

Teacher Readiness in Implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in Kerinci Regency

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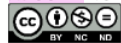
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Abstract: Merdeka Curriculum is a curriculum issued by the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture in 2020 as an effort to strengthen the nation's character and adapt to the times. The implementation of this curriculum requires readiness from various parties, including teachers as direct implementers in schools. This research aims to find out the teacher's mental readiness and knowledge readiness about the independent curriculum. This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach. The data sources in this study are teachers who teach at SD Negeri Sebelah Penggerak in Kerinci Regency. This research data collection technique is using interview and documentation techniques. The data analysis technique of this research is by doing data reduction, data presentation, and verification/conclusion. The results of this study show (1) Mentally to face challenges and changes in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum, teachers have confidence and enthusiasm. (2) The teacher's ability to implement the Merdeka Curriculum, the teacher has a fairly good ability seen in how the teacher compiles teaching modules with minor adjustments based on the sample modules provided by the Ministry of Education and Culture, prepares teaching materials and evaluations by adjusting the characteristics of students. The conclusion of this study shows that teacher readiness in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum is categorised as quite ready.

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Abstrak: Kurikulum Merdeka adalah kurikulum yang dikeluarkan oleh Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan Indonesia pada tahun 2020 sebagai upaya untuk memperkuat karakter bangsa dan menyesuaikan diri dengan perkembangan zaman. Implementasi kurikulum ini membutuhkan kesiapan dari berbagai pihak, termasuk guru sebagai pelaksana langsung di sekolah. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui kesiapan guru secara mental dan kesiapan pengetahuan tentang kurikulum merdeka. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif. Sumber data dalam penelitian ini yaitu para guru yang mengajar di SD Negeri Sekolah Penggerak di Kabupaten Kerinci. Teknik pengumpulan data penelitian ini ialah menggunakan teknik wawancara dan dokumentasi. Teknik analisis data penelitian ini dengan melakukan reduksi data, penyajian data, dan verifikasi/kesimpulan. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan (1) Secara mental untuk menghadapi tantangan dan perubahan dalam implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka guru memiliki rasa percaya diri dan rasa antusias. (2) Kemampuan guru dalam Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka, guru memiliki kemampuan yang cukup baik dilihat bagaimana guru menyusun modul ajar dengan sedikit penyesuaian berdasarkan contoh modul yang diberikan Kemendikbud, menyiapkan bahan ajar, evaluasi dengan menyesuaikan karakteristik peserta didik. Kesimpulan penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa kesiapan guru dalam Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka dikategorikan cukup siap.

A. Introduction

Merdeka Curriculum is a new curriculum issued by the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture in 2020. This curriculum is designed to strengthen the nation's character and adapt to the times. The implementation of this curriculum requires readiness from various parties, including teachers as direct implementers in schools. The Merdeka Curriculum (Marlina, 2022) has several things that are important in the context of education in Indonesia, including, first, developing national character. The Merdeka Curriculum aims to develop a strong and characterised national character, so that students have a quality personality and are ready to face future challenges.

Second, improving the quality of learning. The Merdeka Curriculum offers more innovative and enjoyable learning for students, so it is expected to increase students' interest and motivation to learn. In addition, the Merdeka Curriculum also emphasises the development of student competencies and skills that are relevant to the needs of the world of work.

Third, adjusting to the times. The Merdeka Curriculum is designed to adapt to the times, so that students can follow and take advantage of technology and scientific developments that continue to develop. Fourth, it is part of the independent learning effort. The Merdeka Curriculum is part of the independent learning efforts launched by the Ministry of Education and Culture. Merdeka learning aims to provide wider opportunities for students to learn and develop according to their interests and talents.

Thus, the Merdeka Curriculum has many things that are important in the context of education in Indonesia. It is hoped that with the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, education in Indonesia can be of higher quality and be able to produce a generation with character and ready for the future. The Merdeka Curriculum is a curriculum concept that focuses on developing 21st century skills and empowering learners to be independent, creative, and innovative. This concept is very important for learners because it provides opportunities for them to be more involved in learning, develop their interests and talents, and hone skills that are relevant to the needs of the future world of work. (Puspitarini, 2022).

In an increasingly complex and fast-changing era, skills such as critical thinking, creativity, adaptability, and the ability to communicate effectively are essential. The Merdeka Curriculum provides opportunities for learners to develop these skills through various activities, such as independent projects, group discussions, problem-based learning, and independent exploration (Jusuf & Sobari, 2022).

