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Curriculum as Political Hostage: A Genealogy of 'Ganti Menteri Ganti Kurikulum' as Systemic Trauma in Indonesian Education

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini menyelidiki fenomena Ganti Menteri, Ganti Kurikulum yang terus-menerus dalam pendidikan Indonesia, menganalisisnya tidak hanya sebagai inkonsistensi administrasi tetapi sebagai patologi struktural di mana kebijakan kurikulum berfungsi sebagai alat legitimasi politik. Memanfaatkan metode penelitian perpustakaan kualitatif yang didukung oleh analisis genealogi dan teori trauma kelembagaan Michel Foucault, penelitian ini menelusuri lintasan reformasi kurikulum dari Orde Lama (1947) hingga Kurikulum Merdeka saat ini. Temuan ini mengungkapkan bahwa perubahan kurikulum sering didorong oleh legitimasi melalui negasi logika politik di mana menteri baru memvalidasi otoritas mereka dengan patologisasi kebijakan sebelumnya dan ditopang oleh ekonomi proyek yang mendorong pengadaan material yang sering. Siklus diskontinuitas ini menimbulkan trauma sistemik pada ekosistem pendidikan, yang dimanifestasikan sebagai kelelahan reformasi guru kronis, penghapusan memori institusional, dan kelumpuhan administratif. Studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa kecuali pengembangan kurikulum dipisahkan dari siklus politik lima tahun melalui Grand Design yang mengikat secara hukum dan komisi pengawasan independen, pendidikan Indonesia akan tetap terjebak dalam keadaan penemuan kembali yang terus-menerus dan dangkal. Kata kunci: Kebijakan Pendidikan, Reformasi Kurikulum, Silsilah Politik, Trauma Sistemik, Indonesia, Merdeka Belajar, Foucault, Memori Kelembagaan.

Abstract

This study investigates the persistent phenomenon of *Ganti Menteri, Ganti Kurikulum* (Change Minister, Change Curriculum) in Indonesian education, analyzing it not merely as administrative inconsistency but as a structural pathology where curriculum policy functions as a tool for political legitimacy. Utilizing a qualitative library research method underpinned by Michel Foucault's genealogical analysis and institutional trauma theory, this research traces the trajectory of curriculum reforms from the Old Order (1947) to the current *Kurikulum Merdeka*. The findings reveal that curriculum changes are frequently driven by legitimacy through negation a political logic where new ministers validate their authority by pathologizing predecessor policies and sustained by a proyek economy that incentivizes frequent material procurement. This cycle of discontinuity inflicts systemic trauma on the educational ecosystem, manifested as chronic teacher reform fatigue, the erasure of institutional memory, and administrative paralysis. The study concludes that unless curriculum development is decoupled from the five-year political cycle through a legally binding Grand Design and an independent oversight commission, Indonesian education will remain trapped in a state of perpetual, superficial reinvention.

Keywords: Education Policy, Curriculum Reform, Political Genealogy, Systemic Trauma, Indonesia, Merdeka Belajar, Foucault, Institutional Memory.

INTRODUCTION

The Indonesian phenomenon *Ganti Menteri, Ganti Kurikulum* (Change Minister, Change Curriculum) reflects a systematic pattern in which curriculum reforms serve as instruments of political legitimacy rather than pedagogical necessity. Research demonstrates that curriculum revisions in Indonesia are frequently influenced by the prevailing political system as a means to demonstrate leadership authority, rather than being grounded in actual educational requirements. This pattern persists across multiple political transitions, from the Competency-Based Curriculum (2004), to the Education Unit Level Curriculum (2006), and the 2013 Curriculum, revealing how education policy becomes entangled with political cycles (Abidin Nurdin & Munawwarah, 2023; Putri & Suhardi, 2023). The historical trajectory of curriculum changes spanning 1947, 1964, 1968, 1975, 1984, 1994, 2004, 2006, 2013, and the recent Kurikulum Merdeka illustrates the political tempo that shapes national reform agendas and undermines policy continuity. Understanding this genealogy is critical for scholars and policymakers seeking to disentangle genuine educational improvement from political theater, making this topic highly relevant to the fields of public policy, political science, and education administration.

The continuous cycle of curriculum change creates what can be conceptualized as systemic trauma for educational stakeholders, particularly teachers who must repeatedly adapt to new frameworks without adequate preparation or resources. Studies on the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum reveal significant challenges in implementation, including teacher preparedness, logistical issues, and disparities in digital resources, all of which compound the psychological and professional burden on educators (Hunaepi & Suharta, 2024a). Research indicates that even when curriculum reforms have transformative potential, their effectiveness is severely undermined by inadequate teacher training programs, poor infrastructure, and lack of sustained support systems (Alhamuddin & Murniati, 2025). The disconnect between policy rhetoric emphasizing modernization and the chaotic reality of implementation erodes professional trust and creates resistance among educators who experience reform fatigue. This topic is therefore essential for understanding organizational behavior in public institutions, teacher professional development, and the sociology of education, particularly in contexts where political volatility disrupts institutional stability.

