

Teacher Readiness in Implementing “the Merdeka Curriculum”

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ABSTRACT: The progress of a nation is influenced by education. The curriculum is a factor that has a very big influence on educational development. In the Merdeka Curriculum currently implemented, teachers need to adjust teaching preparation, evaluation techniques, and activities carried out in the learning process at school. Module creation, differentiated learning, and the Pancasila Student Profile Development Project are some of them. This research aims to determine the extent of teacher readiness in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum. The research method uses descriptive analysis techniques with a literature review. The research results show that teachers are not fully ready to face curriculum changes. This can be seen from the fact that teachers still need to understand curriculum paradigms that are different from before and learning methods that have also changed. To overcome this, good cooperation and communication are needed between the school, parents, and the government so that this curriculum can run according to objectives.

Keywords: merdeka curriculum, teachers, readiness

ABSTRAK: Kemajuan suatu bangsa dipengaruhi oleh pendidikan. Kurikulum adalah faktor yang memiliki pengaruh sangat besar terhadap perkembangan pendidikan. Dalam Kurikulum Merdeka yang saat ini diterapkan, guru perlu menyesuaikan persiapan pengajaran, teknik evaluasi, dan kegiatan yang dilakukan dalam proses pembelajaran di sekolah. Pembuatan modul, pembelajaran berdiferensiasi, dan Proyek Pengembangan Profil Pelajar Pancasila adalah beberapa contohnya. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui sejauh mana kesiapan guru dalam mengimplementasikan Kurikulum Merdeka. Metode penelitian menggunakan teknik analisis deskriptif dengan tinjauan literatur. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa guru belum sepenuhnya siap menghadapi perubahan kurikulum. Hal ini dapat dilihat dari kenyataan bahwa guru masih perlu memahami paradigma kurikulum yang berbeda dari sebelumnya dan metode pembelajaran yang juga telah berubah. Untuk mengatasi hal ini, diperlukan kerjasama dan komunikasi yang baik antara sekolah, orang tua, dan pemerintah agar kurikulum ini dapat berjalan sesuai dengan tujuan.

Kata Kunci: guru, kurikulum merdeka, kesiapan

INTRODUCTION

The advancement of a nation is intricately linked with the caliber of its educational system. Achieving an appropriate standard of education entails careful adjustments to align with evolving needs, contemporary conditions, overarching objectives, and dynamic curricular frameworks. Moreover, the quality of education hinges upon various supportive elements such as proficient educators, conducive learning environments, suitable pedagogical approaches,

and effective assessment systems, all of which significantly impact students' learning experiences and ultimately contribute to the overall educational quality (Parker et al., 2022).

In the context of Indonesia, the trajectory of progress is closely intertwined with educational excellence. Since its independence, Indonesia has undergone significant transformations in its educational landscape, particularly concerning the formulation of pertinent curricula. Acknowledging the evolving societal demands over time (Puad & Ashton, 2023), the nation has undergone curriculum revisions on numerous occasions, reflecting a responsive approach to adapt to changing educational requisites. Notably, Indonesia has witnessed the development of various curricular iterations, including the 1947, 1952, 1964, 1968, 1975, 1984, 1994, 2004, 2006, and 2013 curricula (Hadı et al., 2019), alongside the introduction of the Merdeka Curriculum. These revisions typically involve adjustments in teaching allocations, modifications in subject titles, and shifts in learning objectives, with recent curricula emphasizing the cultivation of moral values alongside academic proficiency, as exemplified in the 2013 curriculum (Maba, 2017).

Despite concerted efforts to introduce the Merdeka Curriculum across educational institutions, challenges persist in its effective implementation. While extensive training sessions have been conducted to familiarize educators with the new curriculum, feedback suggests a lack of comprehension regarding its practical application. Notably, the Merdeka Curriculum necessitates differentiated instruction, encompassing diverse approaches to content delivery, instructional methodologies, and outcome assessment (Fauzan et al., 2023). However, teachers encounter impediments in executing evaluative practices aligned with the Merdeka Curriculum's objectives, citing deficiencies in essential documentation and the formulation of assessment rubrics tailored to individual subjects. Consequently, the readiness of educators to navigate the complexities of the Merdeka Curriculum emerges as a critical determinant of its successful integration within school settings (Ndari & Mahmudah, 2023a).

The readiness of teachers to embrace the challenges posed by the Merdeka Curriculum emerges as a pivotal factor influencing its efficacy within the Indonesian educational landscape. Addressing barriers to implementation through targeted support and resource provision is imperative to harness the full potential of this educational paradigm shift and uphold the nation's commitment to fostering holistic student development in alignment with contemporary educational imperatives.

