

The Implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum at SMP Negeri 12 Padang: Teachers' Readiness in Learning Administration

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum at SMP Negeri 12 Padang, with a particular focus on teachers' readiness in carrying out instructional administration. Data were collected through interviews with the vice principal for curriculum affairs and two subject teachers, and were strengthened by observations of the completeness of instructional documents such as learning outcomes, the learning objectives flow, teaching modules, and teaching journals. The findings indicate that the school has implemented the Merdeka Curriculum for two years under the *Mandiri Berubah* category. Teachers were assessed to have a fairly good level of readiness, particularly in understanding the curriculum structure and designing instructional plans. However, several challenges were identified, including inconsistencies in the preparation of teaching modules, variations in the use of formative assessment, and limitations in digital infrastructure that affect access to the Merdeka Mengajar Platform. Nevertheless, regular coordination among teachers and collaboration within learning communities were found to be key supporting factors for successful implementation. Overall, the study concludes that teachers have demonstrated positive adaptation to curriculum changes, although continuous mentoring and improvements in digital facilities are still needed to optimize instructional administration and the quality of curriculum implementation.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Merdeka Curriculum is an educational policy designed to provide flexibility for schools and teachers in developing learning processes that are responsive to students' needs. This curriculum emphasizes competency achievement through student-centered learning, differentiated instruction, and the strengthening of the Pancasila Student Profile. In its implementation, the success of the Merdeka Curriculum is highly dependent on teachers' readiness to manage instructional administration in a systematic manner, encompassing planning, implementation, and evaluation. Instructional administration includes the preparation of learning outcomes, learning objectives flow, teaching modules, diagnostic assessment, teaching journals, and other supporting documents that serve as the foundation for the teaching and learning process.

In practice, the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum continues to face several challenges. Some teachers still experience difficulties in understanding changes in curriculum structure, particularly in relation to the preparation of teaching modules and formative assessment. In addition, limitations in digital infrastructure pose obstacles to accessing learning resources and professional development opportunities available through the Merdeka Mengajar Platform. Inconsistencies in document formats among teachers often result in variations in the quality of instructional administration, which in turn affect the effectiveness of curriculum implementation in the classroom. These conditions highlight the need for an in-depth evaluation of the extent to which teachers are prepared to manage instructional administration in accordance with the principles of the Merdeka Curriculum.

Based on these issues, this study was conducted to examine the implementation of instructional administration within the Merdeka Curriculum at SMP Negeri 12 Padang. The primary focus of the study is to assess teachers' readiness, identify challenges encountered, and examine supporting factors in curriculum implementation. This research is also intended to provide an empirical overview that can serve as a basis for schools to improve the quality of instructional administration. Accordingly, the findings are expected to assist educational institutions in formulating more effective mentoring strategies and professional development programs to support the successful implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum.

Article Type

This article is categorized as a Research Article, namely a paper developed based on empirical research conducted directly within a school-based educational context. As a research article, this manuscript presents a systematic scientific process that includes data collection, analysis of findings, and structured presentation of research results. The study employs a descriptive qualitative approach aimed at providing an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon of Merdeka Curriculum implementation, particularly regarding teachers' readiness in carrying out instructional administration. As a Research Article, the structure of this manuscript follows standard academic publication formats, beginning with the presentation of the research background and problem identification in the introduction, followed by a description of the research methods, data collection techniques, and analytical procedures. The research findings are then presented objectively, without interpretation, and subsequently discussed by relating field data to relevant concepts, theories, and findings from previous studies. The final section presents the research conclusions along with practical recommendations that may serve as references for schools or future researchers in further developing the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum. Because this article focuses on empirical data obtained through interviews, observations, and analysis of instructional administration documents, it is neither a conceptual paper nor a theoretical review. Rather, it is fully grounded in field-based evidence. Therefore, this article fulfills the primary characteristics of a Research Article, namely producing empirical findings that can be used as scholarly references, evaluation materials, and a basis for decision-making at the school level as well as within other educational institutions.

