

## Transformation of Curriculum Administration in the Era of the Merdeka Curriculum: Opportunities for Flexibility and Challenges of Teachers' Administrative Workload

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**ABSTRACT.** Curriculum administration is an essential element in ensuring that educational implementation runs effectively, consistently, and in accordance with students' needs. This study emphasizes that curriculum administration is not merely an administrative activity but also plays a strategic role in linking curriculum documents with classroom learning practices. Using a literature review method, this study examines literature related to curriculum planning, implementation, supervision, and evaluation, as well as the challenges that arise in curriculum implementation. The findings indicate that learning flexibility is a key factor; however, an increase in administrative workload can reduce teaching time, cause teacher stress, and limit innovation. Therefore, the success of curriculum administration depends on balancing administrative demands with pedagogical needs, as well as the active involvement of all stakeholders, including school principals, teachers, educational staff, and the educational community. The integration of technology and professional development has also been shown to support the efficiency of curriculum management. Through adaptive, collaborative, and responsive approaches, curriculum administration is able to improve learning quality, student achievement, and schools' capacity to respond to contemporary changes. This study affirms that curriculum administration should be viewed as a strategic instrument that supports the comprehensive and sustainable achievement of educational goals in Indonesia.

**Keywords:** *Curriculum Administration, Curriculum Implementation, Learning Quality*

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## INTRODUCTION

Education is a deliberately designed process aimed at developing students' potential holistically, encompassing knowledge, skills, and attitudes in order to achieve institutional and societal goals. Within this framework, the curriculum serves as the principal guideline for organizing the learning process, functioning not merely as a formal document but as an operational foundation that directs educational practices (Lili Rahmawati et al., 2023). Therefore, curriculum administration becomes a crucial element in ensuring that the designed curriculum can be implemented effectively and consistently through systematic activities such as planning, implementation, supervision, and evaluation (Rani Nurfitri et al., 2023).

As an integral part of educational management, curriculum administration plays a strategic role in creating structured, relevant, and goal-oriented learning processes. Conceptually, it encompasses a set of coordinated activities intended to ensure coherence between curriculum planning and classroom practices (Yogi Fernando et al., 2023). In this regard, curriculum administration extends beyond technical or bureaucratic tasks; it determines the quality of educational implementation through the organization of learning content, pedagogical approaches, and assessment systems aligned with national education objectives.

However, despite its strategic importance, empirical realities indicate that curriculum administration is often positioned merely as a compliance-oriented administrative task rather than as a transformative management process. In many schools, administrative demands tend to focus on documentation and reporting requirements, potentially reducing the time and energy available for pedagogical innovation. (Rosyada et al., 2024) note that excessive administrative workload may consume instructional time, increase stress levels, limit collaboration and innovation, and ultimately affect classroom learning effectiveness. This condition highlights a critical tension between administrative accountability and pedagogical flexibility.

The implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum further illustrates this complexity. The policy requires schools to demonstrate adaptive and responsive administrative capacities in addressing diverse student needs while providing flexibility in designing and managing contextualized learning processes. Studies show that effective curriculum management frameworks are essential to support this adaptability and continuous adjustment to evolving learning demands (Sepiawardani & Bektiningsih, 2023; Anggraini et al., 2024; Irsyad et al., 2024). Nevertheless, the shift toward greater flexibility also demands stronger coordination, monitoring, and evaluation mechanisms, which may increase administrative responsibilities at the school level. Consequently, the success of Merdeka Curriculum implementation largely depends on schools' ability to balance instructional autonomy with administrative requirements.

In practice, curriculum administration involves multiple stakeholders, including school principals, teachers, and educational staff, as well as the optimization of institutional resources (Muhammad Arifin Nugraha et al., 2025; Maryatini, 2024). This indicates that curriculum administration is inherently collaborative and systemic, rather than merely procedural. However, existing studies tend to discuss curriculum administration conceptually or normatively, with limited emphasis on how administrative practices are operationalized in schools and how they influence the quality of learning implementation, particularly within the context of the Merdeka Curriculum. This gap underscores the need for a more focused examination of curriculum administration practices at the institutional level.

Therefore, this study aims to analyze the implementation of curriculum administration within the context of the Merdeka Curriculum, focusing on how administrative processes are managed, how stakeholders are involved, and how these processes contribute to the effectiveness and quality of learning. By addressing the practical and managerial dimensions of curriculum administration, this research seeks to provide a clearer understanding of its strategic role in advancing sustainable educational quality improvement in Indonesia.