The Merdeka Curriculum focuses on developing learners' broader skills and character, and provides opportunities for learners to choose what they want to learn, according to their interests, talents and needs. There are several reasons why the urgency of an independent curriculum for learners is becoming increasingly important (Nugraha, 2022). Firstly, with an independent curriculum, learners will have more opportunities to learn according to their interests. This can increase learners' motivation to learn and engagement in the teaching-learning process. Secondly, an independent curriculum can

help improve learners' broader skills and character. Besides academic skills, learners can also develop social, emotional and creativity skills that are essential for success in the world of work and life. Third, an independent curriculum can help improve the overall quality of education. By giving learners the opportunity to choose what they want to learn, an independent curriculum can help reduce the scarcity of educational resources and improve the efficiency of using existing resources.

To achieve the objectives of the Merdeka Curriculum, the implementation of the independent curriculum requires hard work and involvement from all parties, including school principals, educators, school administrators, learners, parents, communities and governments. Adequate support and resources are needed to ensure that learners can choose and obtain useful and relevant learning experiences (Bungawati, 2022; Kurikulum et al., 2022; Ramadani et al., 2021).

Teachers play an important role in the successful implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum at school. Teachers need to prepare themselves carefully so that they can implement the Merdeka Curriculum well and achieve the desired learning objectives. Therefore, research is needed to identify teacher readiness in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum. Teachers have a very important role in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum. As a direct implementer in the classroom, teachers must prepare themselves thoroughly in order to implement the Merdeka Curriculum properly and achieve the desired learning objectives (Alfath et al., 2022; Arviansyah & Shagena, 2022; Ihsan, 2022; Rosidah et al., 2021; Setiyaningsih & Wiryanto, 2022; Sutrisno & Yulia, 2022; Yulianti et al., 2022).

As a teacher, there are many things that must be possessed in preparation for the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum (Fitriyah et al., 2022), including knowing well the contents and concepts of the Merdeka Curriculum. Teachers need to understand well the contents and concepts of the Merdeka Curriculum, so that they can design and implement learning in accordance with the objectives of the curriculum. Teachers also need to understand the changes in the Merdeka Curriculum compared to the previous curriculum. Teachers are also required to be able to design innovative and creative learning. The Merdeka Curriculum requires teachers to be able to design innovative and creative learning, so as to increase students' interest and motivation to learn. Teachers must be able to develop diverse and interesting learning methods, and utilise technology in learning.

In addition, readiness to master technology is also an important factor (Indarta et al., 2022). The Merdeka Curriculum requires teachers to be able to utilise technology in learning. Therefore, teachers must have technological readiness, such as the ability to use technological devices, access digital learning resources, and develop learning materials using technology. Another aspect that also needs attention is having mental readiness. Teachers must have the mental readiness to face challenges in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum, such as increasing workload, facing students with diverse interests and talents, and facing changes that occur in the Merdeka Curriculum. Being able to collaborate with fellow teachers also determines the success of the Merdeka Curriculum Implementation. Implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum requires cooperation and collaboration

between teachers in one school. Teachers need to be able to work together and collaborate in designing lessons that are in accordance with the Merdeka Curriculum.

According to Karwono (Karwono, 2017) that "readiness is the condition of individuals that allows them to learn". Hurlock (Hurlock, 1978) states that readiness is an individual's ability to perform certain actions, such as learning, interacting with others, and facing new situations. Mangkunegara (Mangkunegara, 2000) reveals that readiness is a condition that allows a person to perform certain actions effectively and efficiently. From the understanding expressed by the expert, readiness can be defined as an ability or condition that allows a person to act or face certain situations well. This condition includes the stage of development, the ability to change behaviour, and the ability to act effectively and efficiently.

According to Slameto (Slameto, 2015) indicators of readiness to learn are physical condition, mental condition, emotional condition, needs (motivation) and knowledge. According to Djamarah (Djamarah, 2002) readiness factors include: 1) Physical readiness. For example, the body is not sick (away from lethargy, drowsiness, and so on), 2) Psychic readiness. For example, there is a desire to learn, can concentrate, and there is intrinsic motivation. 3) Material readiness. For example, there are materials that are studied or worked on in the form of reading books, notes, etc. And according to Soemanto (Soemanto, 2003) the factors that form readiness include: 1) Physiological equipment and growth; this concerns the growth of personal equipment such as the body in general, the sensory organs, and intellectual capacity. 2) Motivation, which concerns the needs, interests and goals of individuals to maintain and develop themselves.