Examining curriculum as a political hostage contributes to theoretical frameworks in public policy analysis, particularly theories of policy discontinuity, institutional resilience, and organizational trauma. The genealogical approach to curriculum change reveals underlying political rationalities, power distributions among government agencies, and the competing interests of diverse stakeholders including religious groups, communities, and professional educators. Research on decentralization and curriculum reform in Indonesia shows that despite increased autonomy for provincial and local governments, political settlements remain competitive and clientelist, resulting in policies that prioritize political survival over learning outcomes (Bano & Dyonisius, 2022; Dewi, 2021). The concept of systemic trauma provides a lens to analyze resistance behaviors, adaptation fatigue, and implementation fidelity across educational institutions, enriching scholarly discourse on how public sector reforms succeed or fail. This interdisciplinary relevance makes the topic significant for researchers in political economy, education policy, and comparative public administration who seek to understand the mechanisms through which political volatility undermines institutional reform (Suprpto et al., 2021).

The practical significance of this research lies in its potential to inform the creation of a coherent Grand Design of Education (*Peta Jalan Pendidikan*) that prioritizes policy continuity and evidence-based reform over political expediency. Historical analysis of curriculum shifts helps identify critical policy gaps, misalignments between national goals and local implementation capacity, and the political contingencies that derail long-term planning. By reframing discontinuous policy changes as institutional trauma rather than isolated missteps, this work provides strategic insights for designing more resilient curricular architecture and robust stakeholder engagement mechanisms. Evidence from comparative studies suggests that successful curriculum reform requires not only technical design but also sustained political commitment, adequate resource allocation, and mechanisms to insulate educational policy from short-term political cycles (Munandar & Susanti, 2024; Ramesh, 2025). This research therefore addresses urgent practical needs for policymakers, educational administrators, and reform advocates seeking to stabilize Indonesia's educational system amid persistent political volatility.

For scholars, this topic opens critical avenues for investigating the causal links between curriculum policy cycles and measurable outcomes in student learning, teacher retention, school performance, and educational equity. The Merdeka Belajar era, with its emphasis on

student autonomy, 21st-century skills integration, and campus collaboration (link and match), serves as a focal case for evaluating how large-scale reform interacts with local conditions, digital divides, and socioeconomic disparities (Wang et al., 2023). Research evidence indicates that while the Merdeka Curriculum has potential to transform Indonesian education by promoting autonomy and engagement, significant challenges persist in teacher training, infrastructure support, and equitable resource distribution. For practitioners, insights from this genealogical analysis point to the need for governance arrangements that ensure meaningful consultation, capacity-building before implementation, and monitoring mechanisms that hold political leaders accountable for educational outcomes rather than political narratives (Hunaepi & Suharta, 2024b; Pratiwi, 2025). The combination of historical, political, and practical perspectives makes this topic especially pertinent for researchers and professionals committed to understanding how to balance political legitimacy with educational quality in transitional democracies.

METHOD

This study employs qualitative library research through critical policy analysis, utilizing a Foucaultian genealogical lens to trace the history of curriculum reforms and uncover the power relations embedded within educational policy-making in Indonesia. Foucault's genealogy provides a methodological framework for analyzing how knowledge in the form of curriculum is produced and legitimized by power exercised through successive political regimes, revealing the discontinuities, ruptures, and political rationalities that shape educational discourse (Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Mann, 2015; Nickels & Davis, 2020). This approach enables the deconstruction of stated justifications for each curriculum change by examining not only what is officially declared but also what is silenced, excluded, or rendered invisible in policy documents. The genealogical method is particularly suited for analyzing Indonesian curriculum politics because it challenges the assumption of linear progress and instead reveals how policy shifts serve to consolidate political legitimacy rather than address pedagogical needs. Complementing this framework, institutional trauma theory is employed to analyze the cumulative psychological and structural damage caused by chronic policy instability and lack of closure, conceptualizing repeated curriculum disruptions as a form of systemic violence against educational stakeholders. This dual theoretical framework allows for both a macro-level analysis of power-knowledge relations in curriculum production and a micro-level

understanding of how discontinuous reforms create resistance, fatigue, and adaptive dysfunction among teachers, schools, and students.

Primary data sources include official government documents such as *Naskah Akademik* (academic drafts) of past curricula, laws on the National Education System (UU Sisdiknas), and ministerial decrees (Permendikbud) regarding curriculum implementation, which serve as artifacts of policy discourse and governance. Secondary data comprises academic journals on Indonesian education history, reports from education watchdogs including *Jaringan Pemantau Pendidikan Indonesia* (JPPI) and *Federasi Serikat Guru Indonesia* (FSGI), and media archives documenting teacher responses to policy changes (Yasdin & Muksins, 2024). The analytical process involves deconstruction of stated justifications for each curriculum change to identify underlying political rationalities, followed by pattern matching to trace recurring cycles of political appointment leading to policy negation and new project implementation. Critical policy analysis as employed in this study examines how power operates through legislative framing, resource redistribution, and the control of educational knowledge, revealing tensions between policy rhetoric and ground-level realities. This methodological approach aligns with established traditions in critical education policy research that challenge positivist assumptions and center power dynamics, contextual influences, and racialized or politicized discourses in shaping educational experiences. By combining genealogical deconstruction with institutional trauma analysis, this research design enables a comprehensive examination of how curriculum becomes a political hostage and how this pattern produces systemic harm across Indonesia's education system.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. The Genealogy of Discontinuity: Tracing Power, Not Pedagogy

