates literacy, knowledge, skills, and attitudes in the utilisation of technology as a unified set of competencies that students are expected to master. Students are encouraged to think independently and explore learning resources from diverse media in order to discover information and solve real-world problems (Salsabila, A. et al., 2024). Nevertheless, the implementation of this curriculum is not without challenges. Teachers' readiness to design creative learning experiences, limitations in technological infrastructure, low levels of digital literacy, and uneven understanding of student-centred learning approaches remain major concerns. These challenges are particularly evident in teachers' professional competencies and their ability to integrate technology effectively into the learning process (Febrianningsih, R., et al., 2023). Such conditions raise critical questions regarding the extent to which the Merdeka Curriculum can be effectively implemented to enhance student competencies, especially those related to twenty-first-century skills and adaptive capacities in response to digital transformation.

Although the Merdeka Curriculum has been widely adopted to address the challenges of education in the digital era, empirical evidence regarding its contribution to the enhancement of students' competencies remains fragmented. Existing studies tend to prioritise policy discourse and conceptual foundations—such as curricular flexibility and pedagogical transformation—while offering limited analytical linkage to the development of key digital-era competencies, including digital literacy, critical thinking, creativity, and collaboration. Moreover, the literature predominantly emphasises teacher preparedness and administrative compliance, thereby underexploring the extent to which curriculum implementation translates into measurable improvements in student competence.

In addition, educational technology within the Merdeka Curriculum is frequently conceptualised as an auxiliary instructional resource rather than as a core pedagogical and curricular component. Integrated analyses that critically examine the alignment between curriculum principles, implementation strategies, pedagogically grounded technology use, and institutional challenges in fostering students' competencies in the digital context remain scarce. This study addresses this gap by providing a systematic and integrative examination of the Merdeka Curriculum, offering theoretical refinement and practical insights for curriculum development and instructional improvement in contemporary schooling.

Method

This study adopts a qualitative approach with a library research design. This approach is employed to conduct an in-depth examination of concepts, policy frameworks, and findings

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from previous studies related to the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum and its contribution to enhancing students' competencies in the digital era.

The data sources comprise reputable national and international journal articles, official policy documents issued by the Ministry of Education, academic books, and relevant research reports. Literature selection was guided by several criteria, including: (1) relevance to the focus of the study, (2) the credibility and authority of the sources, (3) the recency of publications, with priority given to works published within the last ten years, and (4) their alignment with issues concerning curriculum development, educational technology, and twenty-first-century competencies.

Data analysis was conducted through successive stages of identification, classification, and thematic analysis of the selected literature. The data were analysed using a descriptive-analytical approach by synthesising key findings to elucidate the fundamental principles of the Merdeka Curriculum, implementation strategies, the utilisation of educational technology, and the challenges encountered in enhancing students' competencies. These procedures were systematically designed to ensure the study's replicability and analytical validity.

Result

The synthesis of the literature indicates that the Merdeka Curriculum is both conceptually and empirically understood as a curricular framework that emphasises flexibility, differentiated learning, and the strengthening of twenty-first-century competencies. A body of studies highlights that curricular flexibility enables teachers to adapt learning objectives, content, and assessment to students' needs and characteristics, thereby positively influencing the development of critical thinking and creativity (Masrurah, 2024). A consistent pattern of findings suggests that when such flexibility is accompanied by well-structured pedagogical planning, the Merdeka Curriculum has the potential to significantly enhance the quality of learning.

Furthermore, the synthesis of implementation-oriented studies reveals that the effectiveness of the Merdeka Curriculum is strongly shaped by the instructional strategies employed. Project-based learning, collaborative learning, and formative assessment are frequently associated with improvements in students' competencies, particularly in collaboration and problem-solving skills (Fauzan et al., 2022; Hidayat & Pratiwi, 2023). Nevertheless, cross-study patterns also indicate considerable variation in the application of these strategies across educational institutions, largely influenced by teachers' pedagogical readiness and the level of managerial support provided by schools.

With regard to the utilisation of educational technology, the literature synthesis demonstrates that technology makes a meaningful contribution to strengthening students' digital literacy when it is pedagogically embedded within the learning process. Several studies report that the use of digital learning platforms, open educational resources, and interactive media supports independent and collaborative learning (Slamet, et al., 2024). However, recurring patterns across the literature reveal that technology is often treated merely as a supplementary instructional tool rather than as an integral component of curriculum design, which limits its overall impact on the development of students' competencies.

