



ENGLISH TEACHERS' AND STUDENTS' PERCEPTION TOWARDS IMPLEMENTATION OF KURIKULUM MERDEKA BELAJAR AT SECONDARY SCHOOL

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore teachers' and students' perceptions of Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar in English language subjects in secondary schools. Using a descriptive qualitative approach, this study used questionnaires and interviews as data collection instruments. This study reveals English teachers' and students' perceptions of the implementation of Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar belajar at secondary schools including the concept of Kurikulum Merdeka belajar project-based learning, teaching modules, and assessment, as well as how students perceive the implementation of Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar. The research findings showed positive and negative perceptions of both teachers and students. The positive value for a teacher is that they are free to provide material to students relevant to their respective needs while the negative value is the lack of school facilities that hamper the creativity of teachers in making teaching materials. The positive value for students is that they are more free to express their opinions and be creative according to their respective talents through p5 activities, while the negative value is their challenge in adjusting each new subject listed in Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar. **Keywords:** *Kurikulum merdeka belajar , Teachers' perception, Students' perception, Secondary School*

INTRODUCTION

The Indonesian Ministry of Education is taking strategic steps to improve the quality of education by implementing Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar. This curriculum provides flexibility and freedom in the learning process with a student-centered learning approach. (Siregar et al., 2024) state that some of the problems in implementing the new curriculum include teacher readiness, policy, and stakeholder acceptance; however, (Rahayuningsih et al., 2024) highlight that teachers' belief in the independent curriculum increases student enthusiasm, although poor beliefs often arise due to a lack of understanding, training, and learning tools.

The way people organize and interpret data is called "Perception". In education, it reflects their views and expectations about different aspects of learning. (Telaumbanua, 2024) states perceptions influence one's choice to act positively or negatively. Teachers' understanding of the curriculum has an effect on their teaching and student engagement. Studies show that positive perceptions increase student motivation, while negative perceptions can hinder learning.

Students can be motivated and engaged if they see the way teachers teach them and how they interact with their teachers. Engaged students tend to have better learning outcomes, according to (Rahayuningsih et al., 2024) Project assignments and creative learning approaches can improve students' creativity and critical thinking skills.

In the current era of digitalization encourages the government to design a curriculum that is appropriate and capable of students competing globally. Advances in science and technology encourage adjustments so that students have relevant skills (Herman et al., 2023)

In Indonesia, Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar is expected to create a flexible and student-centered learning environment. However, problems in implementation, such as teachers' lack of understanding, affect the quality of teaching. Among them, in two junior high schools in Gunungsitoli, teachers have not understood how to implement Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar, which may hinder its implementation. (Purani & Susanto Putra, 2022) said that a non-comprehensive understanding can cause teachers to be less successful in implementing Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar. In addition, limited resources and training, especially in SMK and SMA in Gunungsitoli, are barriers, which negatively affect the performance of the curriculum. (Baehaki, 2023) emphasizes that resources, training and support are essential for educators.

Although education is reformed through Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar is expected to have positive effects, an in-depth understanding is needed. This study shows how teachers and students view the implementation of Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar in Gunungsitoli secondary schools.

METHOD

Qualitative research focuses on understanding social experiences and contexts allows it to reveal the complexity behind educational phenomena. According to (Rukminingsih et al., 2020) qualitative research involves collecting, analyzing and concluding empirical data until the end of writing. Qualitative methods seek to understand social phenomena through the collection and analysis

of descriptive data. This research is usually objective and structured (Widodo et al., 2023). This method uses interviews, observations, and document analysis to learn what the experiences, meanings, and perceptions of individuals mean in everyday life.

This qualitative descriptive study interviewed teachers and distributed questionnaires to students in six secondary schools in Gunungsitoli from October to November 2024. Various institutions, such as junior high, vocational, and senior high schools, set ethical goals. The purpose of this study was to find out how teachers and students view the implementation of the self-learning curriculum, due to the fact that these views differ in Gunungsitoli. The purpose of this research methodology is to study, analyze, and provide a thorough explanation of the experience.

PARTICIPANTS

This study involved six secondary schools in Gunungsitoli that implemented Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar. The curriculum was implemented for two to three years and consisted of teachers, students and schools.

The Participants also included students from schools that implemented Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar for two to three years, who could find significant differences from the previous curriculum and express their opinions on the implementation Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar.

