



*Literature Curriculum Development through Education Policy
(A Literature Study Analysis)*

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ABSTRAK

This study examines the influence of educational policies on the development of the literary curriculum in Indonesia, particularly through the Merdeka Curriculum. Using a literature study method, the research analyzes various sources, including books, journal articles, and policy reports. The findings indicate that while the Merdeka Curriculum aims to enhance character development through a student-centered, holistic approach, its implementation faces significant challenges. These include issues with teacher readiness, infrastructure limitations, and an evaluation system that does not fully capture character development. A comparative analysis of Finland's education system underscores the need for improved resource distribution and curriculum relevance. Recommendations focus on addressing infrastructure gaps and aligning literary works with students' developmental stages. The study provides evidence-based insights for policymakers to refine educational policies and improve the literary curriculum in Indonesia.

Keywords: Literary Curriculum, Educational Policies, Character Development.

INTRODUCTION

In today's social phenomenon, character development is increasingly influenced by various factors, including the educational system, particularly the literary curriculum in schools. Schools, as the largest and most enduring learning environments, play a significant role in shaping students' characters (Pike et al., 2021). Through literature, students have the opportunity to develop critical thinking skills, empathy, and an understanding of diverse human values (Kim, 2023; Michaud, 2021).

The literary curriculum is vital in character education. However, data and studies indicate that this curriculum often falls short of addressing deeper character issues (Patton & Prince, 2018). For instance, research shows that many students lack an understanding of the social and cultural contexts embedded in their study literature (Bal et al., 2021; Becker, 2020; Osman et al., 2021; Razak et al., 2022). This underscores the need for evaluation and updates to the literary curriculum to ensure its relevance and effectiveness in character formation.

One of the impacts of this shortcoming is seen in the rise of the "tone-deaf" phenomenon, where individuals struggle to show empathy or understand others' situations (Swan, 2021). The inability to empathize can be attributed to the lack of exposure to diverse perspectives and human

values through literature. This underscores the importance of enhancing the literary curriculum to help students better connect with the emotional and cultural depths of the texts they encounter.

While the literary curriculum is expected to aid in character development, several specific issues need to be addressed (Lavy, 2020). These include a lack of integration of content relevant to current social contexts, inadequate teaching approaches, and deficiencies in teacher training for literature instruction (Pulimeno et al., 2020). This research aims to identify and analyze these issues and their impact on the effectiveness of the literary curriculum.

In Indonesia, the Merdeka Curriculum has integrated literature as an essential component of its educational program. This inclusion is governed by several regulations and policies, such as Ministerial Decree No. 025/H/P/2024, which outlines the recommendations for literature books to be used in primary and secondary education. The primary aim of this program is to enhance students' literacy, reading interests, and critical thinking skills through curated literary works (Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, 2024). The integration of literature in the curriculum also encourages students to understand Indonesian history and culture, develop empathy, and strengthen their character in alignment with the Pancasila Student Profile. Another significant regulation is Ministerial Regulation No. 12 of 2024, which establishes the curriculum structure and content, including the role of literature in early childhood education up to secondary education (Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, 2024).

The urgency of this research lies in the pressing need to update and refine the literary curriculum in Indonesia, given the continuous changes in educational policies and their effects on educational quality. Understanding the effects of these policies on literature teaching and character formation is crucial (Fauzan et al., 2023; Syahrir et al., 2024). This research will provide the necessary insights to improve the curriculum and better address character issues.

Hardianto et al. (2024) argue that frequent changes in educational policies lead to instability in the literary curriculum in Indonesia, highlighting gaps in teacher training and resource allocation. They emphasize that policy stability and adequate support are crucial for effective curriculum implementation. Conversely, Jamal et al. (2021) conducted a comparative study revealing that Malaysia's more integrated approach to literary and character education results in better educational outcomes compared to Indonesia's often fragmented approach. By analyzing these perspectives, this study seeks to identify best practices that can be adapted to enhance literary education and character development in Indonesia.

