



## Review of Teacher Readiness in Implementing Merdeka Curriculum at Public Elementary Schools

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### Abstrak

Pendidikan memainkan peran vital dalam pembentukan kompetensi generasi muda untuk menghadapi tantangan zaman modern. Untuk itu, Pemerintah meluncurkan Kurikulum Merdeka yang bertujuan meningkatkan kualitas Sumber Daya Manusia Indonesia secara global. Tujuan utama kurikulum ini adalah memperluas fleksibilitas dan kapasitas adaptasi tenaga pengajar. Namun demikian, terdapat berbagai hambatan dalam implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka akibat keterbatasan sumber daya yang dimiliki sekolah dasar negeri. Beberapa hambatan adalah kesiapan guru, fasilitas, dan evaluasi kurikulum. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menilai kesiapan guru mengimplementasikan Kurikulum Merdeka di Sekolah dasar. Pengumpulan data dilakukan menggunakan teknik purposive sampling melalui wawancara dengan guru kelas 1 dan 4 yang memahami prinsip Kurikulum Merdeka dengan baik. Hasilnya menunjukkan proses pembelajaran berjalan terkoordinasi dan para guru telah mempersiapkan desain serta media pembelajaran dengan baik. Fasilitas pendukung seperti bahan ajar, video pembelajaran, serta dukungan sekolah mendukung kelancaran pembelajaran. Namun, ditemukan hambatan sebagai temuan empiris bahwa sebagian guru kesulitan menyesuaikan tingkat keterampilan siswa mengingat luasan materi dan implikasi pandemi. Beberapa solusi untuk meningkatkan implementasi kurikulum antara lain penjelasan materi rinci, berbagi pengalaman, pelatihan berkelanjutan, serta evaluasi rutin.

**Kata Kunci:** Tinjauan, Pendidikan, Kurikulum Merdeka, Purposive Sampling

### Abstract

Education plays an important role in shaping the competence of the younger generation to face future challenges. The government implements the Merdeka Curriculum to improve the quality of Indonesian human resources globally. The aim of the Merdeka Curriculum is to expand the flexibility and adaptive capacity of teachers. There are obstacles in its implementation due to the limited resource capacity of public elementary schools. Some of the obstacles are teacher readiness, facilities, and curriculum evaluation. This research assesses the readiness of teachers to implement the Merdeka Curriculum at elementary school. Data collection was carried out using a purposive sampling technique through interviews with grade 1 and 4 teachers who understood the principles of the Merdeka Curriculum well. The results show that the learning process is coordinated and the teachers have prepared the design and learning media well. Supporting facilities such as teaching materials, learning videos, and school support smooth learning. However, an obstacle was found as an empirical finding that some teachers had difficulty adjusting students' skill levels considering the extent of the material and the implications of the pandemic. Several solutions to improve curriculum implementation include detailed material explanations, experience sharing, ongoing training, and regular evaluations.

**Keywords:** Overview, Education, Merdeka Curriculum, Purposive Sampling

#### History:

Received : July 19, 2023

Revised : July 23, 2023

Accepted : October 06, 2023

Published : October 25, 2023

**Publisher:** Undiksha Press

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Education has a very significant role in shaping the younger generation to have good quality and be ready to face various challenges that continue to develop over time. Education plays a role in shaping the competence and character of the nation's next generation in order to face the challenges of globalization and the industrial revolution 4.0 (Pradana et al., 2021; Taufik, 2020). In the context of educational development in Indonesia, the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum is one of the main educational policies of concern. The curriculum is a series of plans and arrangements regarding the objectives, content, and subject matter as well as learning experiences planned and delivered for students in educational institutions (Astuti, 2022; Oates, 2019). Merdeka Curriculum is here to expand teachers' flexibility and

adaptive capacity through an individual-focused learning approach. The Merdeka Curriculum is implemented by the Government to improve the quality of human resources so that they have global competitiveness (Puchalski et al., 2022; Waruwu et al., 2022). The implementation of Merdeka Curriculum aims to expand teachers' flexibility and adaptability in implementing effective and innovative learning according to curriculum objectives. By providing greater space for teachers to develop teaching methods and learning content according to the characteristics of students, it is hoped that it can maximize the learner-oriented learning process. The adoption of the Merdeka Curriculum also aims to optimize the role of educators in developing students' hard skills and soft skills competencies to keep up with the times and the challenges of the globalization era (Muarifin, 2022; Xue et al., 2022). The concept of Merdeka Curriculum provides space for teachers to adapt teaching methods and learning content according to the characteristics and special needs of each learning individual. This is expected to maximize the learner-oriented educational process.

