Towards a Paradigm Shift: Analysis of Student Teachers' and Teacher Education Institutions' Readiness on Kurikulum Merdeka

Menuju Pergeseran Paradigma: Analisis Kesiapan Mahasiswa Calon Guru dan Lembaga Pendidikan Guru dalam Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka

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Abstract: *This research is to examine the preparedness and initiatives of Teacher Training and Education Institutes (LPTK) and student teachers in implementing Kurikulum Merdeka. This cross-sectional study employs a phenomenological approach. The study encompasses 448 student teachers from various provinces in Indonesia. Data were gathered through a questionnaire featuring open-ended questions, and the results were analyzed using a multistage descriptive coding and pattern approach. The findings reveal that 82.81% of student teachers are ready to implement Kurikulum Merdeka. However, in terms of understanding, 24.55% of them still need to improve their understanding about the new curriculum. In conclusion, there persists a need to continually enhance the knowledge and skills of student teachers in navigating the implementation of Kurikulum Merdeka. Additionally, LPTK must ensure the provision of competencies adequately.*

Keywords: *Emancipated Learning Curriculum, LPTK, new curriculum, student teachers*

Abstrak: *Penelitian ini bertujuan mengetahui kesiapan dan upaya LPTK dan mahasiswa calon guru dalam mengimplementasikan Kurikulum Merdeka. Penelitian menggunakan desain cross-sectional dengan pendekatan fenomenologis. Subjek penelitian adalah 448 mahasiswa calon guru dari berbagai daerah di Indonesia. Data dikumpulkan melalui kuesioner dengan pertanyaan terbuka. Hasil kuesioner dianalisis dengan menggunakan pendekatan multistage deskriptif coding dan pattern. Temuan penelitian ini mengungkap bahwa 82.81% calon guru siap untuk menerapkan Kurikulum Merdeka. Namun demikian, dalam aspek pemahaman 24.55% mahasiswa calon guru masih perlu memperbaiki pemahaman kurikulum baru tersebut. Berdasarkan temuan tersebut, dapat disimpulkan bahwa dalam menghadapi penerapan Kurikulum Merdeka, pengetahuan dan keterampilan mahasiswa calon guru masih perlu terus ditingkatkan. Selanjutnya, LPTK harus memastikan bahwa mereka menyediakan kompetensi yang diperlukan secara memadai.*

Kata kunci: *Kurikulum Merdeka, LPTK, kurikulum baru, mahasiswa calon guru*

INTRODUCTION

The curriculum is the cornerstone of the education system (Santika et al., 2022; Willis & Schubert, 1991) as it encompasses the goals, content, and teaching methods necessary to achieve educational objectives. Additionally, the curriculum plays a vital role in establishing standards of educational quality and ensuring equal opportunities for all students. Therefore, ensuring that the curriculum is designed effectively and tailored to the needs of students and society is crucial. A well-designed curriculum can assist students in acquiring the skills and knowledge necessary for life (Rap et al., 2022; Slemrod et al., 2018) and contribute to society's overall progress and development (Mishra & Mishra, 2020). Generally, the curriculum requires regular adjustments to keep pace with ongoing developments (Komarudin & Aziz, 2022; Wang, 2019).

Referring to the explanation, it can be stated that the curriculum is dynamic. Curriculum changes can occur due to various influencing factors. Some common causes of curriculum changes include 1) advancements in time and technology, 2) changing societal and workforce needs, 3) evaluation and quality improvement, 4) shifts in government policies, and 5) educational trends and ideologies. According to Smith & Demichiell (1996), the most significant factor influencing curriculum changes is the evolution of time and input from stakeholders such as alumnae (Daquila, 2022; Tshering et al., 2022), students (Davis et al., 2018), and parents (Hidayati & Rifa'i, 2020). Findings from the study presented by Falah, Safrizal, and Sunarti reveal that one of the challenges of curriculum changes is the alterations in planning, processes, and assessment of learning outcomes (Falah et al., 2023). On the other hand, curriculum changes are perceived to bring advantages, such as opportunities to engage in educational reform aligned with national needs and the developments of the time (Komarudin & Aziz, 2022; Tedesco et al., 2014). Therefore, it can be seen that the dynamics of the curriculum generate both advantages and challenges for stakeholders.

Table 1 shows that Indonesia has undergone several curriculum changes over the past few decades, starting from the curriculum in 1947, 1952, 1964, 1968, 1975, 1984, 1994, 2004, 2006, 2013 (Prihantoro, 2014), and 2022.

