

# IMPROVING TEACHER QUALITY IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MERDEKA CURRICULUM: A QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY

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## ABSTRACT

This study examines how teacher quality is improved in the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum at SMA Negeri 42 Central Maluku, Indonesia. The study was motivated by the strategic role of teachers in translating curriculum reform into meaningful, differentiated, and student-centered learning, particularly in schools that face contextual limitations related to infrastructure, digital access, and teacher readiness. A descriptive qualitative case-study design was employed. The research participants were selected purposively and consisted of the principal and the vice principal for curriculum, both of whom were directly involved in curriculum implementation and teacher development programs. Data were collected through observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation, and were analyzed through data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings reveal four interconnected dimensions of teacher-quality improvement. First, pedagogical competence was strengthened through in-house training, Merdeka Curriculum workshops, peer observation, learning communities, and training in the preparation of learning outcomes, learning objectives, teaching modules, and formative assessments. Second, personality competence was developed through stress-management webinars, emotional and spiritual intelligence training, coaching, and follow-up action plans designed to strengthen teachers as role models for character education and the Pancasila Student Profile. Third, social competence was enhanced through positive-culture workshops, collaborative reflection, and communication-oriented activities that supported inclusive learning relationships. Fourth, professional competence was improved through teacher working groups, direct practice, contextual adaptation, and the development of innovative teaching materials. The study concludes that teacher-quality improvement in the Merdeka Curriculum requires an integrated, school-based professional development model that combines technical training, reflective coaching, collegial collaboration, and contextual problem solving.

**Keywords:** Merdeka Curriculum; Pedagogical Competence; Professional Competence; Teacher Quality; Qualitative Case Study

## INTRODUCTION

The quality of education is inseparable from the quality of teachers. In any education system, curriculum reform can only produce meaningful transformation when teachers are able to interpret policy, design learning experiences, facilitate student growth, and evaluate learning outcomes in ways that are responsive to the needs of learners. In Indonesia, this issue has become increasingly important with the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, also known internationally as the Independent Curriculum. The curriculum promotes flexible, differentiated, contextual, and student-centered learning while strengthening the Pancasila Student Profile as a framework for character formation and holistic student development.

Education serves as a major instrument for improving human resources and strengthening national competitiveness. The Indonesian National Education System Law emphasizes that education aims to develop learners who are faithful, noble in character, healthy, knowledgeable, capable, creative, independent, democratic, and responsible citizens. This national mandate requires schools to create learning processes that are not merely oriented toward content completion, but also toward the formation of competence, character, independence, collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity. In this respect, curriculum reform must be understood as a systemic effort to align learning with contemporary social, cultural, technological, and economic change.

The Merdeka Curriculum emerged as part of Indonesia's continuing effort to respond to learning loss, strengthen essential competencies, and provide schools and teachers with greater autonomy in organizing learning. Compared with earlier curriculum models, the Merdeka Curriculum places stronger emphasis on essential learning materials, differentiated instruction, project-based learning, formative assessment, and the integration of student interests and learning readiness into lesson design. Consequently, the role of teachers changes from that of content transmitters to that of learning designers, facilitators, assessors, mentors, and reflective practitioners.

Teacher competence is central to this transformation. Indonesian teacher policy identifies four core domains of teacher competence: pedagogical, personality, social, and professional competence. Pedagogical competence concerns the ability to understand learners, design learning, implement instruction, use assessment, and develop learner potential. Personality competence refers to teachers' maturity, integrity, emotional stability, wisdom, and capacity to become role models. Social competence refers to the ability to communicate and collaborate effectively with students, colleagues, parents, and the wider community. Professional competence concerns the mastery of subject matter, learning materials, scientific development, and professional growth. These four domains are not separate technical categories; rather, they interact in determining how teachers implement curriculum reform in real classrooms.

Although the Merdeka Curriculum offers opportunities for more meaningful learning, its implementation remains challenging for many schools. Teachers are required to prepare new learning documents, understand learning outcomes, formulate learning objectives, design teaching modules, conduct differentiated instruction, and implement formative and authentic assessment. At the same time, some teachers still experience difficulties in shifting from teacher-centered approaches to student-centered learning. Challenges are more visible in schools with limited internet access, unstable electricity, inadequate learning facilities, and uneven levels of digital literacy. These contextual realities make school-based teacher development a crucial issue in curriculum implementation.

