

Challenges Faced by Senior High School Teachers in the Implementation of Merdeka Curriculum Administration in Classroom Learning

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ABSTRACT

One of the problems in this study is that many high school teachers continue to face various difficulties in managing the *Merdeka Curriculum* during the learning process. The purpose of this study is to explain the problems encountered by teachers and the factors that cause these issues. This research is a qualitative study using a descriptive approach. The study consists of observation sheets and open interview guidelines. Data analysis includes data presentation, conclusion drawing, and data reduction. The results of the study show that teachers face challenges in preparing teaching modules. They also experience administrative time constraints and a lack of understanding of the principles of the *Merdeka Curriculum*. This study indicates that continuous training and intensive mentoring are essential to improving curriculum administration in high schools.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Curriculum administration is a series of planning, implementation, and evaluation processes of learning documents prepared by teachers to ensure that curriculum objectives can be achieved systematically, including the development of teaching modules, assessment tools, and learning designs. In the context of the *Merdeka Curriculum*, curriculum administration emphasizes flexibility, student-centeredness, and the development of learning activities focused on competencies.(ED470979, n.d.) Curriculum administration in contemporary education means more than just preparing learning documents. It also includes quality control, ensuring that learning takes place, and monitoring the alignment between classroom practices and curriculum goals. The definition of the *Merdeka Curriculum* is expanded as it allows teachers to design more contextual lessons by taking into account the Pancasila Student Profile. Consequently, curriculum administration becomes an essential tool in transforming policy frameworks into effective learning practices.(Hartawati & Karim, n.d.-a)

The administration of the *Merdeka Curriculum* is very important because it serves as the foundation for teachers to organize learning effectively, systematically, and in accordance with the learning objectives. (Tarigan & Lubis, 2025)Good administration enables teachers to design flexible learning processes that meet students' needs and facilitate unique learning experiences tailored to each individual student. Without proper curriculum administration, schools cannot collect accurate data on the improvement of learning quality. Therefore, the implementation of *Merdeka Curriculum* administration becomes a crucial basis for enhancing learning management at the high school level..(Education in Indonesia a Decade on Transforming Education in Indonesia: Examining the Landscape of Current Reforms, 2023). The *Merdeka Curriculum* is expected to encourage teachers to be more creative, independent, and reflective in preparing

learning administration and managing more meaningful learning processes. (Ndruru, n.d.) This curriculum is also expected to create a flexible learning atmosphere by providing space for teachers to adjust strategies, teaching modules, and classroom activities according to students' talents and the school context. It is also hoped that the Merdeka Curriculum will enable teachers to become skilled learning designers, not merely implementers. With the freedom given to design teaching modules, formative assessments, and Pancasila Student Profile (P5) strengthening projects, teachers are expected to optimize their creative abilities in determining learning models, media, and strategies that best suit their students' characteristics. In line with these expectations, teachers play a crucial role in the success of educational transformation in schools..(Kasus et al., 2022)

However, many high school teachers continue to face problems in implementing the administration of the *Merdeka Curriculum*. Some of the issues they encounter include heavy administrative workloads, limited time, and difficulties in understanding the changes in curriculum concepts. (Situmorang et al., 2025) These conditions cause learning administration to function poorly, which impacts the quality of lesson planning and classroom implementation. In practice, teachers also face administrative pressure, making it difficult for them to allocate time evenly between administration, developing teaching materials, and teaching. According to several educators, the rapid curriculum changes are not accompanied by adequate mentoring. As a result, they often work independently without sufficient support. These conditions make learning administration more difficult and cause many curriculum documents to become mere formalities..(Gusti Putu et al., 2024). Previous studies show that various administrative obstacles often arise at the early stages of implementing a new curriculum. This can be seen in research on the implementation of the 2013 Curriculum and the *Merdeka Curriculum*, which highlights the lack of teacher readiness, insufficient mentoring, and limited resources. Other researchers also found that teachers' differing understandings of administrative elements lead to variations in the quality of learning tools across classes.(Nur Fadhilah et al., 2023)

