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TEACHERS' VOICE IN 'ASESMEN KOMPETENSI MINUMUM': NAVIGATING THE CHALLENGES IN PRIMARY EDUCATION

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Abstract
This study investigates the challenges encountered by public and private elementary school teachers in urban and rural areas when applying the Asesmen Kompetensi Minumum (AKM). This study employed a qualitative phenomenological method, interviewing four teachers from various circumstances. The findings reveal a number of challenges, including an increased workload, pressure to achieve high AKM scores, limited access to professional development, contradicting holistic education values, feelings of isolation, and policy ambiguity. These variables have a direct effect on teacher emotional well-being, motivation, and instructional efficacy. Teachers are expected to overcome these obstacles with more support from schools and the government, such as continuous training, collaboration rooms, and emotional support.
Keywords: *AKM; teachers' challenges; urban area; ural area.*

Abstrak
Penelitian ini mengkaji tantangan yang dihadapi oleh guru SD negeri dan swasta di daerah perkotaan dan pedesaan dalam menerapkan Asesmen Kompetensi Minum (AKM). Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif fenomenologis dengan mewawancarai empat guru dari berbagai situasi. Temuan penelitian mengungkap sejumlah tantangan, termasuk beban kerja yang meningkat, tekanan untuk mencapai nilai AKM yang tinggi, akses yang terbatas terhadap pengembangan profesional, nilai-nilai pendidikan holistik yang saling bertentangan, perasaan terisolasi, dan ambiguitas kebijakan. Variabel-variabel ini memiliki efek langsung pada kesejahteraan emosional, motivasi, dan efikasi pengajaran guru. Guru diharapkan dapat mengatasi hambatan ini dengan lebih banyak dukungan dari sekolah dan pemerintah, seperti pelatihan berkelanjutan, ruang kolaborasi, dan dukungan emosional.
Kata Kunci: AKM; tantangan; kota; desa.

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Introduction

The Indonesian government has undertaken various efforts in improving the quality of education in the country through a number of well-planned actions. A significant policy that has been put into place is the Asesmen Kompetensi Minimum (AKM), which plays a vital role in the national assessment process. The Indonesian government has implemented a method of assessment that aims to assess the minimum competences of students in the education system, with a specific focus on independent learning (Magdalena et al., 2022). The AKM is an instrument used to assess the quality of educational institutions in schools (Napitupulu et al., 2024) by assessing students' ability in reading and mathematical literacy (Hanafi & Minsih, 2022; Meriana & Murniarti, 2021), which are fundamental skills essential to academic progress .

The implementation of AKM represents a shift from the traditional exam procedure that has been prevalent in the education system for a long time. The AKM attempts to assess

students' ability and preparation for higher education or the workforce by examining their minimum competencies in areas such as literacy and numeracy (Hanafi & Minsih, 2022). The transition to competency-based assessment is vital to ensure that students acquire the skills they need for success in an increasing competitive and dynamic world (Halimi & Seridi-Bouchelaghem, 2021)

Previous studies on the issue of teachers' challenges in implementing competency-based assessments offers valuable insights on different educational settings and reveals the complex issues and opportunities involved with such assessments. For example, Yamtinah, et al., (2022) examined the responses of science teachers in secondary schools to the AKM, highlighting the opportunities and obstacles that teachers encountered in implementing this assessment framework into practice. A paper that examines science teachers' understanding and quality of AKM questions, highlighting the need to improve question quality beyond just testing memory (Ernawati et al., 2022). The study by Petrová et al. (2022) explored how competency development is assessed in challenge-based learning courses, highlighting the importance of implementing innovative assessment methods to facilitate competency-based education in higher education.

The article by Nombo (2022) analyzed the difficulties associated with introducing a competency-based curriculum at teachers' colleges. It highlighted concerns such as the readiness of institutions, the management of the curriculum, and the assessment of outcomes. Mpofu (2024) explored the difficulties of adopting a competency-based curriculum for students with learning disabilities, emphasizing the significance of comprehending and tackling the distinct requirements of various student populations. These studies highlight the complex and diverse problems that teachers have while implementing competency-based approaches in different educational settings.

