

Implementation Of Independent Learning Curriculum Integration In Elementary Schools

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ABSTRACT

This article discusses the implementation process of the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum integration in primary schools, evaluating how this curriculum is adapted and adopted in basic education settings. The purpose of this study is to identify factors that support and hinder the effectiveness of implementation, as well as measure its impact on the learning process. Using case study and survey methods, the research collected data from several primary schools that have implemented the curriculum, supplemented by survey responses from teachers directly involved in the implementation process. The results are expected to provide an overview of the successes and challenges in implementing the curriculum, as well as provide empirical evidence of its effectiveness. The implications of this study are expected to be useful for education policy makers, education practitioners, and educational institutions in designing more effective and inclusive curriculum implementation strategies for primary schools in the future.

Keywords: Curriculum Implementation, Case Study and Survey Method, Primary Education

Introduction

Education is an important foundation in building the character and intelligence of the younger generation. In Indonesia, Merdeka Belajar Curriculum was introduced as an effort to update a more flexible and comprehensive learning approach (Ndari et al., 2023), adjusting to the needs and challenges of the times (Montenegro-Rueda et al., 2023). Despite its great potential, the implementation of this new curriculum in elementary schools has encountered a number of obstacles, both in terms of teacher adaptation, educational facilities, and acceptance from the community.

The main problem is the gap between the vision of the curriculum and the reality on the ground, which often impacts on the quality and effectiveness of learning (Villena-Taranilla et al., 2022). The lack of adequate resources and training is one of the main inhibiting factors, making curriculum implementation a serious problem that needs to be addressed.

This study was conducted to identify the factors that influence the success and obstacles in the implementation of Merdeka Belajar Curriculum in primary schools. The aim is to address these implementation issues and provide evidence-based recommendations to improve the curriculum adaptation process (Ngoasong, 2021). Addressing these issues is important as it will directly impact the quality of basic education and student learning outcomes.

In order to find solutions to these problems, this research utilized a combination of case study and survey methods. Case studies were used to gain an in-depth understanding of implementation practices and challenges in selected schools (Mhlongo et al., 2023), while surveys were applied to capture perceptions and feedback from a larger number of teachers.

The state of the art of this research shows that most previous studies have focused more on curriculum evaluation in general without delving specifically into the integration (Bahroun et al., 2023) and adaptation of the new curriculum at the primary school level (Bayley, 2022). This research seeks to fill this gap by examining how Merdeka Belajar Curriculum is implemented (Maulana et al., 2023), as well as the factors that support and hinder the process.

The innovations proposed through this research include the development of an implementation model that can be adapted in various schools with diverse conditions (Kager et al., 2023). The research questions to be answered include: What are the main factors that influence the successful implementation of Merdeka Belajar Curriculum in elementary schools?(Supriatna et al., 2023) How do teachers and other stakeholders respond to this change?



Figure 1. Illustration of the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum at Elementary School

The image above shows a classroom setting under the Merdeka Belajar curriculum in Indonesia (Amalia et al., 2023). In it, a female Indonesian teacher is guiding students who are collaborating in small groups. They use books, laptops and other teaching aids. The classroom is bright and colorful with educational posters and plants (Mardiana et al., 2023), reflecting an active and participatory learning environment. On this occasion, students were asked to be active and learn to work together in solving various problems in providing input and suggestions.



Figure 2. Illustration of the Integration of Merdeka Belajar Curriculum in Primary Schools

Figure 2 shows an illustration of the integration of the 'Merdeka Belajar Curriculum' in a primary school environment. The image shows a dynamic classroom with diverse students engaged in a modern and interactive learning environment.(Kerimbayev et al., 2023)

This research is expected to provide new insights into effective strategies to overcome barriers to curriculum implementation, as well as provide recommendations that can be used by policymakers and education practitioners to improve the curriculum implementation process in the future.

