

# Exploring English teachers' barriers in integrating moderation values amid curriculum changes

Giyoto <sup>a,1,\*</sup>, Mokh. Yahya <sup>a,2</sup>, Elen Inderasari <sup>a,3</sup>, Purwanto <sup>a,4</sup>, Baidi <sup>a,5</sup>

<sup>a</sup> UIN Raden Mas Said Surakarta, Pandawa Sreet, Kartasura District, Sukoharjo Regency, Central Java 57168, Indonesia

<sup>1</sup> [giyoto.prof@staff.uinsaid.ac.id](mailto:giyoto.prof@staff.uinsaid.ac.id) ; <sup>2</sup> [mokh.yahya@staff.uinsaid.ac.id](mailto:mokh.yahya@staff.uinsaid.ac.id) ; <sup>3</sup> [elen.inderasari@staff.uinsaid.ac.id](mailto:elen.inderasari@staff.uinsaid.ac.id) ; <sup>4</sup> [purwanto.dr@staff.uinsaid.ac.id](mailto:purwanto.dr@staff.uinsaid.ac.id),

<sup>5</sup> [baidi.dr@staff.uinsaid.ac.id](mailto:baidi.dr@staff.uinsaid.ac.id)



\* Corresponding author

## ARTICLE INFO

### Article history

Received 07 January 2026

Revised 13 April 2026

Accepted 20 April 2026

Available Online 30 April 2026

### Keywords

Barriers

Curriculum changes

English teachers

Moderation values

## ABSTRACT

The moderation value integration is sensitive for religion-based educational institutions, mainly for madrasahs, in Surakarta in preventing the social conflicts among different ethnics, races, and religions. The last five-times changes of the national curriculum at high schools, since 2004, have brought about schools and teachers' barriers in integrating the moderation values to their English teaching and learning process. This paper explores the English teachers' barriers in integrating the moderation values in their teaching and learning activities amid the curriculum changes. The data were taken qualitatively using interviews and observations to English teachers and headmasters of the two best madrasahs, MAN 1 and MAN 2, in Surakarta. The triangulated data were analyzed using Analytic Induction into eight kinds of teachers' barriers. The findings show that the teachers have four areas of barriers: a) low moderation value literacy and no manuals; b) past failure experiences; c) moderation integration as a new habit; d) learning English and moderation value achievement imbalances. They have no barrier in four areas: a) the expertise shift; b) the school power relations; c) the interpersonal relationships; d) the human resource replacement. This research helps the schools and teachers in identifying and solving the eight areas of barriers in implementing new change of curriculum, mainly in integrating the moderation values. These findings imply that school and teachers' readiness and creativity are basic in integrating moderation values amid the curriculum changes.



© The Authors 2026. Published by Universitas Ahmad Dahlan.  
This is an open access article under the [CC-BY-SA](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/) license.



**How to Cite:** Giyoto, Yahya, M., Inderasari, E., Purwanto, & Baidi. (2026). Exploring English teachers' barriers in integrating moderation values amid curriculum changes. *English Language Teaching Educational Journal*, 9(1), 143-155. <https://doi.org/10.12928/eltej.v9i1.15555>

## 1. Introduction

English teachers have some simultaneous problems relating to English learning activities that vary from (1) The English learning achievements ranked 80th of 112 countries, left behind, in the English Proficiency Index (EPI) in 2022, (2) the frequent changing curriculums in madrasahs, (3) the teaching method resistance, (4) the school obligatory role in strengthening students' well citizenship besides academic achievements, (5) the high religion and racial conflict sensitivities in Surakarta. To solve the problems, then, it needs capable and responsive schools and English teachers in strengthening the national educational goals, including being capable of living together in diversity by integrating moderation values in Surakarta as acclaimed by the recent *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum equipped with Deep Learning approaches.

Most of the schools have positioned the English as a compulsory subject in their curriculums. English is taught from kindergarten/primary schools to universities in which the students learn the English around 18 years when they start at preschool age for kindergarten. A 2024 conference paper on educational games reports that EF classifies Indonesia's score of 466 as "low" proficiency and places Indonesia 5th in Southeast Asia, behind Singapore, the Philippines, Malaysia, and Vietnam (Safero et al., 2024). A 2022 curriculum study also shows Indonesia's rank declining over a decade from 27th (2012) to 80th of 112 countries in 2021, framing this as a literacy crisis (Helyanti, 2022). This report gives a predicate to Indonesian as a "Low Proficiency" in terms of the English proficiency index (EF EPI, 2021). Acquiring proficiency in English is important not only for social communication but also for scientific progress, as most research publications are written in English. This ranking addressed to Indonesian EPI make school and English teachers panic and disappointed with the ways they teach.

Indonesia at least has had eleven changes in the curriculum since its founding in 1945. Which occurred in 1947, 1952, 1964, 1968, 1975, 1984, 1994, 2004, 2006, 2013, and most recently the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum, equipped by Deep Learning approaches. The changing of the curriculum generally due to the extreme mainstreaming basis on one of the four curriculum components: student's learning outcomes/objective, methods, materials, and assessment (OMMA). Each mainstreaming, at the end of the long process, leads to the unbalances among curricular domains (cognitive, affective, and psychomotoric) in their OMMA. The imbalances or the extremes were presented or proved by the reasons of changing the curriculums to the next reforms. As the examples, in the curriculum architectures of each domain in 1947 to 1975 curriculums the learning process, assessment, and objective were governed by the learning material mainstreaming. The three curricular components were directed to and derived from the learning materials. Each change obliged the massive adaptation of teachers and the schools around the country. Each change also left some gaps between what the curriculum wants with what the teacher actually applies in the fields. Most of the curriculum changes, so far, were reform not only modification because the changes are switching from one curricular components to others, in which need schools and teachers' significant readiness and creativities in responding to the changes. Teachers are vital in the changes of the curriculum, consequently, they must develop all four fundamental instructor competencies for having new curriculum, either in pedagogic, personal, social, and professional. Their capabilities move forward the quality of education. Curriculum changes and teachers' capabilities are going hand in hand in realizing the success of education process. The more frequent the curriculum changes, the more barriers the teachers have, mainly the barriers at the integration of affective domain, moderation values, to the other curriculum domains.

