

Primary School English Language Policy: Assessing Islamic School Teacher Readiness in Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

The reintroduction of English as a compulsory subject in Indonesian primary education, including in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI), places teacher readiness at the center of successful policy implementation. This qualitative study examines Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI) teachers' readiness to respond to the English learning policy, focusing on teachers serving in Wajo Regency, South Sulawesi. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 17 purposively selected MI teachers and analyzed using thematic analysis guided by a multidimensional readiness framework encompassing cognitive, pedagogical, professional, psychological, and institutional dimensions. Findings show that teachers hold moderate to high cognitive readiness and generally positive attitudes toward the policy, yet report significant systemic constraints, including insufficient teaching materials, limited institutional support, inadequate professional development, and low baseline English proficiency among students. A discrepancy between teachers' positive change commitment and their uncertain change efficacy indicates that willingness alone does not translate into implementation capacity. The study concludes that policy success requires not merely a shift in teacher perspective but a comprehensive institutional infrastructure that addresses resource constraints, provides pedagogical support, and enables context-sensitive implementation within Islamic educational settings. The findings contribute to language policy and planning scholarships by illuminating the interplay among teacher agencies, institutional capacity, and systemic conditions in implementing curriculum policy in developing educational contexts, and they offer recommendations for policymakers, teacher-education institutions, and future research.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Globally, English functions as an indispensable lingua franca and a core competency driving international engagement, socio-economic mobility, and cross-border knowledge exchange (Baker, 2026; Chen, 2023; Zeng & Yang, 2024). Consequently, nations across Asia have aggressively recalibrated their primary language-in-education

policies to meet global developmental pressures ([Almukhanbet et al., 2025](#); [Yu et al., 2024](#)). In line with this international trajectory, the Indonesian Ministry of Education introduced a pivotal policy mandating English as a compulsory subject in primary education, set for phased nationwide execution starting in the 2027/2028 academic year ([Arif et al., 2024](#)). Allocating two hours of weekly instruction from grades three through six, the reform seeks to bolster the global competitiveness of young learners ([Zein, 2017](#)). Historically, English in Indonesian primary curricula has experienced systemic volatility, oscillating from a local-content subject (*muatan lokal*) under KTSP ([Astutik & Munir, 2022](#)) to an optional activity under Kurikulum 2013 ([Harahap et al., 2025](#)) before receiving renewed emphasis under Kurikulum Merdeka. This historical trajectory highlights the dynamic, negotiated nature of language planning. However, bridging macro-level national goals with micro-level classroom enactment remains inherently complex, constrained by severe specialized teacher shortages, inadequate instructional infrastructure, and unequal institutional readiness ([Audria & Qamariah, 2023](#); [Indriyani, 2025](#); [Sulistiyo et al., 2020](#)).

This national mandate introduces distinct operational and sociolinguistic complexities when superimposed onto Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI)—Indonesia's Islamic primary schools ([Abdurrisal et al., 2022](#); [Idman, 2025](#)). Unlike their public counterparts under the Ministry of Education, MIs operate under the administrative jurisdiction of the Ministry of Religious Affairs and are frequently embedded within *pesantren* (Islamic boarding school) ecosystems ([Hasan, 2025](#)). These institutions operate within a unique, highly nuanced multilingual and ideological ecology ([Nurtawab, 2025](#)). Within this context, Arabic, Indonesian, local vernaculars, and deeply rooted religious values continuously converge to shape daily linguistic practices and pedagogical priorities. Incorporating a mandatory Western language into an already dense curricular space—where Arabic and Islamic foundational studies traditionally hold spiritual and structural dominance—creates a socio-pedagogical tension largely absent from secular public schools ([Farah & Sumarsono, 2025](#)). As language policy scholars argue, top-down educational directives are never neutrally or uniformly absorbed; rather, they are continuously interpreted, negotiated, and appropriated through local institutional cultures, existing human resources, and community values ([Dunham et al., 2024](#); [Reilly et al., 2024](#)).

