

EDUCATORS' READINESS TO IMPLEMENT THE INDEPENDENT LEARNING CURRICULUM AT MENDUNGAN 2 ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, Yogyakarta

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ABSTRACT

Merdeka Belajar Curriculum is a policy of the Ministry of Education, Culture, and Research and Technology which aims to increase the effectiveness of the current curriculum. This study aims to evaluate teacher preparation in implementing Merdeka Belajar Curriculum. The research method used is a case study involving two teachers and the principal at an elementary school implementing this curriculum. Data for research is collected through interviews, observations, and documentation, then analyzed by data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion making. The research findings show that the level of teacher readiness in implementing Merdeka Belajar Curriculum in elementary schools has reached a sufficiently optimal level. However, some of the obstacles faced by teachers include a lack of understanding of the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum among both teachers and parents. In addition, the facilities and infrastructure to support this curriculum are still inadequate.

Keywords: Teacher Readiness, Independent learning, Primary School

ABSTRAK

Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar adalah kebijakan Kementerian Pendidikan Kebudayaan, dan Ristek yang bertujuan untuk meningkatkan efektivitas kurikulum yang sedang berjalan. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengevaluasi persiapan guru dalam menerapkan Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar. Metode penelitian yang digunakan adalah studi kasus yang melibatkan dua guru dan kepala sekolah di Sekolah Dasar yang menerapkan kurikulum ini. Data untuk penelitian dikumpulkan melalui wawancara, observasi, dan dokumentasi, kemudian dianalisis dengan pengumpulan data, reduksi data, penyajian data, dan pembuatan kesimpulan. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa tingkat kesiapan guru dalam menerapkan Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar di Sekolah Dasar sudah mencapai tingkat optimal yang cukup. Namun, beberapa kendala yang dihadapi oleh guru meliputi kurangnya pemahaman tentang Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar baik di kalangan guru maupun orang tua murid. Selain itu, sarana dan prasarana untuk mendukung kurikulum ini juga masih belum memadai.

Kata Kunci: Kesiapan Guru, Merdeka Belajar, Sekolah Dasar

A. Introduction

Merdeka Belajar Curriculum is an initiative of the Ministry of

Education, Culture and Research to encourage more effective curriculum development. In concept, this

curriculum offers optimal internal learning variation, giving students enough time to understand concepts and strengthen their skills. According to (Ariga, 2022), this approach can increase learning effectiveness by providing opportunities for concept exploration and knowledge reinforcement. Furthermore, this curriculum is available to all educational units that are willing to adopt the Merdeka Belajar concept.

According to (Sopiansyah, 2022), independent learning involves students in a process of individual character building that includes courage, independence, sociability, manners, politeness, and skills, rather than relying solely on a ranking system. (Angga, 2022) describes the independent learning curriculum as a strong intracurricular learning system, giving students adequate time to understand learning concepts, and develop their own competencies.

(Handayani, 2020) emphasizes that independent learning aims to create a learning environment that is full of happiness and fun. On the other hand, (Daga, 2021) states that Merdeka Belajar is a policy that emphasizes freedom of thought, an aspect that is very important,

especially for teachers. However, awareness of this in teachers is the main prerequisite for this concept to be applied properly to students.

According to the Ministry of Education and Culture's decision No. 4 of 2022, the Merdeka Belajar curriculum is run based on the decree of the Head of the Education Standards and Assessment Agency. According to these provisions, this curriculum continues as planned. Starting in the 2022/2023 academic year, the Merdeka Belajar curriculum is one of the options available to educational units. The Ministry of Education and Culture has also issued Decree Number 56 of 2022 which establishes guidelines for implementing the curriculum in the context of learning recovery. These guidelines include three curriculum options that can be used for recovery learning, Merdeka Belajar curriculum structure, provisions related to learning and assessment, and teacher workload.

