

THE READINESS IN IMPLEMENTING THE KURIKULUM MERDEKA FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE SUBJECT IN ELEMENTARY (A Case Study of SD Islam Kergon 01)

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ABSTRACT

Kurikulum Merdeka, yang diperkenalkan oleh Kemendikbudristek (Kementerian Pendidikan, Kebudayaan, Riset, dan Teknologi) pada tahun 2022, bertujuan untuk merevitalisasi kerangka pendidikan pasca COVID-19 dengan mendorong pedagogi yang lebih adaptif dan berpusat pada siswa. Penelitian ini menyelidiki kesiapan SD Islam Kergon 01 dalam menerapkan Kurikulum Merdeka untuk mata pelajaran bahasa Inggris di tingkat sekolah dasar. Dengan menggunakan metodologi studi kasus kualitatif, data dikumpulkan melalui kuesioner, dan wawancara untuk mengevaluasi kesiapan pemangku kepentingan utama, termasuk kepala sekolah dan guru. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan adanya antusiasme umum terhadap kurikulum baru ini; namun, tantangan signifikan tetap ada, terutama terkait alokasi sumber daya dan pelatihan guru. Penelitian ini menekankan pentingnya pengembangan profesional yang berkelanjutan dan dukungan infrastruktur yang lebih baik untuk memfasilitasi implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka yang efektif. Penelitian ini berkontribusi pada diskusi yang lebih luas tentang reformasi pendidikan di Indonesia, memberikan wawasan praktis bagi pembuat kebijakan dan pendidik yang berkomitmen untuk meningkatkan penerapan kerangka kurikulum baru.

Kata Kunci: Kurikulum Merdeka, bahasa Inggris, pengajaran, pembelajaran, pengajaran bahasa Inggris, pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris, pendidikan dasar, implementasi kurikulum strategi, kesiapan, Pendidikan, strategi Pendidikan, kesiapan pendidikan, SD Islam Kergon 01

ABSTRACT

The Kurikulum Merdeka, introduced by Indonesia's Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology in 2022, seeks to rejuvenate the educational framework post COVID-19 by fostering a more adaptable and student-centered pedagogy. This study investigates the preparedness of SD Islam Kergon 01 in implementing the Kurikulum Merdeka for the English language subject at the elementary level. Utilizing a qualitative case study methodology, data were collected through questionnaires, and interviews to evaluate the readiness of key stakeholders, including headmasters and teachers. The results reveal a general eagerness for the new curriculum; however, significant challenges persist, particularly in relation to resource allocation and teacher training. The study underscores the necessity for ongoing professional development and improved infrastructural support to facilitate the effective implementation of the Kurikulum Merdeka. This research contributes to the broader discussion on educational reform in Indonesia, providing practical insights for policymakers and educators committed to enhancing the deployment of new curricular frameworks.

Keywords: Kurikulum Merdeka, English Language, Teaching, Learning, English Language Learning, English language teaching, elementary education, curriculum implementation, Strategies, Readiness, Educational, educational readiness, educational strategies, SD Islam Kergon 01

INTRODUCTION

In 2020, the world faced unprecedented challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which significantly disrupted various sectors, including education. In Indonesia, the pandemic forced the closure of schools and necessitated a rapid shift to remote learning. This transition exposed and worsened existing weaknesses within the education system (Asrifan et al., 2023). In response to the educational disruptions caused by the pandemic, the Indonesian government introduced an emergency curriculum to support distance learning and to mitigate the challenges faced by teachers, parents, and students (Arini et al., 2021).

To further address the long-term impacts of the pandemic on education and to enhance the quality of education in Indonesia, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology launched the *Kurikulum Merdeka* in 2022, replacing the *Kurikulum 2013*. The *Kurikulum Merdeka* aims to develop a more flexible and student-centered approach, empowering schools to adapt the curriculum to their specific needs and circumstances. This initiative represents a significant shift in the educational landscape of Indonesia, with a focus on improving the quality of human resources through education.

However, the successful implementation of *Kurikulum Merdeka* requires rigorous monitoring and evaluation to ensure that it meets its intended goals. Many schools have encountered challenges in adapting to the new curriculum, highlighting the need for continuous support and training for educators (Habib et al., 2023). Despite these efforts, there have been significant difficulties in ensuring that schools are adequately prepared to implement the new curriculum, particularly in the aftermath of the pandemic. The readiness of schools and educators is crucial for the effective implementation of *Kurikulum Merdeka*, as it directly impacts the ability of students to receive a quality education (Rusmiati et al., 2023).

The implementation of *Kurikulum Merdeka* in various schools across Indonesia has introduced significant changes to the educational process, necessitating a considerable amount of time and effort to fully assess its impact. Research on the readiness of schools and teachers to implement *Kurikulum Merdeka* has shown varying levels of preparedness, with some educators demonstrating a high level of engagement and others struggling with the new demands (Ihsan, 2022). For instance, a study on the implementation of *Kurikulum Merdeka* in an elementary school found that teachers were actively engaged in developing teaching materials and conducting cognitive assessments, although challenges remained in aligning with the curriculum's goals (Alimuddin, 2023).

