



A Study on Junior High School Physical Education Teachers' Understanding of The Implementation of The Merdeka Curriculum

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Abstract

Teachers must always improve pedagogical competence to keep up with changes and developments that occur in curriculum content in the learning process of students. The merdeka curriculum is the result of the government's findings on the replacement of the previous curriculum, which gives students the freedom to develop their potential according to their talents and interests. This descriptive quantitative study aims to explore information about the understanding of physical education teachers on the implementation of the merdeka curriculum in junior high schools in Tarumajaya District, Bekasi Regency. The sampling technique was purposive sampling. This study involved 17 schools, with 21 physical education teachers as samples. The instrument used in this study was a questionnaire using a Likert scale and Google Forms media. The results of the study were analyzed using SPSS 23 through descriptive statistics. The data were categorized, then looked for percentages, and averaged (mean). The results of this study indicate the understanding of physical education teachers towards the implementation of an merdeka curriculum in junior high schools in Tarumajaya District with an average value of 73% which is then converted into a "Good Enough" category value. Based on the findings of this study, increasing teacher competence, especially pedagogical competence in Tarumajaya District, must be further optimized through increasing teacher understanding, providing adequate resources, reducing administrative burdens, increasing student motivation, and effective time management towards the focus of the Merdeka curriculum.

How to Cite

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INTRODUCTION

Physical education, sports, and health are closely related to subjects that implement moral education with direct practice (Surahni, 2017). Physical education learning is compulsory education with the aim of improving students' physical fitness and improving students' motor skills to support activities in the school environment (Mahfud & Fahrizqi, 2020). the importance of physical education is also able to improve the quality and quantity of students' health, this physically and mentally healthy human condition can only be achieved if humans are aware and willing to carry out healthy living movements through physical education and sports (Iskandar, 2019). Especially the subject of Physical Education which focuses on the learning process that accompanies students from the time they are in elementary school until they graduate from high school (Saleh & Malinta, 2020).

The learning process is closely related to an interconnected and related sequence of several elements, such as teachers, students, curriculum, teaching methods, and infrastructure (Purnawan & Hidayati, 2021; et al., 2023). The teacher is not only a material deliverer, but also a facilitator who can create an interactive learning environment, where students can actively ask questions, discuss, and cooperate (Fakhrurrazi, 2018). This learning process aims for students to get learning outcomes that can be measured through learning experiences (Suhartoyo et al., 2021). Therefore, learning outcomes are clear evidence that students have experienced changes after participating in the teaching and learning process (Haqiyah & Abidin, 2020).

To become a professional teacher, one must have a combination of four main competencies: including pedagogics, professionalism, good personality, and social skills (Apriyanti, 2017). And one of the competencies that a teacher must have is pedagogical competence (Hafizha et al., 2022). Pedagogical competence mastered by a teacher can make it possible to build a deep relationship with students so that the learning process becomes more effective and dialogical (Akbar, 2021). pedagogical competence at its core, is the ability of a teacher to manage the learning system of students which includes understanding students, designing, implementing, and evaluating, as well as developing students to actualize the various potentials of students (Cahyani & Andriani, 2014).

Learning planning as a strong initial foundation can build a curriculum at all levels of ef-

fective school education (Apriyanti, 2017). Effective learning can make students' souls develop according to their competencies and abilities (Fajri et al., 2023). Therefore, the success of the learning system can make the mindset and behavior of students will be formed, according to the direction and objectives that have been formulated by the curriculum (Bahri, 2017). As a very important tool in the world of education, the curriculum is several educational programs or student learning programs that are arranged logically and systematically, under the auspices of schools and teachers, which are jointly responsible for achieving the stated school education goals (Julaeha et al., 2021). However, the curriculum must still be developed to suit the dynamics of the times, especially since the development of knowledge and information technology has developed massively and uncontrollably in the industrial era 4.0 (Windayanti et al., 2023).

