

TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS IN IMPLEMENTING THE MERDEKA CURRICULUM: A SURVEY STUDY OF JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL MUSIC TEACHERS

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ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Accepted: 08-01-2025

Approved: 01-04-2025

Keywords:

Teacher Perception
Music Arts
Merdeka Curriculum
Survey Study

ABSTRACT

Abstract: The Merdeka Curriculum, introduced in 2021 in Indonesia, provides flexibility in teaching, especially in developing students' creativity and skills. Its success depends on teachers' perceptions, which reflect their understanding, assessment, and response to this policy. In the context of music, teachers must understand the objectives, principles, and implementation of the curriculum and its impact on student learning. This study explores the perceptions of junior high school music teachers in Bogor District in understanding and implementing the Merdeka Curriculum, including the challenges they face. Although this curriculum offers flexibility, teachers still face obstacles such as a lack of training and supporting resources. This study aims to obtain data and information related to how teachers perceive understanding and implementing the Merdeka Curriculum. This study uses a survey research method involving 20 music teachers in junior high schools in Bogor District. Data was collected through questionnaires and analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques. The results showed that teachers have a good understanding of the Merdeka Curriculum, but still need more training and technical support. The majority of teachers believe that this curriculum can increase student creativity if supported by adequate resources. The study concluded that music teachers' perceptions of the Merdeka Curriculum are generally positive, but implementation in the field requires increased technical support and more intensive training.

Abstrak: Kurikulum Merdeka yang diperkenalkan sejak 2021 di Indonesia memberikan fleksibilitas dalam mengajar, terutama dalam mengembangkan kreativitas dan keterampilan siswa. Keberhasilannya bergantung pada persepsi guru, yang mencerminkan pemahaman, penilaian, dan respons mereka terhadap kebijakan ini. Dalam konteks seni musik, guru harus memahami tujuan, prinsip, serta implementasi kurikulum dan dampaknya pada pembelajaran siswa. Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi persepsi guru seni musik SMP di Kabupaten Bogor dalam memahami dan menerapkan Kurikulum Merdeka, termasuk tantangan yang mereka hadapi. Meskipun kurikulum ini menawarkan fleksibilitas, guru masih menghadapi kendala seperti kurangnya pelatihan dan sumber daya pendukung. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk memperoleh data dan informasi terkait dengan bagaimana persepsi guru dalam memahami dan mengimplementasikan Kurikulum Merdeka. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode penelitian survey yang melibatkan 20 guru seni musik di SMP Kabupaten Bogor. Data dikumpulkan melalui kuesioner dan dianalisis dengan teknik statistik deskriptif. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa guru memiliki pemahaman yang baik tentang Kurikulum Merdeka, namun masih membutuhkan lebih banyak pelatihan dan dukungan teknis. Mayoritas guru percaya bahwa kurikulum ini dapat meningkatkan kreativitas siswa jika didukung dengan sumber daya yang memadai. Studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa persepsi guru musik terhadap Kurikulum Merdeka secara umum positif, namun implementasi di lapangan membutuhkan peningkatan dukungan teknis dan pelatihan yang lebih intensif.

A. INTRODUCTION

The Merdeka Curriculum was introduced in 2021 by the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia. The Merdeka Curriculum

focuses on developing soft skills and character, focusing on essential materials, and flexible learning designed according to the needs of students. The advantages of Merdeka Curriculum

lie in its relevance and interactivity, where project-based learning provides greater opportunities for learners to actively explore current issues, such as the environment, health, and others. This approach aims to support the development of characters and competencies that are in line with the dimensions of the Pancasila Learner Profile, such as critical thinking, creativity, and concern for global issues (Kemdikbud, 2022). In the context of music lessons in junior high schools, the Merdeka curriculum is expected to encourage students' creativity and critical thinking skills through project-based learning approaches and contextualized art activities.

The Merdeka Curriculum encourages students to explore more new information (Rusmiati, et al 2023). Teachers have an important role in the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, where in its implementation teachers act as facilitators and learning partners for students.

Teachers have a crucial role in implementing Merdeka Curriculum, especially as facilitators and learning partners for students. As facilitators, teachers support the learning process by creating a conducive environment and providing relevant directions. As learning partners, teachers are actively involved in assisting students to explore, understand, and apply knowledge independently and collaboratively. Likewise, according to Dewi (2014), in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum, the teacher is not the only center and source of learning for students as in the previous curriculum, so that in the Merdeka curriculum teachers are required to always be creative in providing services and learning facilities to students and innovative.

According to the Big Indonesian Dictionary (KBBI) perception is a direct response (acceptance) of something or it also means the process of someone knowing several things through their senses. Perception according to Sugihartono, in Jayanti & Arista (2018) suggests that perception is the brain's ability to translate stimuli or the process of translating stimuli that enter the human sensory organs. Perception can also be interpreted as a cognitive process in which a person receives, interprets, and gives a response or opinion on a certain stimulus or phenomenon. In the context of education, teacher perception is an important

instrument to understand the success or challenges in implementing curriculum policies. Through perceptions, teachers can evaluate the effectiveness of implementation, especially in the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum implementation, including in understanding the curriculum, strategies, its impact on the learning process, and others. Every teacher must have a different and certainly unique perception of the object or learning phenomenon that is of concern to him.

