



## Teachers' Perception and Readiness in Implementing the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum at SMP Negeri 3 Binjai

Oristia Giovani P

Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris, Pascasarjana, Universitas HKBP Nommensen  
e-mail: [oristiagiovanip@gmail.com](mailto:oristiagiovanip@gmail.com)

### **Abstract**

*The purpose of this research is to find out the teachers' perception of the Merdeka Curriculum, the teachers' readiness for the Merdeka Curriculum, and the implementation of the perception & readiness of teachers about the Merdeka Curriculum of SMP Negeri 3 Binjai. The research methodology in this study is qualitative. The technique to determine the sample is purposive sampling with the total of respondents that allowed this research being ten teachers. The result of this study showed that teachers at SMP 3 Binjai have positive and negative perceptions. Positive perception of the Merdeka Belajar curriculum which is free to teach, students are free to express and develop according to their interests and talents and form students' character for the better. In contrast, a negative perception of the Merdeka Belajar curriculum is due to the implementation of an independent curriculum that prioritizes student character and ignores students' knowledge abilities. Even though students' knowledge skills are needed to continue to a higher level. In addition, the allocation of learning time is too short, and the learning time for the Pancasila profile and the P5 project is too long, resulting in lagging teaching materials, and learning resources such as cell phones that not all students can afford economically, some teachers are technologically challenged, the three teachers who feel comfortable with the old standards and have no experience in independent learning. Overall, teachers and schools are ready to implement the Merdeka curriculum.*

**Keywords:** Perception, Readiness, Implementation Merdeka Belajar Curriculum.

### **INTRODUCTION (Bold 12)**

The curriculum in the educational process is a very crucial instrument and is always updated. There is no other purpose in changing the curriculum other than to improve the quality of learning and learning design in schools based on the needs and demands of the community as users of graduates. Therefore, education is designed in such a way as to meet these demands where society needs reliable human resources who are able to provide innovation to their environment.

UU No. 20 tahun 2003 defines curriculum as a set of plans and regulations covering the objectives, content, and learning materials and methods used as guidelines in realizing the implementation of learning activities in order to achieve national education goals. The realization of achieving these educational goals is carried out in the form of curriculum implementation. In

curriculum implementation students gain knowledge or experience through an organized environment from teachers with a set of prescribed rules and regulations.

Curriculum implementation refers to how teachers practice the curriculum, how they teach and evaluate students. In the process, curriculum implementation involves several parties, where the role of these parties is very important in helping to achieve curriculum implementation. Teachers hold the key to the successful implementation of curriculum change. To implement the curriculum in accordance with the design, it takes some readiness, especially the readiness of implementation. The success of curriculum implementation in schools is largely determined by the teacher factor, because if the infrastructure is fulfilled, if the teacher does not carry out his duties properly, the curriculum implementation will not be successful (Hamalik, 2016).

Schools are given three choices, namely using the full 2013 curriculum, a simplified 2013 curriculum or what is called an emergency curriculum, or an merdeka curriculum. This choice is stated in Kepmendikbudristek no 56 tahun 2022 concerning Guidelines for Curriculum Implementation in the context of learning recovery (Merdeka Curriculum), where the SK stipulates 16 decisions, including the second point, namely curriculum development referring to the 2013 curriculum, simplified 2013 curriculum, and Merdeka curriculum.

The Merdeka Curriculum has the advantage of focusing on essential material and giving independence to students, principals and teachers in choosing appropriate learning. The implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum is carried out gradually and not simultaneously, including the formation of driving schools and vocational high school centers of excellence. The government also provides opportunities for schools to conduct Merdeka Curriculum Implementation learning independently, namely independent learning, independent change, and independent sharing.

Planning for the curriculum that will be implemented in the 2022/2023 school year at school education levels throughout Indonesia. Every education is able to plan for the success of the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum so that for an educator who thinks this curriculum is a new curriculum that they do not fully understand, an educator seeks a lot of information about Merdeka Belajar and participates in webinars and trainings related to the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum.

The curriculum has various objectives, one of the main objectives of the curriculum itself is to assist students in preparing for their future so that they are able to become individuals who have high skills, have high reasoning power and critical and creative thinking to be applied later in the community. Likewise in Medan City, which has implemented the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum in the 2022/2023 school year, especially at the junior high school level and especially at the SMP Negeri 3 Binjai school which has implemented it in class VII, then in the new school year it is planned to follow class VIII. The curriculum, which is considered new, creates perceptions for teachers in its application, where the SMP Negeri 3 Binjai school, which is a driving school, is still in the process of learning and understanding by attending webinars. Although the SMP Negeri 3 Binjai school is a driving school, not all teachers understand the Merdeka Curriculum. Even though they have participated in trainings, they are not fully prepared to implement the curriculum because they are still constrained by facilities and infrastructure.