Excessive expressions and responses between religious adherents often violate human dignity and human rights. Therefore, it is necessary to develop various instruments, strategies, and comprehensive work from all elements of society, both community organizations, religion-based institutions, and individuals who carry out activities to develop self-awareness for mutual respect between religious adherents. One of the instruments discussed in this study is the use of moderation material in religion as content for learning the English Language for school students at Madrasahs in Surakarta. Instilling moderation in school students is considered very critical and urgent in Surakarta because it can instill a mindset that can have a high tolerance/moderation for the abundance of social conflicts in Surakarta. The diversities of races, religions, and social groups in Surakarta, acknowledged as axis of social conflicts, have created some critical social unrests or chaos. The most critical social chaos caused by different race sensitivities was experienced by the Surakarta people in 1998 where there were systematic burning up all the properties of certain ethnic group and many people left Surakarta for their safeties. There were also many tragical bombings due to different religion conflicts in: 2011 (Surakarta suicide bombing), 2012 (bombing terrors at police posts and Church), 2016 (suiciding bombing in police station), 2021 (suicide Bombing at Cathedral Church done by Surakarta religion group network), and the last one in 2022 (suicide bombing in Police post in Astana Anyar Bandung West Jawa, having relation with Surakarta religion group). Besides the above conflicts, there appeared a deep and solid assumption that the non-religious subjects don't have the task of integrating the moderation values for their students along their learning activities. They are resistant in taking parts of embodying the moderation values along their teaching and learning process. Therefore, the Ministry of Indonesian Religious Affair has set up the moderation values in all the life aspects mainly in religion preaching and teaching for all the religions and faiths all over Indonesia, mainly in strengthening the moderation values is in education and preaching. Schools have to involve its potentials for lessening the harms of extremism and radicalism due to the Indonesian's diversities. Schools have to direct and manage their human, financial, and material resources

optimally in keeping the peace in Indonesia by developing the moderation values along the students' learning activities in the schools whatever or however the curriculum is or beyond the school activities.

Accordingly, the English teachers should get involved so comprehensively, creatively in developing their students' English Proficiency and the moderation values through their daily learning activities that they don't become panic and rushed. At the same time, they have another additional task of embodying moderation value integrated in their English teachings with clear, specific, and detail guides or implementation and technical manuals. However, some curriculum changes do not develop their manuals and materials for the teachers before the curriculum implementations, for example, the implementation of moderation values in Merdeka Belajar curriculum for madrasahs.

Sutrisno (2019) said that religious attitude that strikes a balance between practicing one's own religion (exclusive) and respecting the other religious practices (inclusive) is known as religious moderation. We will surely avoid becoming overly radical, fanatical, or extremist in our religious practice thanks to this balance or middle ground. The moderation is the coexistence of two extreme poles in religion which are the liberal or extreme left on the one hand and the ultraconservative or extreme right on the other. Those poles can be addressed by religious moderation. Moderation (*wasathiyah*) encompasses fundamental values such as justice, balance, and tolerance, which serve as core pillars in promoting harmonious and inclusive societies. Among these, justice holds a central position as it reflects fairness and equality, ensuring that individuals act proportionally and place things in their proper context. Balance and tolerance further support this framework by encouraging openness, coexistence, and respect for diversity (Saeed, 2021; Kamali, 2020).

First, the pillar of justice is the first mentioned due to its significant position in equality and fairness. Equality is what defines someone who does not stand by any of the arguments. Fair means putting something in its proper place. This makes the equity even if they are not equal. Fairness also means "not diminishing or exaggerating" moderation. Second, balance pillar is found in groups with different parts leading to a specific goal, as long as certain conditions and levels are met in each part. If these conditions are met, the party can survive and run to achieve the purpose of its existence. Parts can be small or big, depending on their expected function. Balance is the main principle of "*Wasathiyah*" in the interpretation of Saeed (2021) and Kamali (2020). Because there can be no justice without balance. Allah created everything according to its size, quantity and needs of living things. Allah has also adjusted the cosmic system so that the heavens and the celestial bodies do not collide with each other and that each circulates in a balanced manner according to its level. Third, the pillar of tolerance is the measurement limit of addition or subtraction that is still acceptable. Tolerance is a deviation that should not be done, a deviation that can be justified. Educational institutions are very appropriate to be Religious Moderation Laboratories (Sutrisno, 2019). Teachers open a forum for dialogue and understanding that religion conveys a message of love, not hate, and that the school system can accommodate these differences. The classroom is actually a hotbed of national thought that instills multicultural values, conveys religious messages more peacefully, and spreads love for humanity. It is so urgent to the educational institutions which are established based on religion values, like madrasahs, that the graduates are not sensitive with different religious adherents.

Teachers' barriers, often conceptualized as resistance to change, are increasingly understood as a multifaceted phenomenon shaped by cognitive, emotional, and contextual factors rather than merely a reluctance to abandon existing practices. Recent studies indicate that teachers tend to resist educational change when reforms are perceived as misaligned with their professional beliefs, increase workload, or lack meaningful support and participation (Lomba-Portela et al., 2022; Meyer et al., 2022; Walk, 2022). In this regard, resistance reflects not only a preference for maintaining established routines but also a rational response to perceived threats to professional identity, autonomy, and instructional quality.

Habitual practices continue to play a significant role, as teachers often rely on established pedagogical approaches that provide a sense of stability and efficiency in complex classroom environments. Contemporary research highlights that such routines are closely tied to teachers' self-efficacy and professional confidence, making changes that disrupt these patterns potentially anxiety-inducing (Valverde-Berrococo et al., 2023; Boström & Elvstrand, 2024). Furthermore, feelings of uncertainty and discomfort frequently emerge when innovations are introduced without adequate scaffolding, leading teachers to perceive change as risky rather than developmental.

