

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Chapter two describes literature review of this study involving teachers' perception regarding *Merdeka* Curriculum implementation.

2.1 *Merdeka* Curriculum Implementation

Merdeka Curriculum, a national curriculum designed by Ministry of Education and Culture aims to encourage students to think critically and *Merdekal*y in 2019. It promotes flexible learning paths and student-centered learning approach. The teachers who execute curriculum changes bear a major responsibility for its effectiveness. The important factors in ensuring the implementation of *Merdeka* Curriculum focuses on teachers' professional development and willingness to adapt emerging pedagogical approaches (Jasrial et al., 2023).

Regarding the *Merdeka* Curriculum implementation, Ishom (2023) stated that MORA (The Ministry of Religious Affairs) has established KMA as a Decree of MORA Number 347 in 2022 as a curriculum implementation guidelines for adopting *Merdeka* Curriculum in *Madrasah* aiming to support the policy of the Ministry of Education and Culture. Then taken from MOOC of MORA training platform, Pintar and Keagamaan (2024), MORA established KMA Number 450 in 2024 to replace KMA Number 347 in 2022. KMA Number 450 involves the curriculum structure of intra-curricular, co-curricular, and extracurricular in teaching and learning process. MORA modifies the curriculum implementation with *Madrasah*'s educational requirements in order to enhance Islamic subjects and the Arabic language subject, which are defining feature of the institution. It is crucial that the curriculum at *Madrasah* emphasizes on students' abilities, attitudes, life skills, and ways of thinking and acting that enable them to anticipate and adapt to constantly changing circumstances, rather than just teaching students the material that they need to learn.

In addition, Anggaira (2023) mentioned six main principles and four major components of *Merdeka* Curriculum. The six main principles are: 1) simple, easy to understand, and implement; 2) focus on the competence and character of all learners; 3) flexible; 4) aligned; 5) working together; and 6) pay attention to the results of the study and feedback. While, the four major components of the *Merdeka* Curriculum established by the government involves: 1) Pancasila student profile; 2) Learning Outcomes; 3) Curriculum structure; and 4) Principles of learning and assessment. All those principles and components must be understood well by the teachers while implementing *Merdeka* Curriculum in their classroom. Another study by Mayanti (2023) also points out that aiming to be implemented effectively, there are several things which should be considered within educational policy so that all the items of *Merdeka* Curriculum would not be just a program of curriculum implementation.

2.2 The Challenges of *Merdeka* Curriculum

Some challenges faced by teachers when implementing *Merdeka* Curriculum. They involve teachers' limited proficiency with information technology, lack of experience with *Merdeka* learning, lack of competency, restricted access to learning, time management, and lack of supporting media. The solutions to the aforementioned issues could be by sharing with other educators, attending internal and external workshops, and increasing understanding about learning strategies (Fauzi, 2023). School readiness also becomes other challenge encountered by schools and teachers in the preparation *Merdeka* Curriculum implementation. Some items would be adapted from the previous curriculum to the new one (Oktaviani & Ramayanti, 2023).

Another challenge comes when teachers must prepare themselves for joining teacher training. Teachers must constantly be able to adjust to the policies that are established since their responsibilities vary as education regulations. They must be capable of adapting to the demands imposed by the policy's execution. Teachers' ability in adjusting to any change is also necessary for any policy of

curriculum changes (Tobing et al., 2023). Teachers highlight the need for workshops and training in order to successfully incorporate the *Merdeka* Curriculum into their teaching practices, even in the face of accomplishments. Teachers have necessary expertise to make valuable contributions to the creation and execution of the curricula. Teachers must participate in professional development workshops and training courses in order to give positive influence in curriculum development (Jasrial et al., 2023 ; Supriatna et al., 2023).

On the other hand, teacher's perception also involves to their students' readiness in the implementation of *Merdeka* Curriculum, it turns out that teacher's perception is inadequate. Teachers continue to feel the need to expand their knowledge of the *Merdeka* Curriculum with regard to properly apply it. Other obstacles are in balancing the differentiation competency levels of students (Wilson and Nurkhamidah, 2023 ; Oktaviani and Ramayanti, 2023). In *Merdeka* Curriculum, Anggraena et al., (2022) stated that teachers are advised to conduct formative and summative assessment. Formative assessment is used to provide information or feedback for teachers and students to improve the process. While summative assessment is carried out to ensure achievement overall learning objectives. Another assessment in *Merdeka* Curriculum is a diagnostic test which aims to find out students' readiness, motivation, learning style, and competency. From the diagnostic assessment results, teachers intend to make student mapping before designing the learning activities. In this case, teachers should design their teaching and learning activities by accommodating the differentiated instruction in content, process, product, or learning environment. The learning activities created by the teachers must accommodate all their students' need (Kristiani et al., 2021).

