



Analysis of the Merdeka Curriculum in Physical Education Learning at Senior High School

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History Article

Received March 2026
Approved April 2026
Published vol 13 no 1 2026

Keywords

Merdeka Curriculum;
Physical Education; Curriculum Implementation

Abstract

This study examines the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in Physical Education, Sports, and Health learning at the senior high school level. The research focuses on three key aspects: planning, classroom implementation, and assessment practices. A qualitative case study design was applied in two schools, Jatinangor High School and Al-Aqsha High school Plus. Data were collected through semi structured interviews, direct classroom observations, and document analysis, including the Education Unit Operational Curriculum, Learning Objectives Flow, and teaching modules. Data were analyzed using the stages of reduction, display, and conclusion drawing, with source and technique triangulation to ensure credibility. The findings show that teachers have aligned learning plans with Learning Outcomes and translated them into structured objectives and contextual teaching modules. Instruction emphasizes student centered learning through differentiated activities based on students' physical abilities and participation levels. Teachers act as facilitators who guide active engagement and skill development. Assessment practices apply authentic and continuous evaluation covering attitudes, knowledge, and motor skills through observation, performance tasks, and reflection. Institutional support, including principal supervision and adequate sports facilities, strengthens curriculum implementation. However, uneven access to training and variations in teacher readiness remain challenges. Overall, the Merdeka Curriculum in Physical Education demonstrates strong potential to improve learning quality when supported by consistent professional development and school level commitment.

How to Cite

Rizki, K. A., Juliantine, T., & Gumilar, A. (2026). Analysis of the Merdeka Curriculum in Physical Education Learning at Senior High School. *Journal of Physical Education, Health and Sport*, 13 (1), 220-226.

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INTRODUCTION

Education plays a fundamental role in developing the full potential of students, in terms of knowledge, attitude, and skills. Education is understood as a conscious and planned process to shape individuals who are able to develop optimally in accordance with their potential. (Himmatus Sa'adah, 2023). In the context of human resource development, education also serves as a strategic means to create a healthy, adaptive, and highly competitive society. (Anggraini & Wiryanto, 2022).

Curriculum reform is one of the key efforts to ensure that the education system remains relevant to the demands of the times. The curriculum serves not only as a learning planning document, but also as a policy instrument that determines the direction and quality of the educational process in schools. (Meij & Merx, 2018). Therefore, curriculum implementation needs to be reviewed empirically so that the objectives formulated can be realized in learning practices.

At the high school level, Physical Education, Sports, and Health (P E) subjects play an important role in supporting the holistic development of students. Physical Education learning contributes to improving physical fitness, developing social skills, and forming attitudes of discipline and sportsmanship. (Nuraini et al., 2024). Physical education also serves as a vehicle for instilling sustainable healthy lifestyles from school age onwards. (Mulyana et al., 2024).

Curriculum implementation is a complex educational transformation process that requires adjustment in teaching practices, school culture, and institutional structure (Pak et al., 2020). In Physical education, this complexity becomes more significant because learning relies heavily on direct physical engagement and experiential activities. Teachers must translate learning outcomes into structured motor, social, and emotional experiences (Sindiani et al., 2025). However, successful implementation also depends on institutional readiness and leadership support.

A number of previous studies have shown that the implementation of the latest curriculum in physical education learning has shown positive results, especially in encouraging more active and student-centered learning. However, various obstacles are still encountered in practice. (Sukma Annisa Pratiwi, Rina Marlina, 2023) found that physical education teachers had difficulty adjusting their lesson plans to the characteristics

of their students and school conditions. Similar findings were reported by (Faradila et al., 2024) that limitations in infrastructure and learning time have an impact on the optimization of the physical education learning process.

In addition to planning and implementation, assessing physical education learning is also a challenge in itself. (Mustafa & Winarno, 2019) revealed that the implementation of authentic assessment in physical education learning has not been optimal, particularly in assessing students' motor skills and attitudes on an ongoing basis. This condition indicates a gap between the curriculum requirements and learning practices in the field.

Based on the findings of previous studies, a more in-depth study is needed on the implementation of the curriculum in physical education, health, and sports learning in senior high schools. This study focuses on analyzing the planning, implementation, and assessment of physical education, health, and sports (PE) learning. The results of this study are expected to provide an empirical description of physical education teaching practices in schools and serve as a basis for improvements in the quality of curriculum implementation .