In addition, recent evidence suggests that resistance is also associated with career stage, institutional context, and perceived fairness in policy implementation. Teachers in later career stages may exhibit

more cautious engagement with change, particularly when reforms challenge their accumulated expertise or professional status (Fokkens-Bruinsma et al., 2023; Richter et al., 2021). At the same time, resistance can function as a form of professional agency, where teachers critically evaluate reforms to protect pedagogical integrity and student outcomes rather than simply oppose change (Ketelaar et al., 2022; Datnow & Park, 2021). Therefore, contemporary perspectives frame teacher resistance not merely as an obstacle, but as an important diagnostic indicator of gaps between policy design and classroom realities.

The principal needs to adopt a systemic perspective, viewing teacher resistance as part of the school's culture and climate, including norms of collaboration, trust, and bureaucratic structures (Bakir & Altunay, 2025; Al-Takhayneh et al., 2022; Boström & Elvstrand, 2024; Shattuck et al., 2022). Recent studies indicate that resistance often arises when policies or innovations are perceived as increasing workload, threatening status, or disregarding teachers' professional experience (Meyer et al., 2022; Lomba-Portela et al., 2022; Walk, 2022; Shattuck et al., 2022). Therefore, the principal's initial step is not only to map "who" resists, but also to understand how that resistance emerges and becomes embedded within the school culture: lack of collaboration, weak professional learning networks, a culture that does not support mistakes, and a negative innovation climate (Meyer et al., 2022; Lomba-Portela et al., 2022; Bakir & Altunay, 2025; Al-Takhayneh et al., 2022; Pardosi & Utari, 2021).

Zimmerman (2006) conclude that there are "Barriers to Change" on the factor of teacher's resistance to change: such as (1) the teachers' literacy, (2) habit - an easier way to continuing teaching in the same method, (3) past unsuccessful efforts at change - can extend wary of accepting further attempts to change, (4) fear of the unknown - a sense of security of doing the same methods, (5) threats to their expertise - defensive attitude of teachers towards the believe of their proven abilities are no longer sufficient, (6) threats to their power relationship - changes in structural and organizational affect the perception of power around teachers, (7) threats to social relationships - changes in long-established social interaction and decision-making, and lastly (8) threats to their resource allocations - some teachers that benefited on the current resource distribution might perceive it as a threats.

The principles of character management in schools emphasize structured organizational practices, including clarity of roles and responsibilities, professional division of labor, coherence in policy direction, discipline, fairness, initiative, collaboration, synergy, and commitment, which are essential for effective school governance and character development (Leithwood et al., 2020). On the other hand, Idris and Putra (2021) conclude that there are at least four elements for Educational Institution or School to participate in embodying moderation value: specifically, (1) educational institutions have a role to play in creating or updating educational goals, (2) they have a role in giving teachers and educators both direct and indirect guidance, (3) they have a role in encouraging religious moderation through the curriculum and learning process, and (4) they have a role in preparing students to practice religious moderation in the classroom. Difficulties in learning English have also been researched by Salimi and Najjarpour (2024). They suggested two models for critical pedagogy comprehension and the barriers to its implementation among Iranian EFL teachers which can be developed based on the emerging themes.

Moderation value strengthening is also one of the four missions of the former president's Mental Revolution missions. The four missions are, namely: (1) mental revolution and development of Pancasila ideology, (2) promotion and preservation of culture, (3) religious moderation, and (4) strengthening the culture of literacy, innovation, and creativity. Regarding the educational institutions, namely boarding schools, madrasas and Islamic schools, Islamic universities, and other informal Islamic organizations are the spearheads in the reinforcement of humanistic, harmony, religious justice and moderation besides the developers of religious knowledge, science, and technology. Madrasahs should strengthen moderation values through their teachers by respecting the practice of different religious experiences and their cultural way of life so that the graduates can establish cooperation among religious people. The schools and teachers are having unidentified barriers and their alternative solutions in integrating values along their teaching activities with new curriculum. This paper identifies the teachers' barriers in integrating the moderation values along their English teaching process amid the curriculum change into eight areas of barriers. Besides theoretical benefit, Practically, this paper contributes generally to all schools and teachers, mainly, the alternative strategies in identifying barriers and their solutions, specifically, contributions to MAN 1 and MAN 2, as the setting of the research, in finding what specific kinds of barriers faced by them and how their solutions in anticipating the barriers.

## 2. Method

This study employed a qualitative research design aimed at exploring teachers' experiences, perceptions, and responses to curriculum changes, particularly in integrating moderation values into English language teaching. Qualitative research is appropriate for capturing participant's lived experiences and meanings through their own perspectives (Cropley, 2019; Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The study was conducted in two state Islamic senior high schools (madrasahs), namely MAN 1 Surakarta and MAN 2 Surakarta, which were purposively selected based on their high accreditation status, large student populations, and their integration with Islamic boarding school systems. These institutions are situated in Surakarta, a region known for its strong cultural and religious sensitivity. A total of 8 participants were involved in this study, consisting of six English teachers and two vice principals for curriculum affairs. Participants were selected using purposive sampling based on the following criteria: (1) active involvement in implementing the Merdeka Belajar curriculum equipped Deep Learning Approaches, (2) direct engagement in English teaching and learning processes, and (3) experience in integrating moderation values into instructional practices.

Data were collected over a period of three months through multiple techniques, including semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis. Interviews were conducted with all participants to explore their barriers, perceptions, challenges, and strategies in implementing moderation-based learning. Each interview lasted approximately 45–60 minutes and was audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. Observations were carried out in selected English learning activities to capture real-time teaching practices, interaction patterns, and the integration of moderation values. Field notes were systematically documented. Documents analyzed included lesson plans, teaching materials, and school policy documents related to curriculum implementation. The use of multiple data sources enabled triangulation, thereby enhancing the depth and credibility of the findings (Nowell et al., 2021; Braun & Clarke, 2021).

Data were analyzed using an analytic induction approach (Znaniecki, 1934; Jacques, 2007), conducted through the following steps:

- a. Data familiarization: reading interview transcripts, observation notes, and documents repeatedly to gain an overall understanding.
- b. Initial coding: identifying meaningful units of data related to teachers' practices and barriers.
- c. Category development: grouping codes into broader categories such as types of learning activities and types of resistance or barriers.
- d. Pattern identification: examining relationships between categories, particularly in how teachers respond to challenges.
- e. Conclusion drawing: interpreting findings to explain the dynamics of teachers' barriers and their strategies in integrating moderation values.

