

## Implementation of the Independent Curriculum to Improve the Quality of Learning English

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### Abstrak

Kurikulum mandiri ini memperkenalkan kerangka baru bagi siswa yang berpusat pada model pembelajaran Merdeka, dengan tujuan menumbuhkan rasa percaya diri dan kecerdasan mereka. Pendidik sekolah merancang rencana pengajaran bahasa Inggris sambil membimbing siswa melalui inisiatif pembelajaran berbasis proyek hingga mereka mencapai kemahiran dan kinerja terpuji pada akhir semester. Mengingat bahasa Inggris merupakan bahasa global, maka penguasaannya harus dikuasai agar tidak tertinggal dari negara lain di era globalisasi. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis penerapan Kurikulum Merdeka dalam meningkatkan kualitas pembelajaran khususnya bahasa Inggris, dan apakah pendekatan ini dapat memperkuat kreativitas dan kemampuan berbahasa Inggris di kalangan pendidik dan siswa. Dengan menggunakan metodologi kualitatif yang memanfaatkan analisis isi, penelitian ini mengandalkan data yang diperoleh dari kuesioner yang dibagikan kepada 158 guru bahasa Inggris dan wawancara yang dilakukan dengan para pendidik. Pemeriksaan atas temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa 77,2% guru bahasa Inggris mengakui adanya kurikulum independen, dan 76,6% siswa mengalami peningkatan dalam keterampilan dan kreativitas. Agar kurikulum Merdeka dapat diterapkan secara berkelanjutan, para pendidik harus lebih meningkatkan pengetahuannya, mengambil peran proaktif dalam mendorong dan membantu siswa baik di dalam maupun di luar ruang kelas, dan merancang proyek pembelajaran bahasa Inggris yang mendorong perkembangan siswa selaras dengan prinsip-prinsip Pancasila. mampu berkembang dalam lanskap kompetitif masa depan.

**Kata kunci:** Kurikulum merdeka, Implementasi, Guru bahasa inggris, Kualitas pembelajaran

### Abstract

This independent curriculum introduces a new framework for students centered on Merdeka learning models, with the goal of fostering their self-assurance and ingenuity. School educators design English teaching plans while guiding students through project-based learning initiatives until they achieve proficiency and commendable performance by the end of the semester. Considering that English stands as a global language, students must attain mastery to prevent lagging behind other nations in the era of globalization. This research aims to analyze the application of the Merdeka Curriculum in improving the quality of learning, especially English, and whether this approach can strengthen creativity and English language proficiency among educators and students. By employing a qualitative methodology utilizing content analysis, the study relies on data derived from questionnaires distributed to 158 English teachers and interviews conducted with educators situated. The examination of the findings reveals that 77.2% of English teachers acknowledge the presence of an independent curriculum, and 76.6% of students have experienced improvements in skills and creativity. For the continuous implementation of the Merdeka curriculum, educators should further enhance their knowledge, take a proactive role in encouraging and assisting students both within and beyond the classroom settings, and design English learning projects that foster the development of students aligned with the Pancasila principles, capable of thriving in the future competitive landscape..

**Keywords:** Independent curriculum, Implementation, English teachers, Learning quality.

#### History:

Received : July 23, 2023

Revised : July 29, 2023

Accepted : October 06, 2023

Published : October 25, 2023

**Publisher:** Undiksha Press

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The education quality in Indonesia remains imperfect and is unevenly distributed across regions. This situation arises from insufficient community resources, inadequate teacher quality, and insufficient facilities and infrastructure for education (Krishnapatria, 2021; Utami, 2015). These factors have driven the government to establish a self-reliant curriculum and make concentrated efforts towards advancing education in Indonesia. Recognizing that education is a vital endeavor aimed at enhancing the quality of human life, essentially seeking to transform behavior and elevate human resources to be self-sufficient

and better individuals. Nevertheless, the actual provision of up-to-date education is not a straightforward undertaking; instead, it is fraught with various challenges. Based on various conducted research, both at the national and international levels, it has been evident that numerous Indonesian students struggle to comprehend basic discourse texts during reading or exhibit deficient literacy and numeracy skills, especially among students whose families have limited financial means (Stevani & Karisma Erikson Tarigan, 2022; Sultan et al., 2020). This predicament has been further exacerbated by the emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic. With students unable to engage in conventional classroom learning due to the pandemic, education has shifted to online platforms, introducing a variety of challenges in instructional management for teachers. This shift has raised concerns about potential declines in teaching quality, and coupled with students' limited self-directed learning abilities, the education crisis has prolonged its impact (García-Morales et al., 2021; Su et al., 2021).