The emergence of the COVID-19 Pandemic outbreak in 2019 at the end of December is one of the polemics for the sustainability of changes in the education system in Indonesia (Sudrajat et al., 2023). Thus, it is appropriate for the government, through the Ministry of Education, to develop a curriculum that is adaptive and effective in solving the problem in question (Juditya et al., 2022). The emergency curriculum is part of the government's thinking to deal with the lagging education and learning system, where this curriculum is an intervention from the 2013 curriculum which is evaluated with core competencies and basic competencies but is more simplified in implementing it to students due to the Covid-19 outbreak (Fajri et al., 2023). While the merdeka curriculum is a curriculum that can be said to be a prototype curriculum at that time, then development occurs as a more flexible curriculum framework, while focusing on essential material and character development of learner competencies (Siregar & Marjo, 2022).

The National Education Standards Agency believes that the Merdeka Learning Curriculum is a curriculum that gives students the freedom to develop their potential according to their talents and interests (Sumitra, 2023). The merdeka curriculum is a curriculum with intracurricular learning where the content will be optimized so that students have enough time to explore concepts and strengthen competencies (Kusumawati et al., 2022). Not only that, the student profile of Pancasila plays a very important role and becomes a reference that guides all policies and novelties in the Indonesian education system in the merdeka curriculum (Windayanti et al., 2023). The focus

of main objective of the Merdeka Curriculum is to create a school atmosphere that supports an effective teaching and learning process, where students can learn comfortably without being burdened with too heavy tasks (Nadzifah et al., 2024).

Even though it has a lot of potential for students, the implementation of an Merdeka learning curriculum in physical education subjects still faces various challenges, so it needs more intensive adjustment and support (Febriati, 2022). This directs the condition of teachers who are still groping in implementing an merdeka curriculum which is seen from several stages including planning, implementing, managing, and reporting assessments and follow-up reflection (Iqbal Akbar Albani & Mu'arifin Mu'arifin, 2023). Not only that, the curriculum change can have an impact on the negative learning system of students, where students cannot adjust to changes in learning quickly through new learning programs (Nurwiatin, 2022). even though mastery of the material is the most important thing for a student in the 21st century (Sumantri, 2019). In reality, what happens in the learning process, often happens that the teaching process runs and takes place ineffectively (Kusumawati et al., 2022).

Several studies have researched the understanding of physical education teachers of the merdeka curriculum. Therefore, researchers highlight some of the main research that is used as a reference such as the expression from (Kusumawati et al., 2022) and (Sudrajat et al., 2023). This explains that the application of an Merdeka learning curriculum in physical education subjects needs to adjust learning for each student and can be supported by the development of learning media. This is supported by a statement (Febriati, 2022) saying that applying an merdeka curriculum in physical education subjects can give students the freedom to move without being limited by rules that involve fun for students in the learning process. This means, from the three studies above, that the role of using media in physical education learning in an merdeka curriculum is very appropriate, it can support a more effective learning system for students. While slightly different from (Iqbal Akbar Albani & Mu'arifin Mu'arifin, 2023) that the level of understanding of physical education teachers towards the merdeka curriculum is very high, there are still some teachers who still have a low understanding including planning, implementation, assessment, and reflection. This opinion is reinforced by (Sumitra, 2023) who says that the success of the merdeka curriculum in physical education lessons is obtained from each indicator, such as in Learning

Preparation, learning implementation, teaching and learning process, competency assessment, and the availability of learning tools. Then (Izdihar, 2023) argues that the newly implemented merdeka curriculum requires teachers to be more professional, active, and responsible because the task of a teacher is not only to deliver material but also to be more creative and innovative in designing lessons.

