

Optimizing the Merdeka Curriculum for Developing the Pancasila Student Profile through Project-Based Learning

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ABSTRACT. This study aims to understand the planning and implementation of the *Merdeka curriculum* in shaping the *Pancasila* student profile. Employing a qualitative research design with descriptive analysis, the subjects included curriculum vice principals, project teachers, and students. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation, while data validity was ensured through technique and source triangulation. The findings reveal that the implementation of the Merdeka curriculum is at a developing stage, 1) Curriculum planning carried out at the start of the academic year 2022/2023 following a prepared workflow. The school extensively improvises government-provided guidelines in developing the operational curriculum and project modules to better meet student and industry needs. 2) The instructional approach at SMK PK Krian 2 is project-based, with the implementation of (*Proyek Penguatan Profil Pelajar Pancasila dan Budaya Kerja*: P5BK) using monthly blocks to replace intracurricular learning hours after (*Masa Pengenalan Lingkungan Sekolah*: MPLS) activities, covering five themes to achieve the six dimensions of the Pancasila student profile. Assessment results show that students are progressing towards the goals set in the project modules, yet the full formation of the Pancasila student profile is not yet achieved due to the novelty of the projects. However, educators are optimistic that the Merdeka curriculum will foster changes in student attitudes and is most suitable for the school's conditions.

Keywords: *Merdeka Curriculum, Pancasila Student Profile, Project-Based Learning, Curriculum Planning and Implementation*

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INTRODUCTION

Curriculum is very important in today's world of education because it serves as a representation of the desired values, vision, and goals of educational institutions. The curriculum must always be updated and adjusted to adapt to scientific advances, technological innovations and social changes (Aziz, Nasution, Lubis, Suhardi, & Harahap, 2024; Baharun, Wahid, Udayana, & Abidin, 2024; Basri & Abdullah, 2024). The curriculum should be designed to be progressive, flexible, and responsive to change to ensure that education matches current needs and prepares students to face future challenges (Bulturbayevich, 2021; Fidayani & Ammar, 2023; Kardi, Basri, Suhartini, & Meliani, 2023; Kaspin, Hamzah, Abdullah, Marzuki, & Razali, 2024). Education today faces many imbalances, including in terms of access to resources and technology. These

imbalances significantly affect how curricula are structured (Al-Shanawani, 2019; Ismail, Junaedi, Hassan, & Nasikhin, 2024). Not surprisingly, the Indonesian government has always endeavored to continuously develop and improve the curriculum to create educational outputs that are more adaptive and relevant to the needs of the times and the dynamics of life (Hakim, 2016; Hakim & Hasan, 2019; Hakim & Sari, 2022). This is because a curriculum that is not responsive enough to change can result in graduates who are less able to adjust to existing social conditions (Anggraeni & Purnomo, 2023; Zakiya, Irsyad, Rusdinal, & Nellitawati, 2023; Zamroni & Supriyanto, 2024).

Many research studies at both national and international levels, including global surveys such as the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), reveal that a large number of students in Indonesia have difficulty understanding basic reading texts or applying simple mathematical principles. PISA scores, however, show no significant progress over the last 10 to 15 years. About 70% of 15-year-old students in Indonesia fall below the minimum competency threshold in reading and math skills (Bhakti Rohyaningsih, Nasem, & Tanjung, 2023; Febrianti, Rahmat, Aniswita, & Fitri, 2023; Yusmar & Fadilah, 2023). This is exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic with academic knowledge and skills loss, and an increasing learning gap as evidenced by over 10,000 studies during 2022 (Andriani, Subandowo, Karyono, & Gunawan, 2021; Prianto, 2022). The government has implemented an emergency curriculum to simplify the curriculum as a strategic response to this learning decline (Badan Standar Kurikulum dan Asesmen Pendidikan Kemendikbudristek, 2022a; Irvan, Mushlihuddin, Rahman, Hartati, & Simangunsong, 2023; Juli Iswanto, 2022).