To systematically analyze this transitional friction, language-in-education planning must be conceptualized not merely as a published document but as an interactive trifold mechanism of language practices, beliefs, and management ([Larsen-Freeman, 2023](#)). Grounding policy feasibility in organizational change theory, Armenakis et al. define readiness as the collective cognitive and affective orientation of organizational actors toward a proposed change ([Repovš et al., 2019](#)). Extending this, [Weiner et al. \(2020\)](#) conceptualize organizational readiness as a dual-construct state of shared commitment (change commitment) and collective capability (change efficacy). When applied to educational implementation, these theoretical frameworks demonstrate that top-down curriculum mandates depend almost entirely on the multidimensional readiness of teachers who act as the primary policy enactors ([Wedell & Grassick, 2017](#)). Without

aligning administrative expectations with teacher efficacy, psychological willingness, and structural backing, policy directives risk remaining symbolic mandates rather than transformative classroom practices (Gao & Cui, 2022).

Synthesizing educational change literature reveals that teacher readiness for early-childhood language instruction is inherently multidimensional. First, cognitive readiness dictates teachers' conceptual grasp of policy objectives and curriculum design (Isnaeni et al., 2024). Second, pedagogical readiness involves mastering communicative, play-based, and developmentally appropriate methodologies tailored to young language learners (Ratri et al., 2025). Third, professional readiness encompasses formal qualifications and target-language proficiency (Arif et al., 2024; Tohamba & Ansyar, 2025), an area where non-specialist primary educators frequently exhibit substantial skill gaps. Fourth, technological readiness highlights the ability to integrate digital tools into language delivery under the TPACK framework (Tseng et al., 2022), a process governed more by teacher self-confidence and targeted training than mere hardware availability (Ma & Ismail, 2025). Fifth, psychological readiness—rooted in self-efficacy and motivation—determines whether teachers sustain effort when encountering instructional barriers (Zhang et al., 2025). Finally, institutional readiness provides the structural bedrock; without leadership backing, clear administrative guidelines, localized materials, and sustained peer collaboration, individual teacher efficacy cannot withstand systemic barriers (Sihombing et al., 2025).

Despite a growing body of scholarship evaluating primary English language teaching (ELT) reforms (Primary et al., 2022; Sahib & Stapa, 2022), critical empirical gaps remain regarding how organizational readiness translates into Islamic primary education contexts. Recent studies indicate that while primary teachers generally display favorable attitudes toward curriculum updates, they remain severely hampered by a lack of specialized ELT preparation, insufficient instructional materials, and low self-efficacy (Arif et al., 2024; Efendi et al., 2025; Tohamba & Ansyar, 2025). However, existing empirical inquiry has predominantly focused on mainstream secular public schools. There remains a profound silence in scholarly literature regarding how teacher readiness, institutional capacity, and stakeholder dynamics intersect within madrasah environments—particularly those tied to pesantren networks where English must compete with Arabic and religious coursework for curricular time and pedagogical focus. Little is known about how MI educators in semi-rural or outer-island regions navigate these competing linguistic and ideological demands ahead of the 2027/2028 mandate.

To address this empirical lacuna, this study investigates the readiness of Madrasah Ibtidaiyah teachers to enact the upcoming mandatory English policy, focusing empirically on Wajo Regency, South Sulawesi. Specifically, the study addresses three key research questions: (1) How do Madrasah teachers perceive and demonstrate multidimensional readiness for the primary English policy? (2) What contextual and institutional factors influence their readiness? and (3) What systemic challenges impede policy enactment, and what strategic interventions can optimize teacher capacity? Theoretically, this study advances language policy and planning (LPP), educational

change theory, and ELT policy studies by extending Weiner's and Armenakis et al.'s organizational readiness frameworks into an under-researched Islamic primary educational landscape (Mathur et al., 2023). Practically, the empirical insights offer actionable guidance for the Ministry of Religious Affairs, the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education, school administrators, and teacher-training institutions to formulate culturally responsive professional development programs, realistic resource allocation strategies, and sustainable implementation frameworks prior to full policy execution.

2. METHOD

This study adopted a qualitative research design employing thematic analysis to investigate Madrasah educators' preparedness to implement the English language policy. A qualitative approach was appropriate because it enables a rich, contextualized understanding of teachers lived experiences, perceptions, and interpretations, as well as the complex sociolinguistic and institutional factors that shape policy responses. Rather than imposing a predefined framework, this method allowed themes to emerge from the data while remaining oriented by a multidimensional teacher-readiness framework.

