

## IMPLEMENTATION OF THE *KURIKULUM MERDEKA BELAJAR* AND ITS IMPACT ON THE LEARNING OUTCOMES OF GRADE XI OFFICE MANAGEMENT AND BUSINESS SERVICES STUDENTS

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### ABSTRACT

This study aims to determine the influence of the implementation of the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum on student learning outcomes in Grade XI Office Management and Business Services Program at SMK Negeri 3 Bandung. Using an explanatory survey method, data were collected from 106 students through questionnaires and semester assessment results. The analysis involved normality, linearity, and regression tests. The results showed that the implementation of the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum is categorized as very effective, with the highest indicator being student active participation and the lowest being inspirational teaching. Student learning outcomes, measured by summative assessment scores, showed that 66.98% had achieved learning objectives, though some still required remediation. Regression analysis indicated a strong and significant positive relationship between curriculum implementation and learning outcomes.

**Key words:** Curriculum implementation; learning outcomes; Merdeka Belajar

### INTRODUCTION

Education is a conscious and structured process designed to develop students' potential in spiritual, intellectual, and practical aspects (Law No. 20 of 2003). In response to the rapid development of society, science, and technology, Indonesia's education system continues to evolve through various curriculum reforms. One of the most recent innovations is the *Merdeka Curriculum*, which seeks to create a more enjoyable, relevant, and flexible learning environment while strengthening students' character and competencies. This curriculum provides both teachers and students with the autonomy to select learning materials and methods that best suit their interests and needs, encouraging a student-centered learning process.

Despite these progressive objectives, the implementation of the *Merdeka Curriculum* in schools still faces several challenges. Many teachers and students have yet to fully understand its principles and effectively apply them in the classroom. This situation has led to inconsistencies in learning outcomes across different schools. At SMK Negeri 3 Bandung, for instance, particularly in the Office Management and Business Services program, more than sixty percent of Grade XI students have not met the *Minimum Mastery Criteria* (KKM) of 75 in summative assessments. Interviews with teachers further revealed that this underachievement is mainly caused by a lack of comprehension regarding the *Merdeka Curriculum*'s framework and the suboptimal implementation of teaching and assessment strategies.

Considering that curriculum design plays a strategic role in ensuring the success of learning processes, such issues suggest the presence of a gap between the expected outcomes of the *Merdeka Curriculum* and its practical realization in vocational education contexts. While previous studies have discussed the theoretical foundations of curriculum innovation and teacher preparedness, empirical analyses focusing on the effects of *Merdeka Curriculum* implementation on students' academic achievement—especially in vocational schools—remain limited.

Therefore, this study aims to analyze the influence of *Merdeka Curriculum* implementation on the learning outcomes of Grade XI students in the Office Management and Business Services program at SMK Negeri 3 Bandung, focusing particularly on aspects of teaching and assessment.

### METHOD

This study employed an explanatory survey approach. A research method refers to the conceptual framework that guides the design of a study, while research techniques represent the practical procedures used to implement the study based on that conceptual framework (Abdurahman, Muhidin, & Somantri, 2017). The population is defined as the entire group of elements or subjects selected by the researcher as the focus of investigation and the basis for drawing conclusions (Sugiyono, 2014).

In this research, the population comprised all students from Grades X to XII of the Office Management and Business Services (*Manajemen Perkantoran dan Layanan Bisnis / MPLB*) program at SMK Negeri 3 Bandung in the 2024/2025 academic year. The sample was drawn from Grade XI Office Management (*Manajemen Perkantoran / MPK*) students who had participated in the Office Management subject, resulting in a total of 106 respondents.

Data were collected using a questionnaire as the primary research instrument. The questionnaire consisted of several items designed to measure each research variable according to its respective indicators, employing a Likert scale format. The data used in this study were primarily obtained from two sources: (1) primary data collected through student questionnaires, and (2) secondary data derived from the *End-of-Semester Summative Assessment (ASAS)* results of Grade XI Office Management and Business Services students at SMK Negeri 3 Bandung.

Before testing the hypotheses, several prerequisite tests were conducted to ensure the validity of the data, including tests of homogeneity, linearity, and normality. To identify relationships among the variables under study, inferential statistical analysis was applied. Specifically, a simple regression analysis technique was employed to examine the hypotheses and determine whether a significant influence existed between the independent and dependent variables.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Normality Test

The normality test using the One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov method shows that both the *Independent Variable*—Implementation of the *Merdeka Belajar* Curriculum (X)—and the *Dependent Variable*—Student Learning Outcomes (Y)—have a significance value of 0.200, which is greater than 0.05. These results indicate that the data in this study are normally distributed. Thus, the statistical assumptions for regression analysis have been met.

### Heteroscedasticity Test

Based on the regression coefficients, the *Merdeka Belajar* Curriculum variable (X) has a significance value of 0.612, which is greater than 0.05. This indicates that the data are free from heteroscedasticity symptoms, meaning the variance of the residuals is constant. Consequently, the regression model can be considered reliable for explaining the relationship between the two variables.

### Linearity Test

The linearity test results show that the deviation from linearity has a significance value of 0.529, exceeding 0.05. This demonstrates that the relationship between the *Merdeka Belajar* Curriculum (X) and Student Learning Outcomes (Y) is linear. Hence, the model fulfills the assumption of linearity required for regression analysis.

