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## The Management of Teacher Creativity Development in Optimizing the Merdeka Curriculum

Mulia Hariana<sup>1</sup>, Enung Hasanah<sup>2</sup>, Achadi Budi Santosa<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1,2,3</sup> Jalan Pramuka 42, UH, Yogyakarta, 5511 ans Universitas Ahmad Dahlan

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**ABSTRACT:** The Merdeka Curriculum is one of the government's effort in enhancing the quality of education in Indonesia. In its implementation, the Merdeka Curriculum initiating differentiated learning based on student's needs. Therefore, teacher creativity is crucial in creating effective learning experiences. This study aims to explore the management of teacher creativity development done in SMP Negeri 3 Balikpapan in optimizing the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum. This research was carried by using a qualitative method with a case study approach. To obtain the data needed, this research did interviews with the principal and teachers, observations, and school document analysis. Data analysis was conducted using Biklen & Bogdan's qualitative data analysis method. The research found that the management of teacher creativity development at SMP Negeri 3 Balikpapan is carried out through the stages of planning, organizing, implementation, and controlling. Planning involves setting objectives, conducting joint discussions, planning programs, and evaluating programs. The school implements several programs for teacher creativity development, including learning communities (kombel), PMM, and teacher training. Organizing stage involves task allocation, collaboration, and forming implementation teams. During the implementation stage, the principal motivates, provides guidance, and builds effective communication. Meanwhile, the controlling stage includes evaluation meetings, monitoring, and supervision. In implementing the teacher creativity management program, the school encounters several obstacles, such as administrative burdens, time constraints, and limited use of technology.

**KEYWORDS:** Education Management, Teacher creativity, The Merdeka Curriculum

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### INTRODUCTION

The development of education in Indonesia has always been a focus due to its crucial role in preparing future generations. Education is the foundation for the development of quality human resources. Through education, students are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and values needed to contribute effectively to society (Psacharopoulos & Patrinos, 2018). Teachers play a key role in education reform and improvement. The teaching and learning process, led by professional teachers, is one of the essential conditions for enhancing the quality of education (Anwar & Mubin, 2022). Therefore, teacher creativity is essential to optimize the teaching and learning process. Teacher creativity can be defined as the effort teachers put into using new methods, techniques, and approaches to improve student learning outcomes (Ghanizadeh & Jahedizadeh, 2016). Creativity in teaching helps teachers find the most appropriate teaching methods for students based on their educational level and needs. The selection of the right learning strategy essentially provides an "opportunity" for students to maximize their learning process (Iriansyah, 2020). Creative teaching is believed to have a positive impact on academic achievement, academic performance, and student learning outcomes (Abidin, 2019). Research conducted by Andayani and Hadiyati (2022) and Dayanti (2022) shows that teacher creativity has a significant impact on students' interest in learning.

Currently, teacher creativity is becoming increasingly important as schools in Indonesia gradually adopt the Merdeka Curriculum. The implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum is a significant innovation introduced by the Indonesian government to improve the quality of national education. Within the framework of the Merdeka Curriculum, teachers are given the freedom to design and develop learning that aligns with the individual interests, needs, and potentials of students (Wiguna & Tristaningrat, 2022). The Merdeka Curriculum emphasizes student-centered learning, where the teacher acts as a facilitator and the students actively engage in the learning process (Jannah & Rasyid, 2023). This requires teachers not only to play the role of educators but also to be innovative and adaptive learning designers (Miasih & Hasanah, 2021).

The Merdeka Curriculum emphasizes essential learning for students, such as literacy and numeracy (Idhartono, 2022). However, in practice, learning outcomes in schools cannot yet be considered optimal. According to a survey conducted by PISA (Programme for International Students Assessment) in 2022, Indonesia experienced a decline in scores compared to previous years. In 2022, Indonesian students ranked 68th out of 81 countries, with PISA scores of 379 in mathematics, 398 in science, and 371 in reading. These scores reflect a 12-13 point decrease compared to the previous survey in 2018. This reality serves as an evaluation for

## The Management of Teacher Creativity Development in Optimizing the Merdeka Curriculum

education in Indonesia, emphasizing the need for continuous improvement to address learning loss. Efforts must be made to overcome the challenges in learning to prevent further decline in educational quality.