SMA Negeri 42 Central Maluku represents a relevant case for examining these issues. The school has attempted to improve teacher quality through in-house training, workshops, learning communities, peer observation, coaching, and collaborative evaluation. However, the initial implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum has not been fully optimal. Teachers still encounter limitations in developing learning strategies aligned with curriculum objectives, creating innovative learning materials, adapting to curriculum change, integrating technology, and building teamwork in the preparation and implementation of learning. These problems demonstrate the need to examine teacher-quality improvement as a practical and contextual process rather than as a purely administrative requirement.

This study addresses the following research question: How does SMA Negeri 42 Central Maluku improve teachers' pedagogical, personality, social, and professional competencies in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum? By answering this question, the study contributes to the literature on curriculum implementation and teacher professional development in Indonesian secondary education, particularly in the context of island-based and resource-constrained schools. The study also offers practical insights for school leaders, curriculum coordinators, and policymakers in designing teacher development programs that are responsive to local needs while remaining aligned with national curriculum reform.

This study is grounded in the concept of teacher quality as a multidimensional professional capacity. In the Indonesian context, teacher quality is commonly operationalized through four competencies: pedagogical, personality, social, and professional competence. These competencies provide a useful analytical lens because the Merdeka Curriculum requires teachers not only to understand curriculum documents but also to transform those documents into learning practices that are meaningful, inclusive, adaptive, and character-oriented.

Pedagogical competence is particularly important because the Merdeka Curriculum requires teachers to design learning according to students' needs, readiness, interests, and potential. Teachers must be able to interpret learning outcomes, formulate learning objectives, prepare teaching modules, select appropriate learning strategies, and use formative assessment to support continuous learning improvement. Without strong pedagogical competence, differentiated learning and project-based learning can become merely formal requirements rather than authentic learning experiences.

Personality competence is also fundamental because the Merdeka Curriculum positions teachers as role models who contribute to the formation of the Pancasila Student Profile. Teachers' emotional stability,

discipline, responsibility, empathy, and ethical conduct influence the classroom climate and students' character development. Personality competence therefore supports not only instructional effectiveness but also the moral and social dimensions of learning.

Social competence is required because learning in the Merdeka Curriculum involves collaboration among teachers, students, parents, school committees, and community stakeholders. This is especially visible in project-based learning and Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Projects, where teachers must communicate effectively, build partnerships, manage social dynamics, and create inclusive learning environments. Professional competence, meanwhile, ensures that teachers master subject matter deeply and are able to adapt content to real-life contexts, technological developments, and local resources.

In this study, these four competencies are treated as an integrated framework for analyzing teacher-quality improvement. The framework allows the study to identify not only the types of training and development activities implemented by the school, but also the barriers, support mechanisms, and contextual adaptations that shape curriculum implementation in practice.

## **METHOD**

### **Research Design**

This research employed a descriptive qualitative case-study approach. The approach was selected because the study aimed to obtain an in-depth understanding of how teacher quality was improved in a specific school context during the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum. Rather than measuring the effectiveness of a particular intervention statistically, the study focused on describing processes, strategies, meanings, challenges, and school-based responses as experienced and explained by key curriculum actors.

### **Research Site and Participants**

The study was conducted at SMA Negeri 42 Central Maluku, Indonesia. The participants were selected through purposive sampling because they possessed direct knowledge of curriculum implementation and teacher development programs. The key informants were the school principal and the vice principal for curriculum. Both participants were considered appropriate sources of information because they were involved in planning, coordinating, supervising, and evaluating teacher-quality improvement activities related to the Merdeka Curriculum.

### **Data Collection**

Data were collected through observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation. Observation was used to understand the school context and the general implementation of teacher-development activities. Interviews were conducted to obtain detailed information about the meaning of teacher competence, the role of each competence in curriculum implementation, the types of training and workshops attended by teachers, the challenges encountered, and the solutions implemented by the school. Documentation was used to support interview and observation data by examining relevant school documents, training records, curriculum documents, and teaching-tool development activities.

The main field data were collected on October 29, 2025. Interview questions were organized around four domains of teacher competence: pedagogical, personality, social, and professional competence. The interview protocol also explored the school's strategies for addressing barriers and sustaining teacher development.