Of the six studies above, there is almost a similarity in the point of view, which is related to the implementation of the merdeka curriculum in physical education subjects, where the research focuses more on the ability of teachers' pedagogical competence in implementing the merdeka curriculum. Substantively, this pedagogical competence requires that a teacher can understand the development of students, as well as how teachers can understand the design, implementation, and evaluation of learning (Akbar, 2021). Therefore, teachers must always improve pedagogical competence to keep up with changes and developments that occur in the curriculum, so that they can implement curriculum content into the learning process of students. Therefore, this kind of research needs to be carried out more specifically and periodically to find out the extent of the implementation of the merdeka curriculum in Indonesia, especially in Tarumajaya District, Bekasi Regency, in this study the researcher wants to focus on whether the physical education teacher's understanding of the implementation of the merdeka curriculum in junior high schools in Tarumajaya District is by the learning objectives set by the government. Not only that, this research is a form of response to curriculum changes to provide the latest data on the implementation of the Merdeka curriculum which aims to identify the level of understanding of Physical Education teachers regarding the implementation and implementation of the Merdeka curriculum in the learning process, as well as what factors influence this understanding, which is useful for the development of educational science. Thus, researchers and the central government can gain a better understanding of the current situation of physical education in Indonesia, and design more effective educational strategies in the future.

In addition, many studies have highlighted the pedagogical competence of Physical Education teachers in the Merdeka curriculum, indicating that this is a crucial research area related to the professionalism of educators in the education system. However, unlike previous studies that were general in nature, this study analyzes in more depth the impact of teacher understanding

on specific aspects of Physical Education learning within the Merdeka curriculum framework. This study focuses on physical education teachers' understanding of the newly implemented Merdeka curriculum because this is a determining factor in the success of the newly implemented education system in Indonesia.

METHODS

Quantitative descriptive aims to describe a phenomenon, event, or event factually, systematically, and accurately (destriana & dwi afriyanti, 2024). A research object based on certain phenomena or variables is then described based on events at the time of the research using numbers or numerical data to be more objective.

This analysis technique uses data obtained through a survey method using a questionnaire. The questionnaire used is an adoption and modification contained in the journal (izdihar, 2023). The questionnaire consists of 15 statements and 2 closed questions, which are distributed via google forms. This research was conducted in junior high schools in tarumajaya district, bekasi regency. The population in this study was 17 junior high schools, then the total sample was 21 physical education teachers representing each school. The sampling technique in this study was purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is a method of selecting samples based on certain considerations (destriana & dwi afriyanti, 2024). Given the limited population and the availability of samples in the study, researchers used a purposive sampling technique. Researchers seek schools for physical education teacher research in the Merdeka curriculum.

The instrument used in this study uses a Likert scale with 5 alternative assessments, namely: (Always, Often, Sometimes, Rarely, Never), which consists of positive and negative answers. The highest score (5) is given for the most appropriate answer, while the lowest score (1) is given for the least appropriate answer. on the understanding of physical education teachers regarding the implementation of the merdeka curriculum in junior high schools in Tarumajaya District, Bekasi Regency Likert scale is a scale used in measuring attitudes, opinions, and perceptions of a person or people about social phenomena (Bahrun et al., 2017) **Table 1.**

Furthermore, after collecting data from the questionnaire, the researcher then categorized the different teacher assessment scores from the questionnaire instruments given, with the aim of

making it easier to process data and draw conclusions. Analyze the data to get conclusions by calculating different categories (M. Akbar Alpiqi, Jujur Gunawan Manullang, 2024). The data obtained is then processed using SPSS 23 and MS Excel. Conduct data analysis by determining the percentage of assessment results based on the Average%. Basically, researchers categorize teacher assessment rules into five groups as follows **Table 2.**

Table 1. Likert Scale Questionnaire Answers

| Positive Question | Negative Question | No |
|-------------------|-------------------|----|
| Always | Never | 5 |
| Often | Rarely | 4 |
| Sometimes | Sometimes | 3 |
| Rarely | Often | 2 |
| Never | Always | 1 |

Source: (Izdihar, 2023)

Table 2. Teacher Assessment Rules

| Interval | Category |
|---------------|-------------|
| $X \geq 62$ | Very Good |
| $58 < X < 61$ | Good |
| $54 < X < 57$ | Good Enough |
| $50 < X < 53$ | Poor |
| $X \leq 49$ | Not Good |