Music education has an important role in developing the creative, aesthetic, and emotional skills of learners. Through music, learners are not only taught technical skills in music but are also given the opportunity to express themselves and develop unique creativity. As stated by Ardipal (2015), music education is an educational field that aims to develop learners' abilities to express and appreciate art creatively. Education is designed to shape the personality of students while instilling emotional balance and a positive attitude in dealing with various situations. In addition, the unique potential of art education in character development is in the development of creative character (Setiaji, 2022). The Merdeka Curriculum focuses on project-based learning, differentiation, and character building, so it is hoped that it can optimize the creative abilities and exploratory power of students.

The implementation of the Merdeka curriculum, especially in music learning in junior high schools (SMP), presents various opportunities and challenges for teachers. In their research, Hardhita, et al (2024) stated, Merdeka Curriculum presents new complexities for teachers and educational institutions. Therefore, as a party that plays a direct role in teaching, the teacher's understanding and perception of this curriculum is very important to ensure its successful implementation in the classroom. In Bogor District, the implementation of Merdeka Curriculum in music lessons is still at a developmental stage. Although the policy has been in place for three years, many junior secondary music teachers face challenges in understanding the basic principles and recommended learning methods, such as project-based learning and formative assessment. This suggests an urgent need for ongoing training to improve teachers'

competencies in implementing the Curriculum effectively.

Several previous studies provide an overview of various aspects of the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, including how teachers and students perceive the Merdeka Curriculum. Like the research by Hamzah & Astuti (2024), students' perceptions of the Merdeka Curriculum in dance lessons are categorized as good, because it is seen from the indicators of acceptance and evaluation which give positive results. Research conducted by Oktariza et al, (2024), stated that the Movers' Teacher's perception of the implementation of the merdeka curriculum is positive, and the majority of teachers have a good understanding of the Merdeka Curriculum. The results of research conducted by Hardhita, et al (2024) stated that the Merdeka Curriculum provides flexibility for teachers not to force students to study arts that they do not like. Likewise, research related to the implementation of Merdeka Belajar conducted by Saefurrohman (2023) shows that cultural arts educators show good enthusiasm in facing independent learning, although they still feel that there are various challenges in understanding the concept of the merdeka learning curriculum as a whole, as well as learning methods that are considered capable of adapting to the development of current information technology.

There has not been much research on music teachers' perceptions of the Merdeka Curriculum in this region, although it is important to provide a clearer picture of the dynamics of its implementation. This study aims to identify how teachers understand, assess, and respond to the Merdeka Curriculum, especially in music lessons. The results of this study are expected to provide deeper insights into the strengths and weaknesses of implementing this policy from the perspective of teachers, who are the main actors in the education process in schools. Knowing teachers' perceptions not only helps policy makers identify key needs, such as training and facility procurement, but also enables schools to design more effective support strategies. This research also has the potential to serve as a reference in improving the quality of music education, both in terms of pedagogical and educational policies. Thus, this research not only contributes to the development of Merdeka

Curriculum implementation, but also strengthens the foundation of relevant and innovative arts education in the modern era.

B. RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a survey research method. Survey research is research by collecting information from a sample by asking them through questionnaires or interviews to describe various aspects of a population, (Fraenkel and Wallen, 1993 in Maida, 2021). In this study, the survey method was used to collect data on the perceptions of cultural arts teachers regarding the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in music lessons. The population in this study were junior high school music teachers who taught in Bogor District. The sample of this study consisted of 20 music teachers selected through purposive sampling method. Purposive sampling is one of the sampling techniques in the survey method used by researchers if researchers have certain considerations in sampling or determining samples for specific purposes, (Santina et al., 2021). From this opinion, researchers chose teachers who have implemented learning with the Merdeka Curriculum. The sample selection was carried out based on certain criteria, namely music teachers who have been involved in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in junior high schools in Bogor District, either public schools or private schools.

To collect data, this study uses an internet interview, namely by distributing questionnaires in the form of a google form linkform. According to Batubara (2016), some of the advantages of using google form are that the Form display is attractive, has various types of tests to choose from, respondents can provide responses anywhere immediately, the form is responsive, the results are immediately compiled and analyzed automatically. Questions on the questionnaire, namely closed questions using a Likert scale of 1-5 to measure music teachers' perceptions of the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in music lessons, consist of several parts. The first section contains questions related to respondent data (name, gender, teaching experience, length of teaching, etc.). The second section focuses on the perceptions of music teachers in understanding the Merdeka

Curriculum, which includes curriculum flexibility, concepts and objectives of the Merdeka curriculum, learning methods and strategies, and assessment in project-based learning implementation. The third section explores the impact of implementing the Merdeka Curriculum such as increasing students' interest, critical thinking skills and learning outcomes, developing students' creativity, developing students' musical skills, and collaboration and exploration in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum. The fourth section explores the challenges and barriers to the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum along with the support that teachers need in implementing the Curriculum.

The data collected from the questionnaire will be processed using the Statistical Product and Service Solution (SPSS) program. In the book by Juliandi, et al (13:2016) entitled Processing Business Research Data with SPSS, it is stated that Statistic Product and Service Solution (SPSS) is capable of processing quantitative data, one of which is in the form of primary data, data obtained from the results of distributing questionnaires, interviews, and observations. With the help of a computer, statistical data processing to produce relevant information becomes faster and more accurate (Santoso, 9-2016). Therefore, the author uses Statistic Product and Service Solution (SPSS) to facilitate the processing of the obtained data. The data is then analyzed using descriptive statistical analysis techniques to describe the results of the perception of music teachers towards the application of the Merdeka Curriculum in music lessons. This analysis aims to provide a clear picture of how music teachers perceive the application of the Merdeka Curriculum in music lessons in junior high schools in Bogor District.