While each curriculum change in Indonesia may involve different approaches, the ultimate goal remains the same. According to Cartwright et al. (2017), the purpose of curriculum change is to enhance the quality of education and help students align with the changing demands of the time.

The Indonesian government does not directly mandate that all schools in Indonesia adopt *Kurikulum Merdeka* (KM). As an initial step, the government conducted a trial implementation of KM in 2,500 pilot schools. Additionally, this curriculum was introduced to other schools as well. According to data released by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology – *Kementerian Pendidikan, Kebudayaan, Riset, dan Teknologi* (Kemdikbud Ristek), a total of 143,265 schools have implemented the new curriculum (Alfarisa et al., 2022). This number continues to increase as KM is gradually implemented, starting from early childhood education to primary, junior, and senior high schools in the academic year 2022/2023.

Based on research and findings, implementing KM has yielded positive results in several pilot schools. Research outcomes indicate exciting patterns, such as improving students' real-world problem-solving skills due to KM's emphasis on project-based and experiential learning (Alfarisa et al., 2022). Additionally, the curriculum has enhanced students' self-confidence by allowing them to explore their interests and talents (Komarudin

Table 1 Curriculum in Indonesia

Year	Curriculum	Description
1947	*Rencana Pelajaran* – Lesson Plan	This curriculum was implemented in the early days of independence to meet the needs and interests of the nation (Sari, 2022)
1952	*Rencana Pelajaran Terurai* – Detailed Lesson Plan	This curriculum is an improvement on the previous curriculum, providing a detailed breakdown of each subject. It establishes connections between each subject and daily life (Sari, 2022).
1964	*Rencana Pendidikan Sekolah Dasar* – Primary School Education Plan	This curriculum focuses on the Pancawardhana program, which includes the development of creativity, emotions, thoughts, works, and morals(Sari, 2022).
1968	*Kurikulum Sekolah Dasar* – Primary School Curriculum	This curriculum is the first integrated curriculum in Indonesia (Yuliyanti et al., 2022). It concentrates on primary and secondary education and emphasizes academic and real-life orientation.
1975	*Kurikulum Berorientasi Pada Tujuan (KBPT)* – Goal-Oriented Curriculum	The curriculum is designed to develop students' potential by providing the necessary knowledge, skills, and values. It also emphasizes character-building based on Pancasila and nationalism. *Kurikulum 1975* emphasizes efficiency and effectiveness in education (Sari, 2022).
1984	*Kurikulum 1984* – 1984 Curriculum	The curriculum emphasizes competency-based education, making it more oriented toward the workforce's needs. It allows schools to create curricula tailored to the needs and conditions of their students in their respective regions. The curriculum is oriented towards instructional objectives (Sari, 2022).
1994	*Kurikulum 1994* – 1994 Curriculum	The curriculum emphasizes education based on science and technology. The teaching objectives emphasize conceptual understanding and problem-solving skills (Sari, 2022).
2004	*Kurikulum Berbasis Kompetensi* – Competency-Based Curriculum	The curriculum emphasizes skill development and problem-solving, introducing project-based learning and character development. It focuses on student-centered learning to develop students' competencies (Sari, 2022).
2006	*Kurikulum Tingkat Satuan Pendidikan* – School-Based Curriculum	The curriculum is developed by educational units, considering regional characteristics and students' characteristics (Sari, 2022).
2013	*Kurukulum 2013* – 2013 Curriculum	The curriculum focuses on the balanced development of attitudes, knowledge, and skills (Sari, 2022). It emphasizes character and life skills-based education and focuses on developing students' character. The curriculum introduces context-based learning and interdisciplinary integration.
2022	*Kurikulum Merdeka*– Emancipated Learning Curriculum	The curriculum emphasizes flexibility and innovation in education. It allows schools and teachers the autonomy to determine curricula and teaching methods that suit students' needs (Kurnia & Novaliyosi, 2023).

& Aziz, 2022). Another relevant finding is the flexibility granted to teachers in creating optimal learning experiences and better understanding students' interests, talents, needs, and abilities (Rahayu et al., 2022).

Beyond academic benefits, implementing KM has also strengthened the relationship between schools and their surrounding communities. This has occurred because KM involves community participation in curriculum design and implementation (Mailin, 2021). In the context of students and the learning atmosphere, KM implementation has increased student engagement (Dewi, 2022) and reduced stress and boredom in the learning process. These achievements result from considering students' needs and local conditions while providing freedom to students and teachers in designing curricula and selecting suitable teaching methods (Pratycia et al., 2023).

