

THE INFLUENCE OF TEACHERS' PEDAGOGICAL COMPETENCE ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MERDEKA CURRICULUM IN PUBLIC SENIOR HIGH SCHOOLS IN RANAH PESISIR DISTRICT

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Abstract

The background of this study is the poor implementation of the independent curriculum in public high schools in the Ranah Pesisir subdistrict. One of the factors influencing this is teacher pedagogical competence. Therefore, the main objective of this study is to determine the effect of teacher pedagogical competence on the implementation of the independent curriculum in public high schools in the Ranah Pesisir subdistrict. A quantitative approach with a correlational method was used. The research sample consists of a number of teachers selected using the Proportionate Stratified Random Sampling technique, calculated based on the Stratified Random Sampling formula. Data collection was conducted using a questionnaire with a Likert scale. The validity and reliability of the instrument were tested using statistical software, which indicated that the instrument was suitable for use in the study. The results of the data analysis indicated that the influence of teachers' pedagogical competence on the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum at the State Senior High School in Ranah Pesisir District was in the "very good" category. Based on these findings, it is recommended that continuous training be conducted, more comprehensive observation instruments be developed, a qualitative approach be used in further research, more specific training needs be mapped, and support for facilities and infrastructure be improved to support optimal administrative performance.

Keywords: Teachers' Pedagogical Competence, Pedagogical Competence, Merdeka Curriculum, Curriculum Implementation, Public High Schools, Ranah Pesisir, Correlational Study

INTRODUCTION

Education serves as the foundational pillar for a nation's development. In Indonesia, various efforts have been undertaken to improve the quality of education, one of which is through the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum. This curriculum is designed to provide school principals with the flexibility to develop a curriculum tailored to the characteristics and needs of students (Permendikbudristek, 2024). The Merdeka Curriculum emphasizes diverse intradisciplinary learning, aiming to deepen understanding and strengthen students' competencies (Kemendikbudristek, 2022). The fundamental changes compared to the 2013 Curriculum include the replacement of core and basic competencies with learning outcomes,

changes in subject status, granting autonomy to schools to independently develop operational curricula, and a stronger focus on formative rather than summative assessment (Sindi et al., 2023).

The successful implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum heavily depends on teachers' pedagogical competence. Pedagogical competence refers to the ability of teachers to manage the learning process, which includes educational insight, understanding students, curriculum development, instructional design and delivery, use of technology, learning evaluation, and the development of student potential (Ratri et al., 2024). Pedagogical competence is influenced by both internal and external factors. Internal factors include: (1) teachers' educational background, (2) teaching experience, (3) health condition, and (4) economic well-being. External factors include: (1) educational facilities, (2) work discipline in schools, and (3) school principal supervision (Waridah & Tirsia, 2022). Teachers with strong pedagogical competence are expected to design and deliver effective and engaging learning experiences (Sanjaya, 2016), in line with the principles of the Merdeka Curriculum, which emphasize student-centered learning and freedom to explore based on students' interests and talents. Therefore, strengthening pedagogical competence is crucial to supporting the optimal implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum.

The implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in public senior high schools (SMA Negeri) in Ranah Pesisir District presents several challenges: (1) teachers struggle to analyze Learning Outcomes (CP) and translate them into Learning Objectives (TP), as well as develop Learning Objective Flows (ATP); (2) difficulties in developing teaching modules and selecting appropriate teaching methods and strategies; (3) challenges in conducting both formative and summative assessments, along with limited time and classroom facilities. Several issues related to teachers' pedagogical competence were also identified, such as: (1) the dominance of lecture-based teaching methods; (2) insufficient understanding of students' characteristics; (3) lack of facilities to develop students' potential; and (4) learning evaluation that tends to focus only on cognitive aspects.

One of the factors influencing the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum is teachers' pedagogical competence. A study by Septian and Zuwirna (2023) in public junior high schools (SMPN) in Kuranji Subdistrict, Padang, found that teachers' preparation for implementing the Merdeka Curriculum was categorized as "Good" (87.67%), with teaching and assessment implementation also rated as "Good" (81.98% and 86.55%, respectively), indicating a positive contribution of pedagogical competence. Similarly, a study by Asna Nafisa Dewi et al. (2025) in elementary schools showed that teachers' pedagogical competence is a key factor in the successful implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum. Research by Fariz and Herdiana (2024) at SD Ar-Rahman in Cimahi also highlighted the importance of improving pedagogical competence and institutional support in achieving successful implementation.

