

Evaluation of the independent curriculum in learning Buddhist religious education at elementary school. Waringin Sari Timur Pringsewu

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Abstract: This study aims to evaluate the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in Buddhist Religious Education at SD Negeri 3 Waringin Sari Timur Pringsewu. The main objective of this study is to gain an in-depth understanding of the implementation of the curriculum based on the values of the Pancasila Student Profile, particularly in the context of minority religious education. This study also aims to identify the extent to which the Merdeka Curriculum has an impact on the character building of students, as well as how the school supports the facilitation of an inclusive and valuable learning process. This study uses a qualitative approach with an evaluative method based on the CIPP (Context, Input, Process, Product) model. Data collection techniques were carried out through observation, in-depth interviews with the principal, vice principal in charge of curriculum, and Buddhist Education teachers, as well as documentation of learning tools. The CIPP model was used to examine the context of the curriculum policy, the readiness and availability of supporting resources, the learning implementation process, and the results or impact of the curriculum implementation. The results showed that the school had implemented the Merdeka Curriculum gradually in accordance with applicable regulations. Buddhist education was implemented equally and comprehensively, despite facing obstacles in the form of a limited number of official textbooks. The school provided support through training programs such as Tathagata and learning communities. The evaluation of student achievement shows a significant improvement in character, as reflected in the Education Report Card indicators, which improved from the red (poor) category in 2022 to green (good) in 2024–2025. These findings show that the Merdeka Curriculum can be effectively implemented in minority religious education if it is supported by resource readiness and institutional commitment.

Keywords: Independent Curriculum, Buddhist Education, CIPP Model, Curriculum Evaluation

1. Introduction

Education in Indonesia is currently undergoing various strategic changes in an effort to improve the quality and relevance of learning for students. One of the significant

changes implemented is the Merdeka Curriculum, which focuses on developing student competencies and independence. The Merdeka Curriculum provides freedom to educational units, both teachers and students, to develop learning according to their respective needs and contexts [1]. This policy is designed to provide greater flexibility for teachers in determining appropriate learning methods and materials, with the main objective of optimizing the potential of students to have skills, strong character, creativity, critical thinking skills, and good collaboration skills. The Merdeka Curriculum also prioritizes competency and content achievement in each of its learning objectives [2].

Although it has great potential to improve the quality of education, the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in the field still faces various challenges that need to be resolved in order to achieve optimal educational goals. One of the main challenges identified is the readiness of educators to implement this curriculum. Research shows that many educators still need to improve their understanding and skills, especially those related to the use of educational technology and learning methods relevant to the Merdeka Curriculum [3].

Educators are expected to master educational technology and have competencies in line with the learning standards in the Merdeka Curriculum. However, many educators still feel unprepared for this change [4], compounded by the fact that school facilities and infrastructure do not yet fully support the implementation of the curriculum [5]. In addition, educators also face obstacles in conducting effective and accurate learning evaluations [6].

The implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum also has a significant impact on the teaching of Buddhist Education in elementary schools. Religious education at the elementary school level is of high urgency, given that religion plays a role in instilling universal values that are very important for the character building of students [7]. However, the implementation of Buddhist Religious Education in elementary schools still faces various challenges, such as limited teacher competence, lack of learning media, lack of training programs, and limited supporting facilities and infrastructure [8]. This condition is not in line with the principles of Sigālovāda Sutta, which emphasizes the importance of the role of teachers (ācariya) as mentors who educate students holistically [9]. Another study at Atisa Dipamkara 1 Elementary School shows that teachers have difficulty implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in Buddhist Education and Ethics subjects, which is influenced by various factors [10]. To overcome this problem, a comprehensive evaluation is needed to find the right solution. This is in line with Buddhist teachings, which emphasize the importance of identifying the root of the problem (dukkha), understanding its causes (samudaya), seeing the potential for its resolution (nirodha), and applying the appropriate method of resolution (magga) [11].

