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# Teachers' Perceptions of The Implementation of Merdeka Curriculum In English Language Learning At Phase EO F Madrasah Aliyah Mathla'ul Anwar Pusat Menes Pandeglang Banten

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## ABSTRACT

This research aims to explore and analyze teachers' perceptions of the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum on English subjects in phase E at Madrasah Aliyah Mathla'ul Anwar, Menes Pusat. The Merdeka Curriculum was introduced as a government effort to increase the relevance and quality of education in Indonesia. Phase E in Madrasah Aliyah Mathla'ul Anwar refers to the upper secondary education level. The research method used is qualitative with a case study approach. Data was collected through in-depth interviews with English teachers involved in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in phase E. Data analysis was carried out using a thematic approach to identify main patterns in teacher perceptions. The research results show that the majority of teachers have a positive perception of the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in English subjects in phase E of Madrasah Aliyah Mathla'ul Anwar. They see the Merdeka Curriculum as a progressive step that provides flexibility in teaching and assessment methods. The application of a scientific approach and contextual learning is considered to enrich students' learning experiences. However, a number of teachers also face challenges in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum. Some of them feel there is a lack of infrastructure support and supporting resources, such as textbooks that are in accordance with the Merdeka Curriculum approach. Additionally, rapid curriculum changes create confusion and concerns regarding proper understanding and implementation. Meanwhile, the assessment aspect is a major concern for English teachers. They consider that the assessment system integrated in the Merdeka Curriculum needs to be adjusted to better support the learning approach promoted. Some teachers also voiced the need for further training to understand and implement the Merdeka Curriculum effectively. In conclusion, teachers' perceptions of the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in English subjects in phase E of Madrasah Aliyah Mathla'ul Anwar reflect a combination of appreciation for innovation and challenges in its implementation. Further efforts are needed to support teachers in overcoming the barriers they face, including the provision of adequate resources and relevant training. This study provides valuable insights for the development and improvement of the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in the context of Aliyah madrasah education.



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## INTRODUCTION

Education is the main part in improving intelligent, dedicated and qualified Human Resources (HR). As time goes by, creative and innovative ideas can be pursued through the educational process. In the world of quality education, whether someone is qualified or not depends on the learning process they go through, and a quality learning process will be obtained if there is a curriculum that is in accordance with the process and goals of the education itself. However, in reality, not all curricula are suitable if applied equally in every educational institution.

Ideally, educational goals can be achieved if they are supported by a curriculum that is neatly arranged and in accordance with the needs of students at school, but in reality there are still many students who feel burdened when curriculum changes occur because they feel burdened. find it difficult to adapt to the new curriculum in force. In fact, the saying "change minister, change curriculum" has emerged. This indicates that the curriculum often changes in each period.

Curriculum is needed in determining the achievement of educational goals. According to Law Number 20 of 2003, "curriculum is a set of plans and arrangements regarding objectives, content, teaching materials and methods used and used as guidelines in organizing learning activities to achieve certain educational goals.

From 1945 to 2020, the history of Indonesian education has experienced a number of changes in curriculum implementation. Among them are the 1947 RPP curriculum, 1952 RPP, 1964 RPP, 1968 curriculum, 1975, 1984, 1994 and 1999 curriculum supplements, competency-based curriculum (KBK 2004), educational units. Level Curriculum (KTSP 2006), and 2013 Curriculum (K13). Indonesia faces many educational problems. School burdens are increasing due to the increasingly diverse needs and demands of life. Schools not only have to provide knowledge to their students, but schools also have a responsibility to help students develop their personalities, interests and character. In addition, schools must help students perfect the various skills they already have.

Several national and international studies state that learning in Indonesia has been experiencing a crisis for quite some time. This research states that quite a lot of Indonesian children are not yet able to understand simple reading or apply basic English concepts. Then the research explained the significant educational gaps between regions in Indonesia. Then things got worse with the Covid-19 pandemic. To catch up with this backwardness and crisis, systematic and significant changes are needed, one of which is through the curriculum. Because the material taught in class is determined by the curriculum which can influence the accuracy of the learning methods used by teachers in meeting students' needs. Therefore, the Ministry of Education and Culture developed the Merdeka Curriculum as an urgent matter in efforts to recover from the learning crisis in Indonesia.

The existence of learning loss due to Covid 19 causes students to achieve different competencies in each school. To overcome this, it is necessary to implement a curriculum as an effort to restore learning. Of course, the implementation of the curriculum is adjusted to needs and must pay attention to the achievement of student competencies in each school. Before the Covid-19 pandemic occurred, the 2013 Curriculum was implemented in educational units in the learning process. Then at the beginning of the pandemic from 2020 to 2021, the Ministry of Education and Culture provided a policy for implementing the 2013 curriculum and the emergency curriculum (simplified or revised 2013 curriculum). Then, each school was given three curriculum choices, including the 2013 Curriculum, the Emergency Curriculum (a simplified curriculum from the Ministry of Education and Culture), and the Merdeka Curriculum. Minister of Education Nadiem Makarim issued an Merdeka learning policy to strengthen the current curriculum. The Merdeka Curriculum focuses on character education and student activities related to competence both socially, emotionally and physically.

