
An Analysis of English Teachers' Perception of *Merdeka* Curriculum at Elementary Schools in Lubuklinggau

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Abstract. *This research aims to determine the perceptions of Elementary Schools English teachers towards the implementation of Merdeka Curriculum. This research used a qualitative descriptive method. The data is collected by using questionnaires. This research involved 9 English teachers in Lubuklinggau Timur I of Elementary Schools. The results showed that English teachers have a positive perceptions of Merdeka Curriculum. In conclusion, Merdeka Curriculum has many positive impacts on students, teachers, and the teaching and learning process. The positive impact on students is that students became more active, independent, and improvement based on student interests. In addition, a positive impact on teachers are given self-independent in the teaching and learning process. The teachers are free to express ideas about how to teach and keep the classroom atmosphere more comfortable..*

Keywords: *Analysis, Teachers' Perception, Merdeka Curriculum, Elementary Schools.*

1. BACKGROUND

The *Merdeka* curriculum is a curriculum that is given with very many and various forms of learning. In learning using the *Merdeka* curriculum, it's use is focused on a social and essential content, so that later students can have a lot of time in exploring a concept that is given to them. There are many lessons, as well as the readings contained therein, because there are so many students in Indonesia who cannot understand the simple readings that exist and learn and bring english. Lessons into their daily lives, then there are some that are essential to the *Merdeka* curriculum in elementary schools (Fransiska et al., 2023): 1. Strengthening the basic competencies and pedagogical understanding of a child. 2. Project-based learning as a strengthening of the Pancasila Student profile is carried out at least twice a year.

Based on the Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture (Permendikbud) Number 67 of 2013 regarding the elementary school curriculum pages 9-10, there is no English lessons found in the subject. Then, based on the Decree of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Kemendikbudristek) Number 56/M/2022 it was found that there was English in the allocation of SD/MI subjects. Therefore, it can be concluded that the *Merdeka* Curriculum has a new policy, namely the existence of English language lessons at the elementary school level which were not in the previous curriculum. With this new policy, English lessons have a position in the *Merdeka* Curriculum with an allocation of time for English lessons in the *Merdeka* curriculum is 2 lesson hours a week or 72 lesson hours a year (Kemendikbudristek) Number 56/M/2022.

Teachers have an important role in the implementation and development of a curriculum. The teacher's role in curriculum development is as an implementer. The teacher plays a role in the application of the existing curriculum. In curriculum development, teachers are considered technical personnel who are only responsible for implementing various existing provisions. According to Nurhasanah (2020) teachers as aligners of the curriculum with the characteristics of students' needs and teachers must understand the curriculum as well as possible. Reviewing the English subject presented in the *Merdeka* Curriculum at the elementary school level, it is necessary to pay attention to the readiness of teaching staff or teachers which is one of the keys to the success of a curriculum.

Based on preliminary observations that have been made at elementary schools in Lubuklinggau. Researchers conducted interviews with several teachers, teachers at the school had limitations in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum, specifically in English subjects. To overcome this, the local government has held training for teachers who hold classes using the Merdeka Curriculum, to overcome the problems initiated by the teachers. However, with this training, the teachers felt that it was not enough because this was the beginning of its implementation in schools. Given that in the previous curriculum, English subjects were not presented. Therefore, it is important to know teachers' perceptions of Merdeka Curriculum, especially in the implementation of English subjects. At this point, based on teachers' perspectives, they cannot be sure whether the implementation of English teaching can be done well, the reason is because not all schools have English teachers, and not all primary schools have teachers who master English.

The description above illustrates that research activities begin with the discovery of research problems. At this stage the researcher describes the problem in his research clearly and concisely. By realizing the existence of a problem, this research is worth researching, because it has shown the reasons why this research needs to be carried out. So this research can be continued by formulating the research problem formulation.

Therefore, the researcher is interested in analyzing "An Analysis of English Teachers Perception of *Merdeka* Curriculum Implemented at Elementary Schools in Lubuklinggau".

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Fatmiyati (2022), perception is a process where we select, organize, and interpret input information to create a meaningful concept. The process of perception can occur on an object, incident, or something that is obtained then conclude the information and gave meaning to sensory stimuli. So, it can be concluded from the understanding of the perception

above that perception is the process of using something that is received through the five senses, and occurs on an object or anything. So that each individual can choose, regulate and interpret information to create a concept meaningfully.