This study offers a novel approach to analyzing the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in Physical Education and Health instruction, which is conducted in a comprehensive and contextual manner through three main aspects: planning, implementation, and assessment of learning. Unlike previous studies, which tended to evaluate implementation in general or in isolation, this study integrates these three aspects into a single, comprehensive analytical framework based on case studies at two schools with distinct characteristics. In addition, this study specifically highlights the unique characteristics of Physical Education as a physical activity based subject that requires contextual, differentiated, and student centered learning, thereby providing a more in depth empirical understanding of how the flexibility of the Merdeka Curriculum is adapted in real world practice.

Another novelty lies in the study's focus on uncovering the gap between the ideal concept of the Merdeka Curriculum and the reality of its implementation, particularly regarding teacher readiness, authentic assessment practices, and institutional support from schools. This study not only describes the success of the implementation but also simultaneously identifies supporting factors and obstacles, thereby yielding findings that

are more critical and practical. Theoretically, this study reinforces the perspective that the success of curriculum implementation is determined not only by policy design but also by teacher capacity and institutional context (Pak et al., 2020). Thus, this study offers a new contribution in the form of a holistic, empirical, and relevant model for understanding the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in Physical Education, which serves as a foundation for both policy development and teaching practices in schools.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study design. The qualitative approach was chosen because it allows researchers to understand the phenomenon of the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in depth and contextually. (Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, 2017) explains that qualitative research is appropriate when researchers want to exploring the meaning, perceptions, and experiences of participants in a real world context.

The research design used was a case study. A case study was chosen to intensively examine the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in physical education learning in the context of a particular school. The research locations were Jatinangor High School and Al-Aqsha High School plus, which have implemented the Merdeka Curriculum at the high school level. This study also adapts indicators from the instrument Program Management Office (PMO) as a basis for analyzing curriculum implementation, so that the research design is not only exploratory in nature, but also has a focused evaluative framework. Thus, the qualitative case study approach provides a strong methodological foundation for understanding the dynamics of the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in physical education learning in a deep and contextual manner.

The research subjects consisted of two physical education teachers, namely Rudini, M.Pd., a physical education teacher at Jatinangor High School, and Raka Aprizal Budiman, S.Pd., a physical education teacher at Al-Aqsha High School. Physical education teachers were chosen as the subject of this study because they play a direct role in planning and implementing learning. The object of this study was the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in physical education learning, which included aspects of planning, implementation, and assessment of learning.

Data collection techniques included interviews, observation, and documentation. Interviews were conducted in a semi-structured man-

ner to explore the understanding, experiences, and views of physical education teachers and school principals regarding the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum. Observations were conducted to directly observe the physical education learning process in the field, including learning strategies, teacher and student interactions, and the implementation of student-centered learning. Documentation was used to analyze curriculum documents, such as the Education Unit Operational Curriculum, Learning Objectives Flow, teaching modules, and assessment instruments.

The research instruments consisted of interview guidelines, observation sheets, and documentation checklists. The interview guidelines were compiled based on indicators of the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in physical education learning. Observation sheets are used to systematically record the implementation of learning. The documents are analyzed to ensure consistency between planning and learning practices.

Data analysis was conducted through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing as stated by (Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldana, 2014). Data validity is maintained through triangulation of sources and techniques to enhance the credibility of research results.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research results and discussion on the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in the learning process of Physical Education, Sports, and Health at the Senior High School level. The discussion focused on how the Merdeka Curriculum was designed, implemented, and evaluated in the context of physical education learning, including the role of school institutions in supporting its implementation. This analysis is based on data obtained through interviews, field observations, and document reviews from Jatinangor High School and Al-Aqsha High School. During the implementation stage, physical education learning is carried out by applying methods that focus primarily on students. Teachers act as facilitators who guide learning activities, while students are positioned as the main actors in physical activities and motor skill development. This shift reflects the core principle of the Merdeka Curriculum, which emphasizes student-centered learning and active participation. This finding is reinforced by statements from teachers in the field.

"What I feel is that our teaching must truly be student-centered; everything can no longer be determin-

ed by the teacher. Creativity comes from the student's desires, so we simply facilitate that" (Teacher at Jatinangor High School).