Buddhist Religious Education plays an important role in character development, particularly through the integration of moral and spiritual values taught by Buddha. Recent studies show that teachings such as Buddhist Pancasila (five precepts), Brahmavihara (four noble attitudes), and Dasa Kusala (ten good deeds) are important foundations in shaping students' ethical, honest, and compassionate character [12]. This is in line with the message in the Dhammapada which reads, "Strive not to do evil. Strive

to do good. Purify your heart and mind. This is the teaching of the Buddhas"[13]. In addition, Buddhist Religious Education also contributes to improving students' emotional intelligence through the practice of meditation and mindfulness, which helps students manage their emotions, increase self-awareness, and build healthy social relationships [14]. In the Metta Sutta, the Buddha also emphasizes the importance of developing boundless love for all beings: "Just as a mother protects her only child at the risk of her own life, so too should one develop boundless love for all beings" [11].

Buddhist education comprehensively covers moral, social, and emotional aspects, which not only aim to convey religious material, but also serve as an effective means of shaping individuals with high morals and integrity [15]. In line with this, in the Sigālovāda Sutta, the Buddha taught the importance of living a good life through respect for parents, teachers, and fellow human beings as part of noble moral practice [9]. The Buddha taught that respecting parents and teachers is the key to a person's growth in virtue and wisdom. Therefore, Buddhist Education plays a strategic role in shaping a generation that has high moral awareness, deep empathy, and a strong sense of self in living their lives.

However, Buddhist Religious Education subjects still receive little attention in educational research, making it challenging to assess the extent to which the Merdeka Curriculum is effective in shaping students' character and religious understanding in accordance with Buddhist values. Curriculum evaluation is a systematic process of assessing the effectiveness and efficiency of a curriculum in achieving its stated educational objectives. This process includes the collection, analysis, and interpretation of valid and reliable data to make decisions regarding curriculum improvement or development.

Based on initial observations at UPT SD Negeri 3 Waringinsari Timur, Pringsewu, there are several problems in the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in Buddhist education. First, many teachers feel unprepared for the curriculum change and tend to still use conventional teaching methods. This condition has the potential to reduce the benefits of the Merdeka Curriculum, which actually gives teachers the freedom to choose appropriate learning strategies. Second, there is still a lack of teaching materials specifically designed in accordance with the Merdeka Curriculum for Buddhist Education, resulting in teachers more often using old materials that are less relevant to the new curriculum's approach. This has implications for the suboptimal understanding of Buddhist values and critical thinking skills among students, which are one of the main objectives of the Merdeka Curriculum.

This study aims to evaluate the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in Buddhist Religious Education in elementary schools, with a case study at UPT SD Negeri 3 Waringinsari Timur, Pringsewu. This study will examine the extent to which the Merdeka Curriculum can support teachers in creating dynamic, interactive, and relevant learning that is in line with the times and the needs of students. Although there have been many studies on the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in general learning, very few studies have specifically examined Buddhist Religious Education learning. Most studies have focused more on core subjects such as Mathematics, Indonesian Language, and Science. Therefore, this study is expected to fill this research gap by providing

empirical data on the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in Buddhist Religious Education learning at the elementary school level.

This study is expected to provide benefits in identifying the extent to which the Merdeka Curriculum can improve the quality of Buddhist Religious Education learning. The results of this study are expected to be a reference for educators, policy makers, and education stakeholders in evaluating and improving the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum. Thus, Buddhist Religious Education learning is expected to be more relevant, contextual, and meaningful for students. In addition, this study also provides a real picture of the challenges and opportunities in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in elementary schools, particularly at UPT SD Negeri 3 Waringinsari Timur, which can be a valuable reference for other schools with similar contexts.

2. Research Method

This study uses a qualitative approach with a CIPP (Context, Input, Process, Product) evaluation design developed by Stufflebeam. This approach was chosen because it is considered capable of providing a comprehensive evaluation of the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in Buddhist Religious Education. The research subjects consisted of the principal, vice principal in charge of curriculum, and Buddhist Education teachers at UPT SD Negeri 3 Waringin Sari Timur, Pringsewu, who were determined through purposive sampling based on their direct involvement in curriculum implementation.

