

Teacher Readiness in Implementing the Merdeka Curriculum: A National Study of Public Schools in Mataram City

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Article history Received : December 7, 2025 Revised : December 10, 2025 Accepted : February 22, 2026 Published : February 28, 2026 Keywords Merdeka Curriculum teacher readiness instructional innovation public schools Mataram City  License by CC-BY-SA Copyright © 2026, The Author(s).	The implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum requires teachers to be adequately prepared in understanding its concepts, principles, and learner-centered instructional practices. This study aims to analyze the readiness of teachers in public schools across Mataram City to implement the Merdeka Curriculum, focusing on pedagogical competence, mastery of teaching resources, the ability to conduct authentic assessments, and the utilization of educational technology. This research employs a quantitative descriptive approach involving 120 teachers from eight public schools selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected using standardized questionnaires and brief interviews, then analyzed using descriptive statistics and simple triangulation. The findings indicate that most teachers fall into the “moderately ready” category, with an average readiness score of 72%, particularly in their understanding of the curriculum’s core concepts and adaptation of instructional methods. However, challenges remain in designing diagnostic assessments, conducting formative evaluations, and accessing intensive government-provided training. This study concludes that teacher readiness in Mataram City still requires improvement through continuous professional development, the strengthening of learning communities, and the provision of technical support in schools. These findings provide important implications for policymakers in developing systematic strategies to enhance teacher competencies and accelerate the successful implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum.
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Introduction

Indonesia’s recent educational reforms, particularly the introduction of the Merdeka Curriculum (Kurikulum Merdeka), mark a significant shift toward learner-centered pedagogy, competency-based learning, and holistic student development. As articulated by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Kemendikbud), the curriculum seeks to overcome long-standing challenges related to learning loss, rigid instructional models, and limited teacher autonomy (Kemendikbudristek, 2022). The successful realization of these ambitions, however, depends heavily on teacher readiness, which remains one of the most critical determinants of curriculum implementation outcomes. Teacher readiness involves not only conceptual understanding of the reform but also the capacity to translate curriculum principles into instructional practices that are adaptive, innovative, and student-focused.

Globally, educational reforms often confront the issue of limited teacher preparedness, particularly when new curricula require substantial changes in pedagogy, assessment models, and classroom culture. Studies in various contexts have emphasized that even well-designed curricula fail when educators lack sufficient training or confidence to apply new methods effectively (Fullan, 2020; Darling-Hammond, 2021). The Merdeka Curriculum positions teachers as learning designers who must be capable of diagnosing students’ needs, modifying learning pathways, and selecting differentiated instructional materials. These expectations highlight the importance of investigating how prepared teachers truly are, particularly in Indonesian regions with diverse school characteristics such as Mataram City.

Teacher readiness becomes increasingly crucial when the curriculum emphasizes higher-order thinking skills (HOTS), project-based learning, and authentic assessments. These pedagogical demands require strong professional competence, mastery of digital tools, and familiarity with flexible learning sequences (Rahman et al., 2023). For many teachers, these shifts require a fundamental transformation in

mindset, moving from teacher-dominated instruction to collaborative and inquiry-oriented learning environments. Without sufficient support, such change can result in partial implementation or misinterpretation of curriculum guidelines.

The Merdeka Curriculum also places substantial attention on designing meaningful assessments, particularly formative and diagnostic assessments that guide instructional decisions. However, international research demonstrates that teachers often face difficulties in transitioning from traditional testing to authentic assessment models (Brookhart, 2018). In Indonesia, similar challenges have been documented, particularly regarding teachers' capacity to create rubrics, provide timely feedback, and conduct competency-based evaluations (Sari & Putra, 2023). Understanding how these issues manifest in Mataram City is essential for building targeted intervention strategies.

In urban educational settings such as Mataram City, teachers are expected to engage with digital learning tools to enhance instruction and assessment. The widespread use of Learning Management Systems (LMS), digital teaching platforms, and interactive media requires teachers to be digitally literate and adaptable. Recent studies during and after the COVID-19 pandemic highlight that teacher digital competency remains uneven across Indonesian schools, affecting curriculum delivery and student engagement (Trisnawati et al., 2022). Because the Merdeka Curriculum mandates technology-supported learning pathways, teacher readiness in this dimension must be examined closely.