To address the challenges mentioned, the Indonesian government, led by the Minister of Education and Culture, introduced educational policies designed for unique circumstances, particularly during the pandemic. One of these policies is embodied in Regulation Number 719/P/2020 by the Ministry of Culture and Education of Indonesia. This regulation aims to provide guidance for the implementation of curricula in educational institutions facing exceptional conditions, offering support to educators in effectively conducting teaching and learning activities amidst the pandemic. This initiative aimed at reinstating learning in response to the absence of classroom-based, face-to-face education, as evidenced by Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture, Research and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia Number 56/M/2022.

The independent curriculum is implemented across all academic subjects, encompassing the study of English as well. English, which falls under the adaptive subjects category, is taught with the purpose of enhancing students' language proficiency (Aizawa et al., 2023; Elas et al., 2019; Rose et al., 2019). Proficiency in language forms the fundamental cornerstone, serving as a communication tool to effectively navigate the dynamic shifts occurring in various contexts, be it within the societal, occupational, or global sphere (Leung, 2022; Rustamov & Mamaziyayev, 2022). English occupies a paramount role for students due to several compelling reasons: (i) It is a global lingua franca extensively employed worldwide, enabling students to establish connections and forge networks transcending geographical and cultural boundaries; (ii) Command over English reading and comprehension grants students access to multidisciplinary knowledge and keeps them abreast of cutting-edge advancements; (iii) A strong grasp of English opens avenues for students to partake in diverse, high-quality educational programs; (iv) Proficiency in English comprehension and application fosters technological acumen, contributing to innovation; (v) Consumption of international films, music, literature, and artistic creations is unhindered by language barriers; (vi) Proficiency in English aligns with the 21st-century skills set, encompassing creativity, critical thinking, collaboration, and problem-solving, bolstering students' adaptability in an ever-evolving environment. Given these myriad advantages, attaining proficiency in English is of paramount importance. Effective English education not only empowers students to unlock their full potential but also readies them to confront the intricacies of an increasingly intricate global landscape.

The interviews conducted by the author with English teachers in junior high schools reveal that they are facing challenges and hindrances while instructing students currently, as these students have not been exposed to English during their time in elementary school. In reality, the acquisition of English becomes more manageable when initiated at an early stage, such as in kindergarten or during elementary school years. Previous studies affirms that early childhood possesses distinctive benefits that set it apart from higher-level learners or adults (Bjorklund, 2022; Chi et al., 2022; Chuey et al., 2021). The distinctiveness and advantages

inherent in early childhood lie in the considerable learning potential that children exhibit, exceeding the expectations or comprehension of adults. Reflected in Regulation of the President of the Republic of Indonesia Number 63 of 2019 regarding the Utilization of the Indonesian Language, it is stipulated that the application of foreign languages is regulated (Oksana et al., 2020; Rouffet et al., 2023).

In the context of Curriculum 13, the English curriculum places emphasis on achieving student competencies, whereas the independent curriculum adopts a fusion of intra-curricular and co-curricular methods through projects to reinforce the Pancasila Student Profile. During the transition from Curriculum 13 to an independent curriculum, educators have the liberty to streamline the curriculum on their own accord. Nonetheless, practical implementation remains challenging for both teachers and students, as simplifying subject curricula is akin to a complex task, including that of the English subject. The English curriculum encompasses four core skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Afzal, 2019; Syakur & Azis, 2020). English employs distinct phonological and structural systems from Indonesian, warranting an in-depth study to equip students with comprehensive perspectives and international communication skills essential for articulating viewpoints globally.

Based on the aforementioned explanation, the primary inquiry addressed in this study revolves around the effective implementation of the independent curriculum to enhance English learning quality in Indonesian educational institutions, thereby preparing for the challenges of the global competitive era. Several pertinent antecedent investigations encompass examination of elementary school educators' perceptions towards the adoption of the independent curriculum (Aliyyah et al., 2023). Diverging from our study's scope, this research uniquely delves into scrutinizing the execution of the independent curriculum to elevate the efficacy of English education. Similarly, other study delves into the implementation of the independent curriculum; however, it is centered on general educational administration in elementary schools, whereas our research accentuates the application of the independent curriculum for enhancing English learning quality (Fransiska et al., 2023). Hence, there exists a distinction between these two investigations. Other study appraised the implementation of the independent curriculum assessment within English education at the elementary level (Surul, 2023). This stands in contrast to our investigation, which concentrates on the incorporation of the independent curriculum to amplify English learning standards. Although both studies address the independent curriculum and English learning, the disparities in focus may lead to divergent analytical methodologies and findings. Considering the research issues and relevant prior studies, conducting this research becomes crucial. This study is anticipated to yield substantial advantages in addressing the English education challenges. Through an investigation into the execution of self-reliant curricula, this study can pinpoint efficacious approaches and tactics for enhancing the English learning quality.