C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Perception of Music Arts Teachers about the Merdeka Curriculum : Understanding, Challenges, and Support in its Implementation.

Based on the results of a survey conducted on 20 junior high school music teachers in Bogor District, the main findings of this study focus on the perceptions of music teachers in understanding the Merdeka Curriculum, which includes curriculum flexibility, concepts and objectives of the Merdeka Curriculum, learning methods and strategies, and

assessment in implementing project-based learning. The following is a table record of respondents' results related to teacher perceptions in understanding the Merdeka Curriculum.

Table 1. Perceptions of Music Teachers in understanding the Merdeka Curriculum related to aspects of curriculum flexibility

Item No.	SS		S		KS		TS		STS		F	Score
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
P1	1	5	14	70	3	15	0	0	2	10	20	74
P2	2	10	14	55	4	10	0	0	0	0	20	78
P3	3	15	15	75	2	10	0	0	0	0	20	81
P4	4	20	15	75	1	5	0	0	0	0	20	83

Based on the data presented in Table 1 regarding the flexibility aspect of the curriculum, it can be concluded that music teachers have a good understanding of flexibility in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum. The overall average value (mean) shows 3.95 with a Respondent Achievement Rate (TCR) of 79%. This puts teacher understanding in the good category. Supported by the results of music teacher statements, 70% agreed that the Merdeka Curriculum provides flexibility to design creative music learning, 55% of music teachers assessed the importance of flexibility in the Merdeka curriculum applied to music lessons, 75% of music teachers agreed that teachers are able to adapt music learning to the needs of students, and 75% of cultural arts teachers agreed that the Merdeka Curriculum frees teachers to design materials and choose learning methods that suit their learning needs.

Flexibility in the Merdeka Curriculum is defined as the ability of teachers to adjust learning according to the needs, characteristics, and potential of students. This concept includes teachers' freedom to design teaching materials, choose relevant methods, and manage learning time independently to achieve more meaningful educational goals. Thus, curriculum flexibility enables a learning process that is more adaptive to contextual challenges in the field, such as differences in socio-cultural conditions or the availability of educational facilities. The high TCR results show that the majority of music teachers understand the importance of this flexibility, especially in the context of music lessons that demand creativity and innovation. But of course, there are several challenges in implementing flexibility in the Merdeka Curriculum, one of which is in the

alignment of materials and learning outcomes. Curriculum flexibility provides freedom in choosing material, but often the material is not aligned with the expected learning outcomes, thus creating learning gaps.

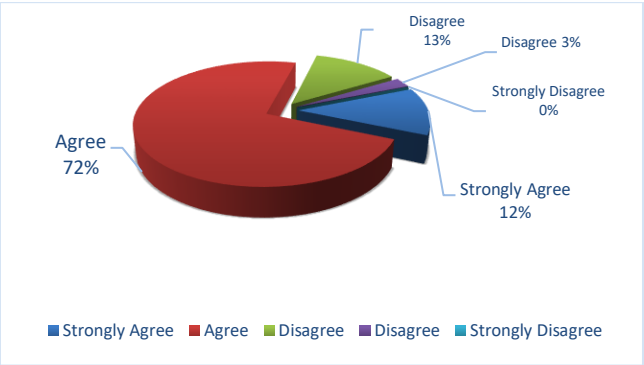


Figure 1. Diagram of Music Teacher Perceptions in understanding the Merdeka Curriculum related to curriculum flexibility

Thus, overall, as illustrated in the diagram, it can be concluded that junior high school music teachers in Bogor District have a good understanding of the Merdeka Curriculum, especially regarding the flexibility aspect of the curriculum, as seen from 12% of respondents strongly agreeing, and 72% agreeing. Music teachers also show a positive attitude in its application, especially in terms of compiling materials and choosing teaching methods that are relevant and in accordance with the needs of students.

Table 2. Perceptions of Music Teachers in understanding the Merdeka Curriculum related to the concept and objectives of the Merdeka Curriculum

Item No.	SS		S		KS		TS		STS		F	Score
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
P5	0	0	0	0	3	15	13	65	4	20	20	81
P6	0	0	0	0	4	20	14	70	2	10	20	78
P7	0	0	1	10	5	25	12	55	2	5	20	75

Based on the data presented in Table 2, music teachers show a good understanding of the concepts and objectives of the Merdeka Curriculum. The average value (mean) obtained is 3.9, with the Respondent Achievement Rate (TCR) reaching 78%, which places the level of teacher understanding in the good category. These results indicate that most teachers have adequate knowledge of the basic principles of the Merdeka Curriculum, including flexibility and a project-based approach. As many as 60% of teachers stated that they had no

difficulty in implementing project-based assessments, and 20% felt very capable of implementing these assessments. However, 15% of respondents stated that they experienced obstacles, which indicates that there is still a need to support a small number of teachers in understanding and implementing project-based assessments. In addition, 70% of music teachers understand well the main objectives of implementing Merdeka Curriculum in music learning. This reflects their awareness of the importance of this curriculum in improving learners' critical thinking, creativity and collaboration skills. Furthermore, 55% of respondents felt that Merdeka Curriculum provides encouragement for music teachers to innovate in teaching methods, opening up opportunities to develop strategies that are adaptive and relevant to the needs of learners.