In addition, the synthesis identifies a number of recurring challenges in the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, including limited technological infrastructure, disparities in teachers' digital competencies, and resistance to shifts in pedagogical paradigms (Sari et al., 2025). These challenges suggest that improvements in students' competencies through the Merdeka Curriculum are contingent not only upon curricular policy, but also upon

the readiness of the broader educational ecosystem. Accordingly, patterns of findings across the reviewed studies underscore the necessity of synergy between policy frameworks, pedagogical practices, and institutional support to ensure the sustainable impact of the Merdeka Curriculum on enhancing students' competencies in the digital era.

However, the study also uncovers a number of obstacles in the digital implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, including inadequate technological infrastructure, uneven levels of teachers' digital proficiency, and varying degrees of institutional preparedness for curricular reform. Despite these constraints, the Merdeka Curriculum exhibits considerable potential to advance student competencies, provided that it is supported by sustained policy commitment, continuous professional development for educators, and the establishment of an inclusive and responsive digital learning environment.

Discussion

The Merdeka Curriculum in the Context of Twenty-First-Century Education

The Merdeka Curriculum represents a renewal of Indonesia's national curriculum designed to respond to the challenges of twenty-first-century learning, which are characterised by accelerated digitalisation, globalisation, and increasing socio-cultural complexity. This reform reflects a shift in educational orientation from an emphasis on content mastery towards the holistic development of student competencies, encompassing cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains, in order to build adaptive readiness in the face of dynamic and uncertain change. The transformation embodied in the Merdeka Curriculum is not limited to structural adjustments but also signifies a philosophical paradigm shift that positions students as active subjects of learning while granting professional autonomy to educators in designing contextual and meaningful learning experiences.

Conceptually, the Merdeka Curriculum is grounded in the principle of *independent learning*, which emphasises student-centred learning through exploratory, collaborative, and differentiated activities aligned with learners' individual characteristics and potential. This orientation corresponds with the demands of twenty-first-century education, which prioritise the development of critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication (4C), alongside digital literacy. Empirical evidence from classroom practice indicates that the flexible structure of the Merdeka Curriculum enables the implementation of innovative learning models, such as project-based learning, which have proven effective in fostering 4C skills through authentic and contextual learning experiences (Amalia, N.I., et al., 2024).

From a pedagogical perspective, the Merdeka Curriculum aligns closely with constructivist learning theories, which conceptualise learning as an active process of knowledge construction through experiential reflection and social interaction. The curriculum grants educators professional autonomy to adapt instructional strategies to learners' characteristics and the socio-cultural context of educational institutions, thereby ensuring that learning remains contextual and meaningful. Recent studies demonstrate that twenty-first-century learning principles are integrated into the Merdeka Curriculum through the application of authentic tasks, the utilisation of educational technology, and competency-based assessment, all of which simultaneously consider students' social contexts and prepare them for further education and the labour market (Widiansyah et al., 2024).

Within the framework of twenty-first-century competencies, the Merdeka Curriculum is directed towards strengthening students' adaptive capacity through the development of higher-order thinking skills, digital literacy, and essential life skills. Twenty-first-century education is understood not merely as the attainment of academic achievement, but as a process of holistic

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competency formation encompassing flexibility, responsible decision-making, creativity, and ethical awareness in the use of digital technology. In this regard, the Merdeka Curriculum has been shown to be effective in cultivating critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication (4C), particularly through project-based and reflective learning approaches that encourage contextual problem-solving and productive teamwork (Maraqonitatillah, et al., 2024).

Despite its strong pedagogical foundation, the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in strengthening twenty-first-century skills continues to face significant challenges, particularly with respect to digital infrastructure readiness and educators' capacity to manage adaptive learning. Empirical findings indicate that limited access to technology, disparities in teachers' digital pedagogical competencies, and insufficient managerial support at the institutional level may hinder the optimal achievement of curriculum objectives (Sofiana, A., et al., 2025). This highlights that curriculum effectiveness is determined not only by the quality of its conceptual design but also by the comprehensive readiness of the educational ecosystem to support sustainable and meaningful implementation.

Beyond the pedagogical dimension, the Merdeka Curriculum philosophically integrates character education through the *Pancasila Student Profile*, which embodies national values while maintaining global relevance. This integration underscores the importance of balancing technological skill mastery with the strengthening of social ethics as an essential demand of twenty-first-century education in an increasingly digitalised society. In this context, the development of critical thinking accompanied by ethical reasoning becomes a crucial foundation for shaping students who are not only technically proficient but also socially responsible in their use of digital technology (Rahma, A., et al., 2024).

