IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MERDEKA CURRICULUM IN GEOGRAPHY SUBJECT IN BANDA ACEH CITY

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to determine how the implementation of the merdeka curriculum in geography subjects in Banda Aceh City. This study used a survey technique which was carried out in 10 schools for geography teachers in Banda Aceh City. Data were collected through interviews, observations, documentation studies and questionnaires. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics. From this research it is known that the implementation of the independence curriculum in Banda Aceh are the neutral/sufficient category of 38.75%, the Less Good category of 27.9%, and the Very Less Good category of 0.26%, then those who answered always and often were 70.55%, according to the category of percentage criteria for interpretation of scores, thus from this study it can be concluded that teachers have succeeded in implementing the merdea curriculum in geography subjects in high schools throughout Banda Aceh City.

Keywords: Implementation; Merdeka Curriculum; Geography Learning; Teachers

INTRODUCTION

Education is the most crucial thing in a person's activities and life. With the presence of education, a person can continue to experience development both cognitively, affective and psychomotor. This is in accordance with the national education goals of the Republic of Indonesia, which is to develop the potential to shape the nation's character. Developing the potential of students to become human beings who always have faith and devotion (Noor, 2018).

To achieve educational goals, there needs to be support in all aspects, one of

which is the curriculum. In the curriculum there are various educational programs provided by the organizing institution in the form of learning plans given to students.

The curriculum should not only contain learning materials and the learning activities, but includes everything that affects the development and formation of students' personalities in accordance with the educational objectives to achieve improved educational standards. The curriculum is an important part of education. The curriculum is used as a

guide for teachers in carrying out learning and also as a reference for achieving educational goals (Meylandari, 2023).

The Merdeka Curriculum has been implemented in many educational school units in Indonesia, one of which is Banda Aceh. In the Merdeka Curriculum, teachers and students can reflect on the learning process that has taken place, so that it is hoped that the quality of learning can improve.

The Office of Education and Culture (DISDIKBUD), a government agency in the implementation and management of regional education and culture, Banda Aceh noted that 22 schools under the authority of the Banda Aceh government have been included in the KEMENDIKBUD Merdeka Learning Curriculum program, including SMA Negeri 3, Unsyiah Laboratory High School, SMA Negeri 4 and SMA Negeri 7 Banda Aceh, and the Merdeka Curriculum program also focuses on developing holistic student learning outcomes that include competencies (literacy and numeracy) and character starting with superior human resources principals and teachers (DISDIKBUD, 2022).

Similar research has also been conducted by Samsuddhuha (2023) with the title "Implementation of the merdeka curriculum learning at SMA Negeri 1 Tanjung Jabung Timur". The results of research on the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum conducted by Samsuddhuha (2023) show that from the results of the questionnaire given to the principal, vice principal for student affairs, and vice principal for curriculum in the very good category with a percentage of 97.7% in the very good category. Based on this research, the researcher also wants to examine the assessment of various elements found in schools related to the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum.

The curriculum is essentially a plan that guides the educational process. What is outlined in the plan is heavily influenced by educational planning. Changes to the education program are not a schedule transfer that must be done, but are done if conditions require changes because there are developments that occur. Educational program improvement is usually related to effective thinking, plans, reports, and implementation (Hardianto, et al., 2023).

The Merdeka Belajar curriculum provides a new color and perfection of

the previous curriculum. The Merdeka Belajar curriculum is a natural learning process to achieve independence. The concept of Merdeka Belajar has the same direction and purpose as the concept of Jhon Dewey's progressivism school of educational philosophy (Barkah, 2023).

Initial observations were conducted at high schools in Banda Aceh, the implementation of the independence curriculum has not been carried out properly as expected, various obstacles are experienced by schools ranging from teachers and students when implementing the independence curriculum in the learning process at school.

The concept of independent learning is an effort to create a liberating learning environment. the perpetrators to think so that they are more courageous to ask questions, dare to appear in public, and also dare to convey what the teacher says (Samsuddhuha, 2023).