Based on the positive outcomes, Kemdikbud Ristek plans to implement KM gradually. In the academic year 2022/2023, KM became an additional option as part of the effort to recover from the pandemic's impact on education. Furthermore, it is expected that by the academic year 2024-2025, KM will be implemented nationwide. Referring to this policy, this study aims to investigate the readiness of student teachers to implement KM and the extent to which Teacher Education Institutions – *Lembaga Pendidikan Tenaga Kependidikan* (LPTK) support student teachers for KM implementation.

The objectives of this research are to identify and analyze the readiness of student teachers to adopt KM, including their understanding of the underlying concepts and principles of this curriculum. Additionally, this initial research will also examine the roles and contributions of LPTK in preparing student teachers for this curriculum change. The research questions formulated for this study are as follows:

1. To what extent do student teachers understand the implemented KM?
2. To what extent does LPTK play a role in preparing student teachers to face this change from the student's perspective?
3. To what extent are student teachers ready to teach using KM?

The results of this research are expected to map the readiness of LPTK and student teachers as they embark on a new phase of education in Indonesia. Consequently, these findings are also expected to provide valuable insights to Kemdikbud Ristek in formulating effective policies and strategies to enhance the readiness of student teachers to adopt KM. Furthermore, this research may offer valuable input to LPTK in developing teacher education programs relevant to KM's demands.

METHOD

Research Method

This research employed a cross-sectional design with a phenomenological approach to investigate the readiness and efforts of LPTK and student teachers in implementing KM. The study involved student teachers from various regions in Indonesia at a specific point in time to yield a comprehensive understanding of their readiness. In the context of this study, it took place in March 2023.

The research used a questionnaire as an instrument designed in a Microsoft Forms template. The questionnaire contained questions to explore student teachers' perceptions and assessments regarding their readiness to implement KM. Researchers cooperated with university faculty and staff in the teacher education program to distribute the questionnaire to the participants.

Before completing the questionnaire, the respondents (research subjects) were provided with informed consent, which included information about the research objectives, procedures, data confidentiality, and their rights

as participants. Subsequently, the participants were allowed to fill out the questionnaire. The procedures followed in this research confirmed that respondents' participation was based on full awareness and consent while maintaining the confidentiality of collected data. Thus, this study adhered to ethical approaches in safeguarding participants' rights and upholding research integrity.

Research Subjects

This study involved student teachers from several provinces in Indonesia (Table 2). The research subjects completed an online questionnaire distributed within one month (March 2023). The questionnaire was administered by asking several LPTK to share it with their student teachers. During this time, 448 student teachers filled out the form. The following table presents the respondents' demographic information, including gender, educational level, chosen major, and region of origin.

Research Instrument

The questionnaire used in this study consists of two distinct sets of questions specifically designed for the research. The first set of questions focuses on the respondents' demographic aspects. This set comprises four questions that gather information about 1) the name of the study program the respondents are currently enrolled in, 2) their educational level (academic year), 3) their gender, and 4) their region of origin (province).

On the other hand, the second set of questions constitutes the core of the questionnaire and concentrates on the student teachers' understanding and the role of LPTK in preparing them for the implementation of KM. This set of questions includes the following four inquiries:

1. As a student teacher who will teach students in the future, what do you know about KM?
2. In your opinion, what are the reasons for the government's implementation of KM at the school level?
3. What efforts have your university, faculty, or study program made to prepare you as a student teacher to implement KM?
4. If you graduate, do you feel prepared to implement KM? Why or why not?

These questions are designed to explore the student teachers' understanding, perceptions, and attitudes toward the Independent Learning Curriculum and the efforts made by their educational institutions to prepare them as capable future teachers to implement KM. The responses to these questions will provide a deeper understanding of the readiness of student teachers and the role of LPTK in facing the implementation of KM.

Data Collection and Analysis

The online questionnaire would be available for student teachers to complete within one month. Participants would be given access to complete the questionnaire during this timeframe. After completion, the data collected from the respondents were downloaded into an Excel workbook for the analysis process.