Based on the background above, this study aims to quantitatively analyze the influence of teachers' pedagogical competence on the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in public senior high schools in Ranah Pesisir District. This research is expected to fill the gap in previous studies, which have not specifically examined this influence in the context of SMA Negeri in Ranah Pesisir District and have not extensively explored how pedagogical competence affects specific aspects of the Merdeka Curriculum.

IMPLEMENTATION METHOD

This study employs a quantitative approach with a correlational method to assess the relationship between teachers' pedagogical competence and the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in public senior high schools in Ranah Pesisir District (Arikunto, 2014). The population of this study consists of 86 teachers, with a sample of 70 teachers selected using the Proportionate Stratified Random Sampling technique. The sample size was determined using the Stratified Random Sampling formula (Sugiyono, 2019).

The data collection instrument used in this study was a questionnaire based on a Likert Scale. As cited by Sukendra & Atmaja (2020), the use of the Likert Scale involves breaking down the variables to be measured into indicators. This scale is used to measure attitudes, views, and perceptions of individuals or groups toward a social phenomenon. Five response options were provided: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Somewhat Agree (SA), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD).

The research process began with the development of a questionnaire framework, which was carried out under the guidance of an academic supervisor to formulate appropriate statements for each indicator. A pilot test was conducted with 16 teachers outside of the research sample. The results of this pilot test were analyzed using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) version 27 to determine the instrument's validity and reliability. Once validated, the questionnaire was distributed to the respondents, and the collected data were analyzed using the mean formula to calculate the average responses.

The findings were then processed to determine achievement levels using classification and research category scales. Further analysis included classical assumption testing through normality and linearity tests, followed by linear regression analysis and hypothesis testing using the t-test and R^2 (coefficient of determination).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the study on the influence of teachers' pedagogical competence on the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in public senior high schools in Ranah Pesisir District involved two variables: the teachers' pedagogical competence variable (X) and the Merdeka Curriculum implementation variable (Y).

Teachers' Pedagogical Competence

This competence is viewed from 11 aspects: (1) understanding the characteristics of students, (2) mastering learning theories and principles of educational instruction, (3) developing the curriculum, (4) delivering educational instruction, (5) utilizing information and communication technology, (6) facilitating the development of students' potential, (7) communicating effectively, empathetically, and respectfully with students, (8) conducting assessment and evaluation of the learning process and outcomes, (9) using the results of assessments and evaluations to improve learning, and (10) engaging in reflective practices to enhance the quality of instruction. The following are the research results obtained to identify the influence of teachers' pedagogical competence on the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in public senior high schools in Ranah Pesisir District:

Table 1. Research Results on Teachers' Pedagogical Competence Variable

	Indicator	TCR	Criteria
Teachers' Pedagogical Competence	Understanding the Characteristics of Students	90,07	Very Good
	Mastering Learning Theories and Principles of Educational Instruction	87,36	Good
	Curriculum Development	87,79	Good
	Conducting Educational Instruction	89,86	Good
	Utilizing Information and Communication Technology	90,43	Very Good
	Facilitating the Development of Students' Potential	90,07	Very Good
	Communicating Effectively, Empathetically, and Respectfully with Students	90,43	Very Good
	Conducting Assessment and Evaluation of Learning Process and Outcomes	89,36	Good
	Utilizing Assessment and Evaluation Results for Learning Improvement	87,64	Good
	Engaging in Reflective Practices to Improve the Quality of Instruction	91,93	Very Good
	Average	89,49	Good

In the first indicator of teachers' pedagogical competence, *understanding the characteristics of students* was rated as "Very Good" with an average score of 90.07. The item with the highest average score was *"I understand the cultural differences among students"*, achieving a score of 93.14, categorized as "Very Good". Meanwhile, the lowest scoring item was *"I understand the spiritual differences among students"*, with a score of 87.71.

The second indicator, *mastering learning theories and principles of educational instruction*, was rated as "Good" with an average score of 87.36. The highest scoring item was *"I master learning theories relevant to supporting educational instruction in the classroom"*, with a score of 88.86 ("Good"). The lowest scoring item was *"I master the principles of educational instruction to design effective and meaningful learning for students"*, with a score of 86.00.

The third indicator, *curriculum development*, received a "Good" rating with an average score of 87.79. The highest scoring item was *"I develop the curriculum based on students' needs to ensure effective and enjoyable learning"*, scoring 91.43 ("Very Good"). The lowest was *"In developing the curriculum, I design learning objectives that are clear and relevant to students' needs"*, with a score of 86.00.