2.3 The Positive Implementation of *Merdeka* Curriculum

English teachers' perception towards *Merdeka* Curriculum implementation has been positive in many ways since it is flexible, adaptable, and tries to meet the diverse of students' need. Aiming to grab successful implementation of *Merdeka* Curriculum, considering teachers' voice is a must related to the curriculum changes,

the goals and objectives of *Merdeka* Curriculum, learning resources, teaching method, teaching and learning facilities, and evaluation system (Jasrial et al., 2023). Additionally, *Merdeka* Curriculum offers a module that lessens the administrative load on instructors, making the teaching and learning process simple and seamless. The module also helps children reach their full potential and enables teachers to work more efficiently (Anggaira, 2023). Teacher's role is no longer limited to that of an administrator preoccupied with daily administrative tasks; instead, teachers focus on the role of a curriculum developer, charged with the responsibility of analyzing, interpreting, and transforming the curriculum in the process of learning. Teacher is also no longer the exclusive source of knowledge; instead, they must apply learning methods by drawing on a variety of learning resources. Indeed, teachers should serve as a learning facilitator, guiding and providing learning facilities in order to enhance the effectiveness of the learning process (Retnaningrum et al., 2023).

2. 4 Teachers' Perception in *Merdeka* Curriculum

Teachers play an essential role as implementer at the final stage in curriculum. Teachers should be involved within curriculum development. They need to know and understand any items of the curriculum itself. Their perceptions should be considered and would influence the curriculum development. At every level of curriculum development, teachers should be able to actively consider the community needs. Teachers should facilitate learning and assist students in pursuing their interests and abilities. Since the duty to apply the curriculum in a way that meets the needs of the students, teachers prepare any learning plans and programs within a particular curriculum. However, not all teachers are able to participate in all stages of the curriculum implementation (Supriatna et al., 2023).

The way teachers provide the learning process for their students is influenced by their own perceptions. Teachers' perception have a big influence on the instruction and learning process in their classroom (Saputra & Hadi, 2022). Teachers' perception also involves teachers' internal mental processes and the

external environment that enables them to make sense of the world or observable forms (Qiong (2017) and Walgito (2003)). According to constructivist theory, although our senses give us the raw information, our brains actively analyse and interpret it. This interpretation is not a direct mapping of the outside environment. In order to produce a cohesive and significant experience, our brains filter, arrange, and even warp sensory data. We actively construct our perception by the interaction of our internal universe of expectations, knowledge, and beliefs with sensory information. Here, motivation and emotion play the crucial part in the perception process (Démuth, 2013). Instead of passively taking in sensory data, active perception highlights how the perceiver shapes their perception of reality (Silva, 2014). Indeed, teachers' perceptions of teaching situations and their decision-making about instruction are greatly influenced by their beliefs, experiences, and emotional states. In order to improve student outcomes and teaching efficacy, it is critical to cultivate positive and introspective views of the teachers.

A Systematic Literature Review (SLR) study conducted by Zamista and Deswita (2023) postulated that *Merdeka* Curriculum is often viewed favourably by most teachers since they are aware of its potential to raise the standard of education quality in Indonesia. In a line it is also found out that not only teachers but also students have a good perception towards the implementation of *Merdeka* Curriculum (Marwan, 2023). Teacher's perception refers to professional teacher's response regarding their experiences in instructing, guiding, directing, training, assessing, and evaluating students of a certain age along the educational pathway. The way a teacher acts and makes judgments can be influenced by different perceptions. It is possible to categorize teachers' perceptions into two groups: positive and negative perception. An excellent foundation for handling any situation will come from having positive or good teachers' perception. While, for negative one will prevent rules from being conducted (Maba, 2017). Indeed, the implementation of the *Merdeka* curriculum will be greatly impacted by teachers' perception. Good implementation can result from positive perceptions, whereas bad

implementation of the program depends on comprehending and resolving these perceptions.