The data analysis process will employ a multistage approach of descriptive coding and pattern analysis (Saldana, 2016) on the qualitative data derived from open-ended questions in the questionnaire. In this analysis, the qualitative data will be analyzed through several stages of coding, where emerging findings and patterns will be identified and categorized. The results of the coding process will be presented in the form of themes or categories that reflect the emerging findings from the data. These themes will provide a more detailed and comprehensive understanding of the student teachers' perceptions, knowledge, and experiences related to KM. By employing a

Table 2 Respondents' Demographics

		N	%
Gender	Male	90	20.09
	Female	358	79.91
Educational Level	Freshmen (1st year)	105	23.44
	Sophomores (2nd year)	93	20.76
	Juniors (3rd year)	96	21.43
	Seniors (4th year)	111	24.78
	More than 4 years	43	9.60
Study Program	Christian Education	25	5.58
	Indonesian Language Education	38	8.48
	English Language Education	10	2.23
	Biology Education	32	7.14
	Economic Education	43	9.60
	Physics Education	16	3.57
	Primary Teacher Education	114	25.45
	Social Science Education	19	4.24
	Chemistry Education	28	6.25
	Mathematics Education	123	27.46
Province	Bangka Belitung	2	0.45
	Banten	14	3.13
	Special Region of Yogyakarta	3	0.67
	Special Capital Region of Jakarta	7	1.56
	West Java	20	4.46
	Central Java	29	6.47
	East Java	13	2.90
	West Kalimantan	6	1.34
	Central Kalimantan	9	2.01
	East Kalimantan	1	0.22
	Lampung	19	4.24
	Maluku	85	18.97
	North Maluku	1	0.22
	East Nusa Tenggara	32	7.14
	Papua	6	1.34
	South Papua	1	0.22
	Riau	8	1.79
	South Sulawesi	19	4.24
	Central Sulawesi	11	2.46
	Southeast Sulawesi	4	0.89
	North Sulawesi	17	3.79
	West Sumatera	1	0.22
	South Sumatera	3	0.67
	North Sumatera	137	30.58

systematic analysis approach, this research aims to delve into a deeper understanding of the student teachers' perceptions, knowledge, and experiences related to KM. The analysis will provide a rich and in-depth understanding of the gathered qualitative data, thus presenting valuable and relevant findings related to the research objectives.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The following section presents the research findings based on the respondents' answers to the provided questions following the research problem formulation.

Student Teachers' Knowledge of the KM

The researcher analyzed the responses provided by the respondents to question number 1, which is "As a student teacher who will teach students in the future, what do you know about KM?" The responses from the respondents were then classified into three categories: not knowing or inaccurate knowledge, having incomplete knowledge, and possessing accurate and comprehensive knowledge as seen on Table 3.

From the table above, it can be seen that 24.55% of student teachers are not aware of or have an inaccurate understanding of the KM. Below are some sentiments of participants who are not aware of or have an inaccurate understanding of the KM:

- *I have only heard the term but do not yet comprehend it fully.*
- *KM is learning focused on targets and outcomes.*
- *It is a more detailed learning within the classroom.*
- *KM is good.*

Furthermore, 58.71% of student teachers have incomplete knowledge about KM. Some testimonies of their responses include:

1. KM emphasizes the process of developing students' talents and interests.
2. KM is a curriculum that highlights the profile of students based on Pancasila and their freedom.
3. A curriculum that does not impose too much knowledge on students; they will learn what they desire, and the curriculum does not assign many homework tasks but focuses more on development during the learning process.

Lastly, 16.74% of students provided correct answers, such as:

- *According to my understanding, KM aims to sharpen children's interests and talents from an early age, focusing on essential content, character development, and students' competencies.*
- *KM is a more flexible intracurricular curriculum that focuses on students' interests and talents, characterized by project-based learning, flexibility for teachers and students, and a focus on essential learning.*
- *KM is a diverse intracurricular curriculum that adopts an approach that emphasizes students' interests and talents, featuring project-based learning, flexibility for both teachers and students, and a focus on essential learning.*

Table 3 Student Teachers' Knowledge of the KM

Educational Level	Knowledge of the KM					
	Unaware or inaccurate knowledge		Incomplete knowledge		Accurate and comprehensive knowledge	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Freshmen (1st year)	25	5.58	68	15.18	12	2.68
Sophomores (2nd year)	21	4.69	53	11.83	19	4.24
Juniors (3rd year)	29	6.47	52	11.61	15	3.35
Seniors (4th year)	23	5.13	63	14.06	25	5.58
More than 4 years	12	2.68	27	6.03	4	0.89
Total	110	24.55	263	58.71	75	16.74

Understanding of the Reasons behind the Government's Curriculum Change

Based on the survey results from 448 respondents, student teachers perceived several factors that might be the reasons behind the government's decision to implement a national curriculum change.