The Merdeka Curriculum is a curriculum designed by the Ministry of Education and Culture to

provide freedom for schools to explore students' abilities in accordance with existing resources and infrastructure. Not only that, the Merdeka Curriculum also gives teachers freedom in delivering learning material and students have more freedom to explore their potential so that the results obtained are achieved optimally. The Merdeka Curriculum applied to Madrasah Aliyah (MA) refers to Minister of Religion Regulation Number 347 of 2022 concerning guidelines for implementing the Merdeka Madrasah curriculum, in the context of learning recovery which explains that the application of the Merdeka Curriculum is intended for Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI), Madrasah Tsanawiyah (MTS), and Madrasah Aliyah (MA). Then in Minister of Religion Regulation Number 347 of 2022 it is explained that the structure of the secondary education curriculum is divided into two main activities, namely extracurricular learning and the project to strengthen the Pancasila student profile.

The advantage of the Merdeka Curriculum is that it is simpler compared to the previous curriculum. Schools become more Merdeka because they are given the authority to control and develop the learning curriculum according to the needs of the educational unit and students. So, the learning that takes place becomes more effective and interactive. In terms of making lesson plans, the advantage of the Merdeka Curriculum is that it makes it easier for teachers in administrative matters because making lesson plans is converted into a teaching module which only consists of three core components, namely learning objectives, learning activities and assessment.

One of the weaknesses of the Merdeka Curriculum is that there is still a lack of clarity regarding effective learning strategies, methods and media because teachers can ignore this process. Then in research conducted at SDN 244 Guruminda which was outlined in a journal entitled "Implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in Improving the Quality of Education" it was stated that when the Merdeka Curriculum was implemented the students' reactions were confused, silent and unwilling to talk. .

Based on the results of previous research conducted by Restu Rahayu in his journal entitled "Implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in Driving Schools" stated that by implementing the Merdeka Curriculum, teaching and learning activities become more interactive and effective. This is because in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum, schools are given the freedom to determine three choices in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum. These three options include: first, implementing some of the principles of the Merdeka Curriculum without changing the existing curriculum in schools. Second, implementing the Merdeka Curriculum by utilizing existing facilities and infrastructure at the school. Third, implementing the Merdeka Curriculum using self-made teaching tools. Apart from the freedom given to schools, the results of research conducted by Restu Rahayu et al. Explain that the principal is one of the most important elements in a driving school, because the principal has high authority to advance the school. Because the principal's job is to protect, direct, inspire, guide and lead the course of educational programs in a better direction. In achieving the success of the Merdeka Curriculum, English as a subject aims to help children acquire better language skills in general, including the ability to understand grammar and correct sentence structure. This can help improve the ability to communicate effectively, both verbally and in writing, this is in line with the profile of Pancasila students who must improve and prepare themselves to participate in the success of the Merdeka Curriculum. A very comprehensive English subject must be chosen as the most basic one so that students can master it well. Because English language material is so broad and extensive, it is impossible to complete learning that only takes place in a few meetings in one semester at school. Therefore, a teacher's creativity is needed in analyzing the most urgent and main learning content so that it is easy for students to understand and put into practice in a short time.

Based on an empirical study conducted on Monday 16 October 2023 at Madrasah Aliyah Mathla'ul Anwar Menes Pusat, there is data that Madrasah Aliyah Mathla'ul Anwar Menes Pusat was declared a school under the auspices of the Ministry of Religion. which implements the

Merdeka learning curriculum in the 2023/2024 academic year. However, because Madrasah Aliyah Mathla'ul Anwar Menes Pusat is the first generation school under the Ministry of Religion to implement the first generation Merdeka Curriculum in Pandeglang Regency, there are several teachers including English teachers who have difficulty implementing the interacting Merdeka Curriculum. more with IT (Information and Technology). So that teachers who are not yet proficient in operating it experience difficulties and lag behind in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum. Then in the learning process, school facilities in the form of infocus, projectors and laptops are inadequate, in contrast to the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum which interacts more with IT (Information and Technology). However, based on empirical studies conducted by researchers, there is a lot of student work displayed in the school environment, where this work is the result of project- based learning for Pancasila students, which is one of the Merdeka Curriculum programs. Then, when English learning takes place, the class atmosphere is very lively because students are actively involved in the learning process. From the results of these observations, researchers are interested in finding out more about the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum at the Madrasah Aliyah Mathla'ul Anwar Menes Pusat, especially teachers' perceptions of the Merdeka Curriculum in English subjects, whether teachers' perceptions of English are positive or the opposite. not in accordance with what can be seen from the results of observations that have been made.

