Analysis of the Readiness Level of Junior High School Teachers: Implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in North Ternate City

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the level of readiness of Junior High School (SMP) teachers in the North Ternate District in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum (IKM). This study uses a quantitative descriptive approach to determine the level of teacher readiness based on five main indicators: knowledge of the Merdeka Curriculum, skills in managing learning, use of learning data, teaching adaptation, and commitment to the development of sustainable professionalism. Data was collected through questionnaires and analyzed using data processing facilities from Ms. Excell. The results showed that the level of teacher readiness was at Level 2 with an average percentage of 80%, which indicates that the readiness is quite good but requires improvement, especially in the skills in managing learning. The main recommendation of this study is the need to increase access to more intensive and comprehensive training.

Keywords: *Readiness Level; Junior High School Teachers; Merdeka Curriculum; North Ternate City*

Introduction

The implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in various schools, including in North Ternate City, requires mature readiness from teachers as the spearhead of education. This curriculum is designed to provide flexibility to teachers in designing and managing learning that is more contextual and in accordance with student needs (Nursalam et al., 2023). However, to be able to run this curriculum optimally, the level of teacher readiness is very crucial, both in terms of pedagogical competence, technological knowledge, and the ability to develop innovative learning (Dara Fayola & Rahmawati, 2023). This study aims to analyze the level of readiness of teachers in Junior High Schools (SMP) in North Ternate City in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum (IKM), as well as identify challenges and strategies that can be taken to increase the effectiveness of the implementation of the curriculum.

IKM was introduced to respond to and overcome the impact of learning loss that occurred during the 2019 pandemic (Nahdhiah & Suciptaningsih, 2024). The Merdeka curriculum is designed to prepare students to face the 21st era of digitalization by providing a dynamic learning experience according to students' wishes, in order to encourage the creativity of each individual (Aziz et al., 2025; Yuniar &

Umami, 2023). This policy also provides flexibility for students to choose the learning process that suits their interests and abilities (Usanto, 2022).

One of the main goals of IKM is designed as a solution to prepare a generation that has professionalism and competence in accordance with their talents, in order to answer the challenges of the increasingly complex and dynamic society 5.0 era (Lestari et al., 2023). In addition, this curriculum aims to improve the quality of Indonesian education, by providing learning through essential content to deepen student competence (Tri Astari, 2022). However, in its implementation, this curriculum provides new challenges for teachers and students in adjusting from all aspects, because it is still new (Faridah et al., 2024).

Based on previous research, IKM in Indonesia still face various serious challenges. One of them is about teacher readiness, which is recommended not only to focus on academic learning, but also the social and emotional development of students (Riskianto et al., 2023). Some schools still have limitations in infrastructure, especially in remote areas. Another obstacle is that the support from various parties including school principals, parents, and the community is still not optimal (Cantika et al., 2022). In addition, continuous teacher competency development training activities are often not carried out optimally due to limited resources (Aji et al., 2023). On the other hand, the regional autonomy given to each school to implement adjustments to curriculum changes requires adaptation that is not easy and takes a long time for schools and teachers.

Teachers as the main actors in the implementation of the curriculum in schools have a crucial role in the success of IKM. The position of the teacher plays a role as a driving force for the learning community, understanding the dynamics of the classroom atmosphere, the learning process, and the needs of students (Tep, 2024). Teachers also play an important role in preparing students with good academic, skillful, emotional, moral and spiritual qualities (Adila et al., 2023). On the other hand, teachers are also required to have good pedagogic, professional, communication, and interpersonal skills in the implementation of the curriculum in the classroom (Hobbs et al., 2023). Therefore, the readiness of teachers in mastering and applying these skills is urgently needed to ensure the successful implementation of the Merdeka curriculum.

Teacher readiness in IKM is one of the priority factors that must be considered. The scope of the teacher's role includes developing the curriculum, designing, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating student learning outcomes in the classroom (Wahira et al., 2023)Teacher readiness also requires adjustments in the implementation of the new curriculum, these conditions must be adjusted to the circumstances, needs, and characteristics of students in the classroom (Jannah & Rasyid, 2023). The readiness of teachers to carry out these roles will determine the success of IKM in creating a meaningful, relevant, and quality learning atmosphere.

The definition of readiness level has several meanings that depend on its use. According to KBBI, the level of readiness refers to the degree or ability to achieve a goal in accordance with applicable standards (Pusat Bahasa Kemdikbud, 2016). In the realm of education, readiness levels are used to measure and evaluate the effectiveness of education policies (Hobbs et al., 2023). I n addition, the level of readiness includes physical and social, as seen in the readiness of an institution regarding its cognitive, physical, and social conditions (Révész-Kiszela, 2023).