One of the key factors in improving the quality of learning and supporting the successful implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum is the management of teacher creativity development. Developing teacher creativity involves teachers' ability to create flexible, innovative, and responsive learning environments that meet students' evolving needs and classroom dynamics (Kurniawan & Hasanah, 2021). Teacher creativity is also related to the strategies used to introduce varied learning methods, utilizing relevant technology and integrating local and global values into the learning process. Properly managed teacher creativity development helps overcome challenges in the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum and enhances the overall quality of education.

One school considered to have good management of teacher creativity development is SMP Negeri 3 Balikpapan, which has been implementing the Merdeka Curriculum since 2022. Schools that successfully foster teacher creativity significantly influence the management of learning under the Merdeka Curriculum. However, literature on managing teacher creativity for the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum remains limited. Given SMP Negeri 3 Balikpapan's achievements in managing its teachers and school, research is needed to uncover the methods used by the school to improve teacher creativity and manage learning. This can serve as a reference and inspiration for other schools. Therefore, the aim of this research is to explore the management of teacher creativity development conducted by SMP Negeri 3 Balikpapan to optimize the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum

### METHODS

This study aims to explore the management of teacher creativity development to optimize the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum (IKM). According to theoretical methods, the most suitable approach for this research is qualitative research. This method is used to explore and understand the issues faced by individuals or groups related to social problems (Creswell & Creswell, 2021). The research employs a case study approach within qualitative methods. A case study involves in-depth analysis of a specific case by collecting information through various data collection methods over a period of time. The case being studied could be an event, activity, process, or program (Creswell, 2016). Stake (1995) states that the case study approach aims to reveal the unique characteristics of an issue. This research was conducted at SMP Negeri 3 Balikpapan. The researcher chose this school because it is considered by the community as a school capable of managing and developing its teachers into creative educators who can deliver engaging and effective learning for students. Data were collected through interviews. For selecting interview participants, the researcher used purposive sampling, where participants are chosen based on specific criteria. The primary data sources for this research were six respondents, including the principal, vice principals for curriculum and student affairs, 'Guru Penggerak,' senior teachers who have taught for more than 10 years, and younger teachers at SMP Negeri 3 Balikpapan. Data analysis was performed using Atlas.ti software. The data analysis model employed was the Bogdan & Biklen model, which includes collecting, organizing, and reducing data, determining themes, drawing conclusions, and interpreting data (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003).

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

School management must use a good system in which everyone involved in the provision of education, such as teachers, staff, information technology, parents, students, communities, governments, and others, must function effectively (Fathurrochman et al., 2022). The management of teacher creativity development at SMP Negeri 3 Balikpapan is carried out by implementing management functions, namely planning, organizing, implementation, and control.

#### Planning

The planning process in managing teacher creativity development at this school involves several stages. In education management, planning is the first crucial step to achieve the desired goals (Fatkhul, 2018).

##### 1. Setting Goals

The main goal of the teacher creativity development program is to develop the professional and pedagogical competencies of teachers, as well as improve their psychological well-being. This goal aligns with Hoy & Miskel's (2008) view that the goals of educational organizations should include the development of professional competence to support teaching effectiveness. Through the teacher creativity development program, collaboration is expected to increase, and good practices can be shared. Success in education is influenced by collaboration between supportive elements (Sahlberg, 2011). With the teacher creativity development program, the school hopes that teachers can optimize the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum by creating conducive learning environments that support the curriculum. The Merdeka Curriculum promotes the concept of "Merdeka Belajar" (Freedom to Learn), which centers learning goals on student needs (Hakiky et al., 2023). Besides student-centered differentiated learning, the Merdeka Curriculum also includes the P5 program. The P5 program requires teachers' skills and creativity to design meaningful activities for students (Lathif & Suprpto, 2023). Teacher creativity is needed to adjust teaching methods to current student needs. Creative teachers can offer varied learning methods and find solutions to teaching challenges, including increasing student motivation (Mangantung et al., 2022).

