

Analysis of Teacher Readiness in Implementing Merdeka Curriculum in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah: A Review of the Literature and Its Implications

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Abstract: This study aims to analyze the readiness of Madrasah Ibtidaiyah teachers in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum through a library research approach with an integrative literature review study type. Data were obtained from national and international scientific articles published between 2015 and 2024 and accessed through Google Scholar, Scispace, DOAJ, and Scopus databases. The analysis shows that MI teachers' readiness includes three main aspects: understanding of the curriculum, pedagogical ability, and skills in designing and implementing differentiated learning. Supporting factors include continuous training, availability of facilities, and support from parents and madrasah stakeholders. However, obstacles such as limited infrastructure, lack of contextualized training, and weak madrasah management pose serious challenges. This study recommends the need for more responsive policies and strengthening teacher professionalism based on real needs in the field. The study also highlights the importance of further research related to evaluating implementation and developing effective training models. The implications of the results of this study are expected to be the basis for making MI teacher education and development policies that are more adaptive to the dynamics of the Merdeka Curriculum.

Keywords: Teacher Readiness, Curriculum Implementation, Teacher Professional Development, Curriculum Innovation, Education Reform.

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A. INTRODUCTION

The Merdeka Curriculum is an education policy initiated by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia to provide flexibility in the learning process. This policy aims to improve the quality of education through an approach that is more adaptive to the needs of students and the times. The implementation of Merdeka Curriculum requires readiness from various parties, especially teachers, who are the spearhead in the learning process. Teacher readiness includes aspects of knowledge, skills, and attitudes in dealing with these curriculum changes. According to Wally et al. (2024), teacher readiness in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum at SD Negeri 286 Central Maluku still requires improvement, although most teachers show a fairly good understanding of the structure and concepts of the curriculum. In addition, research by Yantoro et al. (2023) also shows that teachers at SDN 187 Teratai are not fully prepared to implement the Merdeka Curriculum, especially regarding understanding the curriculum structure and preparing teaching modules.

Research by Sekarinasih (2023) shows that the readiness of Madrasah Ibtidaiyah in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum still needs to be improved, especially in the aspect of preparing learning tools and understanding the concept of Pancasila Profil Pelajar. A similar issue was found in a study by Mulabbiyah et al. (2024), which identified challenges faced by MI teachers in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum, such as limited understanding in developing learning tools and lack of infrastructure support. In addition, the study by Mahfuzah et al. (2024) highlighted the importance of MI teachers' readiness in facing the digital era, which requires adaptation to technology in the learning process. Teachers' readiness in this digital aspect is crucial given the rapid development of information technology and the need to utilize technology in learning.

Research by Widiensyah et al. (2023) shows that teachers' readiness to face the challenges of implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in senior high schools is influenced by internal factors such as competence and motivation, as well as external factors such as system support and resource availability. The main challenges include adaptation to new learning approaches and changes in the assessment system. Effective readiness improvement strategies include continuous professional development, mentoring and collaboration among teachers. These findings are relevant to be applied in the context of Madrasah Ibtidaiyah, given the similar challenges faced in implementing Merdeka Curriculum. Research by Rofi'ah et al. (2023) highlighted the importance of teacher readiness in dealing with curriculum changes, which includes aspects of knowledge, skills and attitudes. Prepared teachers will be more effective in implementing the curriculum and achieving the expected educational goals. This shows that teacher readiness is a key factor in the successful implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum at the Madrasah Ibtidaiyah level.

Based on the results of the study, it can be concluded that despite efforts to improve teacher readiness in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum, there are still gaps that need to be addressed. The identified gaps include a lack of in-depth understanding of curriculum structures and concepts, limitations in developing learning tools, and challenges in adapting to technology. The novelty of this research lies in its focus on the readiness of Madrasah Ibtidaiyah teachers in the context of implementing the Merdeka Curriculum, which is still limited in the existing literature. The purpose of this study is to analyze the readiness of Madrasah Ibtidaiyah teachers in facing the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, with the hope of providing constructive recommendations to improve the quality of education at the Madrasah Ibtidaiyah level.

B. METHOD

This research uses a Library Research approach with an Integrative Literature Review type of study, which aims to systematically synthesize the results of previous research to answer the formulation of predetermined problems. This approach allows researchers to conduct an in-depth exploration of scientific literature related to the readiness of Madrasah Ibtidaiyah teachers in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum. This method is relevant for identifying patterns of findings, research gaps, and opportunities for theoretical and practical scientific contributions (Whittemore & Knafl, 2005).