The Merdeka Belajar curriculum has indicators of success to achieve learning goals (Samsuddhuha, 2023), as for the success indicators of the merdeka learning curriculum program as follows: 1). Teacher participation in the Merdeka Curriculum, 2). Effective learning, 3). There is no lagging of students, and 4)

Obstacles and factors that cause teacher problems in curriculum change.

From the problems that have been raised, important to do conduct research on "Implementation of Merdeka Curriculum in Geography Subjects in Banda Aceh City". Then the problem formulation in this study is how the Implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum for Geography Subjects in Banda Aceh City. It is hoped that the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum implementation in high school geography studies can assist teachers in developing material in the teaching and learning process properly and students can understand it well.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The approach of the research is descriptive quantitative with Survey technique. Based on KADISDIKBUD data, it states that there are 22 schools that run the Merdeka Curriculum program. The subject in this study were 10 Geography subject teachers in the Merdeka Curriculum program.

So the sample in this study is a Senior High School (SMA) that runs the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum Program and the research location was conducted in 10 schools in Banda Aceh.

The reason the researcher took the sample schools above was because the area of Banda Aceh City is very large, and the distance between one school and another is far, so to facilitate the researcher's reach in collecting data, only 10 senior high schools in Banda Aceh were taken, and that also represented the 22 high schools in Banda Aceh. This research uses a questionnaire. The measurement in this questionnaire uses a Likert measurement scale where each answer has a different score, the author distributes the questionnaire in writing accompanied by 5 alternative answers, for quantitative analysis purposes, the answers to each instrument item.

The indicators of the Merdeka Curriculum Implementation variable used in this study are: 1) Teacher Participation in the Independent Curriculum; 2) Effective Learning; 3) No Students Left Behind; 4) Constraints and Factors Causing Teacher Problems in Curriculum Changes

The validity test of the instrument uses the product moment correlation formula, while the reliability test uses the Cronbach alpha formula.

100% = Fixed number

The category in the assessment of research results management is determined by the conversion criteria, according to Arikunto (2013), then the data is interpreted into five levels (**Tabel 1**).

Table 1. Score Interpretation Criteria

No.	Interval	Category	Abbreviation
1	Number 0% - 19.99%	Strongly (disagree/bad/very poor)	SD
2	Number 20% - 39.99%	Disagree/Poor	D
3	Number 40% - 59.99%	Sufficient/Neutral	N
4	Number 60% - 79%	Agree (good/like)	A
5	Number 80% - 100%	Strongly (agree/good/like)	SA

Source: Sugiyono, (2019)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on data processing, the instrument validity test of 40 question items has rcount> from r table (0.632), thus the question items are declared valid. The results of obtaining data on r11 with the test criteria, namely high reliability of 0.98 or close to 1, the closer to 1, the higher the value in the reliability test. The general opportunity in the reliability

test criteria is r11> 0.6, so the instrument is said to be reliable. Based on the steps above, the reliability value is 0.98> 0.6, so the research instrument on the Merdeka Curriculum Implementation program in Geography Subjects in Banda Aceh City is said to be reliable. Efforts to facilitate data processing, all answers to respondents are tabulated based on indicators and grouped based on answers always, often, sometimes, rarely, and never (**Table 2)**.

