

# Analysis of teacher perceptions of changes in the English Curriculum K-13 to the Kurikulum Merdeka at SDN 3 Gumul

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## ABSTRACT

This study examines the perceptions of teachers at SDN 3 Gumul regarding the transition from the 2013 Curriculum (K-13) to Kurikulum Merdeka in English language learning. The research employs a qualitative approach, using structured observations and interviews with two homeroom teachers. The findings highlight the challenges faced by teachers in implementing the new curriculum, including the lack of English language educators and digital media facilities. Despite these challenges, Kurikulum Merdeka offers flexibility and the potential for innovative teaching methods, allowing teachers to adapt their approaches to students' unique needs and integrate local resources and digital media into the learning process. The study underscores the importance of teacher professionalism and continuous support to ensure the successful implementation of Kurikulum Merdeka. The results provide valuable insights into the impact of curriculum changes on teaching practices and the role of teachers in adapting to new educational policies.

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## 1. Introduction

The times, the development of science, and the impact of technological developments have become major factors in changes to the learning curriculum (Alhamuddin, 2014). The history of curriculum development in Indonesia shows a transformation towards higher quality education, which requires refinement and updating of subject matter to remain relevant to the times. Curriculum changes also have positive and negative impacts on the quality of education, where students can learn to keep up with the advancing times, but such rapid changes also cause problems.

In every curriculum change, the government has a number of agendas aimed at improving the quality of education, improving and enhancing certain parts of learning practices in schools. Basically, any implementation of curriculum policy enacted by the government is largely determined by the ability of teachers to implement it correctly. Teachers' perceptions and interpretations of the curriculum are rooted in their own knowledge and experience (Lundeborg & Levin, 2003; Richardson, 2003; Basturkman et al., 2004; Senior, 2006).

The education curriculum in Indonesia often changes in its application in educational units. The curriculum changes from the 2013 Curriculum (K-13) to Kurikulum Merdeka is an important change in education in Indonesia (Arviansyah, 2022). This change is made to keep up with the times, the

development of science, and technological advances. Kurikulum Merdeka is the result of continuous curriculum development in Indonesia, which was previously the 2013 Curriculum (K-13).

The change from Curriculum 2013 (K-13) to Kurikulum Merdeka in English language learning provides flexibility for teachers to design more creative and innovative teaching methods (Banegas, 2016). Kurikulum Merdeka gives educators the freedom to create quality learning, which is the basis for learners to be free in thinking. In English language learning, Kurikulum Merdeka allows the use of local resources that are rich in culture, history, and local wisdom (Budiningsih, 2010). Teachers can adapt their approach to students' learning styles, considering the unique needs of each individual in the teaching-learning process. In addition, Kurikulum Merdeka strengthens the use of technology and digital media in English language learning, such as the exploration of various types of texts in English such as news articles, blogs, and e-books through digital platforms (Baro'ah, 2020).

Effective English language learning plays an important role in preparing young people to communicate effectively at the global level (Wahyudin, 2023). With the implementation of Kurikulum Merdeka, which is integrated with the use of digital media in learning, teachers can more freely integrate local values into English learning, linking language skills with students' cultural identity. Thus, changes in the English language learning curriculum in elementary schools are a response to the demands of the times, scientific developments, and technological advances. With all of these aspects, many researchers are interested in knowing the perceptions of teachers towards changes in the English curriculum for the reasons mentioned above to respond to globalization with changes in the existing curriculum (Anwar, 2023).

### 1.1. Theoretical Reviews

#### a. Analysis

Analysis is an investigation of an event (essay, action, and so on) to find out the real situation (cause, sitting case, and so on). Analysis is also the decomposition of a subject into its various parts and the study of the parts themselves and the relationship between the parts to obtain a precise understanding and understanding of the meaning of the whole. According to Komaruddin (2001) is a thinking activity to decompose a whole into small components so that it can recognize the signs of the components, the relationship of each component, and the function of each component in an integrated whole.

#### b. Perception

Etymologically, perception or in English perception comes from the Latin perception which means to receive or take. Perception is the experience of an event obtained by inferring information and interpreting messages. Perception is giving meaning to our senses. In the book *General Psychology* by Sumanto (2014), it is written that perception is the process of understanding or giving meaning to information to a stimulus. Stimuli are obtained from responses to objects, events, or relationships.