As the results of research by (Leny, 2022; Sahnun & Wibowo, 2023) who said that therefore the Ministry of Education made a breakthrough regarding the curriculum and learning system in Indonesia in the form of the Merdeka Belajar program policy. Then the results of the research by (Baro'ah, 2020; Surahman, Rahmani, Radiana, & Saputra, 2022). The concept of Merdeka Belajar is an idea that emphasizes the importance of freedom of thought for teachers and students in the learning process. The Merdeka Curriculum emerged as a further evolution and implementation of the emergency curriculum created in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This decree puts special emphasis on the Mobilizing Schools and Vocational Schools as Centers of Excellence. The curriculum consists of in-class learning activities and projects that aim to improve the student profile of Pancasila (Anggraeni & Purnomo, 2023; Hakim & Abidin, 2024; Samsudi, Suprptono, Utanto, Rohman, & Djafar, 2024; Windiatmoko, 2021). In the lesson plan, intracurricular activities are incorporated to achieve learning objectives that correspond to the dimensions of the Pancasila student profile. This is done to ensure that future students can act and think following Pancasila (Warsono, 2022).

According to (Rahmadayanti & Hartoyo, 2022) the Pancasila Learner Profile serves as the main guideline guiding educational policy, as well as the basis for educators in developing the character and competencies of their students. The Pancasila Learner Profile considers internal competencies, such as Indonesia's national identity, ideology, and aspirations. And also external factors, such as the social context and challenges facing Indonesia in the 21st century, especially in terms of the industrial revolution 4.0 (Badan Standar Kurikulum dan Asesmen Pendidikan Kemendikbudristek, 2022b; Jamila, 2023). With increased access to information and communication technology, new dangers arise for children's mental and physical health (Baharun et al., 2024; Hakim & Sari, 2022; Hakim, Sirojuddin, & Kartiko, 2023). The phenomenon of cyberbullying and competition-related depression are among the most significant mental health impacts according to (Rofiqi, Iksan, & M. Mansyur, 2023).

As stated by (Jamila, 2023) the OECD report in 2019 showed that digital technology harms most children in the 21st century and is strongly associated with their physical health conditions and emotional well-being. However, the cause-and-effect relationship between the two remains unclear. In other words, children who are depressed may be more susceptible to the negative effects of social media or social media use causing depression. Based on this correlation

(Badan Standar Kurikulum dan Asesmen Pendidikan Kemendikbudristek, 2022a) says that the education system can improve students' physical and emotional health without considering the use of digital technology. Advances such as the Internet of Things (IoT), big data and artificial intelligence have improved the efficiency of manufacturing systems, and robots have begun to replace dangerous, difficult or monotonous human jobs. Therefore, students need to be able to use, utilize, and learn technology to create and improve the benefits of the digital world (Faris, 2023; Setyorini & Khuriyah, 2023; Sholihah, 2021). To face the challenges and opportunities faced today, more than just cognitive abilities are required. This shows how important it is to have a clear graduate profile. The answer to this need is the Pancasila Learner Profile required by Indonesian students in the 21st century (Badan Penelitian dan Pengembangan dan Perbukuan Kemendikbud RI, 2020).

The government's efforts to reform the curriculum emphasize strengthening the Pancasila Student Profile as a pillar of education. By using a project-based approach that aims to find and establish solutions to various environmental problems (N. Hidayati, Yusuf, Nasir, & Kirom, 2023; Kahfi, 2021; Za, Walidin, Idris, & Huda, 2024). The Indonesian government is committed to continuously developing and improving the quality of human resources in order to be able to compete both at the national and international levels. In Presidential Instruction Number 9 of 2016 concerning the Revitalization of Vocational High Schools (SMK), the government focuses on improving the quality and competitiveness of Indonesian human resources by targeting the preparation of a competitive workforce that is ready to compete with foreign workers. The market need for skilled mid-level workers, such as SMK graduates, is a strong reason to prepare them early with good education (Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 2020; Mardi, 2021). While there are many studies exploring the implementation of Merdeka Curriculum, there is still a lack of research that specifically examines the impact of Merdeka Curriculum implementation in shaping the Pancasila Student Profile strengthening project (Wijnia, Noordzij, Arends, Rikers, & Loyens, 2024).