Source:(M. Akbar Alpiqi, Jujur Gunawan Manullang, 2024)

Stating that the calculation of variable score categorization begins with calculating the theoretical mean (Muhammad et al., 2021). The formula is as follows :

Formula :

Theoretical Mean (μ) = $(imax + imin) \sum K$

Theoretical SD = $(xmak - xmin)$

Description:

imax : Maximum Score of Measure Scale

imin : Minimum Score of Measuring Scale

$\sum K$: Number of Problem Items

xmak : Maximum Variable Score

xmin : Minimum Variable Score

Procedures for distributing questionnaires to physical education teacher respondents, distributed via Google Form, where respondents only need to access the link provided and select answers that match their teaching abilities by clicking the options in the available columns. The instrument lattice table contained in the implementation of the merdeka curriculum is as follows **Table 3.**

Table 3. Recapitulation of the Merdeka curriculum Implementation Instrument Grid.

| Indikator | Sub Indicator |
|--|--|
| Implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum | Physical education Teacher's Understanding of the Learning Process in the Merdeka curriculum |
| | Physical education Teacher's Understanding of Time Management in the physical education Learning Process in the Merdeka curriculum |
| | Physical education Teacher's Understanding of the Role of Teachers in the Merdeka curriculum |
| | Physical education Teacher's Understanding of Assessment or Assessment in the Merdeka curriculum |
| | Physical education Teacher's Understanding of the Project to Strengthen the Pancasila Lesson Profile |
| | Physical education Teacher's Understanding of the Merdeka curriculum Application Learning as a |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |

Note: * = Negative Question

Source: (Izdihar, 2023)

Statements in the form of a questionnaire with Google Forms are arranged using a Likert scale with alternative answers (Always, Often, Sometimes, Rarely, Never).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This research was conducted in junior high schools in the Tarumajaya sub-district, Bekasi Regency, both public and private. This research is survey research that seeks to determine the level of understanding of physical education teachers regarding the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in junior high schools in Tarumajaya District, Bekasi Regency. In collecting data, researchers began distributing questionnaires starting from January 8 - 31, 2025. Data was collected using a questionnaire consisting of 15 closed statements and 2 closed questions through Google Form media.

Therefore, to find out how much the physical education teacher understands the implementation of the merdeka curriculum, the first step is to calculate descriptive statistics (Haqiyah & Abidin, 2020). The results of calculating descriptive statistics can be seen in the **Table 4**.

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics of the Implementation of Merdeka Curriculum in physical education Subjects in Junior High Schools in Tarumajaya District

| Statistics | |
|--|---------|
| Implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum | |
| N | 21 |
| Minimum | 49.00 |
| Maximum | 63.00 |
| Sum | 1157.00 |
| Mean | 55.0952 |
| Std. Deviation | 3.97372 |
| Valid N (listwise) | 21 |

Source: Primary data processed, 2025

Based on the **Table 4**, it is known that the descriptive statistical value of the Implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, with a sample size of 21 people, with a Minimum value of 49.00, and a Maximum value of 63.00, with a total value of 1157.00, the results of the distribution of the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum with an average value of 55.0952.

After the researcher categorized the teacher's assessment in table 2. Next, the researcher filled out the questionnaire and obtained the results of the physical education teacher's assessment based on the following percentages **Table 5**.

Table 5. Teacher Assessment Categories

| Interval | Categorization | Frequency | Percentage |
|---------------|----------------|-----------|------------|
| $X \geq 62$ | Very Good | 2 | 10% |
| $58 < X < 61$ | Good | 5 | 24% |
| $54 < X < 57$ | Good Enough | 8 | 38% |
| $50 < X < 53$ | Poor | 6 | 29% |
| $X \leq 49$ | Not Good | 0 | 0% |
| Amount | | 21 | 100% |

Source: (M. Akbar Alpiqi, Jujur Gunawan Manullang, 2024)

In the norm rules for teacher assessment **Table 5** above which uses descriptive statistics, the researchers made a difference in score categorization, the implementation of an merdeka curriculum in junior high schools in the Tarumajaya sub-district can be seen in **Figure 1**.

