



# Perceptions of Principals and Teachers in the Implementation of the Independent Curriculum in Driving Schools at SMAN 1 and SMAN 2 Sukabumi City

Jasmansyah Jasmansyah<sup>1\*</sup>, Rachmat Mulyana<sup>2</sup>, Mustiali Mustiali<sup>3</sup>, M. Ridwan Fauzi<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Elementary Teacher Education, Nusa Putra University, Sukabumi, West Java, Indonesia  
[jasmansyah@nusaputra.ac.id](mailto:jasmansyah@nusaputra.ac.id),

<sup>2</sup> Principal at SMAN 2 Sukabumi City, Sukabumi, West Java, Indonesia  
[m80rahmat@gmail.com](mailto:m80rahmat@gmail.com)

<sup>3,4</sup> Lecturer at Syamsul Ulum Islamic Higher Education, Sukabumi, West Java, Indonesia  
{ [mustiali](mailto:mustiali), [mridwanf](mailto:mridwanf) } @staisyamsululum.ac.id

**Abstract.** The curriculum is the core element in shaping the quality of education, determining its direction, and achieving educational goals. The success of education depends on the curriculum's adaptability to meet the ever-changing needs of students, institutions, and stakeholders. In Indonesia, the Ministry of Education introduced the *Kurikulum Merdeka* (Independent Curriculum) as an additional option to improve education quality. This curriculum focuses on fostering a stress-free and enjoyable learning environment that allows students to showcase their natural talents. It represents a shift from the 2013 curriculum, emphasizing character development and essential materials while providing more flexibility for teachers to adapt to students' abilities. The Independent Curriculum has been piloted in around 2500 schools and vocational institutions in the 2021/2022 academic year and is now available for broader implementation. Schools can choose from three options: Independent Learning, Independent Change, or Independent Sharing. The curriculum aims to create a learning environment that prioritizes students' freedom and creativity while adhering to the values of Pancasila, the foundation of Indonesian society. The study explores the perceptions of teachers and school principals regarding the Independent Curriculum in two pilot schools, SMAN 1 and SMAN 2 Sukabumi City. A quantitative approach using descriptive statistics was employed, and the data collected indicates that the majority of respondents have a positive perception of the curriculum. They recognize its philosophy and concept and believe in its potential to shape students' character and competencies in line with the demands of the 21st century. The research suggests several recommendations for the successful implementation of the Independent Curriculum. It calls for comprehensive support from all school stakeholders, including local government involvement. Collaborative efforts among the school committee, supervisors, principals, and teachers are essential to make schools successful pilot projects. Continuous support and assistance are needed to ensure the effective implementation of the Independent Curriculum, ultimately creating a generation of lifelong learners in Indonesia. The Independent Curriculum is a transformative initiative aimed at improving the quality of education in Indonesia. The positive perceptions of school principals and teachers in SMAN 1 and SMAN 2 Sukabumi City signify its potential for success. However, ongoing support, collaboration, and training are essential to ensure a seamless transition and long-term effectiveness.

**Keywords:** Teachers' and Principals Perception, Independent Curriculum, Driving School, Sekolah Penggerak

## 1. Introduction

The curriculum is the main component in improving the quality of education. As the heart of education, the curriculum plays a very important role regarding the direction and goals of education<sup>1</sup>. The curriculum is a forum that will determine the direction of education. The success or failure of an education really depends

on the curriculum used. As Prof. Dr. Omar Mohammad Al-Toumy Al-Syaibani also views "curriculum as the core of the educational process and the first path through which to achieve its goals<sup>2</sup>. The curriculum development process must continue to be carried out to meet the needs of students, educational institutions and educational stakeholders. An effective curriculum must meet the current needs and demands of the culture, society, and expectations of the people served. Therefore, curriculum development and educational renewal processes must continue to undergo constant review, revision and change<sup>3</sup>. The involvement of all stakeholders determines the success or failure of the curriculum being developed.

The Indonesian government, through the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Higher Education, issued a policy in developing the Kurikulum Merdeka (Independent Curriculum) which is given to educational units as an additional option in order to restore learning during 2022-2024. An independent curriculum is interpreted as a learning design that provides opportunities for students to learn calmly, relaxed, fun, stress-free and pressure-free, to show their natural talents<sup>4</sup>.