Schools in Mataram City—both public and private—serve diverse student populations, creating variation in teaching contexts, resource availability, and institutional support. These differences may influence teachers' understanding of curriculum objectives and their ability to apply innovative teaching practices. Research on educational change suggests that school culture, leadership, and community support are critical mediating variables in teacher readiness (Hallinger, 2020). Therefore, analyzing teachers' preparedness within this specific geographical and sociocultural context provides insights that may differ from national-level findings.

Professional development is another central factor affecting teachers' readiness to implement the Merdeka Curriculum. While the government provides a range of training programs through platforms such as Guru Penggerak and Merdeka Mengajar, access and participation remain unequal across regions. Previous studies have highlighted that Indonesian teachers often rely on self-directed learning or peer collaboration due to limited structured training (Yusuf & Arifin, 2021). The extent to which Mataram teachers engage with these opportunities is essential for determining readiness levels.

Teacher readiness also encompasses emotional and psychological preparedness, including confidence, motivation, and openness to pedagogical change. Curriculum reforms inevitably create anxiety among educators, particularly when expectations shift abruptly or when training resources do not match the complexity of the reform (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). By examining teachers' perspectives and experiences, this study seeks to understand whether Mataram teachers feel equipped and supported in transitioning toward the Merdeka Curriculum.

Furthermore, curriculum implementation requires not only individual teacher competence but also strong collaborative structures. Learning communities, school-based professional groups (MGMP/KKG), and peer mentoring reduce teacher isolation and promote shared learning. Studies indicate that schools with active professional learning communities report higher levels of teacher readiness and improved student outcomes (Vescio et al., 2020). This dimension is particularly relevant in assessing Mataram's public and private schools, which may differ in collaborative practices.

Although the Merdeka Curriculum aims to simplify administrative burdens, many teachers still struggle to navigate curriculum frameworks, learning modules, and assessment guidelines. Reports from the field show that teachers frequently request clearer examples, simplified learning objectives, and more concrete instructional models (Wijayanti et al., 2023). These challenges illustrate the gap between curriculum design and practical classroom realities.

Against this backdrop, investigating teacher readiness in Mataram City is timely and relevant. Mataram represents a strategic location—urban, diverse, and considered a regional education hub in West Nusa Tenggara. As such, assessing teacher readiness in this city may provide early indicators of broader implementation challenges across similar Indonesian regions. The findings of this study therefore have implications beyond local school contexts.

This research focuses specifically on teachers' pedagogical competence, mastery of instructional resources, ability to implement authentic assessments, and digital literacy. These four dimensions reflect the core competencies emphasized in the Merdeka Curriculum and align with global frameworks for effective teaching (OECD, 2020). By adopting a quantitative descriptive method supported by brief interviews, the study provides a reliable and systematic assessment of teachers' preparedness levels.

The study's preliminary findings indicate that teachers in Mataram generally fall into the "moderately ready" category, with an average readiness score of 72%. While this suggests promising progress, the data also reveal inconsistencies in the areas of assessment literacy, diagnostic evaluation, and access to professional development. Such findings are consistent with recent national studies showing similar readiness patterns in Indonesian cities transitioning to the new curriculum (Putri & Wibowo, 2023).

Despite moderate readiness levels, teachers continue to face structural and operational barriers. Limited school-level support, insufficient training intensity, and inconsistent digital infrastructure create disparities between curriculum expectations and implementation outcomes. These obstacles raise concerns regarding sustainability, especially as the Merdeka Curriculum positions teachers as central agents of change.

In particular, the challenges related to authentic assessment indicate that more robust capacity-building initiatives are necessary. Diagnostic assessments require sophisticated understanding of learning trajectories, while formative assessments depend on continuous feedback and data-informed decision making. Without strong assessment competence, teachers may revert to traditional practices that conflict with the curriculum's vision.

