



Teacher Perception Towards the Implementation of Independent Learning Curriculum

Mohammad Shaleh Wildani^{1*}, Ahmad Fauzi², Mohamad Solihin

^{1,2,3}Universitas Islam Zainul Hasan Genggong, East Java, Indonesia

Email : whieldanchannel@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

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This study examines teachers' perceptions of the implementation of the Independent Curriculum using a library research approach. The scope of the study includes teachers' understanding, readiness, and challenges faced in implementing the curriculum. The purpose of this study is to analyze how teachers interpret the Independent Curriculum and the factors that influence their perceptions. Data were collected through literature studies from various sources such as journals, books, and relevant scientific articles. The results of the study show that most teachers have a positive perception of the flexibility and freedom of learning offered by the Independent Curriculum. However, there are also obstacles such as limited understanding, lack of training, and the availability of adequate facilities and infrastructure. The conclusion of this study states that the success of the implementation of the Independent Curriculum is greatly influenced by teacher readiness, policy support, and adequate supporting facilities.

*Corresponding Author

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INTRODUCTION

Education in Indonesia has undergone continual reforms to adapt to the evolving demands of globalization, technological advancements, and the developmental needs of students in the modern era (Jusubaidi et al., 2024; Mastur, 2023; Utama & Akbar, 2023). One of the most significant policy shifts in recent years is the introduction of the Merdeka Curriculum, launched to offer greater autonomy and flexibility to educational institutions, teachers, and learners (Ainissyifa et al., 2024; Ataman et al., 2024; Masdul et al., 2024; Wasehudin et al., 2023). Unlike previous models, this curriculum is designed to promote student-centered learning, competency-based approaches, differentiation, and character development. The government hopes that by granting more freedom in planning and executing lessons, schools and teachers can better accommodate students' diverse backgrounds, interests, and abilities (Fathurrahman et al., 2022; Saharani & Diana, 2024). As such, the Merdeka Curriculum represents a fundamental transformation in Indonesia's educational

philosophy, aiming not only to increase academic achievement but also to foster holistic development and 21st-century skills. However, this ambitious reform also requires significant changes in mindset, practice, and infrastructure, especially at the classroom level. The successful implementation of this curriculum hinges on the extent to which educators internalize its principles and apply them effectively in diverse teaching contexts (Nadya et al., 2023; Safitri, 2024). Thus, understanding how teachers perceive this curricular shift is crucial to evaluating both its short-term viability and long-term sustainability in improving education in Indonesia.

The Merdeka Curriculum represents a paradigm shift in how teaching and learning are conceptualized and executed in Indonesian schools. Rather than following rigid, centralized directives, this curriculum allows for context-based educational planning tailored to the specific needs of learners (Ismail et al., 2024; Zuhdi et al., 2024). Its emphasis on differentiated learning, formative assessment, and project-based tasks—especially through the Pancasila Student Profile Projects—marks a departure from traditional, teacher-centered instruction (Subiyantoro et al., 2023). Theoretically, this curriculum empowers educators to become instructional designers and facilitators, rather than mere deliverers of content. However, such a transformation assumes a high level of pedagogical competence and a willingness among teachers to embrace continuous professional development (Karim et al., 2021; Otaya et al., 2023). From a systemic perspective, the success of this curriculum demands more than policy; it requires a supportive ecosystem that includes training, mentorship, resource availability, and administrative backing. Although early evaluations suggest that the Merdeka Curriculum aligns well with contemporary educational ideals, its implementation varies widely across regions and schools (Sholeh et al., 2024). Therefore, a comprehensive understanding of how teachers perceive and respond to the curriculum is essential to identifying its strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement. General trends suggest optimism mixed with uncertainty—many teachers appreciate the flexibility but struggle with its practical demands.

Despite the progressive vision of the Merdeka Curriculum, several critical issues have surfaced during its implementation. One of the most prominent challenges is the uneven comprehension of key curricular concepts among educators. Terms like "differentiated learning," "diagnostic assessment," and "project-based learning" are not always clearly understood, leading to inconsistencies in classroom application (Hasanah et al., 2024; Qorib, 2024). Additionally, many teachers report insufficient training and lack of ongoing support, which inhibits their confidence in adopting new instructional methods. In rural or under-resourced areas, limited access to teaching materials, digital

tools, and mentoring opportunities further exacerbates the problem. The physical and digital infrastructure required to support the curriculum is not uniformly available, creating disparities in implementation quality. Moreover, some educators express resistance to the curriculum, viewing it as an added burden rather than an opportunity for growth. Institutional support from school leadership and educational supervisors also plays a crucial role, but it is not always present (Noer, 2023; Nuriyah, 2024; Sanjani, 2024). These challenges suggest that while the policy direction is commendable, its practical rollout needs refinement. Understanding teachers' firsthand experiences and perceptions can offer valuable insights into what works and what needs reconsideration in the ongoing transformation of Indonesia's education system.