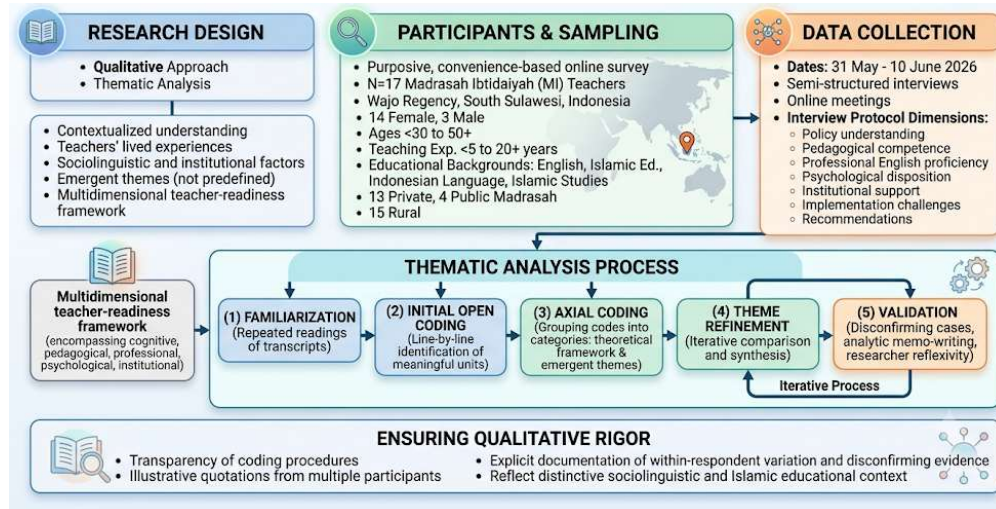


Figure 1. Research Methodology Framework

The study focused on Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI) teachers responding to the English-language policy in Wajo Regency, South Sulawesi, Indonesia. Participants were recruited through a purposive, convenience-based online survey distributed to MI teachers via professional and training networks. The final sample comprised 17 teachers (14 female, 3 male), aged from under 30 to 41–50 years, with teaching experience ranging from less than 5 years to more than 20 years. Participants represented diverse educational backgrounds, including English-language specialization, Islamic Education, Indonesian Language, Islamic Studies, and other disciplines. Of the 17 respondents, 13 taught in private Madrasah and 4 in public institutions, and 15 were in rural settings.

Data was collected between 31 May and 10 June 2026 using semi-structured interviews administered through online meetings. The interview protocol was designed

to assess teachers' readiness to implement the English language policy across multiple dimensions: policy understanding, pedagogical competence, professional English proficiency, psychological disposition, institutional support, implementation challenges, and recommendations for policy enhancement.

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis following established qualitative procedures: (1) familiarization through repeated readings of all 17 interview transcripts; (2) initial open coding through line-by-line identification of meaningful units related to policy perceptions, readiness dimensions, barriers, institutional support, and recommendations; (3) axial coding to group initial codes into preliminary categories aligned with the theoretical readiness framework and emergent contextual themes; (4) theme refinement through iterative comparison and synthesis; and (5) validation through explicit attention to disconfirming cases and analytic memo-writing documenting researcher reflexivity throughout the process. Analysis was guided by a multidimensional teacher-readiness framework encompassing cognitive, pedagogical, professional, psychological, and institutional dimensions, while remaining open to emergent patterns specific to Madrasah contexts.

Qualitative rigor was strengthened through transparency of coding procedures, the use of illustrative quotations from multiple participants to demonstrate convergence across cases, explicit documentation of within-respondent variation and disconfirming evidence, and systematic attention to how data patterns reflect the distinctive sociolinguistic and Islamic educational context of Madrasah Ibtidaiyah.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Analysis of the semi-structured interviews with 17 Madrasah teachers from Wajo Regency produced findings across seven areas: cognitive readiness, pedagogical readiness, professional readiness, psychological readiness, institutional support, systemic challenges, and professional development needs.

