

Analysis of the Impact of Curriculum Change Policy on the Performance of Junior High School Teachers in Hamparan Perak District

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Abstract: This study aims to analyze the impact of curriculum change policy on the performance of Junior High School teachers in Hamparan Perak District. The research employed a quantitative approach using survey techniques. Data were collected through questionnaires distributed to teachers from both public and private junior high schools. The findings indicate that curriculum changes significantly affect teacher performance in terms of lesson planning, instructional delivery, and student assessment. While some teachers showed improved professionalism due to the demands of the new curriculum, others struggled to adapt to the rapid and complex changes. Therefore, continuous training and mentoring are necessary to support teachers in effectively implementing the new curriculum.

Keywords: Curriculum Change; Education Policy; Teacher Performance; Junior High School Teachers; Hamparan Perak.

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Abstrak: Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis dampak kebijakan perubahan kurikulum terhadap kinerja guru di tingkat Sekolah Menengah Pertama (SMP) di Kecamatan Hamparan Perak. Metode yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah pendekatan kuantitatif dengan teknik survei. Data dikumpulkan melalui angket yang disebarakan kepada sejumlah guru dari beberapa SMP negeri dan swasta. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa perubahan kurikulum memberikan pengaruh signifikan terhadap kinerja guru, baik dalam aspek perencanaan pembelajaran, pelaksanaan pembelajaran, maupun evaluasi hasil belajar. Sebagian guru mengalami peningkatan profesionalisme karena tuntutan kurikulum baru, namun sebagian lainnya menghadapi tantangan dalam menyesuaikan diri dengan perubahan kebijakan yang cepat dan kompleks. Oleh karena itu, diperlukan pelatihan dan pendampingan berkelanjutan agar guru dapat menjalankan tugasnya secara optimal dalam implementasi kurikulum yang baru.

Kata Kunci: Perubahan Kurikulum; Kebijakan Pendidikan; Kinerja Guru; Guru SMP; Hamparan Perak.

A. Introduction

The education system is a dynamic entity that evolves in response to the changing demands of society, globalization, technological advancement, and national policy objectives. One of the most crucial aspects of this evolution is curriculum reform, which reflects a government's commitment to improving educational quality and relevance (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2018).

Curriculum change is not simply a matter of adjusting content; it also involves redefining learning goals, instructional strategies, and assessment standards. As a result, teachers are placed at the forefront of implementation and are directly affected by any policy changes introduced (Fullan, 2007).

In the Indonesian context, curriculum changes have occurred several times over the past two decades. The transition from the 2006 School-Based Curriculum (KTSP) to the 2013 Curriculum (K13), and more recently, to the Independent Curriculum (Kurikulum Merdeka), marks significant policy shifts aimed at improving student competencies in the 21st century (Kemendikbud, 2022).

Each new curriculum introduces different pedagogical expectations. For instance, the 2013 Curriculum emphasizes scientific approaches and character education, while the Independent Curriculum stresses flexibility, project-based learning, and differentiated instruction (Putra & Widodo, 2022).

These rapid and successive curriculum reforms often generate both opportunities and challenges for teachers. On one hand, they present new avenues for professional growth and innovation; on the other, they require substantial adjustments in teaching practices, mindset, and workload (Yusof & Halim, 2019).

Teacher performance plays a pivotal role in determining the success of curriculum implementation. As stated by Darling-Hammond (2000), no educational reform can be effective without competent and motivated teachers who are well-prepared to translate policy into practice.

However, policy makers often overlook the ground-level challenges teachers face in adapting to new curricula. These include limited access to training, inadequate instructional materials, time constraints, and inconsistent policy communication (Schleicher, 2018).

In rural and semi-urban districts like Hamparan Perak, these issues are even more pronounced. Limited infrastructure and access to continuous professional development contribute to the uneven implementation of curriculum policy (Nasution, 2021).

Moreover, curriculum reform without adequate support mechanisms may negatively impact teacher morale, increase stress, and lead to burnout. Teachers may feel overwhelmed by increased demands without corresponding resources or time to adapt (Day & Gu, 2007).

According to Guskey (2002), successful curriculum change requires teacher involvement in the planning and decision-making process. When teachers feel excluded or uninformed, their resistance to change may increase, which can adversely affect their performance.