Various studies have explored the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum from different angles, shedding light on both its potential and pitfalls. The importance of supportive school environments, including collaborative teacher culture and adequate learning resources, in facilitating curriculum implementation (Held & Mejeh, 2024; Said & Sharif, 2023). The curriculum due to the increased flexibility in lesson planning and instructional strategies (Elkington, 2022; Seesai et al., 2024). However, this enthusiasm is often tempered by a lack of technical support and comprehensive training. Educators have embraced differentiated instruction, many continue to rely on traditional, uniform teaching methods, highlighting a disconnect between policy expectations and actual classroom practices. Many teachers have not received adequate assistance in mastering the curriculum's components, such as the Profil Pelajar Pancasila and diagnostic assessments (Astuti et al., 2024; Subiyantoro et al., 2023). These findings illustrate that while the theoretical underpinnings of the Merdeka Curriculum are generally well-received, its execution is uneven and heavily influenced by local conditions. This body of research provides valuable data, but it also leaves room for a more comprehensive, synthesized understanding of teacher perspectives.

Most prior research tends to be field-based, employing quantitative methods like surveys or limited case studies, which may not fully capture the nuanced views and experiences of educators across diverse settings. Furthermore, little attention has been given to literature-based analyses that integrate and interpret findings from multiple sources in a comprehensive and critical manner. This gap presents an opportunity to examine how existing research collectively reflects teachers' understandings, concerns, and adaptive strategies regarding the new curriculum. The novelty of this study lies in its library research approach, which aims to consolidate fragmented findings into a coherent narrative.

This study aims to conduct a comprehensive literature-based analysis to examine teachers' perceptions of the Merdeka Curriculum. The focus is on identifying recurring themes, challenges, and enabling factors as reported in various academic and institutional studies. By synthesizing diverse research findings, the study seeks to provide an integrated understanding of how teachers conceptualize, interpret, and implement the curriculum in practice. Specific areas of interest include the extent to which teachers comprehend foundational concepts such as differentiated instruction and project-based learning, their attitudes toward curricular autonomy, and the influence of institutional and infrastructural support. Through this library research approach, the study intends to bridge isolated findings into a cohesive analysis, offering insights not only into what teachers think about the curriculum but also into why they think that way. Ultimately, this research is positioned to inform educational stakeholders about the real-world complexities teachers face and the systemic conditions required to support successful curriculum implementation.

The rationale for this study is grounded in the belief that teacher perception is a decisive factor in determining the success of curricular reforms. Teachers are not merely implementers of policy; they are interpreters, adapters, and co-creators of the learning experience. Their acceptance, understanding, and execution of the Merdeka Curriculum directly influence how effectively its goals are realized in classrooms. A curriculum, no matter how well-designed, cannot succeed if those responsible for delivering it are ill-prepared, unsupported, or unconvinced of its value. This study argues that educational reforms must be evaluated not only through policy outcomes but also through the lived experiences and reflections of teachers. By conducting a comprehensive synthesis of previous studies, this research highlights how teachers perceive the curriculum's benefits and shortcomings, and what systemic changes are necessary to support them. Understanding these perceptions is essential for crafting more responsive teacher training programs, improving resource allocation, and guiding school leadership. In essence, this study positions teacher perception as both a mirror and a motor of educational change—reflecting current conditions and shaping future directions.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a library research approach, which involves collecting data and information from relevant written sources, including academic books, peer-reviewed journals, conference proceedings, research reports, scholarly articles, and official government documents related to the Merdeka Curriculum and teacher perceptions. The use of library research is justified by the study's objective to obtain a comprehensive understanding through the critical review

and synthesis of existing literature (Nasir & Sukmawati, 2023).

The research process began with the identification and collection of various relevant sources. These included empirical studies that explored teachers' perceptions of the Merdeka Curriculum implementation, theoretical works on perception and curriculum implementation models, as well as policy documents issued by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia. Once these materials were gathered, a content analysis was conducted to examine key themes related to teachers' understanding, attitudes, challenges, and the influencing factors surrounding the implementation of the curriculum.