RESEARCH METHOD

The research approach used in this article is descriptive qualitative, which aims to describe and analyse the readiness of teachers in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in schools. The data collection technique applied is library research, where the author collects data from various written sources relevant to the research theme, such as books, journals, research reports, and other literature. The primary data sources consist of books discussing curricula and

educational theories, scholarly journal articles addressing the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum and teacher readiness, previous research reports, and other supporting literature.

The strategy for finding data sources involves several key steps. First, the author searches libraries to find books relevant to the research topic. Second, the author accesses academic databases such as Google Scholar, JSTOR, and ScienceDirect to find scholarly journal articles discussing the Merdeka Curriculum and related aspects. Third, the author utilizes research reports available in university repositories and research institutions focused on education. Additionally, the author uses internet search engines to find supplementary literature that can support this research, including conference papers and articles in credible media.

The data analysis process is carried out in specific stages, starting from determining the research topic, namely the readiness of teachers in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum, to focusing the research on specific aspects such as teachers' understanding of the curriculum, teaching preparation, and teaching methods. Next, the author collects various relevant data sources and reads and reviews these sources to understand their content and relevance. Important information is then noted and processed into descriptive data consisting of interrelated written data. Finally, the data analysis results are compiled into a research report. With this method, the author obtained a clear and comprehensive picture of the readiness of teachers in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in schools.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Merdeka Curriculum

The curriculum comes from the Greek, namely Curir which means runner, and curere which means a place to run or race (Joyal et al., 2022). This understanding leads to an understanding of the curriculum as a place for students to achieve the learning objectives that have been prepared (Robinson & Persky, 2020). Another definition states that the curriculum is a system that includes objectives, content, evaluation, and others related to and carried out by the school to achieve the expected results both inside and outside the school (Campbell-Phillips, 2020; Kilpatrick, 2020).

The curriculum changes that occur are the result of curriculum evaluation. The evaluation was carried out because of several considerations. For example, the changing demands of the world of education and changing educational goals (Ison et al., 2022). The effectiveness and feasibility of the program are several points for adjusting the new curriculum (Yulieana & Effendi, 2020).

In implementing the Merdeka Curriculum, schools are allowed to determine their readiness to implement the Merdeka Curriculum. First, schools can use some of the principles of the Merdeka curriculum and continue to use the old curriculum. Second, use the Merdeka Curriculum with learning tools that have been prepared or use the Merdeka Curriculum and schools can develop their own. This is a freedom for teachers so they can compose more freely.

The Merdeka Curriculum gives teachers flexibility (Defrizal et al., 2022). For example, administrative matters such as preparing lesson plans are now starting to be changed to be simpler. Teachers are also given the freedom to determine the form of assessment of students (Prakoso et al., 2021). The conditions of different schools and students cannot be the same regarding the expected final results. The concept of Freedom to learn returns the national education system to the essence of the law to give schools the freedom to interpret the basic competencies of the curriculum for their assessment. The abolished ranking system is also a form of justice for students which shows that school is no longer a place for competition but a place for collaboration. So, freedom to learn belongs to teachers and students, especially teachers who are entrusted with the freedom to carry out learning (Maipita et al., 2020). Assessment in the form of work projects with different characteristics that have been prepared by the teacher is also a differentiator in this curriculum. Teachers are given the freedom to determine work projects that suit learning outcomes and student abilities.

The role of teachers in the Merdeka Curriculum, teachers can participate in the independent learning platform. Teachers can learn and share to improve their abilities. The driving teacher program is one of the supporting programs in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum. This program aims to empower teachers' teaching and leadership abilities in the classroom and the learning process. Teachers who take part in the driving teacher program will become a reference in increasing their potential and competence (Sihombing et al., 2021).

Teacher Readiness to Implement the Merdeka Curriculum

The results of the research found that some teachers had not implemented this Merdeka Curriculum completely and correctly. Teachers do not yet understand what should be done in class with this curriculum. The curriculum, which was previously more rigid to explore in class, has become easier for teachers to implement. They do not understand well what must be done with a Merdeka Curriculum. Understanding the structure of the Merdeka Curriculum is one of the obstacles (Zakiyyah et al., 2021). The Merdeka Curriculum does not recognize a standard structure in the classroom and teachers are not ready to face these changes quickly.

