

Potential and Challenges in Implementing the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum at schools in Nias Utara

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Abstract. *This article explores the potential and challenges associated with implementing the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum in Indonesia. The method used in this article is a quantitative method by interviewing several teachers at the school. The curriculum is anticipated to enhance education quality by offering flexibility for teachers, enabling students to pursue learning based on their interests, boosting student motivation, and fostering the development of 21st-century skills. However, the article highlights several challenges, including teacher readiness, availability of facilities, mindset change, and the need for effective evaluation. It underscores the crucial requirement for support from the government, schools, teachers, students, and parents to effectively address these challenges and successfully implement the curriculum.*

Keywords: *Merdeka Belajar Curriculum, Implementation, Potential, Challenges.*

INTRODUCTION

Education is one of the keys to the nation's progress. Therefore, the government continues to strive to improve the quality of education in Indonesia. One of the efforts made is to implement a new curriculum, namely the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum. The Merdeka Belajar Curriculum was launched in 2020 as a replacement for the 2013 Curriculum. This curriculum is expected to provide more space for teachers and students to be creative and innovate in learning. To find out more about the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum, the author conducted interviews with five teachers from various levels of education. The interview results show that the teachers welcome this curriculum. They consider that Merdeka Belajar Curriculum has great potential to improve the quality of education in Indonesia.

However, the teachers also revealed several shortcomings of the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum, such as the need for a lot of socialization and training for teachers, the absence of clear graduate competency standards, and not all schools are ready to implement it.

According to the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture the Merdeka Belajar curriculum emphasizes student-centered learning individualized learning paths and the integration of technology in the classroom (Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan 2020). This approach aims to foster critical thinking creativity and problem-solving skills among students preparing them for the challenges of the 21st century.

One potential benefit of the Merdeka Belajar curriculum is its ability to promote student engagement and motivation. By allowing students to have more autonomy in their learning

process they are more likely to develop a sense of ownership and responsibility for their education (Hidayah 2021). This can lead to increased student satisfaction and a higher level of academic achievement.

Furthermore the Merdeka Belajar curriculum encourages teachers to adopt innovative teaching methods and utilize technology to enhance the learning experience. This can provide students with access to a wide range of educational resources and opportunities for collaborative learning (Hidayah 2021). Research has shown that integrating technology in the classroom can improve student engagement critical thinking skills and information retention (Prayoga 2019). However the implementation of the Merdeka Belajar curriculum is not without its challenges. One of the main obstacles is the resistance to change from both teachers and administrators. Some teachers may feel overwhelmed by the shift in teaching methods and the need to adapt to new technologies (Sulistyo 2021). Additionally the lack of proper training and resources for teachers can hinder the effective implementation of the curriculum (Hidayah 2021).

Another challenge is the potential inequality in access to technology and educational resources among students. Not all schools may have the necessary infrastructure to support the integration of technology in the classroom leaving some students at a disadvantage (Prayoga 2019). This can further widen the educational gap between students from different socioeconomic backgrounds.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study used a qualitative method with an interview approach. Interviews were conducted with five teachers from various levels of education. The author asked several questions to these teachers to provide their responses regarding the curriculum that had been implemented at the school with the previous curriculum.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study come from interviews with several English teachers. The following are the results of the interviews.

Teacher 1, 2 and 3:

Merdeka Belajar curriculum has enormous potential to improve the quality of education in Indonesia. This curriculum gives teachers the freedom to develop creativity and innovation in learning. In addition, this curriculum also provides opportunities for students to learn according to their interests and talents.

The advantages of the independent learning curriculum are:

- a) Gives teachers the freedom to develop creativity and innovation in learning.
- b) Provides opportunities for students to learn according to their interests and talents.
- c) Increases student motivation to learn.

The disadvantages of the independent learning curriculum are:

- a) There is still a need for a lot of socialization and training for teachers to implement it.
- b) There is still a need for clear graduate competency standards.
- c) Not all schools are ready to implement it.

Teacher 4 and 5:

Based on the results of the interview, there are several potentials of the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum, namely:

- a) Provide flexibility to teachers. Teachers have the flexibility to develop learning according to the needs and characteristics of students.
- b) Provide opportunities for students to learn according to their interests and talents. So, students can choose subjects that match their interests and talents.
- c) Increase students' learning motivation. More active and creative learning can increase students' learning motivation.
- d) Developing 21st century skills. Merdeka Belajar curriculum focuses on developing 21st century skills such as critical, creative, collaborative, and communicative thinking.

Even though it has a lot of potential, there are several challenges in implementing Merdeka Belajar Curriculum, namely:

- a) Teacher readiness. Teachers need to be provided with adequate training and assistance to be able to implement Merdeka Belajar Curriculum effectively.
- b) Availability of facilities and infrastructure. Schools need to have facilities and infrastructure that support the implementation of Merdeka Belajar Curriculum.
- c) Mindset change. A mindset change is needed from teachers, students, and parents to be able to accept and adapt to the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum.
- d) Evaluation. It is necessary to develop a comprehensive evaluation system to measure student learning achievements in the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum.

The Merdeka Belajar curriculum has great potential to improve the quality of education in Indonesia. However, in order to realize this potential, it is necessary to overcome various existing challenges.

The government needs to provide greater support to schools in implementing the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum. This support can be in the form of training and mentoring for teachers, providing facilities and infrastructure, and socializing to the community.

In addition, it is also necessary to carry out regular monitoring and evaluation to determine the effectiveness of implementing the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum and to make improvements if necessary.

CONCLUSION

The Merdeka Belajar curriculum has great potential to improve the quality of education in Indonesia. This potential includes provide flexibility for teachers to develop creativity and innovation in learning; providing opportunities for students to learn according to their interests and talents; increasing students' learning motivation; and developing 21st century skills. However, there are several challenges in implementing Merdeka Belajar Curriculum. To overcome these challenges, cooperation from all parties is needed, from the government, schools, teachers, students, and parents.

In general, teachers welcome the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum and hope that the government can provide greater support in its implementation.

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