## 2. METHODS

This research employed a qualitative approach that utilizing the content analysis theory framework (Johnson et al., 2020). The data comprised explanatory information and insights from teachers regarding their teaching experiences, encompassing those who have not yet, are currently, or intend to implement the independent curriculum. The data gathering method encompassed the distribution of questionnaires to 158 English teachers engaged in the English language education master's program at Indraprasta University PGRI Jakarta, hailing from educational institutions across the Jabodetabek region (Jakarta, Bogor, Depok, Tangerang, and Bekasi). Additionally, data collection encompassed documentation studies and interviews, involving the examination of policy-making actions by relevant stakeholders

such as the Indonesian Government, as reflected in the policies of the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture, Research and Technology. The process of documentation analysis took place both before and during the research, specifically during informant interviews and the overall data collection phase. The provided questionnaire format used for gathering data regarding the execution of the Merdeka curriculum in English language education within the Jabodetabek region is outlined as show in [Table 1](#).

**Table 1. Questionnaire of Implementation Merdeka Curriculum in English Learning**

No	Statement	Scale				
		1	2	3	4	5
1	<b>Knowledge of independent curriculum</b>					
	a. I understand the independent curriculum					
	b. Using the independent curriculum in learning English					
	c. The curriculum emphasizes project-based learning and real experiences					
	d. The independent curriculum adjusts to the interests and needs of students					
	e. The independent curriculum aims to develop students holistically.					
2	<b>Implementation of the independent curriculum in learning English at school</b>					
	a. I use the independent curriculum in learning English					
	b. Independent curricula can add variety to teaching strategies in the classroom					
	c. An independent curriculum can increase students' interest and motivation in learning English					
	d. The independent curriculum is able to improve student learning outcomes in learning English					
3	<b>Perceptions of the Quality of Learning English with the Independent Curriculum</b>					
	a. With an independent curriculum, students are more enthusiastic and enthusiastic in participating in learning					
	b. The independent curriculum helps improve English language skills better					
	c. With an independent curriculum, students feel they have more opportunities to actively participate in learning					
	d. With an independent curriculum, students feel more free to explore their talents and interests related to English					
	e. Students can use English in everyday situations after learning with the independent curriculum					

In this study, the authors employed the concept of content analysis. Content analysis stands as an analytical method for deriving conclusions by systematically and objectively identifying distinctive elements within text ([He et al., 2020](#); [Lindgren et al., 2020](#)). Content analysis represents a systematic technique for evaluating the content of messages and

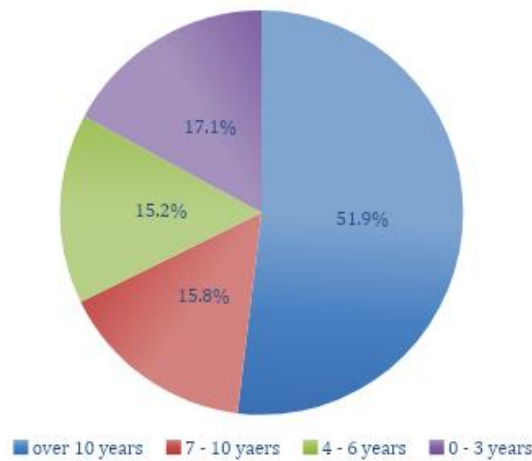
processing communication exchanges, serving as a tool to observe and scrutinize unfiltered communication behaviors within chosen interactions. Additionally, as articulated by previous study content analysis emerges as a research instrument aimed at ascertaining the presence of specific words, themes, or concepts within qualitative data, conducted in an unbiased and methodical manner (Vaismoradi & Snelgrove, 2019; Xie et al., 2019).

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### Results

##### *Teaching experience*

Regarding the teaching background, the survey distributed among 158 English instructors across the Jabodetabek region revealed diverse teaching experiences. The distribution indicated that the experience levels were as follows: 0 - 3 years accounted for 17.1%, 4 - 6 years for 15.2%, 7 - 10 years for 15.8%, and more than 10 years for 51.9%. The graphical representation of English teacher experience is visually presented in Figure 1.



**Figure 1.** Percentage of Teaching Experience in English (in Year)

Based on Figure 1 among 158 English educators across the Jabodetabek region, it was observed that the duration of these instructors' teaching careers exhibited a range of variability. Specifically, the results indicated that 17.1% had an experience of 0 - 3 years, 15.2% had 4 - 6 years of experience, 15.8% had 7 - 10 years of experience, and a substantial 51.9% possessed an experience exceeding 10 years. These findings underscore the fact that a significant proportion of the participating English teachers had extensive teaching tenure. A majority, surpassing half of the total respondents, boasted more than a decade of teaching experience. This diversity in teaching backgrounds signifies that the present study is well poised to encapsulate a comprehensive spectrum of perspectives and insights from English educators within the Greater Jakarta vicinity. Lengthy years of pedagogical involvement offer profound insights into the trials, accomplishments, and possible transformations associated with the implementation of an independent curriculum over time.

