

Research Article

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# Pedagogical Model Innovation Based on Ki Hajar Dewantara's Among System for History Learning in the Merdeka Curriculum

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## Abstract

**Background/purpose.** The challenges in implementing Indonesia's Merdeka Curriculum highlight the urgency for innovative educational approaches to address gaps in historical knowledge and develop 21st-century skills. This study explores the integration of the Among System into the Merdeka Curriculum framework to foster critical thinking, collaboration, and contextual understanding among senior high school students.

**Materials/methods.** A qualitative descriptive design was employed, involving 35 Grade XI students and 3 history teachers from two high schools in Karanganyar Regency. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, direct classroom observations, and document analysis. Thematic analysis was applied to the dataset, ensuring validity (through triangulation of sources) and reliability (through consistency checks).

**Results.** The findings reveal that incorporating the Among System with project-based learning (PjBL) enables students to explore local historical narratives, critically evaluate sources, and connect these narratives to broader national contexts. Teachers were pivotal facilitators, guiding students toward active and reflective learning. However, the study identified significant barriers, including limited availability of contextual teaching materials, inadequate technological infrastructure, and insufficient teacher training.

**Conclusion.** This research contributes to the theoretical development of localized education frameworks aligned with global standards and offers practical recommendations for educators and policymakers. Enhancing teacher competencies and integrating digital tools are critical to achieving sustainable educational practices within the Merdeka Curriculum. The study underscores the importance of empowering educators to effectively adapt innovative teaching strategies to modern educational demands.



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## 1. Introduction

Recent studies have highlighted significant gaps in the implementation of an Independent Curriculum (Kurikulum Merdeka) in Indonesia. Key challenges include inadequate infrastructure and learning resources, insufficient teacher preparation, and difficulties in adapting project-based learning approaches (Kartika Hudayana et al., 2023; Soleha & Mujahid, 2024; Hafiz et al., 2024). Additionally, the integration of technology in education remains a critical issue, as educators often struggle to meet national curriculum standards and adopt holistic evaluation practices (Azzarah et al., 2024; Satriyanto, 2023). Despite these challenges, the curriculum demonstrates potential benefits, including fostering creativity and preparing students for professional demands (Setioyuliani & Andaryani, 2023; Hafiz et al., 2024). Recommendations to address these gaps include strengthening teacher training, improving resource availability, and enhancing collaboration among educational stakeholders.

Empirical evidence indicates that the implementation of Kurikulum Merdeka at the secondary education level, particularly in history instruction, continues to encounter various obstacles. This is evidenced by the results of brief interviews with history teachers in the Karanganyar region, which highlight several primary challenges in optimally applying the principles of Kurikulum Merdeka. Based on these interviews with multiple history teachers in secondary schools within the Karanganyar area, it was revealed that the implementation of Kurikulum Merdeka still faces numerous impediments, especially with respect to integrating local values into the learning process. One educator stated that although basic training on Kurikulum Merdeka had been provided, the majority of learning materials did not include contextual guidance for linking local history with the principles of Pancasila. Another teacher disclosed that their efforts to implement project-based learning were often hindered by limitations in the teaching modules and technological support facilities. Conversely, educators also emphasized the importance of more innovative approaches, such as the Among system, to address these challenges and provide a more meaningful learning experience for students. These findings underscore the necessity for learning strategies that are not only based on local values but also relevant to 21st-century requirements, in accordance with the vision of the Kurikulum Merdeka.

Alongside the difficulties encountered by educators in applying the Merdeka Curriculum principles, history education confronts additional, more extensive issues, particularly in fostering students' historical literacy and incorporating digital technologies into the teaching and learning processes. The integration of digital literacy into conventional history education is a key issue that frequently limits students' access to varied narratives and their ability to critically interact with historical events (Fatimah, 2023; Åhsberg, 2024). This is compounded by reliance on rote memorization, which hinders the development of critical historical thinking skills essential for analyzing events from multiple perspectives (Akhan & Çiçek, 2021). Moreover, the instructional methods typically employed by history teachers frequently neglect to prioritize analysis and interpretation, indicating a disparity between educational theory and practice (Thorp & Persson, 2020; Lee & Harris, 2020). This difficulty is intensified by the need to conform to a standardized curriculum that emphasizes particular narratives, thus undermining critical inquiry.