This study aims to analyze the development of the literary curriculum through educational policies using a literature review approach. The researcher can explore various perspectives and findings from previous studies relevant to this topic by conducting a literature analysis. Literature studies allow the researcher to gather information from various sources that provide a comprehensive view of the influence of educational policies on the literary curriculum. Additionally, this article will examine educational policy from an international perspective to identify best practices that can be applied in Indonesia. This analysis aims to provide evidence-based recommendations on ways to improve educational policies to support the development of a

better literary curriculum. Through a deep understanding of the relationship between educational policy and the literary curriculum, this research can make a significant contribution to the development of educational policy and the improvement of literary education quality in Indonesia. This research is also expected to serve as a reference for policymakers, educators, and other researchers interested in the field of curriculum and educational policy.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a literature study method to analyze the development of the literary curriculum through educational policies. The literature study method was chosen because it allows researchers to explore and assess various sources of information related to the research topic (Snyder, 2019). With this approach, researchers can collect data from relevant literature, including books, journal articles, policy reports, and other related documents.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study finds that education policies affect the literary curriculum in terms of competency standards, teaching methodologies, evaluation systems, and challenges faced in its implementation. Indonesia currently has a Merdeka Curriculum as a new education policy. This curriculum aims to provide more flexibility and independence to schools in developing their own curriculum. The curriculum focuses on student-centered learning with a more holistic and contextual approach (Ndari et al., 2023).

In its implementation, the Merdeka Curriculum has Competency Standards that emphasize the development of students' literacy, numeracy, and character skills (Simarmata & Mayuni, 2023). In the context of literature education, this focus on character development is crucial, as literary works inherently offer moral and ethical lessons that can shape students' values and empathy. The ability to analyze texts, understand cultural contexts, appreciate the diversity of literary works, and engage in literary criticism contributes to students' personal growth. This supports the curriculum's goal of fostering critical thinking and empathy, which are essential components of character education. The emphasis on literacy is not only limited to physical books but also digital literacy. The Merdeka Curriculum forces students to be digitally literate and ready to face the problems of the digital world that we will continue to experience. This is what makes the curriculum emphasize flexible, project-based, and digital technology-based problem-solving (Nurjanah et al., 2024).

The main changes in competency standards and teaching materials in the Merdeka Curriculum include several things. First, flexibility in the selection of teaching materials. Schools are given the freedom to choose and adjust teaching materials according to local needs and contexts. In the context of literature, this flexibility allows educators to introduce literary works that resonate with students' experiences and cultural backgrounds, which can enhance their engagement and internalization of the moral lessons conveyed in these texts (Hunaepi & Suharta, 2024). Second, a project-based approach: The Merdeka Curriculum encourages project-based learning that engages students in real-life projects that integrate various disciplines. In literature

classes, this could mean involving students in creative projects that not only analyze literary works but also encourage them to express their interpretations through various forms, such as writing, drama, or digital storytelling, further reinforcing character development. Third, the use of digital technology. The use of digital technology is also strengthened in the Merdeka Curriculum. Students can expand their learning access, which was previously only physical books and can now start turning to e-books, learning videos, and interactive apps to enrich their learning experience (Restu et al., 2022).

However, the potential of literature to shape character is only fully realized when supported by well-prepared educators and sufficient infrastructure. The curriculum approach that adjusts to the digital era 4.0 or even close to 5.0 does not mean that it is a perfect policy in the world of education in Indonesia (Kadarisman et al., 2022). Unfortunately, this Merdeka Curriculum has several problems that must be solved by all government systems involved in Indonesia. These problems are teacher readiness, limited infrastructure, and evaluation systems.