2.5 Factors Affecting Teachers' Perception towards *Merdeka* Curriculum Implementation

Swarjana (2022) postulated factors affecting individual perception generally, such as psychological factor, expectations, cognitive abilities, social roles, and membership in cultures and social communities. Focusing on *Merdeka* Curriculum implementation, teachers' perceptions are critical to the successful implementation of any educational reform. Teachers' perceptions and reactions to the *Merdeka* Curriculum's implementation are influenced by several factors. To make sure that the curriculum meets its objectives and has a beneficial effect on the teaching and learning process, it is essential to comprehend these elements. Saputra & Hadi (2022) mentioned five dominant factors affecting teachers' perception regarding *Merdeka* Curriculum implementation as follows:

a. Teaching experience

Perceptions of the new curriculum are more steady and profound among teachers with greater teaching experience. Through this experience, they may assess the *Merdeka* Curriculum's advantages and disadvantages, compare it to the previous curriculum, and create efficient adaptation plans. Experience in the classroom also helps teachers feel more confident while introducing the new curriculum to their students. Teachers with greater experience can be more adaptable to innovation and more equipped to handle the changes.

b. Education background

Particularly teachers' degree of education and field of study affects how well they comprehend the ideas in the *Merdeka* Curriculum. The curriculum's goals and tenets may be simpler for teachers with relevant educational backgrounds to comprehend. Additionally, crucial are training and ongoing education.

Teachers who have had the chance to participate in workshops or training on equipped to use it.

c. Workshop/training

Teachers can gain essential skills, share their experiences with peers, and learn more about the *Merdeka* Curriculum through workshops and trainings. Good trainings can improve teachers' comprehension of the goals of the curriculum, suitable teaching strategies, and how to assess the learning results of their students. Trainings can also assist the teachers to gain confidence in implementing the *Merdeka* Curriculum and get over any worries or uncertainties they may have about it.

d. Personal experience

Every teacher also interprets and understands the curriculum in a different way. In the classroom, teachers' implementation of the *Merdeka* Curriculum is influenced by their personal experiences, including their own values, beliefs, and learning opportunities. Teachers who have had success with innovative teaching methods may be more receptive to the *Merdeka* Curriculum and more inventive in tailoring it to the requirements of their students.

e. Education degree

Higher education degrees frequently indicate a more profound comprehension of educational theory and practice. More educated teachers might be better equipped to comprehend and use the more difficult ideas in the *Merdeka* Curriculum. Teachers' opinions of the curriculum are influenced by a variety of factors, it is crucial to remember, including their level of education.

From the explanation above, it can be concluded the indicators of teachers' positive and negative perception, as follows:

2.1 Table of Teachers' Positive and Negative Perception Indicator

Factors	Indicators	
	Positive Perception	Negative Perception
Teaching Experience	Teachers with extensive teaching experience likely to have positive attitudes since they have encountered a variety of problems and changes in the educational sector. They are more likely to see <i>Merdeka</i> Curriculum as a chance for creativity and progress.	Teachers with less experience may feel overwhelmed by the <i>Merdeka</i> Curriculum's modifications. They may feel unprepared or underqualified to apply the new curriculum, which can lead to negative perceptions.
Education Background	Teachers with a good educational background, particularly in the subject area they teach, are more likely to understand pedagogical principles and curriculum.	Teachers with less relevant or in-depth educational backgrounds may struggle to grasp the new concepts in the <i>Merdeka</i> Curriculum.
Workshop or Training	Participating in quality workshops and training can help teachers understand the <i>Merdeka</i> Curriculum and gain practical skills for implementing it.	If the workshops or training are not relevant, of poor quality, or insufficient, teachers may feel unhelpful and unprepared to execute the <i>Merdeka</i> Curriculum.
Personal Experience	Teachers who have had positive experiences administering the previous	Teachers who have had unpleasant experiences with past curriculum changes

	<p>curriculum, or who believe strongly in the need of innovation in education, are more likely to have positive attitudes toward the <i>Merdeka</i> Curriculum.</p>	<p>or who are uncomfortable with new learning methodologies may have negative attitudes about the <i>Merdeka</i> Curriculum. They may be apprehensive about the risks or problems that come with implementing a new curriculum. They prefer to use their existing personal experience.</p>
Education Degree	<p>Teachers with advanced degrees typically have a more in-depth understanding of educational theory and practice. This makes it easier for students to understand and apply complicated topics from the <i>Merdeka</i> Curriculum.</p>	<p>Higher education degrees are frequently connected with a greater knowledge of the curriculum, although this does not always result in a positive assessment. Teachers with advanced degrees may also believe that the <i>Merdeka</i> Curriculum does not fulfil the academic standards they expect, or that it relies too heavily on practical skills rather than theoretical knowledge.</p>