1. Students: The factor of students emerged as one of the vital reasons suspected by student teachers underlying the government's decision to change the curriculum. Respondents emphasized the need for student flexibility in choosing subjects that align with their interests and talents. With this flexibility, students can focus on developing their skills and unique qualities, which, in turn, will influence their learning interests and motivation. The KM is also seen as facilitating students to become more creative and active in learning. In this context, KM is expected to enhance students' literacy and numeracy skills, preparing them for higher education at universities or entry into the workforce. Additionally, through implementing KM, students' character as Pancasila learners is expected to be strengthened. This is aimed at holistic development, not only in academic aspects but also in the values of Pancasila, which serve as the foundation for national life. Thus, curriculum changes based on students' needs are expected to contribute positively to enhancing students' potential.
2. Current Developments: The ongoing developments of science and technology might be why the government changed the national curriculum. Student teachers expressed that the rapid advancement of IPTEK today demands changes in the learning system. In this regard, KM is expected to provide a structured learning framework focused on critical aspects that support current global needs. The development of KM is also seen as aligning with students' preparation to face the era of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, where technological progress and digital transformation are the main factors influencing the educational and job sectors. Through KM, students are expected to develop relevant skills demanded by the present time, such as critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and digital literacy.
3. Covid-19 Pandemic: The Covid-19 pandemic has significantly impacted the education sector, and the awareness of its effects has prompted educational policy changes. Student teachers revealed that the curriculum change is a step the government took to catch up and restore the disrupted learning process due to the pandemic. In this context, the implementation of the KM is expected to be a solution to address the negative impacts of remote learning experienced by students during the Covid-19 pandemic. The application of KM is hoped to assist students in overcoming learning loss resulting from online learning during the pandemic. The differentiated learning approach embedded in KM allows students to catch up with their learning gaps after the pandemic. Differentiated learning in KM provides opportunities for students to learn according to their needs and abilities, thus minimizing learning disparities that arose during remote learning.
4. Improvement of the Previous Curriculum: The curriculum change policy can also be viewed as an effort to improve the previous curriculum, known as the Curriculum 2013 (K13). Evaluation of K13 indicates that the curriculum was less effective in achieving the desired learning outcomes. K13 was criticized for being too broad and dense, making it difficult for students to master the content deeply. Additionally, K13 was deemed inadequate in facilitating students'

development according to their interests and talents. The curriculum tended to have a more generalized approach and did not allow students to develop specific skills or interests. This resulted in students being unable to explore their potential fully and sometimes losing motivation in the learning process. Therefore, the curriculum change implemented through KM is expected to address these weaknesses. Through implementing KM, it is hoped that students can learn more meaningfully and gain a deeper understanding of the learning material.

5. National Progress: The aspiration for national progress is considered one of the factors that might be behind the government's curriculum change policy. This goal includes the desire to achieve education standards on par with advanced countries, where students can choose subjects aligned with their interests in the learning process. In this context, the curriculum change is expected to create a younger generation with social skills (soft skills) contributing significantly to the nation and being able to compete globally. The KM is also expected to be one of the means of accelerating the achievement of national educational goals. In its implementation, KM emphasizes empowering students to develop themselves holistically. This approach allows students to explore their potential more broadly and develop non-academic skills such as creativity, critical thinking, leadership, and effective communication. The hope for the application of KM is to create a stimulating learning environment where students are directed to learn, take initiative, and become problem solvers actively. As such, the well-educated generation through KM is expected to make significant contributions to national development, not only in academic fields but also in addressing social and economic challenges.
6. Education Equality: The need for education equality across all regions in Indonesia is also believed to be one of the factors driving the government's decision to implement the curriculum change. Implementing the KM allows regions and schools to have greater authority in managing education according to their specific needs and contexts. This approach is expected to help regions develop their potential based on their unique strengths and characteristics. Through KM, regions in Indonesia can have flexibility in adapting the existing national curriculum while considering local needs, local wisdom, and specific challenges faced by local communities. This enables schools and educators in each region to design more relevant learning programs tailored to the conditions and needs of students in that area. Implementing KM is expected to reduce educational disparities between remote or marginalized areas and more advanced regions in this context. KM enables efforts to develop more inclusive and sustainable education across Indonesia by giving authority to regions managing education. By considering the characteristics and needs of each region, KM can facilitate the improvement of education quality in those areas and promote balanced growth and development throughout the regions. KM empowers regions to develop their advantages, encourages innovation, and promotes sustainable social and economic growth in each area.
7. Teachers: In the context of education, the role of teachers as the primary agents in the learning process has been widely recognized. However, teachers are also faced with a considerable administrative burden. To address this challenge, implementing KM is expected to provide

significant benefits for teachers. Within the framework of KM, teachers are granted greater flexibility to design and develop learning experiences following the classroom context and students' individual needs. Consequently, teachers can focus more on deepening their knowledge of the subject matter and adapting it to effective and innovative teaching methods. Teachers can become more focused, creative, and actively engaged in developing a learning process that caters to the needs of students and society.