There are several ways to create a perception or have a perception occur factors that play a role which are conditions for perception to occur. Such that stated by Walgito (2003: 54-55) perception is influenced by several factors which have been classified, among others:

- 1) Internal factors, namely factors related to physical and psychological aspects.
- 2) External factors, namely stimuli and characteristics that stand out in the environment which are the background of the object which is a whole or unity that is difficult to separate, including: teachers, learning methods, materials, facilities and infrastructure, environment and friends.

According to Isthofiyani et al. (2014) Teacher perception is a process where someone selects, organizes, interprets input information to create a meaningful picture of the world. From the explanation above, the teacher's perception will depend on the environment that surrounds the teacher and on the teacher's condition.

According to Maba, W., (2017) Teacher's perception is the response of a professional educator about what is experienced in educating, teaching, guiding, directing, training, assessing and evaluating children of the aged child in the educational pathway that is influenced by the beliefs and feelings of the educator. This difference in understanding will cause different judgments of each teacher.

To develop an education level in Indonesia, the Ministry of Education and Culture announced the *Merdeka* curriculum or freedom learning policy in the beginning of 2020 because of the effect by recent Corona pandemic has had a significant impact on education, particularly the teaching-learning process (Wahidiyati, 2020).

The implementation of the *Merdeka* curriculum during the educational process offers several advantages, including (Nurani et al., 2022):

1. Simpler and deeper

Focus on essential materials and development competence of learners in the phase. Learn to be more deep, meaningful, unhurried, and enjoyable.

2. More *Merdeka*

Teachers can teach according to the stage of achievement and development learners. Schools have the authority to develop and manage curriculum and learning in accordance with characteristics of the education unit and students.

3. More relevant and interactive

Learning through project activities provide more opportunities for students to be active explore actual issues for example environmental, health, and more to support development character and competence Pancasila Student Profile.

The thesis by Anggila (2022) entitled "Persepsi Guru Bidang Studi IPS dalam Pelaksanaan Kurikulum *Merdeka* Belajar di SMP Negeri Sekecamatan Tanjung Kemuning Kabupaten Kaur". This research focus on teachers' perception of the implementation of the *Merdeka* Curriculum, to be precise on social science teachers. It was conducted at the junior high school level in the entire Tanjung Kemuning district, Kaur regency. This study aims not only to find out teachers' perceptions of *Merdeka* Curriculum, but this study also to describe the teachers planning by a social science teacher in the implementation of the *Merdeka* Curriculum. The data obtained that social science teachers give positive perception, gave good appreciation for *Merdeka* Curriculum, and showed several factors that hamper the implementation of the *Merdeka* Curriculum.

The thesis by Perdana (2021) entitled "Persepsi Guru Pendidikan Jasmani, Olahraga dan Kesehatan Terhadap *Merdeka* Belajar di Sekolah Dasar Se-Kapanewon Tepus". The focus of this study is teachers' perception of *Merdeka* Belajar in elementary school, to be precise on physical education health and sport (PJOK) teachers. *Merdeka* Belajar was implemented at the elementary school level in the entire Kapanewon Tepus district. The research also showed teachers' perceptions based on 3 factors of *Merdeka* Belajar, which was a factor of concept, content, and implementation of *Merdeka* Belajar. On the other hand, several teachers have different perceptions that the *Merdeka* Curriculum is not good enough because of less socialization for the teacher, in implementation less of facilities and infrastructure.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses a qualitative descriptive method. This research uses an open questionnaire to find out the perceptions of English teachers about the implementation of the independent curriculum. The subjects of this study were 8 English teachers in Lubuklinggau Timur I elementary school. In collecting data, the researcher used a questionnaire. The questionnaire used 3 assessment factors as data measurement, namely concept factors, content factors, and implementation factors.

4. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Finding

The results of the research found by researchers on the perceptions of English teachers in the independent curriculum are as follows:

1. Teachers Perception based on Concept Factor

Concept Factor	The Results of the Questionnaires
Character education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Students become more independent b. Students are more confident c. Students can cooperate well d. Students can apply the values of Pancasila
Fun Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Conducted outside the classroom b. Using real-life examples c. Doing practice in learning d. Creating a comfortable learning environment e. Using interesting props or media
Freedom of Thought	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Students can choose topics they are interested in b. Students are given the opportunity to learn directly with objects around them c. Students are directed to solve a problem

2. Teachers Perception based on Content Factor

Content Factor	The Results of the Questionnaires
One Sheet Lesson Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. More flexible and efficient b. Facilitates analysis of student learning success c. Easy access d. Teachers have more time to explore their lesson plans
Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Increased engagement b. Increased understanding c. Students become more creative d. Balance between knowledge and skills e. Increased independence f. Social process

3. Teachers Perception based on Implementation Factor

Implementation Factor	The Results of the Questionnaires
Teacher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Teachers have more freedom in determining the learning system b. Teachers are given freedom in adjusting the material c. Teachers use media creatively d. Teachers use various sources in teaching
Student	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Students can explore creativity b. Students can develop critical thinking skills early on

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">c. Students are more active and have Pancasila characterd. Students are more interested in the learning process
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Discussions

Based on the research findings, researchers will discuss the perceptions of English teachers in *Lubuklinggau Timur I* Elementary Schools.