The research process began with the preparation stage, which included a literature study to strengthen the theoretical basis, proposal preparation, and submission of a research permit to the relevant agencies. After that, the researchers entered the data collection stage using observation techniques, in-depth interviews with the principal and Buddhist Education teachers, and documentation of learning activities. The data obtained was then analyzed through data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The analysis was conducted using qualitative descriptive methods based on the four components of the CIPP model. The final stage was the preparation of a research report in the form of a systematic thesis in accordance with scientific principles.

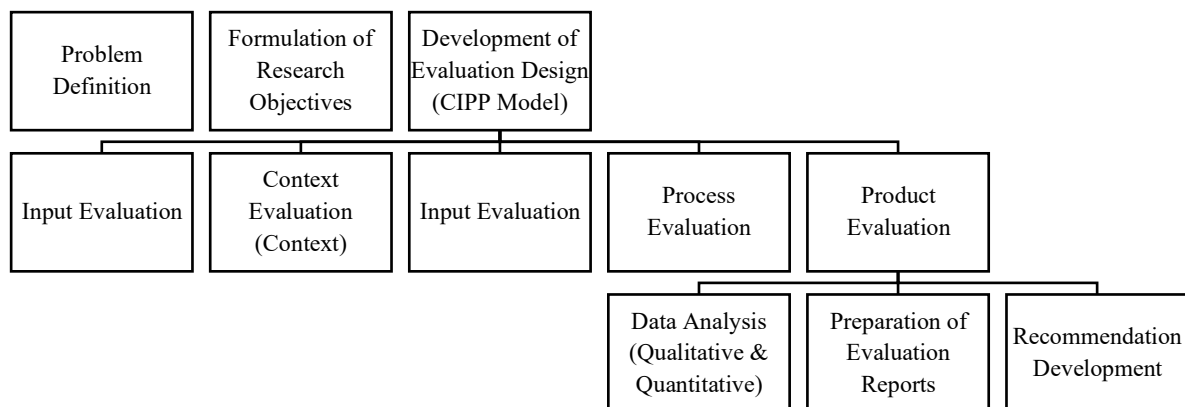


Figure 1. Research Flow Chart

Data collection techniques include observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation studies. Data analysis is conducted using descriptive qualitative methods with data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing procedures. The analysis process aims to gain an in-depth understanding of the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in Buddhist Education subjects in elementary schools, as well as to identify various supporting factors and obstacles encountered in its implementation. The research procedure is a systematic set of steps taken by researchers in conducting research, from the planning stage to reporting the results. These procedures serve as guidelines to maintain order, clarity, and the implementation of each stage of the research so that the research objectives can be achieved effectively and efficiently. In an evaluative qualitative approach, the research procedure is flexible but still systematic, emphasizing the direct involvement of researchers in the field to explore meaning in depth through interaction with participants and the real context. In the context of this study, the research procedure is divided into the following stages:

Preparation Stage At this stage, the researcher identifies the problem and formulates the focus of the research based on the phenomena observed in the field. Next, a literature study is conducted to strengthen the theoretical basis and prepare a research proposal. After the proposal is prepared, the researcher obtains permission from the relevant educational institutions (schools and education offices) and prepares instruments such as interview guidelines and observation sheets. The second stage is **Data Collection**. After obtaining permission, the researcher enters the field to collect data. The techniques used include observation of the implementation of Buddhist education (), in-depth interviews with the principal and teachers, and documentation of teaching tools and learning activities.

This data collection was directed at four aspects of the CIPP evaluation model, namely: context, input, process, and product. The third stage was **Data Analysis**, in which the collected data was analyzed qualitatively through three stages: data reduction (filtering relevant data), data presentation (compiling information in narrative and thematic forms), and drawing conclusions and verification. Each piece of data analyzed is linked to the CIPP evaluation components to provide a complete picture of the effectiveness of the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum. The fourth stage, **Reporting**, is the final stage of this procedure, which is the preparation of a research report in the form of a thesis. The report is compiled systematically in accordance with academic structure, containing the evaluation results for each aspect of the CIPP model, as well as conclusions and recommendations based on findings in the field.

