# Realization of the Merdeka Curriculum in Culinary Fundamentals Education for Grade X at Vocational High School

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## ABSTRACT

The objectives of this research are: (1) To explain the planning, implementation, and evaluation of the Merdeka Curriculum in the teaching of Basic Culinary Skills for Grade X; (2) To identify obstacles in the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in teaching Basic Culinary Skills for Grade X; (3) To describe efforts in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in teaching Basic Culinary Skills for Grade X. This study employed a qualitative method with SMK Negeri 4 Yogyakarta as the research subject. Data were collected through observations, interviews, and document analysis. Research informants included the Vice Principal of Curriculum, the Head of the Culinary Department, and Basic Culinary Skills teachers. Data analysis techniques encompassed data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Data validity was ensured through source triangulation. The research findings are: (1) Learning implementation includes learning planning (Understanding Learning Outcomes, Formulating Learning Objectives, Developing Learning Objective Pathways, Planning Learning Activities and Assessments). The learning models applied were Project-Based Learning (PjBL) and Discovery Learning, using audiovisual learning media. Evaluation was conducted through reflective activities; (2) Identified obstacles include teachers' limited capacity to implement differentiated learning, shortages of both teaching staff and adequate practice facilities, as well as students' lack of independence, persistence, and self-confidence when engaging in sales practices; (3) Efforts made to address these issues include teachers' participation in training programs, enhanced coordination among teachers to foster creativity in active classroom learning, inviting guest instructors, and providing additional support to students to boost their self-confidence, independence, and entrepreneurial resilience. This study concludes that continuous support through educational policy is essential to enhance the effectiveness of the Merdeka Curriculum implementation in vocational high schools.

**Keywords:** Entrepreneurship, fundamental culinary skills, learning evaluation, Merdeka curriculum, project-based learning

## INTRODUCTION

One of the key aspects driving a nation's progress is education. Education involves a conscious and systematic process of transmitting skills and knowledge from one generation to the next to develop desired behaviors (Rahman and Munandar 2022). Several elements are integral to education, including institutions, administrators, teachers, organizers, facilities, media, and students, who represent the future leaders of the world. In educational institutions, a learning guideline known as the curriculum serves as a reference. The curriculum guides educators in conducting teaching and learning activities. Indonesia has undergone multiple curriculum revisions and modifications (Fatmawati and Yusrizal 2020).

The Merdeka Curriculum (Kurikulum Merdeka) policy was initially implemented in a limited number of pioneer schools in 2021. By August 2023, the Merdeka Curriculum was rolled out on a larger scale in educational institutions nationwide (Kemendikbudristek 2022). The core of the Independent Learning policy is to restore educational management authority through granting schools flexibility in planning, implementing, and evaluating educational programs, with support from local governments. The adoption of the Merdeka Curriculum is expected to achieve the nation's educational goals effectively. According to the Merdeka Curriculum guidebook, learning components have been revised, including those in vocational education.

The implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in vocational education in Indonesia aims to increase the relevance and quality of graduates amid the dynamic demands of the industry (Kemendikbudristek, 2023). This curriculum emphasizes flexibility in the teaching-learning process by positioning students as the center of learning and teachers as facilitators. However, its implementation at vocational high schools (SMKs), particularly in the Basic Culinary Skills program, faces several challenges due to the technical and entrepreneurial skills required.

Vocational high schools aim to enhance intelligence, knowledge, character, moral conduct, and life skills, enabling students to pursue higher education or enter the workforce. One of the goals of vocational education is to prepare professional workers in specific fields, producing graduates ready to face globalization and change. Technological advancements continuously impact industry and societal needs (Utama, et al. 2020). SMK Negeri 4 Yogyakarta, a tourism-oriented vocational school, has implemented the Merdeka Curriculum since 2022. The curriculum shift from the 2013 Curriculum to the Merdeka Curriculum has introduced several changes, particularly in learning content.