The implementation of the Independent Curriculum is a refinement of the 2013 curriculum which has been implemented since 2004. The Merdeka curriculum has several differences and similarities with the 2013 curriculum. According to Sari et al. The Merdeka curriculum is made simpler and focuses on essential material and development of student character. The nature or aim of the Merdeka curriculum is to support recovery in learning. The characteristics of the Merdeka curriculum are as follows: 1) project-based learning activities to develop soft skills and traits in accordance with the Pancasila learning profile. 2) focus on essential material so that students have lots of time for learning, especially numeracy and literacy. 3) make learning more flexible for teachers to carry out differentiated learning activities according to students' abilities<sup>5</sup>.

The differences between the 2013 Curriculum and the Independent Curriculum can be seen from several aspects, such as the basic curriculum framework, targeted competencies, curriculum structure, assessment, learning, teaching tools provided by the government, and the respective curriculum rankings. Several differences between the 2013 Curriculum and the Merdeka Curriculum: 1) Subjects: The Independent Curriculum emphasizes character and moral learning, while the 2013 Curriculum has more complete subjects; 2) Development of Pancasila Student Profiles: The Independent Curriculum adds the development of Pancasila student profiles as one of its focuses, while the 2013 Curriculum does not have this; 3) Lesson Hours: In the 2013 Curriculum, lesson hours are set per week, whereas in the Independent Curriculum, education units can arrange the allocation of learning time according to needs; 4) Material Focus: The Independent Curriculum focuses on essential material, while the 2013 Curriculum has more complete material; 5) Implementation: The Independent Curriculum can be adapted to the needs and level of readiness of each school, while the 2013 Curriculum has a more standard implementation<sup>6</sup>. These differences show that the Merdeka Curriculum provides schools with more flexibility in adapting learning to student needs and characteristics, while the 2013

Curriculum has a more standardized structure and components.

Since the 2021/2022 academic year, the Independent Curriculum has been implemented in almost 2500 schools participating in the Pilot School Program (PSP) and 901 Center of Excellence Vocational Schools (SMK PK) as part of learning with a new paradigm. In the 2022/2023 academic year, educational units can choose to implement the curriculum based on their respective readiness starting from Kindergarten-B grades I, IV, VII, and There are three options for implementing the Independent Curriculum for educational units that choose to use the Independent Curriculum in 2023/2024, namely: **1) Independent Learning;** The educational unit applies several Independent Curriculum principles in implementing learning and assessment but still uses the curriculum of the educational unit that is being implemented. **2) Independent Change;** Using the Independent Curriculum in developing the education unit curriculum and applying it in carrying out learning and assessments. **3) Independent Sharing;** Using the Independent Curriculum in developing its educational units and applying it in carrying out learning and assessments with a commitment to share good practices with other educational units<sup>7</sup>

The implementation of the Independent Curriculum is a new breakthrough in realizing Freedom of Learning, which focuses on students' freedom and creativity in thinking to develop cognitive, affective and psychomotor intelligence. The aim of the independent learning curriculum is so that teachers, students and parents can have a happy atmosphere. Freedom to learn means that the education process must create a happy atmosphere<sup>8</sup>. To support this policy, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Higher Education has launched the freedom to learn program and the driving school program as an integrated part of the Merdeka Curriculum. It is hoped that this program can support each school in forming a generation of lifelong learners who have personalities in accordance with the values of Pancasila. The role of teachers is very important in achieving this goal. In line with Ainia's (2020) view, teachers as the main subject in learning are expected to have the ability to be a driver of learning and take real action that has a positive impact on students.

The independent curriculum is a restructuring of the national education system in Indonesia, as quoted by Yamin and Syahrir (2020), namely to respond to the nation's changes and progress in facing disruptive changes in the times<sup>9</sup>. Minister of Education Nadiem Makarim also stated that education reform does not only rely on an administrative approach, but also needs to carry out cultural transformation<sup>10</sup>. This view is in line with the vision and mission of Indonesian education to create quality people who are able to compete in various aspects of life<sup>11</sup>

The concept of Freedom of Learning, its philosophy, its anchor is the philosophy of the Father of Indonesian Education, Ki Hajar Dewantara, namely the motto that is always echoed is *Ing Ngarso Sung Tulodo, Ing Madyo Mangun Karso, Tut Turi Handayani*. Freedom to learn reflects freedom without oppression and exploitation in accessing knowledge and experience which has an impact on changing behavior to form a complete personality. The concept of independent

learning needs to be enthusiastic and get attention in education policy to improve its quality. Apart from that, the Indonesian government and society need to understand the essence of independent learning. The essence of independent learning can be understood through the concept of education desired by the Indonesian people<sup>12</sup>.

