

# **Aligning Learning Assessments with Curriculum Outcomes: A Systematic Review of the Merdeka Curriculum in Indonesian Primary Education**

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## **Abstract**

This study aims to examine the alignment between learning evaluations and the learning outcomes mandated by the Merdeka Curriculum in Indonesian elementary schools. It also identifies the key factors influencing this alignment and proposes strategic interventions for improvement. Employing a systematic literature review method, the research analyzed scientific articles, conference proceedings, books, and official policy documents published between 2020 and 2024. The findings indicate substantial variability in the degree of alignment, with a significant number of elementary schools demonstrating inconsistencies between assessment practices and targeted learning outcomes. Influencing factors include teachers' limited understanding of learning outcomes, insufficient skills in designing valid evaluation instruments, time constraints, administrative burdens, and a lack of ongoing professional development. Proposed strategies to enhance alignment include integrating diverse assessment methods, developing comprehensive evaluation tools, leveraging technology, providing sustained mentoring for teachers, and adopting student-centered evaluation approaches. A systematic, integrated approach is essential to improve the coherence between learning evaluations and curriculum goals in the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum.

**Keywords:** Learning Evaluation; Learning Outcomes; Merdeka Curriculum; Curriculum Alignment.

## **A. Introduction**

Primary education plays a critical role in laying the foundation for lifelong learning. In Indonesia, the Merdeka Curriculum has been introduced as a progressive

educational reform aimed at promoting more flexible, student-centered learning that emphasizes holistic competency development through clearly defined learning outcomes (Kemendikbud, 2024). Within this framework, learning evaluation serves as a key component in ensuring that the curriculum's objectives are effectively achieved. Consistent with the views of Wiggins and McTighe (2005), effective evaluation must reflect the learning goals established within the curriculum design. This aligns with the core principles of the Merdeka Curriculum, which emphasizes the development of competencies that are relevant to students' needs and development.

Previous studies have highlighted the global issue of misalignment between learning evaluation and curriculum outcomes. Black and Wiliam (2018) revealed that traditional assessment practices tend to focus solely on cognitive aspects, often overlooking the assessment of attitudes and skills—core elements in competency-based learning frameworks. They emphasize the importance of integrating both formative and summative assessments into effective teaching practices. Assessment, in this regard, should not merely function as an end-of-learning measurement tool but also as a means of providing constructive feedback throughout the learning process.

Furthermore, research by Carless and Boud (2018) underscores the issue of low feedback literacy among both teachers and students, which hinders the optimal implementation of formative assessment. They identify four essential components of student feedback literacy: appreciating feedback, making judgments, managing affective reactions, and taking action. A lack of understanding and skills in these areas can significantly limit the effectiveness of formative assessment in supporting meaningful learning.

These findings reinforce the urgency of reforming evaluation practices to ensure better alignment with curriculum goals—particularly in the context of the Merdeka Curriculum implementation in Indonesia. The scientific novelty of this article lies in its systematic analysis of the alignment between learning evaluations and learning outcomes in Indonesian elementary schools, as well as its identification of the key factors influencing such alignment.

This study aims to explore three central research questions. First, it investigates the extent to which current learning evaluation practices are aligned with the intended learning outcomes as specified in the Merdeka Curriculum at the elementary school level. Second, it seeks to identify the key factors that influence the degree of alignment between evaluation methods and curriculum-based learning objectives. Third, the study

endeavors to formulate strategic approaches that can be implemented to enhance the coherence between learning evaluations and learning outcomes within the context of the Merdeka Curriculum's implementation.

The objectives of this study are to analyze the degree of alignment between learning evaluations and the expected learning outcomes of the Merdeka Curriculum, to identify the factors that influence this alignment, and to propose strategies for improving coherence between evaluation practices and curriculum goals. It is expected that the findings will contribute both conceptually and practically to the development of more relevant, effective, and responsive evaluation practices that support the broader goals of Indonesia's educational transformation.

## **Methods**

This study adopted a qualitative approach utilizing the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method. SLR is a structured research methodology aimed at identifying, evaluating, and synthesizing relevant studies that address specific research questions (Kitchenham & Charters, 2007). This approach was selected to enable a comprehensive exploration of the alignment between learning evaluation practices and the intended learning outcomes of the Merdeka Curriculum within the context of Indonesian elementary education. The review followed a clearly defined protocol consisting of six key stages: formulation of research questions, development of the review protocol, identification and selection of literature, quality assessment of selected sources, data extraction, and synthesis of findings.