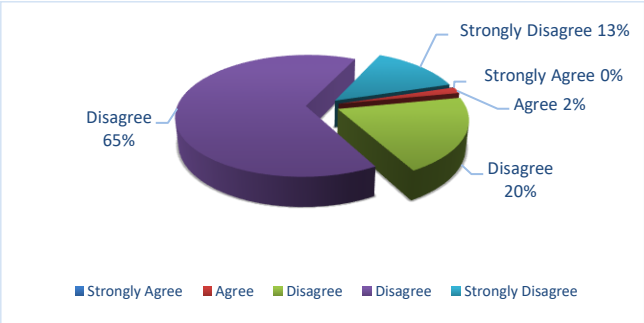


Figure 2. Diagram of Music Teacher Perceptions in understanding the Merdeka Curriculum related to the concept and objectives of the Merdeka Curriculum

The diagram illustrates overall that the majority of teachers have understood and are able to implement the main aspects of the Merdeka Curriculum, supported by respondent data stating 13% strongly disagree, and 65% disagree with the statement that they have difficulty in understanding the Merdeka Curriculum related to the concepts and objectives of the Merdeka Curriculum. Even so, strengthening is still needed, especially in the form of additional training and providing more adequate resources. This is important to ensure that curriculum implementation can run consistently and optimally throughout the Bogor District area.

Table 3. Perceptions of Music Teachers in understanding the Merdeka Curriculum related to learning methods and strategies

Item No.	TM		KM		CM		M		SM		F	Score
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
P8	0	0	2	10	9	45	9	45	0	0	20	67
P9	0	0	0	0	9	45	10	50	1	5	20	72
P10	0	0	1	5	8	40	11	55	0	0	20	70
P11	0	0	1	5	6	30	13	65	0	0	20	72
P12	0	0	0	0	7	35	10	50	3	15	20	76
P13	0	0	1	5	4	20	15	75	0	0	20	74
P14	0	0	3	15	8	40	8	40	1	5	20	67
P15	0	0	0	0	11	55	9	45	0	0	20	69

Based on the data displayed in Table 3, music teachers show a good understanding of learning methods and strategies in the Merdeka Curriculum. The overall mean score of 3.5, with a Respondent Achievement Rate (TCR) of 71%, places the level of teacher understanding in the good category. As many as 45% of music teachers understand the concept of project-based learning and are able to apply it, while another 45% stated that they understood it quite well. However, there were 10% of respondents who felt they did not understand the concept. This suggests that although some teachers have a good understanding, further training is needed to support teachers who still lack understanding. Music teachers also showed a good understanding of student centered learning. As many as 55% of teachers stated that they understood this concept, 40% had a fair understanding, and only 5% stated that they did not understand. This finding indicates that the majority of teachers are able to adopt this approach in music learning, in accordance with the principles of the Merdeka Curriculum.

As many as 65% of teachers understand differentiated teaching methods, 30% moderately understand, and the other 5% feel they do not understand. These results show that the majority of teachers are able to adapt teaching methods to the needs and potential of individual learners, although capacity building is still needed for a small number of teachers. Music teachers are aware of their role as facilitators in learning, with 15% stating that they strongly understand, 50% understand, and 35% moderately understand this role. This confirms that the majority of teachers have been able to fulfill the role recommended in Merdeka Curriculum. As many as 75% of teachers understand the importance of collaboration

between learners in music projects, while 20% stated that they moderately understand, and 5% do not understand. This finding indicates that most teachers understand how to involve learners in collaborative learning to increase creativity. Still related to creativity, only 5% of teachers stated that they were very capable of designing learning activities that allow learners to explore their own musical ideas, while 40% stated that they were capable, 40% moderately capable, and 5% were not capable. This suggests a need to provide additional support to teachers in designing appropriate creative exploration activities.

In terms of teachers' understanding of learning strategies and learner skill development, 55% of teachers stated that the learning strategies applied were sufficiently supportive of learner skill development in music, while the other 45% stated that the strategies were fully supportive. This shows that the majority of teachers see the relevance between the learning strategies used and the goal of developing learners' skills, although improvements in innovative strategies are still needed.

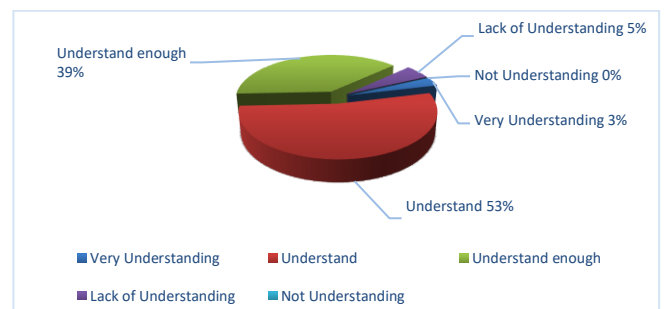


Figure 3. Diagram of Music Teachers' Perceptions in understanding the Merdeka Curriculum related to learning methods and strategies

Overall, the diagram illustrates the perception of music teachers in understanding the Merdeka Curriculum related to learning methods and strategies in the "Positive" category. Music teachers in Bogor District have a good understanding of the learning methods and strategies in the Merdeka Curriculum, as seen from the respondent data, 3% stated that they really understood, 53% understood, and 39% understood enough. However, some challenges still need to be overcome, such as increasing understanding of project-based learning, differentiated teaching, and

the design of students' creative exploration activities. Support in the form of continuous training and the provision of adequate learning facilities is needed to ensure that the implementation of Merdeka Curriculum runs more effectively and has a positive impact on the development of students' music skills.

