

Teachers' Perspectives on The Abolition of The National Exam: Navigating the Debate in Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

This study explores how teachers perceive the abolition of the national exam and how the reform impacts their classroom practices following Michael Fullan's work on educational change and reform. This qualitative case study reports on data gathered via a semi-structured interview with Indonesian biology teachers, who have experience with the national exam. The results reveal that teachers hold nuanced perspectives on the abolition of the national exam, shaped by negative views of the exam, prior policy changes, and concerns about teaching practices. The results also highlight: (1) Teachers have embraced updated curriculum practices, broadening the scope of content, ensuring equal attention to all subjects, and moving away from intense exam-focused preparation; (2) They have adopted more flexible and diverse teaching strategies, allowing for greater use of experimental activities and fostering collaborative learning with students; and (3) The shift has encouraged teachers to reflect on and reconsider their pedagogical beliefs, prompting a deeper examination of the assumptions and frameworks that guide their teaching practices. These findings suggest that abolishing the national exam has not immediately led to radical changes but has had positive implications for classroom instruction.

Keywords: *Educational Reform, National Exam, Teachers' Perceptions*



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INTRODUCTION

In 2019, Indonesia's education system underwent a major transformation when the government decided to phase out the national examination, effective from 2021. This policy shift ignited widespread discussion in the national media, including outlets like Kompas, Tempo, and Media Indonesia. The national exam served as a key mechanism for educational accountability in Indonesia, conducted annually for students in the final year of primary (6th grade), middle (9th grade), and high school (12th grade). The exam covered core subjects like Indonesian Language, English, and Mathematics, with additional subjects tailored to students' chosen majors. For example, natural sciences majors were tested in Biology, Physics, and Chemistry, while social sciences majors faced exams in Geography, Economics, and Sociology (Ministry of Education and Culture of Indonesia, 2011).

Introduced in 2003, the national exam was intended to enhance the quality of education by providing a nationwide evaluation framework (Hamied, 2010; Sulisty, 2015). However, the exam faced widespread criticism due to issues with its implementation and perceived low

quality (Darmaningtyas, 2011; Suryadi, 2014). In response, the government revised the policy in 2015, making the national exam no longer a mandatory requirement for graduation. The intention was to clarify the exam's role as an assessment tool rather than a determinant of student success (Alawiyah, 2015; Neolaka, 2019). Despite these changes, schools continued to prioritize exam preparation, focusing heavily on test scores to secure students' entry into higher education (Alawiyah, 2015; Neolaka, 2019). This emphasis on exam performance persisted, even after the 2015 reform, leading to ongoing calls for the exam's complete abolition.

In December 2019, the government officially decided to abolish the national exam, a move aligned with the 'Merdeka Belajar' (Freedom of Learning) policy introduced by Education Minister Nadiem Makarim. The decision was based on three primary concerns: 1) the exam mainly assessed low-level thinking skills, 2) it discouraged teachers from adopting innovative teaching methods that foster higher-order thinking, and 3) it was not an effective instrument for enhancing educational quality on a national scale (Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture, 2019). The policy shift reflects a broader vision to align educational practices with 21st-century learning objectives, aiming to enhance the overall quality of human resources in Indonesia (Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture, 2019). This reform marks a significant shift in Indonesian education, moving away from high-stakes testing towards a more holistic approach aimed at fostering deeper learning and critical thinking skills among students.

However, the reintroduction of the National Exam (UN) has become an issue that has been emerging recently along with the change in the Minister of Primary and Secondary Education in 2024. Reportedly, the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education is considering returning to using the National Examination. This discourse has drawn pros and cons in various circles, including teachers who play a big role in educating students at school. Despite the intense public debate, there has been limited scholarly exploration of its potential impact or how this change might shape the future of education in Indonesia. While much research has focused on the implications of introducing standardized exams, little attention has been paid to the effects of discontinuing them, especially within the Indonesian context. Internationally, studies on this topic are scarce as well (e.g., Collins et al., 2010; Kim & Isaacs, 2018). Although Darling-Hammond (1994) argued that assessment policy typically has a limited influence on classroom instruction, the shift toward standardized testing and accountability suggests a more complex relationship between exam policies and teaching practices (Coburn, 2004). Therefore, understanding the extent to which removing the national exam influences instructional approaches is crucial in addressing this gap in the literature.

