

STUDENTS' EXPECTATIONS ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF *MERDEKA CURRICULUM*

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Abstract

The curriculum is used as a regulation to develop a well-organized educational system to prepare for advanced civilization. This research aimed to investigate the students' expectations on the implementation of *merdeka curriculum* in grade X SMA Negeri 1 Pangkalan Susu 2024/2025. The subjects of the research were 36 students. It is a qualitative research design that the data was collected by a questionnaire that used a Likert scale to analyze the data. Having analyzed the data, it is found that students have some expectations on the implementation of Kurikulum Merdeka, they are: (1) Kurikulum Merdeka is expected to be better prepare students for the future job market; (2) Kurikulum Merdeka is expected to reduce the academic burden and stress on students; (3) Kurikulum Merdeka is expected to help students develop a strong sense of identity and character; (4) Kurikulum Merdeka is expected to provide more opportunities for students to develop the talented they have; (5) Merdeka Curriculum is expected to provide a joyful learning that motivates them maximally; (6) Merdeka Curriculum is expected to help students achieve their full potential. However, the students expectation of merdeka curriculum hopefully can be revealed through a well-organized implementation of merdeka curriculum.

Keywords: expectation, implementation, merdeka curriculum, Pangkalan Susu

Abstrak

Kurikulum digunakan sebagai sebuah aturan untuk mengembangkan sistem pendidikan yang terorganisasi dengan baik. Kurikulum berubah seiring dengan perubahan kebutuhan siswa, keadaan politik, juga perkembangan teknologi. Kurikulum merdeka diatur oleh Permendikbudristek No 56 tahun 2022. Penerapan kurikulum merdeka yang masih baru ini akan memunculkan berbagai ekspektasi yang berbeda dari siswa. Penelitian ini bertujuan mengetahui ekspektasi siswa terhadap implementasi kurikulum merdeka di SMA Negeri 1 Pangkalan Susu tahun 2024/2025. Subjek penelitian ini adalah 36 siswa. Penelitian ini adalah sebuah penelitian kualitatif yang datanya dikumpulkan melalui penyebaran angket yang menggunakan skala Likert untuk pengolahan data. Hasil pengolahan data menunjukkan bahwa siswa memiliki beberapa ekspektasi dari implementasi kurikulum merdeka, yaitu: (1) kurikulum merdeka diharapkan mampu menyiapkan siswa sesuai lapangan pekerjaan; (2) kurikulum merdeka diharapkan mengurangi beban akademis dan tekanan bagi siswa; (3) kurikulum merdeka diharapkan membantu siswa membentuk jati diri dan karakter; (4) kurikulum merdeka diharapkan mampu memberi kesempatan siswa untuk mengembangkan bakat; (6) kurikulum merdeka diharapkan membantu siswa mencapai potensi diri. Ekspektasi siswa terhadap kurikulum merdeka hanya dapat terwujud melalui penerapan kurikulum merdeka yang terorganisir dengan baik.

Kata Kunci: ekspektasi, implementasi, kurikulum merdeka, Pangkalan Susu

INTRODUCTION

The educational system is one of the most important systems that play an important role in developing advanced civilization. A good education can help

people achieve their goals in life and grow personally and nationally (Sharma & Ankit, 2023). To develop a well-organized educational system it must be a rule to cover it systematically named curriculum.

Curriculum development is a must to improve the development and growth of students (Sibuea, Amin, Mustaqim, & Tumanggor, 2023). Curriculum as an outline of what students will achieve when they are learning at school (Nursaputri & Aisyah, 2024). Curriculum is the spirit of education, so developing a curriculum is an obligation for educational institutions (Seli, Rusnaini, & Suryono, 2023).

Curriculum is the central guide for all educators as to what is essential for teaching and learning so that every student has access to rigorous academic experiences (Ri, 2022). The curriculum is a prescriptive content that illustrates what will be taught in a given educational program (input or subject matter), who will teach (teacher), who will be taught (learner), with what tools and in what context (milieu), with what effect (output/outcomes), and how that will be assessed (assessment) (El-Astal, 2023). The curriculum is a planned series of learning episodes and co-curricular activities that educational institutions offer students, focusing on the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values that students acquire after a certain study period (Fatima, 2024).

Lisa Tunnell (2022) points out that an effective curriculum is essential in the teaching and learning process (Tunnell, 2022). Clark (2022) defines Curriculum as an educational plan to teach learning skills as well as fundamental questions necessary for all students to be able to experience, practice, and master the knowledge needed (Clark, n.d.). It is briefly concluded that curriculum is a comprehensive framework that outlines the educational experiences and learning objectives within a school system. The curriculum should guide what students are expected to learn and how they will demonstrate their understanding. It serves as a roadmap for educators, detailing the goals and standards for student achievement throughout their educational journey.