Based on the outcomes of the survey administered to 158 English educators across Jabodetabek, it was ascertained that the instructors' backgrounds diverged. With reference to the theory of professional growth for educators, these findings can be construed as follows. Within the 0 to 3 years interval, 17.1% of educators are in the nascent phases of their careers, characterized by a focus on acquiring fundamental pedagogical skills. About 15.2% of educators with 4 to 6 years of experience might have transcended the initial adaptation stage and commenced cultivating more intricate instructional proficiencies. In the 7 to 10 years bracket of experience, approximately 15.8% of educators could be at a juncture where

pedagogic stability has been attained, allowing them to engage with novel methodologies. In contrast, the preponderance of educators (51.9%) with over a decade of experience likely occupy an apex phase in their professional journey, signifying a profound grasp of effective teaching methodologies and an ability to mentor and motivate junior peers.

### Knowledge of the *Merdeka* Curriculum

To identify and describe the knowledge of English teachers in Greater Jakarta regarding the *Merdeka* curriculum, we conducted a questionnaire to 158 teachers. The results are presented in Figure 2.

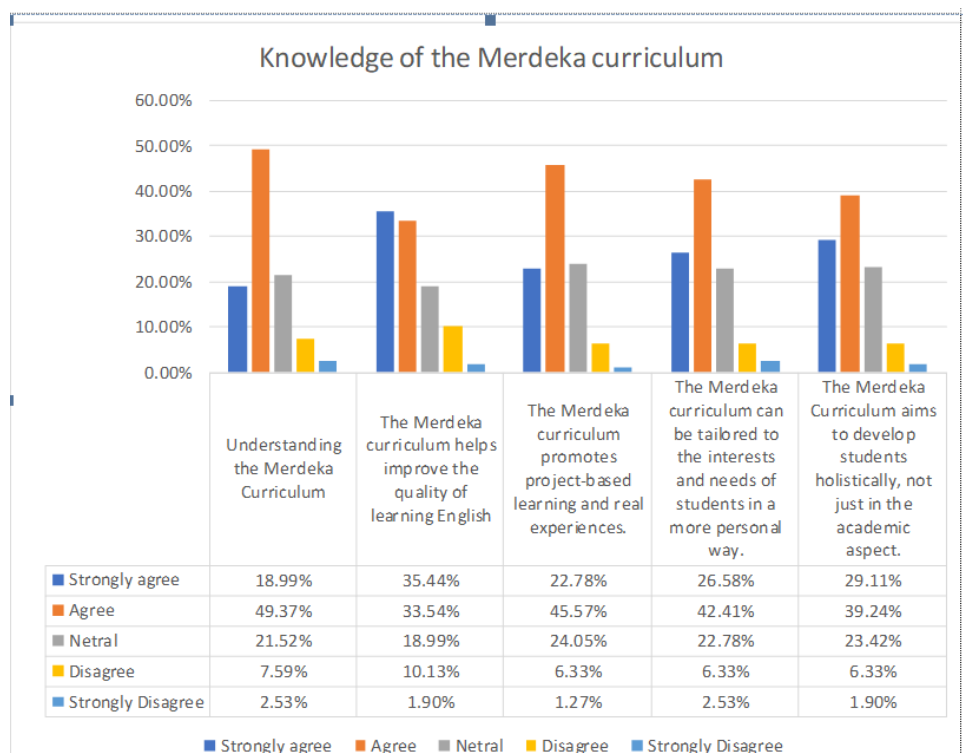


Figure 2. Knowledge of the *Merdeka* Curriculum

Base on Figure 2 it can be seen that 68.36% of respondents (18.99% + 49.37%) strongly agree and strongly agree that they understand the *Merdeka* Curriculum. Conversely, 10.12% of respondents (7.59% + 2.53%) had a negative view of their understanding of the concept. This result reflects that the majority of respondents have a relatively positive understanding of the Independent Curriculum. Teacher knowledge of the Independent Curriculum is influenced by a number of interacting factors. First, education and training factors play an important role.

In the second indicator about "Independence Curriculum helps improve the quality of learning English". From a total of 158 respondents, 35.44% stated that they strongly agreed and 33.54% agreed with this statement. The number of respondents who disagreed (10.13%) and strongly disagreed (1.90%) was relatively low. The concept of the Independent Curriculum emphasizes a more flexible and innovative approach to learning. The *Merdeka* Curriculum has great potential to help improve the quality of learning English. The approach promoted by the *Merdeka* Curriculum, which emphasizes learning that is more contextual, project-based and student-centered, can provide a number of significant benefits in learning English

