



Analysis of Readiness for Merdeka Curriculum Implementation: Case Study at SD/MI Lombok Tengah

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Analisis Kesiapan Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka: Studi Kasus di SD/MI di Kabupaten Lombok Tengah

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ABSTRACT

Merdeka Curriculum has been implemented nationally starting in the academic year 2021/2022 in the schools that participated in the program. Gradually, in the following years, each educational unit can choose to implement Merdeka Curriculum based on their respective readiness. The government has prepared standard levels of readiness to implement Merdeka Curriculum, which consists of four levels. The first level is called the initial stage, the second level is the developing stage, the third level is called the ready stage, and the fourth level is the advanced stage. This research aims to determine the level of readiness of SD/MI in implementing the Merdeka curriculum. The research uses a qualitative research method with a case study approach. Data collection uses observation, questionnaires, and interviews. The research subjects were 18 SD/MI in Lombok Tengah regency. The sources of information were school principals and teachers. The research results show that most of SD/MI are still at the second level of readiness, namely at the developing level. Few schools are only at the ready and advanced stage levels. Based on the research results, it is recommended that policymakers are able to evaluate so that the level of school readiness in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum can increase.

Keywords: *school readiness, Merdeka Curriculum, elementary school*

Kurikulum Merdeka telah diimplementasikan secara nasional mulai tahun ajaran 2021/2022 oleh sekolah-sekolah yang mengikuti program sekolah penggerak. Secara bertahap di tahun-tahun berikutnya setiap satuan pendidikan dapat memilih untuk mengimplementasikan kurikulum merdeka sesuai dengan kesiapannya masing-masing. Pemerintah telah menyiapkan standar level kesiapan implementasi kurikulum merdeka yang terdiri dari 4 level. Level pertama disebut dengan tahap awal, level kedua yang disebut dengan tahap berkembang, level ketiga yang disebut dengan tahap siap, dan level keempat disebut dengan tahap mahir. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui level kesiapan SD/MI dalam mengimplementasikan kurikulum merdeka. Penelitian menggunakan metode penelitian kualitatif dengan pendekatan studi kasus. Pengumpulan data menggunakan observasi, angket dan wawancara. Subjek penelitian adalah 18 SD/MI di kabupaten Lombok Tengah. Sumber informasi merupakan kepala sekolah dan guru. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa sebagian besar SD/MI masih berada pada level kesiapan tingkat kedua yaitu pada level berkembang. Hanya sedikit sekolah berada di level siap dan mahir. Berdasarkan hasil penelitian, direkomendasikan kepada pemangku kebijakan untuk melakukan evaluasi agar level kesiapan sekolah dalam implementasi kurikulum merdeka dapat meningkat.

Kata Kunci: *kesiapan sekolah, Kurikulum Merdeka, sekolah dasar*

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INTRODUCTION

Curriculum as a foundation in educational development has a very complex and multidimensional role. One of the important roles of the curriculum in education is as a starting point in providing useful learning experiences for students. According to (Munandar, 2018) the curriculum can be thought of as the heart of education, if the heart is weak then the entire education process will experience obstacles. The curriculum is closely related to the learning process (Rahmadayanti & Hartoyo, 2022). Improper implementation of the curriculum can have fatal consequences for students' achievement of competence in the future. Tyler, (2013) said that the curriculum must contain at least four components, namely objectives, content, methods and evaluation. These four components are the main basis for designing learning based on student needs. Based on these conditions, the Ministry of Education is working hard to reconstruct the curriculum which focuses on the needs of students, which is called the Merdeka curriculum. The aim of the curriculum reconstruction is none other than improving the quality of learning so that students can have competencies that are relevant to future needs (Sumarsih et al., 2022).

Curriculum transformation from the 2013 curriculum to the Merdeka curriculum is a necessity. The increasingly complex challenges cannot be faced with the old education paradigm. (Fitriyah & Wardani, 2022). All educational actors must continue to move to adapt to changes because the current situation is very different, which can affect the way students learn. Technological developments have changed the way of learning, the way of looking and thinking of students to a more advanced level so that teachers are not the only source of learning for students. The curriculum, as the heart of education, must meet students' needs and learning methods according to what is required. A good curriculum is a curriculum that is appropriate to the times. Students live in times and circumstances that are different from their teachers. Therefore, the curriculum and learning must be designed based on student needs, starting from what competencies students will have to future projections and how to achieve these competencies. Students must be the reference for preparing the curriculum itself. The heart of curriculum development is student independence in learning (Jannah & Rasyid, 2023). The curriculum acts as a guide in learning and functions to guide teachers in the student learning process. It is time for the Merdeka curriculum to be immediately implemented in all education units. This is because changes continue to occur, so implementing the Merdeka curriculum becomes urgent. Education units must adapt the curriculum according to the context and characteristics of students (Indarta et al., 2022). As educators, we must continuously adapt to the changes and progress of the ever-changing times. Our students grow and develop over time, and as educators, we must understand the changes that occur in the social, technological and cultural environment. This is important so that our curriculum remains relevant and valuable for students.