This study will discuss teacher readiness in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum from several aspects, including the mental aspect, namely teacher confidence and enthusiasm and teachers' ability to develop and design learning based on the Merdeka Curriculum. The results of this study are expected to provide input for the development of training and learning programmes for teachers in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum, so that teachers can be better prepared and effective in implementing this new curriculum.

B. Method

This research uses a qualitative approach with descriptive methods. According to Fitrah & Luthfiah (Fitrah & Luthfiah, 2017) qualitative research is research that intends to understand the phenomenon of what is experienced by the research subject by means of description in the form of words and language in a natural context. This research was conducted at a state primary school that became a Force 2 Mobilising School in Kerinci Regency. There are eleven public elementary schools that are Force 2 Mover Schools, consisting of 22 learning committee teachers, namely teachers who teach children in grade 1 and grade 4. This learning committee teacher is the primary data source in this study, the learning committee is a class teacher who is required to implement the Merdeka Curriculum at school. In addition, there are 11 school principals who are secondary data sources in this study. The data collection technique used by researchers is to use interview and

documentation techniques. The data analysis used in this study consists of data reduction in the form of transforming rough data obtained from the field into a simpler form, presenting data, and drawing conclusions that produce a picture of an object that was previously unclear so that it is clearer (Creswell, 2014). Data validity testing uses source triangulation techniques (Anggito & Setiawan, 2018), where data obtained through different sources with the same technique.

C. Result and Discussion

Teacher Mentality in Implementing the Merdeka Curriculum

Merdeka Curriculum is a concept developed to give schools the freedom to develop their own curriculum according to the needs and conditions of each school. In the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, teachers play a very important role because they will be the main determinants in the development and implementation of the curriculum in their schools.

There are various studies that have been conducted to examine teacher self-confidence in schools. Here are some research results related to teacher self-confidence: Research by Rowell & Hong (Rowel & Hong, 2013) found that teacher self-confidence is positively associated with teaching quality, as well as student motivation and participation. Research by Aydın and Çelik found that teachers who have high self-confidence tend to have higher motivation and commitment to their work. Research by Emir (Emir, 2013) showed that teachers who experience stress in their work tend to have lower self-confidence.

From the above research results, it can be concluded that teachers' self-confidence plays an important role in the quality of teaching, effectiveness in managing the classroom, and teachers' motivation in carrying out their duties. Therefore, support and professional development aimed at improving teachers' self-confidence can have a positive impact on the quality of education in schools.

Teacher confidence is very important in the implementation of the independent curriculum. From the results of the data analysis conducted, in general, teachers in the Sekolah Penggerak have a high level of self-confidence, this is supported by the fact that teachers in the Sekolah Penggerak have been provided with technical guidance on the independent curriculum before they implement it in their respective schools. Teachers who have good self-confidence tend to be more effective in teaching and motivating students. Teachers who have good self-confidence also tend to be more able to overcome challenges and difficulties in teaching, and more easily adapt to changes that occur in the school environment.

However, there are some challenges faced by some teachers in building their confidence related to the implementation of the independent curriculum. Some of these problems include: Fear of being wrong, teachers are worried about making mistakes in implementing the independent curriculum. This fear of being wrong can discourage them from trying new things and questioning different approaches. And the demands of a busy class schedule is another factor that affects teachers' confidence building efforts. Teachers

who have busy class schedules and many other tasks feel burdened to implement the independent curriculum. They feel they do not have enough time to prepare and implement this curriculum properly.

To overcome these problems, teachers can do several things such as seeking more information about the independent curriculum, attending training and seminars, networking with fellow teachers, and seeking support from the principal or education authorities. In addition, teachers can also try new things gradually and keep trying to improve themselves in implementing the independent curriculum.

Furthermore, teachers' enthusiasm in implementing the independent curriculum. Teachers are very enthusiastic about this new curriculum, they feel that they are given the freedom to organise and design learning according to school characteristics, student characteristics and the surrounding environment. The Merdeka Curriculum provides freedom and autonomy to teachers in designing and implementing the curriculum, which aims to provide a more relevant and meaningful learning experience for students. However, the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum may cause some problems in teacher enthusiasm, such as administrative demands, the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum demands more time and effort from teachers in planning and implementing it, which may reduce their enthusiasm. To overcome this problem, efforts are needed to provide adequate training and support for teachers in understanding and implementing the independent curriculum.