The Old Order (1947–1964): Curriculum as Nation Building

The immediate post-independence period in Indonesia witnessed curriculum development as an instrument of sovereignty assertion and anti-colonial resistance, reflecting the nation's struggle to establish educational autonomy after centuries of Dutch colonial rule. The curricula of 1947, 1952, and 1964 were explicitly designed to foster national consciousness, eradicate colonial mentalities, and construct a unified Indonesian identity across ethnically and religiously diverse populations. These early educational frameworks prioritized civic education, national history, and the cultivation of patriotic sentiment as

essential components of nation-building, positioning curriculum as a vehicle for consolidating the newly independent state's legitimacy. The Old Order regime under President Sukarno utilized education policy to advance the NASAKOM doctrine (Nationalism, Religion, and Communism), embedding political ideology directly into pedagogical content and teacher training programs (Sunarsoa, 2020).

Historical analysis reveals that curriculum changes during this era were fundamentally political projects rather than pedagogical innovations, serving to legitimize the state's authority and construct a post-colonial national imaginary. The emphasis on anti-colonialism and sovereignty in educational content reflected broader political struggles over Indonesia's international alignment during the Cold War, with curriculum serving as a battlefield for competing ideological visions of the nation's future. Educational materials from this period explicitly rejected Western pedagogical models in favor of indigenous knowledge systems and socialist-leaning approaches to collective learning, demonstrating how curriculum became a site of resistance against continued cultural imperialism (Borgias, 2012; Mortimer, 2006). The frequent curriculum revisions during the Old Order 1947, 1952, 1964 illustrate the inherent instability of using education policy as a tool for political legitimation, establishing a pattern of discontinuity that would persist throughout Indonesia's history.

The genealogical analysis of Old Order curricula reveals that education was subordinated to political imperatives of state consolidation, with pedagogical considerations secondary to the regime's need to construct national unity and assert sovereignty. This instrumentalization of curriculum as a political technology set precedents for subsequent regimes, normalizing the practice of curriculum change as a mechanism for signaling political renewal and differentiating new leadership from predecessors. The legacy of this period persists in contemporary Indonesian education policy, where curriculum continues to function as a symbolic arena for political contestation rather than a stable framework for pedagogical development. Understanding this genealogy is essential for comprehending why curriculum reform in Indonesia remains trapped in cycles of discontinuity, as each regime inherits and reproduces the logic of using educational policy to establish political legitimacy.

The New Order (1968–1994): Curriculum as Ideological Control

The New Order regime under President Suharto (1966–1998) transformed curriculum into a sophisticated apparatus of ideological control, utilizing education to achieve political

stability, centralize power, and indoctrinate citizens in Pancasila state ideology. The 1968 curriculum represented a deliberate rupture from the Old Order's NASAKOM doctrine, explicitly designed to eliminate communist influences and consolidate the New Order's legitimacy through systematic ideological engineering. Central to this project was the implementation of P4 (*Pedoman Penghayatan dan Pengamalan Pancasila* Guidelines for the Comprehension and Implementation of Pancasila) and PSPB (*Pendidikan Sejarah Perjuangan Bangsa* Education on the History of National Struggle), mandatory programs that required all students and teachers to undergo intensive indoctrination in state-approved interpretations of Pancasila. These programs functioned as Althusserian ideological state apparatuses, interpellating subjects into particular relationships with state power and naturalizing authoritarian governance as necessary for national development.

The genealogical examination of New Order curricula (1968, 1975, 1984, 1994) reveals a systematic pattern of centralization and standardization aimed at producing docile, politically compliant citizens. The 1975 curriculum introduced a more flexible, student-based approach while maintaining strict ideological controls, demonstrating the regime's attempt to modernize education without relinquishing political oversight. Curriculum content during this era emphasized essentialism and perennialism in educational philosophy, prioritizing the transmission of fixed knowledge and moral absolutes aligned with state ideology over critical thinking or pedagogical innovation. The strategic positioning of history and citizenship education (*Pendidikan Moral Pancasila*) as core subjects served to construct official narratives of Indonesian nationhood that legitimized the New Order's seizure of power while demonizing political opponents, particularly those associated with the Indonesian Communist Party. This systematic rewriting of national memory through curriculum demonstrates Foucault's insight that power operates through the production of knowledge, not merely its repression.