### **Data Analysis and Trustworthiness**

The data were analyzed using the interactive stages of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing or verification. Data reduction was conducted by selecting, simplifying, and organizing information relevant to the research focus. Data display was carried out by grouping information into thematic categories based on the four teacher-competence domains. Conclusions were drawn by identifying patterns across interviews, observations, and documentation. Trustworthiness was strengthened through source triangulation, technique triangulation, repeated reading of interview notes, and consistency checks between the participants' statements and documentary evidence.

### Ethical Considerations

The study followed basic ethical principles for qualitative research. The research purpose was explained to participants, and the information obtained was used for academic purposes. In the revised manuscript, participants are identified by role rather than by personal name to maintain professional confidentiality and to align the manuscript with international publication conventions.

Table 1. Research focus, data sources, and analytical categories

Research focus	Main data sources	Analytical categories
Pedagogical competence	Interviews, observation, documentation of training and teaching tools	Learning design, differentiated learning, assessment, learning communities
Personality competence	Interviews and records of webinars, coaching, and follow-up plans	Role modelling, emotional stability, discipline, character formation
Social competence	Interviews, observation of collaboration, school reflection activities	Communication, collaboration, stakeholder relations, positive culture
Professional competence	Interviews, training documents, teacher working group activities	Subject mastery, teaching materials, innovation, contextual adaptation

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings show that teacher-quality improvement at SMA Negeri 42 Central Maluku was organized around four competency domains: pedagogical, personality, social, and professional competence. Each domain was developed through school-based strategies, including training, workshops, learning communities, coaching, peer collaboration, and routine evaluation. The findings also reveal that curriculum implementation was shaped by internal factors, such as teacher motivation and readiness, and external factors, such as electricity, internet access, facilities, and local communication culture.

Table 2. Summary of teacher-quality improvement strategies and contextual challenges

Competence domain	Improvement strategies	Main challenges	School responses
Pedagogical	In-house training, Merdeka Curriculum workshops, teaching-module training, peer observation, learning community	Limited creativity, difficulty shifting from teacher-centered to student-centered learning, digital integration barriers	Collaborative reflection, peer learning, evaluation of teaching practices
Personality	Stress-management webinars, emotional and spiritual intelligence training, coaching, follow-up action plans	Low intrinsic motivation, emotional pressure, personal problems affecting classroom conduct	Coaching, positive interaction plans, leadership support
Social	Positive-culture workshops, communication practice, collaborative sharing, emotional-spiritual intelligence webinars	Teacher mindset, limited interaction beyond content delivery, local dialect-related misunderstandings	Weekly reflection, communication adjustment, collaborative problem solving
Professional	Subject teacher working groups, teaching-tool	Power outages, unstable internet, inadequate facilities,	Creative use of local resources, dissemination by

Competence domain	Improvement strategies	Main challenges	School responses
	development, direct practice, contextual adaptation, PMM-based learning	limited technological mastery	certified teachers, routine evaluation

### Improving Pedagogical Competence

The first finding concerns the improvement of teachers' pedagogical competence. In the Merdeka Curriculum, pedagogical competence was understood by school leaders as the teacher's ability to design, facilitate, manage, and evaluate learning that is relevant, meaningful, and student-centered. The principal emphasized that pedagogical competence is no longer limited to preparing lesson plans or delivering materials; it now requires teachers to facilitate deeper and more liberating learning. The vice principal for curriculum similarly explained that pedagogical competence includes the ability to manage students in the learning process through planning, implementation, and evaluation in line with Merdeka Curriculum policy.

This finding indicates a shift in the school's understanding of pedagogy. Teachers are expected to move from teacher-centered delivery toward differentiated learning that considers students' interests, talents, and readiness levels. This shift is essential because the Merdeka Curriculum requires teachers to interpret learning outcomes, formulate learning objectives, develop learning-objective flows, prepare teaching modules, and design assessment practices that support students' growth.

Several strategies were used to improve pedagogical competence. Teachers participated in in-house training, workshops on Merdeka Curriculum implementation, and training on the preparation of learning tools. These activities introduced teachers to the analysis of learning outcomes, the development of learning objectives, the construction of teaching modules, and strategies for student-centered learning. The activities were practical rather than merely theoretical because teachers were trained to produce curriculum documents and apply them to classroom needs.

The school also used learning communities as a collaborative space for teachers to share good practices and discuss obstacles. Peer observation was encouraged so that teachers could learn from colleagues' classroom practices and evaluate teaching processes collectively. This mechanism functioned as an internal professional development system because it allowed teachers to identify problems, exchange strategies, and build shared understanding about curriculum implementation.

