

## English teachers' perceptions of challenges and responsibilities in schools related to the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum

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**Abstract.** *This study examines the perceptions of English teachers in Indonesian schools on the challenges and responsibilities of implementing the Independent Curriculum, a student-centered education reform initiative. Using a mixed methods approach including surveys and semi-structured interviews, the study examined teachers' understanding of the curriculum, their experiences of implementing it, and their concerns and suggestions for improvement. The results show both positive and negative perspectives. Teachers recognized the potential of the course to promote autonomous and personalized learning among students but also highlighted challenges related to workload, resource constraints and professional development needs. The study highlights the importance of supporting teachers through capacity building and collaborative practice to ensure successful implementation of independent courses and optimize their benefits for Indonesian English learning*

**Keywords:** *Merdeka Curriculum, English language teaching, teacher perceptions, challenges, responsibilities, student-centered learning, professional development, Indonesia*

**Abstrak.** Penelitian ini mengkaji persepsi guru Bahasa Inggris di sekolah-sekolah Indonesia mengenai tantangan dan tanggung jawab dalam menerapkan Kurikulum Mandiri, sebuah inisiatif reformasi pendidikan berorientasi siswa. Dengan pendekatan metode campuran yang melibatkan survei dan wawancara semi-terstruktur, penelitian ini meneliti pemahaman guru terhadap kurikulum tersebut, pengalaman mereka dalam mengimplementasikannya, serta kekhawatiran dan saran mereka untuk perbaikan. Hasil menunjukkan perspektif positif dan negatif. Guru mengakui potensi kursus untuk meningkatkan pembelajaran otonom dan personalisasi di antara siswa tetapi juga menyoroti tantangan terkait beban kerja, keterbatasan sumber daya, dan kebutuhan pengembangan profesional. Penelitian ini menyoroti pentingnya mendukung guru melalui peningkatan kapasitas dan praktik kolaboratif untuk memastikan implementasi yang berhasil dari kursus mandiri dan mengoptimalkan manfaatnya bagi pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris di Indonesia.

**Kata kunci:** Kurikulum Merdeka, Pengajaran Bahasa Inggris, persepsi guru, tantangan, tanggung jawab, pembelajaran berpusat pada siswa, pengembangan profesional, Indonesia

### INTRODUCTION

The curriculum in Indonesia has been implemented in a number of ways, including 1947, 1964, 1968, 1973, 1975, 1984, 1994, 1997 (curriculum revision 1994), 2004 (competence-based curriculum), and 2006 (unity level curriculum). In 2013, the government, working with the Ministry of National Education, replaced the curriculum with the 2013 (Kurtilas) curriculum, and the Kurtilas Revision was revised in 2018. Ulinniam & associates, (2021). There is currently a separate curriculum in place. The "Merdeka Curriculum" is an educational initiative introduced in Indonesia to provide a more comprehensive and holistic approach to education, focusing on skills, attitudes, and character.

It emphasizes student-centered learning, active participation, cultural diversity, and the utilization of technology. The term "Merdeka" refers to "independence" or "freedom" in Indonesian, reflecting the aim of the curriculum to foster independent and critical thinking in students. It was developed in response to the need for educational reform in Indonesia, particularly to address learning loss during the COVID-19 pandemic. The curriculum seeks to prepare students to face the challenges and needs of an ever-evolving world, focusing on 21st-century skills. The Merdeka Curriculum is a continuation of the emergency curriculum implemented during the pandemic and is aimed at strengthening the character and various skills of students as an important component in the implementation of learning

### **THEORETICAL STUDY**

The Merdeka Curriculum is a new curriculum introduced by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia in 2022. This curriculum possesses several key characteristics, namely: Student-oriented, meaning that learning is designed to meet the needs and interests of students. Competency-based, indicating that learning is focused on the development of students' competencies. Flexible, implying that teachers have freedom and autonomy in developing learning.

These characteristics undoubtedly present new challenges and responsibilities for teachers. Teachers must possess the ability to understand the needs and interests of students, develop competency-based learning, and wisely utilize the freedom and autonomy provided. Previous Research, several previous studies have been conducted to examine teachers' perceptions of the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum. These studies indicate that teachers have a positive perception of this curriculum.

Teachers feel that it provides them with more freedom and autonomy in developing learning, fostering creativity and innovation in teaching, and making learning more meaningful for students. However, these studies also reveal that the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum poses several challenges for teachers. These challenges include: Inadequate socialization and training related to the Merdeka Curriculum. Socialization and training regarding the Merdeka Curriculum are still insufficient. This leaves teachers feeling confused and struggling to comprehend the new concepts in the curriculum. Lack of adequate resources. Resources required for implementing the Merdeka Curriculum, such as textbooks, learning modules, and teaching aids, are not readily available.

