

Research Article

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Meta-Analysis of Guru Penggerak and Kurikulum Merdeka Initiatives in Enhancing Education Quality in Indonesia

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Abstract: This study explores the significant role of Guru Penggerak and the Kurikulum Merdeka in enhancing educational quality in Indonesia. The research aims to assess how these initiatives improve teaching practices and student outcomes. Employing a Meta-Analysis Literature Review (MALR), the study systematically combines findings from various studies using statistical methods. Data analysis reveals that Guru Penggerak's active involvement in professional development and curriculum innovation, alongside the flexible, student-centered Kurikulum Merdeka, significantly improve educational quality. The research highlights the synergy between these initiatives, providing substantial theoretical and practical contributions. Limitations include reliance on secondary data and suggest future research on long-term impacts and stakeholder perspectives. The study underscores the critical importance of teacher empowerment and curriculum flexibility in driving systemic educational improvements.

Keywords: guru penggerak, kurikulum merdeka, education quality.

Introduction

The quality of education in Indonesia has long been a subject of concern, with various reports and studies highlighting significant gaps and inconsistencies in the educational outcomes across different regions. Despite numerous reforms and initiatives, many schools still struggle with inadequate infrastructure, insufficient teacher training, and a lack of resources. These issues are compounded by socio-economic disparities that further exacerbate the educational divide. As a result, students from underprivileged backgrounds often face considerable challenges in accessing quality education, leading to a cycle of poverty and limited opportunities. This reality underscores the urgent need for innovative and effective solutions to enhance the quality of education in Indonesia, ensuring that all students, regardless of their socio-economic status, have access to high-quality learning experiences.

Existing literature on educational quality improvement has explored various strategies and

theories, yet many have fallen short in addressing the unique challenges faced by the Indonesian education system. Traditional approaches, such as standardized testing and rigid curriculums, often fail to accommodate the diverse needs of students and the dynamic nature of modern education. Theoretical frameworks like constructivism and differentiated instruction have shown promise in enhancing student engagement and learning outcomes, but their practical application in Indonesian schools has been limited. Furthermore, research indicates that teacher quality is a critical determinant of student success, yet many Indonesian teachers lack the necessary training and support to implement these advanced pedagogical methods effectively. This gap between theory and practice highlights the necessity for new, contextually relevant approaches to educational reform in Indonesia.

This study aims to investigate the role of "Guru Penggerak" (Driving Teachers) and the "Kurikulum Merdeka" (Independent Curriculum) in improving the quality of education in

Indonesia. "Guru Penggerak" is an initiative designed to empower teachers to become change agents within their schools and communities, fostering innovative teaching practices and collaborative learning environments. The "Kurikulum Merdeka," on the other hand, offers a more flexible and student-centered approach to curriculum design, allowing for greater adaptability to individual student needs and local contexts. By examining the implementation and impact of these two initiatives, this research seeks to identify effective strategies for enhancing educational quality and ensuring that all students have access to meaningful and equitable learning opportunities.

The significance of this research lies in its potential to inform educational policy and practice in Indonesia. By providing empirical evidence on the effectiveness of the "Guru Penggerak" and "Kurikulum Merdeka" initiatives, this study can offer valuable insights into how these reforms can be scaled and optimized to address the persistent challenges in the education system. Furthermore, the findings can contribute to the broader discourse on educational innovation, highlighting the importance of teacher empowerment and flexible curriculum models in fostering improved educational outcomes. Ultimately, this research underscores the critical role of targeted, contextually appropriate interventions in achieving educational equity and excellence, making a compelling case for continued investment and support for these transformative initiatives.

Literature Review

Guru Penggerak

"Guru Penggerak," or "Driving Teachers," refers to a transformative initiative in Indonesia aimed at enhancing the role of teachers as leaders and change agents within the educational system. This concept encompasses teachers who are proactive in adopting and implementing innovative teaching practices, fostering a culture

of collaboration, and driving positive change in their schools and communities. Guru Penggerak are expected to go beyond traditional teaching roles by taking on responsibilities that include mentoring peers, leading professional development efforts, and actively engaging in school improvement initiatives. This initiative recognizes the critical impact that empowered and motivated teachers can have on student outcomes and overall educational quality.