In addition, the transformation of assessment and learning orientation also shows significant changes compared to previous curricula. Learning is no longer solely focused on final outcomes, but emphasizes process, participation, and behavioral development of students. This is in line with the principles of authentic assessment in the Merdeka Curriculum. As expressed by another teacher,

"While the previous curriculum focused more on end results, the current curriculum focuses more on the process, participation, and behavioral change. Students are also given the opportunity to choose their own activities, allowing them to be more active in their learning." (Teacher at Al-Aqsha High School Plus).

This condition indicates that the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in physical education not only changes teaching strategies, but also reshapes the learning paradigm to become more inclusive and meaningful.

On the other hand, this study also identified several challenges in its implementation, particularly related to teacher readiness and access to professional development. This is reflected in statements from teachers in the field.

"Training related to the independent curriculum is not yet evenly distributed, so we learn more from direct experience in the classroom." (Teacher at Jatinangor High School).

This condition indicates that the success of curriculum implementation is still highly dependent on individual teacher initiative and experiential learning rather than structured institutional support.

The Merdeka Curriculum is described as a curriculum framework that provides opportunities for educational units and educators to manage the learning process more freely and adaptively. In the field of physical education, this flexibility has a significant impact because students demonstrate diversity in their physical abilities, interests, and motivation to learn. As a consequence, physical education learning based on the Merdeka Curriculum requires planning and implementation that can be adapted and focused on the needs of students.

The research data was obtained through in-depth interviews with physical education teachers and related parties at the school, direct observation of the physical education learning process, and an in-depth study of learning documents such as the Education Unit Operational Curriculum (KOSP), Learning Objective Flow

(ATP), and teaching modules. Next, all of the data was analyzed. This analysis ultimately produced key themes that describe the actual practices of implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in physical education teaching.

During the implementation stage, physical education learning is carried out by applying methods that focus primarily on the students. Educators act as mentors who guide learning activities, while students are placed as the main actors in sports activities and motor skill development. The learning process is realized through various activities, such as sports training, group training, and activities appropriate to the situation, which are tailored to the students' abilities. A physical education teacher at Al-Aqsha Jatinangor High School stated that physical education learning currently emphasizes physical movement and games. Students are actively involved in the learning process, while teachers act as facilitators who provide guidance and supervision during the activities. This approach demonstrates a change in the role of teachers in line with the principles of active learning in the Merdeka Curriculum. The results of the observation reveal that learning tailored to individual needs is implemented by teachers through grouping students based on their physical abilities and level of participation. This approach allows all students to remain engaged in the learning process without being burdened by the same ability standards. This practice is in line with the values of the Merdeka Curriculum, which emphasizes inclusive and equitable learning. In addition, teachers explain the objectives and benefits of each sports activity to students. This is evident in the descriptions provided before practical activities, so that physical education learning does not only focus on physical aspects, but also on understanding and awareness of healthy lifestyles.

The results of the study indicate that assessment in the physical education learning process has been implemented based on the principles of authentic evaluation. Student assessment is carried out by teachers on an ongoing basis, taking into account aspects of behavior, understanding, and skills. This assessment is carried out through observation during learning activities, practical performance assessments, and reflections made by students at the end of the learning session. A Physical Education, Sports, and Health teacher at Al-Aqsha High School in Jatinangor stated that physical education learning assessments are not limited to physical fitness tests. Teachers also evaluate students' attitudes, participation levels, and ability to work together during the learning

process. This practice reflects the application of authentic assessment, which comprehensively evaluates cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains, in accordance with the Merdeka Curriculum guidelines. The findings of this study indicate that assessment in physical education learning is no longer focused solely on final grades. The learning process and student development are placed at the center of assessment by educators. This method is in line with the Merdeka Curriculum, which emphasizes formative evaluation as a means of monitoring learning progress and encouraging continuous improvement of student abilities.

This study shows various aspects that facilitate the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in Physical Education, Sports, and Health learning activities. The school leadership's commitment to this curriculum policy strengthens its implementation within the educational institution. The availability of sports facilities and infrastructure also supports the smooth running of the teaching and learning process. Furthermore, collaboration among educators through the Subject Teacher Working Group forum plays a crucial role in sharing practical experiences and aligning perceptions. On the other hand, this study also identified challenges in its implementation. The lack of training and mentoring initiatives related to the Merdeka Curriculum is a major obstacle. Variations in teachers' readiness to understand and implement the curriculum widen the gap in practice in the field. This condition results in inconsistencies in the implementation of physical education in line with the Merdeka Curriculum standards.