#### c. Curriculum

A curriculum is an educational benchmark or learning plan for schools and other institutions. Curriculum in ancient Greek comes from the word *curir* which means runner and *curere* which means a place to race (Connelly et al, 1991). Curriculum means the distance that must be traveled by the runner. Kurikulum Merdeka according Munandar (2021) focuses on flexible learning tailored to students' needs, emphasizing critical thinking and creativity. In contrast with K-13, Hajaroh and Adawiyah (2014) stated K-13 emphasizes the development of student character and the integration of knowledge, skills, and attitudes in the learning process.

### 1.2. Literature Review

Based on the results of the study by Saputri et al. (2024) the researcher concluded that on the 2013 curriculum changes in SD Negeri 1 Ganjaran varied widely, with many teachers rating the changes from the 2013 curriculum to their own curriculum as very positive and making it easier to meet learning objectives. However, the study also highlighted the challenges related to the implementation of Kurikulum Merdeka, such as the need for appropriate learning strategies, inadequate learning design, and a lack of teaching skills among some educators.

Another research from Falah et al. (2023) concluded that the study discussed is not clearly identified. However, the importance of curriculum transformation in improving the quality of teaching and learning in Indonesia. The status of English at the primary level remains the same, as an elective subject that can be taught based on school readiness. The study aims to identify how primary school students perceive learning under the new curriculum that emphasizes students' interests and needs. Additionally, Munandar (2021) concluded that the lesson plan (RPP) serves as a guide in learning activities, and teachers carry out learning activities regularly, implicitly incorporating elements from the previous version of the lesson plan into their teaching. The study provides valuable insights into the impact of curriculum changes on learning activities and the role of teachers in implementing the curriculum.

The differences between the 2013 Curriculum (K-13) and the Merdeka Curriculum certainly bring a number of advantages and disadvantages, and raise many questions among teachers, including at SD Negeri 3 Gumul, Klaten District. The change of curriculum from K-13, which has not been fully successful, to the new curriculum often causes problems and complaints among teachers. This has an impact on various aspects, especially for teachers as research subjects. Therefore, the researcher felt the need to conduct a study at SD Negeri 3 Gumul. Thus, the title of this research is "Analysis of Teacher Perceptions of Changes in The English Learning curriculum K-13 to Kurikulum Merdeka at SDN 3 Gumul".

## 2. Method

The type of research is descriptive qualitative research. Qualitative research methods as expressed by Moleong (2006) is a procedure that produces descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words from people and behaviors that can be observed. This research approach uses a Phenomenological approach. This approach is often used to refer to all objects that are still considered external and paradigmatically must be called objective, which means they have not become human conceptual subjectivity (Dubin & Olshain, 1986).

The data analysis techniques used in this research are structured observation and interview. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010), the method is used to collect data on the natural behavior of individuals in their usual environments, providing rich, qualitative insights into their actions and interactions. Structured observations were used to collect data on how teachers experienced and responded to the curriculum change from K-13 to Kurikulum Merdeka (Bekalo et al, 2000). This observation helps researchers better understand how teachers adapt the new curriculum and face challenges in its implementation. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), interviews are a method used in qualitative research to obtain in-depth information about the views, experiences and feelings of the interviewees. These interviews helped the researcher better understand how teachers adapted the new curriculum and faced challenges in its implementation.

The research analyzing teachers' perceptions of changes in the English language learning curriculum in elementary schools was conducted at SDN 3 Gumul located in Klaten, Central Java. This research was conducted in August 2023. The subjects of this research are 2 teachers at SDN 3 Gumul, namely, Nur Rochman as a homeroom teacher in grade 5 and Mahmud as a homeroom teacher in grade 3. The data analysis technique used in this research is observation, where the author has designed systematically, about what will be observed, when and where. The guidelines are based on these 3 questions:

1. What curriculum is used at SDN 3 Gumul?
2. What kind of English language learning is implemented at SDN 3 Gumul?
3. Is limited technology an obstacle for teachers in teaching English?

