

## **THE PRINCIPAL'S STRATEGY IN IMPLEMENTING THE *KURIKULUM MERDEKA* AT SMA NEGERI 8 MANADO**

**Ayu Lestari, Shelty D.M Sumual, Marthinus Krowin**

*Universitas Negeri Manado  
ayulestari201998@gmail.com*

### **ABSTRACT**

This study investigates the management of an *Kurikulum Merdeka* at SMA Negeri 8 Manado, the principal's strategy, and the results of its implementation. Data was collected through interviews, observations, and documentation, and analyzed using techniques like data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing/verification. Results show that the principal initiates the implementation, receives workshops from the Ministry of Education and Culture and Technology, organizes a learning committee, and implements the curriculum in accordance with government policy. Monthly evaluations and workshops allow for problem-solving and problem-solving. The implementation of the *Kurikulum Merdeka* has resulted in students developing talents, interests, and abilities, including the P5 project, and improved technology use. Teachers and students have better classroom interactions, freedom of thought, and critical thinking.

**Keywords:** *principal, Kurikulum Merdeka, strategy*

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### **INTRODUCTION**

The development and progress of schools in improving superior and quality human resources, principals as leaders of educational institutions are responsible for the success obtained by students through the programs implemented (Illah et al., 2022; Palah et al., 2022; Rahmi et al., 2020). The leadership of the principal is very instrumental in taking roles in accordance with duties and responsibilities (Darmiati et al., 2020; Hartiwi et al., 2020; Komalasari et al., 2020). Furthermore, the headmaster must be able to create and exercise authority and lead groups in an educational environment. If so, it is not wrong if there is an opinion that states that one of the important components of the role in improving the quality of education is the principal. School principals as leaders of teachers must provide media and facilitate teachers in order to respond to changes that occur in society (Navaridas-Nalda et al., 2020; Weiner et al., 2021), because in schools teachers will be more free to innovate if supported by rules and policies that may be part of a principal's strategy (Bafadal et al., 2020; Sibuea et al., 2023; Zulaiha et al., 2020). With the implementation of the Independent Curriculum (*Kurikulum Merdeka*) in schools, a role is needed, especially the right strategy in the implementation and progress of the school led.

Some strategies that have been implemented by the principal in the ongoing *Kurikulum Merdeka* include the principal directing teachers to download and use the platform *Merdeka Mengajar* application as an application in teaching the *Kurikulum Merdeka* (Asrifan et al., 2023; Dirgantoro & Soesanto, 2023; Riskianto et al., 2023). Not only that the principal facilitates projects carried out in the *Kurikulum Merdeka* by calling resource persons to work together such as the Head of the Education Office, conducting workshops and in-house training by driving schools to learn and better know the implementation of the *Kurikulum Merdeka*.

Based on data obtained on the *Balai Guru Penggerak* page which is a forum in carrying out the development and empowerment of teachers, educators, education staff, prospective principals, principals, prospective supervisors and school supervisors. On the BGP website, it is recorded that there are around 201 driving schools at the PAUD-TK, SD, SMP, SMA/SMK and SLB levels spread across North Sulawesi Province, which means that as driving schools, these schools have implemented the *Kurikulum Merdeka*. At the high school level, there are 15 driving schools that have been running and carrying out the *Kurikulum Merdeka*, the 15 schools are not directly together to become driving schools but are divided according to batches I to III from 2021 to now in 2023.

SMA Negeri 8 Manado is a senior secondary education institution located on Jl. Buha Kairagi Dua, Mapanget District, Manado City, Prov. North Sulawesi was established on October 1, 1985 with school A accreditation, the time of learning at SMA Negeri 8 Manado counted 5 full days. As one of the driving schools in the first batch which is also the first mover school in Manado City, SMA Negeri 8 Manado in implementing the *Kurikulum Merdeka* there are management elements consisting of planning, organizing, implementing and evaluating. In the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum at SMA Negeri 8 Manado, students at level or grade X are required to study all subjects and not in the specialization class program. At the next level, students will then choose subjects that suit their talents and interests. In the implementation of learning with the *Kurikulum Merdeka*, it refers to the profile of Pancasila students. Previously, teachers who will provide learning will carry out diagnostic assessments in order to find out the talents and interests and even characteristics of students in their understanding. Because it refers to the Pancasila student profile and carries out the project of implementing the *Kurikulum Merdeka*, at the high school level in one year it must be able to produce 3 projects. At SMA Negeri 8 Manado, it has produced and implemented projects including projects with the theme of waste management, planting hydroponic plants and even local wisdom.