Teacher preparedness is one of the important pillars in the implementation of Merdeka Curriculum in public primary schools. As the frontline in the learning process, the role of teachers is crucial to ensure this educational innovation is successful. Although Merdeka Curriculum offers a more adaptive and contextual learning approach, teachers' professional contributions in realizing this change should not be overlooked (Astutik et al., 2021; Rita & Neviyarni, 2023). Teachers are expected to have an in-depth understanding of the concepts, principles, and implementation of Merdeka Curriculum in order to be able to thoroughly internalize this new paradigm in strengthening learning practices in the classroom. The demands of this pedagogical transformation require teacher readiness in developing andragogy, instructional, and socio-emotional competencies to support the achievement of optimal student learning outcomes according to the objectives of the Merdeka Curriculum (Dzulhidayat, 2022; Insuasty & Jaime, 2020). Therefore, continuous support for teacher professional development in public primary schools is needed to support the achievement of the objectives of the Merdeka Curriculum.

Teachers play a central role in realising the curriculum and instructional goals. Teachers' main responsibilities include planning, implementing, managing, assessing and evaluating the learning process. Factors influencing teachers' readiness to implement educational innovations include professional capacity (competence and mindset), facility and resource support, and organisational commitment (Andarwulan et al., 2021; Zainal & Matore, 2019). Continuous training, flexible learning approaches, and peer support play an important role in improving teachers' capabilities to adopt curriculum changes. By providing the freedom to adjust learning based on individual learning characteristics, it is hoped that Merdeka Curriculum can be optimally realised by teachers. However, it should be recognised that the challenges in implementing this curriculum, especially in public primary schools that sometimes have limited resource capacity, cannot be ignored. Some potential obstacles include the professional readiness of teachers, the availability of supporting infrastructure, and the lack of ongoing mentoring and evaluation of the curriculum transformation (Simamora et al., 2020; Tohara, 2021). Therefore, risk mitigation strategies and continuous support from various stakeholders are needed to ensure that the implementation of Merdeka Curriculum can run effectively and is oriented towards achieving individual learning outcomes of educators.

Implementation is not always easy for teachers to adjust to curriculum transformation. Some of the obstacles in teachers' readiness to implement the Merdeka Curriculum implementation are less effective (Lavania & Nor, 2020; Waruwu et al., 2022). The Merdeka Curriculum has the principle of a learning process that is oriented towards individual learners and prioritises a student-based approach. However, some teachers do not have a deep understanding of the principles and objectives of the curriculum. This has implications for the

teachers' low ability to plan learning, determine achievement indicators, and evaluate students' learning outcomes according to their individual characteristics (Khasanah et al., 2021; Muarifin, 2022). In addition, the infrastructure and facilities supporting the learning process in primary schools are inadequate to support the implementation of an innovative and technology-based curriculum (Pambayun et al., 2020; Wiradinata & Antonio, 2019). In addition, the implementation of socialisation and mentoring for teachers has not been adequate so that the new curriculum paradigm has not been well internalised. This has implications for the implementation of training to improve teacher competence, which has not been comprehensive and sustainable. Therefore, it can be concluded that these various factors affect the low professional readiness of teachers in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum to realise the goals of the learning process that is oriented towards individual students.

The research focuses on reviewing the readiness of teachers at SDN Kedungjenar Blora in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum. This is important because the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum at SDN faces various challenges related to teacher readiness and also considering that SDN Kedungjenar Blora is one of the model schools in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in Blora Regency (Suhandi & Robi'ah, 2022). The analysis will include teachers' understanding of the Merdeka Curriculum, the level of implementation in learning, and supporting and inhibiting factors. The aim is to formulate recommendations to improve teacher competence for effective curriculum transformation and find findings on the obstacles that occur. (Maqsood et al., 2021).

Previous research conducted by previous study with the research title "Merdeka Belajar Curriculum Innovation and Its Application in Education Units" concluded that the teachers of SD Negeri 1 Sidem still need assistance to strengthen the readiness of teachers in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum (Irawati et al., 2022). These findings indicate the importance of conducting more in-depth research on the teacher competency profile. Teachers play a central role in realising curriculum goals. If the competency gap is not addressed immediately, the learning process has the potential to be less effective. Therefore, it is hoped that the results of this study can identify appropriate and relevant capacity strengthening solutions to improve teachers' professional readiness in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum optimally according to the objectives. From the background description, the researcher conduct a study with aims to assesses the readiness of teachers to implement the Merdeka Curriculum at elementary school.