The analysis reveals that New Order curriculum changes were primarily mechanisms for consolidating regime stability rather than responses to educational needs, establishing a pattern of using curriculum as political hostage that persists in contemporary Indonesia. The Malari Incident and Bandung student protests of 1974 prompted intensified emphasis on Pancasila education across all levels, illustrating how curriculum served as a reactive tool for managing political threats to regime legitimacy (Aspinall, 2005). The economic dimensions of curriculum change also emerged during this period, as massive textbook printing projects and nationwide teacher training programs created lucrative opportunities for regime-connected

businesses, establishing the proyek economy that continues to incentivize frequent curriculum revisions. The New Order's success in using curriculum as an instrument of social control left deep institutional legacies, including normalized practices of top-down policy implementation, teacher compliance with state-mandated content, and the erosion of professional autonomy that continue to shape Indonesian education. These legacies constitute a form of structural violence that persists beyond the regime's collapse, demonstrating how curriculum functions as a technology of power with effects that outlive specific political configurations.

The Reformation Era (2004–Present): Curriculum as Reactionary Politics

The post-Suharto Reformation era (1998–present) witnessed a proliferation of curriculum changes KBK (2004), KTSP (2006), K-13 (2013), and Kurikulum Merdeka (2020s) each presented as democratic reform yet reproducing patterns of political instrumentalization established in previous regimes. The Competency-Based Curriculum (KBK, 2004) and School-Based Curriculum (KTSP, 2006) emerged alongside political decentralization reforms, ostensibly granting greater autonomy to local governments and schools in curriculum design. However, genealogical analysis reveals that these reforms were shaped more by political imperatives to signal democratic transformation and differentiate post-authoritarian governance from the New Order than by systematic pedagogical research or stakeholder consultation. The rapid shift from KBK to KTSP within two years exemplifies the persistence of the Ganti Menteri, Ganti Kurikulum pattern, as new ministers sought to establish legitimacy by negating predecessors' policies.

The 2013 Curriculum (K-13) represented a reactionary response to moral panic narratives about declining student character and ethical values, prioritizing character education and Pancasila values over competency development. This shift from competency-based to character-based frameworks occurred without substantial evidence that previous curricula had failed to develop student character, suggesting that the reform was driven by political and ideological anxieties rather than empirical assessment. The K-13's emphasis on scientific approaches and thematic learning, combined with complex assessment systems, created significant implementation challenges for teachers who lacked adequate training and support, resulting in widespread confusion and shallow adoption. Research documenting K-13 implementation reveals that teachers faced greatest difficulties with content standards (35.2%), process standards (25.3%), and assessment standards (20.0%), indicating that the curriculum's design exceeded existing institutional capacity (Muzaky & Achadi, 2024; Nuraeni

et al., 2020). These implementation failures set the stage for yet another curriculum change, demonstrating how each reform creates conditions for its own replacement.

The Kurikulum Merdeka, introduced during the COVID-19 pandemic, was justified as a response to documented learning loss and the need to simplify K-13's rigid structures. Research indicates that elementary students experienced learning loss equivalent to five months in numeracy and six months in literacy between January and April 2021, providing empirical justification for curriculum revision (Ardington et al., 2021; Moscoviz & Evans, 2022). However, critical analysis reveals that the Merdeka Curriculum reproduces familiar patterns of hasty implementation, inadequate teacher preparation, and insufficient socialization, suggesting that political imperatives to demonstrate governmental responsiveness superseded careful policy design. The curriculum's emphasis on student autonomy, project-based learning, and the Pancasila Student Profile represents ideological shifts rather than evidence-based pedagogical innovations, continuing the tradition of using curriculum to advance political visions of ideal citizenship. Findings across multiple studies demonstrate that while educators welcome the Merdeka Curriculum's child-centered orientation, they report feeling rushed, under-trained, and inadequately supported in implementation, replicating dysfunctions observed in previous reforms (Saffina et al., 2020). This genealogy reveals that curriculum changes in the Reformation era remain fundamentally political signals designed to differentiate new ministers from predecessors, validate governmental authority through diagnosis of previous systems as broken, and demonstrate responsiveness to crises whether real (learning loss) or constructed (moral decline).

Table 1: Genealogy of Indonesian Curriculum Changes and Political Rationalities (1947- Present)

Period	Curriculum	Year	Political Context	Stated Justification	Political Rationality	Key Features
Old Order	Rencana Pelajaran 1947	1947	Post-independence nation building	Build national identity	Sovereignty assertion; anti-colonialism	Patriotic education; national history emphasis
	Rencana Pelajaran Terurai 1952	1952	Consolidation of independence	Refine teaching methods	National consciousness construction	Character development;

