

## Implementation of Strategic Management in Optimizing Merdeka Curriculum

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**Abstract:** This study aims to describe and analyze the implementation of strategic management in optimizing Merdeka Curriculum at SMA Negeri 3 Unggulan Kayuagung. This study uses qualitative methods. It shows that Implementation of strategic management consists of strategy formulation (environmental analysis, vision, mission, goals, targets and strategies), implementation (operational curriculum, programs, monitoring and communication systems, school resources, organizational structure, school's principal leadership, and work culture), and strategy evaluation. The obstacles are dynamic policies, limited time, work completion gaps, inconsistency, and evaluation document. The solutions are to optimize growth mindset, digitalization; priority scale-based work plans; collaboration culture; performance work management; evaluation instruments and action plans. Novelty of this study resides in the research setting that implements the Merdeka Curriculum with *Mandiri Berbagi* category, so this study can contribute to strengthening strategic management in educational units to achieve optimal results in facing changes in the Merdeka Curriculum category options.

**Keywords:** Merdeka Curriculum, Strategy Evaluation, Strategy Formulation, Strategy Implementation, Strategic Management

### A. Introduction

The curriculum implementation in the education sector that refers to the National Education Standards is an essential and strategic guideline for enhancing the quality of education system and process as an effort to achieve national education goals. It is not surprising that the curriculum implemented in the education system must develop and adapt to local, national and global conditions, scientific and technology developments. Like the Merdeka Curriculum implemented by the Indonesian government, it is a new curriculum that continues the vision of previous curricula which focused on strengthening character and competency (soft skills) that accommodate students to the world needs. The Merdeka Curriculum has two main activities: (1) intracurricular learning activities based on structured lesson content, and (2) learning activities through strengthening Profil Pelajar Pancasila Project (P5)

which takes 20% - 30% of the total lesson hours per year (Educational Standards, Curriculum, and Assessment Agency, 2022). Referring to Government Regulation Number 57, 2021 schools are given the authority to develop operational curricula based on the curriculum framework and structure, as well as the school's characteristics. Such large authority given to school should be the basis for enhancing efforts to optimize Implementation of Merdeka Curriculum (IMC), so that distortions or deviations between the expected curriculum and the curriculum taught by teachers in class can be minimized.

The success of IMC in schools is of course influenced by several components; one of them is the implementation of strategic management. Strategic management is a specialized scientific discipline of management (Salamun et al., 2022). According to Usman (2019) the term strategic management itself comes from two words "management" and "strategy". Meanwhile, the word strategic is an adjective from the word "strategy". Management comes from Latin, namely *manus* which means "hand" and "agree" (do). These words are combined into "*managere*" which means to handle. *Managere* in English is translated as "to manage" (verb), "management" (noun), and "manager" (the person).

Strategic management is the process of analyzing the conditions faced by an organization to produce strategic decisions that are able to overcome the situations or challenges faced and reach competitive advantage (Henry, 2021). Meanwhile, according to Fadhli (2020), it is an integration process between formulating, implementing and evaluating organizational decision making which has an impact on achieving organizational goals and excellence. Besides that, according to Akdon (2011) in Kholis (2014) explains that the strategy management implementation process includes four interrelated stages, seen in figure 1 below.