Table 2. Teacher Participation in the Merdeka Curriculum

No.	Statement / Likert Scale Quantity	Alternative									
		5 SD	%	4 D	%	3 N	%	2 A	%	1 SA	%
1	Teachers have a lesson plan that considers learners' needs	3	30	3	30	4	40	-	0	-	0
2	Teachers master the teaching materials that will be delivered during the learning process.	3	30	3	30	4	40	-	0	-	0
3	Teachers prepare teaching modules that will be implemented during the learning process.	5	50	2	20	3	30	-	0	-	0
4	Teachers have given freedom in implementing learning.	6	60	2	20	2	20	-	0	-	0
5	Teachers design fun learning so that learners experience the learning process as an experience that generates positive emotions.	2	20	2	20	6	60	-	0	-	0
6	At the beginning of the school year, teachers try to find out about students' learning readiness.	5	50	2	20	3	30	-	0	-	0
7	Teachers reflect on their processes and attitudes to provide positive role models and sources of inspiration for learners.	4	40	4	40	2	20	-	0	-	0
8	Teachers empower the surrounding community, communities, organizations, experts from various professions as resource persons to enrich and promote relevant learning.	2	20	2	20	6	60	-	0	-	0
9	Teachers involve learners in finding solutions to everyday problems that are appropriate to their learning stages.	4	40	3	30	3	30	-	0	-	0
10	Teachers use a variety of methods and models in helping students to develop competencies during the learning process.	3	30	3	30	4	40	-	0	-	0
	Total	37	37	26	26	37	37	-	0	-	0

Based on **Table 2**, it is explained that the respondents' answers to the first indicator of teacher participation in the Merdeka Curriculum were 37% who answered always, 26% who answered often, and only 37% who answered sometimes. In general, according to respondents, participation in the merdeka curriculum is the most important aspect for maintaining the quality of education, meeting needs according to school characteristics and encouraging the role of teachers in curriculum development and in the learning process.

Based on the results of scoring per research indicator, it can be said that the implementation of an Merdeka Curriculum in geography subjects in Banda Aceh on the indicator of teacher participation in an Merdeka Curriculum with a percentage of 38.75%, meaning that it has an influence. The results of this study have similarities with research at SMA Negeri 1 Tanjung Jabung Timur (Samsuddhuha, 2023), stating that the research on the implementation of an Merdeka Curriculum with a percentage of 31.2% is in the very good category.

Then, it was reinforced by what was done at State Senior High School 2 Majene, West Sulawesi in the physics subject, teachers were given training related to the merdeka learning curriculum to improve the competence of teachers in participating in the Merdeka Curriculum, stating that the research on the Merdeka Curriculum with a percentage of 82.69% in the very good category (Kulsum, et al., 2024).

On the other hand, a different phenomenon was found based on the results of research conducted at SMA Negeri 1 Panumbangan, West Java in the geography subject, participation and understanding in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum still need to be improved. This is evidenced by the knowledge of fundamental concepts and rules that have not been able to be interpreted in the context of the Kurikulum Merdeka itself. Furthermore, due to this low level of understanding, it affects the level of readiness and participation of geography-based teachers in implementation of Kurikulum Merdeka (Sulastini, et al., 2024).

This condition is also the same as in SDN Bissoloro, South Sulawesi, the readiness and participation of teachers in The implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum is still not optimal due to limited teacher competency related to this curriculum. Teacher readiness and participation in implementing the curriculum not only focuses on competence, commitment, responsibility, and welfare that must be maintained (Amiruddin and Husain, 2023).

Table 3. Effective Learning

No.	Statement / Likert Scale Quantity	5 SD	%	4 D	%	3 N	%	2 A	%	1 SA	%
11	Teachers use reference learning media from the internet.	4	40	5	50	1	10	-	0	-	0
12	Teachers use innovative learning media.	4	40	4	40	2	20	-	0	-	0
13	Teachers utilize ICT media such as projectors and others during learning.	3	30	3	30	4	40	-	0	-	0
14	Teachers can create discipline, order, safety in organizing the learning process.	3	30	4	40	3	30	-	0	-	0
15	The teacher gives the opportunity to ask questions to students who are active in learning.	4	40	3	30	3	30	-	0	-	0
16	The teacher uses open-ended questions that stimulate deep thinking.	5	50	3	30	2	20	-	0	-	0
17	Teachers give assignments or homework to encourage independent learning.	3	30	3	30	4	40	-	0	-	0
18	Teachers utilize the Pancasila learner profile strengthening project to build learners' character and competencies as future global citizens.	3	30	3	30	4	40	-	0	-	0
19	The Pancasila project was proposed by subject teachers and students.	2	20	4	40	4	40	-	0	-	0
20	The teacher explains the Learning Outcomes, learning objectives and Learning Objective Flow	3	30	3	30	4	40	-	0	-	0
	Total	34	34	35	35	31	31	-	0	-	0