The researcher chose the location of the study, namely SMA Negeri 8 Manado because apart from being a first-mover school in Manado City, it was also based on observations that SMA Negeri 8 Manado had implemented the *Kurikulum Merdeka*. With various strategies from the principal, Mrs. Dra. Mediatix Maryani Ngantung, M.Pd to achieve educational goals and learning development, especially in using the new curriculum, namely the Merdeka Learning Curriculum. The principal directs and provides facilities for teachers to be able to download and use the Kemendikbud application, which is an independent teaching platform to assist in teaching the *Kurikulum Merdeka*, carrying out various *in-house training*, workshops or seminars for teachers to be more knowledgeable in implementing the *Kurikulum Merdeka*. The implementation of the project in the Merdeka Curriculum, the principal of SMA Negeri 8 Manado invited various speakers such as from the Ministry of Education and Culture, the North Sulawesi Provincial Education Office and also provided the opportunity to visit directly to places related to the project carried out. So, that teachers and students can implement and implement the *Kurikulum Merdeka* properly in accordance with the policies of the Ministry of Education as well as the existing government.

So in accordance with the background described, researchers will carry out a research entitled "The Strategy of the Head of School in the Implementation of the *Kurikulum Merdeka* at SMA Negeri 8 Manado". The purpose of this study is to determine the management of the

*Kurikulum Merdeka* at SMA Negeri 8 Manado, to find out the strategy of the principal in the implementation of the *Kurikulum Merdeka* at SMA Negeri 8 Manado, and to find out the results that have been implemented from the principal's strategy in the implementation of the *Kurikulum Merdeka* at SMA Negeri 8 Manado.

## **METHOD**

This research uses a qualitative approach. The research site was SMA Negeri 8 Manado, located on Jalan Buha Kairagi Dua, Mapanget District, Manado City, North Sulawesi Province. The primary data sources in the study were obtained from observation and interview activities from the principal as the main subject, vice principal for curriculum, vice principal for student affairs, vice principal for facilities and infrastructure, driving teachers at SMA Negeri 8 Manado, several teachers and several students as additional subjects. While secondary data are obtained from several journals, articles, and other literature related to the research being conducted. Then for the data analysis technique using the technique of Miles and Huberman (2014).

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### ***Kurikulum Merdeka* management at SMA Negeri 8 Manado**

#### ***Planning for the implementation of the Kurikulum Merdeka at SMA Negeri 8 Manado***

Planning for the implementation of the *Kurikulum Merdeka* at SMA Negeri 8 Manado began with the principal, Mrs. Dra. Mediatix M. Ngantung, M.Pd who registered to take part in the selection of the driving school principal and from the first stage to the second stage was declared to have passed the selection thus Mrs. Dra. Mediatix M. Ngantung, M.Pd whose work unit is at SMA Negeri 8 Manado, then SMA Negeri 8 Manado became the first batch of driving schools in Manado City. Then the headmaster formed a learning committee consisting of the school superintendent, the principal and 10 class X teaching teachers selected according to the subject. Then the teachers in the learning committee participated in workshops or seminars, even *in-house training* conducted by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Technology Research was carried out online because at that time the COVID-19 pandemic still existed.

#### ***Organizing an Kurikulum Merdeka at SMA Negeri 8 Manado***

There is an organizational structure in the implementation of the *Kurikulum Merdeka* at SMA Negeri 8 Manado called the learning committee consisting of the principal as the person in charge, the vice principal of the curriculum section as coordinator, secretary, treasurer, and 8 support teams, namely the curriculum structure & learning outcomes (CP) team, the learning objectives team (TP) & learning objectives flow (ATP), the teaching module team, P5 project team, assessment team, e-report card team, reporting and documentation team, and general guidance team.

#### ***Implementation of the Kurikulum Merdeka at SMA Negeri 8 Manado***

The implementation of the *Kurikulum Merdeka* at SMA Negeri 8 Manado is in accordance with the policies formulated by the government. Where in class X there is no major class, but majors are carried out in class XI. Assessment is replaced with assessment, and at the beginning of the learning meeting the students are given diagnostic assessment, then proceed to formative

assessment and summative assessment. In this *Kurikulum Merdeka*, the development of interest and talent in the use of IT is not only for students but also for teachers. Teachers who carry out learning activities in class teachers are free to use learning methods and media that are in accordance with the character of the students. At SMA Negeri 8 Manado, learning media such as canva, kahoot, quizizz, and googleform have been widely used. In addition to the use of IT with an *Kurikulum Merdeka*, implementing project-based learning is a project to strengthen the profile of Pancasila students (P5).

#### ***Evaluation of the implementation of the Kurikulum Merdeka at SMA Negeri 8 Manado***

Evaluation activities are carried out once a month depending on the activities carried out. Evaluation activities are carried out in *Project Management Office* (PMO) and Workshops where the speakers presented provide solutions to obstacles/problems that we school face. Teachers are formed according to their respective mgmp and then discuss and present what problems are faced then other teacher friends can respond and even answer and provide solutions.

