
Integration of Learning Design and Evaluation in the Implementation of *Kurikulum Merdeka*: Evidence from Public Junior High Schools in Banjarmasin

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Abstrak

Transisi menuju Kurikulum Merdeka di Indonesia memerlukan praktik pengajaran yang lebih adaptif dan berpusat pada siswa, terutama dalam memastikan keselarasan antara desain pembelajaran dan evaluasi pembelajaran. Studi ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis integrasi antara desain pembelajaran dan evaluasi dalam implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka di kelas Ilmu Sosial. Pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif digunakan, melibatkan 16 sekolah menengah pertama negeri yang dipilih melalui sampling acak. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara, observasi, dan analisis dokumen, kemudian dianalisis menggunakan teknik reduksi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa proses desain pembelajaran dimulai dengan tinjauan kolaboratif terhadap Hasil Pembelajaran (CP) melalui Forum Guru Pendidikan Sosial (MGMP), diikuti dengan pengembangan Alur Tujuan Pembelajaran (ATP), penilaian diagnostik, formulasi tujuan pembelajaran spesifik, dan persiapan modul pembelajaran. Evaluasi pembelajaran terdiri dari penilaian diagnostik, formatif, dan sumatif, yang dilakukan dengan bantuan pedoman modul pembelajaran, rubrik sikap, aplikasi penilaian digital, dan instrumen evaluasi sumatif. Integrasi ditunjukkan melalui keselarasan antara tujuan, aktivitas pembelajaran, dan kriteria evaluasi, serta penggunaan hasil penilaian untuk menyempurnakan desain pembelajaran selanjutnya. Studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa integrasi yang efektif antara desain pembelajaran dan evaluasi mendorong perbaikan adaptif dan berkelanjutan dalam praktik pengajaran, sesuai dengan prinsip-prinsip inti Kurikulum Merdeka. Implikasi praktis menyoroti pentingnya mengoptimalkan MGMP sebagai ruang kolaboratif bagi guru, memperkuat dukungan sekolah untuk sistem penilaian terintegrasi, dan meningkatkan program pelatihan guru dalam pengembangan modul pembelajaran dan praktik penilaian yang berkelanjutan.

Kata kunci: Kurikulum Merdeka, desain pembelajaran, evaluasi pembelajaran, Ilmu Sosial

Abstract

The transition towards the *Kurikulum Merdeka* in Indonesia requires more adaptive and student-centered teaching practices, particularly in ensuring coherence between learning design and learning evaluation. This study aims to analyze the integration between learning design and evaluation in the implementation of the *Kurikulum Merdeka* in Social Studies classrooms. A descriptive qualitative approach was employed, involving 16 public junior high schools selected through random sampling. Data were collected through interviews, observations, and document analysis, and were subsequently

analyzed using data reduction, data display, and conclusion-drawing techniques. The findings reveal that the process of learning design begins with a collaborative review of the Learning Outcomes (CP) through the Social Studies Teacher Forum (MGMP), followed by the development of the Learning Objectives Flow (ATP), diagnostic assessments, formulation of specific learning goals, and preparation of teaching modules. Learning evaluation consists of diagnostic, formative, and summative assessments, conducted with the aid of teaching module guidelines, attitude rubrics, digital assessment applications, and summative evaluation instruments. Integration is demonstrated through the alignment of objectives, learning activities, and evaluation criteria, as well as the use of assessment results to refine subsequent learning designs. This study concludes that effective integration between learning design and evaluation fosters adaptive and continuous improvement in teaching practices, consistent with the core principles of the *Kurikulum Merdeka*. The practical implications highlight the importance of optimizing MGMP as collaborative spaces for teachers, strengthening school support for integrated assessment systems, and enhancing teacher training programs on the development of teaching modules and sustainable assessment practices.

Keywords: *Kurikulum Merdeka*, learning design, learning evaluation, Social Studies

Preliminary

Learning design and learning evaluation are two interrelated pillars of the teaching–learning process, both of which are essential for ensuring instructional effectiveness and achieving learning objectives. Learning design provides a structured framework for the educational process, ensuring teaching effectiveness and achievement of learning objectives (Kalkstein et al., 2016). Teachers need to develop the ability to design and implement various learning strategies that align with students' interests, talents, and developmental levels (Putra Aryana, 2020). The principles of learning design encompass fundamental concepts, technology integration, and learning theories, though some resources may require updates to reflect current digital trends (Ilmy et al., 2024)). Learning design aims to formulate communication and media technology to facilitate knowledge transfer between teachers and students, creating effective and efficient learning experiences while minimizing difficulties in understanding (Zulfah, 2025). By implementing well-designed learning approaches, educators can develop students' knowledge, skills, and attitudes in accordance with contemporary demands, fostering meaningful and enjoyable learning processes (Saswili et al., 2024).