The development of creativity is not only aimed at enriching teaching methods but also ensuring that the educational process aligns with student needs and fosters their independence in learning. Developing teacher creativity is expected to positively impact student

## The Management of Teacher Creativity Development in Optimizing the Merdeka Curriculum

learning outcomes. Creative teachers can design engaging, challenging, and relevant learning experiences that facilitate not only understanding the material but also the development of critical thinking and creativity in students (Zubaidah, 2016). When students are engaged in a learning environment that encourages creativity, they are more motivated to learn and are more likely to achieve better academic results (Beghetto & Kaufman, 2014).

Teacher creativity development is also aimed at adjusting teaching to the times and modern demands. Teaching methods that may have been effective in the past are not necessarily relevant in today's digital age, where students face different challenges and needs. Today's students grow up in a very different environment from previous generations, with wide access to digital technology, making a more contextual and relevant approach to teaching necessary (Prensky, 2010). Teacher professionalism development should consider technological and innovative aspects in education to address the challenges of education in the digital era (Mishra & Koehler, 2006).

### 2. Joint Discussions

To determine the actions to be taken, the school holds joint discussions. This process is important to ensure the participation of all parties in decision-making, which can increase the commitment of organization members (Yukl, 2013). Decisions to be made are discussed through both scheduled and situational meetings. According to Mulyasa (2011), meetings are an important tool in education management, serving to coordinate various aspects of school management. Scheduled meetings are usually held regularly to evaluate and plan school programs, while situational meetings are often conducted to respond to specific circumstances that require quick and accurate decisions. Routine evaluations are also conducted to assess program implementation and find solutions to emerging issues. Joint discussions as a method of evaluation can also increase transparency and accountability in the school's decision-making process (Hasibuan, 2014).

### 3. Program Planning

The teacher creativity development program at SMP Negeri 3 Balikpapan is conducted through various activities, including learning communities (kombel), PMM, and teacher training.

#### ○ Learning Communities

Learning communities at SMP Negeri 3 Balikpapan play an essential role in supporting teacher creativity development and the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum. The kombel, which consists of the school kombel ("SEGA"), subject-specific kombel, and the P5 kombel, are designed as collaborative spaces where teachers can share knowledge, discuss challenges, and explore new ideas that can be applied to the learning process. This aligns with the theory of professional learning communities (PLC), which emphasizes that teacher collaboration in learning communities is an effective strategy for continuous professional development (Raff, 1999).

In addition to the implementation of learning communities within the school, the school also encourages teachers to actively participate in learning groups at the city level, commonly known as MGMP. MGMP serves as a platform for subject teachers at the city level to share experiences from their respective schools. The development of pedagogical skills and creativity in teaching can be enhanced through teacher collaboration (Ramdani et al., 2022). Sharing ideas and experiences with fellow teachers can inspire creativity and innovation in teaching (Zubaidah, 2018).

#### ○ PMM

The development of teacher creativity is not only carried out in groups. For independent self-development, the school encourages teachers to actively participate in and contribute to activities on the Merdeka Mengajar Platform (PMM). PMM serves as a self-development tool provided by the Ministry of Education, allowing teachers to continuously hone their skills and creativity independently. PMM helps teachers prepare both learning documents and inspiring teaching ideas (Kurniasih, 2023). By requiring teachers to engage with PMM, the school not only promotes continuous professional development but also strengthens the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, which demands innovation and flexibility in teaching (Istiqomah et al., 2024). Teachers who have a solid understanding of the Merdeka Curriculum are more likely to implement it effectively. A deep understanding of the essence and foundations of the Merdeka Curriculum is a crucial basis for optimizing its implementation (Mawarni et al., 2023).