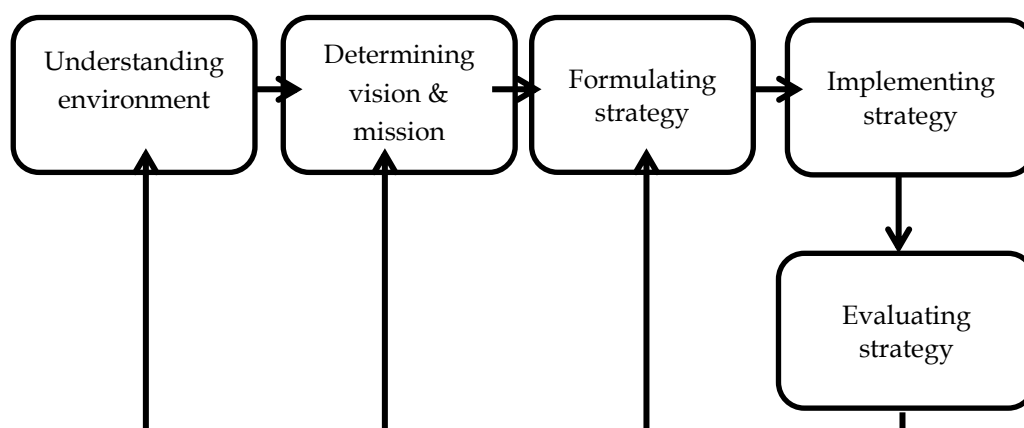


Figure 1. Strategic Management (Akdon, in Kholis, 2014)

Based on figure 1 above, the author concludes that the strategic management process according to Akdon consists of determining the vision and mission which begins with understanding the organizational environment, then carrying out the process of formulating, implementing and evaluating strategies that can be used to carry out

follow-up plans. According to Kiplely et al. (2019) strategic management aims to 1) set a clear direction for the organization, align organizational efforts towards common goals and improve overall organizational performance. 2) identify and develop strategies that provide competitive advantage. 3) ensure optimal allocation of resources, including financial, human and technological assets. 4) help organizations adapt to a dynamic environment.

Based on the explanation above, the author concludes that strategic management is a process of formulation, implementation and evaluation of decision making to produce effective and efficient strategies to achieve the expected goals. As previously explained, strategic management is essential to be implemented as an effort to optimize organizational performance, in this context is in IMC. However, in reality in responding to change, in this case the design of the Merdeka Curriculum, many schools only go with the flow without any strategies taken to anticipate the problems that will be faced (Susanto, 2014).

Apart from the explanation above, the previous study conducted by Bertin Juniaria Herina Sutrisnowati in 2018 with the title "Strategic Management in Implementing the 2013 Curriculum in Elementary Schools" also highlights the importance of strategic management. The result shows strategic management in the implementation of the 2013 Curriculum in Elementary Schools is described based on the process of strategic management stages: strategy planning, implementation and evaluation. The difference is that the previous study focuses on the 2013 Curriculum and the research object is carried out in elementary schools. Meanwhile, this research focuses on the Merdeka Curriculum and is carried out at the high school level with *Mandiri Berbagi* category, so this study can contribute to strengthening strategic management in educational units to achieve optimal results in facing changes in the Merdeka Curriculum category options.

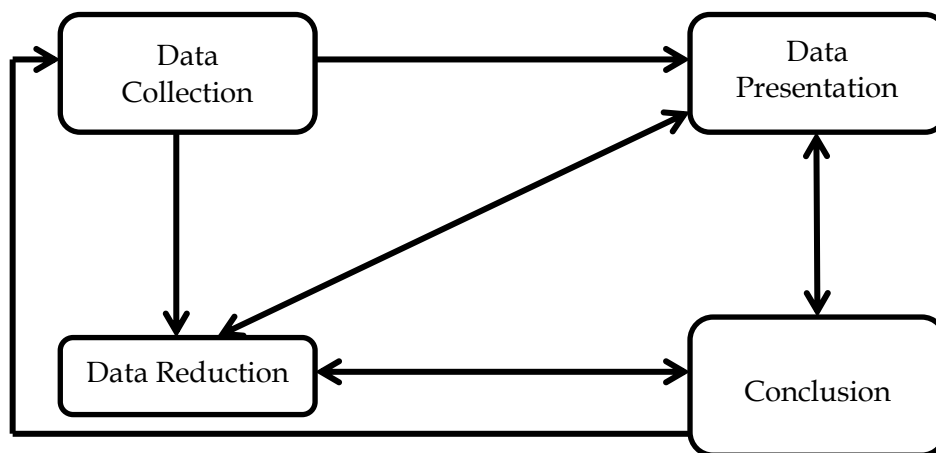
Based on the description above, the author believes it is necessary to conduct a more in-depth study regarding strategic management and implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum to obtain an overview of strategic management so that school principals, teachers and other school stakeholders can understand the implementation of strategic management which can enhance the maximum potential of IMC. The research questions are 1) How is the implementation of strategic management in optimizing the Merdeka Curriculum at SMA Negeri 3 Unggulan Kayuagung? 2) What are the obstacles and solutions for implementing strategic management in optimizing the Merdeka Curriculum at SMA Negeri 3 Unggulan Kayuagung?