Previous studies tend to focus on general aspects of curriculum implementation or student competency assessment without deepening how this curriculum specifically affects character building and Pancasila values in students (Faizah, Prada, & Saidiyah, 2023). Therefore, the researcher chose SMK PK Krian 2 Sidoarjo which has been selected as SMK PK from the beginning of the launch of the SMK Center of Excellence program established on April 20, 2021 to the present which focuses on the machinery and construction sector with the Sepuluh November Institute of Technology as a companion university. The Education Unit Operational Curriculum is only implemented in SMK Centers of Excellence, meaning that less than 10 percent of the total number of SMKs in Indonesia have implemented it.

METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach to explore an in-depth understanding of the implementation of Merdeka curriculum in shaping the profile of Pancasila students (Creswell, 2019). The focus of the analysis lies on the process and factors that influence the implementation of Merdeka curriculum. Using the purposive sampling method, this study targets the Principal, Waka Kurikulum, Head of Department, and project teachers as the main data sources. Data was collected through observation, interviews, and documentation to ensure the richness of information regarding the research subject. This research is of the case study type, allowing an in-depth exploration of the implementation of Merdeka curriculum at SMK PK Krian 2, a school that has implemented this curriculum and run a project to strengthen the profile of Pancasila students (Sugiyono, 2019).

The location of this research is SMK PK Krian 2, which is located on Jalan Kyai Mojo, Katerungan Village, Krian District, Sidoarjo Regency. This location was chosen because the

school is part of the 1,102 schools that have implemented Merdeka curriculum and run the Pancasila learner profile strengthening project, signaling active involvement in this educational initiative. Research preparation included literature study and pre-observation which were conducted over three months, while research activities took place over three months, under research needs and the academic calendar.

The subjects of this study include individuals who provide data related to the variables under study, including the Principal, Waka Kurikulum, Head of Department, and project teachers, as well as related documentation. This research examines the implementation of Merdeka curriculum in shaping the profile of Pancasila students, with predetermined research subjects and objects to gain a comprehensive understanding of the topic.

The data in this study is qualitative and obtained through two types of sources: primary and secondary data. Primary data was obtained directly from informants through interviews and observations, while secondary data involved analyzing documents relevant to the curriculum and the Pancasila learner profile strengthening project (Kusumastuti & Khoiron, 2019). Data collection techniques included observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation studies, all of which were designed to gather accurate and in-depth information about the implementation of the curriculum and its influence on the formation of the Pancasila learner profile. Data analysis was conducted through data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing, following the concepts developed by Miles and Huberman. Data validity was tested through triangulation to ensure the reliability of the research results (Samsu, 2017).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Independent Curriculum Planning in Shaping the Profile of Pancasila Students

The Merdeka curriculum has components that educational units can use as learning guidelines which will later become material for evaluation. The school operational curriculum is a component that serves as a reference for all learning activities at school. To start learning, the education unit creates an operational curriculum based on the basic framework and structure of the special curriculum for the SMK Center of Excellence program established by the government through (Badan Standar Kurikulum dan Asesmen Pendidikan Kemendikbudristek, 2022a).

SMK PK Krian 2 as a Center of Excellence school implements a school operational curriculum which is the first step in improving the curriculum at SMK. From the results of interviews and documentation studies, it is known that SMK PK Krian 2 in planning the Merdeka curriculum, educators and education personnel at SMK PK Krian 2 carry out the stages needed to develop a school operational curriculum before it is implemented in work meetings. Determination of goals is equated with the goals of SMK PK Krian 2 which are based on Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution. This is determined so that whatever system is implemented in the school, the goal remains the same and there is no confusion.

In achieving these goals, an operational curriculum is prepared and the first thing done by the school is to prepare its human resources, namely educators, education personnel, students and parents are involved in building the culture of the education unit, understanding their respective roles and encouraging strengthening the capacity of educators as facilitators. The focus on improving human resources is done when starting to implement the new curriculum in schools as the most important and main factor to be given a good understanding in order to run the new curriculum. This was further explained by Mr. Angga Panca Alam Anugrah Head of the Industrial Electronics Engineering Department in an interview:

The first thing to be improved is starting from the human resources, namely the teachers, the discipline of the teachers who are formed first by the principal. The agreement and commitment of the school community, especially the teaching and education staff, is what is strengthened first. In the past, it was not this good, so

the way of working was not controlled and once there was commitment we changed for the better with the aim of better service to students.