### Simple Linear Regression Analysis

The regression analysis produces the equation  $Y = 21.983 + 0.807X$ , with a positive regression coefficient. This means that an increase in the implementation of the *Merdeka Belajar* Curriculum corresponds to an increase in students' learning outcomes. The positive direction of the coefficient indicates that both variables move in the same direction—when the independent variable increases, the dependent variable also tends to increase.

The correlation coefficient (R) is **0.834**, indicating a strong and positive relationship between the two variables, as it falls within the 0.70–0.90 range according to Guilford's empirical rules. Furthermore, the coefficient of determination (R<sup>2</sup>) is **0.695**, meaning that 69.5% of the variation in student learning outcomes can be explained by the implementation of the *Merdeka Belajar* Curriculum, while the remaining 30.5% is influenced by other factors not examined in this study.

### Description of the *Merdeka Belajar* Curriculum Variable

The *Merdeka Belajar* Curriculum variable was measured using six indicators—interactive, inspiring, enjoyable, challenging, motivating, and providing space for creativity and independence. The overall average score obtained was **4.27**, which falls into the *very high* category (4.20–5.00). These findings imply that teachers and students perceive the *Merdeka Belajar* Curriculum as highly engaging, stimulating, and conducive to fostering creativity and autonomy in the learning process.

### Description of Student Learning Outcomes

Student learning outcomes were derived from the *End-of-Semester Summative Assessment (ASAS)* scores. The results show that the majority of students (66.98%) achieved scores in the 75–89 range, which means they successfully met the learning objectives and did not require remedial actions. Around 32.07% of students scored between 65–74, categorized as *almost achieving learning goals* and required minor remedial efforts focused on specific competencies. Meanwhile, only 0.94% of students fell within the 55–64 range, indicating that very few had not yet met most learning objectives. Notably, no students scored below 55 or above 90, suggesting that while most students achieved satisfactory results, none reached an exceptional level.

Overall, these data reveal that the majority of students in the Office Management and Business Services Program at SMK Negeri 3 Bandung successfully met the Minimum Mastery Criteria (KKM) of 75, with 66.98% of the 106 respondents achieving competency in the *Office Management* subject.

### **The Influence of the *Merdeka Belajar* Curriculum on Student Learning Outcomes**

Based on the results of the *t*-test, the implementation of the *Merdeka Belajar* Curriculum (X) significantly affects student learning outcomes (Y), as evidenced by the significance value of 0.000, which is less than 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis ( $H_1$ ) is accepted. The positive regression coefficient further supports that the curriculum implementation contributes positively to the improvement of student learning performance.

This finding aligns with prior studies. For example, Rofiqoh (2023) found that the implementation of the *Merdeka Belajar* Curriculum significantly affected learning outcomes in Islamic Education and Character Building (PAIBP) among Grade XI students at SMA Negeri 2 Ungaran. Similarly, Kamarullah (2024) revealed a positive correlation between the implementation of the *Merdeka Belajar* Curriculum and learning achievement in Economics at MAN 1 Sintang, with learning motivation serving as a moderating variable. His study reported a path coefficient of 0.160 (*t*-statistic = 1.822, *p*-value = 0.035) and demonstrated that the curriculum also positively influenced students' motivation, shown by a path coefficient of 0.382 (*t*-statistic = 5.908, *p*-value = 0.000).

Taken together, the present study supports previous empirical evidence that the *Merdeka Belajar* Curriculum positively and significantly contributes to improving student learning outcomes. The findings highlight the curriculum's role in promoting active learning, motivation, and student engagement—key components that lead to enhanced academic achievement.

### **CONCLUSION**

Based on the results of the research conducted among Grade XI students of the Office Management and Business Services Program at SMK Negeri 3 Bandung, it can be concluded that the *Merdeka Belajar* Curriculum in the *Office Management* subject is highly effective. The highest indicator demonstrates that teachers have successfully created a learning atmosphere that encourages students' active participation, while the lowest indicator is found in the *inspirational* aspect. Student learning outcomes, as measured through the *End-of-Semester Summative Assessment (ASAS)*, show that the majority of students (66.98%) achieved the learning objectives with scores ranging from 75 to 89, although a small portion still required remedial assistance. Overall, the learning process was conducted effectively. Furthermore, the *Merdeka Belajar* Curriculum was found to have a significant influence on students' learning outcomes in this subject.

The *inspirational learning* indicator, which received the lowest score, requires particular attention from teachers. To enhance this aspect, teachers are encouraged to design learning activities that promote critical and creative thinking through case studies, collaborative projects, and real-world problem-solving tasks. A conducive learning environment can also be fostered through the use of interactive media, flexible classroom management, and by providing students with opportunities to express their ideas. Additionally, offering varied and relevant learning resources, as well as creative assignments that stimulate imagination, can strengthen the inspirational dimension of instruction.

Improvements in student learning outcomes, which are currently categorized as high, can continue to be pursued by reinforcing the implementation of the *Merdeka Belajar* Curriculum at every stage—from planning and classroom execution to assessment and evaluation. Future researchers interested in exploring the *Merdeka Belajar* Curriculum are encouraged to expand their scope beyond teaching and assessment aspects, as there remain many essential dimensions of this curriculum that warrant further academic investigation.

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