The data sources in this study were obtained from several leading academic databases, namely Google Scholar, Scispace, Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ), and Scopus. The articles reviewed were scientific publications relevant to the research topic and met the inclusion criteria, namely: (1) articles resulting from empirical research or literature reviews published between 2015 and 2024, (2) explicitly discussing teacher readiness, implementation of Merdeka Curriculum, and/or development of Madrasah Ibtidaiyah teachers, and (3) available in Indonesian or English and can be accessed in full-text. Meanwhile, the exclusion criteria include: (1) articles that are opinion or non-scientific, (2) do not include clear research methods, and (3) do not have a primary focus on the context of teachers or madrasah.

The literature search process was conducted with keywords such as: “readiness of Madrasah Ibtidaiyah teachers,” “implementation of Merdeka Curriculum,” “teacher readiness and curriculum implementation,” and “MI teacher professional development”. The search was conducted in stages on each database. Each article found was identified based on the relevance of the title and abstract, then further selection was made based on full-text. Articles that passed the initial selection were included in the candidate list and then further screened using the inclusion and exclusion criteria described above. This procedure follows the PRISMA flow diagram principle for systematizing the stages of literature selection (Page et al., 2021).

Data from the selected articles were analyzed thematically using a content analysis approach. The researcher grouped the research results into main themes related to the research variables, such as: (1) aspects of teacher readiness, (2) supporting and inhibiting factors of curriculum implementation, and (3) strategies to strengthen teacher professionalism. Validity and reliability in this study were maintained through a process of triangulating sources and double-checking the synthesized results by comparing findings from different regions and educational contexts. In addition, peer debriefing was conducted to avoid subjective bias in data interpretation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Dimensions of Readiness of Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Teachers in Implementing the Merdeka Curriculum

The readiness of Madrasah Ibtidaiyah teachers in implementing Merdeka Curriculum is a crucial element for the successful implementation of this curriculum. Research shows that teacher readiness is not only related to knowledge of the curriculum itself but also to an understanding of appropriate teaching methodologies (Putra & Widiari, 2023) (Rahmadayanti & Hartoyo, 2022). For example, research in various primary schools shows the need for intensive and continuous training for teachers to adapt to the more flexible and student-centered teaching approach that characterizes the Merdeka Curriculum (Husain et al., 2023; Septiana & Hanafi, 2022).

The implementation of Merdeka Curriculum requires teachers to function as learning facilitators, who not only provide knowledge, but also encourage students to be active in the learning process (Irmawan et al., 2023; Muhafid & Retnawati, 2023). Teachers must understand how to carry out formative and summative assessments in accordance with this curriculum, where assessment is not only about the final results but also the continuous learning process

of students (Putra & Widiari, 2023). This is also in line with the concept of the Pancasila learner profile, where education is not only aimed at academic achievement, but also the development of students' character and social skills (Syahnur et al., 2024).

Challenges in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum remain, especially related to adequate educational tools and support from the surrounding environment, including school principals and parents (Fifani et al., 2023; Mayangsari et al., 2024). Research shows that many teachers feel underprepared and face difficulties in designing lessons that meet the principles of the Merdeka Curriculum (Fifani et al., 2023; Mayangsari et al., 2024). Therefore, it is important for relevant parties, including educational institutions and the government, to provide comprehensive facilities, infrastructure and training to support teachers in adapting to this new curriculum (Irmawan et al., 2023; Rahayu et al., 2022).

Overall, Madrasah Ibtidaiyah teachers' readiness to implement the Merdeka Curriculum requires special attention. Efforts to improve this readiness should include intensive training, development of appropriate curriculum and learning tools, and systematic support from various related parties in the educational environment (Afriani et al., 2023; Baity et al., 2023). With the right approach, it is expected that the implementation of Merdeka Curriculum can take place optimally and provide significant benefits for students (Fifani et al., 2023; Rachmawati et al., 2022).

2. Supporting and Hindering Factors for Teacher Readiness in the Context of Madrasah Ibtidaiyah

Teachers' readiness to implement the curriculum in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah is influenced by various supporting and inhibiting factors. The basic supporting factors are support from madrasah leaders and a positive school environment, as well as adequate facilities. For example, good supervision from the madrasah head can improve teacher performance, because it provides motivation and clear direction in the learning process Samal et al. (2021) (Pratama et al., 2023). In addition, planned and continuous training for teachers is also an important factor, as this provides an opportunity for them to develop pedagogical competencies and understand the new curriculum better (Aisyah et al., 2023).