Evaluation functions as a critical mechanism for measuring student achievement and determining the effectiveness of instructional practices (Abbas et al., 2024). It helps assess student achievement, improve teaching methods, and provide feedback to both educators and learners (Wahid Ahmad Al-Qodri et al., 2025). Through evaluation, teachers can enhance their competencies in classroom management, as well as in the selection of methods, media, and learning materials that effectively motivate students. (Miftha Huljannah, 2021). Evaluation also assists in identifying students' strengths and weaknesses, as well as in adjusting instructional approaches accordingly (Wijayanti et al., 2024).

Evaluation should be an ongoing, reflective tool that actively involves students in their learning journey, rather than just a formal requirement (Maulidah et al., 2024). It plays a strategic role in education by determining the effectiveness of teaching methods and tracking student progress (Sabila et al., 2023). Proper evaluation techniques can enhance teamwork, facilitate peer review, and set standards for assessment (Shinde, 2022). The evaluation process should be valid, effective, and objective to accurately measure learning outcomes (Niza, n.d.). A well-conducted evaluation enables teachers to understand the progress of the instructional system and to enhance the overall quality of education (Triyono & Ilhami, 2025).

The *Kurikulum Merdeka* in Indonesia emphasizes the importance of learning design and evaluation. Teachers are given flexibility to design engaging and meaningful learning experiences (Supianto et al., 2024). Effective learning design involves understanding five key components: learning objectives, student characteristics, learning analysis, teaching strategies, and assessment (Rahman et al., 2024). This approach aims to develop students' knowledge, skills, and attitudes in line with contemporary demands (Idrus L, n.d.). The curriculum introduces changes in assessment methods, shifting from cognitive-focused national exams to more comprehensive evaluations (Shah, 2019).

Kurikulum Merdeka is an alternative curriculum introduced in Indonesia to address learning setbacks during the pandemic and promote educational independence (Saputera et al., 2024). The *Kurikulum Merdeka*, aims to improve education quality and promote competency-based learning (Zou et al., 2025). It aims to replace Kurikulum 2013, offering project-based learning, soft skill development, and a flexible curriculum structure to better prepare students for the rapidly changing era of Society 5.0 (Dündar, 2015a). The curriculum emphasizes freedom for students to develop their potential independently and reduces bureaucratic burdens on teachers and schools, aligning with the educational philosophy of progressivism (Yusup et al., 2024). *Kurikulum Merdeka* and the associated Merdeka Mengajar platform represent efforts to transform Indonesian education, focusing on active and adaptive learning oriented towards project-based instruction (Khoerunnisa & Aqwal, 2020). Successful implementation requires support and hard work from various stakeholders to achieve better and more advanced education in Indonesia.

Kurikulum Merdeka, an evolution of the K13 curriculum, emphasizes student potential, talent, and interest development through digitalized learning (Maulana et al., 2024). It is based on four educational philosophies, with progressivism and constructionism dominating its development. The curriculum aims to increase student motivation by centering on learners, with teachers acting as facilitators. It incorporates the Pancasila Learner Profile, which includes

six dimensions such as faith, independence, and critical reasoning (Yusup et al., 2024). For early childhood education, *Kurikulum Merdeka* focuses on project-based learning and explores the surrounding environment under teacher guidance (Shalehah, 2023). Learning outcomes are based on National Education Standards and encompass religious values, character, self-identity, and foundations of literacy and STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics) (Yusup et al., 2024).

Within Social Studies (IPS), the integration of design and evaluation is particularly important because the subject requires teachers to foster inquiry, critical reasoning, and contextual understanding of social realities (Shah, 2019). Social learning promotes higher-level, abstract thinking, with learning from distant models encouraging more abstract learning than from near models (Kalkstein et al., 2016). A constructivist approach to social studies teaching fosters a culture of inquiry, bridging students' everyday knowledge with school knowledge (Shah, 2019). Additionally, prospective elementary school teachers' deep learning approaches in social studies teaching methods courses positively contribute to their teaching efficacy beliefs (Dündar, 2015b).

Despite its importance, research on how learning design and evaluation are integrated in the implementation of *Kurikulum Merdeka* remains limited, especially within Social Studies classrooms at the junior high school level. Existing studies often address design and evaluation as separate components without fully exploring their interconnectedness in day-to-day practice. Moreover, little empirical attention has been given to public schools in regional contexts such as Banjarmasin, where local conditions may shape curriculum implementation differently.