However, the improvement of pedagogical competence was not without challenges. The main obstacles included limited teacher motivation, comfort with older teaching methods, difficulty developing creative learning strategies, limited technological skills, and inadequate infrastructure. These barriers affected teachers' ability to integrate technology and to implement differentiated learning consistently. The school responded by strengthening collaborative reflection through learning communities and peer observation so that challenges could be discussed and addressed collectively.

*"In the Merdeka Curriculum, teachers must facilitate relevant, in-depth, and liberating learning for students. Pedagogical competence becomes the main key because teachers must shift from teacher-centered to student-centered learning." (Principal, interview, October 29, 2025)*

### Improving Personality Competence

The second finding concerns the improvement of teachers' personality competence. In the school context, personality competence was understood as the teacher's psychological readiness, personal character, emotional stability, discipline, responsibility, wisdom, and ability to become a role model. This competence was considered crucial because the Merdeka Curriculum does not focus only on academic achievement but also on character formation through the Pancasila Student Profile.

The principal stated that teachers must possess a good and mature personal disposition because their attitudes influence the learning process. The vice principal for curriculum added that teachers' personalities must reflect the values they expect from students. In other words, teachers cannot effectively implement character-oriented learning if their own behavior does not demonstrate discipline, responsibility, empathy, and moral consistency.

Several school-based strategies were used to strengthen personality competence. Teachers participated in stress-management webinars, workshops on Merdeka Curriculum implementation, emotional and

spiritual intelligence training, and independent learning through the Merdeka Mengajar Platform. These activities were expected to help teachers manage stress, regulate emotions, develop self-awareness, and become more stable and authoritative in the classroom. The activities also supported teachers in developing soft skills and fostering positive student character.

The school also implemented coaching and follow-up action plans. Coaching was used as a reflective conversation between teachers, the principal, and curriculum leaders. Through coaching, teachers were encouraged to identify their personal challenges, reflect on their classroom behavior, and find practical solutions. Follow-up action plans translated reflection into concrete practices, such as improving positive interactions with students, colleagues, and education staff.

The main barriers to personality competence were internal. Some teachers participated in webinars or workshops only as a formality and did not fully focus on the process. Others experienced emotional pressure from family or community problems that affected their classroom behavior. These findings show that teacher development cannot be limited to technical competence. It must also address emotional resilience, ethical awareness, professional discipline, and the capacity for self-reflection.

*"Teachers must have a stable, mature, and exemplary personality because the Merdeka Curriculum requires them to create comfort, become role models, and support student-centered learning." (Vice principal for curriculum, interview, October 29, 2025)*

### **Improving Social Competence**

The third finding concerns the improvement of teachers' social competence. In the Merdeka Curriculum, social competence was interpreted as the ability to communicate, collaborate, adapt, and build positive relationships with students, fellow teachers, education staff, parents, school committees, and community stakeholders. This competence is particularly important because curriculum implementation requires collaborative learning, project-based activities, and stakeholder participation.

The principal explained that social competence functions as a bridge between the essence of the curriculum and real practice in the classroom, school, and community. The vice principal for curriculum similarly emphasized that teachers must build good communication with students, colleagues, parents, and the community. These statements indicate that the school viewed social competence not as an optional interpersonal skill, but as a foundational condition for implementing inclusive and collaborative learning.

The school improved social competence through workshops on positive culture, webinars on emotional and spiritual intelligence, and workshops on Merdeka Curriculum implementation. These activities helped teachers understand classroom social dynamics, manage relationships, and collaborate with students and colleagues. They also encouraged teachers to build learning environments characterized by honesty, cooperation, respect, and inclusion.

Nevertheless, two major challenges emerged. First, some teachers, particularly senior teachers, were still strongly oriented toward completing learning materials. This orientation reduced opportunities for dialogue, reflection, and social interaction with students. Second, local communication patterns sometimes created misunderstandings. The distinctive tone and dialect associated with the local community could be interpreted differently by students, parents, or stakeholders. This challenge does not mean that local culture is a barrier in itself; rather, it indicates the need for teachers to manage communication carefully and to adjust language use according to audience and context.