Furthermore, curriculum management is necessary for educational

institutions so that the learning process can run as expected by stakeholders well, effectively, and efficiently (Kamila & Agus RM, 2023). The design of the curriculum is aimed to improving students' learning (Nursaputri & Aisyah, 2024). A curriculum must include all important elements in education, such as content, learning goals, learning experience, learning strategies, learning assessment as well as learning facilities to develop outstanding learning outcomes.

The curriculum is a dynamic process that should be flexible due to demands of students' needs, technology, and political issues. The curriculum must be flexible and responsive to the development of science and technology, as well as the evolving needs in the world of work (Syahputra, Hutahut, Thamrin, & Hasyim, 2022). The curriculum needs to be developed dynamically by the demands and changes that occur in society as a concept that must be able to answer all challenges where the curriculum is implemented (Digna & Widyasari, 2023). Thus, in Indonesia curriculum has been changed several times, the recently newest is *Merdeka* curriculum which was launched in 2022.

Merdeka curriculum was launched in 2022 by the Minister of Education and Research. It is regulated by Permendikbudristek No 56 in 2022. *Merdeka* curriculum was introduced as a response to the rigid 2013 curriculum and the educational disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The Curriculum *Merdeka* is designed to be more flexible and adaptable to the needs of individual students, with a greater emphasis on student-centered learning and the use of technology (Muhammad Rafi Zidan & Zaitun Qamariah, 2023). The *Merdeka* curriculum is implemented across all academic subjects, encompassing the study of English as well (Syahfitri Purnama & Pawiro, 2023)

Merdeka curriculum in its implementation fosters some essential

programs covering differentiated learning that fosters students' treatment based on the student way of learning whether audio, visual, or kinesthetic learning; students-centered learning; and the students' character development through Pancasila Student profile.

The Merdeka curriculum fosters differentiated learning. Differentiated learning is closely related to the adjustment of learning to the needs of students. The characteristics and profiles of students who come from different backgrounds, result in different learning needs and treatments (Digna & Widyasari, 2023).

Differentiated learning in Merdeka Curriculum focuses on tailoring education to meet diverse student needs, interests, and readiness level. Teachers should customize their teaching methods and approaches to fit the preferences, individualities, and capabilities of their students (Sofiana, Andriyani, Shofiyuddin, Mubarak, & Candraloka, 2024). Challenges include teacher expertise affects the success of differentiated learning, since teachers is a role that requires specialized skills to carry out their duties in educating, teaching, guiding, directing, and preparing students (Rajagukguk, Sipayung, Pasaribu, & Sinambela, 2024). By fostering a flexible learning environment through differentiated learning, the Merdeka curriculum aims to create an innovative educational culture that accommodates individual learning styles.

Student-centered learning is one of the essential programs of the Merdeka curriculum. Merdeka curriculum aims to create a more autonomous, student-centered learning environment (Hunaepi & Suharta, 2024). By promoting student-centered learning the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum aims to foster creativity, independence, and active engagement in learning (Haq, 2024). By providing students with opportunities to explore and solve real-world problems, the curriculum

enhances critical and creative thinking skills.

Merdeka curriculum also fosters the Pancasila Student Profile emphasizing character development aligned with Pancasila values. Students' expected characters are by the Pancasila values (Octavia & Tirtoni, 2024). Pancasila student profile comprises six dimensions: (1) faith and noble character; (2) global diversity; (3) mutual cooperation; (4) independence; (5) critical reasoning; and (6) creative (Fajarudin, 2023). It is important to promote Pancasila Student Profile since it is the national character of Indonesian. Character education is very important and must be implemented, because it forms national character (Arifin, Mas, Bafadal, & Gaib, 2024). Overall, the Pancasila Student Profile aims to foster holistic education as a reflective of indonesia's cultural enclosed in Pancasila.

The merdeka curriculum is relatively new implemented. Absolutely, students have some different expectations from the implementation of merdeka curriculum. Student expectations are complex constructs that can influence adaptability, engagement, achievement, satisfaction and retention (Amy, Andrew, & Clare, 2023). Today's learners expect convenient and fast interactions with educational institutions every single time. (Sirley, 2024). It is crucial to investigate students' expectation, since it describes what the students hope from their education, especially from the merdeka curriculum to determine learning policies in an educational institution.