Merdeka Belajar can be used as a momentum for teachers and students so that they can innovate and be independent in improving the quality of learning. According to (Lidya et al., 2020), if teachers are given the freedom to choose the most suitable way of learning, then teachers can realize unique and specific innovations. Creativity, innovation, and mastery of technology are a must for teachers, including junior high school teachers. The concept of Merdeka Belajar changes the teaching system which is usually confined to the classroom, now teachers can include other instruments outside the classroom as teaching materials such as environmental observation and online searches.

In addition, teacher readiness in curriculum implementation affects the achievement of learning objectives in the classroom. In implementing the Merdeka curriculum, teachers who can plan lessons are teachers who have prepared before carrying out teaching and learning activities, such as preparing diagnostic assessments, teaching modules. When implementing learning, teachers can carry out the teaching and learning process in accordance with the preliminary activities, core activities, and closing activities that have been previously compiled in the teaching module. Furthermore, the assessment of the learning process is teachers who carry out enrichment or remedial to students who have prepared assessment methods and tools (Sari & Rijanto, 2020).

Several explanations related to curriculum implementation above make teachers the main spotlight of curriculum implementers who then become the key to the success of curriculum achievement. (Sibagariang, 2021) the measure of educational success is seen from the involvement of teachers as educators, students as learners, learning materials provided, teaching methods, and infrastructure provided.

In reality, the importance of the teacher's role in the curriculum is often underestimated. Although teachers play a very central role in education, traditionally teachers do not have a large voice in educational change and their role and job demands, goals and personal experiences are often ignored. This illustrates that what teachers feel, believe, and see becomes their consideration in preparing what they will teach during the learning process in other words, teachers' perceptions of the curriculum are related to their decisions in taking action when teaching.

Teacher perception is related to the beliefs that teachers have, this is also related to teacher readiness where the confidence that teachers have to do their job will affect their readiness to carry out their duties. Therefore, perception and readiness influence each other. (Mulyasa, 2014) Teacher readiness in curriculum implementation depends on the teacher's interpretation of curriculum perceptions.

In order to achieve the implementation of activities that are in accordance with the objectives, in addition to readiness, maximum performance is needed in the teacher himself, which is related to performance. Teacher performance is the result of work achieved by teachers in carrying out their main duties and functions and responsibilities in their duties as teachers (Nurmalasari, 2019).

Teachers as workers need to have abilities that include mastery of subject matter, mastery of teaching and education professionals, mastery of ways to adjust themselves and have the personality to carry out their duties. In addition, teachers need to be developing and dynamic personalities considering changes in the world of education, especially the curriculum which is constantly updated, making teachers must be prepared for the existing conditions.

With Merdeka Belajar, there will be no forced implementation (Merdeka Curriculum) for the next two years," said Nadiem. This will add new views to the teachers who implement it. Teachers' perceptions in terms of knowledge and teacher readiness when preparing for learning, implementing learning, and carrying out assessments in learning are not something that must be explored more deeply, therefore researchers are interested in conducting research with the title "Teachers' Perception and Readiness in Implementing the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum at SMP Negeri 3 Binjai".

## **METHOD**

This study focuses on finding out the perception of teachers of SMPN 3 Binjai. The data needed is teachers' perception of the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum. In this study, the research design used is descriptive qualitative. Qualitative research associated with studying human behavior within the context occurred naturally and the role of the researcher would not affect the normal behavior of the subjects. This study is intended to discover the perception of the teachers of SMP N 3 Binjai. This research was conducted at SMPN 3 Binjai located on Jl. Soekarno Hatta No. 17, Timbang Langkat, Kec. Binjai Timur, Kota Binjai, Sumatera Utara has 1.006 students and 60 teachers. The subjects of this research are the teachers of SMP N 3 Medan. The subjects of the research were chosen are 10 teachers of seven grade who were the participants of this research. The technique of data collection used observation, questionnaire, and interview. Data analysis This section presents the data analysis procedures that are performed on the collected data in order to answer the research questions.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Results

#### Teacher Readiness in Implementing the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum

Readiness is the whole condition of person who makes it ready to respond or answer in a certain way towards a situation. In other words, readiness is the awareness of a person to meet a situation and carry out a planned sequence of action. In this context, this study focused on teacher readiness in implementing the Merdeka curriculum. In terms of three aspects, they are planning, teaching-learning process, and evaluation.