The study on teachers' challenges during the implementation of the AKM in Indonesia provides a unique and specific perspective to the wider discussion on competency-based assessments, in contrast to the current literature. While prior studies have explored problems in many educational settings and disciplines, this research explores the complex issues faced by teachers while implementing AKM in primary school. Our compass points to grasping the practical challenges, providing insight into possible solutions, and acknowledging the dedication of teachers to foster the efficiency of the AKM implementation in the country.

Research Methods

This study employs a qualitative phenomenological method to explore the actual experiences and perspectives of teachers who are dealing with the AKM concept. Phenomenology, first derived from philosophy and then applied to social sciences, aims to comprehend the fundamental nature of personal experiences—the complex interplay of importance, perceptions, and emotions that influence individuals' engagement with the world (Mc Coog, 2021; Qutoshi, 2018). It provides critical insights, such as the natural attitude and phenomenological epoche, that enable a more sophisticated understanding of perception's personal and collective components (Houston, 2021). Despite criticism, phenomenology is useful for social scientists because it provides a greater knowledge of subjective life-worlds and challenges researchers' inherent biases (Eberle, 2015; Houston, 2021). The research aims to use a qualitative phenomenological method to understand the fundamental nature of

teachers' experiences, challenges, and solutions when dealing with the complexities of implementing the AKM.

This study involved teachers who have experienced AKM for years. The teachers have been teaching for 5-10 years. They voluntarily took part in this study. Four teachers, two from public elementary schools and two from private elementary schools, representing urban and rural areas, with the justification that every teacher's voice is matter, and it is believed that their voices will convey different experiences according to their school environments. Teaching in a public elementary school in rural area (hereafter PA), the journey of teacher PA with AKM has been one of adaptation and resilience, turning limited resources into sources of creativity. Teaching in a private school in an urban area (hereafter PB), PB negotiates the complexity of AKM by combining technology with history. Teaching in a remote private school (hereafter PC), PC creates an environment where learning is interwoven with rural life. Urban public-school teacher (hereafter PD) leads students through AKM with persistent dedication. To maintain authenticity and confidentiality, every participant is assigned a pseudonym.

This study gathered information about primary school teachers' experiences with AKM by using semi-structured interviews. Open-ended questions helped the interviewers explore in-depth regarding challenges, experiences, and coping strategies. Thematic analysis was used to identify patterns and report insights. Transcripts were read multiple times, coding for key themes, and an analytic narrative was written to contextualize the findings within existing literature.

Result and Discussions

This part provides insights regarding the implementation of AKM in both rural and urban areas, specifically addressing the issues and practices of AKM in public and private primary schools. Based on the data collected from interviews, three key areas are emphasized: teaching practices, the digital gap, and the well-being and morale of teachers. Each of these aspects are crucial as they have an important impact on AKM administration, and the use of internet tools for targeted educational interventions. This section not only presents a summary of the challenges encountered during the implementation of AKM, but also explores the implications of these challenges and provides possible ways to minimize the impact they have.

The AKM Implementation in Rural Areas

Teaching Practices

As a private school teacher in a rural area, PC is a bachelor's degree graduate who has not become a civil servant and has not had the opportunity to be involved in self-development such as participating in teacher training programs. Therefore, experience in developing teaching methods and teaching materials is still very limited. Especially when the school is an Islamic-based school, where the school prioritizes Islamic-based character education, morals and manners. Thus, the time provided by the school focuses more on these things, limiting teacher-student activities in studying the learning materials that will be asked at AKM. PC have to compile the need to balance between the goals of Islamic value-based education and the demands of AKM, which may affect the planning and implementation of learning. This finding is consistent with the results of several studies, including findings on teachers facing challenges in implementing AKM that measures literacy and numeracy skills (Hanafi & Minsih, 2022; Meriana & Murniarti, 2021) because many teachers do not understand the concept and skills of

AKM to develop appropriate materials (Anas et al., 2021). In Islamic-based schools, the same findings revealed that teachers must balance character education with AKM requirements (Amin et al., 2017).