Based on this gap, this study aims to analyze the integration between learning design and evaluation in the implementation of the *Kurikulum Merdeka* in Social Studies instruction at public junior high schools in Banjarmasin. By examining both challenges and adaptive strategies, the research seeks to provide insights into how teachers navigate the tension between administrative expectations and classroom realities, and how these practices contribute to advancing student-centered learning.

Method

This study employed a descriptive qualitative method to explore the integration of learning design and learning evaluation in the implementation of *Kurikulum Merdeka*. The research was conducted in several public junior high schools located in Banjarmasin. The schools were selected using a random sampling technique, with the research subjects consisting of teachers, students, and school principals. This approach was chosen to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the practices and experiences across different schools.

Data collection was carried out through interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis. The primary informants were social studies teachers and vice principals in charge of curriculum, while additional interviews were conducted with students and teachers of other subjects to enrich the findings and cross-check the information obtained. Observations focused on classroom learning activities and the implementation of evaluation processes, providing direct insights into how learning design and evaluation were applied in practice. Document analysis was used to review lesson plans, teaching modules, assessment instruments, and other related materials.

To ensure data validity, triangulation techniques were applied by comparing data from different sources and methods. Data analysis followed the stages of qualitative research, including data collection, data reduction, data organization, data display, and conclusion drawing. Through this process, patterns and themes related to the integration of learning design and learning evaluation were identified, allowing the researchers to provide a holistic description of the study.

Results and Discussion

The results indicate that public junior high schools in Banjarmasin have implemented *Kurikulum Merdeka* in learning evaluation with various contextual adjustments. While most schools have adopted the new curriculum framework, some continue to apply the 2013 Curriculum (Kurikulum 13) for ninth-grade students, as the implementation must be sustained until the completion of the grade level. This situation illustrates the transitional nature of curriculum reform, requiring schools to balance continuity with innovation. Within this context, the detailed processes of integrating learning design and learning evaluation are examined in the following sections, providing insights into how teachers and administrators adapt to the demands of *Kurikulum Merdeka*.

Learning Design in the Implementation of *Kurikulum Merdeka* for Social Studies at Public Junior High Schools in Banjarmasin

The process of learning design in the implementation of *Kurikulum Merdeka* at public junior high schools in Banjarmasin begins with a collaborative effort among teachers through the IPS subject teacher forum (MGMP). Teachers first analyze the *Capaian Pembelajaran* (learning outcomes) and develop the *Alur Tujuan Pembelajaran* (learning objectives flow). Based on diagnostic assessments of students, they then formulate specific learning goals and prepare teaching modules that align with students' needs and characteristics.

The study found that the review of *Capaian Pembelajaran* (learning outcomes) was conducted systematically at the beginning of each academic year, prior to the students' entry

into school. This process was facilitated through the IPS subject teacher forum (MGMP), which invited resource persons such as university lecturers and representatives from the local education office to provide guidance and expertise. By involving external stakeholders, the review process ensured that the interpretation of learning outcomes was aligned not only with national standards but also with local educational needs. This collaborative approach served as a foundation for developing the Alur Tujuan Pembelajaran (learning objectives flow), thereby strengthening the coherence of instructional planning under *Kurikulum Merdeka*.

Following the review of learning outcomes, teachers collaboratively developed the Alur Tujuan Pembelajaran (ATP) during MGMP meetings. The drafting process was guided by reference to ATP models available on the Ministry of Education's official website and further enriched through discussions facilitated by academic experts, particularly university lecturers. This collaborative practice not only ensured the technical accuracy of the ATP but also encouraged professional dialogue among teachers in refining the sequence of objectives. Once the ATP was established, teachers proceeded to design learning materials that were aligned with the ATP while adapting content from the official textbooks used as the primary teaching reference. This process reflected a balance between adhering to standardized frameworks and contextualizing instructional materials to meet the specific needs of students in Banjarmasin's junior high schools.

Beyond the preparation of the ATP, teachers actively participated in discussions on formulating Tujuan Pembelajaran (learning objectives) within the MGMP forum. These sessions served as a collaborative arena where teachers could share perspectives, negotiate priorities, and align their instructional goals with the broader framework of the ATP. The process highlighted the importance of peer support and professional dialogue, which not only enhanced the clarity of learning objectives but also reduced the burden on individual teachers in interpreting curriculum guidelines.

Once the learning objectives had been agreed upon, teachers advanced to the stage of developing lesson plans or teaching modules. The findings indicated that teachers overwhelmingly preferred to adopt the objectives produced collectively in the MGMP, rather than independently drafting their own. This tendency was primarily attributed to time limitations and varying levels of pedagogical expertise, which made reliance on shared resources both practical and efficient. While this approach ensured a degree of standardization across schools, it also revealed challenges related to teacher autonomy, innovation, and the contextual adaptation of learning modules to meet the diverse needs of students.