This study aims to capture the perspectives of fellow teachers, who play a critical role in the educational process (Klenowski & Wyatt-Smith, 2012). Teachers' voices are often underrepresented in discussions about assessment reform (Kim & Isaacs, 2018), yet their insights are vital for understanding the real-world consequences of abolishing the exam. Before delving into the broader impact on classroom practices, it is essential to first consider teachers' attitudes towards this significant policy shift. Their viewpoints provide crucial insights into how this reform might affect instructional strategies (Kim & Isaacs, 2018; Winke, 2011). Consequently, this study explores teachers' reactions to the elimination of the national exam and investigates its influence on teaching practices in schools, thus contributing to the limited body of research on the discontinuation of high-stakes testing, particularly in the Indonesian setting.

Teachers' Perceptions of High-Stakes Testing

The degree to which teachers engage in exam practices depends on their views and feelings about the test itself (Urduan & Paris, 1994). Teachers' perceptions of high-stakes testing are both negative and positive: teachers are not inherently opposed to high-stakes testing, but

their views are influenced by the test's attributes, such as the appropriateness for purposes, validity, and reliability (Gardner & Galanouli, 2016). In other words, teachers' views about high-stakes testing are determined by their views on the purpose of the test and whether the test is both valid and reliable. In Australia, for example, the majority of teachers indicated positive initial responses to the National Assessment Program — Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) because it was deemed to have many useful purposes for schools (Polesel et al., 2014). However, it seems likely that teachers later felt more negatively due to the misuse of exam results, which did not fit the test's original purpose. During the implementation, teachers considered the test to be a school-ranking tool and a method of policing school performance rather than fulfilling its primary purposes of improving literacy and numeracy, helping schools recognize areas for improvement, and identifying students who need additional support (Polesel et al., 2014)

Research from Urdan & Paris (1994) also shows that teachers have negative views about tests that are not considered educationally beneficial, particularly considering the test's perceived impact. Polesel et al. (2014) then claimed that many teachers feel uncomfortable about the impact of the test on their students and teaching practices. One of the reasons teachers felt negatively towards high-stakes testing was that it negatively affected their students' motivation (Harlen, 2012). Harlen (2012) suggests that high-stakes testing encourages students to study; unfortunately, students are focused on passing the test rather than learning. Such goal orientation is one of the negative consequences of high-stakes testing, whereby students aim to pass exams rather than genuinely learn (Harlen, 2012). This became the case in Indonesia, where the national exam was the main motivator driving students to learn (Musthofa, 2004; Sundayana et al., 2018). Consequently, students focus on achieving high exam scores rather than improving their knowledge, skills, or competencies (Sundayana et al., 2018). From these studies concerning the teachers' perceptions of high-stakes testing, it is highlighted that the teachers' perceptions of such testing are affected by many factors including the test's attributes and the test's perceived impact.

The Effects of High-Stakes Testing on the Curriculum and Pedagogy

Because high-stakes testing is a ubiquitous feature of today's education system, the implementation of such tests inevitably influences instructional practices for better or for worse. On the one hand, high-stakes testing is designed to ensure that students can access a high-quality education, including curriculum and pedagogy (Spillane et al., 2002). High-stakes testing provides teachers with guidelines to follow within the curriculum (Debard & Kubow, 2002), so that the curriculum is aligned with teaching and learning (Stuckart & Glanz, 2010). On the other hand, teachers mostly report negative effects of high-stakes testing on classroom instructions, such as teaching to the test and narrowing the curriculum (Stuckart & Glanz, 2010; Thompson & Harbaugh, 2013; Urdan & Paris, 1994)

Ideally, teachers are expected to give students meaningful experiences through varied instruction (Stuckart & Glanz, 2010). But, due to time constraints and the pressures of high-stakes testing, teachers are either being instructed or choosing to teach to the test (Stuckart & Glanz, 2010; Urdan & Paris, 1994). This means emphasizing tested subjects, focusing on specific issues within these subjects, amending the sequencing and pacing of how the curriculum is covered, and spending time on test preparation (Diamond, 2007). Scholars claim that high-stakes tests have shaped the instructional content covered by teachers (Diamond, 2007; Urdan & Paris, 1994), resulting in them teaching disaggregated pieces of knowledge that are likely to appear on the exam (Polesel et al., 2014; Stuckart & Glanz, 2010). Teachers spend less time on areas of the curriculum that are not assessed, and that contributes to the selective themes and fragmentation of knowledge on tested subjects taught in the classroom. The reallocation of instructional time to the subjects being tested also comes at the expense of

other non-tested subjects (Diamond, 2007; Polesel et al., 2014; Stuckart & Glanz, 2010). Moreover, teachers sequence and pace the curriculum to complete the material quickly (Diamond, 2007) to spend time preparing for the test. Test practice and test preparation are reported as a common part of classrooms' daily activities in schools (Diamond, 2007; Klenowski & Wyatt-Smith, 2012).

