
RESEARCH ARTICLE

Independent Curriculum in the Perception of Indonesian Language Teachers of Smp/Mts in Yogyakarta

Annisa Cahya Rahina, S.Pd.¹ ✉ and Dr. Kastam Syamsi, M. Ed²

^{1,2}Language and Arts Faculty, Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

Corresponding Author: Annisa Cahya Rahina, **E-mail:** annisacahya.2021@student.uny.ac.id

ABSTRACT

The background of this research was the condition of education in the 21st century after the COVID-19 pandemic, which impacted learning loss. In response, the government was attempting to evaluate and restore learning. One example was the implementation of the Independent Curriculum, which was currently being implemented in several schools and had the potential to be implemented nationally in 2024. This study aimed to discover how teachers, particularly Indonesian language teachers at SMP/MTs, perceived the Independent Curriculum. This study used the descriptive approach. Data collection used included observation, interviews, and questionnaires with 15 Indonesian teachers at SMP/MTs in Yogyakarta as respondents. The results showed that teachers' perceptions of the Independent Curriculum were in the "medium" category, with a total percentage of 66.7%. This category showed a fairly good perception of Indonesian SMP/MTs teachers in Yogyakarta regarding projection, implementation, and self-readiness to implement the Merdeka curriculum in school learning.

KEYWORDS

Perception, Independent Curriculum, SMP/MTs teachers

ARTICLE INFORMATION

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1. Introduction

Education in the 21st century after the COVID-19 pandemic impacts learning loss. In this regard, the government is attempting to evaluate and restore learning, one example being the launch of the Independent Curriculum, which has the potential to be implemented nationally in 2024.

In its application, the curriculum transformation from K-13 to the Independent Curriculum generates several paradigms and system contrasts. The 2013 curriculum focuses on increasing and balancing attitude and knowledge competencies with categories in the choice of class majors. Meanwhile, the Independent Curriculum focuses on developing the character and competence of students, as well as honing their interests and talents. The new curriculum has a big challenge, especially for teachers and students. To achieve curriculum-based learning goals, teachers and students must play their best roles.

Not only the paradigm but also the difference between K13 and the Independent Curriculum can be seen in the allocation of activities. The Independent Curriculum allocates two activities, namely (1) intra-curricular learning and (2) projects to strengthen the profile of Pancasila students, which lead to student-centered or student-centered learning. The Independent Curriculum wants to involve students optimally, allowing educators to determine learning tools.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

The teacher's and students' roles support the successful implementation of learning. According to Moos in Fitriana (2016: 663), perceptions of the learning environment provide a significant meaning that can influence learning activities. Therefore, it is

necessary to understand in advance how the perceptions of teachers as assistants, mentors, and facilitators in implementing learning towards the curriculum, which in this study focused on the Independent Curriculum, will be.

Ramadhan (2009: 6) concludes that every individual in everyday life would be subjected to a stimulus or stimuli in the form of information, events, objects, and others derived from their surroundings. The stimulus will have a different meaning for each person. Suwanto and Fajri (2018: 41) describe the nature of perception as something related to the symptoms and experiences one has. The more experience and knowledge a person has, the stronger his perception will be.

A person's perception is influenced by various stimuli and internal factors, which allow for individual differences in perception. Even though there may be differences, it does not rule out the possibility of similarities in perceptions between individuals of certain objects.

1.2 Research Question

This research will describe the answers to the questions below:

1. What is the perception of SMP/MTs Indonesian teachers in Yogyakarta with regard to implementing the Independent Curriculum?

This study will describe teachers' views, feelings, and readiness regarding the implementation and projections of the Independent Curriculum in implementing learning in schools. The teacher's perception becomes interesting and important because it will give meaning to the learning activities carried out in schools, especially in SMPs and MTs in Yogyakarta.

2. Methodology

2.1 Research Design

This research uses the descriptive analysis method. This research procedure produces descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words about individual characteristics, conditions, or symptoms of certain observable groups. The analytical method in this study aims to examine and describe the perceptions of Indonesian SMP/MTs teachers in Yogyakarta towards the Independent Curriculum.

2.2 Participants

A total of 15 Indonesian SMP/MTs teachers in Yogyakarta have agreed to be respondents in this study. The participants were selected by the simple random sampling technique. These teachers teach Indonesian for grades 7, 8, and 9, representing four regencies and one municipality in Yogyakarta.

2.3 Setting

This research is conducted for the SMP/MTs level in Yogyakarta, with data collection conducted during November 2022. The schools selected are representatives of various regions in Yogyakarta, namely Sleman, Gunung Kidul, Kulon Progo, Bantul, and Kotamadya Regency.

2.4 Data Gathering Instrument

2.4.1 Observation

This research begins with observations at several schools in Yogyakarta to see firsthand how learning activities are carried out between schools that have implemented the Independent Curriculum and schools that are still implementing K13.