The learning carried out in the Merdeka Curriculum is student-centred learning. One type of learning is differentiated learning. There are 3 approaches related to differentiated learning: 1) Content differentiation is what students will learn, related to the curriculum and learning materials; 2) Process differentiation, namely the way students learn. Usually related to student learning styles; 3) Product differentiation, namely pointing to things that students have learned (Zakiyyah et al., 2021). Implementing learning requires long preparation and implementation steps. This certainly takes a lot of time for the teacher to prepare. In differentiated learning, it is necessary to pay attention to student needs such as learning readiness, student learning profiles (Zamecnik et al., 2022), and student interests and talents (El-Sabagh, 2021; Ergun & Adibatmaz, 2020).

Differentiated learning can be carried out using the same process as Classroom Action Research (CAR). Teachers are asked to be more productive in researching to improve classroom learning. In the process, the teacher will implement CAR principles such as observation and class orientation as preparation and then start planning, implementing, and reflecting (Nurhasanah et al., 2020). Differentiated learning will also go through the learning evaluation step. With the differences in learning carried out by students who achieve the same learning goals, teachers also need an appropriate assessment model (Tulung et al., 2022). Students may receive different assessments, so teachers need to create different assessment criteria according to the rubric created.

Teachers need to adapt to the existing curriculum. The demands of media and learning facilities expect teachers to be creative teachers. Teachers must be able to explore students' potential through learning in the classroom. The learning allocation, which has begun to be increased to 30% for extracurricular activities, hopes that students will be able to move automatically because their interest in learning has increased. So teachers must be able to prepare these two things well. The teacher's role in preparing learning must be to build students' learning motivation (Filgona et al., 2020). Meaningful learning in class will be one step toward helping students because learning in class is not only demonstrated by achievement but also by students' ability to develop their learning outcomes in everyday life (Anwar et al., 2021).

Developing facilities and infrastructure as well as learning media are two things that teachers and schools need to prepare in implementing the Independent Learning Curriculum (Pratikno et al., 2022). The Merdeka Curriculum requires the theories presented in class to be related to students' daily conditions. Teachers must prepare teaching media that is appropriate to the material in class so that it can arouse students' interest in each lesson. The facilities and infrastructure prepared have also undergone many developments. Learning resources have changed a lot from the previous curriculum because teachers are asked to be innovative in preparing lessons. The use of old textbooks may not be following the new curriculum because it is not appropriate.

The assessment process in the Merdeka Curriculum can be divided into two, namely formative assessment and summative assessment. In existing assessments, teachers can use authentic evaluation models. Authentic Evaluation has been carried out in the 2013 Curriculum. But sometimes schools still cannot fully implement it. For example, Sokhanvar et al., (2021), teachers still experience difficulties in implementing authentic assessment. The difficulty experienced is that many parents find it difficult to understand the meaning of student learning outcomes reports in descriptive form. Apart from that, indicators that need to be assessed descriptively make the assessment process take quite a long time. For the students, this is considered quite fair, because through authentic assessment the teacher thinks that the student's learning process can be more appreciated.

Authentic Assessment is a term created to describe alternative assessment methods that enable students to demonstrate their ability to solve problems. Authentic assessment is carried out comprehensively in the aspects of attitudes,

knowledge, and skills. Some of the difficulties of authentic assessment usually lie in attitude assessment, namely attitude scoring, namely: 1) Unclear instruments and guidelines; 2) Procedural problems, namely, if the attitude assessment procedure is not well structured then the scoring results will be affected; and 3) The problem of scorer bias which is sometimes subjective (Ajjawi et al., 2020).

Another factor in teacher readiness in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum is literacy competency. Teacher literacy is related to literacy access facilities for them. Broad literacy is language ability including the ability to listen, speak, speak, and write as well as think in it (Retnaningrum et al., 2023). One of the literacies needed by teachers is digital literacy. Digital literacy is needed in using the Merdeka Curriculum. Many teachers are not technologically literate. Teachers have access to the Merdeka Mengajar application. This application is not yet familiar to many teachers.

Teachers with good digital literacy will also support their students' learning and progress. Many schools face the problem of limited access to literacy for their students. In general, literacy provision must be fully supported by the local education department so that the goal of growing school literacy culture among students can be realized in the form of the School Literacy Movement (Ingthias et al., 2022). This will foster students' willingness to learn new things and develop them in learning activities at school.

Implementation of the Pancasila values that are widely discussed today is also an important value in the Merdeka Curriculum. Pancasila education was adopted in the form of the Pancasila Student Profile Development Project. The aim of implementing the Pancasila Student Profile Development Project itself is to strengthen student competence, namely the Pancasila student profile (Shofa, 2021).