#### ○ Teacher Training

Another program routinely implemented by the school is teacher training. The training provided is tailored to the teachers' needs and the latest developments in education. Professional development and training focused on enhancing creative skills can improve an individual's ability to generate new ideas and think creatively (Pentury, 2017).

Teacher training is conducted both through in-house training and by sending teachers to external training sessions, either in person or online. The training materials are not only aimed at developing teachers' pedagogical abilities but also their social skills, as well as topics that support student character development, such as anti-bullying training. External training, such as workshops, allows teachers to gain new perspectives and share best practices with colleagues outside the school, which is important for enriching their learning experiences (Sanjani, 2018).

## The Management of Teacher Creativity Development in Optimizing the Merdeka Curriculum

### 4. Evaluation Planning

Continuous evaluation and development are prerequisites for enhancing the effectiveness of the Merdeka Curriculum implementation (Wuwur, 2023). Therefore, proper evaluation is needed to accurately measure the success level and identify improvements required for the program's sustainability moving forward (Yarham et al., 2022). The evaluation of the teacher creativity development program is conducted through supervision and monitoring by a team formed by the school. This evaluation is crucial to ensure that the program has a positive impact on teachers' competencies and creativity, as well as student learning outcomes (Rahmawati, 2023). Evaluation should be carried out continuously, including planning evaluation, process evaluation, and outcome evaluation. How a program is assessed and what standards are used as benchmarks in the evaluation must be well-planned to reflect what is truly happening in the field (Yusuf & Maliki, 2021).

## ORGANIZING

### 1. Task Allocation

The allocation of tasks to teachers and staff at this school is carried out by considering various factors, such as maturity, responsibility, and the teachers' ability to work collaboratively. The division of tasks, authority, and responsibilities based on each individual's field and function is aimed at fostering harmonious and efficient working relationships (Pananrangi, 2017).

The principal selects teachers who are deemed wise and capable of handling situations well, not solely based on age, but also on their maturity and professional attitude. Goleman (1995) argued that emotional intelligence and maturity play crucial roles in dealing with complex situations and making wise decisions in education.

Additionally, the principal strives to provide opportunities for teachers to take on specific responsibilities. This is done as part of the school's fairness principle for teacher self-development. Providing equal opportunities for teachers to take on specific tasks can increase job satisfaction and professional growth (Colquitt et al., 2001).

### 2. Building Collaboration

To enhance program implementation effectiveness, the school utilizes both internal and external human resources. Internal sources, particularly 'Guru Penggerak' (driving teachers), are prioritized to lead learning communities (kombel). This decision is based on the consideration that 'Guru Penggerak' have a deeper understanding of the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum. Apart from 'Guru Penggerak,' the school also provides opportunities for subject kombel leaders, as they are seen to have more experience with their respective subjects. Competent teachers are also encouraged to share their knowledge with others. Meanwhile, external speakers are invited to provide additional training tailored to teachers' needs. Fullan (2007) emphasizes that effective training should be conducted at the school level and involve collaboration between teachers and external stakeholders to achieve optimal professional development results.

Quality professional training involves external trainers who can provide evidence-based guidance and practical support for curriculum and pedagogical development (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017).

### 3. Forming Implementation Teams

One of the tasks assigned is forming kombel committees with an organizational structure that involves all teachers. Kombel is organized with a clear structure where the principal acts as the person in charge, and the committee is responsible for preparing everything related to the kombel's implementation, including preparing speakers, correspondence, and venues for the kombel. The kombel committee consists of subject-specific kombel at the school. Each subject kombel is scheduled to take turns organizing the school's kombel activities. This rotation ensures that all teachers gain experience in preparing kombel sessions.

The establishment of an organizational structure involving all teachers in kombel reflects a collaborative approach, supported by research by Kilgour (2017), which highlights the importance of collaboration in teacher professional development. In implementing the learning community (kombel), delegation of speakers is carried out by selecting 'Guru Penggerak' as the primary speakers because they are considered to have a deep knowledge of the Merdeka Curriculum and the Platform Merdeka Mengajar (PMM). 'Guru Penggerak' often participate in various discussion groups and obtain up-to-date information, allowing them to share valuable knowledge with their fellow teachers. Vygotsky's (1978) Sociocultural Theory emphasizes that social interaction and communication in professional communities play a critical role in skill and knowledge development.