In addition, most research suggests that high-stakes testing often has unintended consequences on pedagogy. Indeed, testing and standards act as powerful catalysts in educators' pedagogical decisions, though they influence content choices less (Diamond, 2007). This is because teachers' thinking influences how to teach the content (Diamond, 2007). However, teachers in many countries reported that they have to change their style and strategy of teaching because of high-stakes testing (Au, 2008; Polesel et al., 2014; Thompson & Harbaugh, 2013). Furthermore, Polesel et al., p. (2014, p. 653) emphasized that "a constriction of pedagogical approaches" results from such testing. The pressure to achieve good exam results causes a return to teacher-centered pedagogies, which negatively impacts students' creativity and high-order thinking skills (Klenowski & Wyatt-Smith, 2012; Lobascher, 2011; Thompson & Harbaugh, 2013). From the review of these studies, it appears that although high-stakes testing can have both positive and negative effects on curriculum and pedagogy, these studies focus mostly on the negative impacts of high-stakes testing on the curriculum and pedagogy.

Teachers' Perceptions of Abolishing High-Stakes Testing

Teachers' perceptions towards abolishing high-stakes testing may be influenced by the implementation of the test. For instance, the majority of teachers in South Korea considered discontinuing high-stakes testing to be a positive change and supported the decision (Kim & Isaacs, 2018). The South Korean teachers had negative views about the test, so unsurprisingly supported the decision to abolish it. In its short implementation, there was huge controversy over the test's quality and objectivity, and the test's implementation seemed rushed and ill-conceived (Kim & Isaacs, 2018). Similarly, science teachers in England and Wales fully support the termination of national testing because the implementation of the tests restricts their instructional practices (Collins et al., 2010). Furthermore, frequent changes in national testing policies also influence teachers' perceptions toward test abolition.

Although teachers generally perceive high-stakes testing negatively (Diamond, 2007; Polesel et al., 2014; Thompson & Harbaugh, 2013; Urda & Paris, 1994), it does not follow that they will view the test's abolition as a positive change. How teachers perceive new educational policy is likely to correlate to their reactions towards assessment changes in classrooms, which are generally complex and varied (Gardner & Galanouli, 2016). Educators' views may vary either positively or negatively to all or some of the changes, and they may engage with them enthusiastically or passively, or reject them entirely (Gardner & Galanouli, 2016).

Teachers simply want to avoid any kind of reform or educational change, as many teachers have developed effective teaching practices, and reforms may force teachers to readjust these practices (Terhart, 2013). These include readjusting their judgment regarding learning processes, such as instructional practices and how they will meet students' needs (Tunstall & Gipps, 1996). However, Terhart (2013) emphasizes that teachers are not inherently resistant to reform, but may be reluctant if the reform aims to change their usual practices. Moreover, teachers may feel uncertain when their established practices are replaced with new ones, especially those that have not yet been tried and tested (Terhart, 2013). Thus, teachers' perceptions of such reforms are more nuanced than a simple matter of resistance or acceptance.

The discussion about teachers' perceptions of exam abolition demonstrates the complexity of their views. Apart from these studies above, a deep understanding of the

teachers' perceptions of abolishing high-stakes testing is still needed. Their responses regarding the reform are critical to determine whether the reform will be implemented according to the stated purposes and be successful. Therefore, exploring teachers' perceptions is an important way of evaluating the reform and its impact on their practice. Research relating to teachers' perceptions of such reforms is still limited, and even in the Indonesian context the literature discussing this reform has not been found, thus adding to the urgency of conducting this study to contribute to the field and shed light on the complexity of teachers' perceptions towards the abolition of the national exam in Indonesia, which may also impact their practices.

To better understand the teacher's perspectives on the test's eradication, this study's starting point is Michael Fullan's work on educational change and reform. Based on the academic's work, implementing any new program or policy typically involves addressing three interconnected dimensions: materials, pedagogy, and beliefs. As Fullan (2016) states:

There are at least three components or dimensions at stake in implementing any new program or policy: (1) The possible use of new or revised materials (instructional resources such as curriculum materials, standards, or technologies); (2) The possible use of new teaching approaches (i.e., new pedagogies, especially learning partnerships with students); and (3) The possible alteration of beliefs (e.g., pedagogical assumptions and theories underlying particular new policies or programs) (p.28)

These three interconnected dimensions must be enacted as a holistic implementation of any new educational program (Fullan, 2016). Finally, the removal of the national exam challenges many teachers' long-held beliefs about assessment and accountability, requiring them to re-evaluate their perspectives on what effective teaching and learning should look like (Jones & Kessler, 2020).