1. Teachers Perception based on Concept Factor

Factors that influence perception can lie within oneself forming perception, in the object or target being interpreted, or in the context of the situation in which the perception is made (Robbins, 2007: 174). In this case the concept factor is one of the factors that arise from the teachers themselves that can affect the good or bad perception of elementary school English teachers in *Lubuklinggau Timur I* sub-district towards their learning. Concept factors consist of character education, fun learning, freedom of thought.

The first is the concept of the *Merdeka* curriculum. The *Merdeka* Curriculum in Indonesia aims to give schools and teachers greater flexibility and autonomy in designing the curriculum. The main focus is on student-centered learning, with an emphasis on critical skills such as problem-solving and creativity, rather than rote memorization.

The curriculum supports interactive learning through project activities that allow students to explore current issues. The goal is to realize meaningful learning, pay attention to the diversity of students' learning abilities, and develop students' characters and interests. The *Merdeka* curriculum prioritizes freedom of thought and self-exploration, making the learning process more enjoyable.

2. Teachers Perception based on Content Factor

Students become more independent and responsible, and this curriculum also requires teachers to use improvisation, innovation and creativity in teaching methods to maximize student potential. This perception is influenced by External factors, namely stimuli and characteristics that stand out in the environment which are the background of the object which is a whole or unity that is difficult to separate, including: teachers, learning methods, materials, facilities and infrastructure, environment and friends. (Walgito, 2003).

Meanwhile, the assessment of student learning outcomes after implementing *Merdeka* Curriculum involves student-centered and flexible strategies. Assessments include formative and summative, which assess students' knowledge, attitudes and skills throughout the learning process. Although student grade results have improved slightly, it is important to note that each

student has a different level of intelligence. Assessment should be thorough and diverse to reflect changes in student learning and development, and involve crosschecking social processes.

3. Teachers Perception based on Implementation Factor

The advantages of Merdeka Curriculum include flexibility in learning that allows for customization of materials and methods, development of practical, creative, and critical thinking skills, and increased student engagement. Students become more active, collaborative and Pancasila-compliant in character, as well as more motivated and adaptable to changes and challenges. Overall, this curriculum makes students more interested and understand the material better. This positive perception is in accordance with the advantages of the Merdeka curriculum according to Nurani et al., (2022).

In addition to the many advantages of the Merdeka curriculum, there are several challenges faced by teachers in implementing it. The cost of implementing the Merdeka curriculum is still a challenge for teachers, because creative and active learning requires adequate teaching aids or materials. In addition, there are still some teachers who are not ready for the implementation of the Merdeka curriculum due to the lack of socialization about this new curriculum. This perception is also supported by the theory of Bastian (2023).

5. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Based on the results of the analysis and discussion of the research on the Perceptions of English Teachers in Implementing the Merdeka Curriculum, data were obtained and it can be concluded that English teachers have a positive perception of the Merdeka curriculum. The results of this perception were obtained through a questionnaire made based on the assessment factors in the Merdeka curriculum. The Merdeka curriculum has many positive impacts on students, teachers, and the teaching and learning process. The positive impact on students is that students become more active, independent, and develop according to their interests. The Merdeka curriculum provides flexibility and freedom in the learning process, allowing students to explore creativity and critical thinking skills. Students also become characters who fit the *“Profil Pelajar Pancasila”*.

For suggestion, the government is expected not only to develop new policies but also to provide adequate facilities for all schools, especially basic facilities and infrastructure. The provision of these facilities requires support from the state, including an appropriate budget allocation, so that teachers do not need to incur personal costs to prepare learning resources. With the fulfillment of adequate needs and equipment, the learning process can

take place optimally. On the other hand, teachers are expected to implement the independent curriculum as much as possible, in accordance with the characteristics of the curriculum, in order to achieve educational goals effectively. For researchers, this provides valuable input and insight into teachers' perceptions of implementing an independent curriculum and serves as a reference for further research.

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