The author held informal discussions with several teachers regarding the implementation of the Merdeka curriculum, and received information that teachers did not fully understand the basic concepts of the Merdeka curriculum<sup>13</sup>. Apart from that, some of them are increasingly confused about the new teaching methods in class, unable to clearly distinguish between the 2013 curriculum and the Merdeka curriculum. This research examines the perceptions of teachers and school principals in implementing the Independent curriculum in schools that run the Pilot School Program (PSP), SMAN 1 Sukabumi City and SMAN 2 Sukabumi City.

## 2. Method

A quantitative approach with descriptive statistics was used in this research. Quantitative research methods are research methods based on the philosophy of positivism that are used to study certain populations or samples<sup>14</sup>. Meanwhile, Lilya Susanti said that the descriptive method is a method of researching the status of a group of people, an object, a set of conditions, a system of thought or a class of events in the present, which aims to create a systematic, factual and accurate description, picture or painting. regarding the facts, properties and relationships between the phenomena being investigated<sup>15</sup>.

The respondents of this research were principals and teachers at 2 (two) public high schools, namely SMAN 1 and SMAN 2 Sukabumi City, with 2 (two) principals and 45 teachers. So the total respondents were 47 people.

The instrument used in this research was used as a measuring tool and collected research data related to the perceptions of school principals and teachers, namely a questionnaire regarding the perceptions of school principals and teachers regarding the implementation of the Merdeka curriculum in driving schools. Before developing an instrument, it is required to state the grating first. Variables are first defined before developing questions, then determining the indicators that must be measured. Then, these indicators are translated into questions or statements. An outline of the research questions is attached in table 1 below:

**Table 1.** Adapted from : Delsi Mitra and Pupung Purnawarman: Teachers' Perception Related to the Implementation of Curriculum 2013

<b>Variabel</b>	<b>Sub-Variabel</b>	<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Notes</b>
Perceptions of School Principals and Teachers in Implementing the Independent Curriculum	Understanding related to the concept of the Independent Curriculum	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Understand the Independent Curriculum Philosophy</li> <li>2. Understand the concept of the Independent Curriculum</li> <li>3. (in theory and practice)</li> </ol>	
	Implementation of Learning Outcomes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Understand the concept of achievement Learning</li> <li>2. Ability to organize achievements Learning</li> </ol>	
	Implementation of the Teaching and Learning Activity Process	Understanding Planning, Implementation and Evaluation in Learning Activities	
	Implementation of the Assessment Process Learning	Understand the types, techniques and strategies of assessment in the Independent Curriculum	

### 3. Results And Discussion

Based on the results of data collection conducted by researchers on the Principals and teachers of the Pilot School at SMAN 1 and SMAN 2 Sukabumi City through a questionnaire, the following results were obtained:

Table 2: Results of data collection conducted by researchers on Principals and teachers of Pilot Schools at SMAN 1 and SMAN 2 Sukabumi City.

Variabel	Sub-Variabel	Indicator	Percentage Sub-Variabel	Percentage Indikator
Perceptions of School Principals and Teachers in Implementing the Independent Curriculum	Teacher Perceptions Regarding Understanding the Philosophy and Concept of the Independent Curriculum	1. Understand the Independent Curriculum Philosophy 2. Understand the concept of the Independent Curriculum (in theory and practice)	88,2%	88,4% 87,9%
	Teacher Perceptions regarding the Implementation of Learning Activities, (Planning, Implementation and Evaluation of Learning).	1. Understand Planning, Implementation and Evaluation	86,6%	86,3%
		2. Learning Activities		87,0%
	Teacher Perceptions regarding the Implementation of Learning Activities, (Learning Implementation).	1. Understand planning, implementation and evaluation 2. Learning Activities	89,2%	89,4%
88,8%				
Teacher Perceptions regarding Implementation of	Understand the types, techniques and strategies of assessment in the	88,1%	88,1%	

	Learning Activities, (Learning Evaluation).	Independent Curriculum		
	Total Average		84,4%	