Furthermore, the findings underscore the importance of strengthening learning communities and collaborative structures. Schools that foster regular peer discussions, collective lesson planning, and reflection cycles tend to demonstrate stronger curriculum implementation outcomes. This highlights the need for policymakers and school leaders to promote shared learning cultures that extend beyond formal training sessions.

Overall, the introduction of the Merdeka Curriculum represents a transformative moment in Indonesia's educational landscape. However, its success hinges largely on the readiness of teachers to enact meaningful instructional change. This study contributes empirical evidence on the status of teacher preparedness in Mataram City and provides insights that can support the government's efforts in developing targeted training programs, improving school-level support mechanisms, and ensuring that the curriculum's learner-centered vision is realized effectively across diverse school contexts.

Research Method

This study employed a quantitative descriptive research design to systematically analyze the readiness of teachers in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum across public and private schools in Mataram City. The quantitative descriptive approach was selected because it allows researchers to explore the current condition of teacher readiness based on measurable indicators without manipulating any variables. This design is widely used in educational policy and curriculum studies where the objective is to map existing phenomena and summarize trends within a specific population. The study focused on evaluating four major components of teacher readiness: pedagogical competence, mastery of instructional resources, the ability to conduct authentic assessments, and digital literacy, all of which represent core competencies demanded by the Merdeka Curriculum.

The population of this research consisted of all teachers working in public and private primary and secondary schools in Mataram City. From this population, a total of 120 teachers were selected as respondents using purposive sampling. The purposive sampling technique was chosen because the study specifically required teachers who had begun implementing or preparing to implement the Merdeka Curriculum within their respective schools. This sampling ensured that the participants possessed relevant experiences and exposure to curriculum implementation. The respondents were drawn from eight schools representing diverse geographic areas and institutional backgrounds to obtain comprehensive and representative perspectives on teacher readiness.

Data collection in this study utilized a standardized questionnaire consisting of four sections aligned with the key dimensions of teacher readiness. Each section contained multiple Likert-scale items rated on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The questionnaire was adapted from existing

instruments used in teacher competency and curriculum readiness research, and subsequently validated through expert review involving two curriculum specialists and one educational assessment expert. To enhance data validity and gain deeper insights into teachers' perceptions, brief semi-structured interviews were conducted with a subset of 20 respondents. These interviews helped triangulate questionnaire data and clarified issues related to training access, assessment challenges, and digital resource utilization.

The data collection process was carried out over a six-week period. During this time, the researcher distributed questionnaires in both digital and printed formats, allowing respondents flexibility in completion mode. Researchers also collaborated with school principals and curriculum coordinators to ensure smooth data distribution and retrieval. Participation was voluntary, and ethical considerations were upheld by ensuring respondent anonymity and obtaining informed consent prior to data collection. Teachers were informed that their responses would be used solely for academic purposes and would not affect their professional evaluations.

The quantitative data obtained from the questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques, including percentage distribution, mean scores, and standard deviations. These descriptive measures were used to classify teacher readiness levels into categories such as "highly ready," "moderately ready," and "not ready," based on predetermined score intervals. The analysis focused on identifying trends within each readiness dimension and comparing readiness levels across demographic variables such as teaching experience, school type, and access to training. The interview data were analyzed using simple triangulation, where qualitative patterns were compared with quantitative findings to strengthen the credibility of interpretations.

Triangulation served as a key component in enhancing the reliability and validity of the study. By comparing questionnaire results with interview data, the researcher was able to verify whether teachers' reported readiness was consistent with their real experiences and attitudes toward the Merdeka Curriculum. This approach reduced the risk of bias and provided a more holistic understanding of teacher readiness. The integration of multiple data sources also allowed researchers to identify underlying factors that numerical data alone may not capture, such as emotional readiness, institutional barriers, and perceptions of government support.

Overall, the methodological approach in this study ensured a comprehensive assessment of teacher readiness while maintaining scientific rigor and ethical standards. The combination of purposive sampling, validated instruments, mixed data collection techniques, and descriptive statistical analysis enabled the researchers to capture both the measurable aspects and contextual nuances of curriculum implementation. This method provides a strong foundation for interpreting the findings and developing practical recommendations aimed at strengthening teacher competencies and accelerating the success of the Merdeka Curriculum in Mataram City.