These problems have been happening in Indonesia for too long. Even for too long, until the community began to get used to it as it was and stopped protesting this problem. Starting from the readiness of teachers to teach. In practice, in the world of education, there are still many teachers who are not ready to adapt to the new curriculum and teaching methods. Particularly in literature education, where a deeper understanding of both traditional and digital forms of literature is required, teacher preparedness is critical. Teachers who struggle to adapt to the new curriculum may find it challenging to fully engage students in meaningful discussions about the moral and ethical dimensions of literary works. Teachers who are too comfortable with the old curriculum system do not exert all their abilities to maximize the teaching method of the Merdeka Curriculum (Intiana et al., 2023). There are still many teachers who do not even have basic skills in the field of technology. The education office also does not provide technology midwives in each school. The Education Office should be able to provide continuous training and mentoring to ensure that teachers can implement the curriculum effectively.

A problem that has existed for a long time and still has a long time to be solved is the limitation of infrastructure. In some areas, limited access to technology and learning resources is a major obstacle. The equitable distribution of gadgets as a learning medium is still uneven in Indonesia. There are still many schools that have difficulty getting gadgets, such as school computers or school laptops, as teachers' teaching tools (Kadarisman et al., 2022). For literature education, this limits the ability of students to access a wider range of literary works in digital formats, which are essential for developing digital literacy alongside traditional literacy. Meanwhile, internet access has experienced significant development since the Covid era. Many private parties are benefiting from this distance learning. In this case, if the government feels unable to level the infrastructure to all schools in Indonesia, the government should cooperate with the private sector to overcome this equitable distribution of infrastructure (Pramana et al., 2021).

The last problem that will be highlighted in this study is the evaluation and assessment system in this Merdeka Curriculum policy (Pantiwati et al., 2023). The current evaluation system

does not fully capture the development of character through literature. Assessments tend to focus more on academic performance rather than how students internalize the moral lessons from literary works. A more holistic evaluation that includes character development metrics would better align with the goals of the Merdeka Curriculum. The evaluation and assessment system in the Merdeka Curriculum must be carried out periodically, not only once a year or once. Still, it can be done at least once every three months to discover the shortcomings of teaching and learning activities in schools. However, this evaluation system not only aims to discover the problem but must also be accompanied by problem-solving. The solution must be from the root of the intended problem. It does not throw the solution to the problem on other things but focuses on what can be solved by the school, school supervisors, and the education office (Savandha et al., 2024).

Literature studies show that several studies compare the education system in Indonesia with those abroad. For example, research conducted by Setiawan (2018) shows that the difference between Indonesia's and Finland's education systems is (a) games at school because Finland is a place to grow and develop; however, Indonesia prioritizes values. (b) regarding teacher recruitment, Finland has set a master's degree as the minimum standard for teacher qualifications. In contrast, teacher qualifications in Indonesia include at least a bachelor's degree (c) Funding: Indonesia receives BOS funding from primary to secondary schools, while Finland provides all education for free (Setiawan, 2018).

Adha et al. (2019) presented seven indicators to assess the quality of education in Indonesia and Finland. The results of the research by Adha et al. (2019) found that (a) Indonesia's education system is characterized by competition, while Finland prioritizes equality; (b) the class system, whereas Finland does not use a class retention system; (c) Showing the amount of Indonesian learned. Students get +/- 40 hours of teaching per week, or 30 hours in Finland. (d) Indonesia students are given a lot of assignments and homework, while Finland does not adhere to this system; (e) Indonesia prioritizes the attendance system, while Finland prioritizes problem-solving, while in Finland, there is a master's degree and (g) the qualification for elementary school students in Indonesia is at least 6 years. In comparison, in Finland, it is at least 7 years. The findings of the research on these seven indicators provide consideration for the Indonesian government to adjust the Finland curriculum to improve the quality of Indonesia's education system (Adha et al., 2019).

Suardipa's (2020) research shows that five factors make Finland's education system better than Indonesia's education system. This includes (a) flexible teaching methods and techniques that allow students to understand the lesson easily, (b) all tuition fees will be covered, (c) Inclusion-based education and students with special needs receive appropriate education, (d) teachers are recognized for their excellence and receive high awards; (e) a lot of research and able to adapt technology and science to developments (Suardipa, 2020).