The fourth indicator, *conducting educational instruction*, was rated "Good" with an average score of 89.86. The highest scoring item was *"I conduct learning by integrating character values that educate students"*, with a score of 92.29 ("Very Good"). The lowest was *"I provide opportunities for each student to ask questions about things they do not understand"*, with a score of 87.43.

The fifth indicator, *utilizing information and communication technology (ICT)*, was rated "Very Good" with an average score of 90.43. The item with the highest score was *"I use ICT provided by the school for learning"*, scoring 94.57 ("Very Good"). The lowest scoring item was *"I use ICT that can be accessed online for learning purposes"*, with a score of 88.00.

The sixth indicator, *facilitating the development of students' potential*, also received a "Very Good" rating with an average score of 90.07. The highest scoring item was *"I analyze the learning potential of each student"*, with a score of 93.14. The lowest scoring item was *"I use various methods to facilitate students' potential development"*, scoring 88.00.

The seventh indicator, *communicating effectively, empathetically, and politely with students*, was rated "Very Good" with an average score of 90.43. The item with the highest score was *"I communicate politely with students during the learning process"*, scoring 94.00. The lowest was *"I build communication that fosters cooperation and critical thinking among students"*, scoring 87.71.

The eighth indicator, *conducting assessment and evaluation of learning processes and outcomes*, was rated "Good" with an average score of 89.36. The highest scoring item was *"I design assessment techniques to identify students' skills"*, with a score of 92.86 ("Very Good"). The lowest was *"I deliver assessment results to students in a clear and understandable manner"*, with a score of 87.14.

The ninth indicator, *using assessment and evaluation results for learning improvement*, was rated "Good" with an average score of 87.64. The highest scoring item was *"I use evaluation results to understand students' mastery of the subject matter"*, scoring 90.00 ("Very Good"). The lowest scoring item was *"I communicate students' learning outcomes to their parents as a form of support for their development"*, scoring 86.29.

The tenth indicator, *engaging in reflective practices to improve the quality of instruction*, was rated "Very Good" with an average score of 91.93. The highest scoring item was *"I record my reflections as a basis for evaluating and improving future instruction"*, with a score of 94.00. The lowest was *"I use reflections to update and improve teaching systems to make them more effective"*, scoring 90.00.

Based on the average TCR scores of each indicator in the teachers' pedagogical competence variable, the highest score was 91.93 (*engaging in reflective practices to improve instructional quality*), while the lowest was 87.36 (*mastering learning theories and principles of educational instruction*). Overall, the average score for teachers' pedagogical competence in public senior high schools in Ranah Pesisir District was **89.49**, falling under the **"Good"** category.

Merdeka Curriculum

This curriculum is assessed from two aspects: (1) classroom learning and (2) the Strengthening Project of the Pancasila Student Profile (P5). The following are the results of the research conducted to identify the influence of teachers' pedagogical competence on the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in public senior high schools in Ranah Pesisir District:

Table 2. Research Results on the Implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum Variable

Variable	Indicator	TCR	Criteria
	Classroom Learning	93,83	Very Good
	Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5)	89,83	Good
Average Score		91,83	Very Good

The first indicator shows that the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in public senior high schools in Ranah Pesisir District, as assessed through classroom learning, falls into the "Very Good" category with a score achievement of 93.83. The item with the highest average score was *"Lesson planning is carried out by analyzing students' needs"*, with a score of 97.71, categorized as "Very Good". Meanwhile, the item with the lowest average score was *"Monitoring is conducted during the learning process to ensure that all students are engaged properly"*, with a score of 89.71.

The second indicator assesses the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum through the *Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5)*, which falls into the "Good" category with an average score of 89.83. The item with the highest average score was *"The principal appoints a P5 coordinator with experience and competence in managing projects"*, with a score of 93.43, categorized as "Very Good". On the other hand, the lowest scoring item was *"The project report is prepared based on the principle of integration, minimizing administrative burden, and reflecting students' competencies"*, with a score of 86.57.

Based on the average TCR scores of each indicator in the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, the highest score was 93.83 for *Classroom Learning*, while the lowest was 89.83 for the *Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5)*. Overall, the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in public senior high schools in Ranah Pesisir District achieved an average score of **91.83**, which falls into the **"Very Good"** category.