There are several research results that examine teacher enthusiasm in schools. Here are some research results related to teacher enthusiasm: Research by Tahir and Aziz found that teacher enthusiasm is positively related to teaching quality, student participation, and student learning outcomes. Aziri (Aziri, 2011) showed that teacher enthusiasm has a positive impact on job satisfaction and commitment to the school organisation. Research by Klassen, Durksen, and Kim (Klassen et al., 2017) found that teachers' support and participation in professional development activities can increase their enthusiasm in teaching. Research by Blasé, Fixsen, and Phillips (Blase et al., 1989) showed that support and recognition from school leaders have a positive impact on teachers' enthusiasm for teaching.

From the above research, it can be concluded that teacher enthusiasm plays an important role in teaching quality, teacher job satisfaction and commitment to the school organisation. Therefore, support and professional development aimed at improving teachers' enthusiasm can have a positive impact on the quality of education in schools.

When a teacher is enthusiastic about the implementation of a new curriculum, he or she is more likely to be motivated to learn the new curriculum and find creative ways to teach it to students. Teachers' enthusiasm can also rub off on students and motivate them to study harder. Mentally, to face challenges and changes in the implementation of Merdeka Curriculum, teachers have confidence, a good sense of enthusiasm, and are able to overcome various problems that arise in the learning process.

From the results of data analysis in this study, mentally, namely teacher confidence is in good condition, before implementing the independent curriculum in their respective

schools, teachers have been provided with technical guidance accompanied by provincial facilitators and have conducted in-house training in education units. Furthermore, teacher enthusiasm is also in good condition, the independent curriculum gives teachers the freedom to determine learning resources according to school characteristics and student learning needs, so that teachers have the flexibility to provide real experiences for students in learning.

The implementation of an independent curriculum requires teachers who have a strong mentality and are ready to adapt to change. Some of the things that teachers need to pay attention to in implementing an independent curriculum include: Ready to innovate: Teachers need to have a mentality that is ready to innovate and create creative and innovative learning models, so that they can meet the diverse needs of students. Ready to learn: Teachers need to always be ready to learn and develop themselves in order to keep up with the latest developments in the world of education and update existing learning methods. Flexible: Teachers need to have a flexible mentality in dealing with changes and adapting to the needs of students and the surrounding environment. Communicative: Teachers need to have good communication skills in interacting with students, parents and other colleagues in order to obtain useful information in developing learning models that suit students' learning needs (Hamdi et al., 2022; Jannah et al., 2022; Anridzo et al., 2022; Khusni et al., 2022; Marlina, 2022; Pertiwi et al., 2022; Zahir et al., 2022).

Teacher Ability in Implementing the Merdeka Curriculum

The Merdeka Curriculum provides freedom for teachers to design and implement a curriculum that suits the needs and characteristics of students. Therefore, the teacher's ability to compile teaching modules is very important in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum. The following are the abilities needed by teachers in compiling the Merdeka Curriculum teaching modules: Understand learning objectives and outcomes. Teachers must understand the concepts and principles of the Merdeka Curriculum, such as a student-centred learning approach and provide freedom in choosing and developing teaching materials. Knowing the characteristics of students is also very important in developing teaching modules, teachers need to understand the characteristics and needs of students to adjust the curriculum designed and the teaching modules created. Developing creative and innovative teaching modules is a necessity, teachers need to develop creative and innovative teaching modules, so that students can be involved and interested in learning. Furthermore, evaluating teaching modules, teachers must be able to evaluate teaching modules that have been made to determine their success in achieving learning objectives (Yasmansyah & sesmiarni, 2022).

In developing teaching modules, most teachers still modify the teaching modules provided by the Ministry of Education and Culture and adjust them to the needs of students. This happens for several reasons. First, teachers consider that the teaching modules from the Ministry of Education and Culture are good enough and in accordance with the needs of students in their area, so there is no need to create new teaching modules. Secondly,

teachers experience limited time and resources to create teaching modules from scratch, so modifying teaching modules that are already available is a more practical choice.

