



The Implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum Viewed From School Readiness in Lampung Province

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Abstract

The curriculum is an important part of education. To realize quality human resources, a curriculum that accommodates various competencies and skills is needed. Curriculum changes are necessary to adapt to current needs and prepare for the future. This research aims to understand the implementation of the Merdeka curriculum in terms of school readiness in Lampung Province. This research is a qualitative descriptive study. The research informants include 5 (five) educators from several high schools in Lampung Province. Data collection was conducted using in-depth interviews and observations, supported by literature studies. The research results show that 1) There are still differences in teachers' perceptions regarding the implementation of the Merdeka curriculum due to several differences in understanding, which are suspected to be caused by varying intensities in participating in socialization or experiences in attending activities related to the implementation of the Merdeka curriculum organized by the Education Office or through sharing experiences with colleagues in the MGMP forum, as well as not yet maximizing independent study through various sites facilitated by the Ministry of Education and other internet sources. 2) The school's readiness is good, but there is still a need for improvement in the provision of facilities and budget to maximize learning outcomes. 3) The educators' readiness is good, but supervision is still needed in the implementation of the Program Penguatan Profil Pelajar Pancasila (P5).

INTRODUCTION

One of the innovations in education is updating the curriculum. The curriculum is an inseparable part of the learning process in schools (Pujiati et al., 2021). The curriculum is an important part of education. The quality of education must always be improved in terms of both quality and quantity (Ramadhan, 2023). To realize quality human resources, a curriculum that accommodates a number of competencies and skills is needed. The curriculum, with all its changes, certainly cannot be separated from adapting to human needs in the world to survive in every era. Oliva (1992) wrote that "the process of curriculum development is not free from various problems." Therefore, changes to the curriculum over time are a process in an effort to improve the curriculum to better meet the needs of society.

According to Barlian et al. (2022), the Merdeka curriculum is a curriculum that encompasses various classroom learning where topics will be optimized so that students have sufficient time to explore concepts and build competencies. Meanwhile, according to Sherly et al. (2020), the Merdeka Curriculum provides freedom to schools, teachers, and students to innovate, learn independently, and be creative, with this freedom starting from the teacher as the driving force. The Merdeka curriculum allows for the exploration of learning activities to achieve effective learning.

The facts from field observations indicate that the implementation of the independent learning curriculum still requires support from various parties. The implementation of the merdeka curriculum in schools is still considered to need evaluation regarding its readiness, both from the educators' side, the students' side, and the parents as the educational support system, as well as from the government's side as the regulator and budget holder. According to Qomariyah and Maghfiroh (2022), the concept of the independent learning curriculum policy requires teachers to create a learning process that motivates students, thereby enhancing their enthusiasm in the learning process without burdening them.

The readiness of schools in this matter is suspected to be an important part in achieving the goals of the independent curriculum itself, namely realizing quality and character-based human resources through the Program Penguatan Profil Pelajar Pancasila (P5). The readiness of schools in curriculum changes can pay attention to two fundamental aspects, namely competent teachers and adequate facilities and infrastructure (Puspitasari et al., 2019). The readiness of schools in implementing the Merdeka curriculum is expected to drive improvements in the quality of education, both directly and indirectly, in Lampung Province in particular and Indonesia in general.

Another empirical fact shows that the implementation of the Merdeka curriculum in several schools is still controversial among both school authorities and education practitioners, as well as the wider community. As published in several mass media, criticism and suggestions regarding the implementation of the Merdeka curriculum need to be thoroughly examined, including aspects such as teacher and education staff readiness, availability of technological infrastructure, resistance to change, implementation gaps, assessment, and evaluation (www.kompasiana.com). The research results (Jayanta & Agustika, 2020) state that teachers' understanding of the implementation of the independent learning curriculum is in the sufficient category and still requires further development and understanding. Furthermore, the research results from (Alimuddin, 2023) indicate that the implementation of the independent learning curriculum has been carried out in terms of cognitive diagnostic assessments, the creation of teaching modules, and the implementation of IPAS learning. However, the P5 practice has not been implemented due to obstacles related to the teachers' lack of understanding of the independent learning curriculum, caused by the minimal offline training.

Curriculum changes especially in the aspect of learning currently being implemented, have become a challenge that must be addressed from various angles. As we know, curriculum changes are a necessity and a logical consequence of the development of science and technology from one era to another. Therefore, the policy of implementing the Merdeka curriculum cannot be denied. As educators, this is an inevitability that must be implemented. Insani (2019) emphasizes that the curriculum must always be dynamic and constantly influenced by changes in the underlying factors.

The implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum impacts the ability and readiness of educators, both in developing the curriculum and in the learning process. Educators are expected to work sincerely, possess an unwavering spirit (continuously), and embody the essence of a true teacher. (Yoga, 2020). Educators who work sincerely in teaching are those who are enveloped and driven by values of goodness and the belief in the benefits gained by students. Values of goodness and belief will encourage them to be creative and innovative in carrying out the teaching process. The readiness of educators in implementing the independent curriculum is evident in designing learning programs, particularly in the utilization of applied learning strategies. For example, the research by Suhartoyo et al. (2020) shows that the implementation of contextual learning can realize independent learning in schools.

The Merdeka Curriculum is designed and developed as a more flexible curriculum framework at the implementation level in schools. The focus of this Curriculum is on delivering essential material and developing the character and competencies of students. The Merdeka Curriculum has characteristics, namely *first*, learning based on projects for the development of soft skills and character that align with the Pancasila student profile. *Second*, Project Based Learning for the development of soft skills and character in accordance with the Pancasila student profile is the

first feature of this independent curriculum. *Third*, focusing on the most important information to provide enough time for in-depth study of basic skills such as literacy and numeracy. *Fourth*, teachers should have the freedom to adjust their teaching methods to the needs and abilities of students, as well as the local context and subjects.

Regarding the implementation of the Merdeka curriculum, Houtman (2020) emphasizes that independent learning becomes an innovation in its execution, where learning outcomes cannot always be measured solely from cognitive aspects but can also include values from affective and psychomotor aspects such as attitudes, skills, creativity, innovation, independence, and competence. In addition, through the implementation of the independent curriculum, innovation in education can also be strengthened, as Nagy et al. (2022) explain that the development of innovation models in the world of education is very beneficial for the transformation of social needs.

Referring to those explanations, a deeper examination will be conducted on: "the Implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum Viewed from School Readiness in Lampung Province". The goal to be achieved in this research is to determine:

1. educator's perceptions of the implementation of the Merdeka curriculum in secondary schools in Lampung Province.
2. school's readiness for the implementation of the Merdeka curriculum in Lampung Province.
3. educator's readiness for the implementation of the Merdeka curriculum in secondary schools in Lampung Province.

METHOD

This research is a qualitative descriptive study. The research informants include 5 (five) educators from the Senior High School (SMA) level with different subjects (Biology, Economics, Sociology, English, and Mathematics) covering different phases, namely: Phase E for 10th grade with 2 educators, and Phase F for 11th grade with 2 (two) educators and 12th grade with 1 (one) educator. The informants include representatives from the cities of Bandar Lampung and Metro with 2 educators, as well as 3 (three) educators from the regencies of Pesawaran, Tulangbawang Barat, and Lampung Barat. Data collection was conducted using in-depth interviews and observations, supported by literature studies. The interview instrument was developed based on literature review and relevant research findings. Qualitative data analysis using the Miles and Huberman model.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Educators' Perceptions of the Implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in Secondary Schools in Lampung Province

The implementation of a program in the field is highly dependent on public perception, including the implementation of the Merdeka curriculum. Here are the perceptions of educators regarding the implementation of the Merdeka curriculum:

Table 1. Educators' Perceptions of the Implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum

Perception of IMC	Amount	%
Very Positive	2	40
Positive	1	20
Enough	1	20
Less	1	20
Total	5	100

Source: Primary data processing

Referring to the data, it can be said that educator's perceptions of the implementation of the Merdeka curriculum are very positive. This means that the implementation of the Merdeka curriculum has received a warm welcome from educators. Furthermore, this can also be interpreted as the curriculum changes implemented by the government being seen as a normal

part of program enhancement for the progress of a nation. The research data is also supported by the opinion of Brundrett et al. (2015), which states that understanding the process of curriculum innovation cannot be separated from the success of education. Based on that opinion, it can be said that a very positive perception from educators will facilitate the success of education.

In the research data, it is also known that there is still a lack of perception regarding the implementation of the Merdeka curriculum. This is due to differences in the intensity of participating in socialization or experiences in participating in activities related to the implementation of the Merdeka curriculum organized by the Education Office or through sharing experiences with colleagues in the MGMP forum, as well as not yet maximizing independent study through various sites facilitated by the Ministry of Education and Culture and other internet sources. This is supported by research from Mustofa & Mariati (2022), which states that many teachers still face difficulties in implementing the independent learning curriculum due to the lack of training or socialization activities related to the independent learning curriculum.