2.4.2 Interview

The observations that have been made raise many interesting things that can be learned. Therefore, this study also collects data through interviewing. "Interviews are conducted to obtain information directly from the source" (Susanti, 2010:19). It is carried out through free interviews with three Indonesian language teachers willing to serve as resource persons.

2.4.3 Questionnaire

This study also uses a questionnaire as a research instrument. The distributed questionnaire contained 15 statement items representing three topic categories. The topic in question concerns the perceptions of Indonesian SMP/MTs teachers regarding 1) projections and learning objectives with the Independent Curriculum in schools (in statement items 1–5), 2) implementation of the Independent Curriculum, which leads to a variety of project-based activities (in statement items 6–10), and 3) readiness and willingness of teachers to apply the Independent Curriculum to Indonesian language learning (in statement points 11–15).

2.5 Data Analysis

The data from observations and interviews are used to compile detailed information about teachers' perceptions of the Independent Curriculum, which is then descriptively summarized. The questionnaire data is analyzed using Likert scale responses 1-4. (Disagree – strongly agree). The data is processed to generate an average and a percentage score, with the score indicating the level of perception of SMP/MTs Indonesian teachers in the categorization (low, medium, and high).

3. Results of the Research Question

The perceptions of Indonesian SMP/MTs teachers in Yogyakarta towards the Independent Curriculum could be interpreted based on the following research results:

Table 1: *Descriptive Statistic*

Variable	Number of Respondents	Lowest Score	Highest score	Average Score	Standard Deviation
Teacher's Perception	15	43	60	50,26	6.04

A total of 15 Indonesian SMP/MTs teachers in Yogyakarta completed a research questionnaire about their perceptions, using a Likert scale (disagree-strongly agree) with a scale of 1-4. The responses of each respondent were then processed to determine the lowest (1 x 15 item scale = 15) and highest (4 x 15 item scale = 60) score. Excel was used to compute the average (total score of all respondents: 15) and standard deviation. Furthermore, this study would present the percentage categorization of SMP/MTs Indonesian teachers' perceptions of the Independent Curriculum using the Azwar formula (2012).

Table 2: *Perception Categorization Formula*

Low	$X < M - 1SD$ $X < 50 - 6$ $X < 44$
Average	$M - 1SD \geq X < M + 1SD$ $50 - 6 \geq X < 50 + 6$ $44 \geq X < 56$
High	$X \geq M + 1SD$ $X \geq 50 + 6$ $X \geq 56$

Table 3: *Perception Categorization Results*

Category	Score	Number of Teachers	Percentage
Low	< 44	1	6,7%
Average	44 – 56	10	66,7%
High	≥56	4	26,7%

According to this table, the perception levels of Indonesian SMP/MTs in Yogyakarta ranged from 6.7% in the low perception category to 66.7% in the medium perception category and up to 26.7% in the high perception category.

4. Discussion

Based on data from observations, interviews, and questionnaires, Indonesian language teachers at SMP/MTs in Yogyakarta had moderate perceptions of the Independent Curriculum's implementation. More than half of those polled agreed and were excited about the proposed goals, implementation system, and readiness to implement this new curriculum. The Independent Curriculum had not yet been implemented nationally and was still being phased in. This also raised concerns and several obstacles for teachers, such as the limited learning resources with the Independent Curriculum, the packaging of student-centered learning, and many more.

Differences in perceptions between individuals occurred naturally because perceptions were formed based on what was seen, heard, and felt. This was consistent with Sarlito W Sarwono's (2010: 103-106) belief that differences in attention, needs, and personality types would result in different perceptions for each individual. Sarwono (1999) argued in Hartati and Widayani (2014)

that perception was subjective and dependent on the subject performing the perception. Environmental, gender, and generational differences could all contribute to different reactions and perceptions.

5. Conclusion

This study found that teachers of Indonesian language subjects at SMP/MTs in Yogyakarta had a favorable attitude toward the Independent Curriculum. As evidenced by the percentage data, SMP/MTs Indonesian teachers' perceptions of the Independent Curriculum were moderate (66.7%). This category meant that more than half of the teachers agreed with the learning projections and goals of the Independent Curriculum. Not only that, but the teachers also agreed on how it would be implemented in the classroom, directing student-centered learning through various project-based programs. Several difficulties and concerns accompanied this favorable perception. Given that the Independent Curriculum was still in its trial phase and had not yet been implemented nationally, such feelings were understandable.

The teachers' perceptions of the curriculum will impact the learning's implementation with the result which appropriates to the curriculum. The results of this study are expected to give details about how the perception of Indonesian Language teachers of SMP/MTs in Yogyakarta and the things that are needed for future implementation.

It is hoped that future research will emerge which describes perception, particularly about the learning elements implemented locally and internationally.

For the limitations, this study encountered obstacles in research. The first one is some of the teachers are not willing to be respondents. Furthermore, uneven implementation of the curriculum in Indonesia impacts the literature, which rarely discusses "Kurikulum Merdeka"; thus, it makes it more difficult to do this research.

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