



English Teachers' Perception of Merdeka Curriculum Implemetation

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Abstract. *The Merdeka curriculum is a crucial tool for educational systems, as it guides teaching and learning processes and measures progress. This study aims to understand English teachers' opinions on the Merdeka curriculum, and the responses were analyzed using qualitative methods. English teachers have expressed differing opinions about the learner-centered Merdeka curriculum. Due to limited resources and the curriculum's recent introduction, a few educators had difficulties putting it into practice. They did, however, recognize the curriculum's potential advantages, such as student autonomy and joyful learning. They also emphasized the significance of infrastructure and facility availability, as well as the competency, abilities, and mindset of educators. Notwithstanding these difficulties, educators saw chances for assistance from parents, curriculum teams, and principals in addition to the beneficial application of technology in the classroom. All things considered, there is potential for growth as well as obstacles with the Merdeka curriculum.*

Keywords: *Teachers' Perception, Merdeka Curriculum, Learner-centered*

Abstrak. Kurikulum Merdeka merupakan alat penting bagi sistem pendidikan, karena membimbing proses pengajaran dan pembelajaran serta mengukur kemajuan. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk memahami pendapat guru bahasa Inggris tentang kurikulum Merdeka, dan tanggapan mereka dianalisis menggunakan metode kualitatif. Guru bahasa Inggris menyatakan pendapat yang berbeda tentang kurikulum Merdeka yang berpusat pada pembelajar. Karena sumber daya terbatas dan pengenalan kurikulum yang baru, beberapa pendidik mengalami kesulitan mengimplementasikannya. Meski begitu, mereka mengakui potensi keuntungan kurikulum, seperti otonomi siswa dan pembelajaran yang menyenangkan. Mereka juga menekankan pentingnya ketersediaan infrastruktur dan fasilitas, serta kompetensi, kemampuan, dan mindset pendidik. Walaupun menghadapi kesulitan ini, pendidik melihat peluang bantuan dari orang tua, tim kurikulum, dan kepala sekolah, ditambah penerapan teknologi yang bermanfaat di dalam kelas. Secara keseluruhan, terdapat potensi pertumbuhan sekaligus rintangan dengan kurikulum Merdeka.

Kata kunci: Persepsi Guru, Kurikulum Merdeka, Perpusat pada Siswa

BACKGROUND

Indonesia has implemented various curriculum strategies, including competence-based and unit-level curriculums, and has undergone numerous revisions. The Kurtilas curriculum, implemented in 2013 by the government and Ministry of National Education, was updated in 2018, and currently, a different curriculum is in use.

The Merdeka Curriculum, introduced in Indonesia, offers a comprehensive approach to education, focusing on character, skills, attitudes, technology use, cultural diversity, active engagement, and student-centered learning. The curriculum, derived from Indonesian "freedom" or "independence," encourages critical thinking and independent learning. It addresses learning loss caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and equips students with 21st-century skills to adapt to a constantly changing world.

Merdeka curriculum is formed by Merdeka Belajar Policy and characterized as flexible, based on competencies, focused on developing character and soft skills, and accommodated to the world needs (Permendikbud No. 22, 2020)

The Merdeka curriculum is characterized by three main features: 1) project-based learning to enhance students' Pancasila profile, 2) a focus on essential material to develop basic competencies, and 3) flexibility, granting teachers the freedom to adapt and align the curriculum based on students' characters. This curriculum embodies the concept of "freedom of learning," allowing teachers to compile, implement, and develop educational plans according to students' needs. The implementation of the Merdeka curriculum introduces notable changes, including the need for teachers to design their lesson plans and engage in differentiated learning, modifying lessons based on individual student needs. Additionally, there is a shift towards project-based learning to fortify students' character development.

According to Dewi (2022), the success of project-based learning implementation hinges significantly on the teacher's role as a learning facilitator. The teacher's ability to employ effective strategies and techniques in executing project-based learning is crucial. In summary, the curriculum change has a substantial impact on teachers, influencing their perceptions of the new curriculum, as they are the direct implementers. This can lead to varying perceptions among teachers.

The Merdeka Curriculum, which is an extension of the emergency curriculum put in place during the pandemic, aims to help pupils develop their character and a variety of abilities as a crucial part of learning.

METHODS

The research method used in this research is a quantitative method with structured data collection through measurement instruments, namely questionnaires. This research was conducted to obtain information or opinions from English teachers about implementation of Merdeka Curriculum. This is also done outside of learning hours, guided by the topics that have been prepared. The aspects asked about teachers are attitudes and experiences before and after implementing the integrated curriculum model as well as the efforts made by teachers to improve students' abilities.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The results of the research

The result of research on English instructors' opinions of the Merdeka curriculum's implementation are the concepts and skills covered in the Free curriculum are not all understood by English teachers. While some people might be aware of the three roles that teachers play in extracurricular, cocurricular, and intracurricular activities, others might not fully understand competencies such as moral character, independence, faith, and a strong devotion to God, as well as teamwork, critical thinking, and creativity. The student-centric approach of the Merdeka curriculum is highly regarded among English teachers. They believe that curricula could guide and help pupils become more qualified individuals who can deal with problems in the future. These results are supported by the fact that the curriculum places a high priority on student autonomy and a positive learning environment, which is consistent with Indonesian national values. It is thought that Merdeka's curriculum has the ability to raise the standard of English instruction in schools. Through a range of student-centered approaches, it is seen to actively involve students in learning, increase critical thinking abilities, and improve their English language proficiency. Implementing the Merdeka curriculum is complicated by the diversity of children in the classroom as well as the availability of teachers, infrastructure, and facilities. However, there are opportunities for positive classroom technology use as well as assistance from the head of the school, parents, and the curriculum team.

Merdeka's curriculum is believed to enhance English teaching quality by engaging students, developing critical thinking, and improving language competence. However, implementation faces barriers due to limited instructors and infrastructure. Teachers' understanding differences highlight the need for comprehensive support. The Merdeka curriculum can be improved through constructive technology use and stakeholder support, addressing these issues and enhancing its effectiveness.

Discussion

English teachers find varying levels of understanding regarding the Merdeka curriculum. While some grasp the roles in extracurricular, cocurricular, and intracurricular activities, others may not fully comprehend competencies like moral character, independence, faith, teamwork, critical thinking, and creativity. Nevertheless, they appreciate the student-centric approach, believing it guides pupils toward becoming more qualified individuals. This is supported by the curriculum's emphasis on student autonomy and a positive learning

environment aligned with Indonesian national values. English instruction's standard is anticipated to rise with the Merdeka curriculum, fostering student engagement, critical thinking, and language proficiency. However, challenges arise from classroom diversity, teacher availability, and infrastructure limitations. Despite these hurdles, positive technology use and support from school leaders, parents, and the curriculum team offer avenues for improvement.

CONCLUSIONS

English teachers find varying levels of understanding regarding the Merdeka curriculum. While some grasp the roles in extracurricular, cocurricular, and intracurricular activities, others may not fully comprehend competencies like moral character, independence, faith, teamwork, critical thinking, and creativity. Nevertheless, they appreciate the student-centric approach, believing it guides pupils toward becoming more qualified individuals. This is supported by the curriculum's emphasis on student autonomy and a positive learning environment aligned with Indonesian national values.

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