Table 1. of Informant Codes

No.	Informant Name	Position	Informant Code
1	School Principal	Principal	NS1-KS
2.	Deputy Principal	Deputy Head of Curriculum	NS2-WK
3.	Mentor Teacher	Buddhist Religious Education Teacher	NS3-GP

Documentation, documentation techniques are used to collect written or visual data such as syllabi, lesson plans, learning notes, student evaluation results, and other supporting documents. This data is useful for strengthening the results of observations and interviews, as well as serving as a basis for evaluating inputs and outputs in the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum. There are two types of data used in this study, namely primary data and secondary data. Primary data is the main source of data collected directly by researchers from the research subjects. The primary sources used in this study were the principal, the vice principal for curriculum, and Buddhist education teachers. To obtain this information, researchers used the interview method. Meanwhile, secondary data is additional data that, according to researchers, can be used to support the main data, but is not original data from the research subjects. Secondary data includes data obtained from archives, documents, records, and reports from school data. To determine the validity of the data in this study, the researcher used various methods, namely as follows:

Extension of research, which means that the researcher returns to the field, conducts observations, and interviews data sources that have been encountered before as well as new data or information. This extension of research is able to create a stronger chemistry. With this extension, the researcher can also recheck whether the data provided so far is correct or not. Triangulation. The triangulation used in this study was source and technique triangulation. Through source triangulation, the researcher collected and compared data obtained through various techniques such as observation, interviews, and documentation. Meanwhile, through technique triangulation, the researcher obtained data from the same source using different techniques.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Results

The implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum at UPT SD Negeri 3 Waringin Sari Timur Pringsewu shows a strong connection with national policies and educational objectives that focus on character building in students. Based on the CIPP evaluation model analysis, the Context component includes policy foundations, educational objectives, and official regulations, such as the Head of BSKM Decree Number 031-A-KR-2024 concerning the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project and Permendikbudristek Number 12 of 2024 concerning guidelines for developing the education unit curriculum. The school's focus on character building through the integration of Buddhist values indicates that the local context has been well internalized into the curriculum policy. This shows that the development and implementation of the curriculum have taken into account the needs of students and the existing socio-cultural environment, making education more relevant, contextual, and meaningful.

The findings of this study indicate that the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum at SD Negeri 3 Waringin Sari Timur Pringsewu has a strong foundation in the context of national education policy and objectives. Based on the CIPP model, the Context component covers the background, objectives, and legal basis of a program or curriculum,

which in this study is reflected in the official implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in accordance with applicable regulations. "We implement the Merdeka Curriculum in this school based on official regulations, such as the Head of BSKM Decree Number 031-A-KR-2024 concerning the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project, as well as Permendikbudristek Number 12 of 2024 concerning guidelines for the development of the education unit curriculum," said Principal NS1. In addition, the focus on character building through Buddhist values shows that the school not only complies with national policies but also understands the importance of the local context in supporting curriculum implementation. Thus, these findings are in line with the Context principle in the CIPP model, which is to ensure that educational programs are designed according to the needs of students, the surrounding environment, and the direction of national education policy.

The Input component in the CIPP model focuses on the resources used to support program implementation. The research findings show that the school provides significant support to Buddhist teachers through training such as Tathagata, BIMTEK, and other professional development activities. In addition, learning tools are developed collectively by teachers with reference to national learning outcomes and adapted to the actual conditions at the school. However, one of the main obstacles faced is the limited availability of teaching materials, especially Buddhist textbooks, which are often not available on the market because they have not been printed or published. This shows that even though schools have provided sufficient input, there are still challenges in terms of distribution and availability of resources. Therefore, the Input aspect in the CIPP model is important to consider so that curriculum implementation can run optimally.

The Process component in the CIPP model evaluates how the program is implemented in practice. This study shows that the learning process in schools is supported by routine supervision mechanisms and the existence of learning communities as a forum for collaboration between teachers. Buddhist teachers use a differentiated approach based on the growth phase of children, so that learning becomes more responsive to the individual needs of students. In addition, the integration of Buddhist values such as compassion, tolerance, and discipline is carried out through intracurricular, cocurricular, and extracurricular activities. However, technological limitations and internet access remain obstacles to the use of modern learning methods. Thus, these findings show that the implementation process of the Merdeka Curriculum in this school has been going well, but still requires adjustments to overcome existing challenges.