Table 4. Perceptions of Music Teachers in understanding the assessment in the Merdeka Curriculum

Item No.	SS		S		KS		TS		STS		F	Score
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
P16	0	0	0	0	1	5	17	85	2	10	20	81
P17	0	0	0	0	9	45	10	50	1	5	20	72
P18	0	0	1	5	5	25	12	60	2	10	20	75
P19	0	0	1	5	8	40	9	45	0	0	20	72

Based on the data displayed in Table 4, music teachers show a good understanding of the assessment concept in the Merdeka Curriculum. The overall mean score is 3.75, with the Respondent Achievement Rate (TCR) reaching 75%, which places the level of teacher understanding in the good category. These results reflect teachers' awareness of the importance of process and project-based approaches in music learning. A total of 10% of music teachers strongly disagreed, 85% disagreed, and 5% disagreed with the statement that they were unable to objectively assess students' creativity using the Merdeka Curriculum. This indicates that the majority of teachers feel confident in assessing students' creativity fairly and in accordance with the criteria applied. Music teachers also indicated a good understanding of the application of process-based assessment to assess learners' creativity and skills. A total of 5% of respondents strongly disagreed, 50% disagreed, and 45% disagreed with the statement that they did not understand process-based assessment. This shows that the majority of teachers have adequate competence in applying this approach in music learning.

A total of 10% of teachers strongly disagreed, 60% disagreed, and 25% disagreed with the statement that they had never used project-based assessment. However, 5% of teachers agreed that they had never used this approach. These results indicate that most teachers have used project-based assessment, although there should still be ongoing efforts to refine the application of project-based assessment among music teachers.

Respondents indicated that most teachers understand the importance of matching assessments with learners' abilities and development in music. A total of 45% disagreed and 40% disagreed with the statement that their assessments were not appropriate to learners' abilities. However, another 5% agreed, indicating the need for further assistance for a small number of teachers in aligning assessment practices with learners' needs.

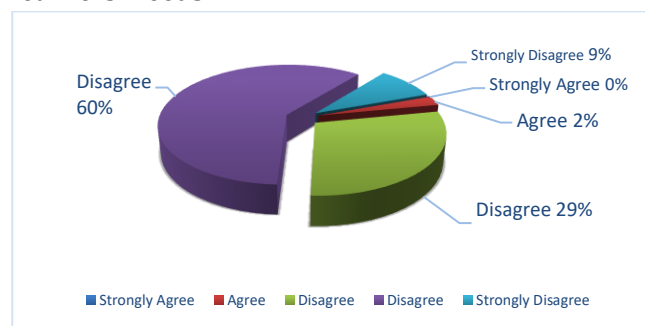


Figure 4. Perceptions of Music Teachers in understanding the assessment in the Merdeka Curriculum

The diagram shows the overall data that music teachers have a good understanding of the concept of assessment in the Merdeka Curriculum, especially related to process and project-based assessments, seen from 9% of respondents who strongly disagree, 60% agree, and 29% disagree with the statement that music teachers do not understand the assessment in the Merdeka Curriculum. Although a small number of teachers still face obstacles, the majority have implemented approaches that are relevant and aligned with music learning objectives. To support the sustainability of implementation, additional training and technical assistance can help increase teachers' confidence and competence in developing and implementing more effective and inclusive assessments.

Percentage of Perceptions of Music Teachers in Implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in Music lessons

Based on the results of a survey conducted on 20 junior high school music teachers in Bogor District, the main findings of this study focus on exploring the impact of implementing the Merdeka Curriculum such as increasing students' interest, critical thinking skills and learning outcomes, developing students' creativity, developing students' musical skills, and collaboration and exploration in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum. The following table records the results

of respondents regarding the exploration of the impact of implementing the Merdeka Curriculum.

Table 5. Improvement in Interest, Critical Thinking Ability, and Learner Learning Outcomes

Item No.	SS		S		RR		TS		STS		F	Score
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
P20	1	5	16	80	1	5	1	5	1	5	20	72
P21	2	10	15	75	3	15	0	0	0	0	20	79
P22	1	5	16	80	3	15	0	0	0	0	20	78

Based on the data in Table 5, music teachers' perceptions of increasing students' interest, critical thinking skills, and learning outcomes in music lessons are positive. The overall mean value reached 3.9 with a Respondent Achievement Rate (TCR) of 77%, which indicates a good level of perception. This finding reflects that the implementation of Merdeka Curriculum in music learning contributes significantly to learners' engagement and achievement. A total of 5% of respondents strongly agreed and 80% agreed that the implementation of Merdeka Curriculum increased students' interest in music lessons. However, there are 5% of respondents who are undecided, 5% who disagree, and another 5% strongly disagree. This data shows that the majority of teachers believe that the Merdeka Curriculum approach, especially through learner-centered learning, is able to attract students to be more actively involved in music lessons.

A total of 10% of respondents strongly agreed, 75% agreed, and 15% were undecided that project-based learning in the Merdeka Curriculum helps improve learners' critical thinking and problem solving skills. These results emphasize that the majority of teachers recognize the positive impact of the project-based approach in encouraging learners to think more analytically and creatively. However, the percentage of respondents who are undecided indicates the need for further training to ensure the application of this method is carried out consistently and effectively. In the cognitive aspect, 5% of respondents strongly agreed, 80% agreed, and 15% were undecided that the implementation of Merdeka Curriculum improved learners' learning outcomes, especially in terms of knowledge about music. This indicates that the majority of teachers feel that Merdeka Curriculum has succeeded in encouraging students' understanding in the theoretical aspects of music.