Table 1. The result of the Questionnaire Teacher Readiness of Implementation of Merdeka Curriculum

No.	Sentences	Amount	
		Agree	Disagree
1.	The teachers ready to implement the Merdeka curriculum	8	2
2.	Regarding competency standards, the syllabus, and handbook in the Merdeka curriculum are regulated by the government and teachers only carry out learning activities	7	3
3.	The teachers already implemented students centered learning	9	1
4.	There is no difficulty in developing Modul Ajar	7	3
5.	The strategies and model already have many variations	5	5
6.	The teacher already implemented learning activities by using technology	6	4
7.	The evaluation model is often used in every class meeting	3	7
8.	Teachers can implement the Merdeka curriculum	7	3
9.	Merdeka curriculum affects student learning outcomes	4	6
10.	The school already implemented all the program	8	2
TOTAL		64	36
Percentage		64 %	36 %

From the results of the data above, it was found that the results of research on teacher readiness in the independent curriculum through questionnaires, it can be concluded that teachers are not fully ready to implement the Merdeka curriculum, as seen from the table above teachers still experience many obstacles and problems in implementing the Merdeka independent. So, teachers feel that the curriculum changes make teachers a bit confused and difficult to adapt.

#### The Percentage of Teachers Readiness to Implement the Merdeka Curriculum

The data above, the percentage of teacher readiness in implementing the independent curriculum. There are teachers who are not fully ready to implement the Merdeka curriculum because teachers still need to adapt to the new curriculum and new programs. There are results

from this research that "agree" 64% and "disagree" 36%. The researcher concluded that teachers were not yet fully prepared to face this independent curriculum.

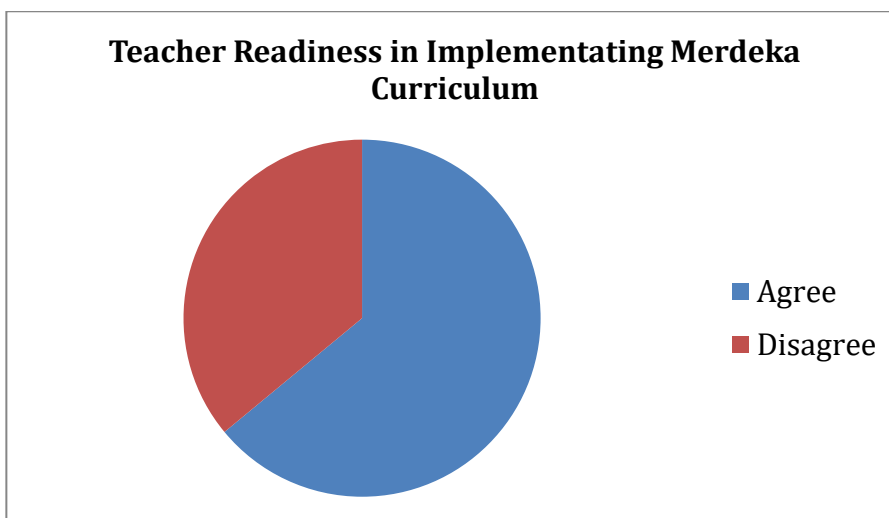


Figure 1. The result of the Questionnaire About the Teachers' Readiness of Implementation Merdeka Curriculum

The first research question was "How is the readiness of teachers to implement the Merdeka curriculum?" The questionnaire result showed that the efforts of the teacher in implementing the Merdeka curriculum in the dimension of planning are not good enough. And about process standards, the components in the lesson plan consist of school identity, class/semester, subject matter, time allocation, learning objectives, basic competencies, and indicators, teaching material, learning methods, learning media, learning resources, learning activities, and assessment.

### Research Findings

The findings in this study are displayed based on three research questions. The first research question is "How does the teacher perception on Merdeka Curriculum? Second, "How does the teacher readiness on Merdeka Curriculum?" And the third question is "What is the implementation of teacher perception and readiness about Merdeka Curriculum?" To answer three research questions, the researcher interviewed ten teachers and give the questionnaire and the vice of the curriculum. The interview was conducted at SMP N 3 Binjai.

In the interview process, the researcher asked the teacher in Bahasa. The interview questions were proposed to get information about the data of this study. The question in this study is generated based on the research question of this study. The first following data would explain the teacher readiness in implementing the Merdeka curriculum, and the second following data would explain the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum.