In addition, AKM requires students to think critically and have a strong understanding of literacy and numeracy (Dina & Ekawati, 2022; Kusaeri et al., 2022). The challenge is how to integrate this skill-centered learning approach without abandoning the characteristics of Islamic education which tends to focus on memorization and direct teaching (teacher-centered). PC needs to find interactive and critical methods while maintaining the values adopted by the school. This is in line with a study which mentioned that integrating critical thinking into Islamic education teaching can enhance meaningful learning outcomes while maintaining the values adopted by the school (Dahari et al., 2019).

Moreover, AKM questions test higher-order thinking skills (HOTS). As a teacher in an Islamic school, PC is not yet accustomed to teaching these skills in depth. Although PC may have a strong understanding of HOTS, turning this knowledge into practical, student-centered learning activities remains problematic. Mohd Aderi et al., (2017) highlight this gap by demonstrating that, while teachers understand HOTS, they struggle to transition from teacher-centered strategies, which are commonly used in religious education, to ways that actively involve students in critical thinking. In addition, the pressure to continue to provide a strong religious education can limit the allocation of learning time for HOTS. Because the curriculum focuses on religious values, students may be less accustomed to questions that require critical analysis and problem solving. PC face the challenge of building students' confidence in working on non-routine questions that require creativity, logic, and deep understanding (Kusaeri et al., 2022). This requires a teaching approach that encourages students to be more active and confident in critical thinking (Kusaeri et al., 2022).

Then, PC is less engaged with the sample questions available in AKM preparation, because the questions are often not adjusted to the context of Islamic values (Kusaeri et al., 2022). PC needs to work extra hard to contextualize AKM materials so that they remain relevant and in line with the values adopted by the school.

The same challenges are felt by PA as a public elementary school teacher in a rural area in terms of adjusting learning and practicing AKM questions. AKM questions require students to have high-level thinking skills (HOTS) which include analysis, evaluation, and creativity. PA has not been trained in developing these skills in daily learning. This makes it difficult for him to prepare students for the types of questions that will appear in AKM. In addition, PA also found that his school lacked contextual learning materials and resources. The learning resources available in rural schools are inadequate or not contextual to the students' environment, making it difficult for PA to teach AKM material relevantly. For example, literacy questions that use urban or high-tech examples may be difficult for students who are not used to the context. PA needs to make extra efforts to adapt the material to suit the students' life experiences in rural areas.

Moreover, PA is often faced with a dense curriculum, so that time to study literacy and numeracy skills specifically for AKM is limited. PA must complete basic materials according to the curriculum, which makes practicing analysis-based questions or problem solving less than optimal. Not to mention that students in rural areas have the view that formal education is less relevant to their daily lives, especially in the context of high-level literacy and numeracy. This makes PAs have to work harder to build student motivation and interest in dealing with AKM questions that require critical thinking. Fauzan (2019) and Handayani et al., (2021) argue that

many teachers lack the necessary skills to develop HOTS-based questions and adjust teaching techniques that promote critical thinking. This problem becomes more serious in rural settings, where access to relevant and contextualized learning resources may be limited. Tyas et al., (2019) found that teachers' varying grasp of HOTS, as well as their limited professional development, hinder efforts to properly include analytical tasks.

Similar to Tyas's study (2019), PC have not received adequate training on AKM or effective activity-based learning methods, such as collaborative learning, discussions, or case studies. Without this training, PC finds it difficult to apply teaching methods that encourage students to think critically and creatively according to AKM standards. It has already mentioned in some research that teachers need to adjust the learning method in order to enhance students' critical thinking and literacy-numeracy skills (Amalia et al., 2021; Amuda et al., 2024; Tyas et al., 2019). This makes it difficult for PC to provide critical and constructive feedback. PC is accustomed to more traditional teaching methods and are not used to providing feedback that encourages students to think more deeply about their mistakes or understanding.