The categorization of Guru Penggerak typically involves several key attributes and roles that distinguish these teachers from their peers. Firstly, Guru Penggerak are characterized by their commitment to continuous professional development and lifelong learning, actively seeking opportunities to enhance their skills and knowledge. Secondly, they exhibit strong leadership qualities, including the ability to inspire and motivate others, effectively manage classroom dynamics, and lead collaborative projects. Additionally, Guru Penggerak are often involved in curriculum development and instructional innovation, using their expertise to design and implement engaging and effective teaching strategies. Finally, these teachers play a pivotal role in community outreach, working with parents, local organizations, and other stakeholders to create a supportive and inclusive educational environment.

Kurikulum Merdeka

The "Kurikulum Merdeka," or "Independent Curriculum," is a progressive educational framework introduced in Indonesia to provide greater flexibility and autonomy in curriculum design and implementation. This curriculum emphasizes student-centered learning, allowing schools and teachers to tailor educational experiences to meet the diverse needs and interests of their students. The Kurikulum Merdeka promotes active learning, critical thinking, and creativity, encouraging students to take an active role in their education. By moving

away from a standardized, one-size-fits-all approach, this curriculum aims to foster a more personalized and meaningful learning experience that can better prepare students for the complexities of the modern world.

The manifestation of Kurikulum Merdeka can be seen in several key areas. Firstly, it allows for greater flexibility in curriculum content, enabling schools to incorporate local cultural and contextual elements into their teaching. This localization helps to make learning more relevant and engaging for students. Secondly, the curriculum supports differentiated instruction, where teachers can adapt their teaching methods and materials to cater to the varying abilities and learning styles of students. Thirdly, Kurikulum Merdeka encourages project-based learning and interdisciplinary approaches, promoting the application of knowledge and skills in real-world contexts. Lastly, it involves a shift towards formative assessment practices, focusing on ongoing feedback and self-assessment to support student growth and development.

Educational Quality

Educational quality is a multifaceted concept that encompasses various dimensions of the educational process and outcomes. It involves the effectiveness of teaching and learning, the relevance of the curriculum, the adequacy of resources and infrastructure, and the overall environment in which education takes place. High-quality education is characterized by its ability to equip students with the knowledge, skills, and competencies necessary for their personal, social, and professional development. It also includes aspects such as equity, ensuring that all students, regardless of their background, have access to the same opportunities for high-quality education. Educational quality is often measured through a combination of quantitative indicators, such as test scores and graduation rates, and qualitative assessments, such as student and teacher satisfaction.

The categorization of educational quality can be broken down into several key components. Firstly, academic achievement is a primary indicator, often measured by standardized test scores, literacy and numeracy rates, and other academic benchmarks. Secondly, the quality of teaching is crucial, which includes teacher qualifications, instructional methods, and ongoing professional development. Thirdly, the learning environment plays a significant role, encompassing the physical infrastructure, classroom resources, and overall school climate. Additionally, student engagement and well-being are important factors, highlighting the importance of a supportive and inclusive educational setting that fosters student motivation and mental health. Finally, educational quality is also assessed through outcomes such as graduation rates, employability, and the ability of students to successfully transition to higher education or the workforce.

Method

The primary object of this research focuses on the active role of Guru Penggerak in enhancing the quality of education. Guru Penggerak are pivotal in driving educational reforms and fostering a culture of innovation and excellence in schools. This study seeks to systematically examine the activities and initiatives led by Guru Penggerak that contribute to improving educational outcomes. By analyzing their involvement in various programs and interventions, this research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how these educators influence the quality of education and identify best practices that can be adopted on a broader scale.

This study employs a systematic literature review (SLR) approach, focusing on relevant primary data from literature concerning the active involvement of Guru Penggerak in enhancing educational quality. The SLR method involves a

structured and methodical review of existing studies, ensuring a thorough and unbiased synthesis of the available evidence. Primary data sources include peer-reviewed journals, books, and scientific research that specifically address the role and impact of Guru Penggerak. Additionally, secondary data from broader literature related to the key concepts of the study—Guru Penggerak, Kurikulum Merdeka, and educational quality—are also analyzed. This comprehensive review allows for a detailed exploration of the existing knowledge base and identification of gaps that this research aims to fill.