In this part, the researcher will delineate the findings of the research results that have been collected in the field. The researcher will show the results of the study by appealing to some previous research and theories related to this study to accomplish and reinforce the discussion of the results of this study. This study generated five themes which included several sub-themes with particular classified categories. These themes were recognized based on the research objectives. The following is a detailed discussion of each theme in this study.

### Theme 1. Teachers' Perceptions on the Implementation of Merdeka Curriculum

Different opinions were given by each participant in this study, especially on the theme of the implementation of the Merdeka curriculum. Some of them argued that the Merdeka curriculum was good, but others did not agree with it.

Based on the results of the data taken, the researcher found that there were six of ten participants who agreed and gave positive arguments toward the implementation of the Merdeka curriculum. They said that the implementation of the curriculum Merdeka was good. This can be

seen from the statement of those who said that the Merdeka curriculum created students to be more creative.

In this curriculum, students were also expected to be more active than their teachers. Student-centered was the method used in class, where the teacher was only a facilitator in the classroom. In addition, one participant also mentioned that this curriculum had completed the indicators. This was great for improving both teacher and student competencies. According to Kurniasih and Sani (2013), there are several important things from the change or refinement of the curriculum, including student activeness, holistic assessment, character education, competency that is appropriate to the needs, and a good evaluation system.

On the other hand, the other 4 participants gave negative reactions to the implementation of the Merdeka curriculum. They argued that the Merdeka curriculum has a limited time and more focus on students' character than students' cognitive. This actually makes teachers overwhelmed because they have to catch up on the material so that it can be delivered because the P5 project takes too long to complete. So, it is difficult and takes a lot of time to study.

### **Theme 2. The strengths and weaknesses of the curriculum in the sight of the teachers**

In this study, researchers found that there are several of the most striking advantages of the Merdeka Curriculum that researchers can learn. The first is student activeness. Because here they are required to be more active in class and find out for themselves. The teacher's role in learning is only a facilitator. A facilitator is a person who provides facilities, namely by making it easier for students so that the learning process takes place more easily and enjoyably. The teacher acts as a facilitator and mediator to create conditions conducive for students to learn and be responsible for achieving learning outcomes.

Second, teachers are more flexible in developing learning and the interesting learning material. Because the teacher is not determined how to teach and from which source. This can also develop teacher creativity in teaching according to student needs. Students will learn to use a variety of media. Technology is one of the tools or media used in the learning process. For that reason, learning will be more interesting by using media that are sophisticated and in accordance with the times. So, teachers no longer have to explain and are rigidly structured.

Third, student talent development is more focused. This is because students can freely express themselves according to their interests and are given space to develop their talents.

Fourth, it does not impose targets like the curriculum. Here students are not required and forced to understand the material provided. This means that students who are less able to understand the lesson are given support to be able to understand the lesson with the help of students who understand better.

Meanwhile, the weaknesses of the independent curriculum are, first, time runs out for project work. Where the time to teach the material is reduced. This results in children missing out on lessons and teachers having to catch up with them. Second, teachers are forced to study inappropriate fields. For example, math teachers must be able to teach PPKN in the Pancasila profile. Third, most emphasize character education, thus putting aside students' knowledge abilities.

### **Theme 3. The Expectation of the Teachers Toward the Implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum**

In terms of expectations, there is nothing wrong with dreaming and expecting something good. It was also done by participants who had collaborated well in this study. They expressed their hopes for the good quality of our country's education.

The hope most expressed by participants was the revision of the curriculum. Five of the ten participants who participated revealed that the Merdeka curriculum should be revised again for various reasons that have been stated. Different from the others, there were 5 participants who revealed that the Merdeka curriculum was quite good and effective so there was no need for revisions.

From the results of the questionnaire, it can be concluded that several things become obstacles for teachers in implementing the Merdeka curriculum, such as in the evaluation, curriculum change, also limited time that is set in the Merdeka curriculum. The Vice of the curriculum also admitted that one of the obstacles in implementing the Merdeka curriculum is the lack of material

used to support the Merdeka curriculum, such as book limitation. Even though, all of the teachers acknowledged that they often participate in training on the Merdeka curriculum, MGMP, and PPG. Therefore, it can be said that some of them utilized the knowledge obtained from this training and also searched for information independently via the internet and platforms provided by the government as their strategy for overcoming the obstacles to implementing the Merdeka curriculum.