In the context of teaching English at the elementary level, there has been limited research on how *Kurikulum Merdeka* has been implemented. Studies have generally focused on teacher preparedness and the availability of teaching resources, but there has been a lack of attention to how the curriculum impacts English language instruction specifically (Suhirman, 2014). This gap in the literature highlights the need for a focused examination of the readiness of schools to implement *Kurikulum Merdeka* for English language instruction.

This study aims to fill this gap by exploring the readiness of *Sekolah Dasar Islam Kergon 01* to implement *Kurikulum Merdeka* for the English language subject. Since the reinstatement of English as a mandatory subject under the new curriculum, it is essential to assess how schools are adapting to these changes, particularly given the historical variations in the status of English language instruction in Indonesian elementary schools (Meisani, 2021). *Sekolah Dasar Islam Kergon 01*, located in Kergon Village, Pekalongan City, serves as a case study to investigate these issues, with the research focusing on the preparedness of the school to implement the new curriculum in teaching English.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research adopts a qualitative approach, focusing on curriculum study methods. Qualitative research as an inquiry process that seeks to understand human or social problems through diverse methodological traditions. It involves constructing a comprehensive, holistic picture, analyzing words, reporting detailed views, and conducting studies in natural settings (Rukminingsih et al., 2020). The objective of this qualitative descriptive/case study is to elucidate the implementation of the *Kurikulum Merdeka*, particularly regarding the English language subject at *Sekolah Dasar Islam Kergon 01*.

This study will take place from March to June 2024 at Sekolah Dasar Islam Kergon 01 in Kota Pekalongan.

The data will be collected through questionnaires and interviews with the headmaster and two teachers, using a purposive sampling method. Primary data sources include questionnaire, which is a data collection tool comprising systematically structured questions. Respondents provide measurable responses through pre-set options or open-ended answers. In this research, questionnaires will be distributed to the headmaster and two teachers to assess the school's readiness and strategies for implementing the *Kurikulum Merdeka* in the English language subject. Interview, also highlights as a data collection technique that involves direct interaction between the researcher and participants. Qualitative interviews seek in-depth understanding of participants' experiences and perspectives related to the studied phenomenon. This research will employ structured interviews with the headmaster and two teachers to validate and elaborate on the questionnaire data. Audio recordings will be used to document these interviews for further analysis (Ardiansyah et al., 2023). while secondary data sources consist of school documents and journals.

The data analysis will employ the Miles and Huberman method, which involves several key stages to ensure a comprehensive and unbiased examination of the collected information. Initially, data display will be facilitated by transcribing interviews with the headmaster and English teachers, converting audio recordings into text for detailed analysis. Following this, data reduction will involve categorizing and organizing the crucial information extracted from the interviews, ensuring that only pertinent details are retained. The data interpretation phase will then focus on understanding the underlying phenomena observed in the interviews and questionnaire responses, strictly adhering to objectivity to avoid any personal bias. Finally, the conclusions will be drawn based on these research findings, articulated in a clear and concise manner, and subjected to iterative reviews to confirm their validity and accuracy.

Secondary data, such as school documents (if available) (*Kurikulum, RPP/Prota/Promes, Silabus*), will be used to corroborate the primary data.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the findings and discussion regarding the readiness and strategies in implementing the *Kurikulum Merdeka* for the English language subject at *SD Islam Kergon 01*. The research focused on identifying the challenges and approaches adopted by the school to enhance English language learning under the new curriculum framework.

A. Readiness

The readiness of implementing English teaching at *SD Islam Kergon 01* was assessed using various indicators, including the Qualification of English Teachers, the English Teacher Availability and School Facilities, Policies, the Students' Interest in Acquiring English Language Skills, and the Processes.

1. Qualification of English Teachers

The headmaster of *SD Islam Kergon 01* acknowledges the school's commendable efforts in developing English language learning, despite the challenges posed by limited funding and the predominance of general qualifications among the teaching staff. The school emphasizes ongoing professional development through active participation in Teacher Working Groups (*KKG/Kelompok Kerja Guru*) and workshops. The commitment to professional development is

crucial, yet the lack of formal participation in seminars or workshops by some teachers highlights a gap that needs addressing to ensure the effective implementation of the *Kurikulum Merdeka*. The experience of the teachers in participating in professional development activities varied. For instance, the first-grade teacher has had limited exposure to formal training but relies on self-directed study and practical classroom experience. This approach reflects a need for more structured professional development opportunities to enhance teaching skills effectively. Conversely, teachers from fourth to sixth grades have had more consistent opportunities for professional development, which has helped them refine their teaching competencies.

2. English Teacher Availability and School Facilities

The headmaster identifies significant constraints related to the availability of specialized English teachers and limited learning facilities. The school relies on existing teachers with general qualifications to deliver English language instruction, often without the benefit of specialized training or adequate digital resources. This approach limits the depth and interactivity of English language learning.

Both first-grade and fourth to sixth-grade teachers face challenges in terms of limited digital resources and lack of specific English-oriented facilities. They strive to utilize basic teaching materials and create learning media independently. There is a pressing need for improved facilities and targeted training programs to optimize English language instruction and incorporate more diverse and interactive methods.