The 2013 Curriculum followed a scientific approach. In Grade X vocational education, particularly in culinary studies, subjects included Sanitation, Hygiene, and Occupational Safety; Basic Culinary Arts; Food Material Knowledge; Basic Cooking; and Nutrition Science. In contrast, the Merdeka Curriculum consolidates these subjects into a single productive subject called Basic Culinary Skills. This subject is mandatory for Grade X students at SMK Negeri 4 Yogyakarta. According to the learning outcomes, Basic Culinary Skills encompass six elements: Culinary Industry Business Processes; Global Culinary and Technological Developments; Culinary Professions and Entrepreneurship (Foodpreneurs and Job Profiles); Implementation of Excellent Service in the Culinary Industry; Cleanliness, Health, Safety, and Environmental Sustainability (CHSES); and Comprehensive Basic Cooking Practices (Kemendikbudristek 2022).

At SMK Negeri 4 Yogyakarta, implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in Basic Culinary Skills faces significant obstacles, including limited practice facilities, a shortage of competent teachers, and low student independence and confidence in entrepreneurial practices. Preliminary observations reveal that about 45% of teachers remain stuck in conventional teaching paradigms, while 60% of students show high dependence on teacher guidance during cooking practice. These findings underscore the need for teacher capacity-building and adequate infrastructure to support Project-Based Learning (PjBL) and Discovery Learning.

Another challenge is the limited implementation of differentiated learning due to insufficient teacher training. Data show that only 30% of teachers have attended training related to the Merdeka Curriculum since 2022. Additionally, limited internet access and digital teaching materials further hinder the learning process. These conditions highlight the importance of greater support from local governments and educational institutions in facilitating teacher capacity development and providing supporting infrastructure. Using a qualitative case study approach, this research aims to offer practical contributions and policy recommendations to strengthen curriculum implementation in similar vocational schools across Indonesia.

## PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Based on the problem background, the research objectives are: (1) To explain the planning, implementation, and evaluation of the Merdeka Curriculum in the teaching of Basic Culinary Skills for Grade X; (2) To identify obstacles in the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in teaching Basic Culinary Skills for Grade X; (3) To describe efforts to implement the Merdeka Curriculum in the teaching of Basic Culinary Skills for Grade X.

## METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach, which is a type of research that describes a problem and aims to explain a phenomenon systematically and accurately (Fiantika, et al. 2022). The study conducted is a field research with a case study approach. Field research is used to obtain accurate and relevant data through direct observation in the field. Meanwhile, the case study approach is applied because the research focuses on a newly implemented educational program, the Merdeka Curriculum (Kurikulum Merdeka), in schools, particularly vocational high schools. As stated by Zulkifli Noor, a case study is research conducted on a system of programs, activities, events, or a group of individuals under specific conditions (Noor, 2015).

The research was conducted at SMK Negeri 4 Yogyakarta, located at Sidikan Street No. 60, Sorosutan, Umbulharjo District, Yogyakarta City, DIY, between January and July 2024. The data used in this research consists of primary and secondary data. The research data includes documents related to learning planning, teaching modules, curriculum guidelines, and academic evaluation reports from the school. Additional sources include digital teaching materials such as e-books and audiovisual media used in learning.

### Participants

In this study, data collection involved interviews, observations, and documentation. Interviews were conducted with selected informants, namely the Vice Principal of Curriculum, the Head of the Culinary Program, and the Basic Culinary Skills teachers, to explore the research issues in-depth. A total of six informants were interviewed, and selected to represent both decision-makers and educators. As stated, the informants were not chosen randomly but based on specific criteria (Kumara, 2018). Observations were carried out to collect information on the planning, implementation, and evaluation of learning, as well as the availability of facilities and infrastructure. Documentation involved the collection of school documents, such as the school profile, teacher and student numbers, teaching modules, and images related to the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in Basic Culinary Skills for Grade X. To ensure the validity of the collected data, source triangulation was used to compare data from interviews, observations, and documentation. According to Norman K. Denkin, cited by (Susanto et al., 2023), triangulation of data sources involves the use of various data collection methods. The variety of perspectives obtained helps in gaining a more comprehensive understanding to reach the truth.