The Influence of Teachers' Pedagogical Competence on the Implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum

Table 3. Correlation and Regression Analysis Results of Teachers' Pedagogical Competence Variable on the Implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum

Independent Variable (X)	Dependent Variable (Y)	Beta Coefficient (β)	Coefficient of Determination (R^2)	t-value (t_{count})	Constant Value
Teachers' Pedagogical Competence	Implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum	0,057	0,585	9,784	35,800

Based on Table 3, the percentage contribution of the independent variable (pedagogical competence) to the dependent variable (implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum) is shown by the coefficient of determination (R^2) of 0.585. This indicates that teachers' pedagogical competence contributes 58.5% to the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, while the

remaining 41.5% is influenced by other variables not examined in this study. Furthermore, Table 3 shows a significance value of $0.001 < 0.05$ and a t-value of $9.784 > t\text{-table value of } 1.668$. Thus, it can be concluded that the pedagogical competence variable (X) has a significant and positive influence on the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum (Y) in public senior high schools in Ranah Pesisir District. Therefore, the hypothesis stating that there is an influence of teachers' pedagogical competence on the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum is proven to be true.

Based on the results of simple regression analysis, the constant value in Table 3 is 35.800, while the regression coefficient (slope) is 0.057. This produces the regression equation:

$$Y = 35.800 + 0.057X$$

The coefficient **b**, known as the regression direction coefficient, shows the average change in the Y variable (implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum) for each unit change in the X variable (teachers' pedagogical competence). Since the value of **b** is positive, it indicates a positive relationship—meaning that an increase in X will lead to an increase in Y.

Based on this equation, it can be interpreted that when the teachers' pedagogical competence (X) is valued at zero, the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum (Y) would start from the constant value of 35.800. The positive regression coefficient of 0.057 indicates that there is a positive influence of teachers' pedagogical competence on the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum. The greater the influence of teachers' pedagogical competence, the higher the quality of curriculum implementation.

Teachers' Pedagogical Competence

The results of the study show that the pedagogical competence of teachers in public senior high schools in Ranah Pesisir District has an average score of 89.49%. Pedagogical competence reflects the teacher's ability to manage the learning process, including understanding student characteristics, curriculum development, instructional planning and implementation, and assessment of learning outcomes. Pedagogical competence plays a crucial role in education, as it enables teachers to create more effective learning experiences and achieve educational objectives successfully.

This finding aligns with Boon (2017), who states that a teacher must master learning theories and teaching principles because students have diverse characteristics, traits, and interests. Ningrum et al. (2023) emphasize that learning activities can be better managed, more enjoyable, and meaningful if teachers have strong pedagogical competence, which can be improved through training. Rifma (2016) also asserts that effective teaching is conducted by teachers with pedagogical competence, as such competence ensures that learning is aligned with students' age, abilities, and classroom conditions. Therefore, the high average score underscores the importance of teachers' pedagogical competence in enhancing the quality of Merdeka Curriculum implementation.

The indicator with the highest average score in the pedagogical competence variable is "reflective practice to improve teaching quality." This reflects teachers' strong ability to evaluate and improve their teaching practices. Reflective teaching is vital for identifying problems and barriers in the teaching-learning process and finding appropriate solutions that

enhance classroom learning quality. This finding aligns with Rusman (2021), who stresses the importance of reflective abilities in evaluating and adjusting teaching strategies to meet students' needs in the digital era. Similarly, Nurlaela et al. (2023) note that reflection helps build deeper understanding and collaboration among teachers. Anifiah Zulfa (2017) highlights that reflective actions evaluate teacher performance, analyze student learning difficulties, and improve the learning process. Nellitawati (2020) also emphasizes the teacher's role in determining the quality and quantity of education and its impact on national education quality.

To maintain high achievement in reflective teaching, teachers should continue to strengthen this skill. Strategies include structured post-teaching reflections, developing lesson plans based on reflections, and transforming reflection results into more effective learning designs. According to Wowor et al. (2022), reflection helps learners revisit what they've learned and developed. Fauziah et al. (2025) argue that reflection is a key part of professional teaching, helping teachers assess their strengths and weaknesses critically. Collaborative reflection allows teachers to gain insights from peers and view teaching from multiple perspectives.

Merdeka Curriculum

The findings indicate that the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in public senior high schools in Ranah Pesisir District is categorized as **very good**, with an average score of 91.83%. This shows a strong positive relationship between the components of the Merdeka Curriculum, where both teachers and students are encouraged to be creative and independent, engage in interactive communication, and pursue meaningful and personalized learning experiences. These results show that the curriculum promotes high-quality, critical, expressive, applicable, and progressive learning. Wulandari et al. (2024) note that the Merdeka Curriculum is a systematic learning approach that focuses on students.