With more prepared human resources, the school tries to find the right formula in developing the Merdeka curriculum by conducting diagnostic assessments through learning style and personality tests so that learning will take place according to the needs of students. The results of the test are very helpful for educators in compiling the school's operational curriculum and finding appropriate learning methods. Regarding this, it was explained in an interview by the Waka Kurikulum of SMK PK Krian 2, Mr. Heri Sugianto, who explained that:

The Merdeka Curriculum changes the learning culture at SMK PK Krian 2, which was previously preoccupied with administrative activities but now improvises a lot and has found a formula, namely all project-based learning (normative, adaptive, productive). At the beginning of conducting a diagnostic assessment using google form, the result was that 90% of vocational students did not like theory and had to practice a lot.

The preparation of the school operational curriculum at SMK PK Krian 2 is also adjusted to the needs of the business world and the industrial world which are synchronized with guidelines from the government in line with what the ministry of education and culture revealed in a press release from the ministry and culture that the curriculum is compiled together in line with strengthening aspects of soft skills, hard skills, and work character according to the needs of the world of work (Faizah et al., 2023; Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 2021). The method taken is to increase the MoU so that it is easier to see the needs in the field and what is most needed by companies from their employees is personal character that can affect the quality of work.

The Pancasila learner profile strengthening project is a project-based co-curricular activity in the Merdeka curriculum that aims to strengthen the efforts of educational institutions to shape the Pancasila learner profile of their students (Aditomo, 2021). In line with the objectives of SMK PK Krian 2, which are also based on Pancasila, the project is an important step for the school in achieving its goals. In order to facilitate its implementation, a workflow with three stages is arranged, namely preparation, implementation and reflection. In the initial stage, the initial identification of the unit's readiness using the flow of questions showed that SMK PK Krian 2 was at an advanced stage ready to implement project-based learning.

The formation of the facilitator team or the person in charge of the project is determined by mutual agreement tailored to the needs of the school, namely focused on teaching teachers for class X with the head of Curriculum as the implementation coordinator. The P5BK (*Proyek Penguatan Profil Pelajar Pancasila dan Budaya Kerja*) Project on Strengthening Pancasila Student Profile and Work Culture team makes the focus of the school year by selecting 2-3 dimensions that are very relevant for the project target. These dimensions are adjusted to the vision and mission of the educational institution. To make the objectives of the Pancasila project clearer, government guidelines suggest that the project should not involve too many aspects of the Pancasila student profile (Direktorat Sekolah Menengah Kejuruan Kemendikbudristek, 2021)

In its planning at SMK PK Krian 2, the P5BK team chose 2-3 dimensions of the learner profile to be achieved for each project theme so that all 6 dimensions were to be achieved in one school year which made it less efficient in achieving them. This is also because it is not continued with the determination of elements and sub-elements that follow the conditions of the learners in the development stage of the profile project module.

In choosing a theme, as a school that is already at an advanced stage, it can choose 3-5 themes for each level or class, and specifically for SMK there is a mandatory theme, namely employment and work culture for all levels. The theme selection model is divided by level with the provisions of the number of themes described in the guidelines by the government, namely for

SMK level class X three profile projects with one work theme and two optional themes, class XI two profile projects with one work theme and for class XII is one profile project with a work theme (Badan Penelitian dan Pengembangan dan Perbukuan Kemendikbudristek, 2021)

Table 1. Theme Selection Model

NO	THEME	CLASS X 288 JP			CLASS XI 144 JP			CLASS XII 72 JP			DESCRIPTION
P I L I H A N	1 Sustainable Lifestyle;		√		√		√				1. Assumed 36 weeks/year 2. Project on Strengthening Pancasila Student Profile and Work Culture 4- 6 weeks/year 3. Implementation options according to school conditions such as: Day of the week or weekly block or month block. 4. Class XII can be done 1 semester
	2 Local wisdom;	√		√		√					
	3 Unity in Diversity				√		√		√		
	4 Build up the body and soul					√		√		√	
	5 Voice of Democracy			√				√	√		
	6 Engineering and Technology to Build NKRI			√	√	√					
	7 Entrepreneurship		√					√	√		
W A J I B	8 Employment	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	
	9 Work Culture	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	
Total		3	4	5	5	5	5	5	4	3	
SMK Model: A/B/C		A	B	C	A	B	C	A	B	C	

In choosing the theme, SMK PK Krian 2 decided to choose the C model in which class X takes three optional themes, class XI three optional themes and class XII one optional theme plus a compulsory theme for each level so that during the three school years in SMK students have implemented all nine themes. With this decision, it indicates that the school has identified that the school is ready to run a sustainable project.