## **B. Methods**

The method used in this study is a qualitative research method. The research procedure consists of pre-field, field work, data analysis, and the study report. First, the pre-field stage consists of looking for actual, interesting and current issues in the

education policy and analyzing the characteristics of the target school, submitting research titles, and writing proposals. Second, the field work stage: research permits and data collection. The data collection techniques were in-depth interviews, observation and documentation studies. Third, data analysis: data analysis is carried out during the work process in the field, and after the data is obtained. The last stage is study report. The procedure explained above is supported by Sutrisnowati (2018) that there are four stages carried out in qualitative research procedures, namely the pre-field stage, field work, data analysis, and the study report.

The informants in this study are the principal, curriculum representative, quality management representative, school supervisor, a teacher, student and parent at SMA Negeri 3 Unggulan Kayuagung were located in Jl. Lieutenant Sayuti No. 3, Kedaton, Kayuagung, Kutaraya, Ogan Komering Ilir Regency, South Sumatra 30617. This study uses the Miles and Huberman interactive model as a data analysis technique. According to Sugiyono (2019) this analysis technique consists of data collection, reduction, presentation, and conclusion that can be seen below.

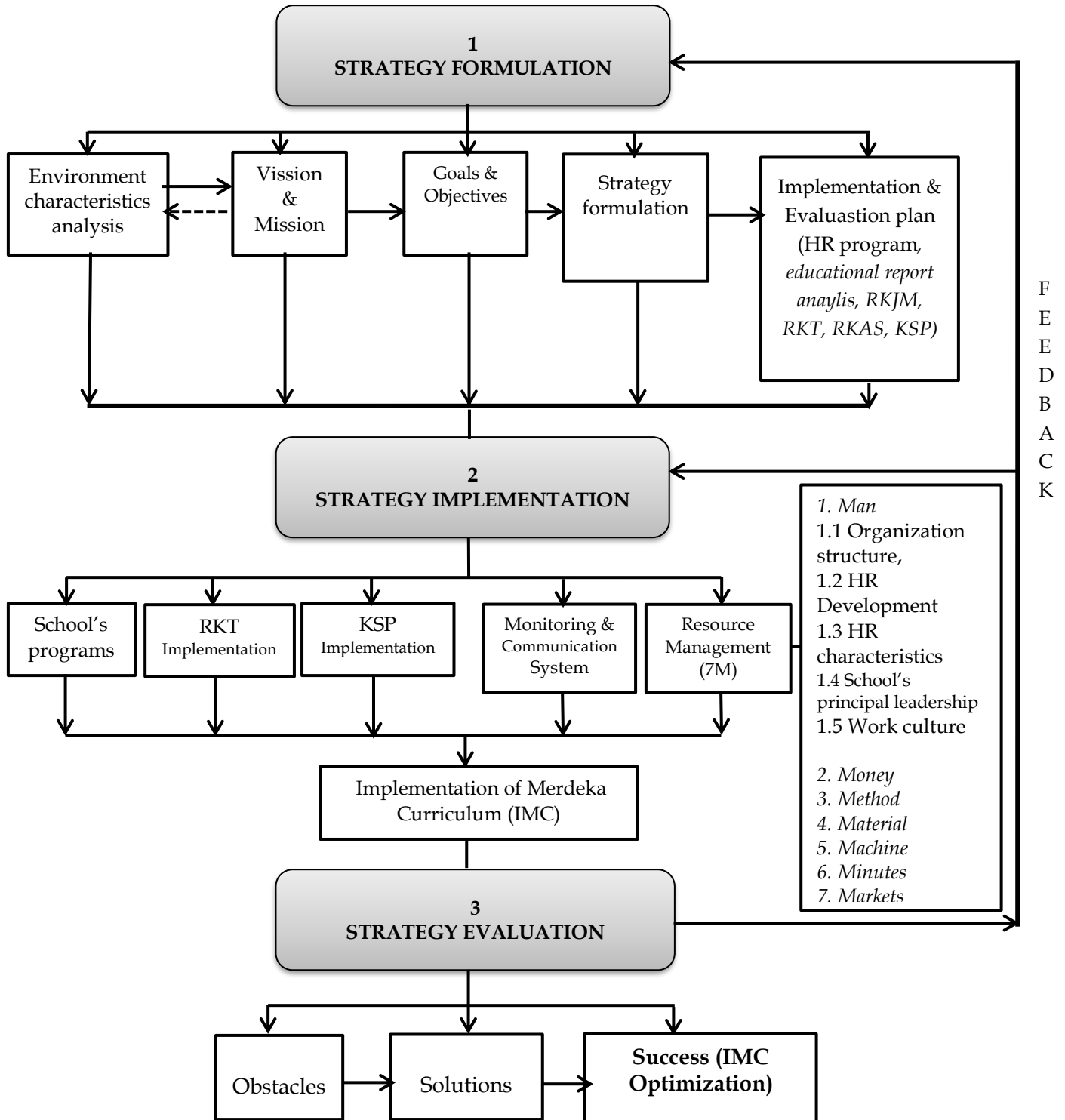


**Figure 2.** Miles and Huberman interactive model (Sugiyono,

### **C. Results and Discussion**

The study results answer the research questions which are 1) how is the implementation of strategic management in optimizing the Merdeka Curriculum at SMA Negeri 3 Unggulan Kayuagung? 2) What are the obstacles and solutions for implementing strategic management in optimizing the Merdeka Curriculum at SMA Negeri 3 Unggulan Kayuagung? The results are fully explained and discussed below.