In addition, the school involves both senior and younger teachers who are deemed competent as speakers. Schools are considered effective when they create a "learning organization" where continuous learning and professional development occur at all levels. The school also invites external speakers to provide additional training, such as national PMM tutors, to enrich teachers' knowledge. Training involving external perspectives can offer additional guidance and facilitate effective practice changes, improving teaching quality and student learning outcomes (Garone et al., 2022).

To measure the results of the teacher creativity development program, the school forms a supervisory team consisting of teachers deemed competent to act as supervisors. This team is responsible for supervising program implementation, ensuring that the program objectives are achieved, and providing feedback for improvements. Supervisory teams can ensure program goals are met and provide constructive feedback (Glickman et al., 2017).

# The Management of Teacher Creativity Development in Optimizing the Merdeka Curriculum

## IMPLEMENTATION

### 1. Motivation

Motivation is a key element in human resource management, especially in the educational context. One way to improve the quality of teachers is by providing encouragement (Estiani & Hasanah, 2022). The principal supports teachers through various means, both materially and morally. As moral support, the principal actively provides guidance to teachers and continuously reminds them of the program's objectives. Additionally, teacher discipline is a key emphasis by the principal. The principal's actions reflect the application of transformational leadership. In the educational context, a principal who acts as a transformational leader will inspire and motivate teachers by constantly reminding them of shared goals, including the importance of innovation and creativity in teaching (Burns, 1978). Transformational leaders help organizational members understand and achieve higher goals, which often involve creativity and innovation in the learning process. Moreover, the principal recognizes teachers' contributions and achievements, highlighting their successes in school meetings. Herzberg's motivation theory (1966) identifies factors that motivate individuals, including working conditions, company policies, and recognition (Yashak et al., 2020). Recognizing teacher achievements serves both as a form of appreciation and motivation for other teachers. This positive reinforcement encourages teachers to continue achieving and innovating in their teaching (Hidayat, 2021). Besides offering rewards, the principal also imposes sanctions on teachers who commit violations. However, the principal first communicates and gathers information from various parties before deciding on any disciplinary action. Fair punishment can enhance teacher professionalism (Santosa, 2022).

Another form of motivation from the principal is providing mentoring to teachers in carrying out their duties. Mulyasa (2011) explains the importance of a principal's role in providing guidance to teachers, including in daily tasks, as a form of motivation and support for improving teaching quality. In this context, the principal plays a significant role in developing the teachers' abilities and willingness to innovate in their teaching (Tobing & Hasanah, 2021). The principal also mentors teachers to support their career development. In the context of rank promotion, the principal does not merely function as an administrative superior but also as a proactive mentor. The principal regularly reminds and encourages teachers to complete the requirements for promotion in a timely manner, demonstrating a strong commitment to the professional development of teachers. Leadership that supports career development will increase teacher competence and motivation, ultimately contributing to improved educational quality in the school (Noe et al., 2017).

The principal also provides material support by ensuring adequate facilities and infrastructure. Adequate facilities are essential for fostering creativity in the learning process (Likar et al., 2015). Facilities such as a large hall, multimedia studio, computer lab, and internet access support not only learning activities but also serve as a foundation for teachers to develop creative teaching methods tailored to student needs. When teachers have sufficient access to technology, they can create more innovative learning methods, ultimately improving student learning outcomes (Dewantara et al., 2021). To support each subject teacher's work, the school provides laptops and LCD projectors for every MGMP (teacher working group). This shows the school's efforts to ensure that all teacher groups have sufficient access to technology, which is an essential element in developing creativity. Access to appropriate technology and resources enhances teachers' ability to use IT-based teaching media, which in turn supports creativity and learning effectiveness (Fitriyani et al., 2021).