The school responded to these challenges through weekly sharing and evaluation activities. Every week, teachers were encouraged to share difficulties encountered during the learning process, including communication problems and relationship issues. Coaching and collaborative discussion were also used to help teachers reflect on their social behavior and develop more adaptive communication strategies. These practices supported the creation of a more inclusive learning environment aligned with the goals of the Merdeka Curriculum.

*"Social competence is a bridge that connects the essence of the Merdeka Curriculum with classroom, school, and community practice. Teachers need communication, collaboration, and the ability to adapt to various situations." (Principal, interview, October 29, 2025)*

### **Improving Professional Competence**

The fourth finding concerns the improvement of teachers' professional competence. In the school context, professional competence was understood as the teacher's mastery of subject matter, ability to develop teaching materials, capacity to transfer knowledge innovatively, and skill in designing learning that is creative, contextual, and student-centered. Professional competence was considered essential because the Merdeka Curriculum gives teachers flexibility to adapt content to students' needs and local contexts.

The principal stated that professional competence enables teachers to become not only learning resources but also facilitators of student-centered learning. The vice principal for curriculum added that professional competence directly influences learning quality and students' independence. These statements show that professional competence was linked to teachers' capacity to transform curriculum flexibility into effective learning practice.

The strategies used to improve professional competence included in-house training, Merdeka Curriculum workshops, subject teacher working group activities, and training in the development of teaching tools. Teachers were trained to prepare teaching modules, develop teaching materials, design contextual learning methods, formulate learning outcomes and learning objectives, and adapt learning to the school environment. Certified teachers were also encouraged to disseminate materials and share good practices with colleagues.

A distinctive finding from this case is the importance of contextual adaptation. The school faced external constraints such as power outages, unstable internet access, and inadequate infrastructure. These limitations affected teachers' ability to use digital platforms and technology-based learning consistently. However, school leaders encouraged teachers to remain creative by using local and natural resources as learning media when electricity or internet access was unavailable. This response demonstrates that professional competence in the Merdeka Curriculum is not only about technology use, but also about adaptive expertise and the ability to maintain learning quality under constraints.

Internal barriers also appeared. Some teachers lacked innovation and creativity and still relied on conventional teaching methods. Others experienced difficulty using technology and were not proactive in seeking information or professional development opportunities. The school addressed these barriers through weekly evaluation, peer dissemination, and mentoring by certified teachers. These mechanisms supported continuous professional learning and helped teachers translate curriculum demands into more practical teaching strategies.

*"When the electricity goes out, teachers must be creative and use nature as a practical learning resource without reducing the essence of Merdeka Curriculum learning." (Vice principal for curriculum, interview, October 29, 2025)*

The findings demonstrate that teacher-quality improvement in the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum is a multidimensional and school-based process. The four competence domains were not developed separately; they interacted as part of a broader professional development ecosystem. Pedagogical competence enabled teachers to design and facilitate differentiated learning. Personality competence strengthened teachers' role as character models. Social competence supported collaboration and inclusive communication. Professional competence enabled teachers to master subject content and adapt learning to students' needs and contextual realities.

First, the improvement of pedagogical competence confirms the importance of practical and contextual professional development. Training activities were meaningful because they did not merely introduce policy concepts but also supported teachers in preparing teaching modules, learning-objective flows, and formative assessments. This aligns with the logic of curriculum implementation: teachers require concrete tools and guided practice to move from policy awareness to classroom application. The use of learning communities and peer observation further indicates that pedagogical improvement is more sustainable when teachers learn collaboratively within their own school context.

Second, the emphasis on personality competence highlights the moral dimension of curriculum implementation. The Merdeka Curriculum is strongly connected to character education through the Pancasila Student Profile. Therefore, teachers are expected to demonstrate the values they teach. The school's use of stress-management webinars, emotional-spiritual intelligence training, coaching, and follow-up plans shows that personality competence requires structured support. Teacher motivation,

emotional regulation, and professional discipline are important because they influence the classroom climate and students' willingness to participate in learning.

Third, the findings on social competence show that curriculum implementation depends on relational capacity. Student-centered learning requires teachers to build trust, communicate clearly, and collaborate with multiple stakeholders. This is particularly important in project-based learning, where teachers may need to involve parents, communities, and other external resources. The local communication challenge found in this study is also significant. It suggests that teachers in culturally distinctive regions need communicative sensitivity so that local identity can be respected while instructional clarity and inclusive interaction are maintained.

