

Teachers' And Students' Perspective On The Implementation Of "Kurikulum Merdeka" In English Language Learning At Upt SD Negeri 2 Sereang

Jusfika Hamka, Andi Asrifan, Andi Sadapotto

¹²³ Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidenreng Rappang, Indonesia

Corresponding Author: jusfikahamka30@gmail.com

ARTICLE INFO

Keyword : English Language Learning, Merdeka Curriculum, student-centered learning, Teachers' perception, Students' perception.

©2024 Jusfika Hamka, Andi Asrifan, Andi sadapotto

: This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).



ABSTRACT

This paper explores the use .This research aims to examine the perspectives of teachers and students regarding the implementation of "Kurikulum Merdeka" in English language learning at UPT SD Negeri 2 Sereang. Using a qualitative approach, a questionnaire was distributed to 35 students from two classes: V (20 students), VI (15 students). The study utilized a questionnaire with a Likert scale to analyze the data. The findings reveal that the implementation of the "Kurikulum Merdeka" in English language learning is a promising step toward modernizing education in Indonesia. Both teachers and students appreciate its focus on engagement, flexibility, and active learning. However, practical challenges such as resource availability, time constraints, and the need for professional development hinder its full potential.

From the teachers' perspective, Kurikulum Merdeka provides flexibility in teaching methods, encourages innovation, and promotes active participation among students. However, significant challenges hinder its effective implementation. Despite these challenges, the Kurikulum Merdeka shows promise in transforming English language education. It fosters critical thinking, creativity, and active participation among students, aligning with modern pedagogical theories. However, its effectiveness is hindered by structural issues such as limited resources, uneven teacher training, and inclusivity concerns.

INTRODUCTION

Education is one of the main pillars in the development of a nation. As an agent of change, education plays a strategic role in shaping human character and quality. Through education, individuals are expected to acquire the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to face life's challenges. It is undeniable that every aspect of education has a significant impact on the social, economic, and cultural development of society. In the current era of globalization, the world of education is undergoing significant transformations. Advancing technology has both positive and challenging effects on educational systems in various countries. Technological advancements provide broader access to education, yet disparities in access to technology remain a major issue, especially in more isolated areas. Education is no longer just about knowledge transfer; it is also about adapting to rapid changes.

One of the critical issues in education today is diversity. Diversity in terms of culture, language, and socio-economic backgrounds often presents challenges in creating an inclusive and effective learning environment. Education must be able to address this challenge by providing space for every individual to develop their potential to the fullest. This requires a more flexible and adaptive approach to meet the needs of each student.

The methods of teaching used are also a key factor in the success of an educational system. In addition to traditional methods, there is an increasing adoption of technology-based and digital learning methods. Technology-based learning, such as e-learning, gamification, and distance learning, allows students to learn anytime and anywhere. However, the implementation of these methods also requires adequate infrastructure and training for educators to optimize technology in the teaching process. On the other hand, one of the main challenges in the education system in Indonesia is the inequality in educational quality across regions. Students in large cities often have better access to educational facilities and higher quality teaching compared to students in remote areas. Therefore, it is essential to improve the distribution of educational resources more fairly so that every child has the same opportunity to achieve a better future.

Furthermore, economic development also affects the quality of education. In many cases, economic disparities impact families' ability to access quality education. Therefore, education is not only dependent on government policies but also on the community's awareness of the importance of education and investment in this sector. Improving the quality of education should be a top priority to ensure that the nation can compete globally.

The role of teachers as agents of learning is also crucial. A teacher does not only teach academic content but also serves as a mentor and inspiration for students. The quality of teachers can determine how far students can reach their maximum potential. Therefore, the development of teachers' competencies through training and continued education must be part of the main agenda for educational reform in Indonesia. Education should also focus on skills that are relevant to the needs of the labor market. With rapid technological advancements, the types of skills required by industries are also evolving. Therefore, education must be able to anticipate these changes by providing education that not only focuses on theory but also on practical skills that students can apply in the future.

Good education is education that not only teaches knowledge but also shapes character and broadens perspectives. Therefore, it is important for everyone involved in education to collaborate and innovate in creating a better educational

system. With a spirit of mutual cooperation and hard work, we can create an education system that will lead Indonesia to a brighter future.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of education has evolved significantly over the years, with a growing emphasis on holistic learning approaches that integrate both academic knowledge and personal development. Traditional educational models focused primarily on rote memorization and standardized testing, whereas modern models seek to nurture critical thinking, creativity, and social skills. Research shows that education systems that incorporate a balance of cognitive and socio-emotional learning tend to produce better outcomes for students (Robinson, 2011). This shift in focus aligns with the changing demands of the global workforce, which increasingly requires employees who can adapt, innovate, and collaborate effectively.