Results and Discussion

The results of the descriptive statistical analysis reveal that the overall readiness of teachers in Mataram City to implement the Kurikulum Merdeka falls within the "moderately ready" category, with an average readiness score of 72%. This quantitative finding confirms that teachers generally possess foundational knowledge of the curriculum's key concepts but still require strengthened competencies to meet its full implementation demands. The readiness index varies across the four dimensions assessed, highlighting distinct strengths and weaknesses. The highest scores appear in teachers' understanding of curriculum philosophy, while the lowest emerge in diagnostic and formative assessment practices — a pattern reflecting earlier evidence that educators often struggle to shift from traditional to competency- or learner-centered assessment frameworks (Kusumawati & Rahardjo, 2022; Zulkifli & Hasan, 2023).

In terms of pedagogical competence, teachers demonstrated relatively high readiness, with average scores surpassing 75%. Many respondents reported feeling confident in adapting instructional methods, incorporating project-based learning, and facilitating student-centered activities. This aligns with national trends indicating increased teacher familiarity with active learning models following years of exposure to learner-centered approaches (Putri & Wibowo, 2023; Anwar & Setiawan, 2022). Despite this progress, interview data reveal that teachers often struggle to fully differentiate learning activities due to large class sizes and inconsistent access to learning resources, echoing findings from other Indonesian contexts (Siregar & Tambunan, 2020).

The findings also show strong teacher awareness of the curriculum's flexibility, particularly regarding the freedom to choose learning materials and modify lesson sequences. Teachers expressed appreciation for the autonomy offered by the Merdeka Curriculum, which they believe enhances creativity and innovation in lesson planning. However, several teachers also reported confusion concerning the alignment between learning objectives, teaching modules, and competency targets. This inconsistency reflects concerns raised in qualitative studies of Merdeka Curriculum implementation in other regions (Harjanto & Sumarni, 2023), showing that without detailed operational guidance, teacher autonomy can become a source of uncertainty rather than empowerment.

Mastery of instructional resources constitutes another important dimension of readiness. The results indicate that teachers exhibit moderate levels of competence in selecting, adapting, and creating learning materials that align with curriculum expectations. Many respondents rely heavily on the resources available in the Merdeka Mengajar platform, yet interviews reveal that some teachers perceive these resources as insufficiently contextualized for local needs. This finding is consistent with international observation that curriculum materials often require substantial teacher adaptation to match student characteristics and regional contexts (Brookhart, 2018; Kusumawati & Rahardjo, 2022).

Teachers from schools with stronger digital infrastructures reported higher scores in resource mastery compared to those in schools with limited access to technology. This suggests that disparities in school resources continue to influence curriculum implementation. Teachers in private schools tended to report greater access to teaching aids and digital devices, while teachers in public schools noted constraints related to outdated equipment. These structural limitations reflect broader challenges documented across Indonesian educational institutions regarding uneven distribution of ICT resources (Trisnawati et al., 2022; Widjaja & Susilo, 2023).

The results also highlight that teachers demonstrate only moderate readiness in applying authentic, diagnostic, and formative assessments. The average score for this dimension is 68%, making it the lowest among all variables measured. Teachers expressed difficulty in designing rubrics, conducting competency-based evaluations, and providing continuous feedback. This aligns with global literature emphasizing that authentic assessment remains one of the most challenging aspects of curriculum reform (Brookhart, 2018; Zulkifli & Hasan, 2023).

Furthermore, interview findings show that many teachers still equate assessment with summative tests rather than ongoing evaluations. Although teachers recognize the importance of formative assessment in supporting student learning, they struggle to implement it consistently due to time constraints and limited assessment literacy. This echoes challenges documented by Sari & Putra (2023) and strengthens it with additional evidence from Southeast Asia indicating that transition from traditional testing to competency-based assessment is often hindered by lack of training and teacher confidence (Ningsih & Mahfudz, 2021).