In addition, several studies emphasize that the effectiveness of implementing a new curriculum is strongly influenced by the quality of training provided to teachers. Other researchers found that teachers tend to experience confusion when training is purely theoretical and lacks comprehensive examples of teaching materials. Therefore, previous studies indicate that curriculum administration challenges are not only technical issues but also related to systemic support from the government and educational institutions.(3197-Article Text-7499-1-10-20230605, n.d.). This recent study focuses on thoroughly exploring the problems encountered in implementing the administration of the *Merdeka Curriculum*, particularly at the high school level, through open interviews. (Parid et al., n.d.) The study also offers new insights into the need for more organized professional support to improve the quality of *Merdeka Curriculum* learning administration. This research is unique because it examines the challenges teachers face in managing the *Merdeka Curriculum* and their subjective experiences regarding curriculum changes.(Ilmu Pendidikan Nonformal et al., 2024) Given the characteristics of high school students and the complexity of various subjects at the senior high school level, focusing the research on the high school context provides more specific information. Therefore, this study presents new insights that can be used as a foundation for creating training programs that are more aligned with individual goals.(Astuti et al., 2024).

2. METHOD, DATA, ANALYSIS

A qualitative descriptive method was used in this study to comprehensively describe the types of difficulties faced by high school teachers in managing the *Merdeka Curriculum* during learning activities. This approach was chosen because it is able to capture situations naturally, particularly related to how teachers organize the curriculum and the problems that arise in the field.(Zikri & Novio, n.d.) The subjects of this study were high school teachers who had implemented the *Merdeka Curriculum* for at least one academic year. Informants were selected using purposive sampling and were chosen based on their experience in developing teaching materials, conducting evaluations, and managing learning in accordance with the *Merdeka Curriculum*.(Kasus et al., 2022). To ensure that the data collected in this study were more complete and valid, the researcher served as the main instrument, supported by in-depth interview guidelines, observation sheets, and documentation of learning administration tools such as teaching modules, diagnostic assessments, and learning follow-up reports.(Jannah et al., 2022). A qualitative method or open-ended interviews were conducted to explore teachers' perspectives on the *Merdeka Curriculum*. The interviews were conducted to obtain accurate data from appropriate sources. Data analysis was carried out by gathering more in-depth information through questions related to the implementation of the *Merdeka*

Curriculum in schools, using the data, categorizing and examining it, and then drawing conclusions so that the findings could be presented to others. (Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar Yunita et al., 2023)

These are the questions that will be given to the teachers:

- a) Which part of the administration do you find the most challenging (for example: developing teaching modules, ATP, CP, assessments, or reflective journals)? Why?
- b) What is the biggest challenge you face in preparing teaching modules or other learning materials?
- c) Does the school provide adequate training or workshops related to the administration of the *Merdeka Curriculum*?
- d) What suggestions would you like to give to the school or the government to reduce administrative barriers?

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

Responses from Teachers Regarding the Administration of the Merdeka Curriculum in Schools

Teacher 1 expressed the following views:

- a. The most challenging part of administration for me is preparing the teaching module, because this process requires a considerable amount of time to align learning objectives, the Learning Objectives Flow (ATP), students' needs, differentiated activities, as well as formative and summative assessments. In addition, the teaching module must be developed contextually and flexibly to align with the principles of the Merdeka Curriculum, which requires thorough analysis.
- b. The biggest challenge I face is aligning students' needs with the competency demands of the curriculum. Each class has different characteristics, abilities, and learning styles, so designing differentiated learning activities often takes a lot of time. Furthermore, developing assessments that truly reflect students' learning achievement is another challenge.
- c. The school has provided several trainings and workshops, but in my opinion, they are not yet fully adequate. The training offered is sometimes still general and does not go deep into the technical aspects of developing teaching modules, ATP, or assessment instruments. Teachers still need more intensive mentoring and complete examples of learning tools to gain a more comprehensive understanding.
- d. My suggestions for the school or the government are:
 - 1) Provide more structured technical training, especially related to developing ATP, teaching modules, assessments, and other learning tools.
 - 2) Develop a learning-resource bank that teachers can use as a reference.
 - 3) Reduce administrative tasks that do not directly impact learning so teachers can focus more on teaching.
 - 4) Provide intensive mentoring from supervisors or expert facilitators so teachers receive guidance when preparing learning tools.
 - 5) Provide a more user-friendly digital platform for submitting administrative documents to reduce time consumption.