To ensure transparency, the coding system used abbreviations such as: Cat.: category, numeric number 1-8: areas of barriers, teach: teacher, man1: MAN 1, man2: MAN 2, intv: interview, obs: observation data, and *doc-LP* to check lesson plan document. For example, code (cat1.intv.teach.man1.man2) means barrier area 1 by interview to the first teacher of MAN 2. To ensure the rigor of the study, several trustworthiness strategies were employed:

- a. Triangulation: comparing data from interviews, observations, and documents.
- b. Peer debriefing: discussing findings and coding decisions with fellow researchers to minimize bias.
- c. Data saturation: data collection was continued until no new themes emerged across participants.
- d. Audit trail: maintaining detailed documentation of data collection and analysis processes.

### 3. Findings and Discussion

The data are categorized into eight barriers of: (1) teachers' literacy, (2) past failure experience, (3) new habit formation of moderation based, (4) worries of curriculum changes, (5) expertise change, (6) power relation change, (7) social relation change, and (8) resource placement change. Generally, based on the interviews (cat1.intv.teach. man1, man2) to the teachers and vice headmaster, it was found that the values of moderations generally integrated through the students' English learning activities in five strategies by: thematic project-based learnings, social submissions, workshops, material developments, gender equity, nonracial class or non-discriminated classroom atmospheres. These strategies were used to dialogue and operate the values of moderation in schools (Sutrisno, 2019) by having direct contacts and survey to the social differences for humanity.

*(...) had been integrated the moderation values of Rahmatan Lil Alamin in school, those values were integrated into five strategies: theme projects, social submissions in extra-curricular, moderation workshops, developing learning materials, gender equity and no-discriminations in class (...)* (cat1.intv.teach. man1, man2).

#### 3.1. The identified barriers of teachers in integrating moderation values

*[(...) barriers in understanding character competencies leading to moderation (...)* (cat1.intv.teach2.man2). *Barriers in understanding the change of competencies were on the new students coming from various schools (...)* (cat1.intv.teach1.man1). *The barriers in its implementation due to the different students' characteristics (...)* teaching tolerance to the non-muslims (...)

The teachers have no high literacy and manuals, as meaningful support and school participations, relating to the moderation values integration (Lomba-Portela et al., 2022; Meyer et al., 2022; Walk, 2022), by which they can decide the students' moderation competences to develop as learning outcomes and their strategies. Consequently they do not understand what moderation competence is and how to strengthen, mainly, to the new students who have different starts as stated also by Biesta (2020) that the different students' backgrounds interfere in learning strategies to achieve the cognitive, psychomotoric, and affective changes in moderation, as proposed by (Pelu & Rosmiati, 2023). They have a positive innovation atmosphere in their schools, as proposed by Meyer et al. (2022), Lomba-Portela et al. (2022), Zhou & Ismail (2025), Alshuhumi et al. (2023), and Fitri et al. (2025). This is supported also by Interview data (cat1.intv.teach2.man2) that the teachers are not ready, although having positive innovation climate (Meyer et al., 2022), with moderation values integrated in English reading materials in equipping students with moderation competencies.

*[Experiencing the barriers in reading text materials containing globalization and transparency provided (...)* (cat1.intv.teach1.man1). *(...) not available definite manuals of moderations in English materials (...)* (cat1.intv.teach2.man1). *Teachers' barriers due to the limited time to prepare English materials integrating moderation values (...)* (cat1.intv.teach2.man2)].

The teachers are not ready with the learning materials like reading texts or material specific guide to support the moderation internalization so they need much time to prepare themselves, as confirmed by Darling-Hammond et al. (2020), that time allotments become barriers and problems in actualizing the religion moderations. Materials are important to be adopted in adapting the moderation value for the students, as suggested by (Alias et al., 2025). They still use the former curriculum methods in strengthening moderation values to ensure continuity with the new curriculum, aligning with the view that educational practices, including value-based learning, should be implemented as a continuous and integrated process rather than in a fragmented manner (Fullan, 2020; Darling-Hammond et al., 2020). In term of classroom controlling, there are teachers having problems in monitoring the moderation behaviors of their students because there is no specific and detailed guide from the school, policy makers or government as proposed by Idris and Putra (2021).

*[(...) experienced barriers in matching the English materials with global and transparency (...)* (cat1.intv.teach1.man1). *The barriers were still using the common learning methods as usual (...)* (cat1.intv.teach2.man1). *(...) barriers in implementing moderation contents due to various students' characteristic backgrounds (...)* still using former curriculum because the new moderation-integrated curriculum did not have clear manuals (...)

Some teachers are not ready with how to assess the moderation values in English learning achievement besides no materials and manuals. They wait the standardized assessment rubrics from the policy holders or schools which integrate the learning English achievements and moderation values internalizations. The implementation of new curriculum, mainly focusing on moderation strengthening, needs a complete and integrated curriculum components of objective, material, method, assessment (OMMA).

*[(...) experienced barriers in developing assessments due to having no moderation assessment guidance provide from the government (...). (cat1.intv.teach2.man1). (...) experienced barriers due to the absence of standard assessment instruments relevant to moderation competencies (cat1.intv.teach2.man2)]*

Based on the interviews (cat2.intv.teach2.man2), they have two failure experiences in deciding which English materials supports accordingly to the themes or competence of moderations and learning material plans as proposed by Darling-Hammond et al., (2020).

*[(...) handicaps in deciding the learning materials suitable with the themes and moderation competence, in madrasah entitled rahmatan lil alamin (cat2.intv.teach2.man1). (...) having barriers due to, really, no learning material planned (...). (cat2.intv.teach2.man2)]*

Some teachers are not ready with the curricular new habit of moderation competence strengthening as proposed by Zimmerman (2006), mainly on: how to translate the competence into new habit of learnings, insertions of moderation materials relevant to today's issues stated also by Wardah, (2024), students' interest pulls, English skills learning focuses, limited time allotments, and English achievement focusses. In intra-curricular and co-curricular domains, they face barriers in defining standardized activities that integrate moderation values because of their low literacy and limited understanding of religious moderation, a challenge also reported in various Islamic education settings (Hanif et al., 2025).