### Data Collection and Analysis

In qualitative research, both pre-field and field data analysis techniques are used (Saleh, 2017). In the pre-field analysis, several steps need to be carried out and prepared by the researcher, which will later become the research procedure in the field. This analysis includes the research design, the determination of the research site, field observations, research permits, and other research requirements. According to Miles and Huberman (1992:20), cited by (Abdussamad, 2021), data analysis in qualitative research includes data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions.

Data collection is carried out through interviews, observations, and documentation using appropriate strategies that focus on the data collection process. Data reduction involves summarizing and selecting the key elements and focusing on what is important according to the research objectives. The researcher uses tools to facilitate data recording during the data collection process, as the data obtained in the field is extensive. During interviews, the researcher uses a mobile phone to record audio, enabling clear and thorough analysis. Data reduction ensures that no data deviates from the research objectives.

Data presentation involves the combination of information from the collected data, followed by conclusions that may present opportunities for further actions. After data reduction, the next step is to present the data obtained. Conclusions depend on the quality of field notes, coding, storage, and the researcher's skills, and may not emerge until data collection is complete (Sidiq & Choiri, 2019). After data is collected, the researcher analyzes its validity using source triangulation by comparing and reviewing information obtained from various sources. All data is analyzed using a descriptive qualitative approach to ensure accurate and relevant results according to the research focus. Conclusion drawing through triangulation is conducted to obtain credible data analysis results (Haryoko et al., 2020).

## FINDINGS

The implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in the Basic Culinary Skills learning for Grade X is carried out through the planning of lessons, such as creating teaching modules. The learning process is conducted using the Project-Based Learning (PjBL) and Discovery Learning models, with audio-visual media and learning resources from digital books, the internet, and YouTube. Evaluation of the learning process is done by providing reflections in the form of formative assessments, as detailed in the triangulation table below:

### Learning Planning

The learning planning process in the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum is carried out through several systematic stages. Based on interviews, observations, and documentation conducted on July 18, 2023, it was found that the planning process begins with socializing the Merdeka Curriculum. The Vice Principal of Curriculum provides information related to the learning phases for each grade, which is then followed by discussions among teachers. This discussion aims to understand the Learning Achievements to be used.

Teachers collaboratively formulate Learning Objectives according to the needs of each class. They also prepare the Learning Flow and design teaching modules along with assessments that align with the Merdeka Curriculum standards. This process ensures that all elements of lesson planning are well integrated. The observation showed that teachers have developed and used Teaching Modules in the learning process. These modules are designed based on the guidelines agreed upon during the discussions, including learning objectives, the material to be taught, and the assessment methods used to measure students' achievements. Figure 1 shows socialization of the Merdeka Curriculum.

Based on the data collected, the steps followed by the teachers align with the procedures set in the Merdeka Curriculum, namely: (1) Understanding the Learning Achievements set out in the curriculum; (2) Formulating Learning Objectives collaboratively; (3) Structuring the Learning Flow that includes all competencies to be achieved; (4) Planning the learning process and assessments to ensure optimal learning outcomes. These steps ensure that lesson planning is carried out effectively, supporting the achievement of educational goals expected in the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum.

**Figure 1.** The socialization of the Merdeka Curriculum

## Learning Implementation

The implementation of learning in the Merdeka Curriculum is carried out through several important stages involving various teaching methods and media. Based on interviews, observations, and documentation, teachers start the lessons by greeting students, praying together, checking attendance, and providing an overview and motivation before beginning the lesson, in accordance with the Teaching Module.