#### **The principal's strategy in implementing the *Kurikulum Merdeka* at SMA Negeri 8 Manado**

##### ***School principals and teachers learn independently with an independent teaching platform***

Principals and teachers at SMA Negeri 8 Manado are required to activate and use the *Merdeka Mengajar Platform* (PMM), especially class X teachers or teachers. With the help of PMM, it is useful for school principals and teachers to get information, inspiration and even understanding and solutions about the *Kurikulum Merdeka* that will be implemented.

##### ***School principals and teachers learn about the Kurikulum Merdeka by participating in a webinar series***

Principals and teachers at SMA Negeri 8 Manado have participated in a series of webinar series, following gradually the principals and teachers gain a better understanding of this *Kurikulum Merdeka*. There are 7 webinar series that must be followed covering the themes of *Kurikulum Merdeka* philosophy, *Kurikulum Merdeka* structure, operational curriculum of educational units, learning outcomes, learning assessment, pancasila student profile, and learning community. This webinar series is usually organized by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Technology Research, the Education Quality Assurance Center (BPMP), the Education Office and other education units.

##### ***School principals and teachers learn about the Kurikulum Merdeka by joining learning communities***

Many teachers at SMA Negeri 8 Manado have joined the "Community" feature in the independent teaching platform (PMM). This learning community provides benefits for teachers, especially members in it can discuss online to discuss problems related to *Kurikulum Merdeka* learning. Teachers who are members of the learning community can also share good practices with each other so that other teacher friends can take positive things and apply them in their respective schools.

***Principals and teachers share good practices with each other through recommended resource persons***

The principal and teachers at SMA Negeri 8 Manado shared good practices with the resource persons provided. The relevant resource persons are the appropriate ones related to what will be discussed, especially in the implementation of the *Kurikulum Merdeka*. The speakers who have been presented by SMA Negeri 8 Manado are Kak Seto and Prof. Eko Indrajit and when carrying out a project to strengthen the profile of Pancasila students with the theme of sustainable lifestyle, the school also presented speakers from the Manado City Climatology and Geophysics Agency and even visited the BMKG office to directly study there. In it, there are also concrete actions followed by students in the form of planting hydroponic vegetable plants, then we, the SMA Negeri 8 Manado school, collaborate with Transmart Carefour supermarkets to be able to bring hydroponic vegetable crops and can be sold there.

***School principals and teachers work closely with development partners in the implementation of the Kurikulum Merdeka***

The cooperation carried out is usually the provision of resource persons from outside the school to support the implementation of the *Kurikulum Merdeka*. The resource persons who have been invited by the SMA Negeri 8 Manado school to share knowledge together both to the teachers and also to the students. The resource person who has met and become a speaker is one of the members of the Climatology and Geophysics Agency (BMKG), there are also speakers brought from the Education Office, namely the head of the office in office. The Principal of SMA Negeri 8 Manado is also often invited to be a resource person, where Mrs. Dra. Mediatrix M. Ngantung, M.Pd often shares knowledge about the *Kurikulum Merdeka* and becomes a driving school.

**Results of the principal's strategy in implementing the *Kurikulum Merdeka* at SMA Negeri 8 Manado**

From the strategies of the principal at SMA Negeri 8 Manado in the implementation of the *Kurikulum Merdeka*, it has been running well so that the results can be felt by teachers and students well. The results of the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in the learning and teaching process are freedom to think, freedom to innovate, and freedom to learn independently and creatively.

**The results of the principal's strategy in implementing the *Kurikulum Merdeka* at SMA Negeri 8 Manado include:**

***For schools***

1. Schools can develop talents and interests by carrying out extracurricular activities.
2. The performance produced by both academic and non-academic participants increased.
3. The school focuses on growing the character of students through projects to strengthen the profile of Pancasila students (P5).

### **For Teachers**

1. Teachers better understand the character of students so that the interaction between teachers and students becomes more familiar.
2. Teachers can be free to think, free to innovative, and can design the use of learning methods that suit students.

### **For Students**

1. Students get freedom in choosing the methods used in the learning process.
2. Students get project-based learning through P5 activities. This P5 activity has benefits to strengthen the character of students.
3. Students are able to think independently critically, in the *Kurikulum Merdeka* students must be able to learn independently and students are active in the ongoing learning process.

## **CONCLUSION**

SMA Negeri 8 Manado is managing an *Kurikulum Merdeka*, implemented by principal Mrs. Dra. Mediatrix M. Ngantung, M.Pd. The curriculum involves three stages of assessment: diagnostic, formative, and surmative. The principal, vice principal, secretary, treasurer, and team support the implementation. The curriculum aligns with government policy, with no major class in class X and three stages of assessment in class XI. IT development is encouraged, using media like Canva, Kahoot, and Quizizz.

Monthly evaluations are conducted through Project Management Office (PMO) activities and workshops. The principal's strategy has improved students' achievements in subjects, sports, robotics, and character profile through the P5 project. Teachers benefit from technology use, innovation, and freedom in choosing methods and subjects.

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