Based on **Table 3**, it is explained that the respondents' answers to the second indicator of effective learning were 34% who answered always, 35% who answered often, and only 31% who answered sometimes, respondents must master the teaching material that will be delivered the students during the learning process and teachers can teach material in an effective, flexible, and responsive way to student needs so that the learning process becomes meaningful. From the results of the scoring per indicator, the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in geography subjects in Banda Aceh on effective learning indicators is 31.8%, meaning that it has an influence.

The same phenomenon also occurred according to research by Samsuddhuha (2023) at SMA Negeri 1 Tanjung Jabung Timur, 49.2% in the very good category. Then, it is also strengthened by the research results of Kulsum et al. (2024) at SMA Negeri 2 Majene, West Sulawesi on physics learning on the effective learning indicator 86.41% in the very good category.

Table 4. No lagging of students

No.	Statement	Alternative									
	Likert Scale Quantity	5 SD	%	4 D	%	3 N	%	2 A	%	1 SA	%
21	The teacher evaluates the project on field practice.	1	10	4	40	5	50	-	0	-	0
22	The teacher evaluates and motivates after the lesson.	3	30	5	50	2	20	-	0	-	0
23	The teacher provides further understanding of the learning material.	5	50	3	30	2	20	-	0	-	0
24	Teachers select materials according to students' needs.	3	30	3	30	4	40	-	0	-	0
25	The way the material is delivered can be understood by students.	4	40	4	40	3	30	-	0	-	0
26	Teachers always provide immediate feedback that encourages learners' ability to continue learning and exploring knowledge.	3	30	2	20	5	50	-	0	-	0
27	The teacher encourages learners to reflect.	4	40	2	20	4	40	-	0	-	0
28	Teachers reflect on their processes and attitudes to provide positive role models and sources of inspiration for learners.	3	30	3	30	4	40	-	0	-	0
29	The teacher explains briefly to save time.	2	20	2	20	6	60	-	0	-	0
30	Teachers provide further understanding of the learning material and teach material that has been left behind during the pandemic.	3	30	3	30	4	40	-	0	-	0
Total		31	31	31	31	39	39		-	0	-

From the **table 4**, the respondents' answers to the third indicator of the absence of students' lagging behind were 31% who answered always, 31% who answered often, and only 39% who answered sometimes, in general during the pandemic all students lagged behind in their learning by doing online learning for this reason, with the Merdeka Curriculum, students must catch up with learning material at school with the help of teachers during the learning process.

From the scoring per indicator, the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in geography subjects in Banda Aceh on the indicator of students' lagging behind with the category of disagreeing or not good with a percentage of 27.9%, this proves that the percentage score is very different and has no effect.

These findings contradict research Samsuddhuha (2023) which states that research in the very good category (66.8%), conducted at SMAN 1 Tanjung

Jabung Timur is in the very good category.

Then, research in SMAN 12 Bandar Lampung on the subject of Islamic Religious Education based on indicators stated that teachers wanted to help students to work on questions left behind in class, but time kept running. Teachers know that students' potential cannot be measured from exam results but is chased by numbers that are pressed by various stakeholders (Margiyotno, 2023).

The backlog of students also occurred during COVID-19, which is a very unfortunate case because the teaching and learning process requires students to learn online or study at home, therefore the government prioritizes the concept of independent learning in the curriculum for students which is designed to help recover from the learning crisis that occurred due to the pandemic, the use of technology and the need for competencies in the current era is one of the bases for developing an independent curriculum (Margiyono, 2023).