The emotional and ideological dimensions of teaching history also present significant barriers. Educators often face difficulties when addressing sensitive historical topics, such as injustices or marginalized communities, which may provoke discomfort among students or resistance from parents (Rodríguez, 2020; J. Miles, 2019). These challenges emphasize the need for a more inclusive and critical approach to history education, enabling students to engage with diverse perspectives and reflect on historical narratives' relevance in contemporary society.

Ki Hajar Dewantara's educational philosophy, particularly his Among System, provides a valuable framework for addressing these challenges within the Merdeka Curriculum. Dewantara's principles

emphasize student independence and character development, aligned with modern learner-centered approaches (Hunaepi, 2023; Prasetyo et al., 2023). The Among System encourages educators to act as guides and motivators, fostering an environment that promotes exploration and learning. Dewantara's mottos—"Ing Ngarso Sung Tuladha," "Ing Madya Mangun Karsa," and "Tut Wuri Handayani"—remain foundational in nurturing independent and responsible learners (Niyarci, 2022). This philosophy aligns seamlessly with the goals of the Merdeka Curriculum, which aims to cultivate Pancasila student profiles while adapting to contemporary educational challenges (Sulistyaningrum et al., 2023). In summary, addressing the challenges in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum and strengthening historical literacy requires a concerted effort to integrate Ki Hajar Dewantara's educational values with modern pedagogical strategies. The principles of the Among Systems offer a holistic approach to fostering independence, critical thinking, and active engagement among students, ensuring that education remains relevant to the demands of the 21st century.

This research is urgently needed to address the difficulties of 21st-century education, particularly in fostering historical literacy, critical thinking abilities, and teamwork. Within the framework of the Independent Curriculum, the examination of local values is essential for developing education that is globally pertinent while being anchored in students' local culture (Avianto, 2023; Fatimah, 2023). This supports the students' need to think reflectively and work collaboratively through a project-based approach (Åhsberg, 2024). The strength of this study lies in its synthesis of Ki Hajar Dewantara's ideology and project-based learning (PjBL), which enhances historical literacy while fostering critical and autonomous thinking among students. The principles of the system, including "Ing Ngarso Sung Tuladha" and "Tut Wuri Handayani," form the foundation for a comprehensive approach that integrates local history with a global perspective, fostering pertinent and sustainable learning experiences (Sariyatun & Marpelina, 2024; Niyarci, 2022).

Although prior research emphasizes the extensive application of PjBL, a gap persists in examining its integration with regional educational philosophies such as the Among. Dewantara's System Among prioritizes student autonomy and character formation along with the goals of the Merdeka Curriculum. Nevertheless, few studies have investigated the integration of Project-Based Learning (PjBL) with System Among to improve history education and literacy, especially in the Indonesian setting. This gap highlights the necessity for research that explores the practical implementation of Dewantara's educational philosophy within PjBL frameworks to enhance history learning in accordance with the ideals of the Merdeka Curriculum.

This study offers theoretical contributions by enhancing the notion of local value-based education pertinent to 21st-century demands, particularly in fostering historical literacy, critical thinking, and collaboration (Sariyatun & Marpelina, 2024; Avianto, 2023). This study provides a framework for educators and institutions to execute the Merdeka Curriculum using a local value-oriented methodology, facilitating the incorporation of local history, while fostering contextual and inclusive education (Sulistiyowati & Surachmi, 2020). The distinctiveness of this study lies in the innovative integration of the Among System, project-based learning (PjBL), and historical literacy, specifically tailored to enhance history education within the framework of the Merdeka Curriculum. This combination enhances students' learning experiences and fosters a sustainable educational approach that can adapt to contemporary problems.

This research provides substantial theoretical and practical advances in addressing the objectives linked to contemporary educational requirements. This study seeks to elucidate the application of the Among System in historical education, according to the Merdeka Curriculum, emphasizing the incorporation of Ki Hajar Dewantara's educational principles. This study examines the significance of this technique in enhancing historical literacy, critical thinking abilities, and collaborative skills among students as components of 21st-century competencies. This project aims to offer practical

contributions to historical education innovations rooted in local values, informed by the process and outcomes of implementing the Among System within the framework of the Merdeka Curriculum.