METHODS

Data Collection and Analysis

As the research depended primarily on participant perception and understanding, a qualitative research design was justly employed. Qualitative research emphasizes characteristics, such as real human settings, participants' voices, and researchers as data-collecting instruments, and it focuses on meaning, subjectivity, inductive data analysis, and reflectivity (Hatch, 2023). The attributes that emerged from the study reflected these characteristics, which were also used to scrutinize the following elements: (1) the lived experiences of teachers in their authentic environments, (2) ideas based on the teachers' and the researcher's perspectives and their subjective judgment, (3) the data being collected directly by the researcher, and (4) the involvement of inductive data analysis when constructing meaning from the information collected.

For data generation, a semi-structured interview was employed. This style of interview involves a set of questions that serve as a guide for the researcher to focus on the key issues being investigated (Bryman, 2016; Gray, 2017). This methodology was ideal for exploring teachers' stories and perspectives about the test's abolition in-depth, providing rich data on participants' viewpoints and the meanings behind them (Gray, 2017).

To analyze the data, a thematic analysis approach was applied, a method commonly used with qualitative data. This approach identifies fundamental patterns or themes in transcripts (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Bryman, 2016). The three main steps in this process included reading through all the data, coding, and categorizing the themes for analysis (Creswell, 2014).

Research Design and Sampling

In terms of ontological and epistemological positions, the study was formulated using constructivism. Constructivism asserts that there are no absolute realities in the world (Hatch, 2023), but rather realities are created from the interaction between the subject and their environment (Gray, 2017). From this paradigm's viewpoint, the research objects are people's perspectives or their constructions of reality (Hatch, 2023). While multiple realities are distinctive, depending on how individuals construct them from their own experiences and points of view (Gray, 2017; Hatch, 2023), the teachers in this study shaped their thoughts about the test's abolition and its subsequent consequences based on their experiences of implementing the test and their interactions with other social actors.

Participants were chosen through a purposive sampling strategy. Clear selection criteria were developed for participants, who must be teachers with personal experiences with the national exam to provide a comprehensive understanding of high-stakes testing (Thompson, 2016). Additionally, the desired group was narrowed to include only biology teachers at high schools, aligning with the researcher's academic background. It is worth noting that biology is one of the subjects tested in the exam. Above all, participants needed to be willing to be involved in this study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

A crucial aspect of exploring the abolition of the national exam is teachers' views towards the reform itself. Interestingly, both participants shared their initial reactions to the news the test would be abolished, how they perceived the test's abolition later, and how they feel about it currently. Before their school received the official government statement, both participants expressed their doubt on initially hearing about the reform. The first participant, Anna, said:

"I was skeptical at first. Could the government abolish the exam? As we all know, the exam has been the determinant of graduation for years and is the standard for all Indonesian students." Meanwhile, the second participant, Elsa, expressed different reasons for doubting the reform:

The debate about abolishing the national exam has been around for a long time. It started to be reported again in 2019. The issue of abolishing the national exam rolls around every year, but it has always just been talk that's never implemented.

When the participants were probed about their perceptions of the exam's abolition, both participants admitted that they supported the concept, but at the same time, they also slightly disagreed with the government's decision. Anna stated: "As a person, I don't think they should abolish the exam; but as a teacher, I more agree with its abolition." Elsa expressed a similar view: "Can I both agree and disagree? If you ask whether I agree or not, I strongly agree. But honestly, without a national exam, something is missing." Anna pointed out a particular reason why she supported the abolition: "I don't like the way exam results are used to rank schools." Furthermore, both participants made a similar point about the need to change the students' focus and goals. Anna mentioned: "Students are no longer only chasing exam scores. It does not have to be that way anymore." Similarly, Elsa voiced the same concern: "We have to change students' mindsets from only chasing exam scores to what they are interested in." "Chasing exam scores" is one of the most common types of exam culture found in Indonesia, when students focus on gaining high scores rather than gaining knowledge. If the national exam is abolished, both participants thought that students could focus on learning rather than grades.