Another factor that is a challenge is the support of students' parents. Education in rural areas often does not get full support from parents or the environment. Parents who have limited understanding of the importance of AKM may be less supportive or facilitate students' learning activities at home. This makes teachers' efforts to prepare students for AKM less effective because there is no continuation of learning at home. Research reveals difficulties in rural education, especially with relation to teacher training and parental support. Students' learning at home may be hampered by parents' lack of awareness of the value of education and their academic potential (Teoh et al., 2022; Wijayanti et al., 2022).

Digital Gaps

Rural areas frequently encounter difficulties in terms of internet connectivity and availability to digital devices when it comes to technology accessibility. According to interviews conducted with teachers in rural areas, both public and private schools have challenges with regard to limited digital accessibility and struggle to get appropriate technology resources. In addition, PA mentioned that in areas where internet connectivity is accessible, it often shows instability, frequent downtime and slow speeds cause serious obstacles in administering online exams such as the AKM, which require dependable and uninterrupted connections for long durations. This hinders the administration of the AKM. The findings of the study add to the list of evidence regarding internet problems in rural areas. Graves et al., (2021) in their study stated that students in rural areas have little access to the internet. Freeman et al., (2020) also stated that unreliable services, data restrictions and expensive internet are barriers for students in rural areas.

Students in rural schools also have challenges when implementing AKM, particularly due to the digital divide that hampers their access to technology-based learning and assessment. This lack of access has the potential to put them at a disadvantage during AKM. According to PA, the digital divide is more noticeable in rural regions. Although internet access is available, the cost can be too expensive for families in rural areas. Moreover, PA adds many families and schools in rural areas do not have sufficient computers, tablets, or smartphones. Family members share the same digital device, which makes it difficult for students to get enough access to online learning materials and tests. Thus, PA needs to make sure that all students have fair access to technology for AKM preparation and administration. Moreover, PC noted that rural schools often do not have IT assistance, to the extent that PC must personally address technical problems related to AKM, hence increasing PC's workload as a teacher.

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Teachers' Well-being and Morale Values

Teachers in rural elementary schools face additional responsibilities due to the implementation of AKM, including adapting teaching methods, addressing the digital divide, and ensuring students are prepared for it. This workload is burdensome, causing stress and burnout. Auliya (2022) addressed the obstacles teachers have while applying AKM, including a lack of sociability, poor student reading interest, and a lack of teacher experience in producing high-level thinking questions. In this study, it was revealed that PA and PC expect strategies like time management training, delegation, and administrative staff support to reduce the burden. Collaboration and professional development opportunities are limited in rural areas, and the pressure to maintain a school's reputation is a significant factor. Additionally, PC expressed difficulties in receiving current and relevant professional development opportunities, particularly in the field of AKM, due to geographical location. PC said that the availability of updated teaching resources was also limited.

The Implementation of AKM in Urban Areas

Teaching Practices

According to PB, private schools often prioritize academic achievement, leading to teachers feeling pressured to "teach to the test" or focus solely on improving AKM scores. This can limit the space for creative and critical learning approaches essential for success in AKM. PB must adapt her teaching methods to meet the needs of all students, requiring additional skills and time. The dense curriculum in private schools often leaves little time for in-depth literacy and numeracy exercises, making it difficult to integrate problem-solving or critical practice exercises into classes. This results in students less likely to practice higher literacy and numeracy skills.