**Table 3.** Perceptions of School Principals and Teachers in Implementing the Independent Curriculum

No	Interval	Frequency	Percentage	Category
1	248 - 293	33	70,2%	Strongly Positive (SP)
2	202 - 247	14	29,8%	Positive (P)
3	157 - 202			Neutral (NL)
4	111 - 156			Negative (N)
5	65 - 110			
	Sum	47	100%	Strongly Negative

The class interval above was obtained using the following descriptive statistical

formula:  $X_{max} = 5 \times 57 = 285$

$X_{min} = 1 \times 57 = 57$

Number of Classes = 5 ( SP, P, NL, N and SN)

$$\text{Class Interval} = \frac{X_{max} - X_{min}}{BK} = \frac{285 - 57}{5} = \frac{228}{5} = 46$$

The results of interviews with the Principals of Pilot Schools at SMAN 1 and SMAN 2 Sukabumi City regarding the driving school program, said that not all schools in Sukabumi City were registered as driving schools. There are only two schools that have categorized driving school, namely SMAN 1 and SMAN 2, saying that not all schools categorized as the driving school program because they do not meet the criteria and requirements.

A person's perception of something is influenced by factors such as their cultural background and personal qualities<sup>16</sup>. In the context of the research subjects, namely the Driving School teachers at SMAN 1 and SMAN 2 Sukabumi City, it can be concluded that they generally still use the 2013 curriculum in their learning, not the independent curriculum. According to them, the independent curriculum in driving schools has good potential, but its implementation is still not optimal. The main problem is the lack of information and training for teachers to develop their competence in using the independent curriculum in driving schools. Therefore, their perception of the implementation of driving schools tends to be neutral. However, if we look at the personal qualities of these teachers, their perceptions of the implementation of driving schools tend to be positive.

Based on the results of interviews that have been conducted, it appears that driving schools are able to shape the character of students in accordance with national values and the competencies required according to the demands of today's times. The existence of the concept of independent learning and driving schools is very relevant to the needs of students and the educational requirements of the 21st century. Apart from that, learning methods at driving schools also involve a comprehensive learning approach and assessment of student learning outcomes based on data. This is due to the driving school's focus on developing students' overall learning outcomes, which include cognitive competencies such as literacy and numeracy, as well as non-cognitive competencies such as character. All of this starts with the superior quality of human resources, especially school principals and teachers. The teachers' perceptions of this are based on their experiences in the learning processes they have undergone previously.

Furthermore, based on table 3 above, it can be seen that the majority of perceptions of School Principals and Teachers regarding the Implementation of the Independent Curriculum are very positive at 70.2% and positive at 29.8%. This perception of teachers having a positive response could be due to the fact that every teacher has been able to accept the driving school program to be implemented in learning at SMA 1 and SMAN 2 Sukabumi City.

Based on table 2, the total average for sub-variables was 84.4%, the lowest percentage for the sub-variable Teacher Perceptions regarding the Implementation of Learning Activities, (Planning, Implementation and Evaluation of Learning) was 86.6% because teachers must master theory and make planning starts from CP (Learning Target), TP (Learning Goal), ATP (Scenario of Learning Goal) and teaching modules, while the highest is the Teacher Perception sub-variable regarding the Implementation of Learning Activities, (Learning Implementation) at 89.2%.

From the description, it can be concluded that the total average of respondents can be categorized as the perception of the Driving School teachers at SMAN 1 and SMAN 2 Sukabumi City as very positive regarding the implementation of the independent curriculum. The results of this research are almost the same as previous research, namely research related to teacher perceptions of the PJBL model in the prototype curriculum conducted by (Trinaldi et al. 2022). The results of this research reveal that teachers agree that project based learning is used as an effort to make students active in learning activities. However, teachers still experience difficulties in carrying out Project Based Learning. Teachers are still confused about differentiating this learning model from other learning models and there are still misunderstandings regarding the planning, implementation and evaluation of learning in the 2013 curriculum with the prototype curriculum. The prototype curriculum is the same curriculum as the PSP (Driver School Program) curriculum (Rachmawati et al. 2022).

#### **4. Conclusion**



The Driving School Program is an initiative to improve the quality of education in Indonesia. This program is focused on developing overall student learning outcomes with the aim of creating a Pancasila Student Profile which includes cognitive competencies (ability to read and count) and non-cognitive competencies (character formation), starting with having quality human resources, especially school principals and teachers.