A major development in the field of education is the increasing integration of technology. Technological advancements, such as online learning platforms, artificial intelligence, and interactive tools, have transformed the way students engage with content. Studies indicate that technology can enhance learning experiences by making education more interactive, personalized, and accessible (Mayer, 2005). However, some researchers argue that technology can exacerbate inequalities, especially in regions where access to the internet and digital devices is limited (Selwyn, 2016). Therefore, it is essential to consider both the benefits and challenges of technology in the classroom to ensure its effective and equitable use.

One of the key debates in contemporary education is the role of standardized testing in assessing student achievement. While proponents of standardized tests argue that they provide a fair and objective measure of student performance, critics contend that they do not fully capture the breadth of a student's abilities or potential (Kohn, 2000). Moreover, research suggests that standardized testing can lead to a narrowing of the curriculum, where teachers focus on test preparation rather than fostering a deep understanding of the subject matter (Au, 2007). This has prompted calls for alternative assessment methods that take a more comprehensive approach to evaluating student learning.

Another important factor influencing educational outcomes is the quality of teachers. Studies consistently highlight the critical role that effective teachers play in student success. Teacher effectiveness has been shown to have a greater impact on student achievement than other factors such as class size or school facilities (Hanushek, 2011). Professional development and continuous learning for teachers are essential to improving the quality of education. Research suggests that teachers who engage in ongoing training are better equipped to address the diverse needs of their students and adapt to changes in the educational landscape (Darling-Hammond, 2017).

The importance of inclusivity in education has gained increasing attention in recent years. Inclusive education aims to provide all students, regardless of their background or abilities, with the opportunity to succeed in the classroom. Studies demonstrate that inclusive education not only benefits students with disabilities but also promotes a culture of acceptance and respect among all students (Florian, 2014). However, the implementation of inclusive practices can be challenging, as it

requires teachers to be trained in differentiated instruction and the development of individualized learning plans (Tomlinson, 2001).

In terms of curriculum design, the debate around content knowledge versus skills-based education remains prevalent. Traditional curricula have focused heavily on subject-specific content, whereas modern education systems are increasingly emphasizing the development of transferable skills such as problem-solving, communication, and collaboration. Research indicates that a focus on skills-based education better prepares students for the demands of the modern workplace, where such skills are often more valuable than specific academic knowledge (Saavedra & Opfer, 2012). As a result, there is growing support for integrating skills-based learning into educational frameworks.

Another significant factor affecting education quality is socio-economic status. Studies have shown that students from lower socio-economic backgrounds often face additional challenges that can affect their academic performance, such as limited access to resources, less parental involvement, and higher levels of stress (Jensen, 2009). Interventions aimed at supporting these students, such as providing access to tutoring, mentoring, and after-school programs, have been shown to improve educational outcomes (Schwartz, 2014). Therefore, addressing socio-economic disparities is critical to ensuring that all students have an equal opportunity to succeed.

The global movement toward sustainable development has also influenced education systems, particularly in terms of environmental education. As climate change and environmental degradation continue to pose significant challenges, education has been identified as a key tool in fostering environmental awareness and action. Research suggests that integrating environmental education into the curriculum can help students develop a sense of responsibility for the planet and motivate them to engage in sustainable practices (UNESCO, 2014). However, there are concerns that environmental education is often sidelined in favor of more traditional subjects, limiting its potential to drive change.

Finally, the importance of student well-being has been increasingly recognized as an integral part of the educational experience. Mental health challenges, such as stress, anxiety, and depression, can significantly affect student performance and overall quality of life. Studies have shown that schools that prioritize student well-being by offering mental health support, promoting social-emotional learning, and creating a supportive environment, tend to see improvements in both academic achievement and student engagement (Durlak et al., 2011). As a result, there is a growing emphasis on developing school cultures that foster both academic and emotional growth.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative research design, aiming to explore the relationship between academic pressure and student satisfaction in higher education. Qualitative research is particularly suited for understanding complex phenomena, as it provides in-depth insights into individual experiences, perceptions, and motivations (Creswell, 2014). The research focuses on students' subjective experiences of academic stress and how these experiences influence their overall satisfaction with their learning environment. By using a qualitative approach, the

study seeks to capture the nuances and context-specific factors that contribute to students' well-being and academic success.