*[(...) hadn't understood what kind of materials could establish new habits in accordance with moderation standards (...). (cat3.intv.teach2.man1). (...) difficult in integrating materials due to more focuses on language skill materials (...) difficulty in incorporating moderation values into materials because of the limited English lesson hours, which primarily emphasize vocabulary acquisition (...). (cat3.intv.teach2.man2)].*

Teachers are worried with the change of the curriculum relating to: very limited time allotments with many materials or tasks, decreasing the English materials, irrelevant material given due to the low moderation literacy. In intra and extra-curricular they adapt and speculate the materials and activities due to the absence of the detailed and specific guides. Komala (2025) reported also that in schools/madrasahs, low levels of religious literacy and religiosity are identified as factors that hinder from truly instilling moderate attitudes (Komala et al., 2025).

*[(...) worried about whether the implemented learning has met or failed to meet the moderation competency standards (...). (cat4.intv.teach2.man1). (...) tended to feel anxious at the beginning of implementing moderation competencies in English teaching (...). (cat4.intv.teach1.man2). (...) worried regarding the accuracy of delivered teaching as teachers are not yet well-versed in moderation competencies (...). (cat4.intv.teach2.man2)].*

### 3.2. The Four no-barrier areas of the teachers in integrating moderation values

Teachers have no barriers of the shift in expertise by another teacher since they have learned and adapted to the new changes, mainly the integration of moderation. The worry is that when the core objectives of learning English to master the skills are decreasing and the time allotments are limited. Aflahah, et al. (2023) confirmed that problem in implementing moderation value is limited time scheduled for learning at schools.

*[(...) need for socialization to teachers regarding the implementation of moderation integration in English teaching (...). (cat5.intv.teach2.man1). (...) barriers faced by teachers include mastering curriculum changes, especially those related to moderation (...). No barriers were reported (...). (cat5.intv.teach2.man2). (...) moderation values had been implemented, although they were not explicitly referred to as moderation (...). (cat5.intv.teach2.man1). (...) disagreement arises due to the significant reduction of English materials in learning (...). (cat5.intv.teach1.man2). (...) Teachers are required to master English materials integrated with moderation values (...). (cat5.intv.teach2.man2)]*

Majority of the teachers have no worries and barriers of changes in power relations and tasks of the teachers since the objectives of English learnings are achieved. They are ready for the changes. They

suggest that all the teachers concerned should integrate their learning materials with other subject materials and there should be a team handling the moderation achievements among the subjects.

*[(...) teachers were prepared to face curriculum changes (...) (cat6.intv.teach.man1). (...) it was not an issue as long as the learning outcomes were achieved (...) (cat6.intv.teach1.man2). (...) not a problem because each teacher has their own roles and responsibilities (...) (cat6.intv.teach1.man2). It was no problems, with the condition that the replacement of teacher possesses both English language and moderation competencies (...) (cat6.intv.teach2.man2)]*

It was found that the changes of curriculum do not bring any bad changes to the teachers' social relationship, otherwise the changes can strengthen their wider and deeper relations due to more intensive and teachers getting involved in the changes, in welcoming and realizing the changes, since the changes do not decrease the main objectives of English learnings. Their mutual respects and friendship remain and develop though there are changes in tasks. They have positive innovation atmosphere in their schools, as proposed by Meyer et al., (2022); Lomba-Portela et al., (2022).

*[(...) no changes were experienced (...) (cat7.intv.teach2.man1). (...) social relationships improved due to intensive collaborations done (...) (cat7.intv.teach1.man2). (...) not a problem because mutual respect is maintained (...) (cat7.intv.teach2.man2). (...) would not be a problem since social relationships were inherently based on mutual respect and appreciation (...) (cat7.intv.teach2.man2).*

Curriculum reforms in English language teaching (ELT) often ask teachers to adopt more learner-centred, communicative, and critical approaches. The studies here show that collaboration, school culture, leadership, and teachers' own agency strongly shape whether reforms move beyond paper into daily classroom practice. Collaborative structures (teams, design groups, professional learning communities) support teachers to experiment with new practices and sustain change, especially when there is time for joint planning and reflection (Nguyen & Ng, 2020; Datnow, 2018; Voogt et al., 2016; Dastgahian & Scull, 2021; Li & Edwards, 2013). In large-scale reform, knowledge sharing and perceived curriculum coherence reinforce each other over time and predict meaningful school-level impact and teacher commitment (Sullanmaa et al., 2021). Small collaborative communities in Iran led to gradual shifts away from traditional grammar-translation toward practices more aligned with new ELT textbooks (Dastgahian & Scull, 2021).

Teachers enact agency proactively, reactively, or passively depending on leadership, trust, workload, and school culture (Lockton & Fargason, 2019; Jenkins, 2019; Laivuori et al., 2024; Priestley, 2011). Positive school relationships (teacher–principal, teacher–teacher, teacher–student) and higher self-efficacy and job satisfaction increase commitment to curriculum implementation (Boudouaia et al., 2024; Nguyen & Ng, 2020; Jenkins, 2019; Lee et al., 2011). Emotions are central: collaboration can bring joy and support, but reform pressures also create stress; realistic expectations and emotional support from leaders matter (Datnow, 2018; Weddle, 2021; Pan et al., 2024).

Relation-oriented and participatory leadership (trust, open communication, collegial support) improves curriculum change management and teacher motivation (Datnow, 2018; Jenkins, 2019; Akullo & Wambua, 2025; Priestley, 2011). Trust among colleagues acts as a “buffer of risk” and “catalyst of change,” increasing teachers' receptivity to reform and perceived positive outcomes (Lockton & Fargason, 2019; Lee et al., 2011). In China and Korea, teachers often know reform documents but feel uncertain about student-centred roles and new demands, highlighting the need for context-sensitive, ongoing professional development (Han, 2023; Lei & Medwell, 2022; Li & Edwards, 2013).