According to (Mulyadi, 2022), the Ministry of Education and Culture has issued four policies within the framework of Merdeka Belajar national education. This policy includes the elimination of national-

based school exams which are replaced by school-based assessments, the transition of national exams to minimum competencies and character surveys, simplifying lesson plans, and implementing a zoning system in the acceptance of new students (PPDB) which is implemented flexibly. (Swandari, 2023) also revealed that Merdeka Belajar policy and the role of teachers focus on three important stages: creating a technology-based education ecosystem, collaborating with various parties, and recognizing the importance of data. The main feature of the Merdeka Belajar curriculum is a project-based learning approach that aims to develop soft skills and character in accordance with the Pancasila learner profile (Nisfa, 2022).

According to (Syaparuddin, 2020), teachers currently feel confused in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum at all levels of education. The teaching profession requires essential special skills, because as directors, educators, motivators, and assessors of students, their main task is to prepare future generations to face the challenges of the 21st century.

Djamarah (in Nur, 2022) revealed that teachers are key instruments in the world of education, where the quality of students is highly dependent on the quality of the teachers themselves. As stated by (Graham, 2023), low quality teachers can result in less qualified students. (Abdullah, 2023) highlighted that teachers as strategic players have five important roles in the learning process: as educators, community members, leaders, administrators, and learning managers.

(Ramzan, 2023) emphasizes the central role of teachers in the teaching and learning process, where the interaction between teachers and students is the main foundation in achieving educational goals. However, Peters (in Mullen, 2023) views that teachers have three main responsibilities: as classroom teachers, as leaders, and as system administrators. Teachers need to understand that experience in using learning tools is not enough (Sandholm, 2023). It is a way to expand their professional skills to prepare themselves for new challenges and renew their knowledge and skills as educators (Ng, 2023).

In implementing the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum, solid cooperation between educational institutions and teachers is essential in realizing innovative learning (Fadil, 2023). Teacher readiness plays a key role in implementing the curriculum, especially in the dynamics of the teaching and learning process which has an impact on learning effectiveness (Ahmad, 2023). However, the current view according to (Rohmah, 2023), the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum is not fully ready to be implemented because it is considered immature, and the education and teaching system still needs to be better managed. Not only that, human resources and the system are also inadequate.

Nevertheless, this condition does not become an obstacle for the government to immediately implement the Merdeka Curriculum without delay. Once the decision is made, educational institutions must prepare themselves and respond quickly to various aspects of resources, including their human resources.

(Ingias, 2022) states that the objectives of the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum are designed to answer

educational challenges in the era of the Industrial Revolution 4.0. This is in line with the views of (Pramesworo, 2023) who underlines that the main goal of independent learning is to create critical, creative, collaborative, and competent students. In addition, (Amunga, 2020) emphasizes that the goal of this curriculum is to create a fun and comfortable environment for teachers, students and parents. (Ahmed, 2022) supports this by highlighting the importance of a happy and pleasant environment in the educational process for all parties involved.

According to the researcher's interview with the principal, the Merdeka Belajar curriculum has been implemented at SDN since the 2022/2023 school year. The implementation is carried out in stages every new school year, currently only applied in grades II and V. However, the principal stated that there are still some problems in its implementation in the field. Some teachers do not fully understand the Merdeka Belajar curriculum, still lack mastery of information technology, the lack of seminars discussing the curriculum, especially at the elementary school level, and there

are still teachers who use less varied learning strategies.

The author finds problems in line with (Defrizal, 2022), who identify similar challenges when teachers implement Merdeka Belajar Curriculum, teachers are often confused in implementing this curriculum at various levels of education because the teaching profession requires special expertise. Research results (Hadi, 2023) also highlighted problems in teacher readiness to implement the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum, such as limited access and inadequate learning facilities, technological difficulties, and lack of experience with the new curriculum. In addition, (Dwiyanti, 2023) research on teacher readiness in the 2013 Curriculum found similar challenges, where teachers have difficulty understanding the Graduate Competency Standards (SKL) in accordance with student needs, still using old learning strategies, and lack of training, socialization, and varied lesson materials. Immediate action is needed to address these issues.