In conclusion, the Merdeka Curriculum within the context of twenty-first-century education can be understood as a holistic and adaptive curricular framework oriented towards empowering students as active learners in developing essential twenty-first-century competencies, meaningfully integrating digital technology, and strengthening character, creativity, and adaptive capacity. Moreover, the Merdeka Curriculum provides innovative space for educators and educational institutions to design contextual learning experiences aligned with students' needs and local characteristics. Strengthening the Merdeka Curriculum framework not only contributes to enhancing students' competitiveness in the digital era but also plays a strategic role in shaping independent, critical, and ethical generations as a central objective of national education transformation.

Student Competencies in the Digital Era

The digital era requires students not only to master factual knowledge but also to develop higher-order thinking skills and digital competencies as integral components of twenty-first-century education. These competencies encompass the integration of cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains, combined with digital literacy and character development. In this context, student competency refers to the capacity to participate effectively in learning processes and everyday life within an increasingly digitalised environment. Such competency is not limited to technical proficiency in using digital tools; rather, it includes digital literacy, critical thinking, and the ability to utilise information selectively and responsibly. Digital literacy plays a strategic role in strengthening students' critical thinking skills, enabling them to analyse complex issues in both educational contexts and real-life situations (Wijayanti, S.F., et al., 2025).

Digital literacy constitutes a foundational competency that underpins students' ability to use technology for active learning. This competency involves the ability to comprehend digital content, evaluate the credibility of information, and utilise technology ethically and effectively. Strengthening digital literacy has been shown to enhance students' analytical capacity in engaging with digital information, thereby fostering a more critical stance towards information

sources, content, and underlying purposes. Moreover, digital literacy supports the development of other essential skills, such as collaboration and creativity, particularly within technology-enhanced learning environments.

Student competencies in the digital era are inseparable from the broader framework of twenty-first-century competencies. These competencies include the 4Cs—critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication—alongside digital literacy, all of which must be internalised through relevant and meaningful learning practices. The integration of digital technology into learning encourages students to become active learners who are capable of generating solutions through the effective use of technological resources (Whindayati, A., et al., 2025). Contextually designed learning experiences supported by digital media can expand students' learning spaces and foster the higher-order thinking skills required to respond to global challenges.

The role of teachers is crucial in nurturing students' digital competencies. As facilitators of learning, teachers must possess adequate digital competence in order to integrate technology effectively into teaching and learning activities. In the context of twenty-first-century education, teachers are expected to master technological literacy and digital skills as integral components of instructional practice. Learning activities should systematically incorporate the use of technology, requiring teachers to develop instructional strategies that embed digital literacy across all aspects of learning, including task design, selection of digital learning resources, and assessment of learning outcomes. When teachers demonstrate strong digital competence, they are better positioned to guide students towards effective, ethical, and responsible engagement with digital technologies (Handiyani, M., et al., 2023).

The Structure of the Merdeka Curriculum in Enhancing Digital Competencies

The digital era requires education systems to facilitate students in acquiring digital competencies that are relevant to global dynamics. Indonesia has responded to this demand through the Merdeka Curriculum (*Independent Curriculum*), which is designed to provide flexibility and autonomy for educational institutions in delivering learning that is adaptive, contextual, and meaningful. In addition to cognitive, affective, and psychomotor components, this curriculum places digital literacy as a central element in the development of holistic twenty-first-century competencies. The reform of the curriculum structure does not merely emphasise knowledge acquisition, but also prioritises the development of critical, collaborative, creative, and digital literacy skills required for students to function effectively in the digital era.

The structure of the Merdeka Curriculum is designed to enable educators to focus on the mastery of core competencies rather than solely on content completion. One of its defining characteristics is the integration of educational technology into lesson planning, instructional processes, and competency-based assessment. Technology is not positioned merely as a supporting tool, but as a learning medium that actively engages students in reflective and meaningful learning experiences (Sari, S.M.D., et al., 2025).

Furthermore, the Merdeka Curriculum structure promotes students' literacy development through learning activities that integrate digital applications, online learning resources, and interactive media. Empirical evidence indicates that the implementation of digital literacy within the Merdeka Curriculum is positively correlated with increased reading interest and improved comprehension of learning materials delivered through digital media (Rahma, A., et al., 2025). Technology thus becomes a strategic element in ensuring that learning processes are efficient, adaptive, and responsive to the challenges of education in the digital era. The integration of technology also strengthens data-driven planning, student-centred learning approaches, and authentic assessment of student competencies.

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The Merdeka Curriculum facilitates the integration of digital media into teaching and learning processes to ensure that learning remains contextual, authentic, and relevant. This approach encourages students to utilise digital tools for problem-solving, collaborative project work, and the presentation of learning outcomes. The application of digital media in project-based learning not only enhances technical skills but also stimulates higher-order thinking skills aligned with twenty-first-century demands. The use of relevant digital media expands opportunities for exploration, providing students with space for reflection and critical thinking, thereby enabling the meaningful integration of digital technology into learning experiences.