Although modifying existing teaching modules can make teachers' tasks easier, these modifications are not always in accordance with the needs and characteristics of students in the classroom. Therefore, it is very important for teachers to adjust existing teaching modules to the needs and characteristics of students in the classroom, as well as add or reduce material that is considered less relevant or less suitable for the conditions of students in their area.

In addition, teachers should also develop the ability to create their own teaching modules, because self-made teaching modules can be more in line with the needs of students in the classroom, more interesting, and easier to understand. In developing the ability to create their own teaching modules, teachers can attend training or workshops, read references about the preparation of teaching modules, or collaborate with other teachers to share experiences and knowledge.

The following are some of the steps commonly taken by teachers in modifying the teaching modules provided by the Ministry of Education and Culture (Ardianti & Amalia, 2022; Maulida, 2022). Understand the competency standards and basic competencies: Teachers must understand the competency standards and basic competencies that must be achieved by students in accordance with the applicable curriculum. This is important so that teachers can determine the material that needs to be added or subtracted from the teaching modules provided by Ministry of Education and Culture. Adjusting to students' needs: Teachers should consider students' characteristics, such as learning speed, ability level, interest, and learning style, so that they can adapt the teaching modules to the needs of students in the classroom. If necessary, teachers can add or reduce material that is deemed insufficient or too heavy for students. Evaluate existing teaching modules: Teachers need to evaluate existing teaching modules to determine their strengths and weaknesses. This is important to know which parts need to be modified or improved.

Adding and subtracting materials: After evaluating the teaching module, teachers can add or subtract materials that are considered less relevant or less appropriate to the conditions of students in their area. For example, adding examples or illustrations that are closer to students' lives, or reducing material that is too theoretical. Adjusting language and appearance: Teachers also need to adjust the language and appearance of the teaching module to make it easy to understand and attractive to students. For example, using language that is easily understood by students, adding pictures or illustrations to explain concepts, or using an attractive format.

Conducting trials: After modifying the teaching module, teachers need to test the teaching module with students in the classroom. This is useful to determine the extent to which the modified teaching modules are in accordance with the needs of students and can help them in learning. By modifying the teaching modules provided by the Ministry of Education and Culture with the steps above, teachers feel that they can create teaching

modules that are more in line with the needs of students in the classroom and can improve the quality of learning.

Problems faced by teachers in preparing teaching modules depend on different conditions and contexts. Some problems that are often faced by teachers in developing teaching modules include: Time constraints; teachers often experience time constraints due to other tasks that must be done, such as teaching, giving assignments, correcting assignments, and others. This can hinder the process of preparing teaching modules. Limited resources; teachers can also experience limited resources, be it human resources, materials, or technology needed to develop quality teaching modules. Difficulty in adjusting the module to the needs of students; adjusting the module to the needs and abilities of students can be a challenge for teachers, especially if the number of students in the class is quite large and has different needs and abilities. Difficulties in selecting and developing materials; teachers must select and develop relevant and up-to-date materials so that the modules prepared can meet competency standards and the demands of the times.

To overcome these problems, teachers can take several actions, such as planning time well, utilising available resources, developing collaboration with other teachers, attending training or workshops on the preparation of teaching modules, using teaching materials that are already available online. In addition, teachers also need to pay attention to student involvement in the process of developing teaching modules to ensure that the modules developed are truly in accordance with the needs and abilities of students.

D. Conclusion

This research shows that in the implementation of the independent curriculum in Kerinci Regency, the teachers of the second batch of Sekolah Penggerak learning committees have confidence and enthusiasm, teachers feel ready to implement the independent curriculum. From various trainings, workshops, in-house training and assistance by facilitators, it fosters confidence and enthusiasm to achieve successful implementation of the independent curriculum. Teacher readiness in implementing the curriculum can affect the success of the learning process and the achievement of the desired educational goals. Adequate support and training for teachers can improve their readiness to implement the independent curriculum well. Regarding the preparation of teaching modules, in general, teachers still adjust based on the sample modules provided by the Ministry of Education and Culture, prepare teaching and evaluation materials by adjusting the characteristics of students, teachers have not compiled teaching modules from scratch which are actually compiled by the teachers themselves according to the needs of students. Some of the factors that cause this to still occur are the limited time teachers have, limited resources such as materials, or technology needed to develop quality teaching modules, difficulties in adjusting modules to the needs of students, especially if the number of students in the class is quite large and has different needs and abilities and finally difficulties in selecting and developing material.

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