



STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF IMPLEMENTATION MERDEKA CURRICULUM IN SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL

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Abstract

This research was conducted because students have not been able to utilize The Merdeka Curriculum optimally, this is due to the lack of information that students know about The Merdeka Curriculum. The Merdeka Curriculum Program is an important topic in the development of education in Indonesia. Meanwhile, the benefits and challenges of implementing this program continue. From the statement above, researcher interested in knowing students' perceptions of what they felt, especially regarding the benefits and challenges of this curriculum. This study used a qualitative method. This research used data collection took the form of audio recordings of interviews which were then transcribed. The resource data in this research were class XI consist of 5 students for the 2022/2023 academic year. To analyze the data, researcher used thematic analysis. Researcher used content validity to support research. The research results showed that the Merdeka Curriculum made students more motivated in learning, because the Merdeka Curriculum supported students to determine what they want to prepare for in the future, this is also done in choosing elective subjects that they choose according to their interests. The Merdeka Curriculum challenges students to continue to develop and learn new things in order to be able to keep up with the times. Researcher also hope that this research can be a reference for readers to improve the curriculum in the future so that it is better and of better quality for students. and teachers also continue to guide students, and students must be more active in studying.

Keywords: Student Perceptions, Benefit, Challenges, Merdeka Curriculum

INTRODUCTION

The curriculum is an important element in implementing the learning process at all levels of education (Desna Yarlina Telaumbanua, 2024). The education system in Indonesia has undergone significant reforms, one of which is the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in SMA. The Merdeka Curriculum Program is an important topic in the development of education in Indonesia. Meanwhile, the benefits and challenges in implementing this program are still on the way. From the statement above, the researcher interested to know students' perceptions of what they felt, especially on the benefits and challenges of this curriculum. Therefore, this research expected to contribute to developing the Merdeka Curriculum in schools in Indonesia. According to (Wahyudi et al., 2022). The curriculum focuses on developing students' character and skills, with an emphasis on

Pancasila values. It incorporates project-based learning, essential material, and allows for flexibility in curriculum design.

Based on observations made by researchers during PLP 1, students had not been able to take full advantage of the Merdeka Curriculum, due to the lack of information that students know about the Merdeka Curriculum. In this day and age, students must be able to master technological advances, this made students challenged where students must follow technological advances so as not to be left behind.

Based on research conducted by researchers, the Merdeka Curriculum has the benefit of making students more motivated in learning and increasing student learning creativity, as well as providing challenges where students have to work on projects given by the teacher, and most assignments are also technology-based. This made students increasingly challenged to learn about technological advances as time goes by so as not to be left behind. (Insani, 2019) Students also have the freedom to choose the subjects they wish to study based on their interests and career aspirations. This allowed them to delve deeper into the areas they are passionate about, fostering a sense of motivation and involvement in their studies. While the challenge that most students had experience is that they needed direction to choose what they would take and lead to their future careers. this would enable them to learn to made decisions that they think are right.

Several researchers have researched the Merdeka Curriculum, especially in senior high schools, to test the effectiveness of the Merdeka Curriculum program. One of the studies conducted by (Shofiyuddin et al., 2023) found that the Merdeka curriculum It can be concluded that the use implementation of Merdeka curriculum through Project based Learning gained very positive perception from the students.

Another study conducted by (Arrozi et al., 2022) found that Merdeka Curriculum The results showed that the student's perceptions of the implementation of the MBKM program were effectively based on the expectations of students. The performance of the MBKM program, regardless of policies, mechanisms, and benefits of MBKM implementation more than 70%. The implementation of MBKM among students is beneficial. It was due to improving the competence and skills of students as a provision to work after graduation.

Student perceptions play an important role in measuring the success of the Independent Curriculum. It is very relevant to conduct a study of student perceptions of the new curriculum so that students' views can be known, and efforts can be made to improve the Independent Curriculum. Along with advances in technology and the development of globalization, the Independent Curriculum is aimed at making students able to face future challenges, be participative, creative, and able to compete in a global environment. The explanation above is also reinforced by the statement of (Handayani et al., 2022) The implementation of the Independent Curriculum is expected to improve the quality of learning and the relevance of education to the world of work.