## Discussion

After analyzing all research instruments systematically and accurately, it was necessary to discuss the result of the study. The aim was to find out the answer to the research question. The explanation for each research question is as follows: The first research question was "How is the readiness of teachers to implement the Merdeka curriculum?". The interview result showed that the efforts of the teacher in implementing the Merdeka curriculum in the dimension of planning are good enough. It can be seen from the components of lesson plans or teaching modules which are arranged based on the Ministry of National Education-Regulation Number 22 of 2016 about process standards, the components in the lesson plan consist of school identity, class/semester, subject matter, time allocation, learning objectives, basic competencies, and indicators, teaching material, learning methods, learning media, learning resources, learning activities and assessment. The logical learning sequence of the scientific approach (5M) is also written in it.

According to Teacher 1 (RM, 35 years old, female), the independent learning curriculum suits her needs. He feels that it is suitable for the times. Where the Merdeka curriculum emphasizes student character, that is the most important. Especially now that the development of children, the times are growing. If good character is not instilled, it will go too far. In addition, the independent curriculum answers the current learning needs of students. In line with that, according to teacher 8 (SGP, 36 years old, male) The independent curriculum is very good. Because in this Merdeka curriculum, children are taught to be more independent, have character, and have good attitudes and ethics. Which was not found in the previous curriculum.

Meanwhile, according to Teacher 5 (RS, 55 years old, female) she has an opinion that contradicts the government. She feels that the independent curriculum is more complicated, not pursuing the completion of learning outcomes. While knowledge is needed to move to a higher level. She felt that the previous curriculum was much better than the current independent curriculum. The obstacle is that during the P5 project, the subject matter that should be delivered is left behind. In addition, the disadvantage is that children cannot be scolded, cannot be reprimanded. While children at a growing age, with various natures, with different family sources, with different family upbringings form different children's characters. In line with that, teacher 2 (SHN, 58 years old, female) experienced difficulties in IT, due to the age factor, so we are forced to need other people to help her. The independent curriculum emphasizes IT.

From the lesson plan or teaching modules, it can be said the teacher of SMP N 3 Binjai has arranged it based on almost all the principles of lesson plan arrangement mentioned in The Ministry of National Education-Regulation Number 22 of 2016. The principles will be formed in the teaching-learning process and evaluation. Therefore, teaching-learning planning is a big influence on the learning process and evaluation.

In terms of the teaching-learning process, the activities of the learning process created by the teacher in the class should have the characteristics mentioned in The Ministry of National Education-Regulation Number 22 of 2016, they are the development of attitude, knowledge, and skill. All three developments have different acquisition processes. Attitudes are obtained through the activities of receiving, running, appreciating, experiencing, and practicing. Knowledge is gained through the activities of remembering, understanding, applying, analyzing, and evaluating. Skills are obtained through observing, asking, trying, reasoning, and creating.

Based on the results of the interview and the questionnaire, the perception of implementing the Merdeka curriculum was similar to Prakoso, et al. (2021), revealing positive perception through the implementation of the Merdeka curriculum which is an effective alternative in providing instruction to students in accordance with the resources owned by the school and needs of teachers given structured socialization, clear guidance, and freedom based on the abilities and personalities of teachers in schools.

From the results of the questionnaire, it was concluded that several things become the obstacles for teachers in implementing the Merdeka curriculum, such as in the evaluation, curriculum change, also limited time that is set in the Merdeka curriculum. The Vice of the curriculum also admitted that one of the obstacles in implementing the Merdeka curriculum is the lack of material used to support the Merdeka curriculum, such as book limitation.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the results of interviews, questionnaires and observations carried out at SMP 3 Binjai regarding teachers' perceptions and readiness in implementing the independent learning curriculum, it can be concluded as follows: first; Some teachers at SMP 3 Binjai have a positive perception of the Merdeka Belajar curriculum. This can be seen from the results of observations and interviews that have been conducted because teachers are free to teach, students are free to express and develop according to their interests and talents and form students' character for the better. Second; Some teachers at SMP 3 Binjai have a negative perception of the Merdeka Belajar curriculum. This can be seen from the results of observations and interviews that have been conducted, due to the implementation of an independent curriculum that prioritizes student character and ignores students' knowledge abilities. Even though students' knowledge skills are needed to continue to a higher level. In addition, the allocation of learning time is too short, the learning time for the Pancasila profile and the P5 project is too long, resulting in lagging teaching materials, learning resources such as cellphones that not all students can afford economically, some teachers are technologically challenged, the three teachers who feel comfortable with the old standards and have no experience in independent learning. Third; Overall, teachers are ready to implement the independent curriculum, although there are some who are not really ready, but it still has to be implemented. Insufficient training means that teachers do not fully understand and are ready to implement this curriculum. The school has implemented an independent curriculum by completing the necessary instruments.

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