Nevertheless, both participants then explained their slight disagreement with the reform. They were concerned that students would be demotivated without a national exam. Anna shared her views: "Students were very enthusiastic about studying because the national exam determined whether they graduated or not. Now that enthusiasm is no longer there. Students are less motivated to study." Elsa made a similar point: "One of the biggest motivations for students to study is to achieve good national exam scores. Students do not feel challenged by I have to study to achieve good grades. It weakens their motivation to learn." Interestingly, these statements concerning the loss of students' motivation are somewhat at odds with the teachers' earlier statements about wanting students to be less fixated on chasing exam scores.

Another key point that emerged was the teachers' concerns and uneasiness about their future duties and responsibilities as teachers. Anna said: "It is even more difficult for me to teach if there is no national exam. The demands on teachers' practice become heavier." Anna seemed to put more emphasis on her new responsibility, where the direction of the learning process is now completely in her hands and control. Likewise, Elsa also mentioned similar concerns but for a different reason:

As a teacher, I feel my responsibility is even heavier without the exam. We used the exam as a target for years: the target is not there anymore. If there is a national exam, the target and the challenge are clear to me. The new assessment is not here yet to be the new target.

Elsa's statement indicated that she used the national exam as a guide for her teaching, and she also voiced her concern that the new target, in the form of a new assessment, has not yet been implemented.

Discussion

This study not only uncovered teachers' views about the abolition of the national exam but also their initial doubts and skepticism when the reform was first announced. As Fullan (2016) highlights, implementing any new program or policy involves three interconnected dimensions: materials, pedagogy, and beliefs. These include the possible use of new or revised materials (instructional resources such as curriculum materials, standards, or technologies), the adoption of new teaching approaches (i.e., new pedagogies, especially learning partnerships with students), and the alteration of beliefs (e.g., pedagogical assumptions and theories underlying particular new policies or programs).

First, concerning materials, teachers' perceptions of the attempted assessment reform were influenced by mistrust towards policies, fuelled by frequent changes to the national exam policy (Kim & Isaacs, 2018). Therefore, it is not unreasonable to assume that teachers did not attach much weight to the news of the exam's abolition because of the government's back-and-forth attitude towards the national exam policy of recent years. In 2015, the Indonesian government changed the national exam's policy: where previously the exam had been a determinant of student graduation, now it was only an instrument to map the quality of education (Alawiyah, 2015; Neolaka, 2019). However, not long after that, the government made the national exam result a determinant for the next level of education (Alawiyah, 2015; Neolaka, 2019), a new function with as much significance as before. These reforms illustrate that the government did not provide consistent materials or resources to support the changes, which aligns with Fullan's observation that clear, reliable resources are critical for the successful implementation of reforms. No wonder then that teachers were skeptical about the government's seriousness regarding abolishing the exam. Like the teachers in Kim & Isaacs (2018)'s study, the initial views of the teachers in this study were affected by their impressions regarding the national exam policies issued by the government.

Second, regarding pedagogy, the teachers' positive views towards the assessment reform emerged from their concerns about the misapplication of exam results. One of the teachers in this study was against using exam results to rank schools. Hamied (2010) and Sulisty (2015) have shown that Indonesia's national exam was implemented to improve the quality of national education, so this exam is expected to be used as an instrument to enhance education in Indonesia. From the findings, the implementation of the national exam deviates from its primary objective as an evaluation tool for education in Indonesia but instead becomes a tool for ranking schools. This is in line with the work of Gardner & Galanouli (2016), who states that teachers' views on the exam are determined by how the teacher sees the appropriateness of its purpose. The misuse of exam results, that is, use that does not match the original stated purpose, causes teachers to perceive the exam negatively (Polesel et al., 2014).

The study also found that teachers had concerns about how to sustain student motivation without the exam, which relates to the pedagogical shift required by reform. Teachers noted that students are often driven by extrinsic motivators such as exam scores, a phenomenon consistent with the negative consequences of high-stakes testing highlighted by Harlen (2012). When students focus on achieving high scores, they become performance-oriented rather than learning-oriented. This underscores the need for new teaching approaches, as suggested by Fullan (2016), where students' intrinsic motivation and deeper engagement become the focus.

Third, in terms of beliefs, the abolition of the national exam challenged teachers' longstanding assumptions about assessment's role in education. The national exam has determined students' graduation and admission to the next educational level for almost two decades. This deep-rooted role of the exam has shaped teachers' practices and beliefs about student motivation. Teachers in this study voiced concerns that the absence of the exam might reduce students' drive to study, a finding echoed in the work of Musthofa (2004) and Sundayana et al. (2018). While the exam has been criticized for fostering test-centric learning, its removal requires teachers to reconsider their pedagogical assumptions and explore alternative ways to motivate and evaluate students.