The level of readiness in an institution plays a very important role in bridging the policy implementation gap between theory and practice (Miake-Lye et al., 2020). Understanding and assessing the level of teacher readiness is essential for the management of education policy planning, implementation, and success (Afista et al., 2020). This applies to ensure that all aspects of teaching are carried out smoothly and in accordance with the latest curriculum policy standards.

Analysis of the Readiness Level of Junior High School Teachers: Implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in North Ternate City

13

The level of teacher readiness in IKM in Indonesia is a key factor in the success of education. Research shows that teachers at various levels of education, including high school to elementary school, face challenges in understanding and implementing this curriculum effectively(Hanifa et al., 2024; Heryahya et al., 2022; Suyamti et al., 2024) . Research by Sabilah et al., (2023) and Sari & Umami, (2023) states that training plays an important role in teacher readiness. Furthermore, Rohim & Rigianti (2023)identified supporting and inhibiting factors that affect curriculum implementation. However, obstacles such as lack of infrastructure and confusion in the implementation of the curriculum were also expressed by Hanifa et al., (2024) and Faridah et al., (2024). Overall, this study emphasizes the need for continuous support for teachers so that the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum can run more effectively.

Ternate City, as the capital of North Maluku Province, has as many as 285 educational institutions from elementary to high school/equivalent, with the largest distribution in Central and South Ternate Districts, while the number of junior high schools is 20 schools throughout Ternate City (Kemedikbud, 2024). The focus of this research is on junior high schools in North Ternate District, which were selected based on the involvement of schools in this region in the Merdeka Curriculum Implementation Program. North Ternate District was chosen because the number of junior high schools in this region is only smaller than other sub-districts, as well as representing the unique dynamics of the region with geographical challenges and limited resources (Saragih & Marpaung, 2024). Based on Ternate Mayor Regulation No. 41.A of 2022, the local government emphasizes the importance of improving the quality of education through IKM and data-based planning. The latest data since 2023 shows that around 163 schools throughout Ternate City have adopted the Merdeka Curriculum, with most of them in the North Ternate region (Zubaedah, 2023)

The novelty of this study lies in its specific focus on teachers in the North Ternate region which has not been studied much before. This study not only measures teacher readiness in general, but also explores specific factors that affect this readiness in local contexts that have not been paid attention to in previous academic studies. This study makes a new contribution to the literature by offering an in-depth analysis of teacher readiness in remote areas and providing practical recommendations for the development of education policy strategies in areas with suboptimal educational conditions.

Method

This research was carried out in February-May 2024 with a population of 118 teachers from two State Junior High Schools in North Ternate City District. These two schools were chosen because they are public schools with the highest number of students in the region, and have adopted the Merdeka Curriculum since 2022, so it is relevant to be analyzed in the context of teacher readiness in the implementation of this new curriculum. based on data from Direktorat Jenderal Pendidikan Anak (2024). The method used is quantitative descriptive with a purposive sampling technique (Tanzeh & Arikunto, 2020), which was chosen to ensure that only schools and teachers who are directly involved in the IKM are included. This selection aims to focus the analysis on the group that is most relevant to the research objectives.

Based on calculations using the Slovin formula with a margin of error of 10%, the sample required is 54 teachers. Data collection was carried out using a questionnaire consisting of 25 statements, which was designed to measure various aspects of teachers' readiness to face IKM. The Likert scale used is: "very ready", "ready", "not ready", and "very unprepared". This questionnaire was developed based on indicators from Tomlinson et al. (2003) which include: 1) knowledge of the Merdeka curriculum, 2) skills in managing learning, 3) use of learning data, 4) adaptation and flexibility of teaching, and 5) teachers' commitment to the development of sustainable professionalism.

Data was collected online using Google Form, which was shared with 26 respondents from each school, namely SMPN A and SMPN B. Quantitative data analysis was carried out using data processing facilities from Ms. Excell, with a descriptive analysis method. The results of the analysis are presented in the form of percentage values per indicator. To determine the level of readiness, categorization based on the interval score of the Tricahyati model (2023) is used, with some basic adjustments:

Table 1. Readiness Level Categorization Class

Level	Percentage (%)	Golongan	Level
4	86–100	Very ready, can be continued	Level 1
3	76–85	Ready, but needs some improvements	Level 2
2	60–75	Not ready, needs some repairs	Level 3
1	≤59	Very unprepared, needs a lot of repairs	Level 4

(Source: Tricahyati, 2023)

Findings

The results of the study are related to the readiness of teachers in IKM in State High Schools in North Ternate. The data will be presented with an analysis per indicator in the following table:

Table 2. Knowledge of the Implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum (IKM)

No	The andage	Total Score	Ideal Score	Percentage	Level
1	I understand the basic concept of IKM	172	216	80%	Level 2
2	I know the main differences between the Merdeka Curriculum and the previous curriculum.	176	216	80%	Level 2
3	I understand the purpose of implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in schools.	172	216	80%	Level 2
4	I am familiar with the teaching modules used in the Merdeka Curriculum.	173	216	80%	Level 2
5	I understand how to integrate the Pancasila student profile in learning.	168	216	78%	Level 2
6	Total	861	1080	80%	Level 2