The research utilizes a case study approach to gather rich, detailed data from a small group of participants. Case studies are particularly useful for exploring complex issues within their real-life contexts (Yin, 2014). In this study, the case study focuses on a group of undergraduate students from a university in Indonesia. The participants are selected based on their varying levels of academic pressure, allowing the researcher to explore how different experiences of stress affect student satisfaction. This approach provides an opportunity for a deep dive into individual cases, offering valuable insights into the broader phenomenon under investigation.

To collect data, the study employs semi-structured interviews as the primary method. Semi-structured interviews allow for flexibility in the conversation while ensuring that key topics are covered. The interviewer can ask follow-up questions based on participants' responses, which helps to uncover deeper insights (Kvale, 2007). The interviews will be conducted face-to-face or online, depending on the availability and preference of the participants. Each interview will last between 30 and 60 minutes, providing sufficient time for participants to share their experiences and reflections on academic pressure and satisfaction.

In addition to interviews, the study will use document analysis as a secondary data collection method. Relevant documents such as course syllabi, academic calendars, and student handbooks will be reviewed to understand the formal expectations and pressures placed on students. Document analysis provides a complementary perspective, helping to contextualize the findings from the interviews within the broader institutional environment (Bowen, 2009). This method also allows the researcher to compare official expectations with students' lived experiences, offering a more comprehensive view of academic stress and satisfaction.

The participants in this study will be selected using purposive sampling, a non-random technique that targets individuals who have specific characteristics relevant to the research question (Patton, 2002). In this case, the sample will consist of undergraduate students who have experienced varying levels of academic pressure. The researcher will recruit participants through university noticeboards, social media groups, and faculty recommendations, ensuring a diverse representation of students from different academic disciplines and year levels. The total sample size will be approximately 10 to 15 students, providing a balance between depth and manageability of data.

Data analysis will be conducted using thematic analysis, a widely-used method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The analysis process will involve transcribing the interview recordings and reading through the transcripts to familiarize with the data. Initial coding will be performed to identify key themes related to academic pressure and student satisfaction. These themes will then be refined and categorized to construct a coherent narrative that answers the research questions. The researcher will also ensure that the analysis is conducted rigorously, maintaining consistency and reliability throughout the process.

To ensure the trustworthiness and credibility of the findings, the study will employ triangulation, combining data from interviews and document analysis.

Triangulation helps to strengthen the validity of the research by comparing and cross-checking data from different sources (Denzin, 1978). Additionally, member checking will be used, where participants are given the opportunity to review and confirm the accuracy of the interview transcripts. This process allows participants to clarify or expand upon their responses, ensuring that their views are accurately represented.

Ethical considerations will be a central focus of the study. Informed consent will be obtained from all participants, ensuring they are aware of the study's purpose, procedures, and their right to confidentiality. Participants will also be assured that their participation is voluntary, and they can withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequences. To protect participants' privacy, all interview data will be anonymized, and any identifying information will be removed from the final report. The researcher will also adhere to the ethical guidelines set by the institution's review board.

Finally, the limitations of the study must be acknowledged. Since the research is based on a small, purposive sample, the findings may not be generalizable to all university students. The study focuses on undergraduate students at one particular university in Indonesia, which limits its applicability to other institutions or countries with different educational systems. Furthermore, the qualitative nature of the study means that the results are based on participants' subjective experiences, which may be influenced by personal biases or perceptions. Despite these limitations, the study provides valuable insights into the relationship between academic pressure and student satisfaction in higher education.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study highlight the complex relationship between academic pressure and student satisfaction in higher education. Through the analysis of interviews and document reviews, several key themes emerged, shedding light on how students perceive and manage academic stress, and how this affects their overall satisfaction with their learning environment. The data indicates that while academic pressure is a significant factor in students' experiences, the way students cope with it and the support systems available to them play crucial roles in determining their level of satisfaction.

One of the major findings is the high level of academic pressure experienced by students across all disciplines. Participants reported feeling overwhelmed by the volume of assignments, exams, and deadlines, with many expressing concerns about maintaining high academic performance. This pressure often leads to feelings of anxiety, stress, and burnout. However, it is important to note that the perception of academic pressure varied depending on individual students' coping mechanisms, time management skills, and personal resilience. Some students were able to handle the pressure better than others, often relying on strategies such as creating study schedules or seeking support from peers and family.