Therefore, based on the problems above the researcher is interested in researching the title "Student Perceptions of Implementation Merdeka Curriculum in Senior High School". In the education system in Indonesia, education has undergone a number of curriculum changes eleven times, starting in 1947, with a very simple curriculum then until the last is the 2013 curriculum. Even though the curriculum changes, the goal is improvement to the previous curriculum. Any changes that occur are at the discretion of the parties involved responsible for handling education in Indonesia. In changing the curriculum currently used is known as the Merdeka Curriculum or the concept of independent learning. Merdeka

Curriculum is in accordance with the ideals of the national figure in Education, namely Ki Hajar Dewantara, focusing on freedom to learn independently and creatively. This will have an impact on the creation of characters students who have independent character. (Insani, 2019) There are also several Merdeka Curriculum policies including changing USBN to a competency assessment, changing the national exam to an assessment minimum competency and character survey. (Indarta et al., 2022) As well as streamlining plans the implementation of learning that usually contains 20 pages now just one sheet pages that contain three components, learning objectives, learning activities, and assessment.

In the world of education, curriculum is one of the important and mandatory elements in institutional units Education. (Rachman et al., 2021) The curriculum has an important role in the form of learning tools that contain about planning learning activities in the form of a process of acquiring knowledge and experience gained through a series of learning activities. (Suratno et al., 2022) Curriculum can also be interpreted as a process that includes determinants in goals learning based on several aspects such as aspects of needs, selection of materials and methods learning, development of learning materials and activities, evaluation of learning outcomes designed by considering the developmental characteristics of students. The design of this curriculum contains rules related to lesson planning related to objectives, content, materials or learning materials, and how to apply them so that the objectives of this curriculum was classified as very important in achieving curriculum goals.

According (Hadi et al., 2023) Merdeka Learning Curriculum is one of the new educational programs in Indonesia which was introduced in 2020. The aim is to give schools and teachers the freedom to develop curriculum and learning methods that suit the needs of students. In this section, we will discuss some of the advantages of the Merdeka Curriculum, including learning that is tailored to student needs, freedom for teachers to choose appropriate teaching methods, increasing student creativity, student motivation to learn, and student participation in learning.

Education is a systematic process to develop individual potential, moral, helping to understand the world around us so that we can provide provisions in facing social life. Every human being has potential can develop through educational activities organized by the government or private parties (Martatiana et al., 2023). Curriculum is a plan that organizes material learning, teaching methods, educational objectives, and assessment in a education system. The curriculum plays a key role in education (Abdullah et al., 2023). The existence of education alone plays a vital role in a sustainable future that brings opportunities for good quality in human life's aspects. Education is the process and outcome of acquiring systematized knowledge and abilities, a prerequisite for preparing a person for life and employment (Ferdaus & Novita, 2023). The existence of the Merdeka Curriculum, which enhances the previous curriculum, offers hope for the restoration of students' learning by taking into account the importance of learning and each student's individuality (Fauzan et al., 2023). The implementation and development of curricula play a central role in shaping the educational landscape of a region. In the Indonesian context, the introduction of the Merdeka Curriculum marked a significant milestone in the ongoing efforts to improve the quality of education (Anjelina et al., 2024).

METHOD

This research is survey research. This allows researchers to summarize perceptions and students' opinions regarding the Merdeka Curriculum (Mukti, 2022). In this

study, researchers used semi-structured interviews containing questions regarding the benefits and challenge felt by students in the Merdeka Curriculum. This interview was conducted to find out directly how students perceive the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in high school which focuses more on discussing the benefits and challenges they face. This research only took 5 respondents to be interviewed because according to the researchers they represented a diversity of reactions. The selection of 5 respondents was chosen randomly in each group, because in this independent curriculum students are divided into 5 groups in 1 class, even more depending on the number of students in 1 class. Researchers used thematic analysis which was deemed suitable to explore students' perceptions of the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in high school. Thematic analysis is suitable for exploring students' perceptions of the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in high school. According to Sugiyono (2021) in thematic analysis.

The Following steps taken to analyze the data:

1. Prepare and organize data

In this study, researchers prepared data by listening to the audio and understanding the interview audio carefully. To facilitate understanding, the audio is also transcribed in text form to determine the necessary themes or points.

2. Review and explore data

The second step, reviewing the data through transcripts and producing initial codes consisting of learning experiences, such as benefits and challenges so that researcher carry out detailed and specific classifications.