On the other hand, although private schools in urban areas usually have better access to resources, time constraints and academic pressures make PB less likely to explore or implement innovative learning methods and resources. This can limit the variety of teaching that can trigger critical and analytical thinking skills in students. Another challenge comes from parents who are often very concerned about their children's educational outcomes, including AKM results. This pressure makes PB feels burdened to achieve certain standards, so they have to sacrifice a deep learning approach in order to achieve the desired results. PA needs to communicate well with parents to explain the importance of a holistic learning process and critical thinking skills for students' long-term success.

The same challenges are faced by PD in implementing teaching techniques that support HOTS development. Although he teaches in an urban area, there is inadequate training or guidance on this, making it difficult for him to focus on developing these skills effectively in the classroom. Moreover, public school students in the city have very diverse abilities, ranging from those who are already advanced to those who need extra help. PD needs to differentiate his teaching, which requires additional time and resources to meet the needs of students at various levels. This challenge is further complicated when he must also ensure that all students are ready for AKM. PD must allocate additional time and find creative ways to integrate critical literacy and numeracy exercises into daily learning.

It turns out that from the interview results it was found that many public elementary school teachers are accustomed to conventional teaching methods that focus on memorization and standardized practice questions. AKM, which requires a problem-solving and critical thinking-based approach, can be new for some teachers. Changes in methods are needed so that students not only understand the concept superficially, but are able to analyze, apply, and

evaluate the information they learn. Even though they are in an urban area, not all public elementary school teachers have sufficient access to professional training related to AKM. These limitations make it difficult for teachers to update or adjust their teaching strategies to the latest AKM standards, especially in methods that train critical and analytical thinking skills in students.

In addition, according to PD, the dynamic urban environment often adds to the challenges for teachers in maintaining student focus in class. Many students face distractions from the surrounding environment, either due to technology or extracurricular activities. PD must be able to design interesting and relevant learning activities, so that students remain motivated to learn, especially in dealing with AKM material.

Digital Gaps

Urban schools encountered difficulties arising from the diversity of students' needs and learning styles. PB had difficulties in ensuring that the AKM properly addresses this diversity. Urban private schools frequently cater to children from different learning style. Consequently, PB faced difficulties in addressing these different needs while also ensuring that every student is well prepared for the AKM. This is in line with a study conducted by Rawandale et al., (2020) that urban schools face challenges in addressing diverse learning styles and needs while preparing students for AKM.

It turns out that, even in urban areas, teachers who teach in public schools also experience the same obstacles in terms of technological readiness to run AKM. PD also stated that not all children have devices that support the implementation of AKM because students come from varying socioeconomic backgrounds. Moreover, students have issues in academic preparedness. As is known, AKM involves questions about literacy and numeracy, habits related to numeracy and literacy in schools are still rarely carried out.

Teachers' well-being and morale values

The challenges felt by teachers, both public and private school teachers, are stress and burnout, especially because they have to meet administrative demands and competitive learning. They are also under pressure to achieve good AKM results for the sake of the school's reputation. This often triggers moral conflict if they feel they have to focus on the end result rather than meaningful learning. They often find it difficult to find emotional support from colleagues, which is important for maintaining their mental health. Not to mention when they are faced with the uncertainty of AKM policies that cause anxiety and reduce motivation, especially if policies often change without clear guidance.

Conclusion

This study reveals a number of challenges faced by public and private elementary school teachers, both in urban and rural areas, in implementing the AKM. These challenges include increasing workload, pressure to achieve high AKM results, limited access to professional development, limited access to internet connection and devices. conflicting holistic education values, feelings of isolation, and uncertainty in policy implementation. All of these factors have a direct impact on teachers' emotional well-being, motivation, and teaching effectiveness.

Based on these findings, it is recommended that schools and authorities provide better support to teachers, such as the development of ICT in the schools, ongoing professional training, collaboration spaces, and emotional support to reduce stress. Alignment between AKM goals and holistic education values is also important so that teachers can achieve competency targets while still prioritizing student character development. Such support will

help teachers implement AKM effectively and maintain the well-being and educational values they uphold, thereby supporting the achievement of more comprehensive educational goals.

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