As is known, the differences in educational backgrounds and the ability of educators to adapt to each change are not the same. Therefore, it can be considered a valuable input that in the implementation of any policy or program, it needs to be holistic and sustainable. The facts from observations and interviews in the field show that there are educators who adapt very quickly, but there are also those who are slow to respond to new policies, especially in the implementation of the independent curriculum. Therefore, it is still necessary to strive for a tiered socialization and supervision of the quality of the implementation of the independent curriculum so that the goals and results can be achieved effectively.

2. School Readiness in Implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in Lampung Province

Based on research data collected through interviews with educators, the following data was obtained:

Table 2. School Readiness in Implementing the Merdeka Curriculum

School Readiness	Informant 1	Informant 2	Informant 3	Informant 4	Informant 5
Human Resources	Good	Enough	Enough	Good	Good
Facilities and Infrastructure	Good	Enough	Enough	Enough	Good
Learning Resources	Enough	Enough	Good and Complete	Good and Complete	Enough
Students	Good	Good	Enough	Enough	Good
Academic Climate	Well Conducive	Conducive	Conducive	Conducive	Well Conducive
School Achievements	Enough	Available	Available	Enough	Available
Funding	Inadequate	Available	Not enough	Inadequate	Not enough

Source: Primary data processing

Referring to the data in Table 2, it is known that school readiness in implementing the Merdeka curriculum is reviewed from several indicators, namely Human Resources (HR), Facilities and Infrastructure, Learning Resources, Learners, Academic Climate, School Achievement, and Funding. In the HR indicator, it is known that from interviews with 5 (five) informants, it was found that the availability of teacher human resources was sufficient and even good in several schools that were in the top and middle positions. This means that the HR indicator is sufficient and can support the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum. According to research from (Arviansyah & Shagena, 2022), teachers are the driving force in the continuity of independent learning, namely teachers must have an active, innovative, creative, skilled, and enthusiastic attitude to be the driving force for change in education units.

Meanwhile, on the facilities and infrastructure indicator, it is known that 3 (three) informants stated that it was sufficient and 2 (two) informants stated that it was good. This means that facilities and infrastructure can support the implementation of the Merdeka curriculum. Although from in-depth interviews there are still notes from informants that it still needs to be

continuously improved and updated according to the latest needs and developments, for example for practicum equipment, provision of computers, LCDs, etc. On the learning resource indicator, it is known that 3 (three) informants stated that they were quite complete and 2 (two) stated that they were good and complete. This means that the existence of learning resources as one of the support systems in successful learning is sufficient to support the implementation of the Merdeka curriculum. Although this learning resource also still gets notes from informants to continue to be updated and added according to the needs of the subjects and the number of students. According to research (Loilatu et al., 2022) that the implementation of an independent curriculum must be supported by facilities and infrastructure that can provide convenience in conducting learning.

Related to the academic climate indicator, it is known that three informants stated that it is conducive and two informants stated that it is quite conducive. This means that so far the academic climate in the school has been conducive to learning and supports the implementation of the curriculum. However, according to the informants, the academic climate still needs to be grown and familiarize in learning activities and still needs support from the school and the government. In the implementation of Merdeka curriculum, both educators and students in a learning environment will be greatly helped by a conducive academic climate. Therefore, through the implementation of the Merdeka curriculum, it is hoped that the role of all parties can be maximize for its success. As the opinion of Indarta et al. (2022) dan Rahayu, (2022) that the Merdeka Curriculum is dynamically designed and follows the development of science and technology, and is evaluated to ensure that it meets the needs of society and graduates.