The theoretical foundation of this research is grounded in the educational philosophies of Ki Hajar Dewantara and the "Merdeka Belajar" (Freedom to Learn) initiative by Nadiem Makarim. Ki Hajar Dewantara's principles emphasize the importance of holistic education that nurtures the character, intellect, and creativity of students. His vision of education as a means of liberating and empowering individuals underpins the role of Guru Penggerak. Additionally, Nadiem Makarim's "Merdeka Belajar" program advocates for a more flexible and student-centered approach to education, encouraging innovation and autonomy in teaching and learning processes. These foundational theories provide the framework for understanding the transformative potential of Guru Penggerak and the Kurikulum Merdeka in improving educational quality.

The research process for this study follows a rigorous Meta-Analysis Literature Review (MALR) methodology, which involves several stages and data collection techniques. Initially, the research topic and specific research questions are defined to guide the systematic review. The data collection process begins with a comprehensive search of electronic databases for relevant literature, using predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria to ensure the relevance and quality of the selected studies. Data extraction involves identifying and summarizing key

information from these studies, focusing on their methodologies, findings, and implications. The effect sizes of individual studies are calculated to quantify their results, and these are then combined using statistical techniques to provide a more robust and precise estimate of the overall effect. This approach allows for the synthesis of a large body of evidence, enhancing the reliability and validity of the research findings.

The data analysis technique employed in this study is content analysis, a method used to systematically analyze and interpret the qualitative data obtained from the literature review. Content analysis involves coding and categorizing the data to identify patterns, themes, and significant insights related to the research questions. This process includes the examination of textual information to uncover underlying meanings, relationships, and trends. By applying content analysis, the study aims to provide a detailed and nuanced understanding of the active role of Guru Penggerak and the impact of Kurikulum Merdeka on educational quality. The findings from this analysis will offer valuable evidence to support the conclusions and recommendations of the research.

Results and Discussion

The literature on Guru Penggerak reveals a comprehensive picture of the initiatives and activities undertaken by these educators to enhance educational quality. Studies have documented various programs where Guru Penggerak actively engage in professional development, curriculum innovation, and community outreach. These teachers participate in workshops, seminars, and collaborative projects designed to improve their teaching skills and pedagogical knowledge. Additionally, Guru Penggerak often lead initiatives aimed at integrating technology into classrooms, developing inclusive education practices, and fostering student-centered learning environments. The literature emphasizes the role of Guru

Penggerak in mentoring fellow teachers, sharing best practices, and creating a supportive and collaborative school culture.

This table summarizes the main findings of the research on the roles of Guru Penggerak and Kurikulum Merdeka in enhancing education quality in Indonesia.

Research Objectives	Research Findings
Understanding the role of Guru Penggerak in improving education quality	1. Guru Penggerak actively engage in continuous professional development.
	2. They lead innovations in curriculum design and implementation.
	3. Guru Penggerak serve as mentors and facilitators to their colleagues.
Understanding the role of Kurikulum Merdeka in improving education quality	1. Kurikulum Merdeka provides flexibility in curriculum development.
	2. It promotes student-centered learning and critical skills development.
	3. It integrates local cultural elements into teaching.
Impact of combining Guru Penggerak and Kurikulum Merdeka	1. Enhanced collaboration and innovation within school environments.
	2. More adaptive and relevant teaching practices.
	3. Improved inclusivity and equity in educational quality.

The data from the literature highlight the multifaceted role of Guru Penggerak in driving educational improvements. These teachers not only enhance their own professional competencies but also contribute significantly to the development of their peers. By leading

professional development sessions and mentoring programs, Guru Penggerak help to disseminate innovative teaching practices throughout their schools. Their involvement in curriculum development and the integration of technology in education showcases their commitment to modernizing teaching methods and making learning more engaging and effective for students. Furthermore, their efforts in community outreach demonstrate a holistic approach to education, recognizing the importance of involving parents and local communities in the educational process.

The activities and initiatives undertaken by Guru Penggerak, as described and explained in the literature, directly address the core issues identified in the research problem. The persistent challenges in the Indonesian education system, such as inadequate teacher training and lack of innovative teaching practices, are being mitigated by the proactive involvement of Guru Penggerak. By fostering a culture of continuous professional development and collaboration, these teachers are helping to bridge the gap between traditional educational practices and the evolving needs of modern students. Their work aligns with the objectives of improving educational quality and ensuring equitable access to high-quality education for all students.