(a)                                                             (b)

**Figure 2.** Learning Implementation: (a) Teacher Opened a Lesson, (b) Students Present Findings

Project-Based Learning (PjBL) and Discovery Learning models are being increasingly adopted by educators to foster a more engaging and explorative learning environment. These models leverage audio-visual learning media, such as PowerPoint slides, videos, and real-life props, to enhance the learning experience (see Figure 3). By incorporating these tools, teachers aim to create a dynamic classroom atmosphere where students can actively engage with the material. Additionally, students are encouraged to explore learning resources beyond traditional textbooks, utilizing digital books, the internet, and platforms like YouTube. This approach not only broadens the scope of learning but also empowers students to take charge of their educational journey, promoting self-directed learning and critical thinking skills.

Despite these advancements, the implementation of differentiated learning within these models remains suboptimal. Differentiated learning is essential for addressing the diverse needs of students, yet teachers have not fully embraced grouping students based on their individual learning requirements. This gap indicates a need for more tailored instructional strategies that cater to varying learning styles and paces. By not grouping students according to their specific needs, opportunities for maximizing each student's potential are missed. To enhance the effectiveness of PjBL and Discovery Learning, educators must

integrate differentiated learning practices, ensuring that all students receive the support and challenges they need to thrive. This would involve assessing students' unique learning profiles and adapting instruction to meet these diverse needs, ultimately fostering a more inclusive and effective learning environment.
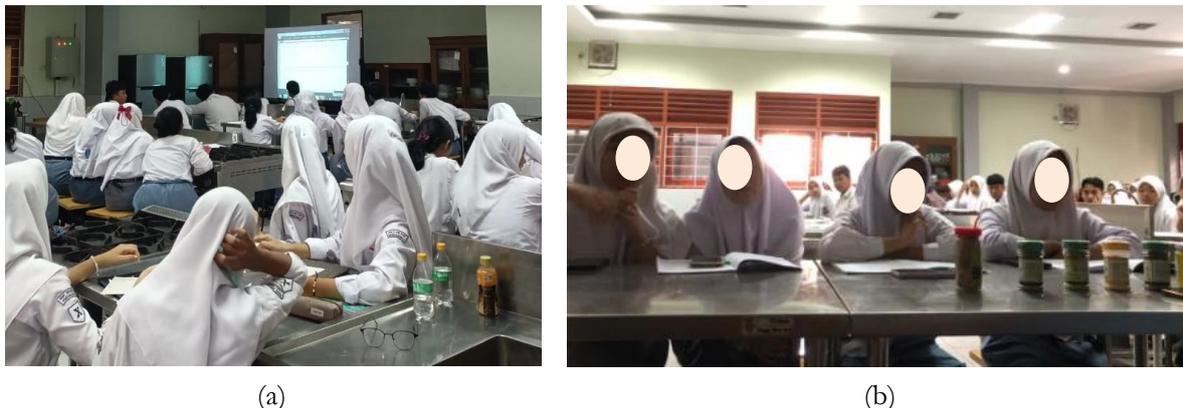


| (a) | (b) |

**Figure 3.** Learning Media Used: (a) Audio-Visual Media, (b) Real-Life Props

In teaching entrepreneurship, teachers use the Discovery Learning method, which requires reinforcement through hands-on practice (see Figure 4 ). At the end of the semester, simple entrepreneurial practices are carried out through a Market Day event designed to enhance students' entrepreneurial spirit. Based on the observation of the Market Day on September 8, 2023, it was found that students were selling various snacks and drinks tailored to the tastes of Generation Alpha.



| (a) | (b) |

**Figure 4.** Learning Methods: (a) The Market Day as a hands-on entrepreneurial practice, (b) Cooking Entrepreneurship Practice

Furthermore, on May 16, 2024, the entrepreneurship practice showed that the products marketed by students were very diverse and reflected their developing creativity. Overall, the learning process followed the guidelines of the Merdeka Curriculum, although there is still room for further development in the application of differentiated learning and optimization of the teaching models used.