## **2. Methodology**

Mathematical discussions in the classroom can enhance and promote children's learning, allowing them to share, justify, argue, and systematize the mathematical reasoning derived from the

### **2.1. Research Approach Design**

This study used a qualitative approach with a descriptive design (Moleong, 2018). This method facilitates a comprehensive examination of learning processes, experiences, and outcomes from the viewpoints of educators and learners (Cresswell et al., 2003). A descriptive design was selected because it facilitates the comprehensive mapping of intricate and contextual learning processes pertinent to practice-based education research (Tarek et al., 2021).

### **2.2. Participant**

This study was conducted in two high schools in the Karanganyar Regency, which adopted the Merdeka Curriculum. Locations were selected intentionally, considering data availability and the execution of project-based learning in these institutions. The research participants comprised three history educators utilizing the Among System in history instruction, along with 35 Grade XI students (18 male and 17 female) from both institutions engaged in project-based learning activities. The sample selection method included purposive sampling, in which participants were chosen based on their pertinence and direct engagement in the execution of the examined procedure (M. B. Miles et al., 2018). This method guarantees that participants possess profound comprehension and expertise pertinent to the execution of the Among System, which is crucial for addressing the research objectives (I Gunawan, 2013).

### **2.3. Data Collection Techniques**

The data were gathered using three primary complementary methods: observation, interviews, and documentation (Otani, 2017). Observations were employed to monitor the execution of the Among System, teacher-student interactions, and student collaboration in project-based learning activities. This strategy provides immediate insight into classroom dynamics and pedagogical approaches. In-depth interviews were conducted with instructors and students to ascertain their thoughts, experiences, and challenges in implementing the Among System.

The data collection process was carried out over a three-month period, from March to October 2024, coinciding with the second semester of the academic year. This timeframe was strategically selected to ensure that the study captured authentic and ongoing teaching and learning dynamics under the Merdeka Curriculum. The data were further supplemented by a study of learning modules, student project outcomes, and their written reflections. These multiple sources of data provide definitive evidence of the execution of lessons and student engagement. This methodological amalgamation facilitates extensive data acquisition to address the research objectives effectively (Aspers & Corte, 2019).

The data for this study were collected over three months from March to October 2024. This timeframe was chosen to coincide with the second semester of the academic year, during which the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum and project-based learning activities were in full effect. The selected period ensured comprehensive observation and data collection, capturing the natural dynamics of teaching and learning processes relevant to the study objectives.

## 2.4. Research Instrument

The data-gathering strategy for this research is tailored to its topic and incorporates techniques such as documentation, in-depth interviews, and observations. The objective of developing this instrument is to guarantee that the data collected are pertinent to the study aims and can yield comprehensive insights into the application of the Among System in historical education according to the Merdeka Curriculum. Each data-gathering method employs a particular instrument designed to assess specific indicators. The tool grid is shown in the subsequent Table 1.

**Table 1.** Research Instrument Grid

Technique	Instruments	Measured Indicators	Data Sources	Instrument Validation
Observation	Observation sheet	Implementation of the <i>Among</i> System, teacher-student interaction, student involvement in learning.	Teachers, students, and classroom activities	Triangulation with interviews and documentation
Interview	Interview guideline	Teacher and student experiences, implementation challenges, impact on historical literacy.	Teachers and students	Member checking and peer debriefing
Documentation	Analysis rubric	Quality of learning modules, student project results, student reflections on learning.	Learning modules, student project results	Document validation through discussions with teachers

Adapted from Rahmadayanti & Hartoyo (2022), Nurzen (2022), Setyowati et al. (2023)

## 2.5. Data Analysis Techniques and Data Validity

The data gathered in this study were examined using two primary methodologies: thematic qualitative analysis and descriptive statistics. Thematic qualitative analysis involves coding and categorizing data from interviews and observations into principal themes pertinent to the research aims (Khoa et al., 2023). This procedure enables researchers to methodically discern patterns, correlations, and significances within qualitative data. The data were evaluated descriptively to discern the developing learning patterns and their influence on student skills (M. B. Miles et al., 2018).

The integrity of the data in this study was ensured using various methodologies. Initially, technical triangulation was employed by amalgamating diverse data-gathering methods, including observation, interviews, and documentation, to validate the consistency of the findings (Aspers & Corte, 2019). Second, peer debriefing was performed through discussions with colleagues to guarantee that the data interpretation remained objective and impartial. Third, member checking was utilized by presenting preliminary interview findings to informants to verify that the researcher's interpretation aligned with their perspectives and experiences (Chauvette et al., 2019). The combination of various methodologies guarantees that the studied data possesses high validity, making it dependable for addressing the study objectives.