In addition, the Merdeka Curriculum promotes the use of innovative learning models, such as project-based learning, problem-based learning, and inquiry-based learning, all of which are closely associated with the development of digital competencies. Through authentic projects and tasks, students are trained to use technology as a tool for exploration, collaboration, and knowledge production rather than merely for information consumption. Moreover, the flexibility of the curriculum allows educational institutions and teachers to adapt learning to local contexts and students' characteristics. This approach is particularly important in the digital era, which is characterised by disparities in access, digital skills, and socio-cultural backgrounds among learners.

The Pancasila Student Profile in Strengthening Competencies in the Digital Era

The *Pancasila Student Profile* serves as a foundational pillar of the Merdeka Curriculum in establishing a balance between academic competence and character development. The Pancasila Student Profile represents the character and capabilities cultivated in students' everyday experiences and internalised through school culture, intramural learning, co-curricular activities, and extracurricular programmes (Rahayuningsih, 2022). Pancasila students are envisioned as lifelong learners who possess global competencies while embodying Pancasila values, reflected in six core attributes: faith and devotion to God Almighty, noble character, global diversity awareness, mutual cooperation, independence, critical reasoning, and creativity (Jamaludin et al., 2022).

The integration of the Pancasila Student Profile into digital learning contexts functions as a reinforcement of ethics and character, ensuring that students are not only technologically proficient but also morally and socially responsible in their use of digital technologies. The effective and sustainable implementation of the Pancasila Student Profile contributes to the formation of a generation that excels in technological competence while maintaining strong national character. Research indicates that strengthening the Pancasila Student Profile in the digital era is closely linked to the use of interactive media that integrates character education with digital learning experiences (Alanur, S.N., et al., 2024).

Interactive learning media—such as digital platforms for values-based discussion, simulations of digital ethics, and problem-based digital narratives addressing social issues—can support the development of faith-based, critical, and creative character more authentically. This approach enables students not only to understand Pancasila values theoretically but also to practise them within digital spaces, for example by critically evaluating information, participating responsibly in digital discourse, and collaborating ethically in online environments. In this way, technology functions not merely as a tool, but as a medium that enriches character education learning experiences.

The Merdeka Curriculum grants educators autonomy to design learning experiences that are aligned with students' needs and contextualised within their digital realities. In strengthening the Pancasila Student Profile, the role of teachers as facilitators of digital learning is crucial. Teachers must possess adequate digital competence to select and utilise digital learning media effectively for instilling Pancasila values. This includes the ability to design digital

project-based tasks, facilitate online discussions that emphasise digital ethics, and employ collaborative learning platforms that promote cooperation and mutual support. Consequently, digital literacy training for teachers becomes a strategic measure to ensure that technology use not only enhances students' technical skills but also reinforces Pancasila character in accordance with national education objectives (Nurajizah, E., 2024).

Implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum Based on Digital Technology

The Merdeka Curriculum represents a strategic policy initiative of the Indonesian government in response to paradigm shifts in education driven by digital transformation and the demands of the twenty-first century. This transformation positions digital technology not merely as a supplementary instructional tool, but as an educational ecosystem that supports flexible, contextual, and student-centred learning. Digitalisation within the Merdeka Curriculum expands learning spaces, enables personalised learning pathways, and encourages students to become independent and reflective learners. This implementation aligns with the *Merdeka Belajar* vision, which emphasises institutional autonomy and innovation in learning based on students' needs (Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, 2022).

As a national education policy, the Merdeka Curriculum grants broad autonomy to educational institutions to design learning experiences that are relevant to students' needs and local contexts. A key aspect of its implementation is the integration of digital technology as a primary driver of adaptive, personalised, and contextual learning. This integration aims to optimise students' capacity to respond to the demands of twenty-first-century education, which is dominated by rapid developments in information and communication technology (ICT) (Andriansah, 2024).

The technology-based implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum is reflected in flexible learning planning, particularly in the development of instructional modules, diagnostic assessment, and the selection of learning strategies. Teachers are encouraged to utilise digital platforms such as Learning Management Systems (LMS), the *Merdeka Mengajar* platform, and various interactive learning applications to support differentiated instruction. Technology enables teachers to tailor content, learning pace, and assessment formats according to students' characteristics. Research findings demonstrate that the use of interactive digital media within the Merdeka Curriculum increases student engagement and promotes higher-order thinking activities (Sofiana, et al., 2024). Consequently, the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in the digital era necessitates a transformation of teachers' roles from information transmitters to facilitators and learning mentors.