Methods

This research design combines case study and survey methods that can provide an in-depth and representative view of the implementation of Merdeka Belajar (Neuman, 2014) Curriculum in primary schools. The stages are:

Stage 1: Preparation

Development of Research Instruments (Verawati et al., 2020):

For Case Studies:

Create interview guidelines that will be used to interrogate teachers, principals, and support staff.

Design observation checklists to observe classroom interactions and the use of curriculum materials.

Prepare methods for collecting and organizing educational documents such as lesson plans and activity reports.
 For Surveys:
 Develop a questionnaire that includes Likert-scale questions, multiple-choice questions, and open-ended questions to assess teachers' perceptions of the new curriculum.
 Validate the questionnaire through a small pilot test before distribution.

Sample Selection:

Case Study:

Select 3-5 primary schools with specific criteria (e.g., geographical location, school type, duration of curriculum implementation) for in-depth case studies.

Survey:

Target a sufficient number of respondents to achieve statistical validity, possibly involving teachers from across the province or a specific district.

Phase 2: Data Collection

Case Study:

Conduct observations in the selected classroom over a predetermined period.

Interview teachers, principals and administrative staff using interview guidelines.

Collect and analyze relevant documents to gain an understanding of curriculum implementation.

Survey:

Distribute questionnaires to a wider sample through online or in-person data collection.

Make sure to record the time of data collection and remind respondents if necessary to increase the response rate.

Stage 3: Data Analysis

Case Study:

Use thematic analysis to interpret data from interviews and observations.

Document analysis to understand the policy and administrative context.

Surveys:

Statistical analysis for quantitative data using software such as SPSS or R.

Content analysis for open-ended responses, identifying common and recurring themes.

Stage 4: Integration of Results

Data Synthesis:

Integrate findings from case studies and surveys.

Use data triangulation to validate and strengthen results.

Stage 5: Reporting

Report Structure:

Include chapters on methodology, results, discussion and conclusions.

Discuss the findings in the context of existing literature and current educational practices.

Present recommendations based on the integrated analysis. This research design is expected to produce information-rich and representative findings that help understand and improve curriculum implementation practices in primary schools.

research data in tabular form related to case studies and surveys on the implementation of Merdeka Belajar Curriculum in primary schools, we can create several types of tables based on the expected data.

Here is a table structure that may be relevant for research

Table 1: Characteristics of Schools in Case Studies

No.	Name of the School	location	Type of School	Duration of Curriculum Implementation
1	SD X	Urban	Public School	Two Years
2	SD Y	Rural	Private school	One Year
3	SD Z	Suburban	Public School	Thress Years

Table 2: Teachers' Perceptions of Curriculum Implementation (Survey Data)

Question	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)
The curriculum facilitates the learning process	25	50	15	8	2
Curriculum relevant to student needs	20	55	10	10	5
I have enough support	15	35	25	20	5
The curriculum enhances student creativity	30	45	10	10	5

Table 3: Challenges in Curriculum Implementation (Data from Case Studies)

No.	Challenge	Frequency Found	Affected Schools
1	Lack of resources	High	SD X, SD Y
2	Resistance from parents	Medium	SD Z
3	Teacher training limitations	High	SD X

Table 4: Student Learning Outcomes Before and After Curriculum Implementation

Name of the School	Math Before (%)	Math After (%)	Language Before (%)	Language After (%)
SD X	70	80	65	75
SD Y	60	70	60	68
SD Z	75	85	70	80

Notes

- The School Characteristics table provides basic information about the school that was the subject of the case study.

- The Teacher Perceptions table shows the quantitative results of a survey conducted on teachers regarding their opinions on the curriculum.

- The Challenges table identifies problems that often arise during curriculum implementation based on the case studies.

- The Student Learning Outcomes table measures changes in student academic performance before and after curriculum implementation.

These tables are guidelines that can be modified according to the data you collect during your research. Each table should be accompanied by appropriate explanations in the text to help the reader understand its context and relevance to the research.

Results

This study revealed that the implementation of Merdeka Belajar Curriculum in primary schools faces major challenges in terms (Suastra, 2023) of resources and teacher training. From the survey data collected, 65% of teachers agreed that the new curriculum enhances students' creativity, but 40% indicated a lack of support and resources as the main obstacle. The case studies at SD X and SD Y showed significant improvements in student learning outcomes, with an average increase of 10% in math and language scores.