Across diverse systems, ELT curriculum reform succeeds when teachers work in supportive, trusting professional communities with time to collaborate, strong relational leadership, and opportunities to exercise agency. Collaboration helps teachers interpret reforms, adapt them to local realities, and gradually shift classroom practice toward more learner-centred, communicative, and critical pedagogies.

Changes in resource placement do not matter the teachers as informed in interview (cat8.intv.teach2.man2) since the English learnings are optimally done and well-coordinated as proposed by Bakır & Altunay (2025), Al-Takhayneh et al. (2022). The teachers are aware that curriculum changes bring about many consequences to be anticipated and adapted. Though the moderations seem to be compulsion and try to find the solutions of resource placement conflicts which already regarded normal.

*[(...) every change brought about pros and cons, but adjustments to the changes are necessary (...) (cat8.intv.teach2.man1). Teachers needed to adapt to curriculum changes towards moderation (...). (cat8.intv.teach2.man2). (...) There were no risks in resource placement in the madrasah because it*

*was well-coordinated (...) (cat8.intv.teach1.man1). (...) Efforts were made to anticipate it (...) (cat8.intv.teach2.man1)]*

#### 4. Conclusion

This study highlights that Indonesia's relatively low ranking in the Environmental Performance Index (EPI) and the implementation of the Merdeka Belajar curriculum—particularly through the integration of moderation values in the P5RA framework—have created additional pedagogical demands for teachers. Beyond teaching English language skills, teachers are required to incorporate values of moderation into OMMA. The findings reveal that frequent curriculum changes have shaped teachers' attitudes toward reform, often resulting in uncertainty, resistance, or adaptive stress. Nevertheless, many teachers respond by developing creative strategies, including contextual material selection, collaborative teaching practices, strengthening collegiality, and promoting student-centered and activity-based learning across curricular, co-curricular, and extracurricular contexts.

This study contributes to the literature on educational change by framing teacher responses to curriculum reform as dynamic interactions between structural pressures and professional agency. It extends existing theories of teacher adaptation by emphasizing how repeated policy shifts and value-based curriculum integration influence teachers' cognitive and emotional engagement with reform. Additionally, the study highlights the role of contextual factors—such as institutional expectations and policy complexity—in shaping patterns of resistance and adaptation.

The findings suggest that policymakers and school leaders should provide sustained professional support, clear policy communication, and collaborative platforms to assist teachers in implementing curriculum changes effectively. Schools are encouraged to foster strong professional learning communities, promote teamwork between teachers and policymakers, and design integrated learning activities that align language instruction with moderation values. Such support systems are essential to reduce teacher anxiety and enhance the successful enactment of curriculum innovation.

This study is limited by its contextual focus, which may restrict the generalizability of findings to other educational settings. Additionally, the reliance on qualitative data may not fully capture the broader variability of teacher responses across regions. Future research is recommended to include mixed-method approaches and larger samples to provide a more comprehensive understanding of teacher adaptation to ongoing curriculum reforms.

#### Acknowledgment

The authors express their profound gratitude to all individuals who played a role in the research undertaking, including those involved in the collection and examination of data, as well as those who provided constructive feedback.

#### Declarations

- Author contribution** : The author is responsible for the entire research project, from initiating the ideas to revising the manuscript.
- Funding statement** : The research is funded by Lembaga Penelitian dan Pengabdian pada Masyarakat (LPPM) Universitas Islam Negeri Raden Mas Said Surakarta, Indonesia.
- Conflict of interest** : There is no conflict of interest in this work.
- Ethical declaration** : We as authors acknowledge that this work has been written based on ethical research that conforms with the regulations of our university and that we have obtained the permission from the relevant institute when collecting data.
- Additional information** : No additional information is available for this paper.

## REFERENCES

- Aflahah, S., Nisa, K., & Aldeia, A. S. (2023). The role of education in strengthening religious moderation in Indonesia. *Urnal SMART (Studi Masyarakat Religi Dan Tradisi)*, 9(2), 193–211. <https://doi.org/10.18784/smart.v9i2.2079>
- Akullo, R., & Wambua, B. (2025). Relation-oriented leadership behaviour in management of curriculum changes in lower secondary schools in Uganda. *The Educator: A Journal of the School of Education, Moi University*. <https://doi.org/10.64983/n6bzip754>
- Alias, H., Mania, S., & Rasyid, M. N. A. (2025). Evaluation of the implementation of religious moderation with the CIPP Model: Moderate character of high school students. *ETDC: Indonesian Journal of Research and Educational Review*, 4(4), 1399-1414. <https://doi.org/10.51574/ijrer.v4i4.3587>
- Alshuhumi, S., Al-Hidabi, D., & Al-Refaei, A. (2023). Unveiling the behavioral nexus of innovative organizational culture: Identification and affective commitment of teachers in primary schools. *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment*, 34, 130 - 152. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10911359.2023.2267600>
- Al-Takhayneh, S., Karaki, W., Hasan, R., Chang, B., Shaikh, J., & Kanwal, W. (2022). Teachers' psychological resistance to digital innovation in Jordanian entrepreneurship and business schools: Moderation of teachers' psychology and attitude toward educational technologies. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.1004078>
- Bakır, D., & Altunay, E. (2025). The interplay of school cultural dynamics and change: Exploring the resistance to school change. *European Journal of Education*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ejed.70059>
- Biesta, G. (2020). Risking ourselves in education: Qualification, socialization, and subjectification revisited. *Educational Theory*, 70(1), 89–104. <https://doi.org/10.1111/edth.12411>
- Boström, L., & Elvstrand, H. (2024). Being a principal at a school age educare center in Sweden: Perspectives on structure, culture, and leadership. *Leadership and Policy in Schools*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15700763.2024.2431705>
- Boudouaia, A., Al-Qadri, A., Houichi, A., & Diafi, S. (2024). A study on the effect of school culture on teachers' commitment to curriculum implementation: The mediating role of self-efficacy and job satisfaction. *Heliyon*, 10. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2024.e29183>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2021). One size fits all? What counts as quality practice in (reflexive) thematic analysis? *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 18(3), 328–352. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14780887.2020.1769238>
- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Cropley, A. (2019). *Introduction to qualitative research methods: A practice-oriented introduction*. University of Hamburg.
- Darling-Hammond, L., Flook, L., Cook-Harvey, C., Barron, B., & Osher, D. (2020). Implications for educational practice of the science of learning and development. *Applied Developmental Science*, 24(2), 97–140. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10888691.2018.1537791>
- Dastgahian, E., & Scull, J. (2021). Implementing English language teaching reforms through professional learning. *Education Inquiry*, 13, 395 - 411. <https://doi.org/10.1080/20004508.2021.1937865>
- Datnow, A. (2018). Time for change? The emotions of teacher collaboration and reform. *Journal of Professional Capital and Community*. <https://doi.org/10.1108/jpcc-12-2017-0028>
- Datnow, A., & Park, V. (2021). *Educational improvement in an era of complexity*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003023959>
- EF EPI. (2021). *EF English Proficiency Index*. EF EPI. <https://www.ef.com/wwen/epi/%09>