Table 2, shows that the indicator of teachers' knowledge about the Implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum shows that most teachers (80%) already have a good understanding of the concepts, applications, and teaching strategies in this curriculum. Teachers are considered quite ready to develop teaching modules, use data to improve teaching, and support online learning with technology. Even so, improvements are still needed, especially in technical skills to optimize technology-based learning. Overall, the teacher's readiness level in knowledge of IKM is at 80% at Level 2, which indicates quite good readiness. However, further improvements are needed, especially in terms of practical implementation, integration of technology in learning, and the development of more effective remedial programs.

Table 3. Skills in managing learning

No	Item	Total Score	Ideal Score	Percentage	Level
1	I can design a lesson plan that is in accordance with the Merdeka Curriculum.	176	216	81	Level 2
2	I was able to carry out project-based learning according to the Merdeka Curriculum.	174	216	81	Level 2
3	I can assess the achievement of student competencies in accordance with the standards of the Merdeka Curriculum.	173	216	80	Level 2
4	I master learning strategies that encourage students' creativity and independence.	168	216	78	Level 2
5	I am able to tailor learning to meet the individual needs of students.	155	216	72	Level 2
6	Total	846	1080	78	Level 2

Table 3, regarding Skills in Managing Learning, shows that teachers are generally quite prepared to design and manage learning in accordance with the Merdeka Curriculum, with an average readiness level of 78% at Level 2. Most teachers are able to design learning that suits the needs of students, manage diverse classrooms, and create a supportive learning atmosphere. However, there are some challenges in the use of technology and the adjustment of learning methods based on different learning styles of students. In particular, an area that needs attention is the ability of teachers to use technology in learning and adjust teaching methods according to various learning styles of students, which is below 80%. This indicates the need for improved technical skills and a deeper understanding of teaching differentiation to ensure optimal success of IKM.

Table 4. Use of learning data

No	Item	Total Score	Ideal Score	Percentage	Level
1	I routinely use student learning outcome data to plan my next lesson.	175	216	81	Level 2
2	I use the results of the learning evaluation to improve teaching methods.	173	216	80	Level 2
3	I am used to using formative assessments to monitor student progress.	170	216	79	Level 2
4	I can analyze student learning data to identify learning difficulties.	177	216	82	Level 2
5	I use data to determine the right learning strategy.	174	216	81	Level 2
6	Total	869	1080	80	Level 2

Table 4, on the Use of Learning Data by Teachers, shows that teachers are generally quite prepared to use data to adjust lesson plans and evaluate teaching methods, with an average achievement rate of 80% at Level 2. Most teachers were able to use the results of student assessments to adjust lesson plans (81%) and conduct data analysis to identify student needs (80%). In addition, they are also quite prepared to evaluate the effectiveness of teaching methods based on student learning outcome data (79%).

In particular, areas that need attention are the development of remedial or enrichment programs based on student assessment data, which achieves the highest achievement (82%), and the use of data to

make decisions related to learning strategies (81%). Although this achievement is quite high, further improvement in data analysis skills will help teachers in making more informed learning decisions, in order to support more effective learning in the future.

Table 5. Adaptability and flexibility of teaching

No	Item	Total Score	Ideal Score	Percentage	Level
1	I can adjust the learning method according to the existing situation.	173	216	80	Level 2
2	I feel comfortable with the changes needed in the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum.	174	216	81	Level 2
3	I am flexible in adapting teaching materials to the needs of students.	178	216	82	Level 2
4	I am open to feedback and changes that support better teaching.	171	216	79	Level 2
5	I was able to face the challenges that arose in the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum.	173	216	80	Level 2
6	Total	869	1080	80	Level 2

Table 5, on Adaptation and Flexibility of Teaching, shows that teachers are quite prepared to adapt teaching methods to student needs and classroom conditions, with an average readiness level of 80% at Level 2. Teachers are also able to be flexible in implementing various learning approaches, changing strategies when students encounter difficulties, and being quick to adopt technology if needed. The highest score was obtained on the ability to change teaching strategies, which was 82%.

However, some areas still need more attention, such as trying new methods and using technology in learning, which scored 79%. This shows that although in general teachers' adaptability is quite good, improving skills in the exploration of new methods and the use of technology is still needed to improve the effectiveness of teaching in accordance with the Merdeka Curriculum.