### 1. Implementation of strategic management in optimizing the Merdeka Curriculum at SMA Negeri 3 Unggulan Kayuagung



**Figure 3.** Implementation of strategic management in optimizing the Merdeka Curriculum at SMA Negeri 3 Unggulan Kayuagung

According to Figure 3 this study shows three stages of strategic management implementation done by SMAN 3 Unggulan Kayuagung in optimizing the Merdeka Curriculum which are: 1) Strategy formulation; 2) Strategy implementation; 3) Strategy evaluation. As stated by Maharani et al. (2023) that strategic management consists of an integration process between formulating, implementing and evaluating strategies. The previous research conducted by Habyb (2021) also showed that strategy formulation, implementation, and evaluation, called as strategic management was implemented in SMA Al-Hikmah Boarding School Batu to enhance its education quality. Strategic management was also described by Sapawardi (2021) in his research. It showed that strategic management was implemented in senior high schools, Janapria district to increase the quality of education that consists of strategy formulation, implementation, and evaluation.

### **1.1 Strategy Formulation**

It shows that SMAN 3 Unggulan Kayuagung conducted strategy formulation that consists of environmental analysis, vision and mission revision, goals, targets and strategies formulation, and implementation and evaluation plans consisting of the preparation of documents for the Medium Term Work Plan (*Rencana Kerja Jangka Menengah/RKJM*), Annual Work Plan (*Rencana Kerja Tahunan/RKT*), School Budget Activity Plan (*Rencana Kegiatan Anggaran Sekolah/RKAS*), Operational Curriculum (*Kurikulum Satuan Pendidikan/KSP*), and Human Resource (HR) development plan and evaluation. The results of this research are supported by Sutrisnowati (2018) who found that strategy formulation in implementing the curriculum consists of analyzing the characteristics of school's environment, vision, mission, goals, objectives and strategies, formulating programs and activity plans, formulating cost plans and funding sources, and formulation of monitoring and evaluation systems. However, the findings of previous research seem to forget one important factor that must be formulated earlier in the planning stage, namely HR development program plan which is one of the key factors in the success of implementing strategic management. This is supported by Sukmana (2015) that HR development must be planned well, adjusted to strategy, and integrated with the organization's short-term and long-term planning goals.