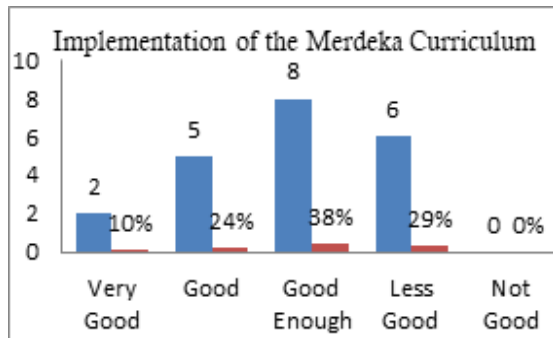


Figure 1. Diagram of the results of the physical education teacher assessment.

We can see that based on **Table 5** and **Figure 1**, the implementation of the Merdeka Learning Curriculum in physical education subjects in junior high schools in Tarumajaya District, Bekasi Regency varies greatly in the “very good” category of 10% (2 teachers), “good” by 24% (5 teachers), “Good Enough” by 38% (8 teachers), “Poor” by 29% (6 teachers), and “Not Good” (0 teachers).

Furthermore, the researcher conducted a test based on the achievements of the total number of teachers in answering the test items of the questionnaire research instrument to determine the percentage and average of all respondents’ answers, regarding the teacher’s understanding of the implementation of the merdeka curriculum, as for this data we can see in **Table 6**.

Table 6. Percentage Level of Implementation of Merdeka Curriculum for physical education Teachers

| Respondents | Ideal Score | Score Acquisition | % | Average | Categorization |
|-------------|-------------|-------------------|-----|---------|----------------|
| 1 | 75 | 63 | 84% | 73% | Very Good |
| 2 | 75 | 52 | 69% | | Poor |
| 3 | 75 | 57 | 76% | | Good |
| 4 | 75 | 54 | 72% | | Good Enough |
| 5 | 75 | 52 | 69% | | Poor |
| 6 | 75 | 58 | 77% | | Good |
| 7 | 75 | 58 | 77% | | Good |
| 8 | 75 | 50 | 67% | | Poor |
| 9 | 75 | 58 | 77% | | Good |
| 10 | 75 | 51 | 68% | | Poor |
| 11 | 75 | 56 | 75% | | Good Enough |
| 12 | 75 | 49 | 65% | | Poor |
| 13 | 75 | 56 | 75% | | Good Enough |
| 14 | 75 | 54 | 72% | | Good Enough |
| 15 | 75 | 55 | 73% | | Good Enough |
| 16 | 75 | 53 | 71% | | Good Enough |
| 17 | 75 | 55 | 73% | | Good Enough |

| | | | | | |
|----|----|----|-----|-----|-------------|
| 18 | 75 | 60 | 80% | 73% | Good |
| 19 | 75 | 50 | 67% | | Poor |
| 20 | 75 | 63 | 84% | | Very Good |
| 21 | 75 | 53 | 71% | | Good Enough |

Source: Primary data processed, 2025

The results of the percentage assessment are based on an average of 73%, then adjusted to the existing category limits. Overall each junior high school shows that all junior high schools in the Tarumajaya sub-district, Bekasi Regency, have varied acquisitions, but the categorization of the value “Good enough” gets the most categorization. We can elaborate on this acquisition, that the lowest score obtained by the respondent was 49 with a percentage of 65% in the category “Not Good”, a value of 53-56 “Good Enough” with a percentage of 71-73%, a value of 57-62 “good” with a percentage of 76-80%, a value of 63 “Very Good” with the respondent’s value is 80%.