Based on the findings from the research, it can be concluded that the perception level of the Head and Teachers of the Driving School at SMAN 1 and SMAN 2 Sukabumi City is classified as very positive at 70.2% regarding the implementation of the independent curriculum. Therefore, researchers provide several recommendations for implementing the independent curriculum, including:

1. Support is needed from all school components, stakeholders and local government in implementing the independent curriculum.
2. The learning committee, school supervisor, driving school principal, and driving teachers should work together to invite and become a pilot project for schools in the area.
3. There needs to be ongoing assistance for the implementation of the Driving School Program so that this program can run well and effectively.

## References

- [1] Aisyah, Novia. *Perbedaan Kurikulum 2013 dan Kurikulum Merdeka SD, SMP, SMA/SMK* Alhamudin, (2014) *Sejarah Kurikulum di Indonesia*. Jurnal **Nur El-Islam**, Volume 1, Nomor 2, Oktober 2014. <https://media.neliti.com/media/publications/226468-sejarah-kurikulum-di-indonesia-studi-ana-bac69203.pdf>
- [2] Faradila Intan Sari, dkk 2023. *Analisis Perbedaan Kurikulum 2013 Dan Kurikulum Merdeka*, Jurnal Pendidikan dan Konseling, Volume 5 No. 1 tahun 2023. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31004/jpdk.v5i1.10843>
- [3] Jasmansyah, dkk. (2022) *Metodologi Penelitian Pendidikan*, Penebit Zahir Publishing Yogyakarta.
- [4] Johnson, J. A. (2001, August 28). *Curriculum revision that works*. In *principles of effective change*.
- [5] Kemdikbudristek, (2020) *Reformasi Pendidikan Nasional Melalui Merdeka Belajar*. SIARAN PERS Nomor: 104/Sipres/A6/V/2020. <https://www.kemdikbud.go.id/main/blog/2020/05/reformasi-pendidikan-nasional-melalui-merdeka-belajar> diakses 7 Agustus 2023
- [6] Kemendikbud, Merdeka Belajar : *Pokok-Pokok Kebijakan Merdeka Belajar*, Jakarta: Makalah Rapat Koordinasi Kepala Dinas Pendidikan Seluruh Indonesia 2019.
- [7] Lilya Susanti (2016) *Metodologi Penelitian*, Modul Fakultas Teknis Universitas Brawijaya Malang. <http://lilyasusanti.lecture.ub.ac.id/files/2018/03/MODUL-METODE-PENELITIAN.pdf>
- [8] Makarim, Nadiem (2022) *Luncurkan Kurikulum Merdeka, Mendikbudristek: Ini Lebih Fleksibel!* Dalam <https://ditpsd.kemdikbud.go.id/artikel/detail/luncurkan-kurikulum-merdeka-mendikbudristek-ini-lebih-fleksibel> diakses 5 Agustus 2023
- [9] Omar Muhammad Al-Toumy Al-Syaibany (214), *Falsafah Pendidikan Islam*, Jakarta: Bulan Bintang.

- [10] Pangestu, Dimas Aldi Pangestu & Rochmat, Saefur (2021), *Filosofi Merdeka Belajar Berdasarkan Perspektif Pendiri Bangsa*. <https://jurnaldikbud.kemdikbud.go.id/index.php/jpnk/article/view/1823/550>. DOI : 10.24832/jpnk.v6i1.1823
- [11] Restu Rahayu, dkk. (2022) *Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar di Sekolah Penggerak*. Jurnal Basicedu, Volume 6 Nomor 4 Tahun 2022, Research & Learning in Elementary Education <https://jbasic.org/index.php/basicedu>
- [12] Novia Aisyah, 2013. Perbedaan Kurikulum 2013 dan Kurikulum Merdeka SD, SMP, SMA/SMK Selengkapnya <http://detik.com> di akses 10 Agustus 2023
- [13] Sihombing, Adison Adrianus dkk (2021) *Merdeka Belajar in an Online Learning during The Covid-19 Outbreak: Concept and Implementation*. Asian Journal of University Education (AJUE) Volume 17, Number 4, October 2021. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.24191/ajue.v17i4.16207>

**Open Access** This chapter is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>), which permits any noncommercial use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons license and indicate if changes were made.

The images or other third party material in this chapter are included in the chapter's Creative Commons license, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the chapter's Creative Commons license and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder.