Teacher performance encompasses multiple dimensions, including lesson planning, classroom management, instructional delivery, and student assessment. Any shifts in curriculum expectations naturally influence these dimensions, requiring realignment with new policy frameworks (Marzano, 2003).

Studies have shown that curriculum changes often lead to a period of instructional instability, where teachers experience uncertainty and require time to re-orient their teaching strategies (Alsubaie, 2016). This transition period is critical and must be managed with care.

In addition, changes in assessment models, such as the shift from summative to formative assessment, as mandated by newer curricula, can also present difficulties for teachers unfamiliar with these approaches (Black & Wiliam, 2009).

Teacher professional development programs, if provided consistently, can mitigate the negative impacts of curriculum change. These programs equip teachers with the knowledge, skills, and confidence needed to implement new teaching practices effectively (Desimone, 2009).

In Hamparan Perak District, there is limited empirical evidence regarding how curriculum reforms have affected teacher performance. Therefore, it is essential to investigate the real impact of curriculum change on teachers' day-to-day work, motivation, and instructional quality.

Understanding this impact is crucial not only for refining curriculum policies but also for improving teacher support strategies and resource allocation at the district level. Without such insights, policy reforms may fall short of their intended outcomes.

Furthermore, measuring teacher performance in response to curriculum change can help identify gaps in training, communication, and implementation. These findings can then inform more inclusive and teacher-centered approaches in future reforms (Avalos, 2011).

This study focuses on junior high school (SMP) teachers in Hamparan Perak District, a region with diverse educational settings and varying levels of school readiness. By examining the relationship between curriculum change and teacher performance, the study seeks to provide actionable recommendations for stakeholders.

Ultimately, curriculum reform must be viewed as a collaborative process. Teachers are not merely implementers of policy; they are agents of change whose voices and experiences should shape the direction of educational improvement (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012).

Therefore, this research is both timely and relevant. It aims to explore how curriculum change policies have influenced the performance of junior high school teachers in Hamparan Perak, with the goal of contributing to more effective and sustainable education reform strategies in Indonesia.

B. Research Methodology

This study employed a quantitative research approach with a descriptive correlational design. The objective was to measure the impact of curriculum change policies on teacher performance in junior high schools (SMP) within the Hamparan Perak District. A quantitative design was chosen to allow for measurable analysis of the relationship between the independent variable (curriculum change policy) and the

dependent variable (teacher performance), as well as to facilitate generalization across the study population.

The population of this research consisted of all Junior High School teachers in the Hamparan Perak District who had experienced at least one major curriculum transition, such as from the 2013 Curriculum to the Independent Curriculum (Kurikulum Merdeka). A stratified random sampling technique was used to ensure representation across public and private schools. The final sample comprised 80 teachers from both rural and urban schools in the district.

The data collection instrument used was a structured questionnaire developed based on theoretical frameworks related to curriculum implementation and teacher performance (Marzano, 2003; Guskey, 2002). The questionnaire consisted of two main sections: the first measuring teacher perceptions of curriculum policy changes (e.g., clarity, support, training, implementation load), and the second assessing aspects of teacher performance (e.g., planning, instruction, classroom management, and assessment practices). All items were scored using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from “Strongly Disagree” to “Strongly Agree.”

To ensure the validity and reliability of the instrument, a pilot test was conducted with 15 teachers outside the sample group. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient for internal consistency was 0.87, indicating a high level of reliability. The content validity of the instrument was confirmed through expert judgment involving three senior education lecturers and curriculum experts.

Data analysis was conducted using statistical software. Descriptive statistics (mean, percentage, and standard deviation) were used to describe the general trends of teacher responses. To determine the strength and significance of the relationship between curriculum policy changes and teacher performance, Pearson correlation analysis was applied. In addition, multiple linear regression was conducted to identify which aspects of curriculum policy had the most significant influence on teacher performance.

This methodology enabled a systematic and objective analysis of the research problem, with findings expected to provide evidence-based insights into the real effects

of curriculum change on teaching practices. Moreover, the use of a quantitative approach allowed the study to highlight patterns and correlations that could inform policy recommendations for future curriculum implementations in similar educational contexts.