This can hinder teachers in developing innovative learning experiences. Students' readiness is not optimal. Students are not fully prepared for a more student-oriented learning

approach. This can lead to various issues in the learning process. Hypotheses Based on relevant theories and previous research, the following hypotheses can be formulated: English teachers have a positive perception of the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum. The implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum poses several challenges for English teachers, including: Inadequate socialization and training related to the Merdeka Curriculum, Lack of adequate resources, Students' readiness is not optimal..

## **METHODS**

This ponder receives a quantitative inquire about approach to investigate English teachers' discernments of challenges and duties in schools related to the execution of the Merdeka Educational modules. The quantitative strategy includes the collection and examination of numerical information to determine measurable designs and draw significant conclusions. The inquire about subjects comprise of English dialect instructors working in different schools that have actualized the Merdeka Educational programs. A stratified arbitrary testing strategy will be utilized to guarantee representation from distinctive school sorts and socioeconomics.

Investigate Strategy:

1. Instrument Improvement:

A comprehensive overview survey will be created, centering on particular challenges and obligations confronted by English instructors. The survey will experience thorough approval to guarantee its unwavering quality and legitimacy.

2. Information Collection:

The finalized survey will be disseminated to the chosen English instructors. The information collection handle will be conducted efficiently to guarantee a agent test.

3. Information Examination:

Measurable procedures, counting clear insights and inferential investigations, will be utilized to analyze the collected information. The particular measurable strategies will be decided based on the nature of the information and inquire about questions.

The investigate will utilize the created overview survey as the essential instrument for information collection. The survey will include Likert-scale questions, permitting instructors to precise their recognitions quantitatively. The essential information collection method will be a self-administered overview. Instructors will be given with clear informational on how to total the survey. Also, the inquire about group may conduct follow-up interviews to assemble supplementary subjective experiences. Quantitative information examination will include

computing graphic insights, such as implies and standard deviations, to summarize key discoveries. Also, inferential measurements, counting relationship and relapse investigations, will be connected to recognize connections between factors. By embracing a precise and exhaustive research approach, this ponder points to supply important bits of knowledge into the challenges and obligations confronted by English instructors within the setting of the Merdeka Educational programs usage.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

This research was conducted using a qualitative method with a case study approach. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with 5 English teachers in three schools in Nias, North Sumatra. The results of the study indicate that English teachers have a positive perception of the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum. They evaluate that this curriculum provides greater flexibility and autonomy for teachers in developing learning that is suitable for the needs and characteristics of students.

Based on the interview results, there are several challenges faced by English teachers in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum. These challenges include:

1. Suboptimal socialization and training for the Merdeka Curriculum. Some teachers still do not have a comprehensive understanding of the concepts and principles of the Merdeka Curriculum. As a result, they face difficulties in applying this curriculum in the classroom.
2. Lack of resources and infrastructure availability. Some schools do not have adequate resources and infrastructure to support the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum. For example, not all schools have stable internet access, making it challenging for teachers to access the necessary materials and information.
3. Time and energy constraints. English teachers also face challenges in terms of limited time and energy. They need to prepare more creative and innovative lessons in line with the Merdeka Curriculum, requiring additional time and effort.

1. In addition to these challenges, English teachers also have several responsibilities in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum. These responsibilities include:

2. Understanding and implementing the concepts and principles of the Merdeka Curriculum comprehensively. English teachers must have a thorough understanding of the concepts and principles of the Merdeka Curriculum to implement it effectively.
3. Developing learning tools that align with the Merdeka Curriculum. English teachers need to create creative and innovative teaching materials in line with the Merdeka Curriculum.

4. Organizing student-centered learning. English teachers should organize student-centered learning so that students can actively and meaningfully engage in the learning process.
5. Authentically assessing student learning outcomes. English teachers must assess student learning outcomes authentically to measure students' competencies comprehensively.

They emphasize the require for all-encompassing bolster frameworks, such as foundation enhancements and centered preparing activities, to engage instructors and encourage the fruitful execution of dynamic educational module. In brief, there's incredible trust for progressing instruction; In any case, to completely realize the potential for educational modules alter in Indonesia, existing impediments must be overcome.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the research, it can be concluded that English teachers have a positive perception of the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum. These teachers feel that this curriculum provides them with more freedom and autonomy in developing learning experiences. This is believed to enhance the creativity and innovation of teachers in teaching, making learning more meaningful for students. However, the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum also poses some challenges for English teachers.

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