The Product component in the CIPP model evaluates the results or impact of program implementation. The research findings show that the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum has succeeded in improving the quality of student character, as reflected in changes in character indicators in the Education Report Card (red to yellow, and yellow to green). In addition, students showed more positive attitude changes, such as politeness, discipline, and better communication skills. "Our students now appear to be more active, creative, independent, and capable of critical thinking," said the Buddhist Education Teacher. The supervising teacher further explained, "This curriculum not only helps them develop academically, but also shapes a stronger and more resilient character." Thus, these findings show that the Merdeka Curriculum has achieved its main objective of

improving students' non-academic aspects, in accordance with the Product principle in the CIPP model.

This shows that the Merdeka Curriculum has succeeded in creating a holistic and inclusive learning environment. A case study from Sunan Kudus State Islamic University explains that the Merdeka Curriculum integrates the intellectual, emotional, social, and physical aspects of students and encourages collaboration between teachers, students, parents, and the community to create an inclusive and holistic learning environment. This curriculum also encourages project-based learning and the adjustment of teaching methods according to student needs, thereby increasing student motivation and engagement [16]. However, evaluation is still dominated by the application of student achievement, which may not fully reflect the development of student character. Therefore, the Product aspect of the CIPP model needs to be strengthened with a more comprehensive evaluation mechanism.

Overall, the findings of this study indicate that the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum at SD Negeri 3 Waringin Sari Timur Pringsewu has been in line with the principles of the CIPP model. In the Context component, the school has a strong foundation in implementing the curriculum based on national policies and local needs. In the Input component, the school provides significant support to teachers through training and the development of learning tools, although there are still obstacles related to the availability of teaching materials. In the Process component, regular supervision and learning communities help teachers in facing implementation challenges. Finally, in the Product component, there has been a significant improvement in the quality of students' character and learning outcomes. With this approach, the CIPP model can be used as an effective evaluation framework to ensure the successful implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in the future. Evaluating the Merdeka Curriculum policy with the CIPP model, which focuses on context, input, process, and product, concludes that CIPP evaluation can be used as an effective tool to assess the successful implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum [17].

One of the main advantages of the Merdeka Curriculum implementation is the improvement in student character quality. Based on the research findings, there was a significant improvement in student character indicators as reflected in the Education Report Card: from red (poor) in 2022, to yellow (fair) in 2023, and green (good) in 2024–2025. This shows that the Merdeka Curriculum has succeeded in shaping student character in accordance with Pancasila values, including Buddhist values such as compassion, tolerance, and discipline. Values such as responsibility, honesty, and caring are integrated into the learning process [18]. Changes in student attitudes are also evident in their daily behavior, such as being more polite, respecting teachers, and demonstrating good manners, for example by formally greeting teachers with "good morning" or "good afternoon," compared to previously when they paid less attention to such things.

3.2. Discussion

The Merdeka Curriculum gives teachers the freedom to innovate in teaching, making learning more flexible and responsive to students' needs. The Merdeka Curriculum has a

flexible structure and gives teachers the freedom to adjust learning materials according to students' needs, making learning more adaptive and flexible [19]. Buddhist teachers use a differentiated approach based on children's growth phases, so that learning materials can be tailored to students' interests and abilities. In addition, the school supports the use of technology in learning, such as the use of the Zoom digital platform for teacher training and the interactive application for students. The learning community developed at the school also provides a forum for teachers to share experiences and ideas. In this way, learning is not only theoretical, but also practical and innovative.

Despite its many advantages, the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in this school also faces several challenges, one of which is the limited availability of teaching materials, especially Buddhist textbooks. One of the challenges in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum is the limited facilities and infrastructure, including inadequate teaching materials [20]. According to the principal, these books are often unavailable on the market because they have not been printed or published. This is a major obstacle in providing complete and relevant learning materials. Buddhist teachers must find their own teaching materials that are in line with the learning outcomes (CP) and learning objectives (TP). These limitations can affect the effectiveness of learning, especially in the context of intracurricular learning, which requires adequate resources.