### 3. Results

#### 3.1. The Relevance of Ki Hajar Dewantara's Concept of Education

Three history teachers were interviewed to support the research findings. Each teacher provided a unique perspective on how the Among System could be implemented in an independent curriculum for teaching history. Teacher A stated that this method helps students become more autonomous, particularly in project assignments that connect local history with national context. According to Teacher A, students who were previously passive were now more engaged in discussions and learning historical material. Nevertheless, Teacher A also noted that the lack of specific class modules to support an Independent Curriculum is a significant constraint. Teacher B also emphasized the influence of the Among System on student interactions. Teacher B reported that this method successfully created a collaborative learning atmosphere in which students actively participated in group discussions and could collectively solve problems. Teacher B asserted that students appeared more confident in expressing their opinions, especially when given the opportunity to present project results. However, Teacher B indicated that there was a need for more varied learning approaches to meet the needs of students with different ability levels. Teacher C placed greater emphasis on technical issues in utilizing the Among System. Teacher C stated that although this method helps students learn history, teachers must be trained to create modules that align with the project-based approach. Teacher C also noted that facilities such as access to digital learning resources were necessary to support improved learning. The interviews with these teachers were validated through member checking, in which the interpreted interview results were returned to each teacher to ensure data accuracy. Triangulation was conducted by comparing the interview findings with the observation results and documentation.

This combination of techniques provided an in-depth understanding of the successes and challenges of implementing the Among System in high school history learning, in accordance with the principles of the Independent Curriculum. Table 2 presents the identification and analysis of interviews conducted with the teachers.

**Table 2.** Relevance of Ki Hajar Dewantara's Educational Concept in the Implementation of the Among

Teacher	Key Findings	Challenges Faced	Recommendations
Teacher A	- Increase student independence through project-based assignments.	- Limited specific teaching modules that support the Independent Curriculum.	- Provision of contextual teaching modules relevant to local and national history.
Teacher B	- Link local and national history.	- The need for a variety of learning methods to reach the needs of students with diverse abilities.	- Training for teachers in implementing more varied learning methods.
Teacher C	- Help students actively participate in group discussions.	- Lack of teacher training in designing project-based modules.	- Improvement of teacher training and access to digital facilities to support learning.

Table 2 summarizes the key findings, challenges, and recommendations from teacher interviews on implementing the Among System in history learning. While successes include fostering student independence, linking local and national history, and encouraging group discussions, challenges such



as limited contextual modules, inadequate teacher training, and the need for diverse teaching methods persist. Recommendations focus on providing contextual modules, improving teacher training, and enhancing digital learning facilities to address these issues effectively.

### ***3.2. Implementation of the Among System in History Learning***

In the context of history education at the secondary school level, the implementation of the Among System is evident in the role of teachers as facilitators, enabling students to engage in independent and collaborative learning. According to Teacher A's findings, the Among approach is used to encourage student participation in group discussions about historical narratives. Teacher A stated that this approach frequently employs open-ended questions to stimulate critical thinking and guides students in connecting local historical events to national historical dynamics. Observational data corroborate these findings, indicating that students actively engage in dialogue, share ideas, and pose critical questions within groups to address historical problems presented by the teacher during lessons. Furthermore, this process demonstrates that students develop increased confidence in expressing their opinions during class discussions. Meanwhile, Teacher B emphasized the significance of Project-Based Learning (PjBL) in implementing the Among System. According to Teacher B, historical projects enable students to collaborate in groups to research specific historical topics such as local figures or significant events in their region. Observational data support this assertion, revealing intensive student interactions within groups, mutual support, and division of responsibilities according to individual roles.

One group enthusiastically compiled their project report, from gathering information to constructing a historical narrative for presentation. The teacher assumes the role of facilitator, providing guidance when students encounter difficulties, such as identifying relevant information sources or structuring the project narrative. Observational data also illustrates how teachers encourage students to contemplate historical values by creating an egalitarian discussion space. In one learning session, the teacher employed an open discussion approach to prompt the students to consider how specific historical events relate to contemporary issues. Students demonstrated high levels of engagement, with each group presenting their discussion results, utilizing visual media such as posters, and receiving feedback from both teachers and peers. The teacher also gave recognition to groups capable of presenting critical and relevant historical narratives. The combination of interview results and observational data, including direct observation of the learning process, indicates that the implementation of the Among System through the PjBL method is not only effective in enhancing student engagement but also promotes collaboration, critical thinking, and reflective abilities in history education.