## Learning Evaluation

The evaluation of learning in the Merdeka Curriculum implementation is conducted through formative and summative assessments. Based on interviews, observations, and documentation, formative assessments are carried out after completing a topic to assess students' understanding. This reflection process is done through various methods, such as multiple-choice questions, essays, either on paper or via Google Forms. Some teachers also conduct direct evaluations by asking students questions orally. Figure 5 describes how reflection is implemented.

**Figure 5.** Reflection Activities as Learning Evaluation

Observations conducted on August 7, 14, and 15, 2023, revealed that after completing a topic, teachers conducted reflections in the form of formative assessments. These assessments aim to monitor students' learning progress regularly and improve the learning process if necessary.

Summative assessments are carried out at the end of each semester to evaluate overall learning achievements. With the structured implementation of formative and summative assessments, teachers are able to identify students' learning needs and take relevant corrective actions to enhance the effectiveness of the learning process.

## Barriers and Efforts to Overcome Barriers

The barriers to the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum at vocational high schools include various aspects, ranging from the limited number and competence of teachers to inadequate practical room facilities for Grade X. Based on interviews, observations, and documentation, it was found that specific training for differentiated learning for vocational school teachers has not been implemented, so its application in the classroom is still not optimal (see Figure 6). Some teachers are still trapped in the paradigm of the previous curriculum, which hinders innovation in the learning process.



**Figure 6.** Practical Room

Moreover, unstable internet signals and the limited number of reference books available for students pose significant challenges. Some productive books for certain subjects are not available in sufficient quantities to be distributed individually to students. Another identified challenge is the lack of students' self-confidence in entrepreneurship practices, such as offering products with inadequate language and passive behavior when managing their stalls. Some students were even seen sitting idly without being actively involved in the buying and selling process. Figure 7 shows practical tools.

|  (a)  |  (b)  |

**Figure 7.** Practical Tools: (a) Kitchen Tools, (b) Lesson Books

The observation showed that there are only seven practical rooms available, while the actual need for practical space to support learning is far from adequate. The teachers' schedules often clash, indicating a shortage of sufficient human resources. Although efforts to strengthen entrepreneurial learning have begun in Grade X, the development of students' confidence and communication skills still needs to be improved through more intensive and continuous guidance.

Efforts to overcome these barriers in the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum include several strategic actions. Based on interviews, observations, and documentation, teachers are encouraged to attend relevant training, such as training on School Empowerment and differentiated learning, to improve their competence. In addition, the school proactively invites guest teachers to provide additional material to support students' skills development.

Observations on April 29, 2024, revealed that guest teachers were invited to provide material on excellent service in the industry. In the practical lessons, students also participated in cooking classes focused on pastry and bakery, where they learned to make cookies and *Crombolloni* with guidance from guest teachers who are experts in the field. Figure 8 shows the guest teacher was being demonstrated cooking.



**Figure 8.** Guest Teachers

To maximize the learning process, group learning methods are implemented so that students can help each other and discuss if they face challenges such as internet access issues. Teachers also actively provide encouragement and motivation to students who lack confidence, are shy, or are reluctant to participate in the entrepreneurial practices. With these measures, the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum is expected to run more effectively and provide a more meaningful learning experience for the students.

## DISCUSSION

### Learning Planning

In the Basic Culinary Skills course at SMK Negeri 4 Yogyakarta, Grade X Phase E, there are 6 elements in the Learning Achievements. Based on discussions and the needs of the students, the teachers refined these into 4 key elements: Basic Culinary Skills, Sanitation and Hygiene, Food Material Knowledge, and Entrepreneurship. Basic Culinary Skills and Food Material Knowledge cover the element of Comprehensive Basic Practice; Sanitation and Hygiene includes elements of Cleanliness, Health, Safety, and Environmental Sustainability; Entrepreneurship includes elements such as the Culinary Business Process, Global Culinary Development and Technological Advances in the Culinary Field, Foodpreneurs and Job Profiles in the culinary industry; and Excellent Service in the industry.