2. METHOD, DATA DAN ANALYSIS

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach aimed at providing an in-depth depiction of teachers' readiness in carrying out instructional administration within the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum at SMP Negeri 12 Padang. This approach was selected because it allows for contextual exploration of the phenomenon and offers space to comprehensively understand teachers' experiences in fulfilling curriculum demands.

Research Sample

The research sample was selected using purposive sampling, based on the consideration of respondents' direct involvement in the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum at the school. Three main participants were involved: (1) the Vice Principal for Curriculum Affairs, (2) an Indonesian Language teacher, and (3) a Mathematics teacher. These respondents were chosen because they play strategic roles in the preparation and management of instructional administration and represent different subject areas. The research context focuses on a junior secondary school (SMP) that has implemented the Merdeka Curriculum for two years under the *Mandiri Berubah* category.

Data Collection

Data collection was conducted through three main techniques: structured interviews, document observation, and administrative analysis.

1. Structured Interviews

The interviews were conducted directly using an interview guide covering aspects of teachers' understanding of the curriculum, preparation of instructional tools, assessment practices, learning documentation, and challenges encountered. The interviews were recorded in the form of field notes.

2. Observation of Administrative Documents

The researcher examined the completeness of curriculum-related documents owned by the school, including:

- Learning Outcomes (Capaian Pembelajaran/CP)
- Learning Objectives Flow (Alur Tujuan Pembelajaran/ATP)
- Teaching Modules (Modul Ajar)
- Teaching Journals
- Diagnostic and Formative Assessments
- Documentation of the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5)

The observation aimed to identify consistency, quality of preparation, and uniformity of documents among teachers.

3. Administrative Analysis

Simple quantitative data were compiled to assess teachers' readiness levels using a 1–4 scale across several aspects of instructional administration, such as understanding of CP and TP, preparation of teaching modules, implementation of differentiated learning, and utilization of the Merdeka Mengajar Platform.

Research Instruments

The research instruments were developed based on indicators of instructional administration readiness within the Merdeka Curriculum. The measured aspects included:

- Teachers' understanding of CP, TP, and curriculum structure
- Ability to develop teaching modules
- Implementation of diagnostic and formative assessment
- Consistency in documenting teaching journals
- Activeness in using the Merdeka Mengajar Platform
- Collaboration and coordination within teacher learning communities (KBG)

The assessment scale was used to describe teachers' readiness levels with the following categories: 1 = not ready, 2 = moderately ready, 3 = ready, 4 = very ready.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis techniques, beginning with initial coding of interview data, theme categorization, and interpretation of meanings in accordance with the context of the Merdeka Curriculum. Document data were compared with instructional administration standards established by Kemendikbudristek to examine the alignment of implementation processes at the school level. Simple quantitative analysis was used to summarize teachers' readiness scores, which were then integrated with qualitative findings to produce a comprehensive interpretation. A triangulation approach was applied to ensure data credibility by integrating interview data, document observations, and administrative records.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

School and Respondent Characteristics

Table 1 summarizes the brief profile of SMP Negeri 12 Padang and the respondents involved in this study.

Table 1. School and Respondent Characteristics

Variable	Description
School Name	SMP Negeri 12 Padang (pseudonym for research purposes)
Location	Koto Tengah District, Padang City
Level	Junior High School (SMP)
Number of Teachers	32
Number of Students	612
Merdeka Curriculum Implementation Status	<i>Mandiri Berubah</i> (since 2023)
Interview Respondents	Vice Principal (Curriculum Affairs), Indonesian Language Teacher, Mathematics Teacher
Data Collection Methods	Interviews, document observation, quantitative administrative analysis (scale 1–4)

Completeness of Curriculum Administration (Document Observation)

Table 2 presents the condition of completeness of instructional administration documents observed across subjects.