The third indicator is about "Independence Curriculum prioritizing project-based learning and real experience". From the results of the questionnaire, 22.78% of respondents strongly agreed and 45.57% agreed that the Merdeka Curriculum prioritizes project-based learning and real experiences. This positive percentage indicates that a large number of respondents feel that the Merdeka Curriculum places an emphasis on learning that involves real projects and practical experiences in learning English. The Merdeka Curriculum features a project-based and hands-on learning approach as one of its principles. This approach aims to change the conventional way of learning, in which students not only consume information, but are also actively involved in the learning process through meaningful projects and real experiences

The fourth indicator is about "The Merdeka curriculum can be tailored to the interests and needs of students in a more personal way". The results of the questionnaire showed that 26.58% of respondents strongly agreed and 42.41% agreed that the Merdeka Curriculum could be adapted to students' interests and needs in a more personal way. This positive percentage indicates that the majority of respondents believe that the Merdeka Curriculum has the flexibility to adapt learning to the individual characteristics and preferences of students. In the last indicator that is "The Merdeka Curriculum aims to develop students holistically, not just in the academic aspect". From the results of the questionnaire, 29.11% of respondents strongly agreed and 39.24% agreed that the Merdeka Curriculum aims to develop students holistically, not just in the academic aspect. This positive percentage indicates that the majority of respondents believe that the Merdeka Curriculum has a broader objective, which involves the overall development of students, including emotional, social, and life skills aspects, not just focusing on academic achievement alone.

### Implementation of Independent Curriculum in Learning English

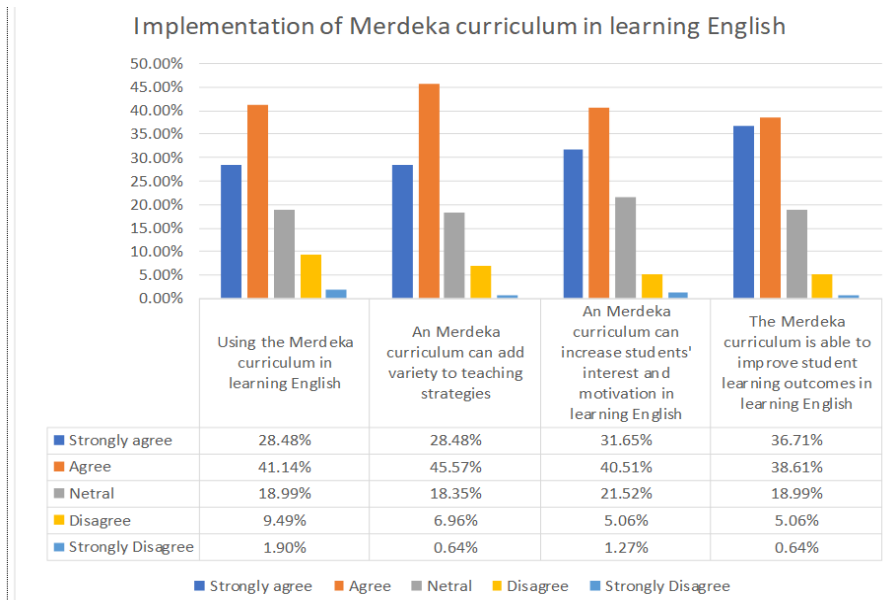


Figure 3. Implementation of Independent Curriculum in Learning English

Base on Figure 3, in the first indicator about "using the Merdeka curriculum in learning English" the results showed that 28.48% of respondents strongly agreed and 41.14% agreed that they used the Merdeka Curriculum in learning English. This positive percentage indicates that the majority of respondents feel involved in the implementation of the Independent Curriculum in learning English. It is important to note that the implementation

of the Independent Curriculum in learning English requires support from teachers and schools. Teachers need to have a deep understanding of the concept of the Independent Curriculum as well as skills in designing and managing lessons that suit this approach. In this case, teacher training and coaching in the use of the Independent Curriculum will greatly contribute to the success of this implementation. The second indicator, "Independent curriculum can add variety to teaching strategies," received positive responses with 28.48% of students strongly agreeing and 45.57% agreeing. The Independent Curriculum has significant potential to add variety to teaching strategies.

The third indicator, "Independence curriculum can increase students' interest and motivation in learning English," shows that 31.65% of students strongly agree and 40.51% agree. The Merdeka Curriculum has significant potential to increase students' interest and motivation in learning English. The fourth indicator, "Independence curriculum is able to improve student learning outcomes in learning English," shows that 36.71% of students strongly agree and 38.61% agree. The Merdeka Curriculum has significant potential to improve student learning outcomes in learning English. One of the key aspects of the Merdeka Curriculum is its approach which focuses on hands-on experiences and project-based learning. By giving students the opportunity to engage in projects that are relevant to everyday life, the Merdeka Curriculum enables deeper and more meaningful learning.