The selection process involved a three-tiered screening: initial review of titles and abstracts to identify potentially relevant sources; full-text screening to ensure content relevance; and a quality appraisal based on a rubric assessing relevance, methodological rigor, and scholarly contribution. Data were systematically extracted using a standardized data extraction form, capturing publication details, research aims, methodologies, key findings, and educational implications. The extracted data were analyzed using thematic analysis as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006), which included the stages of familiarization, initial coding, theme development, theme review, definition and naming of themes, and final reporting.

To enhance the validity and reliability of the findings, several strategies were implemented: application of a transparent and systematic review protocol,

comprehensive documentation at each research phase, triangulation of data sources, and peer debriefing among the research team to verify data interpretation. Through this rigorous methodological process, the study aimed to provide a nuanced and evidence-based understanding of the extent to which learning evaluations align with learning outcomes in the Merdeka Curriculum and to offer strategic recommendations for improving such alignment in Indonesian elementary education.

## **B. Results and Discussion**

Based on a systematic analysis of the literature on learning evaluation and learning outcomes within the context of the Merdeka Curriculum at the elementary school level, several key findings were identified and categorized into three main themes: (1) the alignment of learning evaluations with learning outcomes, (2) the factors influencing this alignment, and (3) strategies for enhancing coherence between evaluation practices and curriculum goals.

### **Alignment of Learning Evaluations with the Merdeka Curriculum Learning Outcomes**

The degree of alignment between learning evaluations and the prescribed learning outcomes in the Merdeka Curriculum varies significantly. Haerul and Rifdan (2023) found that in elementary schools in Makassar, learning evaluations had not yet fully embodied the principles of the Merdeka Curriculum. Their study indicated that 65% of teachers still used evaluation instruments focused primarily on cognitive aspects, with limited attention to assessing attitudes and skills. Marhamah et al. (2024) also identified a misalignment in their study at SD Negeri Aroepala Makassar, where only 40% of the 25 lesson plans analyzed demonstrated congruence between evaluation instruments and learning outcomes. This indicates substantial gaps in the implementation of evaluation practices.

The importance of developing comprehensive instruments for measuring learning outcomes was highlighted by Maharani and Safitri (2024). Evaluation tools designed with consideration for developmental stages and the profile of Pancasila students demonstrated greater validity and reliability, emphasizing the need for evaluation instruments that reflect the characteristics of the Merdeka Curriculum. Mukhdlor et al. (2024), using the CIPP evaluation model (Context, Input, Process, Product), reported that only 57% of elementary schools showed adequate alignment between evaluation practices and learning outcomes in the product dimension. Similarly, Nabila and Nadlir

(2025) concluded that evaluations often fail to measure learning outcomes comprehensively—particularly in the areas of character education and 21st-century skills.

Although a paradigm shift from conventional to authentic assessment has been initiated under the Merdeka Curriculum, its implementation remains suboptimal. Hasanah et al. (2024) observed that limited teacher understanding and challenges in instrument development hinder authentic assessment practices at SD Dwikora Medan. The lack of understanding of project-based and diagnostic assessment—hallmarks of the Merdeka Curriculum—was also highlighted by Tangkearung et al. (2023), who found that only 45% of teachers correctly implemented project-based assessments.

### **Factors Influencing the Alignment between Learning Evaluation and Learning Outcomes**

Various studies have identified multiple factors that affect the alignment between evaluation practices and learning outcomes in the Merdeka Curriculum. Teacher understanding of the curriculum's evaluation concepts emerged as the most significant factor (Sundahry et al., 2024). Findings from technical workshops on evaluation revealed that 72% of teachers still struggled to distinguish between the assessment principles of the 2013 Curriculum and the Merdeka Curriculum.

Listiyani et al. (2023), in their study at SD Negeri Tembarak, identified five influencing factors: (1) teacher comprehension of learning outcomes, (2) teachers' skills in developing evaluation instruments, (3) availability of resources and facilities, (4) school policy support, and (5) supervision and guidance from education inspectors. Their findings indicated that only 48% of teachers demonstrated adequate understanding of learning outcomes. Wyadha et al. (2023) noted that time constraints and administrative burdens were major obstacles to the development of effective evaluation instruments. Approximately 68% of teachers reported that administrative workloads hindered their ability to design high-quality assessments.

Another critical factor is the lack of continuous professional development related to assessment in the Merdeka Curriculum. Anizar and Sardin (2023) reported that only 35% of teachers had participated in training specifically focused on assessment practices under this curriculum. Huljannah (2021) emphasized that teachers' understanding of various assessment techniques and instruments is key to achieving alignment. Teachers

with strong conceptual knowledge of evaluation are more capable of developing instruments that align with learning outcomes. Additionally, disparities in teacher competence, limited infrastructure, and minimal technical support were identified as significant challenges by Ningsi et al. (2024).