In designing IPS learning, teachers relied on a range of instruments that served as essential references for structuring instruction. These included the academic calendar, the reviewed *Capaian Pembelajaran* (CP), the collaboratively developed ATP, school reports or institutional profiles, and the results of diagnostic assessments. Together, these instruments provided a comprehensive foundation for planning, enabling teachers to align instructional goals with curriculum standards, school conditions, and students' initial learning profiles. This systematic use of multiple references demonstrated an effort to create a more coherent and responsive learning design, ensuring that instructional plans were both contextually relevant and pedagogically sound.

The findings further revealed that the completeness of administrative planning documents was typically finalized at the beginning of the semester but rarely revisited or systematically followed up. In practice, classroom teaching was characterized more by adaptation and adjustment to students' conditions rather than by strict adherence to pre-prepared documents. This indicated a gap between the formal requirements of lesson documentation and the dynamic reality of classroom interactions, where teachers often prioritized responsiveness to learners' needs over compliance with administrative expectations.

Moreover, while teaching modules were formally prepared, they were seldom utilized as the primary guide during instruction and were often regarded mainly as administrative obligations. In the classroom, teachers relied more heavily on improvisation to respond to students' engagement, comprehension levels, and contextual challenges. Although this sometimes led to lessons diverging from the prepared modules, teachers consistently attempted to align their practice with the broader learning design and to ensure that instructional activities remained directed toward achieving the intended *Capaian Pembelajaran*. This balance between improvisation and adherence reflected the pragmatic strategies teachers employed to navigate the dual demands of pedagogical flexibility and curriculum accountability.

This tension between administrative compliance and classroom realities mirrors a broader challenge in the implementation of *Kurikulum Merdeka* across Indonesia. Studies reveal that while the curriculum promotes flexibility and contextual adaptation, teachers often grapple with an increased administrative burden and limited pedagogical support. For example, science educators report that excessive documentation and insufficient training impede their ability to implement innovative, student-centered practices (Romadhon et al., 2025). Similarly, literature reviews identify persistent obstacles such as teacher readiness, technological constraints, and the need for stronger collaboration among schools, parents, and policymakers (Nur Kibah Mandasari et al., 2025). These findings underscore a critical need for mechanisms

that bolster teacher autonomy, reduce bureaucratic load, and provide the requisite support to realize the adaptive learning ideals of *Kurikulum Merdeka* effectively.

Learning Evaluation in the Implementation of *Kurikulum Merdeka* for Social Studies at Public Junior High Schools in Banjarmasin

Learning evaluation is carried out through a combination of diagnostic, formative, and summative assessments. Teachers utilize teaching modules, assessment rubrics, digital applications, and summative test instruments to measure students' progress and achievement. These evaluation practices not only assess knowledge acquisition but also emphasize the development of attitudes and competencies, reflecting the holistic approach of *Kurikulum Merdeka*.

The evaluation practices observed in public junior high schools in Banjarmasin demonstrate a structured approach aligned with the principles of *Kurikulum Merdeka*. Teachers employed three main types of assessment: diagnostic, formative, and summative. Diagnostic assessment was conducted at the beginning of the learning process to identify students' prior knowledge, readiness, and learning needs, thereby enabling teachers to design more responsive instructional strategies. Formative assessment was implemented continuously during classroom activities to monitor students' progress and provide timely feedback for improvement. Meanwhile, summative assessment served as the basis for evaluating overall learning outcomes and measuring the extent to which students had achieved the targeted competencies. This three-tiered assessment system illustrates the schools' efforts to balance initial understanding, ongoing progress, and final achievement in the learning process.

Although diagnostic assessment was formally recognized as part of the evaluation process, its implementation remained limited and inconsistent across schools. Many teachers demonstrated a lack of understanding regarding the concept and purpose of diagnostic assessment, which resulted in minimal application in classroom practice (Luthfia, et.all, 2024). Rather than being systematically integrated, diagnostic assessment was often perceived as an optional activity rather than a foundational step for planning instruction. However, educators require more training and guidance to implement these assessments confidently (Nugroho et al., 2023).

Furthermore, schools in Banjarmasin had not yet established a coordinated mechanism to administer diagnostic assessments for new students at the beginning of the academic year. This absence of a school-wide initiative meant that the responsibility was left entirely to individual teachers, many of whom conducted only simple and informal diagnostic activities at the start of lessons. Such practices, while useful to some extent, did not provide comprehensive

insights into students' learning profiles. Consequently, the potential of diagnostic assessment to inform learning design and ensure differentiated instruction remained largely underutilized.