Apart from that, another interesting thing to discuss regarding the findings is: formulation of implementation plans. The findings in this research were that SMAN 3 Unggulan Kayuagung formulated the school documents which included RKJM, RKT, RKAS, and KSP. The same thing was found by Sutrisnowati (2018) that in strategy formulation it is necessary to prepare school documents. However, the previous researcher took the context of strategy formulation in the implementation of the 2013 Curriculum, so that the document studied was the Education Unit Level Curriculum (KTSP) document, and there were no RKJM and RKT documents found. In fact, this document is important to be formulated as a compass for preparing RKAS and a more operational curriculum. The Ministry of Education and Culture

(2023) also said that schools must have a sustainable planning cycle which includes the preparation of RKJM, RKT and RKAS documents. In this research, the process of preparing the implementation plan mentioned above begins with analyzing education report using the Identification, Reflection and Correction (*Identifikasi, Refleksi, Benahi/IRBB*) method which is in accordance with the Data Based Planning (PBD) guidelines launched by the Ministry of Education and Culture as a series of Merdeka Curriculum policies. The results of the education report analysis produce school programs and priority programs that must be addressed by the school. The next step, the results of this research found that schools carried out a SWOT analysis regarding program implementation to use as a reference for creating operational strategies that maximize strengths and opportunities. SMAN 3 Unggulan Kayuagung also creates a priority scale program matrix which will later be included in the RKJM, RKT and RKAS. After that, the school designs the KSP.

The process of preparing the implementation plan document above was confirmed by the Ministry of Education and Culture (2023) which said that schools must carry out PBD by starting with an analysis of education report issued by the Ministry of Education and Culture, formulating priority programs, school programs and activities outlined in the RKJM and RKT. Then formulate programs that need the budget into the RKAS document. As previously explained, beside IRBB method, schools also conduct SWOT analyzes and create school program matrices based on priorities and readiness of school resources. This is supported by Assen et al. (2009) who said that it is important for management to carry out a SWOT analysis to maximize the role of strength factors as organizational assets to maximize opportunities and reduce the impact of threats that arise. Apart from that, identifying weaknesses in the organization can also help organization look for alternative solutions, create the right strategy to minimize weaknesses by taking advantage of strengths in other areas and also existing opportunities.

Furthermore in the strategy formulation process SMAN 3 Unggulan Kayuagung also plan monitoring and evaluation systems which are supported by Fadhli (2020) that the importance of planning and evaluating strategies is due to the dynamic external and internal factors. Monitoring and evaluation system planning in SMAN 3 Unggulan Kayuagung consists of learning and KSP evaluation, including evaluation of strategies that have been implemented. This research found that in evaluation planning there are clear and measurable instruments. However, schools do not have specific instruments related to strategy. KSP evaluation is conducted by answering reflective questions (what is good, what needs to be improved, what needs to be changed). However, according to Gunawan & Benty (2017), school principals need to create and determine measurement tools (instruments) together with teachers and staff. Involving teachers and staff in designing instruments is expected to create mutual understanding of each other's duties and a sense of ownership of the agreement.

Apart from that, if viewed from an organizational approach, this research found that in the strategy formulation stage SMAN 3 Unggulan Kayuagung formed an internal team of quality management and curriculum developers. The internal team identified the characteristics of school by involving various stakeholders to explore the desired expectations, the expectations of the Merdeka Curriculum policy, trend, and the competencies needed in universities, the work and social life, all of which will be used as a reference for designing the school's vision, mission, and goals, which of course are also aligned with the school's internal conditions. The results of this research are supported by the Ministry of Education and Culture, which states that schools can carefully take into account the views/contributions of various schools stakeholders in comprehensively reviewing and reformulating the vision, mission and objectives based on an analysis of the schools environment characteristics (Educational Standards Curriculum and Assessment Agency, 2022a). Meanwhile, previous researchers also found that the strategy formulation process begins with analyzing the environment using SWOT analysis; formulating vision, mission and goals; as well as involving the team in the formulation stage (Laeli, 2021). Anwar (2020) also emphasized that team involvement in strategy formulation increases awareness of the productivity rewards in each strategic plan, thereby increasing work motivation.