						civic education
	Rencana Pendidikan 1964	1964	Sukarno's Guided Democracy	Align with Pancasila	NASAKOM ideology promotion	Political education integration
New Order	Kurikulum 1968	1968	Suharto's consolidation	Eliminate communist influence	Regime legitimization through negation	Anti-communist content; Pancasila emphasis
	Kurikulum 1975	1975	Post-Malari stability	Modernize education	Ideological control; centralization	P4 introduction; moral education (PMP)
	Kurikulum 1984	1984	Economic development focus	Align with development goals	Technocratic governance	Process-skills approach (CBSA)
	Kurikulum 1994	1994	Late New Order maintenance	Consolidate previous reforms	Regime stability through conformity	Suprasubject approach
Reformation	KBK (Competency-Based)	2004	Post-Suharto democratization	Respond to decentralization	Democratic signaling; differentiation	Competency standards; regional autonomy
	KTSP (School-Based)	2006	Democratic consolidation	Grant school autonomy	Political decentralization alignment	Local curriculum adaptation
	Kurikulum 2013 (K-13)	2013	SBY's second term	Address moral decline; 21st century skills	Moral panic response; ministerial legitimacy	Character education emphasis; scientific approach
	Kurikulum Merdeka	2020	COVID-19 pandemic; Jokowi era	Address learning loss; simplify K-13	Crisis management; policy differentiation	Student autonomy; project-based learning

3.2. Curriculum as Political Hostage

Legitimacy through Negation

The pattern of legitimacy through negation constitutes a central mechanism through which new ministers validate their authority by diagnosing predecessor curricula as fundamentally broken, requiring wholesale replacement rather than incremental refinement. This political logic operates through a dialectical structure: to maintain the previous curriculum would implicitly validate the predecessor's competence and vision, thereby undermining the new minister's claim to offer necessary change; conversely, to introduce a new curriculum establishes the minister as an agent of reform and progress. Genealogical analysis reveals that curriculum justifications consistently employ crisis narratives declining moral values, inadequate competencies, learning loss, rigid structures that pathologize existing systems and naturalize radical change as the only rational response (Ellison, 2021; Spendlove, 2025). These narratives function as Foucauldian regimes of truth, producing particular ways of understanding educational problems that foreclose alternative solutions such as capacity building, resource investment, or allowing existing curricula to mature through iterative improvement.

Research on Indonesian curriculum policy demonstrates that political elites prioritize policy signals that enhance their legitimacy over sustained implementation that might produce measurable learning gains. At the district level, competitive and clientelist political settlements pressure educational leaders to demonstrate visible action and differentiate themselves from predecessors, creating incentives for frequent policy shifts regardless of educational outcomes (Rahayu et al., 2023; Rahmat Fadhli, 2024). This dynamic is particularly pronounced during ministerial transitions, when new appointees face expectations to articulate distinctive visions and demonstrate immediate impact. The pattern extends beyond curriculum to encompass related policies such as assessment systems, teacher professional development, and school management, creating cascading disruptions across the entire education sector. Analysis of policy documents and ministerial speeches reveals consistent rhetorical strategies of negation: previous curricula are characterized as outdated, too rigid, not aligned with 21st-century needs, or failing to develop character, while proposed replacements are framed as modern, flexible, globally competitive, and value-based.

The political economy of legitimacy through negation creates perverse incentives where ministers benefit from highlighting educational crises and implementing dramatic reforms regardless of whether these interventions address underlying systemic problems. This pattern is reinforced by media cycles that reward visible policy action over sustained implementation, enabling ministers to claim credit for reform initiatives while avoiding accountability for implementation failures that typically emerge after they have moved to other positions. The genealogical analysis reveals that legitimacy through negation has become institutionalized as a taken-for-granted logic within Indonesian education governance, operating at national, provincial, and district levels. Teachers and school administrators have developed adaptive responses to this pattern, including strategic compliance (changing terminology and documentation while maintaining existing practices) and reform cynicism (assuming that current policies will be replaced before full implementation). These adaptations represent rational survival strategies within a systemically dysfunctional policy environment, yet they simultaneously perpetuate the dysfunction by undermining genuine implementation efforts.

The Proyek Economy

The economic incentives embedded in curriculum changes constitute a powerful yet underexamined driver of policy discontinuity, creating a proyek economy in which frequent reforms generate lucrative contracts for textbook printing, teacher training, assessment development, and educational consulting. Each major curriculum revision necessitates the production and distribution of millions of new textbooks, workbooks, and teacher guides across Indonesia's vast archipelago, representing contracts worth billions of rupiah for publishing companies, many of which maintain connections to political elites. The New Order regime established this pattern through massive P4 indoctrination programs that required nationwide training sessions, printed materials, and assessment systems, creating revenue streams that sustained bureaucratic machinery and enriched regime-connected businesses. This economic structure persisted through the Reformation era, as each curriculum change from KBK through Kurikulum Merdeka generated similar procurement cycles involving textbook production, digital learning materials, teacher training programs, and curriculum implementation support.

The proyek economy creates powerful constituencies with vested interests in maintaining high frequencies of curriculum change, regardless of educational outcomes. Publishing companies benefit from regular obsolescence of existing materials, training consultants secure contracts for massive nationwide professional development programs, and

educational technology firms gain opportunities to introduce new platforms and systems (Rosser et al., 2021). At local levels, district education offices and schools receive implementation budgets that supplement regular operational funds, creating incentives for administrators to support reforms that generate additional resources. Research on district-level political economies reveals that education spending often functions as a mechanism for maintaining patronage networks, with procurement processes favoring politically connected suppliers over competitive bidding or quality considerations. This dynamic transforms curriculum policy from a pedagogical instrument into an economic opportunity, aligning the interests of political elites, bureaucrats, and private contractors in ways that perpetuate reform cycles.