Formative assessment in the implementation of *Kurikulum Merdeka* in junior high schools of Banjarmasin was carried out through a variety of approaches encompassing cognitive, affective, and psychomotor dimensions. In practice, these assessments were conducted in the form of daily tests, assignments, quizzes, and other classroom activities. Despite the flexibility offered by the curriculum, many schools continued to conduct midterm tests (UTS) as part of formative evaluation, considering it an essential tool to monitor students' academic progress and readiness for subsequent learning stages. This reliance on UTS reflects a continuation of traditional practices, showing how the transition from the previous curriculum to *Kurikulum Merdeka* is still ongoing.

The instruments used in formative assessment were diverse and adapted to the learning objectives. Most teachers relied on conventional methods such as worksheets, crossword puzzles, and oral questioning for quizzes, primarily due to school policies that restrict the use of mobile phones among junior high school students. However, some teachers sought creative solutions to integrate digital media into formative assessment. These modifications included projecting digital quizzes for collective participation in the classroom and utilizing computer laboratories to allow students to access and complete digital assessments. Such practices illustrated the teachers' efforts to balance curriculum innovation with the practical limitations of school facilities and policies, thereby ensuring that formative assessment remained both accessible and effective.

Summative assessment in the implementation of *Kurikulum Merdeka* across public junior high schools in Banjarmasin was conducted primarily at the end of each semester through the Ujian Akhir Semester (UAS) and at the end of a learning phase through the Ujian Sekolah. These assessments were carried out simultaneously based on schedules agreed upon by the local education authority, ensuring uniformity in evaluation timelines across schools. The standardized scheduling emphasized the importance of summative assessments as benchmarks for measuring students' cumulative achievement and readiness for progression to the next stage of education.

The instruments for summative assessment were generally developed collaboratively through the subject teachers' forum (MGMP), which provided shared guidelines and question banks to ensure consistency and fairness across schools. Nevertheless, some schools made specific adjustments by designing their own assessment instruments, tailored to the unique context and needs of their students. This variation highlighted a degree of flexibility in the

implementation of summative assessments, allowing schools to adapt while still aligning with the broader framework established by the education authority. Such practices illustrate both the centralized and decentralized characteristics of assessment under *Kurikulum Merdeka*, reflecting an attempt to balance standardization with contextual responsiveness.

Below is the table of analysis between diagnostic, formative, and summative assessment in implementing *Kurikulum Merdeka*.

Table 1. Analysis of Diagnostic, Formative, and Summative Assessments in the Implementation of *Kurikulum Merdeka*

Type of Assessment	Timing	Purpose	Implementation in Schools	Challenges / Notes
Diagnostic Assessment	Beginning of the school year / before learning	Identify students' prior knowledge, learning readiness, and learning needs	Limited implementation; some teachers conduct simple initial assessments individually	Teachers' limited understanding of diagnostic assessment; not conducted uniformly for new students
Formative Assessment	During the learning process (daily, weekly, mid-semester)	Monitor students' progress, provide feedback, support ongoing learning	Conducted through daily tests, assignments, quizzes, class activities; UTS still widely used; instruments vary depending on purpose	Mostly conventional media (worksheets, Q&A); limited digital use due to phone restrictions; some innovations like digital quizzes via projector or computer labs
Summative Assessment	End of semester (UAS), end of phase (School Exam)	Evaluate overall achievement of learning objectives, determine progression	Conducted simultaneously across schools according to education authority schedule; instruments prepared by MGMP, with some school-level adaptations	Centralized schedule ensures uniformity; flexibility exists where schools adapt instruments to local needs

The table illustrates the structured process of learning assessment implemented in the context of *Kurikulum Merdeka* at junior high schools in Banjarmasin. It begins with diagnostic assessment, which is intended to identify students' initial knowledge and learning needs at the start of instruction. However, this stage is still minimally applied, as many teachers lack a comprehensive understanding of diagnostic assessment. The process continues with formative assessment, conducted throughout the learning period to monitor progress and provide feedback. This includes daily tests, quizzes, and class activities, often supported by simple or modified digital tools due to restrictions on students' access to mobile devices. Finally,

summative assessment is carried out at the end of the semester or learning phase to evaluate overall achievement. The summative instruments are generally developed by the MGMP (subject teacher forum), although some schools make adjustments to suit their specific contexts. Collectively, the table underscores how diagnostic, formative, and summative assessments are interconnected, forming an integrated cycle that guides both teaching and learning in the classroom.

Overall, the findings highlight that learning evaluation in the implementation of *Kurikulum Merdeka* within junior high schools in Banjarmasin has been conducted through diagnostic, formative, and summative assessments, each serving distinct purposes in the learning process. While formative and summative assessments have been more systematically applied, diagnostic assessment remains underdeveloped and requires further attention. Despite these challenges, the variety of instruments and approaches used indicates teachers' efforts to adapt evaluation practices to both policy demands and classroom realities. These practices, however, show a gap between administrative requirements and practical classroom application, reflecting the complexity of translating policy into meaningful evaluation.