According to Leni's research (2019), the quality of Finland's education system is influenced by the reduced teaching hours of teachers who receive high government salaries and the reduced workload of students in good condition. Homework student assessment uses international standard

calculations from matriculation in 2001 to adolescence, while Indonesian students are assessed based on assignments and homework (Leni, 2019).

Efendi (2019) compared the basic education curriculum in Indonesia and Finland. The problem discussed in this study is that the program to improve the quality of education in Indonesia is not evenly equitable; the number of students is included in the number of basic education in the national education system. The basic education environment in Indonesia is difficult to manage. The findings of the study show that Indonesia's education system still has a lot to learn from the Finland education system because aspects of Indonesia's education policy are formulated by the government based on the context and conditions related to the diversity of society so that it can be used as an education policy. Reference foundations and reference materials are needed to ensure the future of Indonesia's education system (Efendi, 2019).

There is also the latest research conducted by Putra et al. (2023), which shows that Indonesia's educational curriculum, when compared to Finland, is still categorized as low because there are five components of the curriculum studied, namely curriculum objectives, content/materials, learning media (facilities and infrastructure), learning strategies, and learning processes. There are several suggestions to apply some of the methods adopted by Indonesia teachers to Finland teachers, such as (1) student achievement and progress; (2) student comfort in the learning process; (3) not giving too much homework to students; (4) student evaluation based on progress; (5) students are actively involved in collecting information from the material studied; (6) students' readiness in independence to achieve learning goals.

From the comparison above, many compare education in Indonesia with Finland. However, many still ignore the situation in Indonesia, which is indeed not comparable to Finland. Indonesia's size is indeed a challenge in monitoring the quality of education, population density, GDP per capita, the amount of education budget, and the compulsory education period in Finland, which is indeed superior to that in Indonesia.

The above comparison is still in the form of a comparison of education policies for the entire curriculum. However, what about the curriculum for literature? The literature curriculum has only recently received attention from the government. The determination of literary works that will be included in the Merdeka Curriculum is still in the discussion stage, especially for the junior high and high school levels. Even if there is a literary work that the government recommends, the literary work is still in the form of a book. It is not a literary work in other forms.

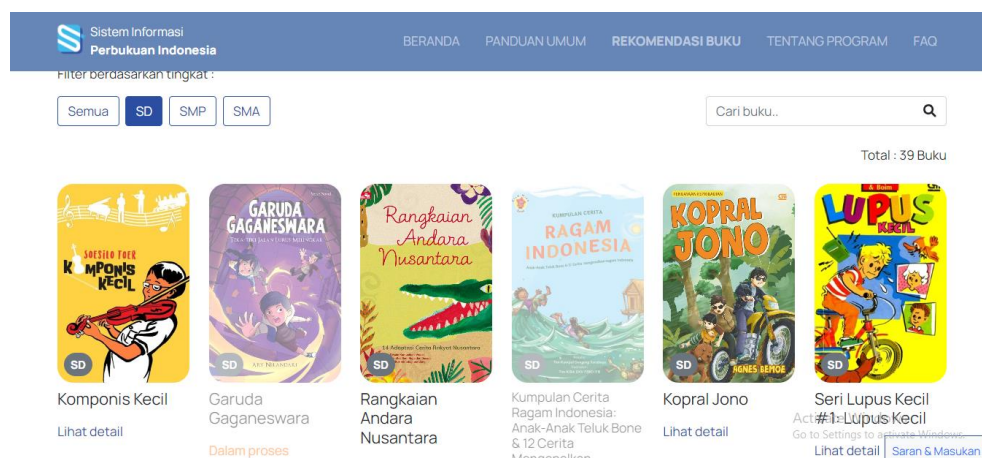


Figure 1. Recommendations for literary works from the government

This is certainly not in line with the ideals of the Merdeka Curriculum, which wants to focus on digital technology. If the government really wants to include literary works based on digital technology, the government must focus on the digital literacy curriculum. Based on Tinmaz et al. (2022), A 'Digital Literacy Framework' was designed by Aviram & Eshet-Alkalai (2006), comprising six categories: (a) photo-visual thinking (understanding and using visual information); (b) real-time thinking (simultaneously processing a variety of stimuli); (c) information thinking (evaluating and combining information from multiple digital sources); (d) branching thinking (navigating in non-linear hypermedia environments); (e) reproduction thinking (creating outcomes using technological tools by designing new content or remixing existing digital content); (f) social-emotional thinking (understanding and applying cyberspace rules).