## **2. METHODS**

This research uses a qualitative study method by adopting a case design for Kedungjenar State Elementary School, Blora Regency. The purpose of this study is to review teachers' preparation in implementing Merdeka Curriculum at Kedungjenar State Primary School (SDN), Blora. This research used a qualitative study method by adopting a case design for Kedungjenar State Primary School, Blora District. Primary data was obtained through structured in-depth interviews with data sources, namely related grade 1 and 4 teachers to reveal detailed information about the profile of teacher readiness in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum. Secondary information is also collected through regulatory documentation, learning observation results, and documents related to the curriculum and professional development of educators. Data analysis uses an interactive model with data reduction techniques, data re-presentation, and conclusion drawing. This method is expected to produce an in-depth understanding of field conditions in order to formulate recommendations for strengthening teacher competencies.

The sample selection method refers to a purposive sampling approach by considering relevant criteria, these criteria include grade 1 and 4 teachers who have a deep understanding of the principles of the Merdeka Curriculum, have implemented the Merdeka Curriculum and teach in different classes. This research process consists of several stages, namely: 1) Conducting interviews with grade 1 and 4 teachers to obtain their views on the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, the level of preparation they have, and identify the challenges they face. 2) Careful collection and documentation of interview results. 3) Determining the next sample based on predetermined criteria and recommendations generated from the previous sample. The instruments used in this study can be reviewed at [Table 1](#).

**Table 1. Interview Research Instruments**

<b>Instruments</b>	<b>Description</b>
Implementation	Teachers explain the initial preparation related to the concepts, objectives, and scope of the Merdeka Curriculum teaching materials. They design syllabi and lesson plans according to indicators of competency achievement. Teachers also prepare various learning resources and conduct learning model trials to get feedback on the model.
Facilities and Infrastructure	The teacher explains the condition of the classroom facilities that support the comfort and smoothness of the learning process. Classrooms are equipped with sufficient furniture such as student chairs, desks, blackboards, LCD projectors. There is also a library that is adequate and easily accessible to students, equipped with a collection of reference books.
Obstacles	The teacher explains the obstacles of material coverage, student readiness and design in learning.
Perception	explain views related to alternative problem solving in overcoming obstacles that arise during the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum.

Through this approach, this research is expected to provide a holistic view of teachers' readiness to implement Merdeka Curriculum. This view is based on the experiences and perceptions of the teachers involved, thus providing a more in-depth perspective on the implementation of this curriculum at SDN Kedungjenar, Blora.

### **3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

#### **Result**

This study used purposive sampling method with the criterion that the respondents were grade one and grade four teachers who understood the concept of the Merdeka curriculum to determine the research subjects. The subjects were six teachers from grades 1 and 4 of SDN Kedungjenar Blora. Information was obtained through in-depth interviews conducted with the research subjects. Based on the results of the interviews, some significant findings were obtained regarding the readiness of the teachers of SDN Kedungjenar Blora in implementing the Merdeka curriculum in their respective classrooms. The interviews provided an overview of the teachers' understanding of the new curriculum.

Based on the results of the review of the implementation of the Merdeka curriculum conducted at SDN Kedungjenar Blora through interviews with teachers regarding implementation. First, the implementation of the Merdeka curriculum learning process runs

coordinated and smoothly. This can be seen from the teacher's ability to manage assets and time resources during learning activities effectively and integrated according to planning. The utilisation of various physical and digital learning media such as books, videos, and others indicate the increasing competence of educators in integrating information technology to achieve curriculum objectives. Good coordination between teachers also helped minimise overlapping materials so that the instructional process could be well directed.

Facilities and infrastructure to support the learning process are adequate. There are teaching materials in the form of textbooks that are in accordance with the syllabus and lesson plans (RPP) according to the Merdeka curriculum for teachers and students. This is useful for helping teachers and students to clearly understand the competencies and indicators of the lesson. The existence of facilities and infrastructure to support the learning process, such as teaching materials in the form of textbooks that are in line with the syllabus and lesson plans (RPP) for the Merdeka Curriculum, has proven to support the implementation of effective learning at Kedungjenar Blora State Elementary School. The existence of adequate and relevant infrastructure and teaching materials allows teachers to focus more on delivering Merdeka Curriculum learning interactively and contextually according to the needs of students.

Several obstacles in implementing the Merdeka curriculum. First, the complexity and breadth of subject matter coverage for grade one and four students is considered quite high, making it difficult for educators to adjust the level of readiness of students because this new curriculum is still in its early stages of management. Secondly, the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic in previous years that disrupted the learning process caused some students to be less prepared to follow this new curriculum optimally. In addition, the ability of educators to design and implement learning needs to be improved considering its conventional orientation. The research findings reveal some important points related to student readiness and teacher competence in implementing the new curriculum. The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic over the past few years has disrupted the learning process, causing some students to be less prepared to adjust to a more flexible and innovative orientated curriculum. Learner readiness is a key factor affecting the success of curriculum implementation.