### ***3.3. Strengthening Historical Literacy Through the Among System***

The implementation of the Among System in history education has been demonstrated to contribute significantly to the enhancement of students' historical literacy. This approach facilitates the students' development of a profound understanding of local history through guided exploration. Based on observations during the learning process, students were directed to identify relevant local historical events, such as significant figures or occurrences in their region. This process not only increases student engagement, but also provides a context that is more closely related to their lives, thereby rendering historical material more meaningful. Furthermore, this method cultivates students' critical thinking skills by instructing them in the examination and interpretation of historical data. An interview with Teacher A revealed that the students were granted the freedom to examine various sources of historical information, including documents, photographs, and oral narratives from the local community. The teacher instructs students to compare sources, identify biases, and formulate rational interpretations. Observational findings support this: Students were observed actively discussing source criticism before drawing conclusions about their findings. This method

demonstrates that the Among System successfully integrates historical knowledge with 21st-century skills such as critical thinking, collaboration, and communication. By combining local historical exploration, critical analysis, and project-based group work, students received profound, relevant, and sustainable learning experiences.

The Among System enhances history education by facilitating local history studies, fostering critical thinking, and promoting collaboration in group projects. This approach enabled students to connect historical events to national and local settings, leading to enhanced comprehension. The teacher's role is crucial in sustaining the dynamics of learning, offering guidance, and ensuring active student engagement. The integration of investigation, collaborative efforts, and project presentations not only augments historical knowledge but also cultivates contemporary abilities, such as teamwork and communication. Table 3 delineates the methodologies employed, educational outcomes, and teacher's role in the process.

**Table 3.** Strengthening Historical Literacy through the *Among* System

Historical Literacy Aspects	Approach in <i>Among</i> System	Learning Outcomes	Teacher Role
Local History Exploration	Students are directed to identify important figures and events in their area.	Students are more engaged in learning, understand local history, and relate it to the national context.	Guide students to explore information from documents, photographs, or local narratives.
Critical Thinking	Students evaluate various sources of historical information, compare facts, and identify bias.	Students are able to construct logical interpretations based on analysis of historical information.	Encourage analytical discussions and provide critical feedback on student interpretations.

Table 3 illustrates how the Among System strengthens historical literacy by focusing on local history exploration and critical thinking. Students are guided to connect local historical events with the national context, enhancing engagement and understanding. Additionally, the system encourages students to evaluate historical sources critically, fostering their ability to construct logical interpretations. Teachers play a pivotal role as facilitators, guiding students in sourcing information and promoting analytical discussions to develop deeper historical insights.

### **3.4. Relevance to the Independent Curriculum (*Kurikulum Merdeka*)**

The application of the Among System in historical education demonstrates a significant alignment with the Merdeka Curriculum, particularly in enhancing the Pancasila student profile. This strategy fosters students' independence. Observations indicate that students are encouraged to comprehend and analyze historical narratives independently through active exploration. The educator functions as a facilitator, offering preliminary advice while allowing students the opportunity to investigate historical sources, such as local papers, artifacts, or conversations with community leaders. This method empowers students to assume responsibility for their learning, aligned with the principle of independence in the Pancasila student profile.

The Among System promotes critical thinking in pupils by instructing them to contemplate and reflect on their historical narratives. The interview results with Teacher A indicated that Teacher A



promoted student critique of biased historical sources, facilitated fact comparison, and encouraged conclusions based on the acquired evidence. This technique enhanced students' critical thinking skills. This was observed in the group projects produced by the students, wherein they presented the outcomes of their study and articulated the rationale for their historical interpretations. Teacher A asserted that this technique facilitated pupils' comprehension of the connections between contemporary challenges and historical events. Enhancing the significance of collaborative efforts, exemplified by project-oriented teamwork, is also crucial.

Interviews with Teacher B revealed the collaborative efforts of student groups to complete project tasks, designate responsibilities, and address problems. Observations indicate that this group dynamic enhanced students' comprehension of the historical content. It also imparted the principles of collaboration and shared accountability, which formed the foundation of mutual cooperation.