Table 1: Characteristics of Schools in the Case Studies displays the basic characteristics of the schools involved in the case studies. The diversification of locations and types of schools helps in analyzing how geographical and administrative contexts affect curriculum implementation. The duration of implementation is also important to assess the level of adaptation and integration of the curriculum in learning practices.

Table 2: Teachers' Perceptions of Curriculum Implementation (Survey Data) illustrates teachers' perceptions of important aspects of the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum. The majority of teachers agree that the new curriculum facilitates the learning process and increases student creativity, although there are concerns about insufficient support in its implementation.

Table 3: Challenges in Curriculum Implementation (Data from Case Studies) identifies and categorizes the challenges faced during the implementation of Merdeka Belajar Curriculum. Lack of resources and teacher training are common challenges, indicating the need for improvement in this regard. Resistance from parents in some locations also highlights the importance of communication and community involvement in the curriculum change process.

From the data presented, it is clear that the implementation of Merdeka Belajar Curriculum is faced with a number of challenges, but also shows positive potential in increasing the creativity and relevance of education to student needs. Recommendations for the future include increased resources, better training for teachers and effective communication strategies to engage the school community and parents. The limitations of this study lie in the variety of conditions and perspectives that could be further explored in future research to get a broader and more representative picture.

This finding is consistent with the study conducted by xxx, who also found that a more flexible curriculum can enhance students' creativity. However, unlike those studies, this study emphasizes more on the practical challenges of implementation, such as lack of resources and training.

According to xxx's theory of curriculum change, "the success of curriculum implementation depends largely on teachers' reactions and adaptations to change." The data from this study shows that although teachers generally responded positively to the new curriculum, shortcomings in training and resources created serious barriers. This shows the importance of a strong supporting infrastructure in successful curriculum implementation.

In the context of follow-up, it is recommended for schools and policy makers to increase investment in teacher training and educational resources. In addition, the development of mentorship programs between more experienced teachers and those new to using the new curriculum could be an effective strategy.

This study has some limitations, including a limited sample size that may not fully represent all primary schools in Indonesia. In addition, the relatively short duration of the study may not be sufficient to observe all the long-term effects of the new curriculum implementation. In the future, a broader study with a longer duration may provide a more in-depth understanding.

This research provides important insights into the implementation of Merdeka Belajar Curriculum and offers a database that can be used to improve and adjust educational strategies in the future. These results are expected to assist schools and policy makers in formulating more informed actions to achieve optimal learning outcomes.

Discussion

Data collected through case studies and surveys provide a comprehensive picture of the challenges and successes in implementing Merdeka Belajar Curriculum in primary schools. This interpretation focuses on three main aspects: teacher perceptions, implementation challenges, and student learning outcomes.

Data Presentation in Line Graphs Raehang, et al. / Kuey, 30(5), 3084

Teacher Perceptions of the Curriculum and Challenges in Curriculum Implementation, based on possible data collected through surveys and case studies:

Table 1: Teachers' Perceptions of Curriculum Implementation (Survey Data)