Cognitive Readiness: Policy Understanding and Perceived Importance

Teachers expressed varied levels of support for reintroducing English at the primary or Madrasah level. Many respondents offered conditional endorsement of the policy, stating, *"I agree, although there are still some things that need improvement"* (AST, 46 years old, 18 years of teaching experience). Others expressed hesitation or uncertainty: *"I am still uncertain about this"* (USM, 26 years old, 3.5 years of teaching experience) and *"I am still uncertain about the objectives of the English learning policy"* (RML, 34 years old, 6 years of teaching experience).

Despite this uncertainty about implementation specifics, respondents generally acknowledged the importance of English education. When asked directly about the significance of teaching English at the primary level, some teachers demonstrated stronger conviction. HRN (35 years old, 6 years teaching experience) stated: *"I am very supportive of this. I think this policy is important."* Similarly, EKY (27 years old, 3 years teaching experience) and ADT (41 years old, 16 years teaching experience)

expressed clear support for the policy's rationale. Overall, while many teachers recognized the importance of learning English in principle, their understanding of the policy's specific implementation requirements—pedagogical details, curriculum scope and sequence, and integration with existing Madrasah priorities—remained incomplete.

Pedagogical Readiness: Instructional Competencies

The qualitative findings revealed a pronounced disparity in teachers' self-perceived pedagogical competence across different domains, particularly highlighting pervasive self-doubt regarding English instructional design and specialized pedagogy. Despite varying levels of professional background, participants consistently expressed hesitation when tasked with developing tailored learning materials, conducting effective learning assessments, and implementing age-appropriate instructional strategies for young learners. For instance, both mid-career educators, AST (45 years old, 12 years of experience) and NM (39 years old, 11 years of experience), explicitly noted their uncertainty in *"preparing English learning materials."* Conversely, teachers exhibited a relatively higher degree of confidence in general classroom management. Newer and highly experienced educators alike, such as AHK (23 years old, 2 years of experience) and BSS (43 years old, 20 years of experience), acknowledged moderate proficiency in broad instructional delivery, albeit with a measured recognition that *"there are still some things that need improvement."*

Compounding these pedagogical uncertainties was an overarching structural challenge: a critical deficiency in institutional teaching resources. Across all respondent profiles, the scarcity of instructional materials emerged as the most uniform constraint influencing daily teaching practices. As articulated by PLT (38 years old, 13 years of experience), *"the availability of English teaching materials is still limited,"* forcing educators to independently source and design instructional content. This systemic lack of institutional support severely amplified teacher workload and time demands outside of regular contact hours. BSS underscored this burden, stating, *"I have to develop my own materials because the school doesn't provide them, which takes a lot of time beyond my regular teaching duties."* Consequently, the imperative to independently create teaching resources not only exacerbates pedagogical anxiety but also consumes vital preparation time that could otherwise be directed toward refined assessment and differentiated instruction.

Professional Readiness: Language Proficiency and Subject-Matter Knowledge

A dominant theme across interviews concerned limited personal English proficiency. AST (45 years old, 12 years teaching experience) stated: *"My English ability is still very limited. I don't feel confident teaching English when my own proficiency is limited."* RML (34 years old, 8 years teaching experience) expressed a similar concern: *"My English ability is still very limited... teaching English with such limited proficiency feels quite difficult."* PLT (38 years old, 13 years teaching experience) likewise reported that *"My English ability is still very limited,"* identifying this as a significant challenge.

Many respondents attributed this proficiency gap to their pre-service education. Teachers trained in non-English disciplines—Islamic Studies, Islamic Education, Indonesian Language, or other fields—had not developed English proficiency during their initial teacher preparation. One respondent explained: *“My teacher training did not emphasize English language competence because my major was Islamic Studies.”* Teachers with English-related backgrounds (such as NSY, 25 years old, with 3 years of teaching experience and a degree in English Education) demonstrated somewhat greater confidence in their language proficiency, though even they often expressed reservations about specific aspects of English teaching, suggesting that professional readiness is substantially shaped by pre-service educational background and exposure to English.