A structured interview guide was created to support Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar (KMB) and asking about students' learning experiences, freedom, cooperation, challenges, and desires. Interviews lasted between 45 and 60 minutes and were recorded for analysis. In addition, questionnaires were given to students to collect quantitative data on how they perceive KMB, such as the new things they learn and how they manage their time to complete tasks. The results provides further insight into how effective KMB is in enhancing students' learning experience.

Table 1: Interviews and questionnaires to student teachers

Domain	Contoh pertanyaan dan petunjuknya
<i>Pengalaman terhadap penerapan KMB</i>	• Apakah mereka sudah menerapkan kurikulum merdeka belajar ? (guru) • Apa hal baru yang didapat ? (siswa) • Berapa lama mereka menjalani KBM disekolah mereka mengajar ? (guru) • Apakah merasa bebas ? (siswa)
<i>keuntungan Dan Kekurangan KMB</i>	• Menyengkan kah pelaksanaan kurikulum merdeka belajar ini ? (guru) • Apa nilai (+) dan nilai (-) dalam penerapan KBM ini ? kesulitan dalam KMB dan pengaruh KMB dalam pengorganisasian kelas apa saja dukungan dan pelatihan yang di peroleh selama pelaksanaan KMB serta sefleksibel apa KMB ? (guru) • Tantangan apa saja yang dihadapi dalam KMB ? (guru dan siswa) • Apakah tugas sulit ? apakah merasa lebih termotivasi ? bagaimana penyelesaian mu jika menghadapi kesulitan ? apakah lebih kreatif, inovatif, aktif dan partisipatif ? (siswa)
<i>Pendekatan dalam KMB</i>	• Bagaimana KMB bisa mengubah pendekatan dalam pengajaran ? (guru) • Apa perbedaan pengajaran guru di kurikulum sebelumnya dan kurikulum sekarang ? (siswa)
<i>strategi dalam KMB</i>	• Strategy dan pedagogis apa yang digunakam untuk penyesuain pada perubahan ? (guru) • Bagaimana menilai kemampuan siswa dan memastikan mereka mencapai CP yang sudah di tentukan ? (guru)

(1) The researchers herself acted as the moderator of the interview, and (2) a structured interview protocol that uses open-ended questions to explore the research objectives.

(3) Field notes that recorded what the researchers saw during the interviews, (4) Questioners are conducted by distributing paper containing questions to students , and (5) A voice recorder that recorded the interviews live. However, the researcher used paper to collect questionnaire data, especially for students.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

RESULTS

Researchers grouped data from six schools, with codes T1, T2, T3, T4, T5, and T6 as teachers. While S1, S2, S3, S4, S4, S5, S6 as students.