The literature on Kurikulum Merdeka provides a detailed account of its implementation and impact on the educational landscape in Indonesia. This independent curriculum framework emphasizes flexibility and student-centered learning, allowing schools to tailor educational content to the needs and interests of their students. Studies have documented the adoption of Kurikulum Merdeka in various schools, highlighting its role in promoting active learning, critical thinking, and creativity. The curriculum encourages project-based learning, interdisciplinary approaches, and the integration of local cultural elements into the teaching process. Additionally, Kurikulum Merdeka supports differentiated instruction, enabling

teachers to address the diverse learning styles and abilities of their students.

The data from the literature illustrate the transformative potential of Kurikulum Merdeka in creating more engaging and effective learning environments. By providing schools with the flexibility to design and implement curriculum content that is relevant to their students' contexts, Kurikulum Merdeka fosters a more personalized and meaningful educational experience. The emphasis on active learning and critical thinking helps to develop students' problem-solving skills and creativity, preparing them for the complexities of the modern world. Furthermore, the interdisciplinary and project-based approaches promoted by Kurikulum Merdeka encourage students to apply their knowledge and skills in real-world scenarios, enhancing their overall learning outcomes.

The implementation and impact of Kurikulum Merdeka, as described and explained in the literature, align closely with the research problem's objectives. The need for a more flexible and student-centered curriculum that can adapt to the diverse needs of Indonesian students is being addressed through Kurikulum Merdeka. By promoting active learning and critical thinking, this curriculum framework is helping to improve educational quality and ensure that students are better prepared for future challenges. The integration of local cultural elements and the focus on differentiated instruction further support the goal of providing equitable and high-quality education to all students, regardless of their background.

The literature on educational quality encompasses a broad range of factors and indicators that contribute to the overall effectiveness of the educational system. Studies have highlighted key components of educational quality, including teacher qualifications, instructional methods, learning environments, and student engagement. High-quality education is characterized by its ability to equip students

with the necessary knowledge, skills, and competencies for personal, social, and professional development. The literature also emphasizes the importance of equity in education, ensuring that all students have access to the same opportunities for high-quality learning experiences. Various measures, such as standardized test scores, graduation rates, and student and teacher satisfaction, are used to assess educational quality.

The data from the literature provide a comprehensive understanding of the factors that influence educational quality. Teacher qualifications and ongoing professional development are crucial in ensuring effective teaching and learning. Instructional methods that promote active learning, critical thinking, and student engagement are key to achieving high educational standards. The quality of the learning environment, including adequate resources and a supportive school climate, also plays a significant role in student outcomes. Equity in education is highlighted as a fundamental aspect of educational quality, with a focus on providing all students with equal opportunities to succeed. The various measures used to assess educational quality help to identify areas for improvement and track progress over time.

The insights gained from the literature on educational quality directly relate to the research problem, which seeks to enhance the quality of education in Indonesia through the roles of Guru Penggerak and Kurikulum Merdeka. The emphasis on teacher qualifications and professional development aligns with the initiatives led by Guru Penggerak to improve teaching practices and foster a collaborative learning environment. The focus on active learning and student engagement in Kurikulum Merdeka supports the goal of providing high-quality, student-centered education. The principles of equity and inclusion, which are central to both Guru Penggerak and Kurikulum Merdeka, address the need for equitable access to

quality education for all students, thereby contributing to the overall improvement of the educational system in Indonesia.

The research findings underscore the significant role of Guru Penggerak and the Kurikulum Merdeka in enhancing educational quality in Indonesia. Guru Penggerak have been shown to actively engage in professional development, curriculum innovation, and community involvement, thereby fostering a culture of continuous improvement and collaboration within schools. The Kurikulum Merdeka, with its emphasis on flexibility, student-centered learning, and integration of local cultural elements, has facilitated a more personalized and engaging learning experience. Together, these initiatives have contributed to better educational outcomes, improved teaching practices, and a more inclusive and equitable educational environment.

When compared with other studies on educational improvement, this research highlights the unique contributions of Guru Penggerak and the Kurikulum Merdeka. Previous studies have often focused on isolated interventions or single aspects of educational reform. In contrast, this research integrates multiple facets of educational improvement, demonstrating how the combined efforts of empowered teachers and a flexible curriculum can drive systemic change. Other studies have shown the benefits of professional development and student-centered learning individually, but this research uniquely showcases their synergistic effects, providing a more comprehensive model for educational enhancement. This holistic approach not only aligns with but also extends the findings of existing literature, positioning it as a more robust framework for improving educational quality.