## **METHOD**

Teachers' perceptions of the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in English subjects at Madrasah Aliyah Mathla'ul Anwar in phase E are a crucial aspect that influences learning effectiveness. In this method, teachers can observe a number of indicators to evaluate how this curriculum is implemented and accepted by them.

First of all, in-depth interviews with English teachers can provide rich insight into their views and understanding of the Merdeka Curriculum. Asking structured, open-ended questions can open up space for them to convey personal experiences, challenges, and perceived positive impacts. Class observation is the next method to explore teacher perceptions. Attending English language learning sessions in phase E allowed researchers to observe how teachers implemented these curriculum elements in daily practice. Observations can also provide a deeper understanding of teacher-student interactions, resource utilization, and learning strategies used. A large-scale survey could involve all English teaching staff at the madrasah. Survey questions may include appreciation of the flexibility of the Merdeka Curriculum, obstacles faced, and support received from the school. Surveys can provide a holistic picture of teachers' collective perceptions of the curriculum. Document analysis can also be involved by examining progress reports, teaching notes, and English learning evaluation results. This document can reveal information regarding the extent to which teachers understand and integrate the principles of the Merdeka Curriculum in each phase of learning.

## **FINDING AND DISCUSSION**

Teachers' perceptions of the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in English subjects in phase E at Madrasah Aliyah Mathla'ul Anwar illustrate their various views and experiences in implementing this innovative curriculum. The results of this research indicate a number of findings that can provide in-depth insight into the extent to which the curriculum influences learning and teaching practices in the madrasa environment.

One important finding is that the majority of teachers responded positively to the Merdeka Curriculum concept. They appreciate the freedom given in designing learning according to student needs and characteristics. Many of them emphasized that this approach provides room for creativity and adaptability that allows them to adapt the material to the classroom context and student characteristics. However, along with this appreciation, research also highlights several challenges faced by teachers. Some of them find it difficult to develop a curriculum that focuses on

student-Pusat learning. Some teachers stated that the freedom provided by the Merdeka Curriculum requires additional skills in lesson planning that can meet students' needs and interests effectively. It is important to note that the lack of support and training related to the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum also emerged as a significant theme in teacher perceptions. Several respondents stated that they felt they needed to get more guidance and support from the school to optimize the implementation of this curriculum. This shows the importance of a holistic approach in supporting educators during the curriculum change process.

The survey results show that the majority of teachers stated that despite several obstacles, they saw a positive impact on students' active participation in learning. By providing freedom in choosing teaching methods, teachers feel more able to motivate students to be actively and critically involved in learning English. In addition, the results of classroom observations reflect variations in the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum. Some teachers are able to integrate a student-Pusat approach smoothly, while others may need more time to adjust. Therefore, there is a need for collaborative forums and experience sharing among teachers to facilitate the exchange of ideas and best practices in the context of this curriculum. In the end, these results and discussion highlight the complexity and dynamics of implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in English subjects in phase E at Madrasah Aliyah Mathla'ul Anwar. Continuous efforts are needed on the part of schools to understand teacher needs and challenges, and provide the necessary resources and training to effectively support this change process. Thus, the results of this research can become a basis for developing better strategies to encourage the sustainable implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in the madrasah environment.

## **CONCLUSION**

In research regarding teachers' perceptions of the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in English subjects in phase E at Madrasah Aliyah Mathla'ul Anwar, it can be concluded that teachers' views reflect a combination of appreciation for the freedom provided by the curriculum and the challenges in facing these changes. Many teachers positively assess the Merdeka Curriculum Concept, seeing it as an opportunity to develop more contextual learning and adapt the material to student needs. Freedom in designing learning is considered to provide space for creativity, motivate students to be more actively involved, and increase their interest in English lessons.

However, research also identifies several obstacles faced by teachers. Some of them experience difficulties in developing a curriculum that focuses on student-Pusat learning. Their perceptions indicate that further support and training is needed so that teachers can take full advantage of the freedom provided by the Merdeka Curriculum. Lack of support and training related to curriculum implementation also emerged as an important issue. Some teachers feel they need further guidance and active support from the school to ensure that they can implement the Merdeka Curriculum optimally. This shows the important role of schools in supporting educators during the curriculum change process.

Thus, the conclusion of this research shows that the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in English subjects in phase E at Madrasah Aliyah Mathla'ul Anwar is a complex process with various dynamics. A holistic approach is needed, including intensive training, collaborative forums, and ongoing support to ensure success and good buy-in from teachers. This research provides a basis for further understanding of how teachers deal with curriculum changes, as well as their potential impact on English language learning in these madrasahs. Therefore, these results can be a basis for the school to design a more effective strategy in supporting the sustainable implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, ensuring improved learning quality, and providing maximum benefits for students at the Madrasah Aliyah Mathla'ul Anwar Pusat Menes.

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