Table 2: Similarities and differences in teacher responses

Quest	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5	T6	Similarities	Differences
Apakah mereka sudah menerapkan kurikulum merdeka belajar (KMB)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Rata rata jawaban mengatakan sudah menerapkan kurikulum merdeka belajar di sekolah yang dikunjungi peneliti	
Berapa lama mereka sudah menjalankan kurikulum merdeka belajar (KMB)?	✓	✓	×	×	✓	✓	t1, t2, t5, dan t6 mengatakan bahwa mereka sudah menjalani Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar selama 3 tahun .	t3 dan t4 mengatakan bahwa mereka sudah menjalani Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar selama 2 tahun.
Apakah mereka senang dengan perubahan kurikulum 2013 ke kurikulum merdeka belajar (KMB)?	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Penerimaan kurikulum merdeka di setiap instansi sekolah yang di kunjungi oleh peneliti merasa senang dengan kurikulum merdeka belajar.	
Apa yang menjadi nilai (+) dan (-) terhadap Pelaksanaan kurikulum merdeka belajar (KMB)?	✓	×	✓	✓	✓	✓	Banyak jawaban menekankan pentingnya fokus pada kebutuhan siswa dan upaya untuk meningkatkan kreativitas serta partisipasi.	Beberapa jawaban menonjolkan tantangan dalam pelaksanaan dan peningkatan beban kerja guru, sementara satu jawaban menyoroti positifnya bertambahnya terminologi baru tanpa mengidentifikasi kelemahan.
Bagaimana kurikulum merdeka belajar (KMB) Mengubah pendekatan Bapak/ibu dalam merancang CP, TP, ATP, ASSESSMENT, MODUL	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Banyak jawaban menekankan pentingnya penyesuaian metode pembelajaran dengan kebutuhan siswa dan tantangan yang dihadapi oleh guru dalam merancang perangkat pembelajaran.	Beberapa jawaban menyoroti beban tambahan yang harus ditanggung oleh guru, sedangkan satu jawaban menekankan adanya panduan dan struktur yang jelas dalam KMB.
Apa saja strategi yang anda gunakan untuk menyesuaikan metode pengajaran dengan konsep kurikulum merdeka belajar (KMB)?	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Banyak jawaban menekankan penyesuaian metode pengajaran dengan kebutuhan siswa dan penggunaan pendekatan yang bervariasi untuk mencapai pemahaman yang lebih baik.	Beberapa jawaban menyoroti penggunaan metode berbasis proyek dan kolaborasi, sementara yang lain lebih fokus pada pembelajaran diferensiasi dan penyesuaian materi.
Apa tantangan yang anda alami dalam menjalani kurikulum merdeka belajar (KMB)?	✓	×	✓	✓	✓	×	Banyak jawaban menekankan tantangan terkait kemampuan siswa, baik dalam bahasa maupun keaktifan, serta isu terkait fasilitas dan sumber daya.	Beberapa jawaban menyoroti tantangan dalam pendekatan dan standar, sementara satu jawaban menegaskan bahwa tidak ada tantangan yang dialami.
Seberapa fleksibel	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Banyak jawaban menekankan bahwa KMB	Beberapa jawaban mencatat adanya batasan dalam fleksibilitas yang disebabkan oleh

kurikulum merdeka belajar (KMB) dalam memberikan kebebasan kepada anda untuk menentukan materi ajar yang sesuai dengan kebutuhan siswa?							memberikan fleksibilitas dalam menentukan materi ajar sesuai kebutuhan siswa.	capaian pembelajaran, sementara satu jawaban memberikan pernyataan umum tanpa detail.
Bagaimana kurikulum merdeka belajar (KMB) memengaruhi cara anda mengelola kelas dan interaksi dengan siswa?	✓	×	✓	×	✓	✓	Banyak jawaban menekankan pentingnya standar penilaian dan konsistensi dengan kurikulum sebelumnya, serta pengenalan terhadap asesmen awal untuk memahami kebutuhan siswa.	Beberapa jawaban menonjolkan pendekatan personal dan fleksibel, yang menunjukkan evolusi dalam cara penilaian diterapkan dalam Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar.
Apa saja kesulitan yang anda hadapi Dalam mengintegrasikan pembelajaran berbasis proyek atau inkuiri sesuai kurikulum merdeka belajar (KMB)?	✓	×	✓	✓	✓	✓	Banyak jawaban menyoroti tantangan yang dihadapi terkait dengan sumber daya dan perbedaan kemampuan siswa, yang merupakan hambatan umum dalam integrasi pembelajaran berbasis proyek.	Jawaban yang menyatakan tidak ada masalah menunjukkan bahwa tidak semua pendidik mengalami kesulitan yang sama, mencerminkan variasi dalam pengalaman dan konteks.
Bagaimana anda menilai kemampuan siswa dengan format asesmen yang ada dalam kurikulum merdeka belajar (KMB)?	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Banyak jawaban menekankan pentingnya penilaian berbasis standar dan fokus pada kebutuhan serta capaian pembelajaran siswa.	
Apa saja dukungan atau pelatihan yang anda perlukan untuk lebih memahami dan menerapkan kurikulum merdeka belajar (KMB) secara efektif?	×	×	✓	✓	✓	✓	Banyak jawaban menekankan perlunya pelatihan dan dukungan untuk memahami dan menerapkan Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar secara efektif.	Ada variasi dalam pengalaman terhadap ketersediaan pelatihan serta spesifikasi pelatihan yang diharapkan, menciptakan gambaran beragam tentang kebutuhan dukungan.
Bagaimana anda memastikan bahwa siswa tetap mencapai tujuan pembelajaran/CP meskipun diberikan kebebasan belajar sesuai minat mereka?	✓	×	✓	✓	✓	×	Banyak jawaban menyoroti pentingnya asesmen dan monitoring untuk memastikan pencapaian tujuan pembelajaran sambil memberikan kebebasan belajar kepada siswa.	Ada variasi dalam pendekatan yang digunakan, baik dalam menyusun rencana pembelajaran maupun dalam strategi pembelajaran yang diterapkan.
Seberapa besar peran anda dalam pengambilan keputusan terkait materi dan metode pengajaran dalam kurikulum merdeka belajar (KMB)?	✓	×	✓	×	✓	×	Semua jawaban menekankan pentingnya peran guru dalam pengambilan keputusan terkait materi dan metode pengajaran.	Ada variasi dalam tingkat kemandirian guru dalam pengambilan keputusan dan fokus pada kualitas siswa versus proses pengambilan keputusan.
Bagaimana anda menyeimbangkan antara kebebasan pedagogis dengan tujuan kurikulum nasional yang masih harus dipenuhi?	✓	×	✓	✓	✓	✓	Menekankan pentingnya keseimbangan antara kebebasan pedagogis dan tujuan kurikulum serta fokus pada kebutuhan siswa.	Jawaban 2 tidak berpartisipasi dalam solusi dan respons terhadap pertanyaan.