## **1.2 Strategy Implementation**

The second stage is strategy implementation. In implementing the strategy, it was found that SMAN 3 Unggulan Kayuagung carried out the steps that had been prepared which are 1) implementing excellent programs, Annual Work Plans (RKT), and Education Operational Curriculum (KSP). 2) Implementation of monitoring and communication systems; 3) Resource management (HR, budget, methods, facilities & infrastructure, technology, time and market). And 4) in HR management is supported by organizational structure, optimization of HR characteristics, implementation of HR development programs, quality of school principal leadership, and a supportive work culture.

These findings are supported by previous research which found that strategy implementation consists of implementing various policies, improving the quality of human resources, work culture, and implementing monitoring and communication systems by school principals (Dermawan, 2020). However, previous research did not mention how to manage other school resources in implementing the strategy. Ward in Hunger and Wheelen states that strategy implementation consists of school program implementation activities and resource management (Kholis, 2014). If we refer to Usman (2019), resources are management elements that include man, money, method, materials/media, machines/technology, minutes, and market. The importance of resource management in strategy implementation was also conveyed by Susanto (2014) that strategy implementation cannot be separated from the ability to utilize various existing resources, thereby leading to the achievement of the



decided vision, mission and targets. Resources consist of material resources, especially in the form of facilities and infrastructure, financial resources in the form of allocated funds, human resources, technology and information. This further supports the findings of this research. Apart from that, the Ministry of Education and Culture also encourages schools to be able to manage internal and external resources to enhance improvements in the quality of the learning activity process (Educational Standards, Curriculum, and Assessment Agency, 2022).

What was stated above was also found in this research that in implementing the strategy SMA Negeri 3 Unggulan Kayuagung utilizes internal and external resources, such as the use of internal HR to become a resource in HR development activities, match their competence and responsibility, and they are also optimized as a driving team at school. External human resources such as parents, alumni, and school partners are also given a trust as student learning resources, funding sources, and school support system. Apart from that, technological resources are optimized by utilizing technology to improve the quality of school management and teaching and learning processes in the classroom through digitalization programs, utilization of the Merdeka Mengajar Platform, online learning applications, and social media. Facilities and infrastructure resources are also utilized by schools to provide safe, comfortable and meaningful learning experiences.

Based on the discussion above, it can be concluded that proper management of school resources is one of the important elements that must be carried out in implementing the strategy. The findings of this research are also in line with the implementation theory pioneered by Hunger (2009) in Anwar (2020) which explains that program development, budgets and procedures must be clear and used as a guide during implementation. As stated previously, in implementing the strategy, SMA Negeri 3 Unggulan Kayuagung implements excellent programs, RKT, procedures contained in the KSP, and budget management contained in the RKAS as a reference when implementing the strategy. Hunger also added that in implementing strategy it is important for management to arrange the organizational structure (staffing) in accordance with strategic needs. This further strengthens the findings of this research that in implementing the strategy, SMA Negeri 3 Unggulan Kayuagung organizes human resources through an organizational structure that regulates human resources according to their competencies and responsibilities.

Susanto (2014) also added that organizational structure is a key element in strategy implementation by indicating the implementation of responsibilities and duties. Apart from the organizational structure, SMA Negeri 3 Unggulan Kayuagung also emphasizes the monitoring system and communication system as important factors that are emphasized in strategy implementation. This is supported by Susanto (2014) that one of the factors in strategy implementation is the implementation of a monitoring and coordination system, where schools must implement the best way to assess performance (monitoring) and coordinate actions between school members.