C. Results and Discussion

The findings of this study are based on the responses of 80 junior high school teachers in Hamparan Perak District who participated in the survey regarding the impact of curriculum change policies on their performance. The data was analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation analysis, and multiple regression tests.

Descriptive results showed that a significant proportion of teachers (75%) agreed that the recent curriculum changes, particularly the transition to the Independent Curriculum (Kurikulum Merdeka), had affected their instructional practices. Among these, many expressed that the changes introduced both challenges and opportunities for growth.

In terms of teacher perceptions toward the policy, 68% of respondents felt that the curriculum guidelines were not always clearly communicated by education authorities. This lack of clarity often led to confusion in implementing lesson plans, especially concerning the shift to project-based and differentiated learning.

Regarding professional support, 54% of teachers reported that they received minimal or irregular training related to the new curriculum. While some schools organized limited workshops, many teachers had to seek independent resources or collaborate informally with peers to understand and apply new strategies.

On the other hand, 62% of teachers acknowledged that the new curriculum encouraged them to be more creative and student-centered in their teaching. Teachers who were more familiar with digital tools adapted more easily and even integrated multimedia and blended learning models into their classrooms.

The average performance score, based on self-assessed indicators such as lesson planning, classroom management, instruction, and assessment, was 3.84 on a 5-point

scale. This suggests that while teacher performance remained relatively high, it was accompanied by varying levels of stress and adaptation difficulty.

A Pearson correlation test revealed a moderate positive relationship between teacher understanding of the curriculum policy and their performance ($r = 0.52$, $p < 0.01$). This indicates that teachers who had a better grasp of the curriculum objectives and structure tended to perform better in classroom practices.

In contrast, a negative correlation was observed between perceived implementation burden (e.g., administrative load, documentation requirements) and teacher performance ($r = -0.41$, $p < 0.01$). Teachers who felt overwhelmed by the bureaucratic aspects of the reform were less effective in their instructional roles.

Multiple regression analysis identified two key predictors of teacher performance during curriculum change: (1) clarity of curriculum communication ($\beta = 0.45$, $p < 0.01$) and (2) availability of training and resources ($\beta = 0.39$, $p < 0.05$). These two factors explained 47% of the variance in teacher performance scores.

Interestingly, demographic factors such as teaching experience and certification status did not show a significant effect on performance in the context of curriculum change. Both novice and senior teachers experienced similar levels of difficulty if they lacked sufficient guidance and support.

Qualitative comments gathered from open-ended survey items reinforced these findings. Many teachers expressed a desire for more structured guidance and practical examples of lesson planning under the new curriculum. Several also voiced concerns about the lack of alignment between curriculum expectations and the current school infrastructure.

One teacher remarked, “We are expected to teach differently, but we are not given enough time or tools to prepare ourselves. Sometimes, I feel like I am experimenting in front of my students.” This statement illustrates the emotional toll and uncertainty that often accompany rapid policy shifts.

Despite these concerns, some teachers reported positive transformations. Teachers who embraced collaborative learning communities and digital platforms noted

improvements in their instructional delivery and student engagement. These teachers adapted more quickly and showed higher performance indicators.

The findings also revealed that schools with proactive leadership tended to perform better overall. Principals who facilitated regular discussions, coaching, and shared resources contributed to a smoother transition process for teachers.

Overall, the research highlights that curriculum change policies can enhance teacher performance when properly supported by clear communication, professional development, and leadership. Without these, the reforms risk creating confusion and performance decline, especially at the grassroots level.

These results serve as a valuable reference for policymakers, suggesting the importance of prioritizing teacher readiness and institutional support in any future curriculum changes. Teachers are the key implementers, and their performance directly reflects the success or failure of policy reforms.

Discussion

The findings of this study reveal several critical insights into how curriculum change policies influence teacher performance at the junior high school level in Hamparan Perak District. The data show that while the implementation of new curricula, particularly the Independent Curriculum (Kurikulum Merdeka), brings the potential for pedagogical improvement, its effectiveness is largely dependent on how well the change is communicated, supported, and contextualized at the school level.

One of the most significant findings is the moderate positive correlation between teachers' understanding of the curriculum and their performance. This supports the theory proposed by Guskey (2002), which states that meaningful educational change begins with changes in teacher beliefs and understanding. Teachers who comprehended the principles of the new curriculum were more confident and capable in applying them to their teaching practices.