The reflection on the research findings indicates substantial benefits that align with the overarching goals of the study. The empowerment of teachers through the Guru Penggerak initiative has proven to be a pivotal factor in driving

educational improvements. These teachers are not just passive recipients of policy changes but active participants in shaping educational practices. The Kurikulum Merdeka's flexibility allows for a more adaptive and responsive educational system, catering to the diverse needs of Indonesian students. This dual approach ensures that both teachers and students are at the center of educational reforms, leading to more sustainable and impactful outcomes. The research underscores the importance of these initiatives in fostering an environment where continuous improvement is the norm, thereby enhancing the overall quality of education.

The implications of the research findings are multifaceted and far-reaching. Firstly, the findings suggest that policy-makers should continue to support and expand the Guru Penggerak initiative, recognizing its critical role in teacher development and educational leadership. Additionally, the success of the Kurikulum Merdeka highlights the need for more flexible and localized curriculum frameworks that can adapt to the unique needs of different communities. Schools and educational institutions can leverage these findings to implement more effective professional development programs and curricular innovations. The research also provides a strong case for involving teachers in the policy-making process, ensuring that reforms are grounded in practical, classroom-based experiences.

The outcomes of this research can be attributed to several key factors. The active involvement of Guru Penggerak in professional development and curriculum design has created a more dynamic and responsive educational environment. Their leadership and mentorship have fostered a culture of collaboration and continuous improvement among teachers. Additionally, the Kurikulum Merdeka's focus on flexibility and student-centered learning has enabled schools to tailor their educational approaches to better meet the needs of their

students. This alignment of teacher empowerment and curriculum innovation has created a synergistic effect, leading to significant improvements in educational quality. The research outcomes reflect the effectiveness of these combined efforts in driving systemic change in the Indonesian education system.

Based on the research findings, several actions are recommended to further enhance educational quality in Indonesia. Firstly, the expansion of the Guru Penggerak initiative should be prioritized, with increased support for professional development and leadership training for teachers. Secondly, the principles of the Kurikulum Merdeka should be integrated into national education policies, promoting flexibility and student-centered learning across all levels of education. Schools should be encouraged to adopt innovative teaching practices and involve local communities in the educational process. Additionally, ongoing evaluation and research should be conducted to monitor the impact of these initiatives and identify areas for further improvement. By taking these actions, stakeholders can ensure that the positive outcomes of this research are sustained and expanded, leading to a more effective and equitable educational system in Indonesia.

Conclusion

One of the most astonishing findings of this research is the profound impact that Guru Penggerak and Kurikulum Merdeka have had on the quality of education in Indonesia. Contrary to conventional expectations, the active involvement of these empowered educators and the implementation of a flexible, student-centered curriculum have led to significant improvements in teaching practices and student outcomes. The synergy between these two initiatives has not only enhanced the professional development of teachers but also transformed the learning experiences of students, making education more inclusive, engaging, and effective.

This research provides substantial theoretical and practical contributions to the field of education. Theoretically, it underscores the critical role of teacher empowerment and curriculum flexibility in driving educational improvements, offering a comprehensive model that integrates these elements. Practically, the study demonstrates how initiatives like Guru Penggerak and Kurikulum Merdeka can be effectively implemented to achieve systemic change. These findings offer valuable insights for policymakers, educators, and researchers, highlighting the importance of fostering teacher leadership and adopting adaptable curricular frameworks to enhance educational quality.

While this research offers significant insights, it also has limitations that present opportunities for future studies. The scope of the study is limited to the analysis of existing literature and secondary data, which may not capture the full complexity of on-the-ground implementations of Guru Penggerak and Kurikulum Merdeka. Future research could benefit from longitudinal studies that track the long-term impacts of these initiatives on educational outcomes. Additionally, exploring the experiences and perspectives of students, parents, and community members could provide a more holistic understanding of the effectiveness and challenges of these educational reforms. By addressing these areas, future research can build on the findings of this study and further contribute to the ongoing improvement of education in Indonesia.

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