The highest-scoring indicator in the Merdeka Curriculum implementation variable is *classroom learning*, which reflects successful classroom teaching. Classroom learning in this context refers to differentiated instruction. According to Insani and Munandar (2023), teachers who implement differentiated learning tend to increase student engagement and learning outcomes. Wulandari et al. (2024) add that the goal of differentiated learning is to help each student achieve expected learning goals.

When teachers are able to translate curriculum goals into classroom practice, the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum becomes more effective and student-centered. Marantika et al. (2023) emphasize that student-centered learning is designed, implemented, and assessed to meet individual students' needs based on their readiness, interests, and learning profiles. This allows teachers to adapt content, processes, products, and learning environments based on students' learning stages. Nasition (2017) explains that classroom learning consists of planning, implementation, and evaluation phases that are interrelated to achieve learning goals effectively.

The Influence of Teachers' Pedagogical Competence on the Implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum

The study found that teachers' pedagogical competence has a **positive and significant influence** on the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, contributing **58.5%** to the variance (coefficient of determination $R^2 = 0.585$; $t\text{-value} = 9.784$; $p = 0.001 < 0.05$). This supports the theory that pedagogical competence plays a critical role in enhancing curriculum implementation. Mustafa (2024) describes pedagogical competence as a fundamental skill in managing the student learning process. Sanjaya (2016) adds that teachers with good pedagogical competence are capable of designing and delivering effective and enjoyable learning, which aligns with the Merdeka Curriculum's emphasis on student-centered, engaging education.

The study conducted in public senior high schools in Ranah Pesisir District shows that pedagogical competence is categorized as **good** (89.49%), while the Merdeka Curriculum implementation is categorized as **very good** (91.83%). Hypothesis testing confirms a positive and significant relationship between pedagogical competence and curriculum implementation ($t\text{-value} = 9.784 > t\text{-table} = 1.668$; significance = $0.001 < 0.05$). The coefficient of determination (R^2) is 0.585, indicating that 58.5% of the implementation of the curriculum can be explained by the pedagogical competence variable.

Pedagogical competence includes dimensions such as understanding student characteristics, mastering learning theories and principles, developing curriculum, implementing effective instruction, utilizing ICT, facilitating student potential, communicating effectively, assessing and evaluating learning, using assessment results for improvement, and engaging in reflective teaching.

The positive influence of pedagogical competence on curriculum implementation is supported by various studies. Nisak and Anggaraini (2024) conclude that pedagogical competence affects the effectiveness of Merdeka Curriculum implementation. Apriyantika and Mustika (2023) observe that teachers demonstrate high levels of pedagogical competence when implementing the curriculum. Thamrin et al. (2023) emphasize the importance of training and deep understanding of the Merdeka Curriculum to improve both teaching quality and pedagogical competence. These findings collectively reinforce that pedagogical mastery significantly affects the successful implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings and data analysis, it can be concluded that the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in public senior high schools in Ranah Pesisir District falls into the *very good* category. This indicates that the curriculum enhances learning that is high-quality, critical, expressive, applicable, varied, and progressive. The pedagogical competence of teachers is also classified as *good*, as demonstrated by their ability to manage the learning process—from understanding student characteristics, developing curriculum, planning and delivering instruction, to evaluating learning outcomes.

This study also shows that teachers' pedagogical competence has a positive influence on the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum. In other words, the stronger the teachers'

pedagogical competence, the better the implementation of the curriculum. Therefore, pedagogical competence is a key factor in supporting the effective and efficient implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in public senior high schools in Ranah Pesisir District.

Teachers are encouraged to regularly participate in practical and applicable training and mentoring programs, particularly on indicators that still need improvement, such as utilizing assessment results for instructional improvement, mastering learning theories and educational principles, curriculum development, and conducting assessments and evaluations of learning outcomes.

It is also recommended that school principals intensify socialization and training activities related to the development of teaching tools such as Learning Objectives (TP), Learning Objective Flow (ATP), teaching modules, as well as the implementation of formative and summative assessments. Through these capacity-building efforts, the quality of Merdeka Curriculum implementation in public senior high schools in Ranah Pesisir District is expected to continue improving and contribute to the realization of a better education system.

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