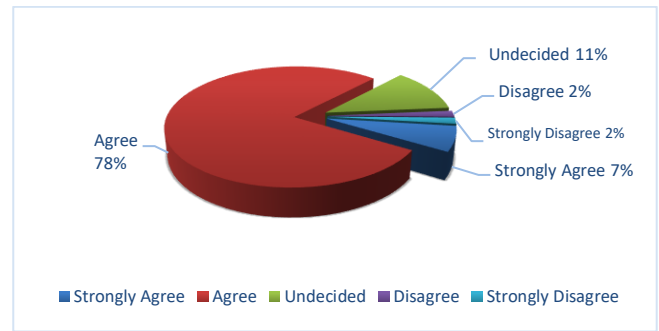


Figure 5. Music teachers' perceptions of increasing students' interest, critical thinking skills, and learning outcomes.

The diagram shows that overall the results of this study, music teachers have a positive perception of the impact of implementing the Merdeka Curriculum, especially in increasing students' interest in learning, critical thinking skills, and learning outcomes. Supported by the results of respondents, 7% strongly agreed, and 78% agreed. However, a small number of respondents who disagree, disagree, and strongly disagree indicate that there are challenges in implementing this curriculum. To strengthen its impact, strategic measures such as intensive training for teachers, provision of adequate resources, and continuous mentoring are needed to ensure the consistency and effectiveness of Merdeka Curriculum-based learning.

Table 6. Learner Creativity Development

Item No.	SS		S		KS		TS		STS		F	Score
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
P23	3	15	13	65	2	10	0	0	2	10	20	75
P24	3	15	13	65	2	10	0	0	2	10	20	75
P25	2	10	13	65	2	10	3	15	0	0	20	74
P26	4	20	11	55	3	15	2	10	0	0	20	77

The data in Table 6 shows that music teachers have a positive perception of the development of students' creativity in music lessons through the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum. The overall average (mean) value is 3.8 with the Respondent Achievement Rate (TCR) reaching 75.2%, which indicates a good level of perception. This finding confirms that the Merdeka Curriculum contributes significantly to facilitating learners to explore and develop their creativity in music. A total of 15% of respondents strongly agreed, 65% agreed, 10% disagreed, and 2% strongly disagreed that the Merdeka Curriculum helps learners develop their creativity in music lessons. This shows that the majority of teachers feel that this curriculum provides ample space for students to express their creative ideas. Furthermore, on the statement that the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum allows learners to be more involved in

interactive and innovative music projects, the results are consistent: 15% of respondents strongly agreed, 65% agreed, 10% disagreed, and 2% strongly disagreed. This finding underscores that the project-based approach in Merdeka Curriculum successfully increases learners' involvement in meaningful activities that support creativity.

However, perceptions are slightly different on the statement that Merdeka Curriculum encourages students to be more creative in making music. A total of 10% of respondents strongly agreed, 65% agreed, and 15% disagreed. The higher percentage in the "disagree" category indicates that some teachers may face challenges in helping students develop creative musical works, such as limited facilities or time available for exploration. Another result stated that Merdeka Curriculum makes learners more actively participate in learning activities. A total of 20% of respondents strongly agreed, 55% agreed, 15% disagreed and 10% disagreed. This finding indicates that the majority of teachers agree that the Merdeka Curriculum provides opportunities for students to be more involved in music learning, although there is still room to increase participation for a small number of students.

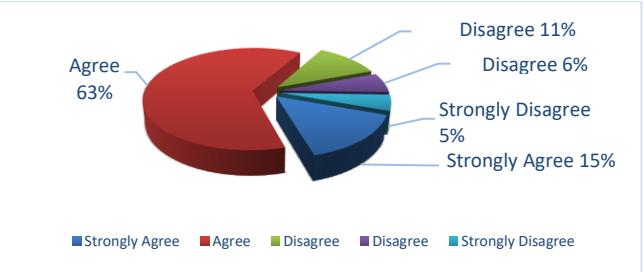


Figure 6. Music teachers' perceptions of developing students' creativity

The implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in music learning is positively assessed by teachers in terms of supporting the development of students' creativity. Judging from the diagram above, 15% strongly agree, and 63% agree that the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum can develop learners' creativity. Project-based and interactive approaches are proven to increase learners' involvement and ability to explore their activities. However, 11% of respondents disagreed, 6% disagreed, and 5% strongly disagreed. These results also show that there are certain challenges in implementing Merdeka Curriculum that are needed to increase learners' creativity, one of which is that supporting facilities or limited learning time can affect the effectiveness of implementation. Therefore, additional support in the form of teacher training, facility procurement, and curriculum implementation assistance is

needed to maximize the potential for developing students' creativity.

Table 7. Development of Learners' Music Skills

Item No.	SS		S		KS		TS		STS		F	Score
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
P27	0	0	1	5	4	20	11	55	4	20	20	81
P28	1	5	0	0	1	15	15	75	3	15	20	80

Based on the data in table 7, music teachers show a positive perception of the development of students' musical skills through the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum. the overall average (mean) value is 3.9 with the Respondent Achievement Rate (TCR) reaching 78.5%, which indicates a good category level. This finding confirms that Merdeka Curriculum plays an important role in facilitating learners to explore and develop their musical skills effectively. A total of 20% of respondents strongly disagreed with the statement that they did not feel the Merdeka Curriculum supported the development of learners' musical skills effectively, supported by 55% of respondents who disagreed, and another 20% who disagreed. However, there were 5% who agreed with the statement. This data shows that most teachers believe the Merdeka Curriculum has provided adequate support to improve students' musical skills, although there are still a small number who feel it is not effective. In terms of learner confidence, 15% of music teachers strongly disagree with the statement that learners are not more confident in performing their musical works after the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, supported by 75% of respondents who disagree, 5% who disagree, and 5% who strongly agree. This finding reflects that the majority of teachers consider the Merdeka curriculum to have succeeded in encouraging learners to be more confident in demonstrating their musical skills, both in individual and group contexts.