Fourth, professional competence emerged as both a technical and adaptive capacity. Teachers need mastery of content, teaching materials, assessment, and digital tools. However, in schools with limited infrastructure, professional competence also includes the ability to creatively adapt learning to available resources. The school's encouragement to use nature as a learning resource during power outages is an example of context-sensitive professional practice. This finding is important for educational policy because curriculum reform should not assume that all schools have equal digital and infrastructural readiness.

The study also shows that school leadership plays a central role in teacher-quality improvement. The principal and vice principal for curriculum acted as facilitators, motivators, evaluators, and coaches. Their role was not limited to administrative supervision; they created learning spaces through workshops, learning communities, routine evaluation, and coaching. This indicates that successful curriculum implementation requires instructional leadership that connects national policy with local school capacity.

A further implication is that teacher development for the Merdeka Curriculum should be continuous rather than incidental. One-time workshops are insufficient when teachers face complex changes in pedagogy, assessment, classroom culture, and professional identity. The case of SMA Negeri 42 Central Maluku shows that professional development becomes more relevant when it combines formal training, collegial learning, coaching, peer observation, material dissemination, and regular reflection. Such an integrated model can help teachers gradually internalize curriculum principles and translate them into classroom practice.

Finally, the study highlights the importance of contextual equity in curriculum reform. Schools in island and semi-rural contexts may face electricity disruptions, weak internet networks, and limited facilities. These constraints can slow down implementation, especially when curriculum policy relies on digital platforms and technology-based learning resources. Therefore, curriculum support should include infrastructure development, offline learning resources, locally adapted training, and school-based mentoring so that curriculum reform does not widen inequalities among schools.

### **Practical Implications**

The findings offer several practical implications. First, schools should develop integrated teacher-quality improvement programs that address pedagogical, personality, social, and professional competence simultaneously. Second, in-house training and workshops should be followed by coaching, peer observation, and learning-community activities so that teachers can apply what they have learned. Third, school leaders should create regular spaces for reflection and evaluation, because teachers need opportunities to discuss barriers and share good practices. Fourth, teacher development should include emotional resilience, communication skills, and character modelling, not only technical curriculum training. Fifth, schools with limited infrastructure should be supported with alternative learning resources, offline materials, and locally relevant teaching strategies.

For policymakers, the study suggests that implementation support for the Merdeka Curriculum should be differentiated according to school context. Schools in areas with weak internet access and unstable electricity require specific assistance, including infrastructure improvement, offline digital resources, and mentoring systems. For teacher educators and training providers, professional development modules should be designed to integrate curriculum theory, practical teaching-tool development, classroom simulation, reflective practice, and contextual problem solving.

### **Limitations and Future Research**

This study has several limitations. First, it was conducted in one school and therefore does not aim to generalize statistically to all schools implementing the Merdeka Curriculum. Second, the participants were limited to school leaders, namely the principal and the vice principal for curriculum. Future studies should include teachers, students, parents, and school committees to obtain a broader view of implementation. Third, the study used a qualitative descriptive design; future research may combine qualitative and quantitative approaches to examine the relationship between teacher-development strategies and measurable learning outcomes. Comparative studies across schools in different geographic and infrastructural contexts would also enrich understanding of how local conditions shape curriculum implementation

### **CONCLUSION**

This study examined how teacher quality is improved in the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum at SMA Negeri 42 Central Maluku. The findings show that teacher-quality improvement is carried out through four interrelated competence domains. Pedagogical competence is strengthened through in-house training, Merdeka Curriculum workshops, teaching-tool development, learning communities, and peer observation. Personality competence is developed through stress-management webinars, emotional and spiritual intelligence training, coaching, and follow-up action plans that support teachers as role models. Social competence is improved through positive-culture workshops, collaborative reflection, and communication-oriented activities that strengthen relationships with students, colleagues, parents, and stakeholders. Professional competence is enhanced through subject teacher working groups, practical training, contextual teaching-material development, certified-teacher dissemination, and adaptive use of local resources.

The study concludes that the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum depends not only on curriculum documents but also on the capacity of schools to build a continuous professional development ecosystem. Teacher-quality improvement must integrate technical training, reflective coaching, collegial collaboration, leadership support, and contextual adaptation. In resource-constrained contexts such as Central Maluku, curriculum implementation also requires infrastructure-sensitive strategies that allow teachers to remain creative and effective despite limitations. These findings contribute to curriculum implementation studies by showing how school-based professional development can translate national reform into locally meaningful practice.

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