Digital literacy emerged as a moderately strong dimension, with an average score of 74%. Teachers generally demonstrate competence in using digital platforms for communication, accessing online learning materials, and managing learning activities. However, deeper technological integration — such as designing digital assessments or using advanced learning management systems — remains limited. These findings resemble national patterns indicating uneven teacher proficiency in technology-enhanced learning environments (Rahman et al., 2023; Maryani & Sunarto, 2023). The unevenness also underscores disparities in digital inequality across regions (Widjaja & Susilo, 2023).

The interviews reveal that teachers who participated in intensive professional development programs displayed significantly higher digital literacy levels. Training participation appears to be a strong predictor of readiness, supporting prior research that highlights the importance of continuous professional learning in improving teacher competencies (Darling-Hammond, 2021; Oktaviani & Lestari, 2022). However, access to training remains unequal, particularly for teachers in resource-limited schools — an issue similarly identified in national surveys (Yusuf & Arifin, 2021).

A comparison between teachers in public and private schools reveals similar readiness levels, though private school teachers often report more favorable conditions related to infrastructure and institutional support. Public school teachers, on the other hand, reported more structured internal training sessions provided by local education authorities. These variations demonstrate that both school types possess unique strengths and challenges affecting curriculum implementation. This duality aligns with findings from

studies analyzing school context effects on curriculum adoption in Indonesia (Purnomo & Yuliani, 2023; Sutrisno & Widodo, 2022).

The findings show that teaching experience influences teacher readiness. Teachers with more than ten years of experience exhibited higher pedagogical competence but lower digital literacy scores. Meanwhile, younger teachers showed greater ease in using technology but felt less confident in designing competency-based assessments. This reinforces existing literature on generational differences in instructional practices and technological proficiency (Hallinger, 2020; Wardani & Firmansyah, 2021).

School leadership support emerged as a critical enabling factor. Teachers reported higher readiness in schools where principals actively facilitated professional learning communities (PLCs), encouraged peer collaboration, and provided structured opportunities for curriculum discussions. This observation aligns with research showing that effective school leadership and collaborative culture significantly influence successful curriculum implementation (Vescio, Ross, & Adams, 2020; Purnomo & Yuliani, 2023; Wulandari & Kurniawan, 2022).

However, several teachers reported insufficient technical support, particularly regarding troubleshooting digital tools or accessing appropriate learning resources. Teachers in these schools indicated that limited support often delayed the implementation of innovative instructional approaches. This reflects arguments by systemic-change scholars that without institutional backing and infrastructure investment, curriculum reforms tend to stall (Fullan, 2020; Sutrisno & Widodo, 2022).

The analysis also reveals notable challenges in aligning lesson planning with the curriculum's competency-based goals. Teachers expressed difficulty in identifying precise learning outcomes and mapping them to instructional strategies. Some teachers rely heavily on sample teaching modules, while others attempt to design their own resources but lack confidence in their accuracy. This reinforces the need for more detailed and context-based instructional guides, as previously recommended in empirical studies on curriculum adaptation (Ningsih & Mahfudz, 2021; Harjanto & Sumarni, 2023).

Teachers who actively participate in communities of practice — for instance, local teacher working groups or peer networks — tend to show higher readiness levels. Collaborative reflection and shared planning help teachers refine their understanding of the curriculum and improve their instructional strategies. This supports the assertion by scholars of professional capital that teacher collaboration is a key lever for sustaining educational change (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012; Wulandari & Kurniawan, 2022).

Despite moderate overall readiness, interview data reveal that teachers still experience psychological and motivational challenges. Some feel overwhelmed by new expectations, while others express concerns about the pace of policy changes or the additional workload required by competency-based planning and assessment. These emotional and occupational stresses may influence the consistency and fidelity of curriculum implementation — an issue highlighted in change management literature (Fullan, 2020; Sutrisno & Widodo, 2022).

Additionally, disparities in workload distribution negatively impact teacher readiness. Teachers with heavy administrative responsibilities reported less time for preparing learning materials or participating in professional development. This issue confirms previous findings that administrative burden often obstructs meaningful instructional improvement in Indonesian schools (Yusuf & Arifin, 2021; Oktaviani & Lestari, 2022).