The design of the time allocation for the Pancasila learner profile project at SMK PK Krian 2 is by first identifying the total number of profile project hours each class has. The number of hours has been determined in Kepmendikbudristek RI Number 56/M/2022 with the provision that for SMK class X the allocation of profile project hours is 288 JP, class XI 144 JP and class XII is 72 JP. Furthermore, in choosing the time to implement the profile project, the school takes a monthly block from three other project implementation time options, namely weekly blocks and daily blocks. The monthly block is chosen according to the needs and abilities of SMK PK Krian 2 by compressing the implementation of the theme in one period of time depending on the number of face-to-face hours allocated in each profile project.

The budget is designed at once by the facilitator team for the needs of project implementation including the celebration. SMK PK Krian 2 maximizes BOS funds to meet the needs of project implementation by means of students accompanied by the teaching teacher proposing the budget needed to carry out the project that has been determined.

Furthermore, the facilitator team along with the profile project teaching teachers developed a project module that was guided by examples of project modules provided by the government which contained four components in it, namely module profile, objectives, activities and assessments. The first step in SMK PK Krian 2 is to assess the existing module based on students' developmental stage and school situation. Then, the module is modified by adjusting the content, including topics, objectives, activities and assessments to suit the needs. The final step is to readjust to ensure that the objectives, activities, and assessments in the module are appropriate and to ensure that the issues or themes raised and the students' objectives are appropriate.

In the project module, a rubric for the achievement of objectives or sub-elements of the dimensions within the theme is compiled to determine the development of learners in achieving the Pancasila learner profile and to carry out assessments. The rubric is divided into four, namely starting to develop, developing, developing as expected, and very developing, which are assessed from the competencies in the dimensions that are adjusted to the phase of the learners. The competencies differ according to the phase, which is divided into six phases according to the age and level of the learners. As for project presenters and facilitators, the school also brings in experts in their fields that are under the theme of the project being implemented to maximize the experience of students and strengthen partnership relationships.

The Merdeka Curriculum, primarily implemented at SMK PK Krian 2 as a Center of Excellence school, represents a step forward in adapting vocational education to the changing world of business and industry. This approach not only ensures that learning materials are relevant to the competencies needed in the workplace, but also ensures that educators, education personnel, learners, and parents are actively involved in the development of the operational curriculum and work closely with businesses and industry through MoUs. Through the activities of the Pancasila learner profile strengthening project, the initiative also ensures that basic values such as those contained in Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution are integrated in every aspect of learning. The program prepares students not only for their careers but also for their professional lives.

Implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in Shaping the Profile of Pancasila Students

The purpose of this stage is to realize the previously made plans using various methods and resources that have been determined at the planning stage (W. Hidayati, Syaefudin, & Muslimah, 2018). In the implementation of the Merdeka curriculum to ensure hard skills, soft skills, and strong character, learning is pursued based on real projects from the world of work (project-based learning) and that is what is applied at SMK PK Krian 2 in both intracurricular and co-curricular activities. During learning in heterogeneous classes, educators have a basic capacity in the form of differentiation strategies and project-based learning because that way educators can meet the needs of students as a whole. Examples of some projects from real project-based learning are explained by the Head of Curriculum as follows;

Project-based real learning such as TKR, they can go to village centers to help such as changing oil on Fridays or the DKV department makes banners of hope. So the sellers whose selling banners are still not good enough are made and their merchandise is also helped to be promoted if for the office they go to villages whose administration is not good enough to help. The industrial electronics department helped make the prayer schedule in the form of a running text.

The results of observations related to good classroom management is the first step in implementing project-based learning at SMK PK Krian 2, starting from the arrangement of learning spaces made by groups based on the way of learning and the interests of students. The learning methods used are also different so that it is not monotonous and learner-centered which is facilitated by various learning media. Educators as facilitators provide a theme and a problem or

project that must be solved and students actively group to discuss a problem and work on a project together so that collaborative learning is created.