The recent studies says that the findings indicate that university education, although marginally, has met the students' expectation of university education towards enriching their social and personal experiences (Ariffin, Noor, & Alias, 2022). Another study showed that all students expect that they would learn all skills of English as well as grammar and pronunciation. They also believe that they would get good jobs if they could master

English well.(Eriani, Pratolo, Nailufer, & Astuti, 2021). The other research results showed that the Merdeka Curriculum made students more motivated in learning (Rahma, Perangin, & Rahayu, 2024). Other research findings said that the Merdeka Curriculum has provided a better picture than the previous Curriculum (Lestari, 2023). The other research concludes that Student-cented learning in Merdeka curriculum can instill resilience in students, thus making students strong and resilient in receiving learning (Noptario, Irawan, & Zakaria, 2024).

From the previous studies discussed above, there is no similar research that has been done in SMA Negeri 1 Pangkalan Susu. However, the originality of this research discussed the students' expectation on the implementation of merdeka curriculum engages the resercher to conduct a research titled Students' Expectation on the Implementation of Merdeka Curriculum in Grade X SMA Negeri 1 Pangkalan Susu in academic year 2024/2025. The research aims to investigate students' expectation on the implementation of merdeka curriculum in grade X SMA Negeri 1 Pangkalan susu in academic year 2024/2025.

Pangkalan susu is a district of Langkat regency, North Sumatera, Indonesia. Pangkalan susu is characterized by a diverse population, economic, ethnic, regional morphology, and social background. The most common economical activities of pangkalan susu population are in the sector of fishing and farming. Socially, the most common ethnics of population are Melayunese, Banjarnese, Acehnese, and Javanese. Based on the regional Morphology, pangkalan susu consists of plain lands, coastal lands, as well as hills in relatively large areas.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research was conducted by using a qualitative research design because

in this study the researcher collects data, analyzes it and then draws conclusions. This research aimed to investigate the students' expectations of the implementation of Merdeka curriculum in grade X of SMA Negeri 1 Pangkalan Susu in the academic year 2024/2025.

The subject of the research was 36 students of grade X SMA Negeri 1 Pangkalan Susu in the academic year 2024/2025. The researcher chose the students of grade X because the Merdeka curriculum is newly implemented in grade X. The subject was taken by using a random cluster sampling technique. The object of the research is to focus on the student's expectations on the implementation of merdeka curriculum in grade X of SMA Negeri 1 Pangkalan Susu in academic year 2024/2025.

The instrument used for collecting data was a questionnaire. The questionnaire used to collect the students' expectation on the implementation of Merdeka curriculum because it is an effective and efficient way to collect data since it is practical, objective and free of charge. The questionnaire consisted of 20 questions related to the implementation of Merdeka curriculum. The questionnaire was analyzed by using Likert Scale with 5 levels of agreement, namely strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree.

The steps of research methodology were: collecting data by using questionnaire; analyzing the data from questionnaire by using likert scale; and drawing conclusion.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

The data for this research was collected by using questionnaire consisted of 20 questions concerning about students' expectation on the implementation of Merdeka Curriculum. Likert scale with 5 levels is used to analyze the data. It is described as:

- 5 score for strongly agree
- 4 score for agree
- 3 score for neutral
- 2 score for disagree

- 1 score for strongly disagree

To find the percentage of respondents, the researcher used the following formula:

$$P (\%) = \frac{n}{\sum n} \times 100$$

To find the total percentage of each statements, the researcher used the following formula:

P : the percentage of respondent

n : the frequency of students who chooses the same responses

$\sum n$: total respondents

a : the total statements of questionnaire

Having analyzed the data, the research findings are described in the following table:

Table 1. *Percentage of respondents' answer*

NO	Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD
1.	I expect the Merdeka Curriculum to provide more flexibility in choosing courses and learning pathways.	11 (30,56%)	11 (30,56%)	12 (33,34%)	1 (2,78%)	1 (2,78%)
2.	I expect the Merdeka Curriculum will enhance my critical thinking and problem-solving skills.	12 (33,34%)	15 (41,70%)	9 (25,00%)	0	0
3.	I expect the Merdeka Curriculum will better prepare me for the future job market.	21 (58,33%)	14 (38,89%)	0	1 (2,78%)	0
4.	I am confident that the Merdeka Curriculum will foster a more student-centered learning environment.	17 (47,22%)	15 (41,70%)	2 (5,56%)	1 (2,78%)	1 (2,78%)
5.	I expect the Merdeka Curriculum to offer a wider range of learning experiences, such as internships, projects, and community engagement.	18 (50%)	11 (30,56%)	1 (2,78%)	1 (2,78%)	5 (13,89%)
6.	I believe the Merdeka Curriculum will promote a more collaborative and interactive learning atmosphere.	18 (50%)	14 (38,89%)	1 (2,78%)	0	3 (8,33%)
7.	I am hopeful that the Merdeka Curriculum will reduce the academic burden and stress on students.	18 (50%)	18 (50%)	0	0	0
8.	I expect the Merdeka Curriculum to provide opportunities for personalized learning and self-directed study.	15 (41,70%)	11 (30,56%)	1 (2,78%)	9 (25,00%)	0
9.	I expect the Merdeka Curriculum will improve the quality of education in Indonesia.	15 (41,70%)	17 (47,22%)	1 (2,78%)	1 (2,78%)	2 (5,56%)
10.	I expect a well-implemented Merdeka Curriculum and its potential benefits.	22 (61,11%)	11 (30,56%)	3 (8,33%)	0	0
11.	I expect the Merdeka Curriculum will help me develop a strong sense of identity and character.	18 (50%)	16 (44,44%)	0	2 (5,56%)	0

12.	I expect the Merdeka Curriculum to encourage more innovative and creative teaching methods.	13 (36,11%)	13 (36,11%)	4 (11,11%)	6 (16,67%)	0
13.	I am hopeful that the Merdeka Curriculum will reduce the emphasis on standardized testing.	10 (27,78%)	8 (22,22%)	5 (13,89%)	6 (16,67%)	7 (19,44%)
14.	I expect the Merdeka Curriculum will provide more opportunities for students to develop the talent they have	23 (63,89%)	13 (36,11%)	0	0	0
15.	I expect the Merdeka Curriculum to help me develop strong digital literacy skills.	20 (22,56%)	13 (36,11%)	1 (2,78%)	1 (2,78%)	1 (2,78%)
16.	I am hopeful that the Merdeka Curriculum will provide joyful learning that motivates students maximally	25 (69,44%)	11 (30,56%)	0	0	0
17.	I expect the Merdeka Curriculum will provide more opportunities for collaborative work	20 (22,56%)	10 (27,78%)	1 (2,78%)	0	5 (13,89%)
18.	I expect the Merdeka Curriculum will promote students to be more religious	15 (41,70%)	15 (41,70%)	0	2 (5,56%)	4 (11,11%)
19.	I expect the Merdeka Curriculum will help me develop strong communication and presentation skills.	15 (41,70%)	12 (33,33%)	6 (16,67%)	2 (5,56%)	1 (2,78%)
20.	I expect the Merdeka Curriculum will help me achieve my full potential.	20 (22,56%)	15 (41,70%)	0	1 (2,78%)	0

The table above describes the respondents answers of the questionnaire about students expectation from the implementation of merdeka curriculum. There are 20 questions with 5 scales of agreement. The table consists of the column of scale, frequency, as well as percentage of respondents. It shows the number of respondents who agree or disagree with the statements and the calculation of the score was in the percentage formula. From the results it can be seen that the respondents responded positively to the results of the questionnaire which proves that respondents have positive expectations of the implementation of Merdeka curriculum.

From the first statement that Merdeka curriculum is expected to provide more flexibility in choosing courses and learning pathways got 30,56 % strongly

agree and 30,56% agree. It indicates a positive response from the respondents. In the second statement that Merdeka curriculum is expected to enhance students' critical thinking and problem solving skills got 33,34% of strongly agree and 41,70% of agree which indicates a positive response from the respondents. In the third statement that Merdeka curriculum is expected to prepare the students for the future job market got 58,33% strongly agree and 38,89% agree. It got Only 2,78% disagree. It indicates a very good response from the respondents. The fourth statement got 47,22% strongly agree and 41,70% agree. The fifth statement got 50% strongly agree and 30,56% agree. The sixth statement got 50% strongly agree and 38,89% agree. The seventh statement got 50% strongly agree and 50% agree. It indicates perfectly positive response from respondents. The

eight statement got 41,70% strongly agree and 30,56% agree. The ninth statement got 41,70% strongly agree and 47,22% agree. The tenth statement got 61,11% strongly agree and 30,56% agree. The eleventh statement got 50% strongly agree and 44,44% agree. It indicates a positive response from respondents. The twelfth statement got 36,11% strongly agree and 36,11% agree. The thirteenth statement got only 27,78% strongly agree and 22,22% agree. The fourteenth statement got 63,89% strongly agree and 36, 11% agree. It is the positive responses that all respondents agree with the statement. The fifteenth statement 55,56% strongly agree and 36,11% agree. The sixteenth statement got 69,44% strongly agree and 30,56% agree. It indicates perfectly positive responses from respondents. The seventeenth statement got 55,56% strongly agree and 27,78% agree. The eighteenth statement got 41,67% strongly agree and 41,67% agree. The nineteenth statement only got 41,67% strongly agree and 33,33% agree. The twentieth statement got 55,56% strongly agree and 41,67% agree that indicates positive responses from respondents.