The utilisation of digital platforms, learning management systems, and open educational resources enables learning to become more interactive, collaborative, and personalised. Assessment practices within the Merdeka Curriculum emphasise continuous formative assessment, allowing students to monitor their competency development reflectively. Technology-based implementation strategies are carried out through various instructional approaches that enhance active student engagement. Digital technologies are employed to access learning resources, facilitate discussion and collaboration among students, and provide real-time feedback through applications such as Quizizz, Google Classroom, and digital communication groups (Ainy, K.N., et al., 2025).

Implications of the Merdeka Curriculum for Enhancing Student Competencies

The Merdeka Curriculum has significant implications for enhancing student competencies in the digital era. Curriculum flexibility, an emphasis on essential competencies, and the integration of technology and character education enable students to develop holistically. The Merdeka Curriculum introduces a substantial shift in learning paradigms by positioning students at the centre of the learning process. Its flexible learning structure allows

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students to engage actively in learning activities through project work, group discussions, and contextual learning experiences (Maulida, N., et al., 2024). Empirical evidence indicates that this approach increases student engagement, as learning activities are designed to align with students' interests and learning needs. Higher levels of engagement are associated with increased learning motivation and improved mental readiness to cope with more complex learning situations, thereby indirectly strengthening students' cognitive and affective competencies.

The implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, which emphasises problem-based learning and project-based learning, has been shown to enhance students' critical thinking skills. Studies in Indonesian language learning contexts reveal that structured tasks requiring analysis, evaluation, and synthesis of information significantly improve students' higher-order thinking competencies within a single academic semester. By encouraging learning approaches that connect subject matter to real-life contexts, the Merdeka Curriculum enables students not only to understand concepts but also to apply them in complex and authentic situations (Yanti, N. F., et al., 2024).

Beyond academic competencies, the Merdeka Curriculum also exerts a positive influence on the development of personal competencies, such as creativity and learner autonomy. Its implementation supports students in becoming more independent in managing their learning processes and more creative in designing project outcomes. Learning environments that provide opportunities for experimentation, reflection, and decision-making foster students' growth as proactive and innovative learners (Rawin, S. C., et al., 2025). The Merdeka Curriculum encourages students to think critically, innovate, collaborate, and adapt to technological change. Consequently, it contributes to the formation of lifelong learners who are well-prepared to face global challenges in the digital era.

This study has several limitations, primarily related to the use of a library research design that relies on the analysis of selected literature. As a result, the findings reflect conceptual tendencies and general patterns identified in previous studies, rather than providing a full representation of the empirical practices of the Merdeka Curriculum at classroom and school levels. In addition, the scope of the reviewed literature is constrained by criteria of relevance, source credibility, and a specific publication timeframe, which means that variations in the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum across regions, educational levels, and socio-cultural contexts are not comprehensively captured.

In light of these limitations, future research is recommended to develop more context-sensitive empirical investigations to complement the findings of this study. Subsequent studies may employ qualitative, quantitative, or mixed-methods approaches to examine the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum more directly, particularly in relation to the development of students' competencies in the digital era. Furthermore, comparative studies across regions or educational levels, as well as longitudinal research, are necessary to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the long-term impact of the Merdeka Curriculum on the strengthening of twenty-first-century competencies.

Conclusion

This literature-based study concludes that the Merdeka Curriculum is positioned as an adaptive curricular framework intended to address the evolving demands of education in the digital era. Based on the synthesis of selected scholarly works, the curriculum consistently emerges as supporting student-centred learning, instructional flexibility, and differentiated pedagogical practices. Across the reviewed literature, instructional approaches such as project-

based learning, formative assessment, and the pedagogically grounded use of digital technologies are recurrently associated with the strengthening of twenty-first-century competencies, particularly critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and digital literacy. These associations represent prevailing patterns within the literature rather than definitive evidence of effectiveness in all educational contexts. As this study is grounded in a systematic review of selected academic and policy sources, its conclusions are shaped by the boundaries of the literature analysed, including publication scope, selection criteria, and contextual diversity. Consequently, the findings should be understood as providing an analytical and conceptual synthesis of the Merdeka Curriculum's role in competency development, rather than as broadly generalisable claims about classroom practice. Within these limitations, the study offers a conceptual reference for curriculum development and instructional planning, while highlighting the importance of future empirical, comparative, and longitudinal research to further examine how the Merdeka Curriculum operates across diverse institutional and socio-educational settings.

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