In addition to physical infrastructure, human capital—both teachers and students—is recognized as a critical asset for supporting the success of school programs. Teachers and students are not merely beneficiaries but also key actors in the educational process. The school places particular attention on optimizing human capital potential, demonstrated through various programs and facilities provided, including significant financial support from the school. Adequate financial support for school programs is highly influential on the quality of education (Santosa, 2021).

### 2. Guidance

In implementing the teacher creativity development program, the principal ensures that teachers are prepared by giving them guidance regarding the activities they will participate in. To effectively develop teacher creativity, the principal encourages collaboration among teachers, both in personal and professional development. Teacher collaboration in professional development is essential for improving performance and competence (Santoso et al., 2023). In developing teacher creativity to optimize the Merdeka Curriculum, support from 'Guru Penggerak' is crucial, especially in using the PMM platform. The principal empowers 'Guru Penggerak' to help their colleagues use and benefit from PMM as a self-development program. Continuous professional development through interactions with fellow professionals can enhance competence (Rahayu et al., 2019).

### 3. Effective Communication

Effective communication is key to ensuring that all members of the organization understand their goals and roles. The principal communicates the program through regular and situational meetings, along with direct communication, aligning with the situational leadership theory by Paul Hersey and Ken Blanchard. This theory suggests that leaders must adapt their leadership style to the readiness level of their members (Hersey et al., 2001). In this case, the principal employs a participatory and collaborative approach, allowing teachers to feel involved and contribute to program development. In addition to meetings, communication is also facilitated

## The Management of Teacher Creativity Development in Optimizing the Merdeka Curriculum

through digital media, such as WhatsApp. Effective communication in education involves open dialogue, constructive feedback, and the use of technology to support communication (Glickman et al., 2017).

To build effective communication, the principal is also responsive and open to suggestions and input from teachers. This approach helps teachers feel more valued and recognize that their contributions are essential to the school. Open and honest communication can enhance job satisfaction and interpersonal relationships within the organization (Alberti & Emmons, 2017).

### CONTROLLING

In implementing the teacher creativity development program, the principal of SMP Negeri 3 Balikpapan applies three main types of control: preliminary control, concurrent control, and feedback control. Each type of control serves to ensure that the program's goals are achieved effectively and efficiently, despite any challenges encountered.

#### 1. Preliminary Control

Preliminary control is carried out by ensuring thorough preparation through internal meetings with the relevant staff. In this context, the principal facilitates small meetings to coordinate activities and ensure that every subject or committee has a clear understanding of their tasks and responsibilities. According to Mulyasa (2011), the principal plays a managerial role, ensuring control over various aspects of school operations. One form of control is to ensure effective coordination through internal meetings. These meetings allow the principal to provide direction, gather input, and clarify tasks and responsibilities. This behavior reflects the principal's role in instructional leadership, ensuring that all teachers and staff understand the vision and objectives to be achieved (Hallinger, 2005).

#### 2. Concurrent Control

Concurrent control is exercised during the program through monitoring. Monitoring is conducted to ensure that the programs designed by the school run smoothly and align with the predetermined objectives. Siagian (2008) states that one of the crucial management functions is control, which involves monitoring and evaluating program implementation. Effective monitoring allows the principal to detect problems early and take the necessary corrective actions.

Monitoring is carried out by tracking the level of teacher participation in the program. The principal pays attention to teacher attendance at organized programs. Additionally, to monitor the program's implementation, the principal employs innovative methods such as the use of digital questionnaires through platforms like WhatsApp and Google Forms. The use of digital questionnaires for monitoring by the principal reflects an adaptation to technological advancements in school management. The utilization of technology in management control can enhance the effectiveness of monitoring and provide real-time feedback (Ouchi, 2019).

#### 3. Feedback Control

The controlling is carried out by evaluating the results of educational activities to analyze any potential deviations from the planned outcomes (Beni A. Saebani & Komaruddin, 2016). Feedback control at this school is implemented through academic supervision. This is done to assess the extent to which teachers are able to implement their creativity in the learning process. The supervision follows several stages: pre-observation, observation, coaching, and follow-up planning. In addition to serving as an evaluation tool, supervision by the principal can also improve teacher performance (Buku et al., 2021).