### **Strategies to Improve the Alignment between Learning Evaluation and Learning Outcomes**

The reviewed literature identifies several strategic approaches for enhancing the coherence between evaluation practices and the intended learning outcomes of the Merdeka Curriculum. One widely emphasized strategy is the integration of multiple forms of assessment. Aini et al. (2024) advocate for the balanced use of formative, summative, diagnostic, and project-based assessments, arguing that such integration allows for a more comprehensive evaluation of student learning across various domains.

Supporting this perspective, Maulida et al. (2024), in their study at SD Negeri 16 Banda Aceh, found that the simultaneous application of formative and summative assessments significantly improved the alignment between evaluation practices and curriculum outcomes. Formative assessments were shown to provide timely, constructive feedback that supports instructional improvement, while summative assessments offered a broader overview of learning achievements at the conclusion of instructional periods.

To ensure that learning evaluations adequately capture all aspects of student competence, Maisaroh et al. (2025) recommended the development of instruments that proportionally address cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains. Their research at SDN Polisi 1 in Bogor demonstrated that the use of holistic tools such as rubrics, portfolios, and project-based assessments – resulted in more accurate and meaningful evaluations aligned with the Merdeka Curriculum. The integration of digital tools has also emerged as an effective means of enhancing evaluation practices. Maharani and Safitri (2024) designed a technology-based assessment model that enabled teachers to conduct evaluations more efficiently while providing rich, multidimensional data. The use of such tools was found to enhance both the effectiveness and the practicality of aligning assessments with curriculum standards.

Another important strategy involves the optimal utilization of evaluation results. Anizar and Sardin (2023) emphasized that assessment data should not only inform grading decisions but also serve as a basis for instructional refinement. When used effectively,

these data allow teachers to tailor their teaching strategies to better support student progress toward curriculum-aligned outcomes. Recognizing the need for capacity building, Sundahry et al. (2024) recommended ongoing professional development programs focused on assessment literacy. Their findings suggest that sustained training and mentoring significantly improve teachers' ability to develop and implement evaluation instruments aligned with learning outcomes. Finally, a shift toward student-centered assessment was proposed by Huljannah (2021) as a transformative strategy. This approach encourages active student involvement in the evaluation process and allows for greater personalization of assessment methods, thereby enabling learners to demonstrate their competencies in ways that reflect their individual strengths, learning preferences, and contextual realities.

In summary, improving the alignment between learning evaluation and curriculum outcomes necessitates a comprehensive and multi-faceted strategy. Key elements include enhancing teacher competence, developing valid and inclusive assessment instruments, leveraging technological innovations, ensuring institutional support, and fostering a reflective use of evaluation data. Collectively, these strategies can contribute to a more effective implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum and ultimately support holistic student development.

### **C. Conclusions**

The systematic analysis of the alignment between learning evaluation and the intended learning outcomes of the Merdeka Curriculum in elementary schools reveals several critical findings. First, there is a considerable variation in the level of alignment, with most elementary schools showing notable discrepancies. Evaluation practices remain predominantly focused on cognitive aspects and do not adequately address the assessment of attitudes and skills, which are central components emphasized in the Merdeka Curriculum.

Second, several factors influence the alignment between evaluation and learning outcomes, including: (1) teachers' understanding of the concept of learning outcomes in the Merdeka Curriculum; (2) their ability to develop appropriate evaluation instruments; (3) time constraints and administrative workload; (4) lack of continuous training and professional support; and (5) limited access to adequate resources and infrastructure. Only a minority of teachers possess sufficient understanding of learning evaluation

under the Merdeka Curriculum, which hampers the effective implementation of evaluations aligned with curriculum goals.

Third, strategies to enhance alignment between evaluation and learning outcomes include: (1) integrating various types of assessment formative, summative, diagnostic, and project-based—in a balanced manner; (2) developing evaluation instruments that proportionally cover cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains; (3) utilizing technology to support assessment processes; (4) implementing sustained mentoring and training programs for teachers; and (5) adopting student-centered assessment approaches.

This study concludes that improving the coherence between learning evaluations and learning outcomes within the Merdeka Curriculum requires a comprehensive and systematic approach. Ongoing efforts are necessary to strengthen teachers' knowledge and skills in designing and applying evaluation strategies that effectively measure holistic competency attainment in accordance with the principles and objectives of the Merdeka Curriculum.

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