Implementing curriculum changes is not easy. Challenges and obstacles always go hand in hand every time a curriculum change occurs (Suhandi & Robi'ah, 2022). School readiness is essential to pay attention to before implementing the curriculum widely, especially in schools far from the city center with limited infrastructure (Priantini et al., 2022). In the national context, the Merdeka curriculum has been launched since 2021/2022, spearheaded by the driving school program (Rahayu et al., 2022). Gradually, in the following years, each educational unit can implement a Merdeka curriculum according to their readiness. The government has prepared standard readiness levels to implement the Merdeka curriculum, which consists of 4 levels. The first level is called the initial stage, the second is called the developing stage, the third is the ready stage, and the fourth is called the advanced stage (Kemendikbud, 2022). This level of school readiness is an essential part of evaluating the implementation of the Merdeka curriculum. Based on the preliminary study results, SD/MI in Lombok Tengah district has implemented an Merdeka curriculum. However, the level of school readiness in implementing the Merdeka curriculum is not yet known with certainty. If this is not



resolved immediately, preparing a follow-up plan for implementing the Merdeka curriculum in the Lombok Tengah district cannot be done correctly. Based on these problems, research needs to be carried out to determine the level of readiness of SD/MI in implementing the Merdeka curriculum. It is hoped that the results of this research can be used as evaluation material to improve school readiness in implementing the Merdeka curriculum. So, the objectives of this research to determine the level of readiness of SD/MI in implementing the Merdeka curriculum.

THEORETICAL SUPPORT

Principles of Merdeka Curriculum Design

The principles of designing an Merdeka curriculum are based on the vision of Indonesian education, theory and research results related to curriculum design, and various good practices obtained through literature studies and focused discussions with curriculum experts. Curriculum design principles are grouped into four groups according to the scope where these principles need to be applied: (1) related to curriculum design or achievement standards in each discipline, three principles need to be considered, namely: focus, consistency, and coherence ; (2) in designing a curriculum that applies to all scientific disciplines, the principles that need to be fulfilled are the ability to transfer competencies, interdisciplinarity, and choice; (3) in designing curriculum policies at a more macro level, the principles adhered to are authenticity, flexibility and harmony; and (4) related to the curriculum design work process, the principles that need to be adhered to are engagement, student empowerment or independence, teacher empowerment or independence. (Gordon et al., 2019).

The curriculum formed by the Merdeka Belajar Policy will be characterized by being flexible, competency-based, focused on developing character and soft skills and accommodating to world needs (Kemendikbud Ristek, 2021). Merdeka Belajar's philosophy, initiated by the Father of Education, Ki Hajar Dewantara, is also an essential basis for formulating curriculum design principles. According to Dewantara, independence is the goal of education as well as the principle underlying the strategy to achieve this goal. Independence as a learning goal, according to Dewantara, is achieved through the development of morals; as he wrote, "Ethics, disposition or character, is the unification of thought, feeling and will or will, which then gives rise to energy...". With this 'moral character', every human being stands as an independent human being (individual) who can rule or control himself. This is a civilized human being, and that is the aim and purpose of education in general. The principles that guide the curriculum design process are as follows: simple, focused on the character and competence of students, flexible, harmonious, working together and paying attention to study results and feedback.

Merdeka Curriculum Structure and Framework

Curriculum structure is the organization of competencies, learning content and learning load. The main characteristics emphasized in the design of this curriculum structure are as follows: (1) there is a change in subject status, (2) the educational unit has the authority to develop the operational curriculum, (3) learning is divided into two, namely intracurricular and co-curricular in the form of a project to strengthen student profiles Pancasila, and (4) there are choices that students can make. The curriculum framework is the main basic design in developing the curriculum structure. In Article 38, it is also stated that the primary curriculum framework and curriculum structure are the basis for developing educational unit curricula. Thus, there is a separation between (1) the curriculum framework and (2) the curriculum developed in the education unit. This second curriculum is also commonly referred to as the operational curriculum (Edwards, 2011) because the curriculum developed by the educational unit is a curriculum that is genuinely "operated" or used concretely. To achieve changes in the learning process at the student level and achieve the national education goals,



the basic framework and curriculum structure designed at the national level needs to be further developed at the educational unit level. (Boesen et al., 2014); (Choppin et al., 2022).