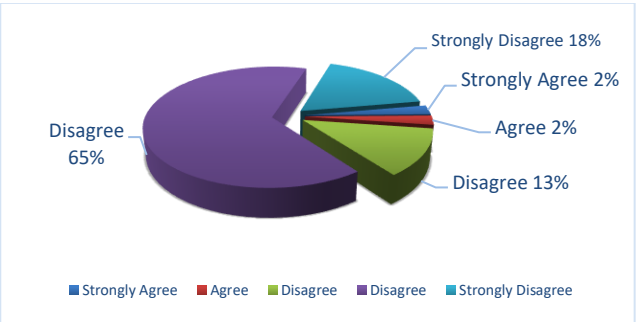


Figure 7. Music teachers' perceptions of students' music skills development

The diagram shows that the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum is positively assessed by music teachers in supporting the

development of students' skills, seen from the 18% of respondents who strongly disagree, and 65% disagree with the statement that the Merdeka Curriculum does not support the development of students' musical skills. This means that the majority of respondents agree that the Merdeka Curriculum has made a significant contribution in creating innovative and relevant music learning. The interactive project-based approach provides opportunities for learners to explore their potential, improve musical skills, and build confidence in performing their work.

Table 8. Learners' Musical Collaboration and Exploration

Item No.	SS		S		KS		TS		STS		F	Score
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
P29	3	15	15	75	2	10	0	0	0	0	20	81
P30	2	10	16	80	2	10	0	0	0	0	20	80
P31	2	10	16	80	2	10	0	0	0	0	20	80
P32	3	15	14	70	1	5	1	5	1	5	20	79

Based on the data in Table 8, music teachers show a positive perception of developing students' ability to collaborate and explore music in music lessons. The overall mean score (mean) is 4, with the Respondent Achievement Rate (TCR) reaching 80.2%, which shows results in the good category. This finding underscores that the implementation of Merdeka Curriculum significantly supports the development of learners' musical collaboration and exploration skills. A total of 15% of music teachers strongly agree that the Merdeka Curriculum provides ample space for collaboration in music learning, supported by 75% of respondents who agree, while the other 10% disagree. This data reflects that the majority of teachers feel that this curriculum provides great opportunities for learners to work together actively in groups. In the context of music projects, 10% of teachers strongly agreed, 80% agreed, and 10% disagreed that Merdeka Curriculum encourages learners to work well together in music groups. This suggests that a project-based approach can create a learning environment conducive to collaboration.

Regarding musical exploration, 10% of respondents strongly agreed, 80% agreed, and 10% disagreed that Merdeka Curriculum encourages learners' courage in experimenting with new musical instruments or sounds. This indicates that this curriculum not only supports creativity, but also provides space for learners to explore innovative musical ideas. In addition, music teachers stated that Merdeka Curriculum allows

learners to analyze more types of traditional and modern music. A total of 15% of respondents strongly agreed, 70% agreed, 5% disagreed, 5% disagreed, and 5% strongly disagreed with the statement. This finding shows that there is recognition of the role of the Merdeka Curriculum in enriching students' musical insights, although there are still a small number who have not fully felt its impact.

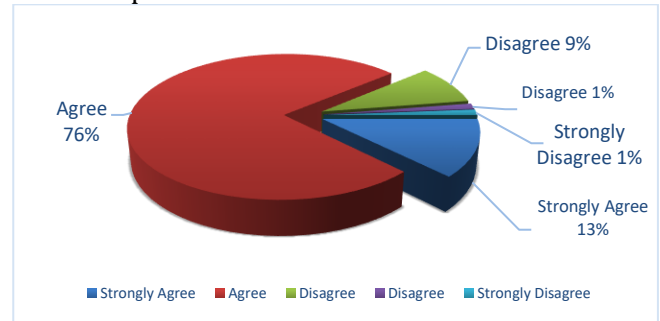


Figure 8. Teachers' perceptions related to developing learners' ability to collaborate and explore music

Based on the diagram above, it shows that the Merdeka Curriculum is generally considered positive by music teachers in supporting students' musical collaboration and exploration abilities, supported by 13% who strongly agree, and 76% agree. These results are supported by previous research conducted by Permana (2023), showing that the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum can increase students' creativity, independence, collaboration, critical thinking skills, motivation, and engagement. The project-based approach and flexibility in the exploration of musical instruments and musical genres have provided a more meaningful learning experience. However, to increase effectiveness, it is necessary to strengthen the technical support aspect of the implementation strategy more comprehensively. This step can ensure that all learners and teachers get the maximum benefit from Merdeka Curriculum.

Challenges and Required Support

The survey data shows that there are several challenges and support needed by music teachers in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in music lessons in class. This support is needed so that the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in music lessons takes place optimally. The following is a record of respondents' results regarding challenges and support in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in music lessons.