Psychological Readiness: Attitudes, Motivation, and Self-Efficacy

The qualitative analysis revealed complex psychological dispositions among teachers regarding the newly implemented English language policy, characterized by a predominantly favorable yet highly conditional baseline orientation. A significant proportion of respondents expressed strong endorsement and initial enthusiasm; for instance, ADT (41 years old, 16 years of teaching experience) affirmed, *“I am very supportive of this. I think this policy is important,”* a sentiment consistently mirrored across multiple policy dimensions by senior educators such as BSM (46 years old, 20 years of teaching experience). However, a critical nuance emerged regarding the sustainability of this positive disposition, as several educators articulated a form of conditional motivation contingent upon structural enablement. Participants explicitly noted that high instructional drive is difficult to maintain in the absence of adequate institutional infrastructure, continuous professional development, and accessible teaching resources, thereby underscoring that affective alignment alone is insufficient for long-term policy adoption.

Furthermore, a pronounced divergence was observed between teachers' general acceptance of the policy and their underlying self-efficacy regarding classroom execution. Despite demonstrating positive attitudes, several educators conveyed substantial self-doubt regarding their capacity to deliver effective English instruction. Early-career and mid-career teachers alike—such as USM (26 years old, 3.5 years of teaching experience), who noted, *“I am still uncertain about my ability to teach English in the classroom,”* and PLT (38 years old, 13 years of teaching experience)—manifested hesitation despite their willingness to engage with the curriculum. Compounding these pedagogical anxieties were instances of outright opposition and skepticism toward policy feasibility. Notably, BSS (43 years old, 20 years of teaching experience) resisted the mandate, stating, *“I do not agree, because it doesn't help students and becomes a burden for us.”* This dissent underscores a broader concern that policy implementation without adequate institutional recalibration risks imposing unreasonable occupational strain on teaching staff.

Institutional Support and School Resources

The qualitative findings highlight a stark institutional paradox characterized by strong rhetorical leadership support that fails to translate into effective structural enablement. While educators acknowledged verbal encouragement from school leadership—with participants like ADT (41 years old, 16 years of experience) and AHK (23 years old, 2 years of experience) noting headmaster support and sporadic facility provision—this endorsement lacked actionable operational guidelines. Teachers reported widespread ambiguity regarding implementation standards, curriculum scope, assessment criteria, and the integration of English instruction with school-specific values (e.g., Islamic pedagogy), as encapsulated by RML (34 years old, 8 years of experience), who noted that *"implementation instructions are not clear."* This policy-practice gap was further exacerbated by a significant deficit in professional development capacity, with participants such as HRN (35 years old, 6 years of experience) emphasizing that current training opportunities remain insufficient to prepare staff for effective curriculum delivery.

Compounding this administrative disconnect was a severe and systemic shortage of tangible instructional resources and allocated learning time. Across the sample, educators unanimously cited the critical scarcity of pedagogical materials as a primary barrier, a constraint concisely articulated by PLT (38 years old, 13 years of experience), who observed that *"the availability of English teaching materials is still limited."* Furthermore, this material deficit was aggravated by structural time constraints, with teachers noting that the allocated instructional schedule is fundamentally inadequate to achieve target learning outcomes, particularly given students' minimal baseline exposure to the language. Consequently, the convergence of ambiguous institutional guidance, inadequate professional training, material deprivation, and temporal constraints severely undermines the practical execution of the language policy despite top-down leadership support.

Systemic Challenges to Implementation

The qualitative analysis identified five interconnected systemic barriers that substantially impede policy execution beyond individual and institutional factors. At the learner level, educators consistently highlighted students' minimal baseline proficiency as a foundational challenge; as noted by AHK (23 years old, 2 years of experience) and USM (26 years old, 3.5 years of experience), *"students' initial English ability is still low,"* necessitating extensive instructional time devoted to basic reinforcement. This pedagogical challenge was further exacerbated by socio-cultural constraints, specifically low parental and community support. USM explicitly stated that *"parents' support for English learning is still low,"* a pattern attributed to limited parental English literacy and socio-economic contexts—particularly in rural communities—where English is rarely perceived as immediately relevant to traditional livelihoods. Furthermore, teachers faced significant structural friction due to excessive administrative workloads. As explained by BSS (43 years old, 20 years of experience),

non-instructional duties severely restrict the time available for lesson planning and curriculum adaptation.