Stages of Implementing the Merdeka Curriculum

Implementation of the Merdeka curriculum needs to be carried out through thorough preparation by increasing teacher/educator competency and providing a learning infrastructure that supports the learning process. An understanding of the curriculum is the primary capital for implementing the Merdeka curriculum in educational units so that the implementation of the curriculum can be carried out in accordance with the established design. (Ni Shuilleabhain & Seery, 2018). For this reason, educators and educational units need to know the stages of readiness they have in order to implement the Merdeka curriculum in schools. Knowledge about the stages of curriculum implementation can be a reflection for educators and educational units so that the Merdeka curriculum can be implemented perfectly and comprehensively over time.

The curriculum implementation stages are not a regulation or standard set by the Government but are designed to assist educators and educational units in setting targets for implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in accordance with the readiness of educators and educational units. This stage was developed as a learning step or process to make changes to learning practices and assessments that educators need to carry out when using the Merdeka Curriculum. This stage can be used by teachers, educational units, the Government, development partners, as well as organizations or institutions that play a role in supporting the implementation of other curricula. The existence of this phasing shows that teachers and educational units can start implementing it at a lower stage compared to others. However, the implementation still adheres to the principles of curriculum design, which are based on the Freedom of Learning philosophy and aim at strengthening the competencies and character that have been determined. This stage is used as material for self-reflection regarding the readiness of educators and education units to implement the Merdeka Curriculum. The stages of curriculum implementation set by the Government include the initial stage, developing stage, ready stage and advanced stage.

METHOD

The type of research used is qualitative research. According to (Creswell, 2012) qualitative research is a research procedure that produces descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words from the subjects being observed. This is in accordance with the aim of this research, namely to analyze and describe the readiness of SD/MI in implementing the Merdeka curriculum. The qualitative research approach is also expected to present research results clearly and easily understood. Location of data collection at SD/MI in Lombok Tengah Regency. The subjects in this research were school principals and teachers in 18 SD/MI in Lombok Tengah Regency, with samples taken in Kuta Village and Darek Village. The selection of research subjects used a purposive sampling technique. This sampling technique was used because it considered that the research subjects came from schools that were implementing the Merdeka curriculum through the Partnership between Inovasi NTB, Mataram University and Lombok Tengah Regency.

The researcher is the main instrument in this research. This is because researchers independently and directly relate to school principals and teachers and understand the relationship between data obtained in the field, namely from the results of interviews and observations. Researchers act as the main instrument to collect data through interviews and observations. After the data is collected, the researcher analyzes the data, interprets the data and writes up the research results. A questionnaire is a data collection technique by asking written questions to be answered in writing by the respondent. In this research, a questionnaire was used to determine the level of school readiness in

implementing the Merdeka curriculum. The questionnaire was prepared based on 4 levels of readiness to implement the Merdeka curriculum. To deepen the research results, interviews and observations were used. The aim is to find out in-depth and detail the level of school readiness, the efforts made, challenges and obstacles in implementing the Merdeka curriculum. Researchers took several steps to collect data, namely by giving questionnaires to school principals and teachers and continuing with interviews and observations. After the data collection process has been completed, the next stage is data analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

The level of school readiness in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum is measured through two main aspects, namely the school readiness stage in the aspects of planning and implementing learning. The following aspects can be measured to determine the level of school readiness in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum.

Table 1. Indicators of School Readiness Levels in Implementing The Merdeka Curriculum

Main Aspects	Indicators
Planning Aspect	Designing operational curriculum for educational units
	Designing the flow of learning objectives
	Learning and assessment planning that suits students' needs
	Planning for the development of teaching tools that suit the needs of students
Implementing of Learning Aspect	Planning a "Projek Penguatan Profil Pelajar Pancasila"
	Implementation of the "Projek Penguatan Profil Pelajar Pancasila (P5)"
	Implementation of student-centred learning
	Use of initial assessment in learning
	Application of learning according to students' learning stages
	Teacher collaboration in curriculum implementation
	Collaboration with parents/family in learning
	Collaboration with society/community/industry
	Reflection, evaluation and improvement of the quality of curriculum implementation
	Assessment in learning
Collaborate with parents/families and the community in developing curriculum and extracurricular activities	

Based on the two main aspects measured in Table 1, the level of school readiness can be determined as presented in Figure 1.