Analysis of implementation patterns reveals that the proyek economy contributes to shallow adoption and administrative burden, as resources flow disproportionately toward visible inputs (textbooks, training workshops, promotional materials) rather than sustained support for classroom practice improvement. Teachers report that curriculum reforms typically involve one-time training sessions and provision of printed materials, followed by minimal ongoing support or mentoring, resulting in surface-level compliance rather than deep pedagogical transformation (Rosser et al., 2021). The economic incentives favor spectacular launches and rapid rollout over careful piloting, iterative refinement, and capacity building, creating predictable implementation failures that subsequently justify the next round of reform. This pattern constitutes a form of reform capture, where the process of changing curriculum becomes more politically and economically valuable than the outcomes such changes might produce. The genealogical analysis reveals that the proyek economy has become deeply embedded in Indonesian education governance, operating through formal procurement systems, informal patronage networks, and tacit understandings among political elites, bureaucrats, and private sector actors. Breaking this pattern requires confronting not only pedagogical assumptions but also the material interests that sustain frequent curriculum changes, making genuine policy stability politically and economically costly for key stakeholders.

Table 2: Implementation Challenges Across Curriculum Reforms in Indonesia

Challenge Category	K-13 (2013)	Kurikulum Merdeka (2020s)	Consistency Across Reforms
Teacher Preparedness	Limited understanding of scientific approach and authentic assessment	Inadequate training; hasty implementation	Persistent across all reforms
Content Standards	Highest difficulty area (35.2% of teachers)	Unclear guidelines and expectations	Consistent complexity issues
Assessment Systems	20% of teachers reported difficulty with new assessment approaches	Transition from RPP to teaching modules created confusion	Continuous relearning burden
Infrastructure & Resources	Digital resource disparities; limited facilities	Pronounced in rural areas; inadequate technological support	Persistent regional inequities
Administrative Burden	Complex RPP documentation requirements	New module formats; documentation overload	Progressive accumulation of compliance demands
Time for Implementation	Insufficient preparation before rollout	Implementation perceived as too rushed	Systematic pattern of hasty adoption
Professional Development	One-time workshops insufficient	Lack of sustained mentoring and support	Training models inadequate across reforms
Policy Stability	Frequent revisions and clarifications during implementation	Uncertainty about policy permanence	Chronic instability breeding cynicism

3.3. Anatomy of Systemic Trauma

Reform Fatigue and Cynicism

The continuous cycle of curriculum changes has produced widespread reform fatigue among Indonesian teachers, who have developed protective psychological mechanisms characterized by the cynical aphorism Don't get too attached, it will change in 5 years. Systematic literature reviews spanning two decades (2003-2023) reveal that while teachers generally express openness and initial acceptance toward new curricula, this does not translate into effective implementation or substantive changes in classroom practice. Instead, teachers have learned to engage in strategic compliance, modifying administrative documentation and terminology to satisfy supervisory requirements while maintaining familiar teaching methods rooted in traditional, teacher-centered pedagogy. This adaptive response represents a rational survival strategy in an environment of chronic instability, yet it simultaneously undermines the pedagogical objectives that curriculum reforms ostensibly pursue.

Research documents that reform fatigue manifests as emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced professional efficacy among educators who have experienced multiple curriculum transitions. Teachers in rural and under-resourced areas experience particularly acute fatigue, as they lack access to training, materials, and collegial support necessary for meaningful implementation, yet face identical compliance demands as urban counterparts. The phenomenon of rapid changing of Indonesian curriculum emerges consistently across studies as a primary source of teacher demotivation, ranking alongside financial constraints and workload pressures. Qualitative data from teacher interviews reveals a profound sense of futility, with educators questioning the value of investing time and energy in mastering new pedagogical approaches that will likely be abandoned before demonstrating impact. This cynicism extends to professional development activities, as teachers perceive training workshops as performative exercises rather than genuine opportunities for skill development.

The psychological impact of reform fatigue creates a vicious cycle: shallow implementation produces poor outcomes, which are then cited as evidence of curriculum failure, justifying yet another round of reform that further deepens teacher cynicism. Studies across contexts from the 2013 Curriculum through Kurikulum Merdeka document remarkably consistent patterns of implementation challenges including inadequate training, unclear

guidelines, insufficient resources, and misalignment between policy expectations and ground-level capacities. Teachers report feeling used as policy experiments rather than respected as professionals with valuable implementation knowledge, contributing to widespread alienation from reform processes. The institutional response to teacher resistance typically involves intensified monitoring and compliance demands rather than addressing underlying capacity gaps, further eroding trust and deepening cynicism. This pattern exemplifies what can be termed systemic trauma cumulative psychological and institutional damage caused by chronic policy instability and broken promises of improvement.