Systemic ambiguity and socio-religious curricular tensions further complicated implementation at the institutional level. Educators reported a lack of clear macro-level implementation frameworks, receiving vague policy directives that lacked actionable curriculum sequences, assessment standards, or contextual integration guidelines. This systemic lack of direction exacerbated curriculum-contextual tensions specific to the madrasah environment, where several teachers expressed apprehension that prioritizing English might dilute the institutional focus on Arabic and Islamic studies. While a minority of respondents acknowledged the strategic potential of English in facilitating access to contemporary global Islamic scholarship, the prevailing sentiment reflected concerns over curricular overload and ideological dilution. Ultimately, these findings demonstrate that successful English policy implementation requires addressing structural administrative demands, providing explicit curricular guidance, and carefully aligning language goals with local community values and religious educational missions.

Professional Development Needs

Across interviews, teachers articulated specific professional development priorities. The most universally emphasized need was enhanced personal English proficiency. Requests for professional development were framed as urgent: *“I need additional, ongoing training related to English teaching, not just a one-day workshop, but systematic programs that build my proficiency and my ability to teach young learners effectively”* (RA, 24 years old, 2 years of teaching experience).

Teachers distinguished between desired professional development and actual offerings, preferring sustained, cohort-based programs over one-off workshops. RML (34 years old, 8 years of teaching experience) noted that “available training is still insufficient,” implying that more systematic programs were needed, and HRN (35 years old, 6 years of teaching experience) similarly emphasized the need for *“additional, ongoing training related to English learning”* rather than episodic workshops. Beyond language proficiency, teachers identified the need for professional development in young-learner pedagogy, age-appropriate assessment literacy, and integration of English with Islamic pedagogical contexts.

Discussion

Teachers' Perceptions and Demonstrated Readiness (RQ1)

The results show a contradictory pattern in teachers' preparedness. Teachers exhibit considerable diversity and gaps in specific competencies even though they hold positive cognitive attitudes toward the policy in principle and acknowledge its significance for young learners' prospects and global competitiveness. Psychologically, most teachers show a desire and willingness to participate in implementation; nevertheless, their self-efficacy—confidence in their capacity to teach English successfully—trails far behind

their supportive attitudes. This discrepancy between perceived competence and willingness constitutes an important implementation weakness.

Pedagogically, teachers report general competence in classroom management yet express substantial uncertainty about language-specific instructional design. The severe scarcity of curriculum materials compounds this gap: even teachers who possess pedagogical design knowledge cannot fully operate it without adequate resources, and the burden of creating instructional materials independently consumes time that could otherwise be devoted to lesson preparation or professional learning. In line with organizational change theory, teachers exhibit change commitment—positive attitudes toward reform—but uncertain change efficacy, that is, doubts about their collective and individual capacity to execute the policy as envisioned ([Nassir & Benoliel, 2025](#); [Windasari et al., 2022](#)). This finding corroborates [Tohamba and Ansyar \(2025\)](#), who similarly found that positive attitudes toward curriculum reform coexist with insufficient formal preparation in English-language teaching.

Factors Influencing Teacher Readiness (RQ2)

Teachers' readiness to implement the compulsory English policy is shaped by an interlocking set of individuals, institutional, and systemic factors. At the individual level, English proficiency emerges as the primary predictor of pedagogical confidence, while non-English specialists—who dominate the Madrasah workforce due to misaligned hiring and pre-service education—face significant competence deficits that short-term training cannot remediate. Institutionally, vocal leadership commitment fails to translate into structural support, leaving educators constrained by vague implementation guidelines, inadequate curriculum materials, sporadic professional development, and heavy administrative burdens. This dynamic reflects symbolic rather than substantive organizational commitment, aligning with Weiner's distinction between stated commitment and structural change efficacy ([Mladenova, 2022](#)).

Systemically, teachers encounter external barriers beyond their control, including low student baseline proficiency, insufficient instruction time, and minimal home language support due to limited parental engagement in rural settings. Furthermore, vague policy directives lack the context-specific guidance required for effective execution. Ultimately, individual teacher motivation and positive intentions cannot overcome these deep-seated structural and institutional gaps. These interconnected challenges reinforce the observation by [Arif et al. \(2024\)](#), [Baharuddin and Burhan \(2025\)](#) that instructional resources and teacher competence jointly condition how educational opportunities and hurdles are perceived during policy reimplementaion, highlighting that systemic alignment and infrastructure are indispensable for meaningful reform.