Argue that, the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in physical education subjects faces various complex challenges. These problems need to be addressed comprehensively through increasing teacher understanding, providing adequate resources, reducing administrative burdens, increasing student motivation, and effective time management (Iqbal Akbar Albani & Mu’arifin Mu’arifin, 2023). On the other hand, the existence of a merdeka curriculum as the main guardian of education has the potential to improve the quality of education, but the availability of competent teacher resources is highly expected as a benchmark reference to advance the education system in Indonesia (Juditya et al., 2022). Thus, the process of implementing the Merdeka Curriculum can be expected to run more optimally to achieve the desired learning objectives (Sudrajat et al., 2023).

Limited implementation of the curriculum has started in 2021 in driving schools in 111 districts/cities, in 2022 the implementation of the merdeka curriculum begins for Merdeka pathways, and by 2023 almost 70% of educational units in Indonesia have implemented the merdeka curriculum through the driving school program, SMK centers of excellence, and independent pathway curriculum implementation (Kemendikbud, 2023). The program, which has been running for approximately 3 years as a reference for the vision and mission of education in Indonesia, has been “good enough” in the process of implementation in junior high schools in Tarumajaya District, Bekasi Regency, in the subject of physical education. However, there

are still many things that need to be considered and reviewed in the process of implementing the merdeka curriculum (Kusumawati et al., 2022). This should require a deeper evaluation from both the central and regional governments regarding the merdeka curriculum so that what the government wants in the education system runs better and by what is expected (Iqbal Akbar Albani & Mu'arifin Mu'arifin, 2023).

Judging from the average teacher who answers the item test items consisting of 15 statements in junior high schools in Tarumajaya sub-district, Bekasi Regency, there are still many teachers who answer "Always" and "Often" on the 3 negative statement test items, this is supported by the answers to 2 closed questions. Thus the teacher can be considered to understand or get a high category if the other questions can be answered correctly, then later it can be averaged and can get a category according to the questionnaire that has been filled out.

The results of the questionnaire questions, almost show that the level of teacher understanding of the implementation of the merdeka curriculum is declared "Good Enough" with the highest total score. Thus, this survey research can be used to determine the extent of the physical education teacher's understanding of the Implementation of the Merdeka curriculum.

CONCLUSION

Curriculum in physical education subjects in junior high schools in tarumajaya district, bekasi regency, is enough good, with the highest score, this is based on indicators from the teacher's perspective on the factors: physical education teachers' understanding of the learning process in the merdeka curriculum, physical education teachers' understanding of time management in the physical education learning process in the merdeka curriculum, physical education teachers' understanding of the role of teachers in the merdeka curriculum, and teacher understanding physical education regarding assessment or grading in the merdeka curriculum. Whereas junior high schools in tarumajaya district, gradually in the process, have integrated the merdeka learning curriculum as a curriculum determined by the state in implementing the education system, however, there are still many factors that hinder teachers in understanding the implementation of the merdeka curriculum, in physical education subjects, as well as unsupportive facilities and infrastructure which are the reasons for the lack of progress in implementing the merdeka curricu-

lum. Therefore, the desired changes to education are still not what is expected and must need to be reviewed, evaluated, and studied periodically, including in project-based learning which is one of the curriculum learning activities that builds the characteristics of indonesian students.

Through the findings obtained in this study, the implementation of the merdeka curriculum in physical education lessons in various junior high schools in indonesia is highly recommended. This research is expected to be the main capital in contributing to teachers' understanding of the implementation and implementation of the Merdeka learning curriculum, especially in physical education subjects at the junior high school level. Training and development of teachers' professional potential need to be carried out so that physical education teachers no longer feel confused in implementing the merdeka curriculum learning system. Apart from that, research related to physical education teachers' understanding of the merdeka curriculum needs to be carried out. This research can provide more updated information on the education system in indonesia so that scholars know what is useful and can be gained through the implementation and implementation of the merdeka curriculum in physical education lessons.

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