Consequently, the implementation of the Among System in historical education not only enhances students' historical literacy but also fortifies aspects of autonomy, critical thinking, and collaborative engagement within the Pancasila student profile. This indicates that the methodology aligns with the objectives of the Merdeka Curriculum to cultivate pupils who possess intellectual, social, and moral competence. Table 4 elucidates the examination and identification of the research documentation.

**Table 4.** Research Documentation Results

Documentation Type	Description of Findings	Relevance to the Independent Curriculum
Learning Module	The project-based history learning module covers local and national history themes with an independent exploration approach.	Supporting the Independent dimension in the Pancasila student profile through active exploration.
Student Project Results	Student groups produce written reports on local historical figures analyzed from various sources.	Strengthening historical literacy and Critical Reasoning skills.
Student Written Reflection	Students share their experiences in the project, including challenges faced and lessons learned.	Developing the ability of Mutual Cooperation and critical self-evaluation.
Student Group Presentation	Students present the results of their projects, using visual media such as posters and slides to support arguments.	Training communication and collaboration skills in Mutual Cooperation.
Class Observation Document	Notes on student-teacher interactions, group discussion dynamics, and student engagement in learning.	Reflecting the implementation of the <i>Among</i> System in creating active and participatory learning.

This study shows that using the Among System in history education under an independent curriculum aids students' understanding of history through local history exploration, critical analysis, and collaborative projects. Qualitative thematic analysis revealed that this method promoted independent and reflective learning. Educators guide productive discussions and exploration. Teacher interviews indicated that students enhance their critical skills in evaluating historical sources and form relevant interpretations for local and national contexts. Additionally, observations showed increased student engagement in group discussions. Documentation of group projects demonstrates that collaboration and communication during learning improves students' grasp of historical values.

## 4. Discussion

This section is divided into three subsections. The first subsection present the occurrences of the TT's actions during the task discussion and mathematical learning systematization phases of each session. The second subsection provides evidence of these actions. Finally, the third subsection summarizes the results, detailing the number of occurrences of each action in the four sessions and the total.

### 4.1. Strengthening Historical Literacy through the Among System

The implementation of the Among System in history education enhances students' historical knowledge, particularly through active and comprehensive research on the local history. Educators assist pupils in examining their local history, interpreting data, and contemplating their significance. Students acquire profound comprehension of history through this process, enabling them to relate historical events to their social and cultural settings. This approach aligns with Among philosophy, which underscores the significance of student discovery and autonomy in the learning process. This approach aligns with constructivist philosophy, which posits that students actively participate in the learning process (Wertsch, 1985). Thus, the Among System not only strengthens students' understanding of local historical narratives, but also trains them to think critically and independently in understanding the dynamics of history.

Previous studies support the integration of local history into education to improve students' understanding of national narratives and critical thinking skills. Indriani et al. (2021) showed that local history-based learning improves students' critical thinking skills, while Sariyatun and Marpelina (2024) asserted that this approach strengthens students' cultural identity and connection to the community. Implementation strategies vary and include online learning (Gunawan & Rachmah, 2021), project-based approaches (Abidin, 2020), and the use of ICT-based media (Bahri et al., 2021). Sulistyowati and Surachmi (2020) proposed exploring the local wisdom by writing historical narratives to provide a more relevant context. However, López Rodríguez (2020) also noted challenges in balancing national narratives and local perspectives in history textbooks and student work.

By integrating local history into system-based learning, students not only understand national history in a broader context, but also develop critical and reflective thinking skills that are essential to facing the challenges of the 21st century. This approach provides a meaningful learning experience while strengthening students' cultural identities and historical awareness.

### 4.2. Collaboration and Group Dynamics through Project Based Learning (PjBL)

The execution of project-based learning (PjBL) via the Among System effectively enhances students' collaborative abilities in history education. Students were instructed to collaborate, assume various roles, and address problems constructively throughout the project. Interviews with Teacher B indicated that this strategy fostered effective group dynamics, enabling students to assist each other in data collection and research compilation. Observations indicated that students exhibited greater engagement in conversations, showed initiative, and engaged more actively in the project presentations. Teachers' involvement is crucial in maintaining group dynamics and ensuring that all pupils participate. The findings indicate that PjBL enhanced collaborative abilities and the values of mutual cooperation, which are components of the Pancasila student profile under the Merdeka Curriculum.