Initial studies at the research site revealed that the school has implemented Merdeka curriculum at all levels, including the lower grades

that are the focus of this study. However, further research is needed to evaluate the extent of the implementation of the Merdeka curriculum. The main focus of this research is to explore the level of teacher readiness in implementing the Merdeka learning curriculum, especially at the primary school (SD) level. The research aims to analyze the readiness of elementary school teachers in adopting Merdeka learning curriculum.

B. Research Methods

This research adopts the case study method as an approach because it is able to provide an in-depth understanding of the challenges faced by individuals or groups in the situation under investigation (Quintão, 2020). The main focus of this research is to evaluate the level of readiness of teachers in implementing the independent curriculum in an elementary school environment. The purpose of using this case study method is to obtain a comprehensive picture of teacher readiness in implementing the merdeka curriculum at Mendungan 2 Yogyakarta Elementary School. The research

was conducted from October to December 2023, involving the participation of two teachers from grades II and V, and the principal as the main resource person.

In this study, data were collected through observation techniques using observation sheets, interviews, and document review. The accuracy of the information was tested using three triangulation approaches: technical, source and time. Source triangulation was used to review information from various sources to test doubts about the material. Meanwhile, the time triangulation technique was a way to obtain information gradually over time.

The data analysis technique using the Miles and Huberman approach consists of four stages, namely: data collection (acquisition), data reduction (reduction), data presentation (display), and drawing conclusions from the data (verification) (Mezmir, 2020).

C. Research Results and Discussion

Understanding the Curriculum Structure

The merdeka curriculum is shaped through intracurricular learning and the Pancasila learner profile strengthening project (P5), which emphasizes learners' ability to apply learning skills while engaged in intracurricular activities. The Pancasila Learner Profile is not presented separately in 18 different sessions, but rather guides teachers in developing the curriculum, so it is not taught separately.

Based on the results of observations, the Merdeka Belajar curriculum structure at the elementary level includes the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening (P5) project which includes several aspects, namely sustainable lifestyles, local wisdom, Unity in Diversity, mental and physical development, technology and engineering, and entrepreneurship. In addition, there is intracurricular learning consisting of flag ceremonies, literacy, numeracy, hygiene, imtaq, and gymnastics. Extracurricular learning is divided into two fields, namely the state field and the sports field. This activity is carried out from Monday to Saturday according to the results of the research observations carried out.

In the author's interviews with resource persons regarding the curriculum structure, it was conveyed that grade II and grade V teachers at Mendungan 2 Yogyakarta State Elementary School have a fairly good understanding, although they still do not fully understand. They know that Merdeka Curriculum consists of a project to strengthen the Pancasila learner profile (P5), intracurricular learning, and extracurricular learning. This project is implemented based on students' talents and interests. However, teachers stated that there are no concrete examples of independent learning at the primary school level. They also do not have a clear picture of how the curriculum is implemented but are in the process of learning through participation in workshops or training related to strengthening independence. The education office is working to improve teachers' understanding of Merdeka Curriculum.

Lesson Plan Readiness

The independent curriculum requires teachers and students to understand it. Planning becomes the core of educational institutions and becomes a concrete step to adjust to the new curriculum, which must be

adapted to the conditions of educational institutions. According to (Jeong, 2020), the goal of all these activities is to create effective and efficient learning plans. The independent curriculum gives schools the freedom to choose criteria that fit the structure of the curriculum.

Based on the results of the author's interviews with relevant informants, grade II and V teachers at Mendungan 2 Yogyakarta State Elementary School have shown good readiness in planning lessons according to the independent curriculum structure. They have made plans in accordance with the standards that have been set.

Learning Process Readiness

Teachers need to adjust the learning process according to the new curriculum which includes process standards according to the Ministry of Education and Culture No. 137 of 2014, which includes planning, implementing, guiding and monitoring learning. During the learning process, there are stages of opening, core and closing activities. The merdeka learning curriculum aims to give students the freedom to choose the way they want to learn. To increase

the effectiveness of the learning process, teachers need to be able to adapt learning activities to the current conditions of children (Vanbecelaere, 2020).