Loss of Institutional Memory

The constant curriculum resets prevent the development and retention of institutional memory within schools, forcing educational communities to continuously restart rather than build upon accumulated knowledge and refined practices. Each curriculum change demands that teachers discard previously learned pedagogical approaches, assessment methods, and curriculum materials in favor of new frameworks, resulting in the systematic destruction of professional expertise developed through experience. This phenomenon is particularly evident in the transition from KTSP (2006) to K-13 (2013) to Kurikulum Merdeka (2020s), where valuable innovations such as the school-based autonomy emphasized in KTSP were abandoned entirely rather than refined and integrated into subsequent frameworks. Research indicates that KTSP granted meaningful autonomy for schools to adapt curriculum to local contexts and student needs, producing positive results in engagement and culturally relevant learning; however, these gains were negated when K-13 imposed standardized thematic approaches that reduced local flexibility (Indrayadi et al., 2025).

The loss of institutional memory operates at multiple levels: individual teachers forget hard-won pedagogical insights as new frameworks demand different competencies; schools lose documentation and materials from previous eras as storage space is repurposed for current curriculum requirements; and the education system fails to systematically evaluate what worked and what failed in predecessor curricula, resulting in the repetition of mistakes across reform cycles. Studies document that experienced teachers who had developed sophisticated understanding of KTSP's competency frameworks and assessment approaches found their expertise suddenly devalued when K-13 introduced scientific learning models and authentic assessment, forcing them to relearn fundamental pedagogical skills. This devaluation of experience disproportionately affects senior teachers, creating generational tensions and

undermining the transmission of tacit professional knowledge from experienced to novice educators.

The systematic erasure of institutional memory produces profound inefficiencies, as schools and teachers must repeatedly invest time and resources in understanding new frameworks rather than deepening implementation of existing ones. Comparative analysis reveals that high-performing education systems maintain curriculum stability over decades, allowing teachers to develop deep expertise and schools to refine implementation through iterative improvement (Greatbatch & Tate, 2019). In contrast, Indonesia's pattern of discontinuous change prevents the maturation of teaching methods, as the time horizon between policy introduction and replacement (typically 4-7 years) is insufficient for full implementation, evaluation, and refinement. Research on curriculum implementation lifecycles suggests that meaningful transformation requires 10-15 years of sustained support, professional development, and iterative adaptation timeframes that Indonesian policy cycles systematically preclude. The resulting inability to learn from experience constitutes a form of organizational amnesia that condemns the education system to perpetual reinvention rather than progressive improvement.

Administrative Paralysis

The burden of continuously relearning administrative compliance requirements from RPP (*Rencana Pelaksanaan Pembelajaran*) to teaching modules (*Modul Ajar*) to contemporary documentation formats consumes time and cognitive resources that could otherwise be devoted to actual student interaction and pedagogical improvement. Studies consistently identify administrative burden as a primary implementation challenge across curriculum reforms, with teachers reporting that documentation demands often exceed actual teaching time (Mabunda, 2023). The transition from K-13 to Kurikulum Merdeka exemplifies this pattern: teachers who had finally mastered the complex RPP format required under K-13 suddenly faced requirements to produce entirely different teaching modules and learning projects, necessitating hundreds of hours of additional administrative work. Research indicates that this administrative churn particularly disadvantages teachers in under-resourced schools who lack dedicated curriculum support staff and must personally manage all documentation while maintaining full teaching loads.

The administrative paralysis produced by frequent policy changes manifests in several dysfunctional patterns: teachers prioritize surface compliance over substantive pedagogical change, investing effort in documentation that satisfies supervisory requirements while maintaining traditional teaching practices; schools develop informal markets for template documents and pre-fabricated teaching modules that circulate among teachers seeking to minimize administrative burden; and supervision systems become focused on verifying documentation rather than supporting instructional improvement, creating perverse accountability that rewards paperwork over learning outcomes. Qualitative research reveals that teachers experience administrative requirements as alienating and disconnected from classroom realities, generating resentment toward reform initiatives they perceive as adding burden without corresponding support.

The cumulative effect of administrative paralysis is to create what can be termed implementation theater performative compliance with policy requirements that maintains appearances of reform while leaving fundamental classroom practices unchanged. Teachers become skilled at producing documentation that signals alignment with current curriculum mandates while continuing to rely on familiar pedagogical routines, creating systematic divergence between official policy and enacted practice. This pattern is reinforced by supervision systems that lack capacity to meaningfully evaluate teaching quality and therefore default to checking documentation completeness. Research across multiple curriculum implementations KBK, KTSP, K-13, Kurikulum Merdeka documents remarkably consistent gaps between policy aspirations (student-centered learning, critical thinking, authentic assessment) and classroom realities (teacher-centered instruction, rote learning, exam-focused assessment) (Sugianto et al., 2024). The administrative paralysis produced by continuous curriculum changes represents a form of systemic trauma that degrades professional autonomy, erodes intrinsic motivation, and transforms teaching from a creative professional practice into a compliance-focused bureaucratic function.