## 3. Findings and Discussion

Teachers' perceptions of curriculum changes from Curriculum 2013 to Kurikulum Merdeka in English language learning have been the focus of several studies. A study states by Faisal et al. (2023) that the professionalism of English teachers is faced with serious challenges in implementing the Curriculum Merdeka, especially related to the low mastery of the concept of developing teacher professionalism in implementing Kurikulum Merdeka. In addition, another paper by Rahayu et al. (2022) mentions that the results of the study show that English teachers' perceptions and

interpretations of the 2013 Curriculum are at two poles; positive (having an impact on the transformation from the traditional view of learning towards modern pedagogical dimensions) and negative (seeing curriculum changes as something that is formal and conceptual). The results of other studies by Muzharifah et al. (2023) show that the perceptions of teachers and educators in implementing Kurikulum Merdeka as a whole have concerns about the implementation of the curriculum.

SDN 3 Gumul currently uses two different curricula, K-13 and Kurikulum Merdeka. This is due to the unevenness of the existing curriculum changes, but it is certain that in the new semester of 2024 all classes at SDN 3 Gumul will use curriculum merdeka. In learning English when using K-13 there is a reduction in compulsory English lessons from 4 hours per week to 2 hours per week. With this new regulation, some schools made English an extracurricular activity rather than a subject, and in some schools it was not taught at all, leading to the transfer or even expulsion of English teachers in primary schools. SDN 3 Gumul did not have an English teacher when K-13 was introduced, so English was not taught at SDN 3 Gumul.

Then the curriculum changed from K-13 to Kurikulum Merdeka. Kurikulum Merdeka, in the context of English language learning at SDN 3 Gumul, brought significant changes to the learning system at SDN 3 Gumul. Kurikulum Merdeka also supports optimal English language teaching at SDN 3 Gumul, because it advocates early introduction to language. In the era of digital learning, the implementation of Merdeka Curriculum in English language teaching provides an opportunity to make the learning process more interesting and meaningful for students. It emphasizes that English is not just a subject, but a tool to open doors to the world, and teachers play a key role as facilitators in helping students learn English according to their interests. Although in reality English has not been optimized at SDN 3 Gumul, in addition to the lack of English language educators, there are also a lack of facilities such as digital media available.

Kurikulum Merdeka in English language learning provides flexibility for teachers to design more creative and innovative teaching methods. Kurikulum Merdeka gives educators the freedom to create quality learning, which is the basis for independent learners in thinking. In English language learning, Kurikulum Merdeka allows the use of local resources that are rich in culture, history, and local wisdom. At SDN 3 Gumul, because there are no English teachers, homeroom teachers are the ones who teach English in class, teachers find it difficult with this, especially since there are several teachers who do not master basic English. The situation is made more difficult by students who have not had English lessons before. Teachers adapt their approach to students' learning styles, considering the unique needs of each individual in the teaching-learning process.

In addition, Kurikulum Merdeka strengthens the use of technology and digital media in English language learning, such as the exploration of various types of texts in English such as news articles, blogs, and e-books through digital platforms. Effective English learning plays an important role in preparing the younger generation to communicate effectively at the global level. With the implementation of Kurikulum Merdeka integrated with the utilization of digital media in learning, teachers can more freely integrate local values into English learning, linking language skills with students' cultural identity.

#### 4. Conclusion

Based on the analysis of teachers' perceptions of changes in the English language learning curriculum from the 2013 Curriculum (K-13) to Kurikulum Merdeka at SDN 3 Gumul, the findings show that teachers' perceptions of curriculum change are polar: positive and negative. The research highlights Kurikulum Merdeka flexibility and creativity, enabling teachers to tailor their approaches to the individual needs of students and incorporate local resources and digital media into their teaching. Nonetheless, the study also points out challenges for teachers, such as a shortage of English language instructors and digital media resources, which impede the successful execution of the new curriculum.

The research emphasizes the importance of teacher professionalism and the need for continuous support and training to ensure successful implementation of Kurikulum Merdeka. It also underscores the role of technology in enhancing English language learning and the potential for the curriculum to foster critical thinking and creativity among students.

In conclusion, the transition from K-13 to Kurikulum Merdeka presents both opportunities and challenges for English language learning in Indonesian elementary schools. While the new curriculum offers flexibility and the potential for innovative teaching methods, it also requires significant support and resources to ensure its successful implementation. The findings of this study highlight the need for ongoing professional development for teachers and the integration of technology to enhance the learning experience. Ultimately, the success of the Merdeka Curriculum will depend on the ability of educators to adapt and innovate within the constraints of their current environment.

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