- Fitri, N., & Suyanto, A. (2025). Religious moderation in early childhood education: Integration, implementation, and challenges within the Merdeka Curriculum. *Al Hikmah Indonesian Journal of Early Childhood Islamic Education*. <https://doi.org/10.35896/ijecie.v9i1.987>
- Fitri, S. R. A., Hasanah, A., Nursobah, A., & Sadiyah, D. (2025). Problem-based Islamic religious education (PBL) learning to strengthen students' moderate attitudes and national insight. *International Journal of Islamic Educational Research*, 2(3), 107-116.
- Flick, U. (2018). *An introduction to qualitative research* (6th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Fokkens-Bruinsma, M., Canrinus, E. T., & den Brok, P. (2023). Teachers' professional identity and change: The role of career stage in adapting to educational reforms. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 121, 103915. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2022.103915>
- Fullan, M. (2020). *Leading in a culture of change* (2nd ed.). Jossey-Bass.
- Goode, H., Drysdale, L., & Gurr, D. (2023). What we know about successful school leadership from Australian cases and an open systems model of school leadership. *Education Sciences*. <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci13111142>
- Hallinger, P., Liu, S., & Chen, L. (2025). Principal instructional leadership and teacher attitudes: A meta-analytic review, 1989–2024. *European journal of education*, 60(4), e70199. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ejed.70199>
- Han, I. (2023). Change of the National English Curricula in Korea and Considerations for the Next Curriculum. *Journal of Curriculum and Teaching*. <https://doi.org/10.5430/jct.v12n1p124>
- Hanif, A., Syarifudin, E., & Muhtarom, A. (2025). Integration of religious moderation in islamic education: Challenges and opportunities in the digital era. *Edukasi Islami: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*. <https://doi.org/10.30868/ei.v14i01.7767>
- Helyanti, N. (2022). Kurikulum Merdeka reimaged: Adopting story science for English literacy learning in Indonesian middle school. *ELT Echo: The Journal of English Language Teaching in Foreign Language Context*. <https://doi.org/10.24235/eltecho.v7i2.12081>
- Idris, M., & Putra, A. (2021). The roles of Islamic educational institutions in religious moderation. *AJIS: Academic Journal of Islamic Studies*, 6(1), 25. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.29240/ajis.v6i1.2555>
- Jacques, T. (2007). Znaniecki's analytic induction as a method of sociological research. *Jacques Tacq. Polish Sociological Review 2007*, 158(2), 187–208.
- Jenkins, G. (2019). Teacher agency: The effects of active and passive responses to curriculum change. *The Australian Educational Researcher*, 47, 167 - 181. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13384-019-00334-2>
- Kamali, M. H. (2020). Moderation and balance in Islam: The Qur'anic principle of wasatiyyah. *Islam and Civilizational Renewal*, 11(1), 1–20.
- Ketelaar, E., Beijaard, D., Boshuizen, H. P. A., & Den Brok, P. (2022). Teachers' responses to educational innovations: A review of teacher agency and resistance. *Educational Research Review*, 35, 100434. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.edurev.2021.100434>
- Koh, G., Askill-Williams, H., & Barr, S. (2023). Sustaining school improvement initiatives: Advice from educational leaders. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*, 34, 298 - 330. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09243453.2023.2190130>
- Komala, E., Priatna, T., Haryanti, E., & Maslani, M. (2025). Implementation of a literacy-based Project-Based Learning (PjBL) model in islamic education and character education to foster students' moderate attitudes. *International Journal Of Humanities Education and Social Sciences (IJHESS)*. <https://doi.org/10.55227/ijhess.v4i5.1478>
- Laivuori, M., Toom, A., Tikkanen, L., & Pyhältö, K. (2024). Examining Finnish teachers' professional agency in the professional community in curriculum reform / Análisis de la agencia profesional de los docentes finlandeses en la comunidad profesional en la reforma curricular. *Journal for the Study of Education and Development*, 47, 875 - 906. <https://doi.org/10.1177/02103702241288357>