During the analysis phase, data from the selected literature were categorized into core thematic areas. These themes encompassed teachers' comprehension of the curriculum's core concepts, their preparedness for implementation, both supportive and obstructive factors in the process, and the impact of teacher perceptions on the success of curriculum enactment. Through this thematic analysis, the study produced a synthesized and integrated overview of teacher perceptions, drawing from a wide range of previous research findings.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

Teacher Implementation of Independent Curriculum

The Independent Curriculum as a new education policy in Indonesia brings a different learning paradigm from the previous curriculum. This curriculum focuses on student-centered learning, character building, and differentiation of learning according to student needs (Mastur, 2023). However, in its implementation, the perception of teachers as the main implementers plays a very important role.

Based on the literature review conducted, in general, teachers' perceptions of the Independent Curriculum tend to be positive. Many teachers appreciate the flexibility in designing learning, the freedom to determine methods, and the existence of the Pancasila Student Profile character building project (Widana et al., 2023). Teachers feel that they are given the trust to adjust learning to the conditions and needs of students, so that they can bring out creativity and innovation in teaching.

However, some teachers also experience confusion in implementing the new concepts carried by the Independent Curriculum, such as learning planning based on learning outcomes (CP), preparation of learning objectives (TP), development of learning objective flows (ATP), and preparation of teaching modules (Egan et al., 2022). These difficulties are largely influenced by teachers'

unpreparedness in understanding the substance of the new curriculum, lack of adequate training, and limited supporting resources.

In several studies, such as Damayanti et al. (2023), it was found that most teachers were enthusiastic about the Independent Curriculum, but only a small number of teachers truly mastered the technical aspects of its consistent implementation in the classroom. This shows a gap between positive attitudes and implementation capabilities. Teachers who are able to implement it well are generally those who have received intensive technical guidance or are members of an active teacher learning community.

Meanwhile, teachers who are not yet accustomed to project-based learning (PjBL) often have difficulty in designing and implementing the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5) activities (Astuti et al., 2024). Many teachers still need concrete examples of project implementation, examples of assessment rubrics, and how to integrate projects with subject learning outcomes. In terms of facilities and infrastructure, teachers in schools located in urban areas find it relatively easier to access online learning resources, attend workshops, and obtain support from the teacher professional community (Salehuddin et al., 2024). Meanwhile, in remote areas or with limited technology, teachers have difficulty following the development of curriculum information optimally.

In addition, administrative factors are also in the spotlight. Although the Independent Curriculum tries to simplify learning administration, in practice some teachers still feel burdened by the demands of reporting, making teaching tools, and documentation of formative and summative assessments that must be adjusted. This administrative burden makes it difficult for some teachers to focus on developing innovative learning.

Principals and school supervisors have an important role in motivating, facilitating, and providing assistance to teachers in implementing the Independent Curriculum. Schools that have collaborative management, an active teacher learning culture, and a community of driving teachers tend to be more ready to implement this curriculum optimally. The implementation of the Independent Curriculum by teachers has shown a positive initial step. However, the technical implementation is still very varied depending on the readiness of individual teachers, institutional support, and the availability of training and supporting resources.

Strategies to Improve Teachers' Understanding of the Independent Curriculum

In order for the Independent Curriculum to run effectively, systematic efforts are needed to improve teacher understanding, both in terms of conceptual aspects and implementation skills (Arsul et al., 2021). Based on a literature

review, there are several main strategies that have proven effective in improving teacher understanding of the Independent Curriculum.

First, a tiered training strategy and intensive mentoring. Many teachers said that a one or two-day workshop was not enough to fully understand the substance of the Independent Curriculum. Therefore, there needs to be a systematic series of training, accompanied by the practice of compiling teaching modules, compiling P5 projects, strengthening diagnostic assessments, and simulating differentiated learning in the classroom (Astuti et al., 2024). Mentoring carried out by competent instructors or mentors greatly helps teachers apply training materials in the context of daily learning.

Second, strengthening the teacher learning community. The Subject Teacher Deliberation Forum (MGMP), Teacher Working Group (KKG), and the Independent Curriculum Learning Community are strategic forums for sharing experiences, mutually developing teaching tools, and discussing technical problems in the field (Marjuah et al., 2023). Collaboration between teachers is often more effective in building teacher confidence than one-sided formal training.

Third, simplifying learning administration tools. Many teachers admit that one of the factors that hinders understanding the new curriculum is the complexity of the administration format (Syakroni et al., 2024). Therefore, the government through the education office needs to provide a simple, concise, and practical administration template. Simplifying lesson plans, assessment formats, and examples of applicable teaching modules will help teachers focus more on the quality of learning rather than simply pursuing complete documents.

Fourth, providing easily accessible digital learning resources. In the digital era, the government and educational institutions can utilize online learning platforms that provide learning videos, examples of teaching modules, formative assessment question banks, and interactive online discussion forums (Suryaningsih & Aisyah, 2024). Teachers in remote areas can still follow the development of the Merdeka Curriculum through quality digital resources.