In addition to the physical book form, the government must also pay attention to the books that will be given to students. At the student level, they should have read or at least known canon literary works in Indonesia (Nugraha, 2020). In his writing, Saryono (2021) acknowledged that Indonesia has various works that are recognized by the world as canon literary works. For example *Illiad* (Homer), *Mahabharata* (Vyasa), *Gurindam Duabelas* (Hamzah Fansuri), *Kitab Tawwasin* (al-Hallaj), *Masnawi* (Rumi), *I La Galigo/Sureq Galigo* (Siti Aisyah we Tienriole), *Serat Chentini* (Sastranagara-RanggasutrasnaSastradipura), *Kalatidha* (Ronggowarsita), *Rindu Dendam* (Amir Hamzah), *Belenggu* (Armijn Pane), *Aku* (Chairil Anwar), *I Swasta Setahun di Bendahulu* (I Gusti Pandji Tisna), tetralogi *Bumi Manusia* (Pramoedya A.T.), *O, Amuk dan Kapak* (Soetardji C.B.), *Supernova* (Dee), *Saman* (Ayu Utami), etc.

The canon literary works that are included in the curriculum must also be adapted to the mental readiness of students. Do not let the books included in the curriculum not be in accordance with the age and mental readiness of the students. For example, the novel *Saman* by Ayu Utami must be reviewed if it wants to be included in the curriculum (Suyitno & Nugraha, 2014). Because the novel contains vulgar content, the government cannot include the canon novel in the curriculum. It is different from the novel *Laskar Pelangi* by Andrea Hirata. The novel is highly recommended to be included in the literary curriculum because, according to Pangesti et al. (2024), This novel

illustrates the importance of forming moral values in children; good ethics are considered an important foundation for building resilient individuals, integrity, and care for the surrounding environment. The application of ethics education in Laskar Pelangi occurs through formal learning at school, life experiences, and social interaction.

For further deepening, canon literature included in the curriculum not only helps students form character values but also enhances students' knowledge that cannot be obtained in ordinary formal education at school. In the research of Atikurrahman et al. (2021), one of the canon literature in Indonesia---*Siti Nurbaya* by Marah Rusli--- is not only read to find out the moral character of each character but also as a socio-historical document. The novel succeeded in capturing the Malay dynamics of the early twentieth century, especially the last three chapters around the anti-tax rebellion in West Sumatra.

Therefore, the government, as an education policymaker, should have created a literature-focused curriculum. In addition to solving the problems of equitable distribution of the system and the completeness of facilities and infrastructure, the government must pay attention to the types of books that will be included in the curriculum. This article has provided a few recommendations related to the policy. Hopefully, this article will be one of the government's references for improving policies for Indonesia.

CONCLUSION

The study highlights that educational policies significantly influence the literary curriculum, particularly in shaping competency standards, teaching methods, and evaluation systems, while also uncovering implementation challenges. Indonesia's Merdeka Curriculum promotes flexibility and student-centered learning with a focus on character development, utilizing literature as a tool to instill moral values and empathy. Despite this, the curriculum faces obstacles such as inadequate teacher readiness, limited infrastructure, and an evaluation system that overlooks holistic character development. Compared with Finland's education system, the study reveals disparities in resource distribution and educational quality, emphasizing the need for more targeted literary content based on students' age and developmental stages. Recommendations include addressing infrastructure gaps, enhancing teacher preparedness, ensuring that literary works are age-appropriate, and guiding policymakers in improving Indonesia's literary curriculum.

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