3. Policies

SD Islam Kergon 01 has integrated English into its curriculum as an elective local content subject but has not yet established it as a mandatory course. The school's approach to English language learning emphasizes pragmatism, aligning with the specific needs of the community it serves. The policy governing English language learning emphasizes a student-centered approach, particularly for younger students, while higher grades involve more complex educational materials and tasks.

The school has made efforts to develop an operational curriculum for English language instruction, adhering to guidelines set by the Directorate General of Education. However, the preparedness for English language learning remains limited, focusing primarily on basic teaching methods such as reading and imitation.

4. Students' Interest in Acquiring English Language Skills

The teachers at *SD Islam Kergon 01* have demonstrated commendable readiness in addressing students' preparedness and interest in English language learning. The first-grade teacher employs a student-centered approach, while the fourth to sixth-grade teacher uses interactive and contextually relevant strategies to engage students. Despite challenges, students exhibit a positive interest in learning English.

5. Processes

Both the first-grade and fourth to sixth-grade teachers exhibit strong readiness in implementing student-centered learning techniques and integrated assessments. They utilize various assessment strategies to support English language learning and tailor instruction to meet the individual needs of their students. However, there is room for improvement in fully grasping and applying the concept of integrated assessment. The use and development of teaching tools vary

between the grades, with the first-grade teacher focusing on engaging and enjoyable activities, while the fourth to sixth-grade teacher emphasizes the need for more comprehensive and interactive learning experiences. The collaboration with parents, families, and the community is currently limited. Enhancing these partnerships is essential for supporting English language learning and ensuring a holistic approach to education.

Based on the questionnaire and interview results, *SD Islam Kergon 01* demonstrates an initial preparedness for implementing English language education within the *Kurikulum Merdeka* framework. Despite facing challenges such as limited resources, teacher qualifications, and institutional support, the school's dedication to ongoing improvement and proactive teacher efforts indicates a promising potential for advancement. To further enhance the quality of English language teaching and learning at *SD Islam Kergon 01*, it is essential to tackle these challenges through focused professional development, improved facilities, and strengthened community partnerships. These actions will be critical in overcoming existing obstacles and achieving significant progress in the school's English language education.

B. Strategies

The strategies for implementing English teaching at *SD Islam Kergon 01* were assessed using five key indicators: the Qualification of English Teachers, the English Teacher Availability and School Facilities, the Policies, the Students' Interest in Acquiring English Language Skills, and the Processes. To gain insights into these strategies, interviews were conducted with the headmaster and teachers.

1. Qualification of English Teachers

Future strategies at *SD Islam Kergon 01* include increasing teacher participation in training and workshops, as well as improving teacher qualifications through more targeted recruitment and specialized training in English language education.

2. English Teacher Availability and School Facilities

The current strategy focuses on maximizing existing resources and fostering teacher initiative and creativity in English teaching. However, there is a need for dedicated English teachers and specific facilities to support comprehensive English language learning. Future strategies should aim to enhance these areas to facilitate better learning outcomes.

3. Policies

The school's strategy for English language instruction relies heavily on teacher initiative and the flexibility afforded by the *Kurikulum Merdeka*. Despite challenges related to resource availability and teacher qualifications, the school is committed to continuous evaluation and improvement in its approach to English language learning.

4. Students' Interest in Acquiring English Language Skills

The strategies employed by the teachers involve experiential and interactive learning to foster student interest and motivation. Future strategies should consider incorporating structured extracurricular activities and expanding the use of multimedia resources to make learning more engaging and relevant.

5. Processes

The strategies for student-centered learning and integrated assessment emphasize hands-on experiences and practical activities. Future strategies should include a more comprehensive approach to integrated assessment and the use of multimedia tools to enhance English language

learning. The collaboration with parents and the community needs to be enhanced to support English language learning effectively. Future strategies should aim to establish stronger partnerships with educational institutions and utilize digital resources to strengthen the learning process.

The interview results indicate that the strategies for implementing the *Kurikulum Merdeka* for the English language subject at the elementary level show a solid foundation for its successful execution. The commitment of the headmaster and teachers, alongside focused enhancements in resources, professional development, and community engagement, will be essential in elevating the quality of English language education at the school.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion of this study entitled "The Readiness in Implementing the Kurikulum Merdeka for English Language Subject in Elementary (A Case Study of SD Islam Kergon 01)" indicates that SD Islam Kergon 01 is not fully ready to implement the *Kurikulum Merdeka* for English language subject, several factors including limited funding, resource constraints and the lack of specialized training.

Current strategies leverage available resources and encourage teacher creativity, although there is a significant need for more structured activities, multimedia tools, and increased collaboration with parents and the community.

To enhance the implementation of the curriculum, it is crucial for teachers to seek specialized training and adopt innovative teaching methods, for the school administration to invest in necessary resources and build partnerships, and for future research to explore effective strategies across various educational settings. By addressing these areas, SD Islam Kergon 01 can strengthen its approach to English language education, providing a more comprehensive and engaging learning experience for its students.

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