8. Learning Process: Through implementing the KM, the learning process can be designed with greater flexibility and depth, focusing on essential subject matter. KM allows teachers to design and adapt the curriculum to suit students' needs and characteristics. With this flexibility in curriculum development, learning can be customized to the classroom context and the students' more profound needs. This allows teachers to adjust methods, strategies, and teaching materials to be more relevant and effective in achieving learning objectives. Thus, implementing KM allows the learning process to be organized flexibly and deeply, considering each student's uniqueness, interests, and talents. This is expected to create a learning environment that is more personal, active, and enjoyable, thereby enhancing the quality of learning and holistic student development.

The Role of LPTK in Preparing Student Teachers to Implement the Kurikulum Merdeka

Out of 448 respondents, 26 stated that the LPTK where they received their education did not intentionally provide explanations or preparations to become teachers' candidates in implementing the KM. Meanwhile, the remaining respondents expressed that LPTK had tried to prepare student teachers for KM implementation. These efforts are outlined as follows.

1. Provision of Supporting Courses: LPTK offers various courses that support the implementation of KM. One example is the curriculum study course, which extensively covers KM and analyzes its differences from other curricula. Additionally, some courses teach various classroom teaching methods such as group discussions, presentations, quizzes, Q&A sessions, role-play, independent learning, and others. These courses allow student teachers to learn teaching methods suitable for the needs and characteristics of the students they will teach in the future. LPTK also offers courses that train students in developing lesson plans (RPP) in line with KM. These courses help students understand their interests and talents and find appropriate learning media to support their learning process. Furthermore, some courses teach how to encourage students to demonstrate their talents during learning. Through these courses, LPTK aims to comprehensively prepare student teachers to meet the demands and complexities of KM implementation. The courses aim to enhance student teachers' understanding, skills, and abilities in effectively implementing KM in their future teaching practices.
2. Organizing Socialization/Seminars/Workshops/Discussions: To academically prepare teacher candidates, LPTK introduces KM at the beginning of the semester. This is to ensure that student teachers obtain a comprehensive understanding of the KM framework. With this understanding, students will be better prepared and less surprised when facing assignments that apply the concept of KM. Additionally, LPTK holds seminars and workshops that discuss KM involving

educational experts and schools that have implemented KM. The purpose of these activities is to provide socialization about KM to the students. By involving competent speakers and practitioners in the field, students are expected to gain a deeper insight into implementing KM in authentic contexts. Furthermore, the faculty has organized discussions regarding the *Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar* for all teacher candidates. These discussions allow students to dialogue, exchange ideas, and deepen their understanding of KM. Students can share their experiences, thoughts, and perspectives on implementing KM in these activities.

3. Through Field Practice/Site Visits: LPTK organizes field experience programs for students, particularly in schools implementing the *Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar*. This program allows students to observe the direct implementation of KM in the field. During this field practice, students can observe and learn how KM is applied in the school context, including the strategies, methods, and approaches teachers use to implement KM. By witnessing firsthand how KM is implemented in the school environment, students can observe the challenges, opportunities, and successes of KM implementation. These observations also allow students to learn from practitioners in the field, gain new insights, and draw inspiration to develop their ability to implement KM in the future. With a deeper understanding and direct experience in the field, students are expected to apply the concept of KM more effectively and skillfully when they become teachers who implement this approach in their teaching.
4. Real-Life Experiences as Learners: To create a more profound academic experience, lecturers implement project-based learning in the classroom. In project-based learning, students are given relevant projects or practice assignments related to the material. Lecturers also provide direct modeling of the learning process. This approach aims to build the knowledge, concepts, and skills students need through real-life experiences that they can apply in the real world. This approach allows students to be directly involved in learning activities and gain a more concrete understanding of KM. By acquiring direct experience in learning, students are expected to develop a more comprehensive understanding and relevant skills in implementing KM in an educational context.
5. Research: Students can research literature to enhance their understanding and academic capabilities regarding implementing KM. This research aims to analyze the implications of KM implementation in education. In this research, students are directed to conduct in-depth analyses of relevant literature sources, such as scientific journals, books, articles, and other academic sources. Through this process, students can identify and analyze various implications of implementing KM in education. Through this research, students are expected to gain a deeper understanding of the implications of KM implementation and develop critical analysis and synthesis skills relevant to this information.
6. Encouraging Independent Learning and Seeking Information Related To KM: To improve students' academic quality and preparation as adaptable future teachers, LPTK encourages students to adopt a self-directed learning approach through various initiatives provided. One such initiative is the *Merdeka Mengajar* Platform, where students can access learning resources related to the KM. Through this platform,