## **METHOD**

This study employs a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) to ensure methodological rigor, transparency, and replicability. The review procedure was adapted from PRISMA guidelines and consisted of four stages: identification, screening, eligibility assessment, and inclusion. A systematic search was conducted across Scopus, ERIC, Google Scholar, and nationally accredited journal databases. The search used combinations of the following keywords: "curriculum administration," "curriculum management," "educational management," "Merdeka Curriculum," and "curriculum implementation." Boolean operators (AND, OR) were applied to refine the

results. The publication timeframe was limited to 2015–2025 to ensure relevance to contemporary educational reforms, while seminal works published prior to this period were included selectively when theoretically significant.

Inclusion criteria were: (1) peer-reviewed journal articles, scholarly books, research reports, or official policy documents; (2) publications in English or Indonesian; (3) studies addressing administrative or managerial aspects of curriculum implementation in formal education settings; and (4) works presenting empirical findings or well-established conceptual frameworks. Exclusion criteria comprised non-academic publications, sources lacking methodological clarity, and studies not directly aligned with the research focus. Following duplicate removal, titles and abstracts were screened for relevance. Full-text articles meeting the inclusion criteria were then assessed for methodological quality and conceptual contribution. The final corpus of selected studies formed the basis of analysis.

Data were analyzed using qualitative content analysis. The procedure involved: (1) data reduction through extraction of relevant arguments, findings, and conceptual elements; (2) thematic categorization into key domains such as planning, implementation mechanisms, stakeholder roles, monitoring and evaluation, administrative challenges, and curriculum flexibility; (3) cross-study comparison to identify patterns and inconsistencies; and (4) synthesis to construct an integrated analytical narrative aligned with the research objectives. This structured approach enhances analytical transparency and ensures that the findings are grounded in systematically selected and critically evaluated literature.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **Result**

The results of the literature review indicate that curriculum administration plays a highly strategic role in ensuring the smoothness, coherence, and quality of the learning process within educational institutions. Rather than functioning merely as an administrative mechanism concerned with documentation and procedural compliance, curriculum administration represents a systemic framework that connects curriculum policy at the macro level with pedagogical practice at the micro level. Conceptually, curriculum administration involves a series of planned, organized, and systematic activities, including planning, implementation, supervision, and evaluation, all of which aim to bridge curriculum documents with real classroom practices (Muhammad Arifin Nugraha et al., 2025).

This bridging function is critical because curriculum documents no matter how well designed do not automatically translate into effective teaching and learning. The presence of structured administrative processes ensures that curricular intentions are operationalized in lesson plans, instructional strategies, classroom assessment practices, and reflective improvements. Without strong administrative coordination, there is a risk that curriculum implementation becomes fragmented, inconsistent, and detached from its intended goals.

Findings from several studies reinforce that without effective curriculum administration, curriculum implementation tends to become a mere administrative formality and does not significantly impact the improvement of learning quality. In many cases, educational institutions may formally adopt a curriculum framework, yet fail to internalize its philosophical foundations, competency targets, or pedagogical implications. This phenomenon highlights the distinction between procedural compliance and substantive implementation. Effective curriculum administration therefore requires more than regulatory adherence; it demands organizational commitment, instructional leadership, and continuous quality monitoring.

Effective curriculum administration also requires strong collaboration among school stakeholders and a deep understanding of students' needs and local contexts. Curriculum implementation does not occur in a vacuum; it operates within specific socio-cultural, economic, and institutional environments. Therefore, administrators must ensure that curricular design and delivery reflect local realities while maintaining alignment with national educational standards. The contextualization of curriculum content strengthens its relevance and increases student engagement, thereby enhancing learning outcomes.

Studies evaluating the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum show that learning flexibility is a necessity but also presents new challenges in curriculum management. (Rosyada et al., 2024) demonstrate that increased administrative burdens can reduce teaching time, cause teacher stress, limit collaboration and innovation, and generate additional costs, which ultimately diminish the effectiveness of classroom learning.

This finding is particularly important because the Merdeka Curriculum emphasizes autonomy, differentiation, and contextual adaptation. While flexibility provides opportunities for creativity and responsiveness, it simultaneously demands greater planning capacity, documentation processes, and reporting mechanisms. Teachers are required not only to design adaptive learning experiences but also to document progress, conduct reflective evaluations, and coordinate interdisciplinary learning projects. When administrative demands exceed available time and institutional support, the intended pedagogical innovation may be compromised.

These findings are consistent with other literature analyses highlighting the importance of time management skills and resource support in curriculum administration so as not to disrupt core learning processes (Rosyada et al., 2024). Time allocation becomes a central variable in curriculum effectiveness. Excessive bureaucratic procedures may inadvertently shift teachers' focus away from instructional preparation toward paperwork completion. Therefore, a balance must be established between accountability requirements and pedagogical autonomy.