Based on research conducted based on indicators, it states that the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the learning crisis that already exists in Indonesia. During the 2 years of the pandemic, there has been a significant increase in learning loss in terms of students' literacy and numeracy competencies.

Indonesia is not only struggling with learning loss but also faces the risk of widening the learning gap, especially for students from families with low socio-economic backgrounds who are more at risk of not being registered or not participating in the learning process (Antari and Prihandoni, 2024).

Table 5. Obstacles and factors that cause problems for teachers in curriculum changes

No.	Statement / Likert Scale Quantity	5 SD	%	4 D	%	3 N	%	2 A	%	1 SA	%
31	Teachers experience obstacles in creating learning innovations to improve student learning outcomes as a whole.	3	30	2	20	5	50	-	0	-	0
32	Teachers experience obstacles in implementing learning reflection.	2	20	6	60	2	20	-	0	-	0
33	Teachers do not experience obstacles in realizing student learning activities so that they get learning experiences in accordance with the values of the Pancasila precepts.	2	20	3	30	5	50	-	0	-	0
34	Teachers experience obstacles in directing	2	20	2	20	6	60	-	0	-	0

No.	Statement / Likert Scale Quantity	5 SD	%	4 D	%	3 N	%	2 A	%	1 SA	%
	students to learn according to the essential material as well as their interests and talents.										
35	Teachers experience obstacles in implementing numeracy literacy habituation at school.	3	30	2	20	3	30	2	20	-	0
36	Limited information obtained by teachers regarding the Merdeka Curriculum.	1	10	4	40	3	30	1	10	1	10
37	There are differences in learning components between the Merdeka Curriculum and the previous curriculum.	2	20	2	20	5	50	1	10	-	0
38	Lack of training activities to improve teachers' understanding of the Merdeka Curriculum.	1	10	3	30	3	30	2	20	1	10
39	Lack of teacher readiness in designing learning tools in accordance with the Merdeka Curriculum.	2	20	3	30	3	30	1	10	1	10
40	Teachers' lack of passion in improving their competencies to deal with the Merdeka Curriculum.	-	0	4	40	2	20	3	30	1	10
Total		18	18	31	31	37	37	10	10	4	40

Based on **Table 5**, it is explained that the respondents' answers to the fourth indicator of obstacles and factors that cause teacher problems in curriculum changes were 18% who answered always, 31% who answered often, 37% who answered sometimes, 10% of respondents who answered rarely, and only 4% who answered never.

In general, according to respondents, the lack of funds in organizing training and the unpreparedness of teachers and the curriculum changing in a short time make the difficulty of teachers in adapting and implementing it optimally.

From the scoring per indicator, the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in geography subjects in Banda Aceh on indicators in the Very Poor category with a percentage of 0.26%.

Based on research Minarti et al. (2023), it is stated that the research was conducted on indicators of obstacles that occurred when implementing authentic assessment of Biology learning in the Merdeka Curriculum in State High Schools in Batang Regency, namely the many aspects that must be assessed along with learning, inadequate infrastructure in schools, and the heterogeneous condition of students from various aspects with the category Very Not Good At All.

Based on research conducted by Ipah (2023) at a State Private High School in

Demak Regency in Biology learning, the obstacles faced by teachers in the Independent Curriculum were a lot of biology material in a short time,, limited time in discussions by students, teachers experience obstacles in implementing differentiated learning due to the number of students exceeding capacity and infrastructure that is not optimal.

Based on research conducted by Ummi (2023), it is stated that there are several challenges faced by teachers when implementing an Merdeka Curriculum, such as the lack of government socialization of the Merdeka Curriculum to schools and the lack of teacher preparation to switch to an Merdeka Curriculum.