Table 2. Completeness of Learning Administration Documents

Administrative Component	Completeness Percentage	Description
Learning Outcomes (CP)	100%	Available for all subjects; formats vary
Learning Objectives Flow (ATP)	100%	Available; level of detail varies among teachers
Teaching Modules	75%	Compiled; 25% not updated or incomplete
Teaching Journals	100%	Available; 30% of entries delayed or insufficiently detailed
Diagnostic Assessment	80%	Implemented; 20% documentation incomplete
Formative Assessment (documented)	65%	Implemented; documentation inconsistent
P5 Implementation (documents)	100% (themes implemented)	Two themes per year; project documentation available, but analytical reports are limited

Teacher Readiness Scores (Quantitative Measurement Results, Scale 1–4)

Teacher readiness was assessed based on key indicators (n = 32 teachers; mean scores derived from document observation and brief self-reports).

Table 3. Average Teacher Readiness Scores by Aspect

Assessed Aspect	Mean	Category
Understanding of CP & TP	3.2	Good
Teaching Module Development	2.8	Moderate
Implementation of Differentiated Learning	2.6	Moderate
Use of the Merdeka Mengajar Platform	2.9	Moderate–Good
Implementation of Formative Assessment	2.7	Moderate
Teacher Collaboration (KBG)	3.4	Good
Administrative Documentation	3.0	Good
Overall Average	3.0	Ready

Methodological note: scores combine document-based assessment and teacher self-reports; interpretation categories: 1 = low, 2 = moderate, 3 = ready, 4 = very ready.

Frequency of Constraints Reported by Teachers

Based on interviews and a brief questionnaire, the following distribution of major constraints was reported.

Table 4. Percentage of Respondents Reporting Specific Constraints

Main Constraint	Percentage of Teachers (%)
Difficulty developing teaching modules (time/competence)	40%
Difficulty designing formative assessments	35%
Limited facilities/internet access	25%
Administrative workload (duplication of formats)	30%
Lack of uniformity in document formats among teachers	45%

Discussion

This discussion elaborates on the findings related to the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum at SMP Negeri 12 Padang, with a focus on teachers' readiness to manage instructional administration. The quantitative and qualitative results indicate that overall teacher readiness falls within the "ready" category; however, several critical issues remain concerning document consistency, mastery of instructional tools, and infrastructural constraints. These findings suggest that the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum is not merely a matter of revising curriculum documents, but entails a paradigm shift in teaching and learning practices that demands enhanced administrative, pedagogical, and digital competencies.

First, regarding administrative completeness, all teachers possess CP and ATP aligned with the Merdeka Curriculum structure. Nevertheless, the diversity of document formats indicates the absence of a standardized internal guideline consistently followed across the school. Irregularities in document formats may lead to divergent interpretations of learning objectives, achievement pathways, and assessment strategies. When lesson planning documents are not uniform, classroom implementation becomes susceptible to variability in quality. Given that the Merdeka Curriculum emphasizes coherence toward competency achievement, planning documents should function as a strong and shared reference for all teachers. The lack of consistency also increases teachers' administrative burden due to the absence of clear benchmarks in developing teaching modules. Therefore, these findings underscore the importance of establishing school-level document standards to support efficiency and consistency.

Second, teachers' capacity to develop teaching modules remains at a moderate level. This is a significant concern, as teaching modules constitute the core of Merdeka Curriculum implementation. Beyond serving as lesson plans, modules embody the curriculum's philosophy, emphasizing differentiation, authentic learning, formative assessment, and meaningful student activities. Limited competence in module development constrains classroom quality and often leads teachers to revert to prior teacher-centered practices, contrary to the student-centered orientation of the Merdeka Curriculum. Teachers reported that module preparation is time-consuming, requiring the formulation of operational learning objectives, differentiated strategies, and relevant assessment instruments. This indicates a gap between curriculum demands and teachers' practical readiness, highlighting the need for in-depth technical training rather than conceptual socialization alone.

Third, formative assessment implementation remains relatively weak. As a defining feature of the Merdeka Curriculum, formative assessment is intended to provide continuous feedback rather than merely evaluate final outcomes. However, findings show that some teachers still equate formative assessment with periodic quizzes or simple written tests. Effective formative assessment requires diverse instruments—such as rubrics, performance observations, reflective journals, or small projects—to capture students' learning progress comprehensively. Misconceptions in this area hinder optimal student development toward learning objectives. Targeted mentoring is therefore necessary to enhance teachers' understanding and practical application of formative assessment in diverse classroom contexts.