This study underscores the importance of balancing administrative demands with teachers' pedagogical responsibilities in implementing innovative curricula such as the Merdeka Curriculum. Administrative structures should function as enabling mechanisms rather than restrictive controls. School leadership must therefore design management systems that streamline documentation processes, optimize digital tools, and reduce redundancy in reporting procedures. In doing so, curriculum administration can serve as a facilitator of innovation rather than an obstacle to instructional creativity.

Furthermore, other literature findings indicate that the active involvement of stakeholders, including school principals, teachers, educational staff, and the broader educational community significantly contributes to the effectiveness of curriculum administration. Synergy between internal and external school parties supports more inclusive and responsive decision-making processes in addressing contemporary educational changes (Syuhada et al., 2024).

Stakeholder involvement enhances curriculum ownership. When educators and community members participate in planning and evaluating curriculum initiatives, they develop a stronger sense of responsibility and alignment with institutional goals. This participatory approach also allows curriculum decisions to reflect diverse perspectives, thereby increasing adaptability and social relevance. Inclusive governance structures encourage transparency, shared accountability, and collective problem-solving.

This approach not only strengthens administrative implementation but also encourages stakeholder participation in continuously designing, reviewing, and evaluating curriculum practices. Continuous improvement cycles supported by collaborative reflection enable schools to

adjust instructional strategies based on student performance data and contextual developments. Thus, curriculum administration becomes dynamic and iterative rather than static and procedural.

Several studies also emphasize the role of technology and professional development in curriculum administration. The integration of technology in curriculum management processes has been shown to enhance communication efficiency, data coordination, and the monitoring of curriculum implementation, particularly in the current digital era. Digital platforms facilitate real-time reporting, centralized documentation, and data-driven evaluation mechanisms.

Findings from the literature review indicate that synergy between effective curriculum management, improved teacher professional competence, and consistent utilization of educational technology can lead to higher learning outcomes and more adaptive school management in response to global changes (Aprianto & Wahyudi, 2023). Professional development ensures that teachers possess the pedagogical and technological skills necessary to operationalize curriculum frameworks effectively. Meanwhile, technological integration streamlines administrative workflows and enhances institutional transparency.

Taken together, these results indicate that the integration of technology in curriculum administration, supported by continuous professional development, is fundamental to achieving effective, adaptable, and sustainable education in a dynamic global landscape. Educational institutions must therefore invest not only in infrastructure but also in human capital development to maximize the benefits of curriculum innovation.

## **Discussion**

### The Process of Curriculum Administration Development

The process of curriculum development is a series of stages reflecting continuous efforts to adapt, improve, and refine curricula so that they remain relevant to the demands of the times, advancements in science and technology, and socio-cultural developments. Curriculum development is inherently dynamic; it responds to evolving knowledge systems, labor market demands, technological transformation, and societal expectations. In Indonesia, this process has gone through several important phases, shifting from an emphasis on factual knowledge toward a more holistic and competency-based approach.

According to (Paramita et al., 2025), curriculum transformation in Indonesia has undergone several significant stages, including:

1. An emphasis on the mastery of factual knowledge;
2. A shift toward a more holistic approach integrating attitudes, skills, and values;
3. The provision of flexibility for educational units to design and implement curricula according to local contexts (as in the Merdeka Curriculum).

The first phase, characterized by factual knowledge mastery, reflected a traditional paradigm in which learning outcomes were primarily measured through cognitive recall. While this approach contributed to foundational literacy and numeracy, it often neglected affective and psychomotor dimensions. The subsequent shift toward holistic integration represented a paradigm transformation in educational philosophy, recognizing that meaningful education encompasses character formation, critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and ethical responsibility.

The introduction of flexibility in the Merdeka Curriculum marks a significant milestone in curriculum decentralization. Educational units are empowered to contextualize learning content based on regional characteristics and student diversity. This flexibility promotes innovation but

also requires stronger administrative coordination to ensure coherence across subjects and grade levels.

This developmental process involves analyzing students' needs, formulating curriculum objectives, selecting and organizing content, and developing structured and continuous learning experiences in accordance with changing conditions and modern technological developments. Needs analysis serves as the foundational step in curriculum planning, ensuring that educational programs align with learner profiles and community expectations. Objective formulation translates broad educational goals into measurable competencies. Content organization ensures logical sequencing and interdisciplinary integration.