students can participate in webinar series discussing various aspects of KM, join Learning Communities for discussions and knowledge-sharing, and utilize the Service Center or Helpdesk to receive support and guidance in facing KM learning challenges. Additionally, lecturers recommend guidebooks that students can study independently. These guidebooks are designed to provide a deeper understanding of the concepts and strategies for implementing the *Kurikulum Merdeka.* By studying these guidebooks, students can develop independent skills in assimilating information and preparing themselves with the necessary knowledge to face changes in the educational context. With these initiatives, students are encouraged to adopt a self-directed learning approach, sharpen their adaptive skills, and equip themselves with comprehensive knowledge of KM.

Readiness of Student Teachers to Implement the KM and Its Reasons

Table 4 represents the readiness of student teachers to implement KM. Several reasons were provided in the context of the responses of "not ready" from the student teachers. The following are quotations from the responses given by the students:

- *Because everything depends on the school's condition, the local government only encourages school principals and teachers to reflect on their readiness to implement the Kurikulum Merdeka. Therefore, the readiness for KM implementation at schools can vary.*
- *I have not received an adequate introduction to this curriculum and do not know how to implement it in the classroom. This lack of knowledge makes me feel unprepared to implement KM.*
- *It may become ineffective when students are given too much course material and are forced to complete their studies quickly. Focusing on KM may result in a lack of depth in the knowledge received.*

From these quotations, it can be observed that the students express that they do not fully understand the essence and essence of the KM. Some of the reasons provided include concern for the needs of elementary school children, reliance on the school's conditions, lack of introduction and understanding of KM, and concerns about the accumulation of course material that could reduce the depth of knowledge.

While respondents who answered "undecided" (16.29%) provided several reasons, some of them include a lack of comprehensive understanding of KM and feeling inadequately competent to implement it effectively. Additionally, some respondents consider KM less effective in the educational context. The reasons behind this viewpoint could stem from their experiences or perceptions of KM implementation not yielding the expected

Table 4 Student Teachers' Readiness to Implement the KM

Educational Level	Readiness to Implement the KM					
	Not Ready		Hesitation (Undecided)		Ready	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Freshmen (1st year)	1	0.22	4	0.89	100	22.32
Sophomores (2nd year)	0	0.00	13	2.90	80	17.86
Juniors (3rd year)	1	0.22	22	4.91	73	16.29
Seniors (4th year)	1	0.22	29	6.47	81	18.08
More than 4 years	1	0.22	5	1.12	37	8.26
Total	4	0.89	73	16.29	371	82.81

results. They may have encountered various obstacles or challenges in implementing KM that influenced their perception of the curriculum's effectiveness. Apart from uncertainty and the perception of ineffectiveness, some respondents expressed concerns about curriculum changes after graduation. They worry that a new curriculum might be implemented after they complete their studies, and they would need to adapt to it. This could be a source of anxiety and uncertainty about their future as teachers.

Here are some examples of student responses reflecting their lack of preparation regarding the KM:

- *I still need to learn about this curriculum and receive guidance in its implementation.*
- *I am not well-informed about its mechanisms in terms of administration and practice.*
- *I have never practiced it directly nor delved deeper into the KM.*

Furthermore, there are other responses not related to the readiness of student teachers concerning KM, including:

- *KM will 'force' teachers to cater to students with diverse abilities*
- *It depends on whether, after we graduate and start teaching, the government will still implement the Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar or not.*
- *I feel uncertain because I am still considering becoming a teacher.*

In the context of the "yes" responses (82.81%) regarding the readiness of student teachers to implement the *Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar* (KM), several types of responses can be identified as follows.

1. They support the government's program to improve the quality of education in Indonesia. Some student teachers feel prepared to implement KM because it is a curriculum initiated and established by the government, and they believe that the government will assist and facilitate schools and teachers in implementing KM.
2. Well-equipped with knowledge and understanding. Student teachers state that they have been well-equipped with sufficient knowledge and understanding of the *Kurikulum Merdeka* through courses, field experience programs, and training provided by their program, faculty, and university.
3. They are recognizing KM as an educational breakthrough in Indonesia. Some student teachers realize that KM is in line with modern developments and have benefits in enhancing learning effectiveness, student progress, and overall national progress. They also perceive KM as a curriculum that provides space for developing students' interests and talents, making learning meaningful.
4. The responsibility of a teacher. Student teachers feel that being ready to implement KM is their responsibility as educators who must provide the best for their students, especially amid the post-pandemic conditions. They recognize the importance of adapting to curriculum developments and changes and mastering the curriculum that will be implemented.