3. Develop a data coding system

The third step, after determining initial codes based on original ideas, is important to provide a set of codes that can be applied to classify the data.

4. Allocate codes in the data.

The statements of each informant/student were organized into codes and classified the data more specifically to be included in the final analysis based on the topic of students' perception implementation Merdeka Curriculum In Senior High School.

5. Related to themes that often appear

The fifth step is to determine themes from the data analysis that are in accordance with the research questions so that two relevant themes are found, namely benefit and challenges for students.

6. Interpret the meaning of the theme

The final step is research, carrying out the process of writing an analytical discussion of the code that has been represented in the previous step according to the existing theme.

RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

The research results explain about benefits and challenges from student perceptions. As a result, there are several benefits obtained by students, such as: increasing life motivation, and increasing creativity. Meanwhile, the challenge that students face is that students learn to adapt to this curriculum.

1. Benefits of the Merdeka curriculum according to students' perceptions

a. Merdeka curriculum can motivate students to learn.

This can be felt by students because Merdeka curriculum provides freedom in choosing subjects that students are interested in, so that they are more enthusiastic about learning and carry out it seriously according to the students' requests.

Extract 1.1:

Fredy: "Yes, it frees up subjects that I'm interested in, I really agree because I can prepare for the college I want to go to in the future."

Extract 1.2:

Amelia: "Very agree, because we adjust subjects that are relevant to the major we want and make us even more enthusiastic."

Extract 1.3:

Sava: "Very agree, so that my friends and I can prepare relevant lessons in the majors we want and make me more enthusiastic about studying."

Extract 1.4:

Fawwaz: "I really agree, because this is a form of support from the school for students to be able to determine their interests and I am even more motivated to learn."

From the results of the statements, 4 out of 5 students stated that the independent curriculum could foster and increase enthusiasm for learning and be more motivated to go to a higher level such as university. Their statement is strengthened by the findings of (Wahyuni, 2022) In Merdeka Learning, students are given the freedom to choose the way they want to learn, according to their needs and interests. This makes them more active and independent in the learning process. Other findings were also found in (Hidayati et al., 2022) that this independent curriculum has an effect on student learning, one of which is student motivation to learn, due to changes to the curriculum, students are more motivated to learn.

b. Merdeka curriculum can increase students' creativity in learning.

This can be felt by students because the Merdeka curriculum provides projects which can make students creative and increase students' skills.

Extract 2.1:

Allan: "Not all subjects are linked to the Pancasila student profile, there are several subjects that are project-based (P5) which teach students new skills for future preparation."

Extract 2.2:

Fredy: "Not all subjects are linked, but my friends and I have received P5 projects in other subjects which can increase our skills."

Extract 2.3:

Amelia: "Not always, but there are several subjects that give us P5 projects and these projects are carried out regularly."

Extract 2.4:

Sava: "Not all, but there are several subjects that have implemented it, actually this is a very good program but if possible, don't make it a burden on the students."

Extract 2.5:

Fawwaz: "Not always, but it is still a process of adapting to conditions, there are several subjects that have been linked to the Pancasila student profile values, and I also agree with that because it can develop our skills."

From the results of this statement, 5 out of 5 students agreed that an independent curriculum can foster and increase student creativity and improve student skills to prepare students for the future, which can be a positive activity for students in the future that provides many benefits.

Below are instructions for the code

Name	Code	Meaning
Coding	B	Benefit
	C	Challenges

Below is an explanation of the table above

No	Generating initial codes	Coding	Themes	Sub Thema
1	“Yes, it frees up subjects that I'm interested in, I really agree because I can prepare for the college I want to go to in the future.”	B	Benefit	Merdeka curriculum can motivate students to learn.
2	“Very agree, because we adjust subjects that are relevant to the major, we want and make us even more enthusiastic.”	B	Benefit	Merdeka curriculum can motivate students to learn.
3	“Very agree, so that my friends and I can prepare relevant lessons in the majors we want and make me more enthusiastic about studying.”	B	Benefit	Merdeka curriculum can motivate students to learn.
4	“I really agree, because this is a form of support from the school for students to be able to determine their interests and I am even more motivated to learn.”	B	Benefit	Merdeka curriculum can motivate students to learn.
5	"Not all subjects are linked, but my friends and I have received P5 projects in other subjects which can increase our skills."	B	Benefit	Merdeka curriculum can increase students' creativity in learning.
6	“Not always, but there are several subjects that give us P5 projects, and these projects are carried out regularly.”	B	Benefit	Merdeka curriculum can increase students' creativity in learning.