Implementation Challenges and Policy Interventions (RQ3)

Five interconnected challenges constrain teacher agency and effective policy execution: a professional capacity gap, curriculum material scarcity, institutional support inconsistency, systemic student and parental constraints, and curriculum-

contextual tensions. To address these issues, targeted interventions are required across multiple levels. Specifically, non-English specialists need sustained, contextualized English proficiency programs combined with young-learner pedagogy, while the universal shortage of resources demands the distribution of culturally responsive, age-appropriate materials and training in material adaptation (Roque et al., 2025). Additionally, institutional leadership must move beyond verbal support by providing clear written roadmaps, systematic professional development, and dedicated lesson preparation time to relieve structural burdens.

Beyond internal school dynamics, broader systemic and contextual adjustments are critical to supporting educators. Low baseline student proficiency and limited home language support necessitate pre-primary foundational English exposure, parent engagement initiatives, and realistic expectations regarding learning timelines (Lee & Kim, 2025). Furthermore, explicit frameworks integrating English instruction with Islamic pedagogy are necessary to balance curriculum loads without displacing core Islamic educational priorities. Ultimately, qualitative findings demonstrate that teachers are not simply "unready," but rather operate within heavy structural constraints; addressing these multifaceted gaps through coordinated interventions is essential to unlocking teacher agency and achieving sustainable educational reform.

This study extends organizational change theory by Armenakis et al. by demonstrating that readiness is not merely an individual characteristic, but a dynamic property shaped by the relationship between individual capacity, institutional structures, and systemic conditions (Kamarova et al., 2025; Mladenova, 2022). It reveals that teachers' incomplete readiness stems from underdeveloped contextual conditions rather than a lack of willingness or capability, underscoring that structural intervention—such as resource allocation, clear instruction, reduced administrative loads, and professional growth—is far more critical for language policy success in Islamic primary education than simple motivation-building. To ensure effective implementation, practical efforts must prioritize sustained, cohort-based English proficiency programs, culturally responsive learning materials aligned with Islamic pedagogy, clear written guidelines, dedicated preparation time, stronger community engagement, and reformed pre-service teacher preparation tailored to the sociolinguistic context of Madrasah education.

Several limitations, however, frame the interpretation of these findings. Methodologically, the study relied on self-reported data from a cross-sectional design conducted over a short timeframe (31 May–10 June 2026), which inherently limits causal claims, long-term tracking of readiness, and protection against social-desirability bias. Furthermore, because the study lacked direct classroom observations or evaluation of student learning outcomes, conclusions regarding actual instructional translation remain constrained. Contextually, the small sample size of 17 teachers from Wajo Regency—predominantly from rural, private Madrasahs with low male teacher representation (only 3 participants)—means these insights may not fully generalize to state-run, urban, or gender-diverse educational environments.

4. CONCLUSION

This qualitative study examined the readiness of Madrasah Ibtidaiyah teachers to respond to the English-language learning policy at the primary-school level, with particular attention to teachers serving in Wajo Regency, South Sulawesi. Interview data from 17 teachers reveal that educators hold moderately positive attitudinal support for the policy and generally positive motivation to engage with it, yet experience significant gaps in English proficiency, pedagogical design competence, clarity of institutional support, and systemic enabling conditions. Teachers' readiness is shaped jointly by individual capacity—language proficiency, pedagogical knowledge, self-efficacy—and institutional support—leadership guidance, material provision, professional development, time allocation—with institutional and systemic factors emerging as the more tractable intervention points. Implementation is impeded by interconnected barriers spanning the individual (limited proficiency), institutional (scarcity of resources and guidance), and systemic (low student baseline proficiency, limited parental support, and heavy administrative burden) levels.

For future research, longitudinal designs are needed to examine how teacher readiness evolves over the course of the English learning policy's implementation, and future studies should incorporate classroom observations and student learning data to investigate the relationship between teacher readiness, instructional quality, and student learning outcomes. Comparative research across Madrasah and public primary schools would provide valuable insight into the contextual factors that shape implementation capacity in different educational settings, and expanding the geographic scope of research to include multiple regencies and provinces across Indonesia would further enhance the generalizability of findings and provide a more comprehensive understanding of policy implementation across diverse regional contexts.

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