Table 9: Challenges and obstacles in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in music lessons

Item No.	SS		S		KS		TS		STS		F
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
P33	4	20	12	60	2	10	2	10	0	0	20
P34	5	25	13	65	2	10	0	0	0	0	20
P35	7	35	12	60	1	5	0	0	0	0	20
P36	3	15	12	60	3	15	2	10	0	0	20

Based on the data in Table 9, a number of music teachers face various challenges in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum, especially related to limited facilities, administrative burden, student interest, and time allocation for project-based learning. A total of 20% of teachers strongly agreed, 60% agreed, 10% disagreed, and 2% disagreed that the lack of supporting facilities and facilities at school was an obstacle in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum. this finding shows that the majority of teachers feel that limited infrastructure such as musical instruments, practice rooms, or access to technology has an impact on the effectiveness of project-based music learning. A total of 25% of respondents strongly agreed, 65% agreed, and 10% disagreed with the statement that high administrative burden reduces teachers' time to design creative learning. This highlights that although Merdeka Curriculum encourages innovation, administrative responsibilities can be a significant barrier for teachers in creating meaningful learning experiences.

Furthermore, 35% of teachers strongly agreed, 60% agreed, and 5% disagreed with the statement that not all students have the same interest in music, making it difficult to implement flexible learning. This condition shows that the diversity of learners' interests is a challenge for teachers in designing activities that are relevant and interesting for all learners. Regarding the time allocation available, 15% of respondents strongly agreed, 60% agreed, 15% disagreed, and 10% disagreed that the time available for implementing project-based learning is still inadequate. This reflects the need to adjust the schedule or structure of learning time so that teachers have enough opportunities to carry out creative projects in accordance with the Merdeka Curriculum.

The overall results show that although the majority of music teachers support the implementation of Merdeka Curriculum, they face obstacles or challenges that require special attention. Limited facilities and time,

administrative burden, and variations in students' interests are significant inhibiting factors. These results are supported by previous research conducted by Lahabu, et al (2024) identifying one of the main challenges in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum is limited infrastructure. To overcome this obstacle, the government and schools need to provide more concrete support, such as providing adequate infrastructure, simplifying administrative burdens, and developing more inclusive and flexible learning strategies. With these steps, the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum can run more effectively and provide maximum benefits for students.

Table 10: Support needed by teachers in implementing the Curriculum

Item No.	SS		S		KS		TS		STS		F
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
P37	6	30	11	55	2	10	1	5	0	0	20
P38	3	15	14	70	3	15	0	0	0	0	20
P39	0	0	4	20	3	15	10	50	1	5	20
P40	8	40	12	60	0	0	0	0	0	0	20

Based on the data in Table 10, the support needs needed to assist teachers in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum, especially in music learning, are illustrated. As many as 30% of respondents strongly agreed and 55% agreed that they needed more training to develop music learning within the framework of the Merdeka Curriculum. Meanwhile, 10% disagreed, and 5% disagreed with the statement. This data confirms that the majority of teachers feel additional training is needed to strengthen their competence in designing relevant and innovative lessons. Similar results were found regarding the lack of training on the implementation of Merdeka Curriculum in general, especially in music lessons. A total of 25% of teachers strongly agreed, 70% agreed, and 15% disagreed that more intensive training is still an urgent need. This shows that many teachers feel that their knowledge of the curriculum still needs to be improved, especially in understanding project-based learning strategies and assessment.

A total of 5% of respondents stated that they were very dissatisfied, 50% were dissatisfied, 25% were less satisfied, and only 20% were satisfied with the government's support in providing facilities to implement Merdeka Curriculum in music lessons. This finding reflects the great need for the provision of adequate facilities and infrastructure, such as musical instruments, practice rooms and access to technology, to

support the successful implementation of the curriculum. In internal support, especially from the school principal, 40% of teachers strongly agreed, and the other 60% agreed that teachers received good support from the school principal in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum. This support, whether in the form of motivation, facility management, or organizing training, is very important to strengthen the effectiveness of curriculum implementation at the school level.

From the overall data, it shows that teacher training and the provision of adequate facilities are the main aspects that need to be improved to support the implementation of Merdeka Curriculum in music learning. Although teachers get internal support from the principal, there is a need to expand external support, especially from the government, in the form of ongoing training and provision of facilities. These strategic steps are important to ensure Merdeka Curriculum can be implemented effectively and provide maximum benefits for teachers and learners.

D. CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

The results show that the Merdeka Curriculum provides flexibility in teaching, especially in developing students' creativity and skills in music education. The project-based approach, which is at the core of this curriculum, provides space for students to explore music more boldly, collaborate effectively, and get to know various types of traditional and modern music. Most music teachers have a good understanding of the Merdeka Curriculum and believe that it can increase student creativity if supported by adequate resources.

However, there are several obstacles that affect the effectiveness of the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in the field. Teachers face challenges such as limited support facilities and resources, administrative burdens that reduce time for innovation, and variations in students' interest in music that make it difficult to implement flexible learning. In addition, the lack of training and technical support is a major obstacle for teachers in understanding and implementing this curriculum optimally. Although support from the principal is considered important, external support in the form of adequate facilities and more intensive training is still an urgent need.

Strategic steps are needed to ensure the successful implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in music education. The results of this study confirm that increasing the effectiveness of curriculum implementation can be achieved through continuous teacher training, simplification of administrative burdens, and improvement of

educational infrastructure. Schools are also advised to utilize digital technology as a tool in music education to overcome limited facilities and increase student engagement.

With the right support, the Merdeka Curriculum can be more effective in creating innovative and relevant music learning and equipping students with 21st-century skills. Therefore, synergy between education stakeholders is needed to ensure that every teacher and student has sufficient access to facilities and training that optimally support the implementation of this curriculum.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The researcher would like to express her deepest gratitude to all parties, especially to the junior high school music teachers in Bogor District, who have provided support and participation in this research.

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