The process of curriculum administration development includes structured stages to ensure that educational curricula effectively achieve learning objectives. This process encompasses planning, implementation, supervision, and evaluation, which are interrelated to optimize curriculum management in educational institutions. Planning determines direction, implementation operationalizes strategy, supervision maintains quality control, and evaluation measures effectiveness for continuous improvement.

These stages are not linear but cyclical. Evaluation results inform subsequent planning processes, thereby creating a feedback loop that strengthens institutional learning. Schools that adopt reflective administrative practices are better positioned to respond to emerging educational challenges.

#### Curriculum Implementation in Schools

The implementation of relevant curriculum administration in schools can be observed from research findings in several schools in Indonesia, which show that curriculum administration processes including planning, organizing, implementation, supervision, and evaluation are conducted effectively.

The study by (Bariroh&Yuniarti, 2016) at SMK Negeri Winongan found that curriculum administration was comprehensively applied, starting from curriculum planning, preparation of learning schedules, organization of teachers' tasks, implementation of learning programs, to the evaluation of student learning outcomes and curriculum implementation effectiveness. This structured approach demonstrates how systematic administration supports instructional continuity.

Sound curriculum administration supports the smooth conduct of teaching and learning activities (KBM) and optimally improves student academic achievement. Administrative clarity ensures that teachers understand instructional timelines, competency targets, and assessment frameworks. When responsibilities are clearly distributed, coordination becomes more efficient, reducing instructional disruptions.

In practice, school principals, vice principals for curriculum, and teachers actively manage all aspects of curriculum administration to ensure that learning targets are achieved. Leadership plays a central role in aligning institutional vision with classroom implementation. Instructional leadership characterized by guidance, monitoring, and professional support strengthens teacher performance and accountability.

In general, curriculum administration in schools includes:

1. the preparation of annual and semester programs.
2. learning scheduling and distribution of teachers' duties.
3. monitoring and evaluation of curriculum implementation.
4. documentation of learning outcomes and administrative reports.

5. coordination among teachers, school principals, and related parties.

Each component contributes to systemic coherence. Annual and semester programs provide macro-level planning, while scheduling ensures logistical feasibility. Monitoring mechanisms detect implementation gaps, and documentation facilitates transparency and accountability.

The literature review indicates that curriculum administration is a crucial foundation in the education system; however, its effectiveness largely depends on educational institutions' ability to align several key factors. These factors include curriculum flexibility, human resource support, the use of technology, and broad stakeholder involvement. Synergy among these elements allows curriculum administration to go beyond mere administrative activities and play a strategic role in determining learning quality and the sustainable achievement of educational goals (Muhammad Arifin Nugraha et al., 2025; Aprianto & Wahyudi, 2023).

With structured and adaptive management, schools are able to respond to changing student needs and the demands of contemporary educational development. Adaptive management involves continuous data analysis, reflective evaluation, and timely adjustment of instructional strategies.

Effective implementation of curriculum administration has been shown to support improvements in student academic achievement through systematic process management, thereby minimizing administrative barriers. Administrative efficiency reduces teacher workload stress and enhances instructional focus. The active role of all stakeholders, including school principals, teachers, educational staff, and the educational community strengthens synergy in aligning the curriculum with local contexts and student characteristics (Syuhada et al., 2024; Rinaldho et al., 2024).

Thus, collaborative and responsive curriculum administration becomes a key factor in the successful implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum and the strengthening of sustainable educational quality. Ultimately, curriculum administration must be viewed not merely as procedural management but as strategic educational leadership that ensures coherence, accountability, innovation, and long-term institutional growth.

## **CONCLUSION**

Curriculum administration is a strategic component of the education system that plays an important role in bridging curriculum planning with classroom learning practices. Its success is determined not only by compliance with procedures and documentation but also by schools' ability to adapt the curriculum to students' needs, local contexts, and the demands of contemporary educational development. Through adaptive and structured approaches, curriculum administration can ensure that teaching and learning processes take place effectively and consistently.

Moreover, the success of curriculum administration heavily depends on collaboration and the involvement of all stakeholders, ranging from school principals and teachers to educational staff and the broader educational community. This synergy strengthens flexible curriculum management, encourages learning innovation, and facilitates teachers in adapting teaching methods and materials to students' characteristics. Therefore, curriculum administration is not merely an administrative matter but an instrument that supports learning quality and the comprehensive achievement of educational objectives.

Finally, effective curriculum administration has been proven to enhance student academic achievement, reduce administrative barriers, and strengthen schools' adaptability to global changes and student needs. Collaborative and responsive implementation is key to the successful execution of the Merdeka Curriculum while reinforcing sustainable educational quality.

Therefore, curriculum administration must be viewed as an essential strategic element in the development of education in Indonesia.

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