### Perceptions of the Quality of Learning with the *Merdeka* Curriculum

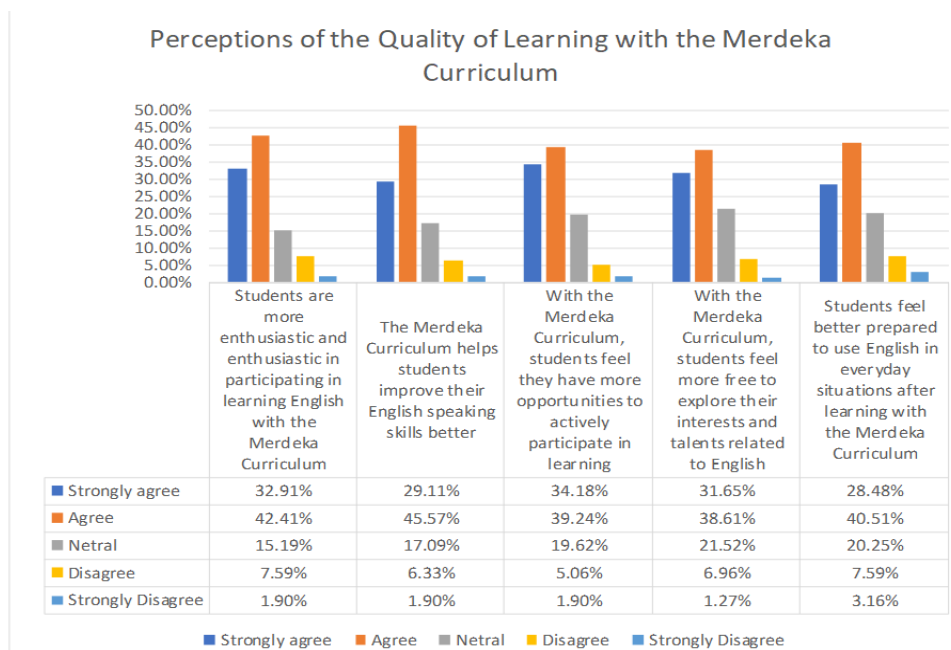


Figure 4. Perceptions of the Quality of Learning with the *Merdeka* Curriculum

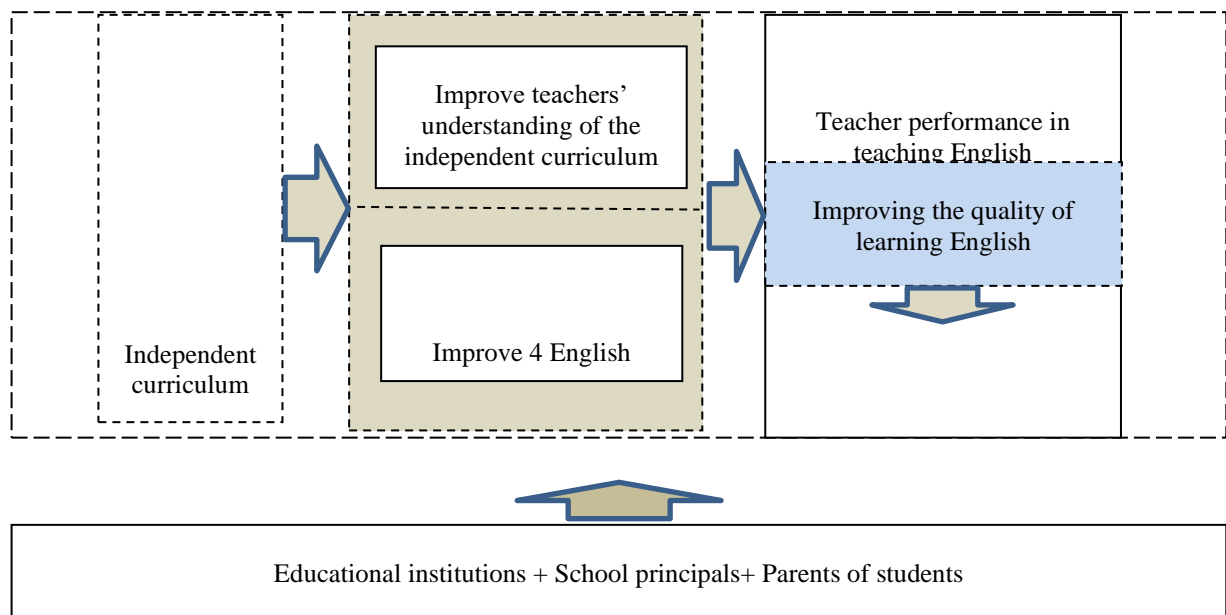
Based on Figure 4, it is known that the first indicator shows that 32.91% of respondents strongly agree and 42.41% of respondents agree that students are more enthusiastic and enthusiastic in participating in learning English with the Independent Curriculum. This reflects the positive view of the majority of respondents on the positive impact of the Independent Curriculum on the enthusiasm and enthusiasm of students in learning English. This is in line with educational psychology theory which links motivation and positive emotions to better learning outcomes. The second indicator is about "Independence Curriculum helps students improve their English language skills better" Shows the results that 29.11% of respondents strongly agreed, 45.57% agreed, 17.09%



neutral, 6.33% disagreed, and 1.90% strongly disagreed with the statement. These results indicate that the majority of students (around 74.68%) have a positive view of the role of the Independent Curriculum in improving their English language skills.