3. Educator Readiness in Implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in Secondary Schools in Lampung Province

Based on the research data collected through interviews with educators, the following data were obtained:

Table 3. Educator Readiness in Implementing the Merdeka Curriculum

Educator Readiness	Informant 1	Informant 2	Informant 3	Informant 4	Informant 5
Qualifications	Good	Enough	Enough	Good	Good
Competence	Good	Enough	Enough	Enough	Good
Achievements	Enough	Enough	Good	Good	Enough
<i>Soft skills</i>	Less	Enough	Enough	Enough	Good
Training/IHT/Seminar Participation	Enough	Good	Good	Good	Good

Source: Primary data processing

Referring to table 3, it can be seen that in terms of educators' readiness in implementing the Merdeka curriculum, it is quite good. This can be seen from several indicators, namely: educator qualifications, competence, achievements both academic and non-academic, soft skills, and participation in training/IHT/seminars. Based on the results of the interviews, information was obtained that the informants already had S1 qualifications and some even had S2. This means that the educators have fulfilled the minimum requirements as an educator and even exceeded the standard if there are already qualified S2. This educational qualification is very important so that educators are able to provide the best for students based on their experience in gaining knowledge. The ability of educators to facilitate learning will be greatly influenced by the educational background that has been taken.

In relation to competence, based on the results of interviews and observations in several schools, it is known that educators have competence in accordance with the Law on Teachers and Lecturers which includes pedagogic competence, professional competence, social competence and personality competence. This means that educators are relevant to educational needs and targets. Regarding the implementation of Merdeka curriculum, competent educators will find it easier to understand learning outcomes. Educators with good competence will also find it easier

to organize learning and will be able to accommodate the needs of students through differentiated learning.

In addition, the results of interviews with informants obtained information that they have a number of academic and non-academic achievements, such as being a driving teacher, winning competitions in the field of learning media, writing competitions, and so on. The achievements achieved by these educators are a motivation for both the educators themselves and also for students and the school. High-achieving educators become the best example for students and will be a driver of current and future success.

Based on the results of the interviews, it was also obtained information that the educators in the school already have a number of soft skills that are very helpful in their field of work at school. According to (Sawyer, 2011) who stated that soft skills such as creativity can help teachers in designing interesting and innovative learning, while adaptability is the ability to respond to diverse student needs and unexpected conditions. Among the soft skills possessed by educators include communication skills, foreign language skills, the ability to use technology in learning, the ability to foster student organizations, and others. This means that the soft skills possessed by educators are a supporting instrument for the successful implementation of the Merdeka curriculum. The implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum is running well in schools, one of which is due to the role factor of educators who have good soft skills. Likewise, participation in various scientific forums such as training, IHT, and seminars or workshops.

The results of interviews with informants show that educators have a variety of experiences. Each educator adjusts to their abilities. Creative educators always have a way to be adaptive in every change that exists. Creative educators always improvise in learning, innovate with their abilities and are active in MGMP forums or listen through zoom to various webinars organized by Kemdikbud and the provincial or city education offices.

Educators play a very important role in the implementation of the Merdeka curriculum. Rindiantika (2017) wrote: '... in the learning process, the teacher with all his knowledge does not only act as a teacher but is required to be an inspirer'. Educators who will design, organize and implement and evaluate learning in the classroom. Whether the implementation of learning is good or bad will depend on the readiness of the educator. As we know, the implementation of the Merdeka curriculum places emphasis on character building and the Program Penguatan Profil Pelajar Pancasila (P5). The formation of P5 requires time and habituation. One of the research informants even emphasized the need for an ideal educator figure, and the need for supervision from the government so that P5 can be realized properly. Educators are role models who will inspire and motivate students. The ability to facilitate learning is key. Zulfatunnisa & Maknun (2022) emphasize that the success of education depends on the quality of teaching.

Through qualifications, competencies, achievements, soft skills, and participation in various scientific forums, educators will be better prepared to face various challenges and dynamics in classroom learning that are their responsibility. In addition, educators will also be adaptable and provide the best in their field of work and benefit the community. The readiness of these educators will have an impact on educational achievements at large and the realization of superior Indonesian human resources that are able to compete locally, nationally and globally. This is reinforced by the opinion of Savira (2023), who wrote that 'related to human resource development, education is the path to success and teachers are the main key so that the road can be wide open.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the results and discussion, it can be concluded that: 1) There are still differences in teachers' perceptions of the implementation of the independent curriculum because there are still some differences in understanding, which are thought to be due to differences in intensity in participating in socialization and experience in participating in activities related to the Implementation of the Independent Curriculum held by the Education Office or through sharing experiences with peers in the MGMP forum, and not yet optimal in learning independently through various sites facilitated by the Ministry of Education and Culture and other internet

sources. 2) School readiness is good, but it still needs improvement in fulfilling facilities and budgets to maximize learning outcomes. 3) Educators' readiness is good, but still need supervision in the implementation of the Program Penguatan Profil Pelajar Pancasila (P5).

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