Collaborative learning allows students to gain various learning experiences such as by having many discussions, presentations and working on a project so that it fosters learner profiles such as mutual cooperation and critical reasoning. Based on the interview results, it also shows that the teacher at the end of learning in class, summarizes and explains the conclusions and objectives of the learning that has been done so that students' thoughts are directed and not mistaken in understanding the essence of the learning. Feedback given by students is also positive and they are more dominant and happy to carry out project-based learning than just theories delivered through lectures when in class.

Furthermore, the Pancasila learner profile development project is a learning method that comes from various disciplines and focuses on project objectives to improve various skills contained in the Pancasila learner profile (Kurniasih, 2022). The Pancasila learner profile strengthening project is designed separately from intracurricular and is implemented flexibly in terms of content, activities, and time. Because it is flexible and left entirely to the education unit, its implementation at SMK PK Krian 2 adapts to the activity plan that has been compiled independently beforehand.

The implementation of profile projects is grouped into various pre-selected themes, the government has determined the main themes to be formulated into topics by educational units. The first theme is chosen, local wisdom, and has three project titles, the three activities are *ngaji bareng*, *napak tilas*, and decorative table lamps. If described, the theme of local wisdom should be to build curiosity and inquiry skills of students through exploration of the culture and local wisdom of the surrounding community. With the three activities that have been carried out, all three aim to directly invite students to see the various wisdoms around them from various perspectives.

The second theme is the voice of democracy with activities in the form of direct battalion (student council) voting coupled with making an appeal poster about democracy. This activity is in line with the theme of the voice of democracy which is intended so that students can reflect on the meaning of democracy and understand the implementation of democracy and its challenges in different contexts, including in school organizations. The third theme is engineering and technology to build NKRI and the title of the project implemented is the utilization of innovative technology and making soap from used cooking oil. If connected with the government's goal regarding this theme is to teach people to think critically, and innovatively, and empathize with engineers to build technological products that facilitate the activities of themselves and others. These two activities help people learn the basics about the use of current technology which is very important when making products.

The fourth theme is mandatory, namely employment with three project titles in it. The three activities are socialization of school rules, SAR, First Aid and HSE activities, and sports. The last theme is work culture with four different activities, the first is the learning contract and three-party commitment, the second is the introduction of foreign cultures and languages and the third is Public Speaking. The theme of work and work culture can be a unity that is implemented to build students' understanding in connecting various knowledge that has been understood with real experiences in daily life and the world of work. Class X is still given the basics of simple knowledge at school which will be useful in the world of work.

Whereas in the context of documentation studies on the implementation of assessment is an important step in profile project activities and there are two assessments, namely formative and summative. In the project module, filling out the assessment is arranged in the form of a rubric that shows the results of learner achievement in various phases. The developmental phases are determined under the objectives to be achieved in each theme. These objectives are sub-elements selected by the facilitator team that become the character focus of the dimensions that must exist

in learners as Pancasila learners. In P5BK, the results of the assessment can measure the achievement of goals or profiles that must be formed in students and as evaluation material for further project development. Regarding this, the following is an explanation from Mr. Angga as the head of the department and teachers who deal directly with students:

From the general report card and project, it is clear that the attitude assessment is in writing and no longer a number so that we can know the stage of development of the child's ability and attitude. Maybe if the attitude cannot be changed within one month or two months, but if we can create learning-related mechanisms shortly, over time from the learning patterns that we have created it can change the attitude of children but this is a long process because children are only eight hours at school and the rest spend a lot of time at home. While at home, we must know the parenting patterns, and what the environment is like so that the whole builds the character of the students.

Finally, at SMK PK Krian 2, when viewed from the results of the rubric for assessing the achievement of the sub-elements, the majority of students are at the developing stage, but seeing the overall formation of the Pancasila learner profile in students is not easy, especially about character because many factors can also influence. Such as internal or family factors at home and from school, namely 5% of older teachers who are still struggling to understand the development of the Merdeka curriculum and also from the industry, sometimes the availability of time is not synchronized so that the school must adjust the time so that it can be synchronized and activities can still be carried out.