Building on these findings, the next subsection explores how learning evaluation is not only conducted as a separate component but also integrated into the broader process of learning design. The integration of learning design and evaluation becomes crucial to ensure that instructional planning, classroom practice, and assessment are aligned to achieve the intended *Capaian Pembelajaran* within the framework of *Kurikulum Merdeka*.

Integration of Learning Design and Learning Evaluation in the Implementation of *Kurikulum Merdeka* for Social Studies at Public Junior High Schools in Banjarmasin

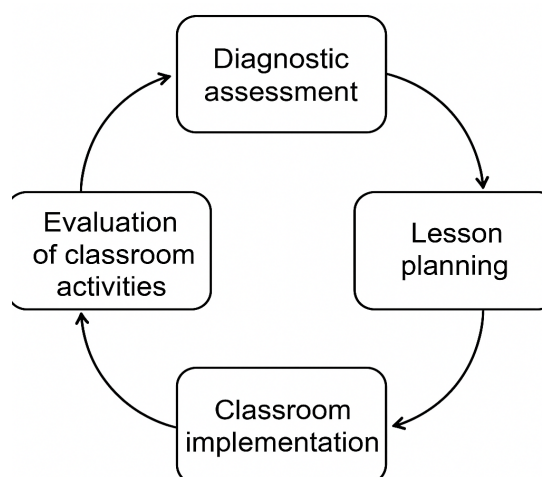
The integration of learning design and evaluation is evident in how assessment results inform the next cycle of instructional planning. Diagnostic assessments provide the foundation for tailoring learning objectives, while formative and summative assessments generate feedback that guides teachers in refining teaching strategies. This cyclical relationship ensures that learning design and evaluation are mutually reinforcing, creating a continuous improvement loop in the teaching and learning process.

The process of designing instruction and conducting evaluation in junior high schools can be understood as a continuous and mutually reinforcing cycle. Diagnostic assessment is used as the foundation for developing lesson plans, ensuring that the planned activities are aligned with the initial profile and needs of the students. This planning is then implemented in classroom practice, where its effectiveness is immediately subjected to evaluation.

The evaluation of classroom activities serves as a critical feedback mechanism in this cycle. The results obtained from these evaluations are not merely recorded but are actively considered in the preparation of subsequent lesson plans. By integrating evaluation into every stage of the instructional process, teachers are able to ensure that their lesson designs remain responsive to student needs and contextual conditions.

Moreover, evaluations are conducted not only at the end of a unit or semester but can also take place after each lesson to measure the immediate effectiveness of instruction. This frequent and ongoing evaluation enables teachers to make timely improvements and adjustments, thus enhancing the overall quality of the teaching and learning process. The cyclical nature of this integration highlights the dynamic relationship between planning and evaluation, reinforcing the adaptive character of instructional practice under the *Kurikulum Merdeka*.

Figure 1. Integration between learning design and learning evaluation



The integration of learning design and evaluation in public junior high schools in Banjarmasin is largely characterized by practical adaptation rather than strict adherence to administrative documentation. Teachers tend to prioritize immediate classroom needs over formal record-keeping, which allows them to respond dynamically to student behavior and learning progress. This adaptive approach highlights the teachers' focus on creating a learning environment that remains relevant and responsive, even though it results in limited formal evidence of the integration process. Such conditions illustrate how flexibility becomes a defining feature of the learning design–evaluation cycle in practice.

In addition, the attempt to develop assessment rubrics that align with learning objectives reflects teachers' awareness of the importance of structured evaluation. However, the implementation often leans toward simplified methods that can be managed within

classroom realities. The use of anecdotal notes or classroom records, which capture students' levels of participation, focus, and enthusiasm, demonstrates how teachers rely on observational and reflective practices. Although informal, these records provide meaningful insights into affective and psychomotor domains, complementing cognitive evaluation and contributing to a more holistic understanding of student learning outcomes.

The integration of learning design and learning evaluation in Banjarmasin junior high schools is generally carried out in an unstructured and independent manner by teachers. Rather than following a predetermined framework, teachers often rely on spontaneous adaptation after observing that students' responses or outcomes do not align with expectations. This indicates that the evaluation process is deeply embedded in day-to-day classroom interactions, with effectiveness measured primarily through observation of student behavior and engagement. In this sense, evaluation becomes less of a formalized procedure and more of a reflective practice that informs the teacher's immediate instructional adjustments.