A physical education teacher at Jatinangor High School stated that training related to the Merdeka Curriculum has not been carried out evenly. This situation has encouraged teachers to deepen their understanding through direct experience in the classroom. Practical experience in the classroom serves as the main source of learning for teachers in adjusting the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in physical education subjects. In addition, the motivation and discipline of some students still pose obstacles in the physical education learning process. This is reflected in the low participation and lack of consistency among students in participating in a series of learning activities. These obstacles require a more diverse and contextually relevant learning approach in order to increase student participation.

The results of the study revealed that the learning plans were prepared by physical educa-

tion teachers with reference to the Learning Outcomes of the Merdeka Curriculum. These achievements are then integrated into the Learning Objectives Flow and teaching materials that are adapted to the students' conditions. Teachers prioritize mastery of core competencies over completion of all subject matter. This finding is consistent with the view that (Hasan, 2024), which emphasizes the importance of flexibility in designing learning under the Merdeka Curriculum.

The implementation of physical education learning demonstrates the application of learner-centered learning. Teachers act as facilitators and apply learning differentiated based on the physical abilities of students. This approach creates an inclusive and participatory learning environment. These findings support the results of the study (Bailey et al., 2009).

The evaluation was conducted using authentic methods through direct observation, practical demonstrations, and self-reflection processes. The evaluation covered the dimensions of behavior, conceptual understanding, and practical skills of students. According to (Sokhanvar et al., 2021), Authentic assessment provides a comprehensive view of students' overall abilities. In addition, assistance from the principal, which includes regular supervision and the provision of facilities and equipment, strengthens the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum (Nguyen & Ng, 2020).

CONCLUSION

This study reveals that the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in the learning process of Physical Education, Sports, and Health at the high school level has been carried out with a sufficient level of success. Learning Outcomes can be translated by physical education teachers into learning plans that are relevant to the local context, through the development of Learning Objective Sequences and teaching materials that are tailored to the characteristics of students and the school environment. The learning plan is no longer focused on completing all subject matter, but rather on mastering basic skills and developing strong student character.

The implementation of physical education learning has indicated the principle of student-centered education. The role of teachers is as guides who provide opportunities for active involvement, using tailored learning approaches, and creates a learning environment that involves everyone. This approach facilitates students to actively participate in sports activities and build

social skills, collaboration, and sportsmanship.

Physical education learning evaluation is implemented through authentic assessment integrated with the learning process. Attitude, knowledge, and skills are continuously evaluated by teachers through observation, demonstration, and student reflection. This evaluation approach provides a more comprehensive view of student progress in line with the characteristics of the Merdeka Curriculum.

Support from educational institutions, particularly the role of school leaders and the availability of facilities and infrastructure, is considered a crucial element in the successful implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum. Educational supervision, support for improving teacher competence, and the procurement of physical education learning equipment by schools strengthen the implementation of the curriculum at the educational unit level. In general, the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in the physical education learning process shows significant potential for improving the quality of education if supported by efficient preparation by educators and school administrators.

Further research should involve a wider range and variety of subjects, both from public and private schools, as well as from different regional contexts. Expanding the scope of this study is important to obtain a more representative and limited generalizable picture of the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in physical education learning.

Further research also needs to develop mixed methods designs by combining qualitative and quantitative approaches. The use of quantitative data, such as physical fitness levels, learning motivation, and student participation, can reinforce qualitative findings and provide more objective empirical evidence regarding the impact of the Merdeka Curriculum implementation on physical education learning.

In addition, an in-depth study of the readiness and competence of physical education teachers in implementing differentiated learning and authentic assessment is still needed. The research can focus on the effectiveness of training, mentoring, and professional forums for teachers in improving the consistency of the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in schools.

Further research is also recommended to analyze the role of school principal leadership and managerial support in the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in physical education learning. This study is expected to provide practical contributions to strengthening school policies

and improving the quality of physical education learning in a sustainable manner.

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