Teacher 2 expressed the following views:

- a. In my opinion, the most challenging part is preparing the teaching module because it must be adjusted to students' needs, learning outcomes, and the school context.
- b. Designing differentiated learning and assessments suitable for students with diverse abilities, while ensuring the module remains practical to use.
- c. The school provides training, but it still needs improvement.
- d. Simplify administrative procedures and increase practical trainings.

Teacher 3 expressed the following views:

- a. For me, the most challenging part is developing the teaching module. This is because the module is the "heart" of the learning process. Preparing it is not merely fulfilling administrative requirements but integrating—comprehensively and creatively—the CP, Learning Objectives, ATP, diagnostic, formative, and summative assessments, as well as differentiation to accommodate diverse students. It takes time and deep thought to create a module that is truly meaningful and applicable in the classroom, not just a document to complete requirements.

- b. The biggest challenge is time allocation. Ideally, developing a high-quality module requires lengthy research, planning, and revisions. However, given daily teaching demands, it becomes difficult to prepare a well-designed module. Another challenge is bridging the idealism of the Merdeka Curriculum (such as differentiation and the P5 project) with real classroom conditions, including large class sizes and students' diverse backgrounds.
- c. The school has attempted to provide training, such as In-House Training (IHT) and workshops. However, in terms of adequacy, improvement is still needed. Most trainings remain general and theoretical. We need ongoing mentoring, practical examples, simulations of module development, and discussion forums to address specific issues encountered in the field.
- d. My suggestions are:
 - For the School:**
 - o *Form "Teacher Working Groups" (KKG) or small teams based on subjects or grade levels to collaboratively create teaching modules. This can distribute the workload and improve module quality.*
 - o *Provide "dedicated hours" or reduce teaching hours for teachers who are heavily involved in developing learning tools.*
 - For the Government:**
 - o *Provide more ready-to-use and varied teaching modules for all subjects and grade levels that teachers can adapt, not just empty templates.*
 - o *Simplify non-essential administrative formats and focus on substantial aspects of learning.*
 - o *Provide practical, tiered training that addresses real needs faced by teachers in the field.*

Teacher 4 expressed the following views:

- a. For me, the most challenging part is preparing the teaching module because it requires deep understanding of the curriculum, students' competencies, and appropriate teaching methods. Preparing a module also takes a long time and must be adjusted to students' needs.
- b. The biggest challenge is integrating elements of the Merdeka Curriculum (such as CP, ATP, and assessment) into a relevant and student-centered module. Additionally, limited references and examples that fit the local context also pose challenges.
- c. This answer may vary depending on personal experiences. Generally, some schools do provide training, but many teachers still feel that the training does not fully address their needs in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum.
- d. My suggestions:
 - For Schools:**
 - o Provide regular training and direct mentoring (coaching) for teachers in developing modules and other learning tools.
 - o Provide adequate time for teachers to prepare and revise administrative documents.
 - For the Government:**
 - o Provide standardized teaching module examples that can be adapted to local contexts.
 - o Improve access to digital platforms that support Merdeka Curriculum administration.

Discussion

Based on the findings from interviews and observations with four high school teachers, it was revealed that the main obstacle in implementing the administrative aspects of the Merdeka Curriculum in the teaching process is closely related to the development of teaching modules. All teachers stated that designing teaching modules is the most difficult administrative component to complete. This challenge arises because teaching modules must include several crucial elements such as Learning Outcomes (CP), Learning Objective Flow (ATP), various types of assessments including diagnostic, formative, and summative, as well as differentiation strategies tailored to students' needs. The process of developing teaching modules also requires a high level of creativity and in-depth analysis so that the modules produced are contextual, flexible, and capable of accommodating the diverse characteristics of students. This makes the process time-consuming, demanding significant effort and complex pedagogical understanding. (Wantiana & Mellisa, 2023). In facing the most significant challenges, many educators acknowledged experiencing difficulties in harmonizing students' diverse needs with the competency demands outlined in the Merdeka Curriculum. Classrooms that vary in student ability, learning styles, and backgrounds require teachers to design different and effective learning activities. Teachers also stated that

designing assessments that truly reflect students' learning achievements is a highly time-consuming task, particularly because it requires consideration of relevance and fairness for all students. (Agusty et al., 2023)