Furthermore, teachers often respond to classroom realities by modifying strategies to ensure student participation and active involvement. For instance, when students appear disengaged or passive, teachers may alter their instructional methods to foster a more interactive and student-centered environment. Such improvisations illustrate the flexible and responsive nature of the integration process, though they also reveal the absence of standardized guidance for evaluation. The reliance on teacher judgment highlights both the strengths of adaptability and the risks of inconsistency across classrooms.

At the end of instructional sessions, some teachers extend the integration process by engaging students in reflective activities. These reflections serve a dual purpose: they allow students to consolidate their learning while simultaneously functioning as a diagnostic assessment tool for future lessons. Importantly, student feedback is incorporated into this process, offering teachers valuable insights into instructional effectiveness from the learners' perspective. Conducted either at the conclusion of daily lessons or at the end of the semester, this practice not only strengthens the feedback loop between teaching and evaluation but also aligns with the principles of formative and participatory assessment.

This unstructured yet adaptive integration process also reflects the broader spirit of the *Kurikulum Merdeka*, which emphasizes flexibility, contextualization, and learner-centered practices. Although the lack of standardized guidelines may pose challenges for consistency and documentation, the responsive adjustments made by teachers demonstrate an authentic effort to align instruction with students' needs. By allowing room for reflection, feedback, and improvisation, the integration of learning design and evaluation contributes to the cultivation

of a more dynamic and participatory learning environment. In this way, the practices observed in Banjarmasin schools illustrate how the goals of *Kurikulum Merdeka* are interpreted and enacted in real classroom settings, where adaptability often becomes the key to fostering meaningful learning outcomes.

Teachers' Challenges and Strategies in Integrating Learning Design and Evaluation in Implementing *Kurikulum Merdeka*

This subsection explores the challenges and strategies employed by teachers in integrating learning design and learning evaluation within the classroom context. While the integration process is essential for ensuring that teaching objectives align with assessment practices, many teachers encounter obstacles related to limited time, administrative demands, and the absence of structured guidelines. Despite these challenges, teachers demonstrate resilience by adopting adaptive strategies, such as modifying lesson plans based on real-time classroom dynamics and incorporating student feedback into future instructional planning. This adaptive approach reflects both the constraints and the innovative practices that shape the integration process in daily teaching activities.

One of the key challenges faced by teachers in integrating learning design and evaluation is the limited time available to prepare structured and administratively complete evaluation instruments. Teachers often find it difficult to balance administrative requirements with the actual demands of classroom practice. As a result, rather than spending excessive time on documentation, teachers prioritize strategies that directly encourage student engagement in learning. They focus on listening to students' feedback and making continuous improvements to teaching methods, ensuring that the learning process remains responsive to students' needs even when administrative preparation is not optimal.

Another significant barrier is the lack of sufficient training on how to integrate evaluation results into lesson planning and how to effectively utilize these results to enhance instruction. In the absence of structured professional development opportunities, teachers often rely on experiential learning, adopting a learning-by-doing approach. Trial and error becomes a natural process in their practice, where teachers experiment with different strategies to see what works best for their students. In addition, informal collaboration through peer discussions plays an important role, as teachers exchange experiences about student behaviors and share practical solutions for addressing classroom challenges. This collaborative and experiential strategy reflects the adaptability of teachers in navigating the gaps left by limited institutional support.

A third challenge identified in the integration of learning design and evaluation is the need for specific skills that enable teachers to be sensitive to classroom dynamics, adapt quickly, and adjust instructional strategies accordingly. These skills are not only technical but also situational, requiring teachers to interpret subtle cues from students' behavior, engagement, and responses during lessons. Developing such skills is a gradual process that demands continuous practice and experience, making teaching expertise an important factor in effective classroom management and instructional adaptation.

In practice, experienced teachers are generally more adept at reading classroom situations and making immediate adjustments than novice teachers, who often struggle with interpreting student needs in real time. Unfortunately, there are limited training opportunities that specifically address these adaptive teaching skills, leaving many teachers to rely on self-directed learning or informal mentoring. Discussions with more senior colleagues become a vital strategy, as novice teachers learn by observing, asking questions, and adopting practices shared by those with greater classroom experience. This highlights the importance of professional collaboration and peer support networks in bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and the practical demands of adaptive teaching.

Another challenge faced by teachers is the diversity of student characteristics, which makes it difficult to apply a single instructional strategy effectively across all classes and grade levels. Every group of students demonstrates unique dynamics in terms of motivation, learning style, and classroom behavior, requiring teachers to make continuous adjustments and refinements to their instructional approaches. This ongoing process of adaptation ensures that learning activities remain relevant and responsive to the actual needs of students, even though it often creates additional workload for teachers.