Based on observations that have been made, teachers have shown adequate skills in structuring the learning process in accordance with the structure of the independent curriculum. The results of the author's interviews with relevant sources also confirm that grade II and V teachers at Mendungan 2 Yogyakarta State Elementary School have successfully carried out learning activities in line with the independent curriculum. In the implementation of learning, there are opening, core, and closing stages, as well as giving students the freedom to choose learning according to their talents and interests. The learning approach applied has the principle of meaningful learning, where learning is done through play activities.

The learning process begins when students ask questions to the teacher, who acts as the main facilitator. Interaction between students and their classmates is an important aspect, with the use of interactive media to trigger student

interest in learning in accordance with the independent curriculum. The role of learning media is an integral support in the learning process, as revealed by (Choirudin, 2021), that learning media in the independent curriculum must have interactive appeal. The implementation of the independent curriculum in the learning process in elementary schools, especially in grades II and V, is carried out in stages and starts from simple things. This approach facilitates curriculum adaptation for teachers and students.

Teaching Module Readiness

The teaching module is an explanation of the flow of learning objectives (ATP) derived from learning outcomes (CP). According to (Al Mamun, 2020), teaching modules have an important role in supporting teachers in designing learning. Teaching modules function as teaching tools specifically designed to assist students in the learning process (Putri, 2020). The main objective is to help learners develop in accordance with the Pancasila learner profile which includes: a) Believing and fearing God Almighty; b) Global Diversity; c) Mutual cooperation; d) Creative; e) Critical

reasoning; f) Independent (Arumsari, 2023).

From the results of the author's interviews with resource persons related to the readiness of teaching modules, it was revealed that grade II and V teachers at Mendungan 2 Yogyakarta State Elementary School showed adequate readiness in the preparation of teaching modules. Before starting learning activities, the first step taken by grade II and V teachers is to design teaching modules.

This process begins with the development of learning objectives, which involves analyzing learning outcomes as a first step. Next, they establish competencies that are based on the learning outcomes. The next stage is designing the flow of learning objectives, which also involves analyzing learning outcomes and relevant competencies. The last step is to formulate learning outcomes by converting core competencies (KI) and basic competencies (KD) into learning outcomes (CP), which become guidelines during the learning process. In line with the opinion of (Hamora, 2022), teaching modules are prepared by paying attention to

learning materials and learning needs, evaluating, and preparing modules to be interesting so that students are motivated in the learning process.

Based on the documentation review, there are some differences between the K13 textbook and the stand-alone curriculum. For example, K-13 has indicators and learning objectives, while the Merdeka curriculum has CP (Competency Points) and TP (Teaching Points). The learning outcomes of the Merdeka curriculum are the renewal of core competencies and basic competencies designed to increase the focus of learning towards competency development. In addition, the CP in Merdeka curriculum is presented in paragraph form, which makes it difficult for teachers. After TP, the next step is to create ATP (Achievement Targets or Learning Objectives). The reason it is difficult for teachers to develop ATP is due to the difficulty in identifying learning tools that are in accordance with the support services at school.

Readiness of Facilities and Infrastructure

When implementing this curriculum, learning is more project-

focused, which requires facilities that can support its success. Facilities and infrastructure play an important role as a supporting factor in the implementation of the independent curriculum (Yusuf, 2021). The school environment and buildings are part of the infrastructure. The size of the land and the number of classrooms will be adjusted to the number of learners to ensure learning is appropriate and optimal.