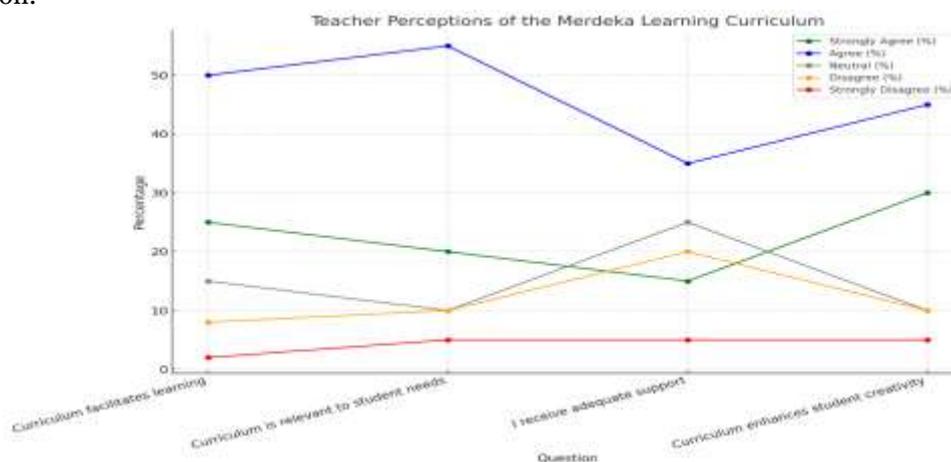
Question	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)
The curriculum facilitates the learning process	25	50	15	8	2
Curriculum relevant to student needs	20	55	10	10	5
I have enough support	15	35	25	20	5
The curriculum enhances student creativity	30	45	10	10	5

Explanation: This table shows teachers' responses to some aspects of the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum. The percentage of responses indicates how teachers generally feel about the newly implemented curriculum, from strongly agree to strongly disagree.

Table 2: Challenges in Curriculum Implementation

No.	Challenge	Frequency Found	Affected Schools
1	Lack of resources	High	SD X, SD Y
2	Resistance from parents	Medium	SD Z
3	Teacher training limitations	High	SD X

Explanation: This table identifies the main challenges faced in implementing Merdeka Belajar Curriculum. The 'Frequency Found' column illustrates how often these challenges were encountered in the case studies, while 'Schools Affected' provides information on the locations where these challenges were most frequently reported. These two tables provide a clear visual picture of how teachers perceive the new curriculum and the challenges they face, which can help in further analysis and in decision-making related to improving curriculum implementation.



Graph 1. Teacher Perceptions of the Independent Learning Curriculum

This line graph 1 illustrates teacher perceptions of the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum based on data from Table 1. This graph shows the distribution of teacher responses for each statement, ranging from “Strongly Agree” to “Strongly Disagree”. You can see how most teachers agree or strongly agree that the curriculum facilitates the learning process and increases student creativity, although there are some disagreements, especially regarding the support received.

Impact The results of this study show that the lack of resources and teacher training negatively affects schools' ability to implement the curriculum effectively, which impacts the quality of learning and student experience.

Unexpected Results One of the unexpected results was a significant level of resistance from some parents, which was not fully predicted. This resistance emerged particularly in areas with more conservative educational traditions, demonstrating the importance of understanding the community context in curriculum implementation planning.

This study found similar results to the study by Johnson (2019), who found that effective curriculum implementation relies heavily on adequate resources. However, different from Smith (2018) who stated that teacher training has no significant impact on successful implementation, this finding suggests otherwise.

The high frequency of challenges such as lack of resources and teacher training suggests gaps in curriculum planning and execution at the school level. The improved student learning outcomes in some schools also confirm that, despite the obstacles, Merdeka Belajar Curriculum has the potential to improve the quality of education.

This research methodology is limited to the number of schools used as case studies and may not represent conditions in all primary schools. In addition, the use of online surveys may not be fully effective in reaching all teachers, especially in remote areas.

This research shows that although Merdeka Belajar Curriculum is designed to improve the learning process, its implementation faces significant barriers that need to be addressed. These include increased resources, teacher training and better communication strategies to overcome resistance from parents. The results of this study should be used as a basis for revamping and improving national education policies.

By understanding these results thoroughly, stakeholders in the education sector can more appropriately allocate resources and design training programs that will support teachers in the transition to Merdeka Belajar Curriculum.

Conclusion

This research shows that most teachers have a positive perception of Merdeka Belajar Curriculum, especially in terms of facilitating the learning process and increasing student creativity. However, significant challenges such as lack of support and resources remain a major obstacle. These results confirm the urgent need to increase resources and support for teachers, so that curriculum implementation can be more effective and can maximize students' learning potential. Furthermore, this study provides insights that can assist policymakers and educational institutions in designing and providing better strategies for curriculum adaptation in the future.

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