The third indicator, namely "With the Independent Curriculum, students feel they have more opportunities to participate actively in learning" reflects students' responses to the use of the Independent Curriculum in increasing active participation in learning English. From the results of the questionnaire, 34.18% of respondents strongly agreed and 39.24% agreed with this statement, indicating a positive view of the contribution of the Independent Curriculum to student involvement in the learning process. The fourth indicator is "With the Independent Curriculum, students feel more free to explore their interests and talents related to English." In this table, the results show that 31.65% of respondents strongly agree and 38.61% agree that the Merdeka Curriculum gives them more freedom to explore interests and talents related to English. This percentage indicates that the majority of respondents have a positive view of freedom in exploring aspects of English that are relevant to their interests and talents. With the Merdeka Curriculum, students feel more free to explore their interests and talents related to English

The last indicator is "Students feel more prepared to use English in everyday situations after learning with the Independent Curriculum." In these results, 28.48% of respondents strongly agreed and 40.51% agreed with the statement. This percentage indicates a positive view from the majority respondents to the effectiveness of the Independent Curriculum in increasing students' readiness to use English in the context of everyday life. When studying with the Merdeka Curriculum, students feel better prepared to use English in everyday situations. The concept of the Independent Curriculum which emphasizes real experience and project-based learning gives students the opportunity to be involved in situations similar to the use of English in the real world. Through projects that mimic everyday situations, students can practice speaking, listening, reading and writing in English in relevant and meaningful contexts. Based on the description above, the mindset that can be used in implementing the independent curriculum in improving the quality of learning English for students as shown in [Figure 5](#).



**Figure 5.** The Mindset to Improve the Quality of Learning English in the Independent Curriculum

From [Figure 5](#) it can be described that English subject teachers need training in order to increase their understanding of the independent curriculum. In line with this, teachers also continuously improve and develop their abilities in teaching English. To improve the quality of learning English which ultimately leads to increasing students' abilities, skills and creativity in speaking English, good teacher performance is needed in the eyes of students. This mindset can only be implemented if there is full support from educational institutions, school principals, and parents of students as described in this paper.

## **Discussion**

### **Teaching experience**

The significance of practical involvement in enhancing the professional growth of educators is acknowledged within Shulman's theory on the Concept of Rich Pedagogical Knowledge (PCK) ([Koh, 2020](#); [Star, 2023](#)). Educators with varying backgrounds may possess a more profound comprehension of proficient teaching methods, derived from firsthand classroom involvement. PCK encompasses a grasp of students' comprehension of particular subjects, strategies to surmount learning obstacles, and the most efficient learning approaches in distinct scenarios. As a result, these findings demonstrate the scope of teacher professional development in the realm of English instruction and its potential association with the execution of an independent curriculum aimed at enhancing the caliber of education.

This finding is consistent with several other relevant studies. For example, research that involving teachers in various regions shows a similar pattern of distribution of teaching experience ([Mohammed et al., 2020](#)). They found that the majority of teachers had more than 10 years of experience, which could indicate a level of maturity in teaching. On the other hand, research in urban areas shows that most English teachers are relatively new to their profession, with less than 5 years of teaching experience ([Moser et al., 2021](#)). The results of this study have important implications for the development of policies and training programs for English teachers. Teachers with longer experience may have deeper insight into effective teaching strategies and the classical challenges that may arise in learning English ([Amalia et al., 2021](#); [Subekti, 2021](#)). On the other hand, new teachers may need further support in the form of training and mentoring to help them develop their teaching skills and overcome barriers to teaching English. Therefore, these results demonstrate the need for a differentiated approach in professional development for English teachers, which can be adapted to their level of experience. Furthermore, to find out the implementation of the Merdeka curriculum in improving the quality of learning English in Jabodetabek, researchers measured three aspects, namely the teacher's knowledge of the Merdeka curriculum, the implementation of the Merdeka curriculum in learning English, and the teacher's perception of the implementation of the Merdeka curriculum in improving the quality of learning English. The results of the questionnaire analysis are presented as follows:

### **Knowledge of the Merdeka curriculum**

The level of awareness and understanding of curriculum change among teachers is also a significant factor. Teachers who have in-depth knowledge of the philosophical underpinnings and goals of the Independent Curriculum may be more involved and able to explain it well to students and fellow teachers ([Suyanto, 2017](#); [Zein et al., 2020](#)). The involvement of teachers in curriculum development and updating can also influence their understanding. Teachers who are actively involved in the process of planning and developing the Independent Curriculum tend to have deeper insight into how this curriculum aligns with students' needs and learning challenges in the classroom ([Franklin & Harrington, 2019](#); [Twining et al., 2021](#)).