### Learning Implementation

Based on the research findings through interviews, observations, and documentation, it was found that teachers begin lessons with greetings, group prayers, and attendance checks, and provide aperception and motivation as an introduction before starting the lesson. These initial steps follow the guidelines outlined in the Teaching Modules prepared by the teachers. This can be aligned with the theory of (Rusmaini, 2019) that opening activities aim to create a mentally ready and attentive atmosphere for students, as well as to build student motivation so they become more enthusiastic and engaged in the lesson. Therefore, these initial activities involve not only greetings and attendance checks but also motivation and aperception.

Based on research findings through interviews, observations, and documentation, teachers deliver material using teaching models, media, and learning resources tailored to the needs of the students. According to the diagnostic test results, students prefer audio-visual media, so teachers predominantly use PowerPoint presentations and show videos, along with direct media tools. The teaching model is adjusted to student-centered learning, where the teacher acts as a facilitator to improve students' independence, understanding, and responsibility. Thus, the Project-Based Learning (PjBL) and Discovery Learning models are used, and for learning resources, teachers use government-issued modules as references while giving students the freedom to explore materials from various sources such as digital books, the internet, and YouTube. Project-Based Learning and Discovery Learning are examples of constructivist learning approaches.

This aligns with the Constructivist Learning Theory, which is a process of constructing knowledge through abstracting experiences as a result of students' interactions with real-life contexts, whether personal, natural, or social (Wahab & Rosnawati, 2021). According to (Masgumelar, 2021), constructivism is closely related to the Discovery Learning model because it gives students the freedom to build their own knowledge through a learning model designed by the teacher. Meanwhile, according to (Arsya & Fahira, 2021), Discovery Learning is a teaching model that emphasizes the process of independently and actively understanding a concept, where the teacher acts as a supervisor. On the other hand, Project-Based Learning is a constructivist model based on projects that present real-life problems to students, enabling them to generate permanent knowledge.

The teaching media used include visual media, such as LCDs, PowerPoint slides, and audio-visual media, like videos. This aligns with Faisal Anwar's statement that using visual media in teaching helps students easily understand the material presented by the teacher as the visual media facilitator (Anwar et al., 2022). Visual media presents learning content through displays such as OHP, LCD projectors, and slides,

while audio-visual media reinforces the information that students receive because they not only hear but also see, strengthening their understanding (Anwar, et al. 2022).

Based on research findings through interviews, observations, and documentation, the application of entrepreneurship elements in the curriculum has led to increased entrepreneurial spirit among students, as well as greater innovation and creativity in their work. This is in line with the findings in the journal "Analysis of Factors Affecting Entrepreneurial Attitude" (Rukmana, 2018), which identified six factors influencing entrepreneurship: self-efficacy, persistence, independence, creativity, decision-making ability, and entrepreneurial education.

## Learning Evaluation

Based on the research findings, the evaluation process is carried out using formative assessments through observation during the discussion and presentation process. This allows teachers to assess how well students can provide solutions to the given problems. In addition, teachers evaluate students' ability to process a product, calculate food costs, determine raw material prices, selling prices, profits, and any losses. Furthermore, teachers use objective tests at the end of each lesson. These objective tests consist of multiple-choice questions, short answers, and essays to assess understanding of the material. This aligns with Anindito Aditomo's theory that assessment is an inseparable part of the learning process and is crucial as input for lesson planning in the classroom, including diagnostic assessments, formative assessments, and summative assessments (Aditimo, 2024).

## Barriers

Every policy faces challenges in its implementation, including the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum. According to (Astini, 2022), the challenges faced by the Merdeka Curriculum include: "Education must take advantage of innovations like Artificial Intelligence, Internet of Things (IoT), Virtual/Augmented Reality in education, and Big Data; Educators or teachers must be proficient in transferring learning material and inspire students to think creatively and critically; Education leaders must be competent." Based on data, the barriers identified include insufficient training, as Basic Culinary Skills teachers have only received socialization and guidance from the school regarding how to implement the Merdeka Curriculum. Additionally, the number and competence of teachers are still inadequate, requiring them to understand and apply differentiated learning. The facilities for Grade X practical rooms are also limited, as the kitchen facilities are prioritized for Grades XI and XII, leaving Grade X to wait for the upper classes to finish their practical sessions. Moreover, the issue of internet signal instability needs attention.