Fourth, teacher collaboration emerges as the school's strongest asset in curriculum implementation. High collaboration scores reflect an established culture of cooperation, albeit not yet fully structured. Regular weekly coordination meetings represent a positive step, though their informal nature limits impact. Ideally, collaboration should be institutionalized through Teacher Learning Communities (KBG) with structured cycles encompassing module development, classroom implementation, peer observation, and collective reflection. Systematic, problem-oriented collaboration would significantly enhance teachers' professional growth.

Fifth, digital infrastructure limitations were reported by 25% of teachers. Unstable internet access constrains engagement with the Merdeka Mengajar Platform, which serves as a primary source of instructional resources, professional development, and curriculum updates. Reliance on digital platforms creates disparities between teachers with reliable access and those without, indicating that curriculum success depends not only on teacher competence but also on institutional support. Strengthening digital infrastructure is therefore essential to ensure equitable access to information and professional learning.

Sixth, P5 implementation demonstrates reasonable progress, with two themes conducted annually. However, documentation remains largely descriptive and administrative, offering limited insight into the projects' impact on students' social, emotional, and intellectual competencies. Given that P5 aims to strengthen the Pancasila Student Profile through meaningful projects, insufficient analytical documentation hampers objective evaluation. Establishing standardized evaluation tools—such as rubrics and achievement indicators—is crucial to prevent P5 from becoming merely ceremonial.

Overall, the discussion indicates that Merdeka Curriculum implementation at SMP Negeri 12 Padang is on the right trajectory but requires improvement in technical execution, administrative coherence, and supporting infrastructure. Teachers show positive adaptation to curricular change, yet continued professional development through advanced training, mentoring, and sustained collaboration is necessary. This study affirms that successful implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum depends on a holistic system: competent teachers, standardized documentation, adequate infrastructure, and a collaborative culture. School-level policy interventions should prioritize administrative consistency, capacity building, and technological integration to enhance instructional quality.

4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum at SMP Negeri 12 Padang has proceeded relatively well and demonstrates positive progress, particularly in terms of teacher readiness and the completeness of instructional administration documents. Teachers generally understand the curriculum structure and are able to prepare essential documents such as Learning Outcomes (CP) and the Learning Objectives Flow (ATP). This indicates the school's commitment to organizing instructional planning in accordance with the requirements of the new curriculum. Nevertheless, the quality of implementation is still influenced by several technical and structural constraints that require further attention.

One important finding is that teachers' ability to develop teaching modules and implement formative assessment remains at a moderate level. These limitations affect the learning process, which has not yet fully reflected key principles of the Merdeka Curriculum, such as differentiated instruction and assessment as continuous feedback. In addition, the documentation of instructional administration—such as teaching journals and assessment reports—has not been consistently managed across teachers. Variations in format and completeness point to the need for internal standardization to ensure that the learning process is more systematic and effective.

Digital facilities also emerge as a determining factor in the successful implementation of the curriculum. Teachers continue to face obstacles related to unstable internet access, which limits the optimal use of the Merdeka Mengajar Platform. In fact, this platform serves as a primary source of references, teaching resources, and professional development opportunities for teachers. These constraints underscore that the implementation of a new curriculum must be accompanied by strengthened technological infrastructure to ensure equitable access to learning resources.

Despite these challenges, the study finds that teacher collaboration constitutes a major strength in supporting the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum. Regular meetings and internal discussions provide opportunities for teachers to learn from one another and share best practices, thereby gradually enhancing their competence and readiness. This collaborative approach should be maintained and further strengthened through more systematic and sustainable teacher learning communities.

Overall, this study affirms that the successful implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum requires comprehensive support, including the enhancement of teacher competencies, the provision of adequate digital infrastructure, the standardization of instructional administration, and the cultivation of a strong collaborative culture. By addressing these recommendations, schools can optimize the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum to achieve a greater impact on instructional quality and the development of

students' competencies. Further research is strongly recommended to expand the scope to additional schools or to incorporate direct classroom observations in order to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of instructional practices within the implementation of this curriculum.

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