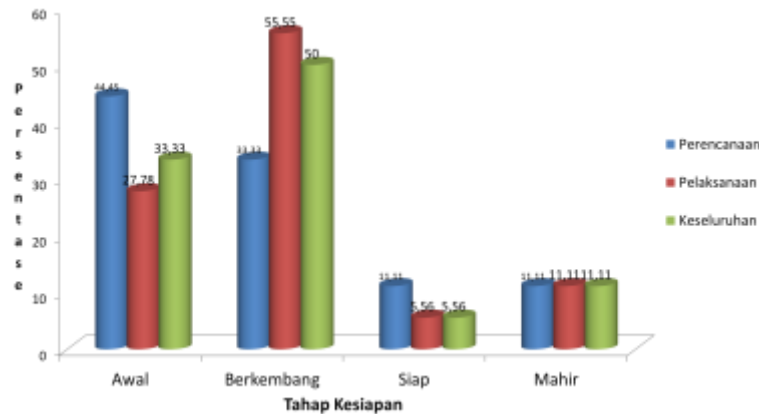


Figure 1. School Readiness Level

The diagram in Figure 1 shows that the level of readiness in the planning aspect is 44.45% at the initial level, 33.33% at the developing level, 11.11% at the ready level, and 11.11% at the advanced level. Furthermore, the level of readiness in the implementation aspect was 27.78% at the initial level, 55.55% at the developing level, 5.56% at the advanced level, and 11.11% at the ready level. Overall, the level of school readiness in implementing the independent curriculum is 33.33% at the initial level, 50% at the developing level, 5.56% at the advanced level, and 11.11% at the ready level.

Discussion

The objective of this research to determine the level of readiness of SD/MI in implementing the Merdeka curriculum. Based on the data tabulation diagram presented in Figure 1, it can be seen that most schools are still in the initial stages of the planning aspect, and only a few schools are at the ready and advanced level. This data shows that teachers have not been able to adapt planning to the curriculum provided by the government, so in practice, teachers use both modules and textbooks provided by the government. In the implementation aspect, school learning is at a better level when compared to the planning aspect. The implementation aspect of school learning is already at a developing level, which means that teachers have begun to dare to innovate and improvise learning according to students' needs and abilities. In the implementation aspect, the level of school readiness is better because learning is applied, while in the planning aspect, it is administrative. On average, teachers experience difficulties when it comes to administration, so teachers tend to teach without a plan outlined in the teaching module. Therefore, the role of the school principal is very much needed to encourage teachers to improve their administrative performance and learning planning (Barnett et al., 2000); (Kadji-Beltran et al., 2013). If we add up the aspects of readiness with the application of learning, the level of school readiness is at a developing level. In contrast, the number of schools that are already at the ready and advanced level is still small in number.

The low level of school readiness in implementing the Merdeka curriculum after being explored through interviews was caused by a lack of socialization of the curriculum that the government would launch. Information about curriculum changes can only be heard faintly from a distance. The role of teachers in implementing the curriculum in elementary schools is as the spearhead of the actual implementation of the curriculum. However, unfortunately, training and mentoring for teachers is still lacking. The use of the Merdeka Mengajar platform provided by the government as an educational tool is not practical. Several factors cause the ineffective use of the



educational platform, including teachers having difficulty accessing the platform, not knowing how to use it, and there are even teachers who do not yet have an ID belajar as a condition for accessing the platform altogether. This, of course, hampers schools' readiness to implement the curriculum, so schools need to receive special attention as curriculum implementers at the lowest level (Gordon et al., 2019).

Conceptually, the curriculum development that has occurred has been excellent. However, the Merdeka Belajar philosophy, which encourages independent learning, must be evaluated, considering that not all schools have the same ability to adapt the curriculum, especially suburban schools. The mission of changing the curriculum towards a curriculum that is simple and easy to implement has actually turned out to be a challenging curriculum. The government should provide opportunities for schools to receive education about curriculum changes not only from digital platforms but also provide offline training so that the implementation of the Merdeka curriculum can be realized more quickly.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results of the research and discussion, it can be concluded that the majority of SD/MI is still at the second level of readiness, namely at the developing stage; only a few schools are at the ready and advanced stage. The low level of school readiness in implementing the Merdeka curriculum is due to the lack of direct training and assistance in implementing the Merdeka curriculum.

Based on the results of this research, it is recommended that policymakers evaluate so that the level of school readiness in implementing the Merdeka curriculum can increase. Policymakers are advised to provide direct training and not just rely on the Merdeka Mengajar platform because many teachers still experience problems accessing the digital platform.

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