Previous research has supported the efficacy of PjBL in enhancing students' collaboration and communication skills. Putri and Dwikoranto (2022) claimed that PjBL facilitates students' collaborative learning while improving communication skills through precise role distribution. In alignment with this, Rais et al. (2021) further posited that PjBL enables students to communicate interactively, construct knowledge, and develop 21st-century skills, including critical thinking.

Additional studies affirm that collaboration-based PjBL enhances critical thinking skills, analytical abilities, and social interactions among students during the process of learning history (Biazus & Mahtari, 2022; Amelia & Santoso, 2021). By engaging students in intensive group work, PjBL facilitates their comprehension of historical contexts and prepares them for future teamwork challenges.

Furthermore, collaborative approaches such as PjBL are relevant to the values of mutual cooperation and the integration of Pancasila in learning. Relevant research by Liang and Schartner (2022) emphasizes the importance of cross-cultural group work in strengthening students' social awareness. Fauziah et al. (2023) demonstrated that learning based on local values helps reinforce national identity, while other research also highlights how group work supports the development of values, such as tolerance, religiosity, and collective responsibility (Zakso et al., 2021; Oswald & Zhao, 2021). Moreover, learning models such as RECE (Reflective, Engage, Collaborative, Elaborative) are also effective in integrating character and national values with academic learning (Sarkadi et al., 2022).

PjBL enhances collaboration skills while fostering an inclusive and participatory learning environment. Research conducted by Muntazhimah et al. (2020), indicated that students experience enhanced social and cognitive interactions when engaged in cooperative learning. Furthermore, projects centered on teamwork enhance learning experiences and technical competencies (Oswald & Zhao, 2021). Within the framework of the Independent Curriculum (Kurikulum Merdeka), the incorporation of technology in collaborative learning, as noted (Wahyuningtyas & Idris, 2020), enhances students' ability to communicate and collaborate more efficiently. Participation in projects enables students to develop collaboration skills while instilling Pancasila values, such as responsibility, social awareness, and teamwork.

### ***4.3. The Relevance of Local History Exploration to 21st-Century Skills***

Exploring local history through the Among System facilitates the development of 21st-century skills, particularly in critical thinking and analytical reasoning. Students learn to analyze various historical information sources such as cultural artifacts, oral histories, and local documents. This process aids in evaluating the veracity of the information, identifying biases, and constructing logical historical interpretations. As evidenced by an interview with Teacher A, students were encouraged to examine the relationships between local historical principles and international contexts. Observations indicate that students actively engage in group discussions, share findings, and connect local narratives to national historical dynamics, thus supporting these findings. Project-based local exploration enables students to understand the relevance of history to contemporary issues. This aligns with the study by Sari et al. (2023) which stated that learning based on local values is effective in developing critical thinking skills, reflective abilities, and historical awareness in a global context.

The investigation of local history aligns with the principles of an Independent Curriculum, promoting contextual and experiential learning. Numerous studies have demonstrated that contextual learning can foster the development of critical thinking skills by examining local historical information, enabling individuals to grasp cause-and-effect relationships within the historical narratives of their communities (Avianto, 2023). This approach aligns with Ütkür (2020), highlighting the significance of experiential learning in the exploration of local history, thereby aiding students in comprehending the connections between local events and wider historical themes. Studying local history enhances students' comprehension of their surroundings and plays a significant role in shaping their national identity. The research conducted by Danugroho (2024), emphasizes that comprehension of local history can enhance students' pride in their community and national identity. This is supported by Muhtarom (2023), who indicated that local history education enables students

to connect historical events with their personal experiences, thereby enhancing their critical understanding of history.

The principles of Kurikulum Merdeka in integrating local wisdom with historical education also support the achievement of a Pancasila student profile. This curriculum promotes project-based learning approaches and outdoor exploration to enhance student motivation and learning outcomes in history learning (Jauhar et al., 2024; Bahri et al., 2024; Munira & Suryana, 2023). Furthermore, the integration of local cultural wisdom aims to strengthen the development of students' characteristics and national identity (Handayani et al., 2022). Curriculum philosophy based on humanism, progressivism, and constructivism supports student-centered learning and respects individual potential (Noer et al., 2023), which aligns with Ki Hajar Dewantara's educational concept of student autonomy and holistic development (Efendi et al., 2023).