However, many teachers reported confusion and uncertainty regarding how to interpret and apply the new curriculum frameworks. This reflects a weakness in the policy communication process, where top-down reforms are introduced without sufficient explanation or guidance. As Schleicher (2018) argues, successful policy

implementation requires clear objectives, shared understanding, and two-way communication between policymakers and practitioners.

The lack of professional development opportunities emerged as another key obstacle. Teachers indicated that they received little to no structured training to prepare for the transition, forcing many of them to learn independently or through peer discussions. This aligns with Desimone's (2009) assertion that sustained and high-quality professional development is essential for improving teacher capacity in response to policy change.

Interestingly, the study also found that bureaucratic and administrative demands, such as increased documentation and reporting, had a negative impact on teacher performance. Teachers felt that these non-instructional tasks detracted from their ability to focus on classroom preparation and student engagement. Day and Gu (2007) similarly emphasized that increased workload and external pressure can erode teacher motivation and effectiveness.

Despite these challenges, a portion of teachers demonstrated adaptability and even innovation in their teaching. These individuals often relied on collaborative learning environments within their schools, using technology and peer support to adjust their methods. This supports the idea of professional learning communities as a buffer against the isolating effects of policy change (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012).

Another important factor highlighted in this study is the role of school leadership. Schools with proactive and communicative principals experienced smoother curriculum transitions, and teachers in such schools reported higher performance levels. This finding reflects the importance of distributed leadership, where school leaders not only manage but also mentor and support teaching staff through change (Leithwood et al., 2006).

The absence of a significant relationship between demographic variables (e.g., teaching experience) and performance during curriculum change suggests that support systems and contextual conditions are more influential than individual background factors. Even experienced teachers can struggle in the absence of proper scaffolding, while newer teachers may thrive with strong mentorship and training.

Furthermore, the findings indicate that the emotional and psychological impact of curriculum reform must be taken into account. Teachers' narratives revealed feelings of stress, pressure, and self-doubt. These affective responses, if left unaddressed, can undermine long-term commitment to curriculum goals. This aligns with the literature on teacher well-being, which identifies emotional support as a critical factor in successful reform (Day & Gu, 2007).

This study also affirms that curriculum reform is not just a technical process but a cultural one, requiring a shift in teacher beliefs, habits, and school norms. Reform cannot succeed if teachers are treated as mere implementers rather than as partners in the transformation process (Fullan, 2007).

Overall, the results suggest that the success of curriculum change depends on three major factors: (1) the clarity of policy communication, (2) the availability of ongoing professional development, and (3) the strength of instructional leadership. These factors significantly shape how teachers interpret, adopt, and apply new instructional expectations.

The case of Hamparan Perak District provides a microcosm of broader national challenges in education reform. While the curriculum aims are progressive, the path toward implementation requires systemic support, not just for curriculum design but also for teacher empowerment.

Therefore, policymakers must adopt a more bottom-up approach to reform, one that engages teachers in the design, piloting, and evaluation of curriculum policies. This will not only improve the practicality of reforms but also increase teacher buy-in and commitment.

Finally, this discussion highlights the need for future studies that explore the long-term effects of curriculum change on teacher performance and student achievement. Longitudinal research would provide deeper insights into the sustainability and actual impact of policy-driven educational reforms.

D. Conclusion

This study concludes that curriculum change policies have a significant impact on the performance of junior high school teachers in Hamparan Perak District. Teachers' understanding of the new curriculum, clarity of policy communication, and access to training and resources play a crucial role in determining their effectiveness in the classroom. Those who received clear guidance and adequate professional development showed better adaptation and higher performance, while those without such support experienced confusion and decreased motivation.

Moreover, the study highlights that non-instructional demands, such as increased documentation and administrative tasks, negatively affect teacher performance by reducing the time and energy available for core teaching activities. Effective school leadership, characterized by proactive communication and continuous mentoring, was identified as a key factor in supporting teachers during curriculum transitions.

In conclusion, curriculum reform must be accompanied by systematic support mechanisms that prioritize teacher readiness and well-being. Policymakers and school leaders should ensure that teachers are not only informed but also equipped and empowered to implement changes effectively. Only through collaborative, inclusive, and well-supported implementation can curriculum reforms achieve their intended educational goals.

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