In Table 2 above the quest column contains what questions the researchers gave as interview for teachers and T1, T2, T3, T4, T5, and T6 as Teachers means (Teacher1, Teacher2 ...etc). In the table above, the researchers gave the symbol (✓) as similarities and the symbol (×) as differences. While in the 8th column

entitled similarities, the researcher explains what are the similarities of the six participating teachers, and in the 9th column entitled differences, the researcher explains what are the differences in the teacher's answers.

Table.3 similarities and differences in teacher responses

Question	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	Similarities	Differences
<i>Apa hal baru yang kamu pelajari sejak ada kurikulum merdeka belajar (KMB)?</i>	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	<i>Semua siswa menyebutkan adanya pembelajaran berbasis proyek dan praktik.</i>	<i>2 Siswa menyoroti teknologi proyektor sebagai hal baru, siswa lain tidak menyebutkan ini.</i>
<i>Apakah kamu merasa lebih bebas saat belajar dengan kurikulum merdeka belajar (KMB)?</i>	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	<i>Mayoritas merasa lebih bebas karena adanya diskusi dan pengaturan waktu mandiri.</i>	<i>2 Siswa merasa bebas namun terdapat kendala seperti akses teknologi, siswa lain tidak menyebutkan ini</i>
<i>Bagaimana cara kamu bekerja sama dengan teman-teman dalam proyek di kelas?</i>	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	<i>Siswa bekerja sama dengan menghargai pendapat teman dan menggunakan komunikasi digital.</i>	<i>Beberapa siswa menghadapi hambatan dari teman yang egois atau kebiasaan menyontek.</i>
<i>Apa tantangan terbesar yang kamu hadapi saat belajar dengan cara KMB ini?</i>	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	<i>Semua siswa menghadapi tantangan berupa banyaknya tugas dan pengelolaan waktu.</i>	<i>Biaya mahal untuk tugas menjadi tantangan 2 siswa, tidak disebutkan oleh siswa lain.</i>
<i>Apakah tugas yang diberikan oleh guru lebih menarik atau lebih sulit dari sebelumnya?</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	<i>Mayoritas menganggap tugas menarik dan menantang kreativitas.</i>	
<i>Bagaimana kamu mengatur waktu untuk menyelesaikan tugas dalam kurikulum merdeka belajar?</i>	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗	<i>3 siswa mengelola waktu dengan jadwal harian atau bekerja di malam hari.</i>	<i>3 Siswa mampu untuk mengatur jadwal belajar secara terstruktur.</i>
<i>Apakah kamu merasa lebih termotivasi untuk belajar dengan kurikulum merdeka belajar (KMB)?</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	<i>Mayoritas merasa lebih termotivasi oleh variasi tugas dan metode belajar mandiri.</i>	
<i>Bagaimana caramu menyelesaikan jika ada kesulitan dengan pelajaran dalam KMB?</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	<i>Siswa mengatasi kesulitan dengan bertanya kepada guru, teman, atau mencari referensi online.</i>	