#### **4.4. Challenges in Implementing the Among System and Independent Curriculum**

The primary problems in adopting the Among System and Independent Curriculum were highlighted as constraints of contextual teaching modules and insufficient technology resources. In an interview with instructor C, it was noted that accessible modules frequently lacked relevance to the local historical background. Consequently, educators must provide supplementary materials to enhance learning. Furthermore, the primary impediment to facilitating students' exploration was the restricted availability of digital devices and internet connectivity at the school. Educators require specialized training to incorporate the Among System into a project-based learning framework. Observations indicated that certain students encountered challenges in accessing digital information sources, resulting in impediments to their learning process. This issue aligns with the findings of Jauhar et al. (2024), which indicated that inadequate facilities and resources frequently hinder the implementation of new curricula, such as the Independent Curriculum.

Previous studies have emphasized the importance of continuous teacher training to support the sustainability of innovative learning methods. According to Frèrejean et al. (2021) effective development programs for educators must be tailored to meet the needs of teachers, beginning with mastery of fundamental skills and progressing to more advanced differentiation strategies. In accordance with this, Guyassa et al. (2021) noted that collaborative training between school leaders and teachers is more effective in addressing the actual needs of educators. Furthermore, other research findings indicate that ongoing training, beginning with pre-service education and extending throughout a teacher's career, enhances the quality of teaching and positively influences student learning outcomes (Koşar et al., 2022; Moussaoui, 2021).

In a broader context, enhancing teacher training should encompass the development of digital competencies, emotional intelligence, and pedagogical innovation to ensure the sustainability of contemporary learning methods. According to Pozo-Rico et al. (2023) and Garzón Artacho et al. (2020) continuous practice-based training is crucial for enhancing teachers' digital competence. Furthermore, additional researchers emphasize the importance of incorporating Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) into initial teacher training to equip educators with the ability to implement innovative and inclusive learning methods (Pegalajar-Palomino et al., 2021; Fischer et al., 2022). To address the challenges identified in this study, it is essential to engage in collaborative efforts that encompass practice-based training, creation of contextual teaching modules, and enhancement of technology access in schools. By following these steps, the sustainability of the Among System and the effectiveness of the Merdeka Curriculum can be ensured, thereby supporting the comprehensive achievement of 21st century education objectives.

The results of this study have significant theoretical and practical implications. Theoretically, it advances education theory based on local values pertinent to 21st-century learning, emphasizing historical literacy via the Among Systems. This method merges local and global values, supporting the

Pancasila student profile in line with the Merdeka Curriculum's vision. Practically, it is recommended that schools, teachers, and policymakers provide more contextual teaching modules, continuous teacher training, and better facilities for project-based learning. Limitations include the study's focus on only two schools and limited documentation of long-term impacts. Further research is needed to explore the broader application of Among System and its effects on various student competencies.

## 5. Conclusion

The findings of this study demonstrate that the application of the Among System in history education, along with the Merdeka Curriculum, is pertinent to the research aims of enhancing historical literacy, critical thinking abilities, and student collaboration. This methodology offers a significant educational experience by incorporating local and national historical values, while reinforcing the characteristics of Pancasila pupils. The analysis of this study's results affirms that enhancing historical literacy via local inquiry and project-based collaborative efforts can serve as a sustainable educational paradigm, particularly within the framework of locally relevant value-based education pertinent to the 21st century. It is advisable to broaden the range of locales and populations to encompass a diverse array of educational situations, including in regions with inadequate facilities. Future research may further investigate the application of digital technology to enhance the implementation of the Among System and assess its effects on additional factors including student creativity and adaptable skills.

## 6. Suggestion

Based on the findings of this study, it is advisable to broaden the range of locales and populations to encompass a diverse array of educational situations, including in regions with inadequate facilities. Future research may further investigate the application of digital technology to enhance the implementation of the Among System and assess its effects on additional factors including student creativity and adaptable skills.

## Declarations

**Author Contributions.** I.M.R.R: Literature review, conceptualization. W.: methodology, data analysis. D.: review-editing and writing, original manuscript preparation. HP: analysis data, methodology, discussion critics. All authors have read and approved the published on the final version of the article.

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**Ethical Approval.** Since this article is based on a thesis, the necessary permissions from the ethics committee were obtained during the thesis writing process.

**Data Availability Statement.** Data is available by the corresponding author upon request.

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