Learning evaluation in the Merdeka Curriculum is still dominated by the application of student achievement, which may not fully reflect the development of students' character. Although there has been an improvement in academic aspects, non-academic evaluations such as attitude, behavior, and moral values have not been evaluated proportionally. For example, changes in students' attitudes towards being more polite and disciplined are more often observed through informal observation than through formal evaluation mechanisms. Therefore, the evaluation system needs to be improved to cover all aspects of student development, both academic and non-academic.

The successful implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum is highly dependent on the ability of teachers to design and implement learning. Teachers need to have the ability to design differentiated and responsive learning to student needs so that the learning process is effective and inclusive [21]. Research findings show that Buddhist teachers have made innovative efforts, such as integrating Buddhist values into learning through meditation activities, group discussions, and collaborative projects. However, not all teachers have the same ability to develop innovative and holistic learning. Limited training or professional support can affect the quality of learning, especially in the context of minority religions such as Buddhism. Therefore, improving teacher capacity through intensive training and competency development is important to consider. Curriculum evaluation is essential to maintain the quality and relevance of education programs. It serves as a mechanism to assess whether the curriculum achieves its intended objectives and to identify areas for improvement. Curriculum evaluation is part of a management system, which involves planning, organizing, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating.

Overall, the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum at SD Negeri 3 Waringin Sari Timur Pringsewu has many advantages, such as improving the quality of students' character, innovation in learning, and support for minority religions such as Buddhism.

However, challenges such as limited teaching materials, limited evaluation mechanisms, and dependence on teacher capabilities need to be overcome to improve the effectiveness of curriculum implementation. By addressing these shortcomings, it is hoped that the Merdeka Curriculum can provide more optimal benefits for students and schools.

One of the main challenges in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum is the limited teaching materials, especially Buddhist textbooks, which are often unavailable on the market because they have not been printed or published. To overcome this problem, schools need to work with publishers and the government to ensure a more equitable and rapid distribution of teaching materials. In addition, teachers can utilize digital resources, such as e-books or online learning platforms, to provide relevant learning materials for students. By increasing access to teaching materials, it is hoped that Buddhist studies learning can be more effective and in line with learning outcomes (CP) and learning objectives (TP).

The success of the Merdeka Curriculum's implementation depends heavily on teachers' ability to design and implement innovative learning. Therefore, intensive training for teachers is a top priority. Schools can hold advanced training on the use of technology in learning, such as interactive applications or digital platforms like Zoom, to support modern learning methods. In addition, training on the differentiation approach is also important to help teachers tailor learning to the individual needs of students. This training program can be carried out periodically in collaboration with provincial or district KKG (Teacher Working Groups). With the improvement of teacher competence, it is hoped that the quality of learning can continue to be improved.

The evaluation of learning in the Merdeka Curriculum needs to be improved to cover all aspects of student development, both academic and non-academic. Currently, evaluation is still dominated by the application of student achievement, which may not fully reflect the development of student character. Therefore, schools need to develop more comprehensive evaluation mechanisms, such as direct observation of student attitudes and behavior in daily life. For example, teachers can make reflective notes on changes in student attitudes, such as politeness, discipline, and communication skills. In this way, evaluation reflects not only the final results but also the overall teaching and learning process.

The Merdeka Curriculum emphasizes the importance of collaboration between schools, parents, and the community in supporting student learning. To increase the effectiveness of curriculum implementation, schools need to strengthen partnerships with parents through open communication and joint activities. For example, schools can hold regular meetings with parents to discuss student progress or involve them in collaborative projects at school. In addition, cooperation with local communities, such as places of worship or religious organizations, can also support the development of students' moral and spiritual values. By strengthening this collaboration, it is hoped that a holistic and inclusive learning environment can be created.

These recommendations for improvement aim to address the challenges faced during the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum at SD Negeri 3 Waringin Sari Timur Pringsewu. By increasing access to teaching materials, providing intensive training to

teachers, improving evaluation mechanisms, and strengthening collaboration with parents and the community, it is hoped that the implementation of the curriculum can run more optimally. These steps will help create a holistic, inclusive, and value-based learning environment, so that students can develop optimally in both academic and non-academic aspects.