Several previous studies, study examined how the training provided to teachers in introducing and implementing innovative curricula had an impact on their understanding (Franklin & Harrington, 2019). The results show that teachers who attend training that are structured and focus on new approaches, such as the Independent Curriculum, have a better understanding of the concepts and aims of the curriculum. It further study that examines how environmental support factors, including school leadership and collaboration between teachers, influence the implementation of innovative curricula (Domitrovich et al., 2019). The findings of this study indicate that teachers who feel supported by the school environment tend to have a better understanding of curriculum changes and feel more motivated to adapt to these changes. Other study looked at how teachers' level of awareness of curriculum changes impacted their understanding (Campbel, 2020). The results show that teachers who have a deeper understanding of the goals and philosophy behind innovative curricula tend to have a more positive view of these changes.

### **Implementation of Independent Curriculum in Learning English**

Necessary to measure and evaluate the learning outcomes achieved by students through the Independent Curriculum. This can help measure the extent to which the Independent Curriculum has met learning objectives and ensures that the expected learning outcomes can be achieved effectively (Supriati et al., 2022). This concept recognizes the importance of flexibility in the learning approach, allowing teachers to adopt a variety of strategies to suit students' needs and learning styles. By giving teachers the freedom to design diverse learning experiences, the Merdeka Curriculum creates space for experimentation with creative and innovative methods. Different teaching strategies such as group discussions, collaborative projects, simulations, problem-based learning, etc. can be integrated according to the learning context. Thus, students will experience variations in learning approaches that are more interesting and relevant. This has the potential to increase student motivation and participation in the learning process, because students feel engaged and involved in a varied environment. In addition, this variation approach also allows teachers to accommodate diverse learning styles and provides opportunities for deeper understanding of concepts (Hadi et al., 2023; Yunaini et al., 2022). Overall, the ability of the Merdeka Curriculum to add variety to teaching strategies is a step towards learning that is more dynamic, interactive, and adaptive to the needs of today's students. With a more contextual and personal approach, the Merdeka Curriculum is able to bring a more meaningful learning experience for students. Through integrating content that is relevant to everyday life and real experiences, students are more emotionally and cognitively involved in learning. Active involvement in this learning can arouse students' curiosity and enthusiasm, which in turn will encourage their interest in learning English.

### **Perceptions of the Quality of Learning with the *Merdeka* Curriculum**

According to the theory of Self-Determination, an educational environment that supports autonomy, competence, and social relations can increase students' intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2020; Vasconcellos et al., 2020). In a study by previous study found that the implementation of learning approaches that give students more control over their learning process encourages more active participation and higher levels of enthusiasm (El-Sabagh, 2021). This finding is also in line with research who found that learning that encourages students to actively participate and have more control over their learning can increase students' intrinsic motivation and satisfaction (Kotera et al., 2023). Therefore, the results of the questionnaire showing that students are more enthusiastic and enthusiastic in learning English with the Independent Curriculum support the view that the application of this approach has a positive impact on students' enthusiasm for participating in English

learning. In this context, the implementation of the Independent Curriculum provides students with the opportunity to take an active role in learning, choose a way of learning that suits their interests, and feel the real impact of their efforts. This can encourage higher engagement and ownership of the learning process. Although there is a small percentage (9.49%) who disagree or strongly disagree, this may be due to variations in students' perceptions or experiences in dealing with a more open learning approach such as the Independent Curriculum. The Merdeka Curriculum has strong potential to help students improve their English language skills better. Compared to the traditional curriculum approach, the Merdeka Curriculum promotes learning that is more contextual, creative, and focuses on real experiences. In the context of learning English, this means that students not only learn about grammar and vocabulary mechanically, but are also given opportunities to use English in meaningful real situations. Through practical projects and hands-on experience, students can apply their English skills in everyday communicative contexts, such as speaking, listening, reading and writing.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

From this study it was concluded that teachers agree with the existence of an independent curriculum. Implementation of the independent curriculum can foster motivation to improve themselves in learning English so that it leads to improving students' skills and creativity. The implementation of the independent curriculum in improving the quality of learning English is still low because this curriculum is still relatively new and teachers are still looking for the best way to implement it. To overcome this, teachers as teachers and implementers in the field should be given independent curriculum training so that they are able to guide and accompany students. Teachers should add to their competencies so they can create projects that suit the needs and lives of the students around them. Meanwhile, schools should be able to make students independent and able to support the development of their competence and character in a sustainable and holistic manner (Pancasila student profile).

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