When the integration of learning design and evaluation is strictly tied to administrative documentation, teachers often find themselves burdened with extensive reporting requirements. As a result, much of the written planning and reporting becomes a matter of formality rather than a true reflection of classroom practices. Instead of relying solely on administrative procedures, teachers engage in trial-and-error approaches directly in the classroom, experimenting with strategies until they discover the most suitable formula for their students. This practical orientation highlights the tension between administrative compliance and pedagogical responsiveness, with teachers prioritizing student engagement and learning outcomes over rigid adherence to documentation.

The results indicate that the implementation of Kurikulum Merdeka in Banjarmasin reflects both opportunities and challenges in achieving adaptive, student-centered learning. The

collaborative review of CP and the collective development of ATP show strong alignment with the principles of professional learning communities. This finding supports earlier research emphasizing the significance of MGMP in enhancing teacher collaboration and curriculum interpretation (Misbah, 2023). At the same time, the tendency to regard teaching modules primarily as administrative tasks highlights a structural gap between curriculum design and classroom practice, consistent with reports that teachers nationwide face heavy documentation burdens (Romadhon et al., 2025).

Diagnostic assessment, though acknowledged in policy, remains underdeveloped. Teachers' limited understanding and the absence of school-wide systems undermine its potential to support differentiated instruction, echoing concerns raised by Nugroho et al. (2023). Without systematic diagnostic practices, the ideal of tailoring instruction to individual learner profiles remains difficult to realize.

Formative assessment practices reveal a duality: while daily quizzes and class activities reflect continuous evaluation, the persistence of midterm tests (UTS) shows inertia from the previous curriculum. This coexistence of traditional and innovative practices underscores the transitional stage of reform. The modest use of digital tools demonstrates teacher creativity but also reflects infrastructural and policy constraints.

Integration of design and evaluation appears largely informal and adaptive. While this responsiveness ensures relevance to classroom realities, it also creates inconsistencies across schools and teachers. Similar patterns are noted in broader studies of Kurikulum Merdeka, which emphasize flexibility but also reveal the need for clearer guidelines and sustained professional support (Mandasari et al., 2025).

Overall, the findings suggest that while Banjarmasin schools are moving toward the ideals of Kurikulum Merdeka—flexibility, contextualization, and student-centeredness—the process remains uneven. To fully realize these goals, policy makers and institutions must reduce administrative burdens, strengthen training on diagnostic and formative assessment, and foster support systems that enable teachers to integrate planning and evaluation in a coherent and sustainable manner.

Theoretical Implications

The findings from this study provide several theoretical contributions to the literature on curriculum reform and educational evaluation. First, the integration of learning design and evaluation within the Kurikulum Merdeka context reinforces the theoretical proposition that curriculum implementation is not a linear process but an adaptive practice shaped by institutional, cultural, and resource constraints. This aligns with constructivist perspectives on

curriculum reform, which emphasize the dynamic interaction between policy frameworks and teachers' pedagogical agency.

Second, the limited and inconsistent use of diagnostic assessment highlights a theoretical gap between policy prescriptions of differentiated learning and the realities of classroom enactment. This tension suggests that current frameworks of assessment integration may overestimate teachers' capacity to translate diagnostic data into actionable instructional strategies. Theoretically, this calls for a reconceptualization of assessment as a socially negotiated practice rather than a purely technical mechanism.

Third, the persistence of traditional midterm assessments alongside formative practices illustrates the phenomenon of curricular hybridity, wherein elements of old and new systems coexist. This hybridity supports theories of path dependency in educational change, underscoring that systemic reform often results in layered rather than fully replaced practices.

Conclusion

The study concludes that the integration of learning design and evaluation in the implementation of *Kurikulum Merdeka* at junior high schools in Banjarmasin is characterized by strong teacher collaboration and adaptive classroom practices, yet constrained by administrative demands, limited training, and uneven use of diagnostic assessments. While formal structures such as MGMP foster coherence and professional dialogue, teachers rely heavily on improvisation, peer support, and reflective adjustments to meet diverse student needs. This tension between policy expectations and classroom realities underscores the need to reduce bureaucratic burdens, strengthen teacher autonomy, and provide sustained capacity building so that the curriculum's vision of adaptive, student-centered learning can be more fully realized in practice.

Future studies should investigate teachers' adaptive practices over time through longitudinal designs, and explore whether the challenges observed in Banjarmasin mirror broader national patterns. Special attention should be given to how professional learning communities such as MGMP support the integration of planning and evaluation, and how diagnostic assessments are interpreted in practice. Finally, research linking teacher practices with student learning outcomes would provide stronger evidence on the effectiveness of *Kurikulum Merdeka* in achieving its intended goals

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