Table 3: Manifestations of Systemic Trauma in Indonesian Education

Dimension of Trauma	Observable Manifestations	Impact on System	Supporting Evidence
Reform Fatigue	Teacher cynicism: Don't get too	Shallow implementation; strategic compliance	Consistent across 20 years of reforms

	attached, it will change in 5 years	rather than genuine adoption	
Emotional Exhaustion	Teachers report feeling used as policy experiments	Reduced professional efficacy; depersonalization	Demotivation linked to rapid curriculum changes
Strategic Compliance	Changing administrative terms but not teaching practices	Divergence between policy rhetoric and classroom reality	Documented across KBK, KTSP, K-13, Merdeka
Loss of Institutional Memory	Valuable practices from KTSP (autonomy) discarded in K-13	Inability to refine and build upon successful innovations	Repetition of mistakes across reform cycles
Devaluation of Experience	Expert teachers' knowledge made obsolete by new frameworks	Generational tensions; loss of tacit knowledge transmission	Senior teachers forced to relearn fundamental skills
Administrative Paralysis	Documentation demands exceed teaching time	Time stolen from student interaction; focus on paperwork over pedagogy	Progressive accumulation across reforms
Implementation Theater	Producing compliant documents while maintaining traditional practices	Systematic gap between official policy and enacted practice	Supervision focused on documentation, not teaching quality
Professional Alienation	Teachers perceive training as performative, not developmental	Erosion of intrinsic motivation; teaching as bureaucratic compliance	Trust deficit between teachers and policymakers
Organizational Amnesia	Systematic failure to evaluate what worked in previous curricula	Perpetual reinvention rather than progressive improvement	4-7 year policy cycles prevent maturation

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the adage *Ganti Menteri, Ganti Kurikulum* describes a structural pathology deeply embedded in Indonesia's education governance, rather than a mere series of administrative adjustments. The genealogical analysis demonstrates that curriculum reforms are primarily driven by political rationalities specifically the need for legitimacy through negation whereby new regimes validate their authority by dismantling the educational frameworks of their predecessors. This cycle is sustained by a proyek economy that incentivizes material change over pedagogical stability, creating a powerful nexus of political and economic interests that thrive on discontinuity. Consequently, the curriculum has effectively become a political hostage, serving the short-term legitimacy needs of the five-year political cycle rather than the long-term developmental needs of the nation.

The research further identifies that this chronic instability has inflicted systemic trauma on the educational ecosystem. This trauma manifests as deep-seated reform fatigue among teachers, who respond with strategic compliance and cynicism, and as a loss of institutional memory that forces schools to perpetually reset their pedagogical practices. The result is a system characterized by implementation theater, where the appearance of reform is maintained through administrative documentation while classroom practices remain largely unchanged. This finding challenges the prevailing narrative that resistance to change is merely a matter of teacher competence; rather, it is a rational adaptive response to a traumatic policy environment.

Theoretically, this study expands the application of Foucaultian genealogy to the context of post-colonial education policy, illustrating how the regime of truth in curriculum is constructed through the exercise of political power. It highlights that in the Indonesian context, power operates not through the stability of knowledge, but through its calculated disruption. Furthermore, the integration of institutional trauma theory provides a novel framework for analyzing the human cost of policy volatility. It shifts the analytical focus from technical implementation failures to the psychological and structural erosion of the teaching profession, offering a more empathetic and structurally grounded understanding of why educational reforms in Indonesia so often fail to take root.

To break the cycle of systemic trauma and liberate the curriculum from its status as a political hostage, two fundamental structural reforms are recommended:

1. **Legislative Lock via a Grand Design (Peta Jalan Pendidikan):** The state must establish a National Education Roadmap spanning 20–25 years that is enacted as a Law (*Undang-Undang*), rather than a Presidential or Ministerial Regulation. This higher legal standing would bind future ministers to a long-term strategic vision, permitting only technical adjustments rather than philosophical overhauls. This roadmap should focus on core competencies and character values that transcend political eras, ensuring continuity across administration changes.
2. **Establishment of an Independent National Education Commission:** Authority over curriculum design and evaluation should be transferred from the Ministry (an executive political body) to an independent National Education Commission (*Komisi Nasional Pendidikan*). This body, composed of non-partisan professionals, academics, and practitioners, would hold the copyright to the national curriculum, insulating it from the immediate pressures of the five-year political cycle. The Ministry's role would then shift to the implementation and management of resources, creating a necessary separation of powers between the designers of pedagogy and the executors of policy.

Indonesia currently stands at a critical demographic juncture, where the quality of education will determine whether the nation reaps a demographic dividend or suffers a demographic disaster. Continuing the practice of using curriculum as a political signaling tool is no longer sustainable. Without a decisive decoupling of pedagogy from politics, the Indonesian education system will remain stunted perpetually restarting, forever reforming, yet never truly maturing. The path forward requires the political courage to relinquish control over the curriculum, trusting in a stable, professional, and long-term educational vision that outlasts any single minister or regime.

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