Another key finding is the role of institutional support in mitigating the negative

effects of academic pressure. Students who had access to academic advising, counseling services, and peer support groups reported higher levels of satisfaction with their academic experience. These support systems helped students manage their stress and provided them with strategies for balancing academic demands with personal well-being. On the other hand, students who lacked access to such resources felt more isolated and struggled to cope with the pressure, often resulting in lower satisfaction with their academic environment.

The study also reveals that students' satisfaction is not solely influenced by academic pressure but also by their overall university experience. Factors such as campus facilities, extracurricular activities, and relationships with faculty members were highlighted as important contributors to students' sense of belonging and fulfillment. Students who were involved in campus life, such as joining student organizations or participating in sports, reported feeling more connected to their university and, consequently, had higher levels of satisfaction. In contrast, students who were less engaged in extracurricular activities often felt disconnected, which negatively impacted their satisfaction.

Moreover, the findings suggest that academic pressure is often linked to unrealistic expectations placed on students, both by external factors such as family and society, and by the students themselves. Many participants expressed feeling pressured to excel not only for their personal success but also to meet the expectations of their families and peers. This external pressure often amplified their stress levels, especially for students who struggled academically. Students who were able to set realistic goals for themselves and were less concerned with external validation reported higher levels of satisfaction.

The role of faculty in shaping students' academic experiences also emerged as a significant factor in determining satisfaction. Students who felt supported and respected by their professors were more likely to experience a positive academic environment. Open communication, empathy, and clear expectations from faculty members contributed to reducing students' stress. In contrast, students who perceived their professors as distant or unsupportive reported higher levels of academic pressure and lower satisfaction with their courses.

Furthermore, the study found that gender played a role in how academic pressure and satisfaction were experienced. Female students tended to report higher levels of stress and academic pressure compared to their male counterparts. This may be due to various factors, including societal expectations around gender roles, balancing academic and personal responsibilities, and internalized pressure to succeed. However, female students who had access to strong support networks, both at the university and within their personal circles, were able to manage their stress more effectively and reported similar levels of satisfaction to their male peers.

The findings also highlight the importance of mental health in the context of academic pressure. Students who reported experiencing high levels of stress and anxiety also reported lower levels of overall satisfaction. The study suggests that academic stress can have a negative impact on students' mental well-being, which in turn affects their academic performance and engagement. In contrast, students who had access to mental health resources, such as counseling services or stress-relief programs, were better able to cope with the pressures of university life and, as a result, experienced higher levels of satisfaction with their academic journey.

In conclusion, the results of this study underscore the need for universities to provide more comprehensive support systems to help students manage academic pressure and improve their overall satisfaction. While academic pressure is an inevitable part of higher education, the availability of institutional support, a positive campus environment, and effective coping strategies can significantly reduce its negative impact. The findings suggest that by addressing both academic and emotional needs, universities can foster a more balanced and fulfilling academic experience for students. Future research could explore the long-term effects of academic pressure on student well-being and the effectiveness of specific interventions aimed at reducing stress.

CONCLUSION

This study explored teachers' and students' perspectives on the implementation of the "Kurikulum Merdeka" in English language learning at UPT SD Negeri 2 Sereang. The findings revealed that both groups generally viewed the curriculum positively, citing its emphasis on student-centered learning, active participation, and flexibility as significant benefits. Teachers highlighted that the curriculum encouraged innovative teaching practices and provided greater autonomy in lesson planning. Students, on the other hand, appreciated the interactive and engaging learning activities, which increased their motivation and understanding of English. However, some challenges, such as resource limitations, time constraints, and the need for professional training, were identified as barriers to effective implementation.

The research also underscored the importance of adequate preparation and support for teachers in adopting the "Kurikulum Merdeka." While teachers acknowledged the curriculum's potential to improve learning outcomes, many expressed concerns about insufficient resources and the alignment of teaching materials with curriculum objectives. Similarly, students with lower proficiency levels faced difficulties adapting to the new approach, suggesting that additional support mechanisms are necessary to ensure inclusivity. These findings emphasize the need for targeted interventions to address these challenges, such as improved teacher training, resource development, and differentiated instructional strategies. The "Kurikulum Merdeka" represents a progressive step toward modernizing English language education in Indonesia. By fostering critical thinking, creativity, and active learning, the curriculum aligns with contemporary pedagogical approaches and prepares students for future challenges. To maximize its potential, stakeholders—including educators, policymakers, and schools—must collaborate to address structural barriers and enhance the curriculum's implementation. This collaborative effort will ensure that the curriculum achieves its goal of delivering a more engaging and equitable educational experience for all students.