The implementation of differentiated learning has not been optimal. Differentiation itself means grouping students based on their abilities, such as grouping students who are skilled, somewhat skilled, or not skilled (Kemendikbudristek, 2022). This requires time for adjustment, making it difficult for teachers to implement it effectively. Additionally, there is resistance to change from the previous curriculum to the Merdeka Curriculum mindset. Furthermore, some students lack confidence and are reluctant to promote the products they are selling. This is problematic since self-confidence and persistence are key factors in entrepreneurial attitudes, as discussed in the journal "Analysis of Factors Affecting Entrepreneurial Attitude" by (Rukmana, 2018).

## Efforts

In an educational unit like a Vocational High School, changes are necessary to address the challenges faced, including the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum. As mentioned by (Astini, 2022) "Educators

or teachers should minimize their role as the sole provider of learning material (the center of learning); Teachers should become tutors, facilitators, and inspirers, true learners who motivate students, creating a "Free Learning" environment; Teachers must be skilled in presenting learning material and inspire creativity in students." One solution proposed is to encourage teachers to participate in training outside of school. By attending training, teachers will broaden their knowledge and better understand how to implement the Merdeka Curriculum, including how to apply differentiated learning.

Teachers also collaborate within their fields to foster creativity. Additionally, efforts have been made to invite guest teachers to address the shortage of kitchen facilities and create study groups in the classroom so students can discuss the material and address challenges such as internet signal issues and limited books. To shift the mindset from the old curriculum to the new one, teachers have begun implementing project-based learning, placing the focus on the students themselves.

These findings highlight the importance of developing teachers' capacities through continuous training so they can implement the learning models in line with the Merdeka Curriculum guidelines. Activities such as thematic training and inviting guest teachers can enrich teachers' skills in designing interactive learning that meets the needs of the culinary industry (Astini, 2022). The practical implication of these findings is the need for educational policies that support intensive training programs and the provision of adequate practical facilities. These recommendations are relevant for policymakers and educational institutions aiming to improve the effectiveness of implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in vocational schools throughout Indonesia.

## CONCLUSION

The implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in the Basic Culinary Skills course at SMK Negeri 4 Yogyakarta has been carried out effectively. Teachers have planned the lessons by understanding the Learning Outcomes, formulating Learning Objectives, designing the Learning Pathway, and planning Learning and Assessment. The lessons are delivered by providing aperception and motivation, using Project-Based Learning (PjBL) and Discovery Learning models, as well as audio-visual media. The entrepreneurship elements applied have fostered the entrepreneurial spirit and creativity of the students. Evaluation is carried out through formative test reflections.

Barriers to the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in the Basic Culinary Skills course at SMK Negeri 4 Yogyakarta include teachers not participating enough in training, insufficient teacher numbers and competencies, teachers not yet attending training, unoptimized differentiated learning, and the need for mindset adaptation. In addition, the school infrastructure still lacks sufficient kitchen facilities for practical sessions, and the internet signal is inadequate to support the learning process. Furthermore, students' self-confidence, independence, and persistence in entrepreneurship need further strengthening.

Efforts to overcome the barriers in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in the Basic Culinary Skills course at SMK Negeri 4 Yogyakarta include continuously encouraging teachers to attend training, fostering coordination among teachers to enhance creativity in creating active classroom learning. Inviting guest teachers helps address the limited space and teacher competencies, and teachers should provide stronger support to students to increase their self-confidence, independence, and persistence in entrepreneurship. The practical implications of this research include the need for enhanced policy support for the provision of continuous training and adequate practical facilities. Recommendations for future research include further exploration of the impact of differentiated learning on students' technical skills and entrepreneurship at vocational schools.

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