4. Conclusion

The implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in Buddhist Religious Education at UPT SD Negeri 3 Waringin Sari Timur Pringsewu has shown significant progress, particularly in improving the quality of students' character. The results of the study indicate that the Merdeka Curriculum has a strong policy basis, sufficient resource support, and a learning process that has begun to adopt a contextual and differentiated approach. However, a number of challenges still need to be overcome, such as the limited availability of specific teaching materials for Buddhist Religious Education, limited supporting technological facilities, and evaluation mechanisms that do not yet fully cover the dimensions of student character as a whole. The findings of this study show that the application of the CIPP evaluation model is effective in identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the Merdeka Curriculum implementation and serves as a relevant framework for future improvements in education policy. Resource support in the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum is realized through teacher training and competency development. Buddhist Education teachers have participated in training programs such as Tathagata, technical guidance (BIMTEK), and involvement in learning communities.

However, there are still significant obstacles in terms of the availability of teaching materials, particularly Merdeka Curriculum-based Buddhist Education textbooks, which are not yet officially available on the market. The absence of textbooks has an impact on the burden on teachers in independently compiling teaching materials and limited access to learning for students. The implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in Buddhist Education is carried out in stages over three years: starting from grades 1 and 4 in the first year, grades 2 and 5 in the second year, and grades 3 and 6 in the third year. The learning process is designed with reference to learning outcomes (CP), using a contextual, collaborative, and character-building approach. Teachers play an active role in developing lesson plans and implementing adaptive learning according to the conditions of the students. Despite facing limitations in teaching materials and learning media, the implementation process continues with innovative and creative enthusiasm.

Based on the research results, several recommendations need to be considered so that the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum can run more optimally. First, the development and distribution of Buddhist Education teaching materials in accordance with the principles of the Merdeka Curriculum needs to be realized immediately to support contextual and relevant learning. Second, increasing teacher capacity through intensive training on innovative learning design and technology utilization must be a priority in professional development programs. Third, the learning evaluation system needs to be refined to include not only academic achievement but also the character and

moral values of students. With the implementation of these recommendations, it is hoped that the Merdeka Curriculum can have a broader impact in producing students with character, competence, and readiness to face future challenges.

Overall, it can be concluded that SD Negeri 3 Waringin Sari Timur Pringsewu has implemented the Merdeka Curriculum quite well in the context of Buddhist Education. Although there are still obstacles, particularly in terms of the availability of teaching materials, the school and teachers have shown a high level of commitment and adaptability to the curriculum changes. These results make an important contribution to strengthening student character and prove that the Merdeka Curriculum can be implemented inclusively, including in minority religious education in elementary schools.

Based on the research findings, here are some suggestions for improving the evaluation of the Merdeka Curriculum at SD Negeri 3 Waringin Sari Timur Pringsewu: To overcome the limitations of teaching materials, especially Buddhist textbooks, the school needs to collaborate with publishers and the government to ensure a more equitable and rapid distribution of teaching materials. In addition, teachers can utilize digital resources, such as e-books or online learning platforms, to provide relevant learning materials for students. Intensive training for teachers is a top priority to improve their capacity to design and implement innovative learning. The school can conduct advanced training on the use of technology in learning, such as interactive applications or digital platforms such as Zoom, to support modern learning methods. Learning assessments need to be improved to cover all aspects of student development, both academic and non-academic. Currently, assessments are still dominated by student achievement tests, which may not fully reflect students' character development. Therefore, schools need to develop more comprehensive assessment mechanisms, such as direct observation of students' attitudes and behavior in their daily lives.

The Merdeka Curriculum emphasizes the importance of collaboration between schools, parents, and the community in supporting student learning. To increase the effectiveness of curriculum implementation, schools need to strengthen partnerships with parents through open communication and joint activities. For example, schools can hold regular meetings with parents to discuss student development or involve them in collaborative projects at school. Schools must continue to provide space for teachers to innovate in teaching, as long as these innovations have a positive impact and improve the quality of learning. For example, teachers can develop more interactive learning methods or use technology to enrich learning materials.

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