From the 20 questions of the questionnaire, there are big six questions that got the highest percentage of agreeing, they are questions no 3, 7, 11, 14, 16, and 20. Question no 3 (I expect the Merdeka Curriculum will better prepare me for the future job market) got 97,22% of agreeing percentage (58,33% strongly agree and 38,89% agree). It means that students expect that the Merdeka Curriculum will better prepare them for the future job market.

Question no 7 (I am hopeful that the Merdeka Curriculum will reduce the academic burden and stress on students) got 100% of agreeing percentage (50,00% strongly agree and 50% agree). It means that students expect that the Merdeka Curriculum will reduce the academic burden and stress on them.

Question no 11 (I expect the

Merdeka Curriculum will help me develop a strong sense of identity and character) got 94,44% of agreeing percentage (50% strongly agree and 44,44% agree). It means that students expect that the Merdeka Curriculum will help them develop a strong sense of identity and character.

Question no 14 (I expect the Merdeka Curriculum will provide more opportunities for students to develop the talented we have) got 100% of agreeing percentage (63,89% strongly agree and 36,11% agree). It means that students expect the Merdeka Curriculum will provide more opportunities for them to develop the talented they have.

Question no 16 (I am hopeful that the Merdeka Curriculum will provide a joyful learning that motivates students maximally) got 100% of agreeing percentage (69,44% strongly agree and 30,56% agree). It means that students expect that the Merdeka Curriculum will provide a joyful learning that maximally motivates them.

Question no 20 (I expect the Merdeka Curriculum will help me achieve my full potential) got 97,22% of agreeing percentage (55,56% strongly agree and 41,67% agree). It means that students expect that the Merdeka Curriculum will help students achieve their full potential.

Students really have many expectations from the implementation of merdeka curriculum. Students expect to get better preparation for the future job market through the implementation of merdeka curriculum. It is expected to develop skillful learning outcomes that capable and compatible of job market requirement.

Merdeka curriculum is expected to reduce the academic burden and stress on the students. The academic burden contributes to stress on the students. That is why Merdeka curriculum promotes flexibility that reduces students' stress to achieve better results of the learning process.

Merdeka curriculum is also expected to develop students identity, character, as well as their talent and potential. It can be revealed through the development of differentiated learning, student-centered learning and Pancasila student profile that promotes active, autonomous, self-directed, and good character students.

Furthermore, the Merdeka curriculum is expected to provide a joyful learning environment that motivates students maximally in optimal achievement of learning goals. It is crucial to create a joyful learning since it makes the students feel happy, thus they can be motivated in learning process. However, the students expectation of merdeka curriculum hopefully can be revealed through a well-organized implementation of merdeka curriculum.

CONCLUSION

This research is aimed to investigate the students' expectation on the implementation of Merdeka curriculum in grade X SMA Negeri 1 Pangkalan Susu in academic year 2024/2025. Having analyzed the data got from the questionnaire, it is concluded that: Students have some expectations on the implementation of Merdeka curriculum, they are: (1) Merdeka Curriculum is expected to be better prepare students for the future job market; (2) Merdeka Curriculum is expected to reduce the academic burden and stress on students; (3) Merdeka Curriculum is expected to help students develop a strong sense of identity and character; (4) Merdeka Curriculum is expected to provide more opportunities for students to develop the talented they have; (5) Merdeka Curriculum is expected to provide a joyful learning that motivates them maximally; (6) Merdeka Curriculum is expected to help students achieve their full potential.

The students' expectation on the implementation of Merdeka Curriculum indicates that Merdeka curriculum is acceptable for the students. The students' expectations can be revealed maximally by

implementing a well-organized Merdeka curriculum. However, it will be a challenge for our educational system to reveal a well-implemented Merdeka curriculum optimally and successfully. Furthermore, it will be interesting for future research to conduct research about strategies in implementing Merdeka curriculum.

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