The implementation of the Pancasila Student Profile Development Project uses modules that are re-composed by the teachers. Modules are arranged according to the characteristics of each school. So one school's module may be different from another school.

In the Merdeka curriculum, teachers are asked to be able to arrange their teaching modules. In achieving the specified learning outcomes and the Pancasila Student Profile, this module is used to help with the targets. Teaching modules are a set of learning tools that are prepared based on the curriculum and implemented to achieve the specified Competency Standards (Marsidin, 2022). Teaching modules also play a major role in helping and supporting teachers in designing learning (Michailidi & Stavrou, 2021). In teaching modules 3 components help prepare them, namely: general information component, core component, and attachment component (Houghton, 2023; Katz & Michalowiz, 2020).

School readiness determines the success of implementing the Pancasila Student Profile Development Project. The school readiness stage is divided into 3 phases, namely: The initial phase, the developing phase, and the advanced phase (Widarini & Suterji, 2023). It is known that several schools are still just preparing projects like this, and there is also not enough funding to involve external parties

to support existing projects. This affects several P5 criteria that have not been achieved (Utari & Afendi, 2022).

Each school is also given the freedom to allocate time for implementing the Pancasila Student Profile Development Project. The time distribution is adjusted to existing regulations. The division of time is between intracurricular and P5 learning. Curricular and extracurricular project activities are carried out separately (Buckley & Lee, 2021a). The form of assessment at P5 considers the student's condition, project objectives, pedagogical assessment, and all students (Arranz et al., 2017; Buckley & Lee, 2021b).

In line with the problem of teacher readiness above, several difficulties experienced in implementing the Merdeka curriculum are (Retnaningrum et al., 2023):

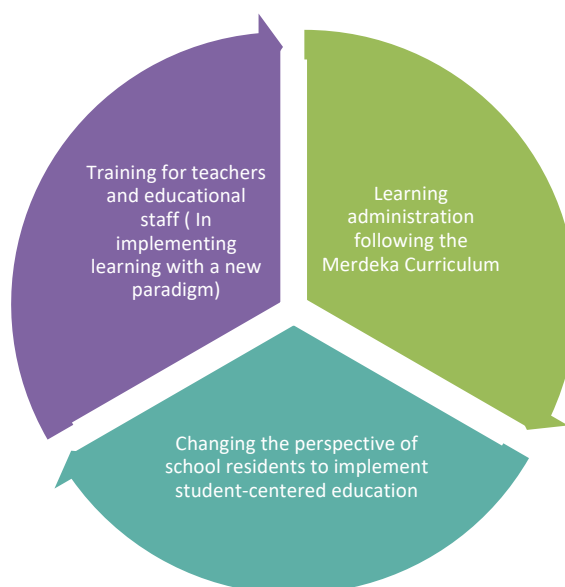


Figure 1. Difficulties in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum

Solutions have also been tried to be launched to help overcome this problem. Socialization of the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum through several online workshops (Ndari & Mahmudah, 2023b). However, what happened was that teachers were reluctant to follow it. And commenting makes you even more confused after participating in the workshop (Al Yakin et al., 2023). This has also been researched by (Pratikno et al., 2022) for the implementation of this curriculum communication is needed from the school principal and teachers. School principals need to prepare teachers and maintain communication with parents so that the Merdeka Curriculum can be implemented.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, the successful implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum predominantly hinges upon the adaptability and comprehension of teachers, who serve as primary agents in executing educational reforms at the grassroots level. While the Merdeka Curriculum aims to empower educators and instill confidence in their instructional practices, its adoption

presents formidable challenges necessitating teacher adaptation. Unfortunately, the study reveals a deficiency in teachers' awareness regarding the nuances of the Merdeka Curriculum, highlighting a crucial need for enhanced teacher readiness. To bolster teacher readiness in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum, concerted efforts are imperative. Both educational institutions and governmental bodies must collaborate to cultivate conducive environments conducive to curriculum execution. This entails providing comprehensive support mechanisms, including tailored training programs, regular supervision, and the provision of essential resources and infrastructure. Notably, specialized training initiatives should encompass areas such as fostering pedagogical creativity, enhancing digital literacy, and refining evaluation techniques, all of which are pivotal for optimizing classroom learning experiences under the Merdeka Curriculum.

Furthermore, ongoing supervision is indispensable to ensure adherence to curriculum guidelines and facilitate continuous professional development among teachers. By implementing these multifaceted strategies, stakeholders can fortify educators' capacity to effectively implement the Merdeka Curriculum, thereby advancing the overarching goals of educational reform and student empowerment.

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