Information regarding several alternative solutions to avoid obstacles in implementing Merdeka Curriculum. These alternatives were identified based on teachers' perceptions. First, teachers are expected to explain learning materials in detail using various educational stimulants to facilitate students' understanding, especially level one. This approach is considered capable of adjusting the level of student readiness. Second, sharing information and teaching experiences among teachers is believed to improve competence in implementing learning according to the latest curriculum.

## **Discussions**

Active student participation is realised thanks to the design of interesting learning activities using these various learning resources (Ahmaddien et al., 2022; Amon & Rajib Bustami, 2021; Sari et al., 2023). Secondly, the teachers' preparation for implementing the curriculum was thorough. They have developed learning modules that reflect the indicators of students' competence achievement. Various learning media such as videos and visual aids have also been prepared to facilitate the learning process. Overall, the qualitative analysis shows that teachers at SDN Kedungjenar Blora have prepared the implementation of the Merdeka curriculum well. Learning can run purposefully and smoothly in accordance with the previously prepared plans. This indicates that the teachers' readiness to implement the Merdeka curriculum is very good (Arisanti, 2022; Purani & Putra, 2022).

Textbooks that are arranged in line with competencies help teachers present differentiated learning according to student capacity and facilitate Merdeka learning

(Adriyanto et al., 2021; Lestari et al., 2019). In addition, learning support media outside of books such as projectors are also available and utilised to play learning videos. The existence of this media has the potential to improve and facilitate students' understanding of learning materials. Furthermore, the school supports the implementation of the curriculum by facilitating the provision of other facilities and infrastructure needed by teachers during the learning process in the classroom, such as office equipment. This support is useful to facilitate learning interactions between teachers and students as well as the smooth administration of academic activities (Kempa et al., 2023; Safitri & Dafit, 2021). Thanks to the various facilities available, the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum at SDN Kedungjenar Blora can be effective.

On the other hand, teachers' conventional learning orientation also has the potential to hinder the improvement of students' readiness (Azzahra et al., 2023; Jamaludin et al., 2022). Therefore, it is necessary to improve teachers' competence in designing learning more creatively and adaptively. Efforts to restore students' readiness and improve teachers' learning development skills need to be carried out in an integrated and sustainable manner so that the objectives of curriculum change can be achieved optimally. These findings are very important to be followed up through programmes to strengthen the quality of education in schools (Prastowo, 2017; Shaleh Assingkily, 2020).

Practitioners with longer experience in the field of teaching the Merdeka Curriculum are assumed to be able to make a major contribution to optimising the capabilities of new colleagues. Teamwork through discussions, knowledge sharing sessions, even joint training is expected to complement knowledge and practical skills in managing learning (Jannati et al., 2023; Putri & Arifin, 2022). More senior teachers are considered to have greater insight and experience to transmit to others. This internal collaboration model is considered quite effective in improving the competence of education personnel on an ongoing basis. Based on the anticipated benefits, the idea of sharing experiences between education personnel received positive support from the academic community at SDN Kedungjenar Blora. Furthermore, continuous training for educators to adapt to curriculum changes (Kadek Adi Wibawa et al., 2022; Mantra et al., 2022). Additional time is needed to improve skills. Also, periodic evaluation is important to identify obstacles and improvements to enhance the teaching and learning process (Suhandi & Robi'ah, 2022; Sunardi & Muallil, 2023). Finally, this approach to presenting material independently is also expected to make it easier for educators to manage the teaching and learning process in the classroom. Thus, this solution is believed to help smooth the implementation of Merdeka Curriculum.

This finding is significant because it can affect teachers' ability to realise student learning according to their potential. Therefore, this empirical finding has important implications for expanding the space and providing appropriate support to enable teachers to conduct effective learning to overcome these obstacles. Some alternative solutions and recommendations include: SDN Kedungjenar Blora is advised to continue to improve curriculum implementation by maintaining a high level of preparation. This needs to be complemented by continuous monitoring and evaluation to detect new barriers and determine relevant corrective actions. Evaluation results need to be disseminated to other educational institutions through dissemination activities to promote best practices. Continuous improvement of instructor competence is also offered. Overall, the study results indicate that the learning process has been effective although efforts are still needed to improve the quality on an ongoing basis.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

As a result of the review of the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum at Kedungjenar Blora State Primary School, it can be concluded that the implementation of the curriculum has been effective although some obstacles were identified. In general, the instructional process runs smoothly and is coordinated thanks to careful planning by the instructors. Supporting facilities such as learning modules, presentation tools, as well as school management support have supported the smooth running of the educational process. Nevertheless, the obstacles faced are also empirical findings that despite careful preparation, some teachers still experience obstacles in adjusting the skill level of students given the breadth of the scope of teaching materials and the implications of the covid-19 pandemic that have not been fully resolved.

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