7	“Not all, but there are several subjects that have implemented it, actually this is a very good program but, if possible, don't make it a burden on the students.”	B	Benefit	Merdeka curriculum can increase students' creativity in learning.
8	"Not all subjects are linked to the Pancasila student profile, there are several subjects that are project-based (P5) which teach students new skills for future preparation."	B	Benefit	Merdeka curriculum can increase students' creativity in learning.
9	"Not always, but it is still a process of adapting to conditions, there are several subjects that have been linked to the Pancasila student profile values, and I also agree with that because it can develop our skills."	B	Benefit	Merdeka curriculum can increase students' creativity in learning.
10	“Not always, because not all tasks are technology based. I prefer technology- based ones because I am also learning so as not to be left behind.”	C	Challenges	Students felt challenged by technology-based assignments or projects that keep up with the times.
11	"It's not mandatory, but I prefer technology-based ones because they are easier and simpler."	C	Challenges	Students felt challenged by technology-based assignments or projects that keep up with the times.
12	Very agree, so that we get used to it and can keep up with the times."	C	Challenges	Students felt challenged by technology-based assignments or projects that keep up with the times.
13	“Not always, because not all tasks are technology based. I prefer technology- based ones because I am also learning so as not to be left behind.”	C	Challenges	Students felt challenged by technology-based assignments or projects that keep up with the times.

Discussions

In this discussion, the researcher discussed that the Merdeka Curriculum provides benefits and Challenges for students.

The Merdeka Curriculum can motivate students to learn. This is proven by the students' explanation of their freedom to choose specialization subjects, which students choose

according to their interests, and usually students choose which ones will be needed in the future to prepare for entry into the university that students want, here students feel motivated to learn because students feel they have been given the freedom to choose and this makes students even more enthusiastic. (Vhalery et al., 2022) This freedom is used as encouragement for students to explore their knowledge so as to create an independent character. (Baro'ah, 2020) Freedom to learn was born because of the many problems that occur in the world of education, but the focus is more on human resources.

The second benefit felt by students is the Independent Curriculum which can increase students' creativity in learning. The results obtained from interviews were that students felt they were more creative, because in this curriculum they were given projects which could improve students' skills and increase their creativity. According to (Asrifan et al., 2023) Merdeka Curriculum is a new curriculum implemented in Indonesia with the aim of improving the quality of education by providing greater flexibility, creativity, and a student-centered approach to learning

Meanwhile, the challenge they face is that they feel challenged by the progress of the times, where most of their tasks are technology-based. so students feel this is their challenge and continue to learn about technological advances as time goes by. (Rachman et al., 2021) The curriculum has an important role in the form of learning tools that contain about planning learning activities in the form of a process of acquiring knowledge and experience gained through a series of learning activities.

CONCLUSION

After analyzing the data, researcher concluded in this study that the Merdeka Curriculum had many positive impacts felt by students and the challenges they experienced could make them want to know more about many things.

1. Benefits for Students

The Merdeka Curriculum is flexible and able to increase student motivation and help students develop student interests and talents from existing policies. Most students find it helpful in preparing knowledge for future students. The use of the Independent Curriculum also provides a challenge for students to keep up with developments in the era where everything is technology-based.

The Merdeka Curriculum made students more motivated to learn, because the Merdeka Curriculum supports students to determine what they want to prepare for the future, this is done as well as in choosing elective subjects that they choose according to the students' interests. This policy makes students more motivated in their learning. Apart from that, the Independent Curriculum can also increase students' creativity from the assignments or projects given. just as there is a P5 program which is carried out regularly to increase student creativity both in the form of goods and creativity in creating interesting performances.

2. Challenges for Students

The Merdeka Curriculum provides challenges for students to continue to develop and learn new things so they can keep up with the times. Because most of their assignments are technology-based, including making ppt, presentations and film making, they are also student assignments. Assignments or projects like this require students to continue to follow current developments in the field of technology and most students say they like the Merdeka Curriculum because students feel supported in preparing for their future.

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