However, there are also significant inhibiting factors in teacher readiness. One of the main obstacles is the lack of adequate facilities and infrastructure in madrasahs, which can hinder the effective learning process (Akhmadi, 2023). In addition, teachers' lack of pedagogical skills and competence in using technology can be a major obstacle in implementing the innovative learning approaches expected from Merdeka Curriculum (Saputra et al., 2024). Limited human resources, including teachers who are not focused on one subject, can also result in a lack of attention and optimization in teaching, reducing the efficiency of learning in madrasahs (Apriatni et al., 2023).

Another factor that can also affect teacher readiness is the support and involvement of parents and the surrounding community. Research shows that collaboration between teachers, parents and other stakeholders can create a conducive environment for improving education quality (Aisyah et al., 2023; (Atikoh, 2023). In some cases, a lack of communication and information between madrasahs and parents/communities can result in a lack of support for

learning activities in madrasahs, limiting teachers' readiness to implement the curriculum effectively (Akhmadi, 2023). Thus, to improve Madrasah Ibtidaiyah teachers' readiness to implement Merdeka Curriculum, it is important to pay attention to and address these supporting and inhibiting factors. This includes improving facilities, continuous training for teachers, and building good communication and collaboration with parents and communities. The result of effective management is expected to improve the overall quality of education (Atikoh, 2023).

3. Implications of the Review Results for Strengthening Teacher Professionalism and Education Policy

The implications of the review results for strengthening teacher professionalism and education policy in the context of the Merdeka curriculum are very important to understand, especially in improving the quality of education in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah. Teacher professionalism is the key to success in implementing a curriculum that emphasizes more independent learning and is able to build student character and competence. The results of the review indicate that the development of teacher professionalism must be accompanied by continuous training that is relevant to the needs in the field. One study confirmed that teacher readiness in implementing the Merdeka curriculum showed mixed results, where most teachers felt quite ready, but still needed further support in terms of knowledge and skills Sabilah et al. (2023). This indicates the need for more focused efforts in organizing training programs that are appropriate to the local context and student characteristics as part of a broader education policy.

Research also shows that a supportive school environment, including support from the madrasah principal and cooperation with parents, greatly influences teachers' readiness to implement the curriculum (Daga, 2021). Education policies that support this collaboration include providing adequate learning platforms and opportunities for teachers to share good practices, which will further enhance their professionalism in implementing effective and creative educational methods (Uluwiyah et al., 2024).

Challenges remain, where many teachers still face problems related to pedagogical competence and mastery of subject matter. Research shows that there are still teachers who feel they do not understand the Merdeka curriculum and its implementation in the context of more interactive and student-centered learning (Faridah et al., 2024). Thus, education policies need to include skill-building programs designed to address these limitations, including strengthening aspects of character-based learning and technology (Heryahya et al., 2022).

As an implication for education policy, it is crucial to create feedback mechanisms that can help government and education managers understand the needs of teachers in the field. This includes regular monitoring and evaluation of training to ensure that teachers get the most out of it (Wardoyo et al., 2021). Through a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and drivers teachers face, strengthening professionalism can be translated into more responsive and adaptive policies. Thus, the goal of improving the quality of education in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah can be effectively realized.

D. CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Based on the results of the literature review, it can be concluded that the readiness of Madrasah Ibtidaiyah teachers in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum still faces various challenges, both from the internal side of the teacher and the external support of the education system. This readiness includes aspects of curriculum knowledge, pedagogical abilities, and skills in preparing and implementing learning that is oriented towards differentiation and student character. Supporting factors such as continuous training, adequate facilities and collaboration with parents determine the success of implementation. Meanwhile, constraints such as limited infrastructure and low managerial support are still serious obstacles. Therefore, systematic strategies and responsive education policies are needed to strengthen teacher professionalism and ensure the optimal achievement of Merdeka Curriculum goals in the Madrasah Ibtidaiyah environment. The urgency of future research lies in developing a training model based on the real needs of MI teachers as well as a longitudinal evaluation of the impact of implementing Merdeka Curriculum. Field studies that examine the interaction between madrasah work culture, learning innovation, and student learning outcomes are also important areas for further exploration.

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