### CHALLENGES

During the process of implementing the Merdeka Curriculum, the school encountered several challenges in the development of teacher creativity. The main obstacle faced is the heavy administrative burden on teachers. Teachers find it difficult to balance time between completing administrative tasks and carrying out teaching activities. In some cases, teachers have had to prioritize administrative duties over their primary role, which is teaching. A heavy administrative workload can indeed hinder teachers from innovating in the classroom (Fullan & Khushal, 2021).

Another challenge faced by the school is the limited time for developing teacher creativity. In addition to the administrative burden that consumes much of the teachers' time, the school also struggles to find the right time to conduct learning communities. Even for individual self-development activities, such as the PMM, teachers sometimes have to engage in these activities during class hours, which can interfere with the effectiveness of teaching. Effective teacher collaboration requires adequate time to produce a positive impact on teaching practices (Vangrieken et al., 2017).

Teacher creativity can also be fostered through the use of technology. The incorporation of technological tools in the learning process opens up new opportunities to create more engaging and innovative learning experiences (Lestari & Kurnia, 2023). In the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, the use of technology and digital media is crucial to ensuring smooth learning processes. However, some teachers still face difficulties adapting to technological advancements, especially older teachers. The adoption of technology in education is often hindered by age factors and a lack of adequate training, leading to resistance toward the use of new technologies (Hsu, 2016). To address this, the school provides training to help teachers develop their skills in utilizing technology.

## The Management of Teacher Creativity Development in Optimizing the Merdeka Curriculum

### IMPACT

Creative teachers have a positive impact on the quality of learning in schools, especially in the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum. One aspect of this is innovation in teaching. Creative teachers generate new ideas for classroom management, such as giving students the opportunity to set their own learning objectives. This aligns with the characteristics of the Merdeka Curriculum, which promotes differentiated learning. Teachers are empowered to adjust the learning environment, content, processes, and outcomes according to the needs of students in each class (Nafi'ah et al., 2023).

The implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum also needs to consider the execution of the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5) as one of its key features. This project aims to develop students' character by encouraging them to explore local issues and collaborate to solve them (Kemendikbudristek, 2022). According to Dewey's educational theory (1938), learning experiences that involve social responsibility can enhance both learning and character development (Dewey, 2022). Effective teacher creativity in planning P5 activities makes these projects more meaningful. At this school, P5 provides students with additional insights into democracy, commerce, and other activities that are beneficial for character development.

One of the school's flagship extracurricular programs is the Green Generation. The school initiated Green Generation in 2009 to raise students' environmental awareness. Creative teachers play a crucial role in advancing the school's extracurricular activities, helping to further develop students' potential.

### CONCLUSION

Creative teachers have a positive impact on the quality of learning in schools, particularly in the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum. One example is innovation in the classroom. Creative teachers come up with new ideas for classroom management, such as allowing students to set their own learning objectives. This aligns with the characteristics of the Merdeka Curriculum, which emphasizes differentiated learning. Teachers are empowered to adjust the learning environment, as well as the content, process, and outcomes, to meet the needs of students in each class (Nafi'ah et al., 2023).

The implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum must also take into account the execution of the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5), one of its key features. This project aims to develop students' character by encouraging them to explore local issues and collaborate to solve these problems (Kemendikbudristek, 2022). According to Dewey's educational theory (1938), learning experiences that involve social responsibility can enhance both learning and character development (Dewey, 2022). Effective teacher creativity in planning P5 activities makes the projects more meaningful. At this school, P5 provides students with additional knowledge on topics like democracy, commerce, and other activities that help in shaping their character.

One of the school's flagship extracurricular programs is the Green Generation. The school initiated Green Generation in 2009 to raise students' environmental awareness. Creative teachers play a key role in advancing the school's extracurricular activities, helping to develop students' potential further.

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