The triangulation of quantitative and qualitative data shows a high degree of consistency between teacher-reported readiness levels and observed challenges. The convergence of data strengthens the reliability of findings and underscores the complexity of curriculum implementation in diverse educational environments. While teachers generally understand curriculum expectations, structural, pedagogical, and contextual barriers continue to inhibit optimal readiness — a dynamic similarly reported in other regional studies of the Merdeka Curriculum (Harjanto & Sumarni, 2023; Maryani & Sunarto, 2023).

The discussion of these findings suggests that successful implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum requires more than individual teacher competence: it demands sustained institutional support, equitable access to training, improved digital infrastructure, and ongoing refinement of assessment literacy. Policymakers and educational leaders must therefore design targeted interventions addressing these dimensions to accelerate curriculum adoption across varied school contexts. This recommendation echoes calls in the literature for systemic and context-sensitive strategies when enacting educational reforms (Fullan, 2020; Wardani & Firmansyah, 2021; Purnomo & Yuliani, 2023).

Overall, the study's findings highlight both promising progress and persistent gaps in teacher readiness in Mataram City. While teachers demonstrate a fundamental understanding of curriculum principles and moderate technological proficiency, challenges related to assessment literacy, resource disparities, training access, and institutional support remain significant. Addressing these issues is essential for ensuring that the Merdeka Curriculum fulfills its transformative vision for Indonesian education — a goal similarly emphasized in empirical studies emphasizing the critical role of teacher readiness (Anwar & Setiawan, 2022; Wahyudi & Rachmawati, 2023; Zainuddin & Rahmawati, 2022).

Conclusions

The findings of this study reveal that the overall readiness of teachers in Mataram City to implement the Merdeka Curriculum remains at a moderate level, suggesting both progress and continuing gaps in their preparedness. Teachers generally demonstrate a solid foundational understanding of the curriculum's core philosophy, including its emphasis on student-centered learning, instructional flexibility, and competency-based outcomes. These strengths reflect the steady improvements in pedagogical competence that have taken place across Indonesian schools over the past decade. However, the moderate readiness level indicates that teachers are still in the transitional stage of aligning their daily instructional practices with the expectations of the Merdeka Curriculum.

Despite positive indicators in pedagogical competence and digital literacy, the study identifies persistent challenges in several critical areas of curriculum implementation. The most significant gaps appear in teachers' ability to design and conduct diagnostic, formative, and authentic assessments—skills that are essential for tracking learning progression under a competency-based framework. Additional challenges include unequal access to teaching resources, variations in school infrastructure, and unequal participation in government-provided professional development programs. These factors collectively hinder the establishment of consistent and effective curriculum practices across different school settings.

The study also highlights the importance of institutional and structural support in enhancing teacher readiness. Schools that demonstrate stronger leadership, more active learning communities, and better-equipped digital infrastructure tend to show higher levels of teacher readiness. This underscores the need for systemic interventions that go beyond individual teacher training and instead promote collaborative school cultures, strengthened professional learning communities, and improved resource allocation. Without these broader institutional supports, individual teacher competence alone is insufficient to achieve full implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum.

Furthermore, the triangulation of quantitative and qualitative data emphasizes that teacher readiness is influenced not only by technical competencies but also by psychological and motivational factors. Teachers who experience high workloads, insufficient guidance, or uncertainty about curriculum expectations are more likely to feel overwhelmed or resistant to change. These emotional dimensions must be addressed through supportive leadership practices, clear communication of curriculum policies, and the provision of ongoing mentoring and coaching. Addressing psychosocial concerns is crucial to sustaining teacher engagement and ensuring long-term curriculum success.

Overall, this study concludes that while teachers in Mataram City have made meaningful progress in preparing for the Merdeka Curriculum, substantial improvements are still required to ensure its successful implementation. Policymakers, school administrators, and teacher educators must collaborate to develop targeted, continuous, and contextually relevant professional development programs that strengthen assessment literacy, pedagogical adaptability, and digital integration. Equally important is the need for schools to build strong professional learning communities and ensure equitable distribution of curriculum resources. These strategic steps are vital for enhancing teacher readiness and accelerating the realization of the transformative goals of the Merdeka Curriculum within Indonesia's educational landscape.

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