Regarding the communication system, it is also supported by the implementation theory pioneered by George Edward III in Siregar (2022) that implementing the communication system is an important factor because the goals and objectives of the strategy must be communicated clearly and consistently to the target group, thereby minimizing implementation deviations and resistance from the target group.

Another important thing to discuss from the research findings regarding the implementation of strategies in optimizing the Merdeka Curriculum is that SMA Negeri 3 Unggulan Kayuagung also captures the optimization of human resource characteristics, the quality of the principal's leadership, and work culture, all of which can support successful implementation. This is supported by Susanto (2014) who said that strategy implementation is supported by good leadership and work culture. In addition, based on the results of previous research, it was found that there is a significant influence between school principal leadership and teacher competence and performance (Fitria et al., 2023). The leader's ability to direct, mobilize and motivate all the human resources involved is one of the key factors in the success of strategy implementation (Hunger in Anwar, 2020).

Similarly, the findings in this research show that the success of strategy implementation at SMA Negeri 3 Unggulan Kayuagung is influenced by the leadership of the school principal who is always able to act, motivate, inspire and direct the school community, and is able to become a leader who leads by giving role models. (*Lead by example*), so that it can become a role model in building HR characteristics and performance, as well as a work culture that supports strategy implementation. Based on the findings, the work culture built at SMA Negeri 3 Unggulan Kayuagung is a culture of learning, collaboration, discipline, responsibility, commitment, high enthusiasm, and high ethics and loyalty. This is also in accordance with implementation theory based on George Edward III in Siregar (2022) that disposition is the character, characteristics and perspective possessed by HR which is an important element that must be considered in strategy implementation.

### **1.3 Strategy Evaluation**

This research shows the strategy evaluation process in optimizing the Merdeka Curriculum at SMA Negeri 3 Unggulan Kayuagung includes the success of optimizing the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, the obstacles faced and the solutions taken to overcome these obstacles. These findings are also in line with research by Sutrisnowati (2018) which found that the strategy evaluation carried out by schools in the context of implementing the 2013 Curriculum included the success of implementing the curriculum, obstacles and solutions to the obstacles faced. The same thing was also conveyed by Ward in Hunger and Wheelen that the strategy evaluation process includes evaluating organizational performance and program implementation results (Kholis, 2014). Fadhli (2020) also added that strategy

evaluation produces feedback to identify the root of the problem (constraints) and to make adjustments to strategy formulation in the future. Referring to the evaluation results, it was found that the implementation of strategic management at SMA Negeri 3 Unggulan had been carried out well, measured by the achievement of success indicators starting from the strategy formulation, implementation and evaluation process.

The implementation of good strategic management has an impact on success in optimizing the Merdeka Curriculum. The success of optimizing the Merdeka Curriculum at SMA Negeri 3 Unggulan Kayuagung can be seen from the results of learning evaluations and evaluations of planning and implementation of the School Operational Curriculum (KSP) documents. Evaluation of the success of optimizing the Merdeka Curriculum through the implementation of strategic management at SMA Negeri 3 Unggulan Kayuagung is measured through learning evaluations and KSP evaluations by looking at conformity with the basic framework of the Merdeka Curriculum, including curriculum structure, learning outcomes, learning principles and assessment. Apart from that, through the achievement of the dimensions of the *Profil Pelajar Pancasila*, the quality of the learning process, the results of learning assessments, the management of school resources for the purpose of improving the quality of learning, and the successful implementation of school programs.

The findings discussed above are supported by the Educational Standards, Curriculum, and Assessment Agency (2022) that the evaluation of the Merdeka Curriculum can be seen from the overall learning evaluation and KSP evaluation. Beside that, according to the Ministry of Education and Culture (2021), schools are successful in developing KSP if the KSP is prepared in accordance with the curriculum framework and structure, and is adapted to the school's characteristics. In addition to the success of optimizing the Merdeka Curriculum through the implementation of strategic management, in the evaluation process schools identify and analyze the obstacles faced, as well as follow-up solutions to overcome these obstacles.