Therefore, the indicators of the Merdeka Learning Curriculum program make acceleration or acceleration of learning that has been left behind and strengthen Pancasila education learning. To strengthen the explanation of the above indicators, it can be seen in **Table 6** tabulation of questionnaire respondents' answers based on the indicators below:

Table 6. Tabulation of Questionnaire Answers Based on Indicators

No	Statement	Alternative Answer (score)					Total (ΣF)
		5	4	3	2	1	
1.	Teacher Participation in the Merdeka Curriculum	37	26	37	0	0	600
2.	Effective Learning	34	35	31	0	0	492
3.	No lagging behind students	31	31	39	10	0	432
4.	Obstacles and factors that cause teacher problems in curriculum change	18	31	37	0	4	20
	Total	**120**	**123**	**144**	**10**	**4**	**(ΣF) = 1.548**

From the result of Merdeka Curriculum in Geography Subjects in Banda Aceh City, it is known that 10 teachers in Banda Aceh city generally understand how to implement this Merdeka Curriculum in schools, indicating that the average analysis for all indicators from highest to lowest is the first indicator, namely "Teacher Participation in the Merdeka Curriculum" with a percentage of 38.75% who answered Always with the Neutral category.

Then, the second indicator "Effective Learning" with a percentage of 31.8% in the Disagree category, the third indicator "The absence of lagging students" with a percentage of 27.9% in the Disagree category, and the fourth indicator

"Obstacles and factors that cause teacher problems in curriculum change" with a percentage of 0.26% in the Strongly Disagree category.

Overall, the analysis of the application of the Merdeka Curriculum in geography lessons at school, is in the 70.55% category of the good category, this result is obtained on the average of the results of the researcher's survey on the question items of each indicator.

From the explanation above, it can be seen that the highest indicator is Teacher Participation in the Merdeka Curriculum and Effective Learning and the lowest indicator is the obstacles and factors that cause teacher problems in curriculum change.

According to Desfandi et al. (2020), students' lack of understanding of the subject matter experienced is caused by several factors, one of which often occurs is that students misunderstand the concepts taught by teachers during classroom learning.

Students are said to understand a subject matter well if they are able to construct the meaning of the learning message and then convey the message using their own words and sentences (Gadeng et al., 2018:2; Anderson and Krathwol, 2015:105).

Finally, to improve students' knowledge and understanding, teachers are expected to be able to utilize the environment around the students' homes as a learning resource in geography subjects (Gadeng et al. 2022).

CONCLUSIONS

The implementation of Merdeka Curriculum in geography subjects is in the "good" category with a percentage of 70.55% obtained from the average questionnaire results. From this research it can also be seen that the high and low implementation of the Merdeka Kurikulum Curriculum can be influenced by several factors, namely teacher participation in the Merdeka Curriculum, effective learning, the absence of students' lagging behind, and the constraints of factors that cause teacher problems in curriculum change.

Of the four measurement indicators used to see the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, the indicators from the highest to the lowest are the first indicator, namely "Teacher Participation in the Independent Curriculum" with a percentage of 38.75%, who answered Always in the Neutral category, the second indicator "Effective Learning"

with a percentage of 31.8% in the Disagree category, the third indicator "No Student Lagging Behind" with a percentage of 27.9% in the Disagree category, and the fourth indicator "obstacles and factors that cause teacher problems in curriculum changes" with a percentage of 0.26% in the Strongly Disagree category.

From the results of research on the Implementation of Merdeka Curriculum in Geography Subjects in Banda Aceh City and pointing to the indicators obtained from data analysis, there are several suggestions that can be conveyed, namely:

1) When viewed from the research data, the indicators of obstacles and factors that cause teacher problems in curriculum change have a lower percentage value when compared to the value of other indicators, the low value of this indicator needs more attention from teachers and from schools.

2) For teachers to be more creative and innovative in providing classroom learning on an merdeka learning curriculum so that students do not feel bored and bored while in class, teachers are also expected to be able to attend trainings felt by the School,

the Education Office and the Central Ministry and it is also hoped that teachers will be able to guide more in the projects given to students about entrepreneurship.

3) For future researchers, it is suggested that the results of this study can provide a better questionnaire with more indicators and samples.

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