Based on the results of observations and interviews with relevant sources regarding the readiness of facilities and infrastructure for grade II and V teachers at Mendungan 2 Yogyakarta State Elementary School, it can be concluded that the available facilities and infrastructure are sufficient to carry out learning activities. This situation can be seen from the number of rooms available, the completeness of equipment in each room, the collection of books in the library, and the availability of learning media. Furthermore, with the capacity of each class ranging from 27 to 30 students per class, this situation is considered ideal. The infrastructure, which includes the buildings and the environment around the school, has

been adjusted in terms of land area and space to the number of learners so that learning can take place in a relevant and optimal manner. However, there is a need for additional improvements to be made by the school, especially related to the improvement of learning media that must be arranged and equipped in the RKAS to achieve the objectives of the independent learning curriculum.

Learning Assessment Readiness

The tool to evaluate the success of learning and demonstrate student performance is called learning assessment. One type of authentic assessment is one that is able to measure student development in the cognitive, affective and psychomotor dimensions. According to (Ajjawi, 2020) authentic evaluation is one form of evaluation used in basic education. While it provides adequate details regarding student learning outcomes, it requires too many tools.

In the results of the author's interviews with informants regarding the readiness of learning assessment, it was stated that grade II and V teachers at Mendungan 2 Yogyakarta State Elementary School have a fairly good performance in

conducting assessments. The teachers explained that they conduct assessment by utilizing the Alur Tujuan Pembelajaran (ATP) to achieve learning objectives (TP), then identify the TP, and evaluate it through written tests, oral tests, post-tests, and pre-tests. From there, they emphasized the need for training related to assessment in the context of the independent curriculum.

Based on the documentation, there are differences between the assessment approaches in the 2013 Curriculum and Merdeka Belajar Curriculum. The 2013 Curriculum emphasizes strengthening authentic assessment in each subject, with the division of assessment into attitudes, knowledge, and skills. In contrast, in the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum, the focus is on the project to strengthen the Pancasila learner profile. In it, there is no special separation related to assessment as in the 2013 Curriculum. Teachers in the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum are more inclined to make assessments that are in accordance with the learning objectives to be achieved. However, the assessment model in project-based learning can be confusing for teachers because of the various

types of assessments used, such as presentations, projects, products, and oral and written assessments, all of which are part of the assessment in the learning process.

Factors inhibiting teacher readiness

Factors that hinder teachers' readiness to implement the curriculum in primary schools include teachers' and parents' lack of understanding of the concept of the independent learning curriculum, so that the objectives of this curriculum have not been fully achieved. Support from parents plays a key role in understanding the essence of the independent learning curriculum, as revealed by (Nurazizah, 2021), that parental support includes presence, willingness to listen, attention, trust, appreciation, and affection. With parental involvement, the process of implementing this curriculum can run more smoothly.

Another obstacle is that some students do not have access to the media needed to implement an independent learning curriculum. Learning media has an important role in awakening students' potential, as explained by (Rahmatullah, 2022), as a means to stimulate students'

thoughts, feelings, attention, skills, and abilities.

Therefore, teachers need to continue learning and improving their understanding of this curriculum through trainings and webinars organized by the education office. Schools also need to make detailed socialization efforts to parents and school committees regarding the implementation of the independent learning curriculum to establish strong cooperation in achieving learning objectives. However, there is still a lack of available facilities and infrastructure to support the success of learning, so a budget allocation is needed from the 2023 RKAS which is the principal's policy.

D.Conclusion

Teachers' readiness to implement the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum, as seen from the results of observations and interviews based on six indicators, shows that there is still a lack of understanding regarding the structure of the Merdeka Curriculum. Further training is still needed regarding the preparation of teaching modules, learning assessments, and improving the readiness of facilities and

infrastructure to support the successful implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum. Teachers still do not have a comprehensive understanding of the implementation of this curriculum. The level of readiness expressed is very important so that schools can immediately respond to teachers' concerns. In addition, the concept of this curriculum must be understood in the context of all elements of an educational institution so that its implementation can be optimal, effective, efficient, and achieve the desired goals. Therefore, further efforts from the school are needed to maximize the potential and enthusiasm to realize Merdeka Curriculum as expected by the Ministry of Education and Culture, in order to create the expected Pancasila learner profile.

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