## **2. Obstacles and solutions to implement strategic management in optimizing the Merdeka Curriculum at SMA Negeri 3 Unggulan Kayuagung**

This research found obstacles faced by SMAN 3 Unggulan Kayuagung in implementing management strategy which were categorized into obstacles in the process of strategy formulation, implementation and evaluation. First, the obstacles in formulating a strategy are 1) Dynamic changes to the Merdeka curriculum policy. Meanwhile, the solution implemented by the school is optimizing the equation of growth mindset and optimizing the use of digitalization in the planning process. This is supported by the Ministry of Education and Culture (2023) that schools face challenges with policies that continue to be adjusted, so that schools continue to adapt to the Merdeka Curriculum and it is hoped that this will encourage

improvement growth mindset and collaboration of the teachers. Apart from that, the solution to optimize the use of technology in the planning process is appropriate, in accordance with UNESCO in the Ministry of Education and Culture (2023) which states that amidst changes in dynamic external factors digital technology has the potential to make access more inclusive, faster and cheaper.

2) Time limitations have an impact on the lack of optimal timeliness in ratifying planning documents. Constraints related to time resources (*minutes*) What was found in this research was also found in previous research in the context of implementing strategic management in the implementation of the 2013 Curriculum that three target schools in the research conveyed the same thing, namely that the obstacle faced was limited time so that the timeliness in preparing planning documents was not fully optimal. The solution carried out in previous research was the effectiveness of teacher activities and creating priority scale activities. Findings related to this solution were also found in this research, namely that the solution was to determine tasks and activities based on a priority scale and build a culture of collaboration. The importance of a collaboration culture is supported by Saleh (2023) who states that completing work carried out collaboratively can create work completion that is faster, more effective and efficient.

Second, the obstacles in the strategy implementation process at SMA Negeri 3 Unggulan Kayuagung are 1) the lack of optimal commitment, consistency and stability of all teachers' performance. 2) there is inequality or speed gap in completing work. The solution implemented is strengthening perceptions, mentoring, direction, and upgrading competencies through developing human resources for those who need, as well as implementing competency-based performance assessments. This is supported by Mukminin et al. (2019) conveying the importance of implementing performance management to improve individual performance by building open and constructive relationships between individuals and organizations in ongoing dialogue; provide a framework for agreed work objectives that focus on required attributes and competencies, and create an agreed development plan.

Third, the obstacle in the strategy evaluation process at SMA Negeri 3 Unggulan Kayuagung is the organization of evaluation documents is not yet optimal. The solution is that there is a need for a strategy and KSP evaluation instrument document format, as well as a Follow-up Plan (RTL) format. This is supported by Gunawan & Benty (2017) who view the monitoring approach that evaluation of results must start with a) setting standards, namely creating instruments used to measure the success of a program. b) measuring program results/achievements c) evaluating results d) carrying out corrective action or RTL including stopping the program, revising the program, or continuing the program by making improvements to several program elements. The RTL document itself needs to be written and documented, apart from that, the importance of optimizing

digitalization in evaluation documentation. It can also be done by integrating the role of technology as stated by Sinulingga (2022) that Good documentation will support the work process, because comparing past data to formulate predictions is a continuous process in implementing strategic management.

#### **D. Conclusions**

Based on the result of data analysis, 1) the implementation of strategic management in optimizing Merdeka Curriculum at SMAN 3 Unggulan Kayuagung consist of strategy formulation, implementation, and evaluation. a) strategy formulation consists of environmental analysis, vision and mission revision, goals, targets and strategies formulation, and implementation and evaluation plans. b) strategy implementation consists of implementing operational curriculum, school's programs, monitoring-communication systems, and managing school resources, supported by human resource characteristics, organizational structure, school's principal leadership, and work culture. c) strategy evaluation shows the success, obstacles and solutions. 2) the obstacles are dynamic policies, limited time, work completion gaps, and inconsistency in teachers' performance and evaluation document management. The solutions are to optimize growth mindset activities for teachers, digitalization in planning and evaluation processes; priority scale-based work plans; collaboration culture; performance work management; and standardization of evaluation instruments and action plans documents.

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