The findings also indicate that training or workshops related to the administration of the Merdeka Curriculum in schools are still insufficient. Although several schools have conducted In-House Training (IHT) and sent teachers to external training, the training content is considered too general and lacks focus on technical aspects, especially the development of teaching modules, ATP, and assessment tools. Teachers expect ongoing mentoring, comprehensive examples of learning devices, and discussion forums that can help address concrete problems encountered during curriculum implementation. (Asmar Jaya Gulo et al., 2024). Suggestions from teachers to improve the administrative implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum are divided into two categories: suggestions for schools and suggestions for the government. (Hasanah et al., n.d.-a) Teachers recommend that schools form a working group or team responsible for developing teaching modules, allocate specific time for teachers to work on learning devices, and provide regular training and direct mentoring. On the other hand, teachers expect the government to simplify administrative procedures that are considered unnecessary, provide comprehensive and ready-to-use sample teaching modules, and improve technical training that is more applicable and structured. In addition, they also hope for the development of a more intuitive and efficient digital platform that can reduce administrative burdens so that teachers can focus more on teaching activities. (Ilmu Pendidikan Nonformal et al., 2024). Overall, the findings of this study indicate that the main challenges for high school teachers in implementing the administrative components of the Merdeka Curriculum lie not only in the technical aspects of designing learning tools, but also in time constraints, the lack of comprehensive training, and the need for more concrete examples and guidance. (Hartawati & Karim, n.d.-b) With adequate support from educational institutions and the government, these obstacles can be reduced, enabling the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum to run more effectively and have a positive impact on improving the quality of teaching in the classroom. (UBT01-10-2025-081928, n.d.)

4. CONCLUSION

The research findings show that one of the main problems faced by high school teachers in implementing the administration of the Merdeka Curriculum is developing teaching modules. (Andriani & Widiyono, 2024) Teaching modules must incorporate various essential elements such as learning outcomes (CP), learning objective flow (ATP), diagnostic, formative, and summative assessments, as well as differentiation strategies tailored to students' needs and characteristics. Due to the limited time teachers have—having to divide their focus between teaching, managing the classroom, and fulfilling administrative demands—the process of developing modules, which requires analysis and creativity, becomes even more difficult to accomplish. In addition, schools still provide inadequate training, as it tends to be general and does not cover the technical aspects that teachers truly need in order to implement the curriculum. (Hasanah et al., n.d.-b) This condition indicates that the administrative difficulties faced by teachers may negatively affect the quality of learning if they are not balanced with sufficient support and guidance. (Ilmu Pendidikan Nonformal et al., 2024; Jannah et al., 2022).

Based on the results of this study, schools need to better support teachers by forming working groups or teams responsible for developing teaching modules, providing dedicated time for preparing learning materials, and conducting continuous technical training that focuses on practical skills in designing ATP, teaching modules, and assessments. In addition, schools should provide complete sample learning materials as references so that teachers do not have to start from scratch. (Education in Indonesia a Decade on Transforming Education in Indonesia: Examining the Landscape of Current Reforms, 2023). Meanwhile, the government is expected to simplify the administrative tasks of the Merdeka Curriculum so that teachers can focus more on the teaching and learning process. The government should also improve technical training for teachers, provide a bank of teaching modules that can be adapted to each school's needs, and develop a more user-friendly and effective digital platform to assist with administrative tasks such as data collection and reporting. These efforts are expected to help teachers overcome administrative challenges and support the optimal implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in schools. (Astuti et al., 2024).

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