<i>Apa ada perbedaan dalam cara guru mengajar di KMB dibandingkan dengan kurikulum 2013?</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	<i>Semua siswa mencatat KMB lebih menekankan kreativitas dan aktivitas siswa.</i>	
<i>Menurutmu, apakah KMB membantu kamu menjadi lebih kreatif, inovatif, aktif, partisipatif?</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	<i>Mayoritas siswa setuju bahwa KMB membantu mereka menjadi lebih kreatif dan inovatif.</i>	

In Table 3 above, it is explained that the first table of questions contains questions given by researchers to questioner participants. The column contains S1, S2, S3, S4, S5, and S6 as students meaning (student1, student 2 ...etc) symbol (✓) as similarities and symbol (×) as differences. In the similarities column, the researcher contains what student respondents have in common. While in the differences column the researcher contains what is the difference between each student response that is conveyed.

DISCUSSION

The results showed that the majority of teachers felt that they had implemented Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar effectively. (Ramadina, 2021) explains in his research about the role of the principal in assisting curriculum implementation where the principal is the driving force. Principal support is essential to ensure that education policies can be implemented smoothly, curriculum changes will be easier for teachers to handle if they have received the necessary training and procedures (Darmayani & Amelia, 2023). However, it was found that although most teachers have between 1 to 3 years of teaching experience, this limited experience could be a factor affecting how they implement the curriculum as delivered (Simon et al., 2023). Teachers with longer experience more effectively overcome the obstacles to implementing Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar. (Aulia et al., 2024) Teachers' teaching experience affects the successful adaptation of Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar. In this context, the need for continuous training and more intensive coaching is very important to improve teaching quality in the era of implementing Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar.

Regarding teacher satisfaction with Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar, many are satisfied even though there are challenges in its implementation. (Tuerah & Tuerah, 2023) state limited resources such as textbooks and facilities are the main obstacles to implementing Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar. Furthermore, (Aisyah, 2024) also explain that the implementation of Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar requires comprehensive support, including resources, training and administrative support.

On the students' side, the result of this study show that they feel more engaged in activity-based learning such as competitions, exhibitions and project assignments. This is in line with Piaget's theory of constructivism which states that students' understanding and creativity will grow when they are actively involved in the knowledge creation process.

However, while many students felt they were given freedom in their learning, some reported challenges related to heavy workloads and limited access

to technology. (Fatimatuzzahrah et al., 2023) Implementation of Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar faces three main challenges: limited resources, training and time. (Nisa et al., 2023) The implementation of Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar requires intensive socialization because the process is still in its early stages. Therefore, it is necessary to increase access to technology and digital training and socialization for students so that they can maximize their learning experience.

In addition, it was found that students felt more motivated with a variety of assignments and freedom in accessing materials. Research (Zaematun & Rizqi, 2024)) shows that giving varied assignments and providing learning freedom can increase student motivation which ultimately contributes to achieving better learning outcomes.

However, the biggest challenge students face is time management between homework and schoolwork, which affects the quality of their study time. This suggests the need for more support in terms of time management, both from the school and parents. Effective time management is crucial to the successful implementation of a project-based curriculum, which requires more flexible and structured time to complete more activities, as explained by (Wahyuningsih et al., 2024).

This study has limitations because it was only conducted in a particular area, namely Gunungsitoli, so the results may not be generalized to all regions of Indonesia. Therefore, further research is needed to evaluate the effectiveness of Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar in various cultural and social contexts. Studies in various regions with different conditions will provide a more comprehensive picture of the challenges and successes of implementing this curriculum throughout Indonesia.

As a recommendation, future research needs to assess more deeply the effect of more intensive training on the effectiveness of curriculum implementation. Also, a systematic evaluation of the effect of Kurikulum Merdeka on student motivation and achievement in different types of schools would provide deeper insights into this policy.

CONCLUSION

Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar implemented at secondary schools in Indonesia has had a significant impact on the learning process. It allows students to be more creative, independent and engaged in project-based activities, while teachers have the freedom to customize teaching materials according to students' needs. However, several obstacles hinder the implementation of this curriculum, including lack of facilities, lack of adequate training, and lack of access to technology.

Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar has great potential as an educational framework that fits the demands of the 21st century, despite some obstacles. To succeed, continuous support, such as the provision of resources, comprehensive training and ongoing evaluation, is essential. This curriculum can be the basis for a more flexible, creative and student-centered education system by addressing these issues.

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