Table 6. Teachers' commitment to the development of continuous professionalism

No	Item	Total Score	Ideal Score	Percentage	Level
1	I am ready to take part in training and workshops related to the Merdeka Curriculum to improve my competence.	170	216	79	Level 2
2	I am actively looking for new information about the development of IKM to apply in learning.	173	216	80	Level 2
3	I am involved in the teacher learning community to improve professional skills related to the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum.	172	216	80	Level 2
4	I am committed to continuing to learn and develop my skills as a professional teacher.	173	216	80	Level 2
5	I am ready to take the time to take part in a self-development program related to increasing teaching capacity in accordance with the Merdeka Curriculum.	171	216	79	Level 2
6	Total	859	1080	80	Level 2

Table 6, on Teachers' Commitment to Sustainable Professionalism Development, shows that teachers are generally quite prepared to participate in training and competency development related to IKM, with an average readiness level of 80% at Level 2. Most teachers are committed to seeking new information, being involved in learning communities, and participating in self-development programs to improve teaching skills in accordance with the demands of the Merdeka Curriculum.

However, there are areas that still need attention, such as readiness to attend training and workshops, as well as time allocation for self-development programs, which is at 79%. This indicates the need for additional encouragement for teachers to be more actively involved in training and professional development activities, in order to ensure continuous improvement of competencies in IKM.

Table 7. Analysis of Teacher Readiness Level Indicators in IKM

No	Indicator	Total Score	Ideal Score	Percentage	Level
1	Knowledge of the Merdeka curriculum	861	1080	80%	Level 2
2	Skills in managing learning,	846	1080	78%	Level 2
3	The use of learning data,	869	1080	80%	Level 2
4	Adaptability and flexibility of teaching, and	869	1080	80%	Level 2
5	Teachers' commitment to the development of continuous professionalism	859	1080	80%	Level 2
6	Total Amount	4304	5400	80%	Level 2

Table 7 shows an analysis of indicators related to the level of teacher readiness in IKM. There are five main indicators measured, namely knowledge of IKM, skills in managing learning, use of learning data, adaptation and flexibility of teaching, and commitment to sustainable professionalism development. Each indicator has a number of scores that are compared to its ideal score to get a percentage of readiness. Hasilnya menunjukkan bahwa tingkat kesiapan guru berada pada level 2 dengan rata-rata persentase 80%.

The skill indicator in managing learning obtained the lowest percentage, which was 78%, while other indicators reached 80%. This indicates that there is a need for improvement in the aspect of learning management skills. Commitment to continuous professional development is also at 80%, indicating that most teachers are committed to continuously improving their capacity, but there is still room for improvement.

Discussion

The results of the analysis of teacher readiness in IKM show that, although the overall readiness level is at 80%, there are important aspects that need to be considered, especially related to skills in managing learning. Studies show that mastery of these skills is very important to improve the quality of education in Indonesia (Solehah, 2023). Research by Putu et al., (2022)confirms that the main difficulty in the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum lies in the ability of teachers to adapt to flexible and technology-based teaching methods, which are the main characteristics of this curriculum.

The importance of improving learning management skills is also emphasized in several international studies that show that classroom management competencies have a great influence on the success of the implementation of the new curriculum. (Azizah et al., 2023) found that the low level of teacher readiness in terms of learning management skills is often caused by a lack of training and a lack of supporting resources such as learning modules. Meanwhile, research by Ndari (2023) also shows

similar challenges in various educational institutions that implement the Merdeka Curriculum, especially in terms of access to adequate professional training.

The commitment to the development of continuous professionalism, even though it has reached 80%, still requires a stronger push. Several studies emphasize the importance of developing professionalism as a means to improve teachers' pedagogical skills and intrinsic motivation in facing the challenges of the new curriculum. (Börü, 2018) states that teachers who are committed to continuous professional development are better able to succeed in the implementation of curriculum innovation. These findings are also supported by Aji et al., (2023), which show that the success of curriculum implementation is closely related to how well teachers take advantage of opportunities for sustainable learning.

In conclusion, although in general teachers are ready for IKM, the aspect of learning management skills still requires more attention. Further training and comprehensive support are urgently needed to ensure that the implementation of this curriculum can run optimally. This support includes increased access to relevant teaching modules as well as the provision of quality continuing professional development programmes

Conclusion

The results of the study show that the level of readiness of teachers in IKM in Junior High Schools in North Ternate District is quite good, with the average level of readiness at Level 2 (80%). However, there are several areas that need improvement, especially in the skills of managing learning and making optimal use of technology. This skill is very important because it is the foundation for the success of IKM, as emphasized by various studies (Putu et al., 2022; Solehah, 2023).

Therefore, the main recommendation of this study is the need to increase access to more intensive and comprehensive training, especially those that focus on technology-based learning management, the provision of relevant learning modules, and the strengthening of continuous professional development programs to effectively increase the capacity of teachers in IKM. If these recommendations are implemented, it is hoped that the level of teacher readiness will increase, so that the educational goals in the Merdeka Curriculum can be achieved more optimally in the future.

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