As an educational institution, SMK PK Krian 2 tries to maximize the formation of student profiles while in the school environment and one of the efforts made is the implementation of the Pancasila student profile strengthening project. Implementing the project-based Merdeka curriculum makes it easier for educators to shape student profiles even though it has not yet reached the stage of significant development in students but by evaluating the implementation in this first year, the school is optimistic that the project can help school efforts in achieving goals.

The implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum project described in the context of SMK PK Krian 2 has shown progressive steps in strengthening students' hard skills, soft skills, and character through an integrated approach with the needs of the world of work (Anam, Sulaeman, Mustakim, Putra, & Hakim, 2024; Djalilah, Muzakar, Suhardi, & Kartiko, 2024). The application of project-based learning methods, which involve intracurricular and co-curricular activities, as well as projects to strengthen the profile of Pancasila students, shows a commitment to holistic and adaptive learning. This collaborative, cross-disciplinary learning not only helps students improve their cognitive and non-cognitive abilities but also helps them strengthen their identity by learning democratic values and local wisdom (Erawadi & Setiadi, 2024; Mu'min, 2023). This approach has great potential to produce students who are competitive and rooted in the values of Pancasila. This is despite obstacles such as adaptation of senior teachers and synchronization with industry. However, students showed positive responses and initial evaluations were promising.

Table 2. Research Findings

No	Indicator	Findings
Planning		
1	Objectives to be achieved	Goal setting is equalized with the objectives of SMK PK Krian 2 which are based on Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution in formulating the school operational curriculum.
2	Identify school readiness	Performed with the standards that have been made by the government, namely reflecting with a flow of questions that show SMK PK Krian 2 is already at an advanced stage ready to implement project-based learning.

3	Personnel	Educators and education personnel are given training and guidance on the implementation of the learning curriculum, the results of which the majority have understood, although 5% of older teachers have not been able to adapt optimally.
4	Designing budget and timeline	In meeting the needs of project implementation, the budget is designed by maximizing BOS funds and the time is well adjusted.
5	Method development	The method applied is the result of the development of guidelines prepared by the Ministry of Education and Culture that follow the needs of students in schools.
Implementation		
6	Strategies used	The initial diagnostic assessment shows that SMK students prefer project-based learning so the strategy made by the school is appropriate in helping students' character development.
7	Learning and assessment	Learning is maximized based on projects and the assessment used is no longer only based on numbers but the development of the dimensions of the Pancasila learner profile following the objectives to be achieved.
8	Conducting project celebrations	The results of the projects that have been carried out are exhibited in a project celebration that shows the development of student's abilities.
9	Assessment processing and project reporting	The implementation of the independent curriculum facilitates educators in shaping the profile of Pancasila learners but not yet at the stage of significant student character development because many other factors influence it.

CONCLUSION

The Merdeka Curriculum at SMK PK Krian 2 demonstrates a systematic and structured effort in building a school operational curriculum that not only meets the needs of business and industry but also integrates the strengthening of the Pancasila learner profile as the foundation of learner character. By involving all elements of the school in curriculum planning and implementation, the school has successfully designed and implemented a curriculum that is compatible with Pancasila's learning. One important step towards creating graduates with integrity and Pancasila values is to emphasize the development of soft skills, hard skills, and employability character through Pancasila-based co-curricular projects. Governments, schools and communities must work together to develop and implement a broad and adaptive education curriculum. The application of Pancasila values in every aspect of the educational process, confirms the important role of education in the formation of students' character and national identity.

The implementation of Merdeka curriculum at SMK PK Krian 2, which focuses on project-based learning, aims to develop students' hard skills, soft skills, and strong character through real-world projects. With good classroom management and collaborative approach, students are expected to experience deep learning, encouraging teamwork and critical thinking. SMK PK Krian 2 also implements Pancasila learner profile strengthening projects, with diverse themes, from local wisdom to technology, to strengthen students' competencies according to the Pancasila learner profile. Despite challenges in student character building and adaptation to the Merdeka curriculum, this effort is considered an important step in shaping the expected learner

profile. Evaluation from the first year of implementation shows optimism that the project-based approach can be effective in achieving educational goals at SMK PK Krian 2.

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