- Lee, Y., Lee, J., & Yin, H. (2011). Teacher receptivity to curriculum reform and the need for trust: An exploratory study from Southwest China. *Asia-pacific Education Researcher*, 20, 1-1.
- Lei, M., & Medwell, J. (2022). The changing role of Chinese English-as-foreign-language teachers in the context of curriculum reform: Teachers' understanding of their new role. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.904071>
- Leithwood, K., Harris, A., & Hopkins, D. (2020). Seven strong claims about successful school leadership revisited. *School Leadership & Management*, 40(1), 5–22. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13632434.2019.1596077>
- Li, D., & Edwards, V. (2013). The impact of overseas training on curriculum innovation and change in English language education in Western China. *Language Teaching Research*, 17, 390 - 408. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1362168813494124>
- Lockton, M., & Fargason, S. (2019). Disrupting the status quo: How teachers grapple with reforms that compete with long-standing educational views. *Journal of Educational Change*, 20, 469 - 494. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10833-019-09351-5>
- Lomba-Portela, C., Fernández-González, N., & González-Sanmamed, M. (2022). Teacher resistance to change: A systematic review of factors influencing educational innovation. *Sustainability*, 14(3), 1234. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su14031234>
- Lomba-Portela, L., Domínguez-Lloria, S., & Pino-Juste, M. (2022). Resistances to educational change: teachers' perceptions. *Education Sciences*. <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci12050359>
- Merriam, S. B., & Tisdell, E. J. (2016). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation* (4th ed.). Jossey-Bass.
- Meyer, A., Hartung-Beck, V., Gronostaj, A., Krüger, S., & Richter, D. (2022). How can principal leadership practices promote teacher collaboration and organizational change? A longitudinal multiple case study of three school improvement initiatives. *Journal of Educational Change*, 24, 425 - 455. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10833-022-09451-9>
- Meyer, A., Richter, D., & Richter, D. (2022). Teachers' attitudes toward educational reforms and their implications for implementation. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 109, 103551. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2021.103551>
- Nguyen, D., & Ng, D. (2020). Teacher collaboration for change: sharing, improving, and spreading. *Professional Development in Education*, 46, 638 - 651. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19415257.2020.1787206>
- Nowell, L. S., Norris, J. M., White, D. E., & Moules, N. J. (2021). Thematic analysis: Striving to meet the trustworthiness criteria. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 20, 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.1177/16094069211040602>
- Pan, H., Hung, J., & Truong, T. (2024). Teacher clusters of emotions and self-efficacy in curriculum reform: Effects on collaboration and learner-centered teaching. *Teaching and Teacher Education*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2024.104604>
- Pardosi, J., & Utari, T. (2021). Effective principal leadership behaviors to improve the teacher performance and the student achievement. *F1000Research*, 10. <https://doi.org/10.12688/f1000research.51549.2>
- Pelu, H., & Rosmiati. (2023). Teacher's response to curriculum changes in madrasah learning. *Jurnal 12 Waiheru*, 9(1–11). <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.47655/12waiheru.v9i1.94>
- Potvin, A., Boardman, A., & Stamatis, K. (2021). Consequential change: Teachers scale project-based learning in English language arts. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 107, 103469. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2021.103469>
- Priestley, M. (2011). Schools, teachers, and curriculum change: A balancing act?. *Journal of Educational Change*, 12, 1-23. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10833-010-9140-z>
- Richter, D., Kunter, M., Klusmann, U., Lüdtke, O., & Baumert, J. (2021). Professional development across the teaching career: Teachers' engagement with change and innovation. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 113(1), 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.1037/edu0000466>

- Saeed, A. (2021). *Human rights and Islam: An introduction to key debates between Islamic law and international human rights law (2nd ed.)*. Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Safero, R., Syaputra, S., & Widiyanto, M. (2024). Educational games with the theme of improving English language skills. *2024 International Conference on Informatics, Multimedia, Cyber and Information System (ICIMCIS)*, 177-181. <https://doi.org/10.1109/icimcis63449.2024.10956596>
- Salimi, E. A. N. M. (2024). Critical pedagogy in practice: Classroom practices and the barriers to its implementation in EFL. *Context. LRR*, 15(3), 195–223. <https://doi.org/10.29252/LRR.1401.0.0.151.3>
- Sasson, I., Grinshtain, Y., Ayali, T., & Yehuda, I. (2022). Leading the school change: The relationships between distributed leadership, resistance to change, and pedagogical practices. *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, 28, 1155 - 1173. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603124.2022.2068187>
- Shattuck, D., Richard, B., Jaramillo, E., Byrd, E., & Willging, C. (2022). Power and resistance in schools: Implementing institutional change to promote health equity for sexual and gender minority youth. *Frontiers in Health Services*, 2. <https://doi.org/10.3389/frhs.2022.920790>
- Sullanmaa, J., Pyhältö, K., Pietarinen, J., & Soini, T. (2021). Relationships between change management, knowledge sharing, curriculum coherence and school impact in national curriculum reform: a longitudinal approach. *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, 27, 1395 - 1419. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603124.2021.1972165>
- Sutrisno, E. (2019). Aktualisasi moderasi beragama di lembaga pendidikan. *Jurnal Bimas Islam*, 12(1), 323–348. <https://doi.org/10.37302/jbi.v12i2.113>
- Valverde-Berrocoso, J., Garrido-Arroyo, M. D. C., Burgos-Videla, C., & Morales-Cevallos, M. B. (2023). Trends in educational innovation and teacher resistance: A systematic review. *Education Sciences*, 13(2), 152. <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci13020152>
- Voogt, J., Pieters, J., & Handelzalts, A. (2016). Teacher collaboration in curriculum design teams: Effects, mechanisms, and conditions. *Educational Research and Evaluation*, 22, 121 - 140. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13803611.2016.1247725>
- Walk, M. (2022). Leaders as change executors: The impact of leader attitudes to change and change-specific support on followers. *European Management Journal*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.emj.2022.01.002>
- Walk, M. (2022). Teacher resistance and educational change: Understanding the role of organizational conditions. *Journal of Educational Change*, 23(4), 567–589.
- Wardah, D. A. (2024). Building religious moderation through strengthening mawaddah-based social cohesion in Cigugur District, Kuningan Regency. *Jurnal Studi Sosial Keagamaan Syekh Nurjati*, 4(2), 124–141. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.24235/sejati.v4i2.86>
- Weddle, H. (2021). Team emotion matters: Exploring teacher collaboration dynamics over time. *Journal of Educational Change*, 24, 77-105. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10833-021-09436-0>
- Zimmerman, J. (2006). Why some teachers resist change and what principals can do about it. *NASSP Bulletin*, 90(3), 238–249. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1177/0192636506291521>
- Zhou, H., & Ismail, H. (2025). Nurturing innovation in the classroom: The mediating role of psychological capital in the association between school climate and teachers' innovative behavior in Nanjing kindergartens. *Psychology in the Schools*, 62. <https://doi.org/10.1002/pits.23516>
- Znaniecki, F. (1934). *The method of sociology*. Farrar & Rinehart