Moreover, another interesting finding from the interviews is the teachers' uneasiness towards the reform, particularly their concern regarding the increase in their duties and responsibilities after the test is abolished. These concerns may illustrate why teachers are reluctant to change, as suggested by Terhart (2013). Even though the teachers support the reform, they may resist changing what has become routine. For the educational changes that occurred, teachers must readjust their judgment about the students' knowledge and how to meet the students' learning needs (Tunstall & Gipps, 1996). This ties back to Fullan's framework, as altering beliefs involves helping teachers shift from entrenched practices to new, potentially unfamiliar approaches.

Furthermore, the teachers' previous practices were mostly grounded in the linear, objective, and content-driven national exam scheme, whereas this must also change once the test is abolished. There is great uncertainty for teachers when the established practices have to be replaced with new ones that have not yet been implemented (Terhart, 2013). In this context, the reform signifies not only a change in practice but also a major shift in thinking about learning and teaching.

Overall, this study demonstrates that teachers' support for the reform was shaped by their experiences and perceptions across Fullan's three dimensions. While they expressed positive views about reducing students' score fixation and eliminating the misuse of exam results, their skepticism, and concerns reflect the need for clearer materials, pedagogical innovations, and shifts in belief systems. As Fullan (2016) emphasizes, addressing these dimensions holistically is key to fostering sustainable and effective educational reforms.

CONCLUSION

This study explored Indonesian biology teachers' perceptions of the abolition of the national exam and its impact on instructional practices, using a constructivist paradigm and qualitative case study methodology. The findings reveal that teachers' initial skepticism about the reform gradually shifted toward a positive view, especially as they recognized its potential to mitigate the negative consequences of high-stakes testing.

While teachers initially doubted the government's commitment to the reform and expressed concerns about increased responsibilities due to the absence of a clear alternative assessment system, they ultimately supported the abolition. They saw it as an opportunity to move away from the misuse of exam results, which had previously shaped their teaching. This aligns with Fullan's (2016) framework, which emphasizes the importance of altering beliefs, particularly those related to assessment practices.

The impact of the exam's abolition on instructional practices was not immediate but was evident in the gradual shift in curriculum and pedagogy. Teachers expanded the breadth of the curriculum, moving away from a narrow focus on test-specific content. They also gave equal attention to both tested and non-tested subjects, reducing the emphasis on test preparation activities, such as pacing and sequencing to meet exam requirements. These changes reflect Fullan's (2016) concept of revised materials, where curriculum adjustments occur as a result of changes in assessment practices.

In terms of pedagogy, teachers adopted more flexible, student-centered approaches, incorporating hands-on activities, investigations, and experiments. This shift allowed for more creative and critical thinking opportunities for students. These changes align with Fullan's idea of new pedagogies, where teaching strategies evolve to foster deeper learning and partnerships with students.

Overall, the abolition of the national exam provided teachers with the opportunity to broaden their curriculum and adopt more varied teaching strategies, moving away from rote memorization toward a more balanced, engaging, and meaningful learning experience. This aligns with Fullan's framework, which highlights the interconnections between new materials, teaching approaches, and changes in beliefs. Although the reform's full impact is still unfolding, the findings suggest that it has created a positive shift in instructional practices, offering a more holistic and student-centered approach to teaching and learning.

This research explored teachers' perceptions of the abolition of Indonesia's national exam and its impact on instructional practices, particularly in terms of pedagogy and curriculum. Teachers expressed varied responses to the reform, which revealed both the positive and negative consequences on their teaching practices. The findings provide valuable insights into the real-world effects of the reform and highlight limitations in its integration into classroom practices, offering useful considerations for the Indonesian government and stakeholders in supporting the success of the reform. On a broader scale, this study extends the discussion on the impacts of test abolition, an issue often framed within the context of current exams or the introduction of new exams, thereby contributing to a deeper understanding of this phenomenon and informing future assessment policies in diverse national contexts.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The researcher declares no conflict of interest in conducting this study. Measures were taken to ensure the integrity and neutrality of the research process. Trustworthiness was maintained by adhering to the principles of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. The researcher maintained transparency and avoided deception by providing participants with detailed information about the study and obtaining their informed consent. These efforts were aimed at upholding ethical integrity and mitigating any potential personal or professional conflicts of interest.

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