Here are some examples of student responses reflecting their readiness to implement KM:

- *I am ready because KM allows students to learn according to their interests and talents. Students will not feel bored with appropriate teaching methods, and the learning objectives can be achieved more effectively*.
- *I believe that KM is a breakthrough in education, transforming traditional learning methods into more modern and effective ones. This curriculum considers current developments and students' needs, thus creating more relevant and meaningful learning experiences.*

- *My readiness to implement KM is based on government policies that have considered the progress of education in Indonesia. I am aware that KM is a step taken to improve the quality of education, and I am prepared to follow it.*

Discussion

As long as education and life exist, curriculum changes are inevitable. This is because the curriculum is dynamic; it constantly changes according to the development of time (Cartwright et al., 2017; Gibbs, 2018; Kift, 2003; Simmons & MacLean, 2018; Velthuis et al., 2018). Curriculum development is an ongoing process that involves continuous evaluation and analysis. With the certainty of these changes, the necessary step is to prepare teachers and future teachers as the vanguards of education to adapt quickly when curriculum changes are needed. Teachers must be able to adapt quickly to ensure that students continue to receive quality education (Chung, 2022).

The questionnaire results showed that student teachers' understanding of the new curriculum (KM) is already quite good but incomplete. Before implementing a curriculum, teachers must understand it correctly (Pill & Stolz, 2017). A good understanding will assist teachers in implementing effective teaching practices (Pill & Stolz, 2017; Waluyo & Kardoyo, 2020).

The questionnaire results also indicate that students can provide logical and positive reasons behind the government's decision to change the curriculum. This also demonstrates student teachers' awareness of the paradigm shift in education and their understanding of the main objectives of this curriculum, which is to provide more meaningful and relevant learning experiences for students. A sufficient understanding of KM indicates that student teachers and LPTK have embraced the new ideas and concepts necessary to face the educational paradigm shift. To implement the curriculum effectively, acceptance and understanding of the educational paradigm shift are essential foundations (Acosta, 2016; Jayathilake & Jayawardhana, 2017; Nousiainen et al., 2017).

Regarding readiness, the results of the questionnaire show that not all student teachers are ready to implement this new curriculum. To address this unpreparedness, continuous efforts are needed to deepen understanding of KM and provide appropriate knowledge and approaches to prepare students for implementing KM. Responses reflecting doubt and uncertainty among some students regarding the implementation and effectiveness of KM indicate the need for more profound knowledge and understanding. Therefore, continuous efforts by LPTK to deepen understanding, collaborate with educational institutions, and provide ongoing support will be vital to optimizing students' readiness to implement KM. Even though some feel ready, their understanding still requires further consolidation and development through more in-depth academic approaches, collaboration with educational institutions, and continuous support from relevant parties to ensure optimal readiness in implementing KM. LPTK must also continuously update its curriculum and align it with the currently applicable school curriculum (Khan, 2012) to equip every student teacher well.

Through good synergy between the government and LPTK in preparing student teachers, each student teacher is expected to adapt quickly to effectively implement curriculum changes when they become teachers in the future.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Conclusion

Based on the research and analysis conducted, it can be concluded that 1) 24.55% of student

teachers do not understand KM, 58.71% have an incomplete understanding, and 16.74% have accurate and comprehensive knowledge about KM facing the implementation of the KM; 2) Most student teachers (94.2%) stated that their LPTK has tried to prepare students to implement *Kurikulum Merdeka*; and 3) most student teachers have expressed that they are ready to implement KM, while some remain not ready and hesitant.

These results imply that the knowledge and skills of student teachers still require continuous improvement to achieve optimal readiness. LPTK, as an institution responsible for producing teachers, also needs to comprehensively evaluate all preparation efforts made thus far to ensure maximum preparation for student teachers. Therefore, every curriculum change requires readiness and sincere efforts from LPTK as an educational institution and the student teachers. Consequently, strong readiness and collaboration between LPTK and student teachers in facing curriculum changes will positively contribute to the government's efforts to maximize the implementation of these curriculum changes.

Suggestion

Considering teachers' crucial role in shaping the nation's next generation, it is essential for the government and all education stakeholders to work together and be fully committed to implementing curriculum changes. One possible way is to provide more intensive curriculum training (both synchronous and asynchronous) for LPTK and student teachers. So far, the government has focused more on conducting socialization and training for schools and teachers who have taught. With mature readiness and continuous improvements, it is hoped that implementing KM will significantly impact the achievement of the goals of Indonesian education.

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