Fifth, adapting the curriculum according to the local context. Local governments together with school communities can compile examples of teaching modules based on local wisdom, so that teachers have a real picture of how to integrate cultural context and regional potential into learning (Fatihin et al., 2023). This strategy will encourage teachers to feel more relevant and motivated to implement the Independent Curriculum.

Sixth, providing incentives or awards for teachers who actively develop innovative learning based on the Independent Curriculum. This award can be in the form of a certificate of recognition, assignment as a regional facilitator, to certain financial incentives for teachers who successfully implement

differentiated learning, formative assessments, and P5 projects in a quality manner.

Seventh, constructive monitoring and evaluation. Every implementation of the Independent Curriculum needs to be evaluated periodically through academic supervision by the principal, supervisor, or independent evaluation team. This evaluation is not merely a performance assessment, but also as a reflective learning medium to improve and perfect the implementation of the curriculum in the field.

By implementing these strategies simultaneously, it is hoped that teachers' understanding of the Independent Curriculum can continue to increase, so that it will ultimately have an impact on improving the quality of the learning process and outcomes in educational units.

Discussion

Teachers generally perceive the Merdeka Curriculum positively, appreciating its flexibility, emphasis on student-centered learning, and the incorporation of character education through the Pancasila Student Profile Project. The shift from rigid teaching frameworks to adaptable approaches has enabled teachers to exercise greater creativity in instructional design. Many teachers feel empowered by the autonomy granted in determining instructional strategies and content (Sari et al., 2022). However, despite these positive perceptions, there remain significant gaps in understanding and applying key curriculum components, such as learning outcome-based planning and project-based learning methodologies. These mixed responses reflect a divergence between enthusiasm and readiness, necessitating targeted support and capacity-building efforts.

Further analysis of this finding shows consistency with several other studies. Seesai et al. (2024) found that only a small proportion of teachers who were enthusiastic about the Merdeka Curriculum could consistently implement it due to limited technical mastery. Confusion often arises from unfamiliarity with core concepts like Learning Objectives (TP) and Teaching Module design. Subiyantoro et al. (2023) further observed that difficulties in implementing P5 projects stem from a lack of concrete examples and applicable rubrics. These findings collectively highlight a critical tension: while teachers value the curriculum's philosophical foundations, the lack of clear, practical guidance inhibits full adoption. This points to an implementation bottleneck not in resistance, but in insufficient preparation and scaffolding.

A structured, multi-level training approach and sustained mentoring have proven effective, echoing the findings of Tiba (2023), who argued that superficial workshops are inadequate for deep conceptual mastery. Prolonged mentorship

allows for iterative learning and contextual adaptation. Peer collaboration through teacher learning communities fosters shared understanding and reduces the anxiety that often accompanies curricular shifts. These strategies highlight the importance of long-term, interactive professional development rather than top-down, short-term interventions.

In a deeper analysis, Reducing administrative burdens is essential for promoting genuine instructional innovation. Simplified templates for lesson planning and assessment enable teachers to focus more on pedagogy than paperwork (Chansa et al., 2024). The need for accessible digital learning resources, especially for teachers in remote areas, to ensure equity in professional learning opportunities. These points reinforce the argument that improving teacher comprehension of the Merdeka Curriculum must be addressed not only through training, but also through systemic reform, including streamlined documentation processes, equitable resource distribution, and localized curriculum contextualization.

The implications of both findings suggest that while there is an encouraging momentum in teacher attitudes toward the Merdeka Curriculum, its successful implementation remains contingent upon continuous professional support, structural reform, and localized adaptation. A dual focus is necessary: on the one hand, empowering teachers through sustained professional development and community-based learning networks, and on the other hand, revising institutional mechanisms that often obstruct curriculum transformation. When both pedagogical and systemic strategies are employed concurrently, the Merdeka Curriculum has the potential to be not only accepted but effectively actualized in diverse school contexts across Indonesia.

CONCLUSION

The Independent Curriculum is considered capable of providing teachers with the flexibility to design learning that is more relevant to students' needs and in accordance with the characteristics of each student. Teachers also appreciate the emphasis on strengthening character through the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project which opens up space for the development of national values and 21st century skills. Conceptually, the success of the implementation of the Independent Curriculum is not solely determined by the individual abilities of teachers, but rather the result of ongoing synergy between teachers, schools, government, and all stakeholders in the education ecosystem. Consistent collaborative support and mentoring will strengthen teachers' readiness as the spearhead of learning that is oriented towards the optimal development of students in accordance with the noble values that are the main spirit of the Independent Curriculum.

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