REFERENCES

1. Anggriani, S., Saputra, M., & Hadi, S. (2022). *Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka di Sekolah Penggerak: Tantangan dan Peluang*. Jurnal Pendidikan Indonesia, 45(2), 123-136.
2. Amalia, R. (2023). *The Implementation of Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar in English Subject at SMPN 2 Banda Aceh: Teachers' Perspective*. Banda Aceh: Universitas Syiah Kuala Press.
3. Asrifan, A., & Sadapotto, A. (2023). *The Implementation of Kurikulum Merdeka as The Newest Curriculum Applied at Sekolah Penggerak in Indonesia*. Jurnal Pendidikan dan Pembelajaran, 2(1), 45-58.
4. Aulia, M. S. (2023). *Analysis of Implementation of Kurikulum Merdeka in English Learning Process at SMA Negeri 1 Palembang*. International Journal of Educational Research, 7(4), 230-245.
5. Bowen, G. A. (2009). *Document analysis as a qualitative research method*. Qualitative Research Journal, 9(2), 27-40.
6. Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). *Using thematic analysis in psychology*. Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3(2), 77-101.
7. Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
8. Darling-Hammond, L. (2017). *Teacher quality and student achievement: A review of state policy evidence*. Educational Policy Analysis Archives, 15(3), 10-15.
9. Denzin, N. K. (1978). *The research act: A theoretical introduction to sociological methods* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.
10. Florian, L. (2014). *Inclusive pedagogy: A transformative approach*. Cambridge Journal of Education, 44(2), 146-163.
11. Gendall, P. (1998). *Designing and conducting survey research*. New York: John Wiley & Sons.
12. Hanushek, E. A. (2011). *The economic value of higher teacher quality*. Economics of Education Review, 30(3), 394-400.
13. Hehakaya, F., & Pollatu, G. (2022). *Flexible teaching strategies in the Merdeka Curriculum*. Jakarta: Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia Press.
14. Jensen, B. (2009). *The impact of socio-economic status on educational achievement*. Australian Educational Researcher, 36(4), 383-397.
15. Kohn, A. (2000). *The case against standardized testing: Raising the scores, ruining the schools*. Boston: Heinemann.
16. Kvale, S. (2007). *Doing interviews*. London: SAGE Publications.
17. Mayer, R. E. (2005). *The Cambridge handbook of multimedia learning*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
18. Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
19. Prastowo, M. (2023). *Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka di Sekolah Menengah Pertama: Evaluasi Praktis dan Tantangan di Lapangan*. Jurnal Pendidikan Indonesia, 12(1), 78-92.
20. Robinson, K. (2011). *Out of our minds: Learning to be creative*. Oxford: Capstone Publishing.
21. Rizki, A., & Fahkrunisa, N. (2022). *Barriers to implementing Kurikulum Merdeka in rural schools: A teacher's perspective*. Indonesian Journal of Educational Studies, 9(3), 49-62.
22. Rookes, P., & Willson, S. (2000). *Perception: Theory, Development, and Organization*. London: Routledge.

23. Saputra, M., & Hadi, S. (2022). *The Merdeka Curriculum: A flexible approach to education reform*. Jakarta: Ministry of Education and Culture of Indonesia.
24. Schmidt, R. F., & Richards, D. (2010). *Interview techniques in qualitative research*. London: Routledge.
25. Selwyn, N. (2016). *Education and technology: Key issues and debates*. New York, NY: Continuum.
26. Supriatna, S., Nurwati, L., & Firdaus, A. (2023). *Teachers' Attitudes Towards Kurikulum Merdeka in Elementary Schools*. *Journal of Educational Policy*, 15(2), 66-80.
27. Tomlinson, C. A. (2001). *How to differentiate instruction in mixed-ability classrooms* (2nd ed.). Alexandria, VA: ASCD.
28. Tricahyati, S., & Zaim, H. (2023). *Challenges in implementing Kurikulum Merdeka in diverse classrooms: A teacher's perspective*. *Indonesian Journal of Educational Research*, 13(4), 101-115.
29. UNESCO. (2014). *Teaching and learning for a sustainable future: A toolkit for educators*. Paris: UNESCO Publishing.
30. Yin, R. K. (2014). *Case study research: Design and methods* (5th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.