IMPLEMENTATION AND ISSUES OF THE MERDEKA CURRICULUM

Habib1*, Eliyah2, Mauizatul Hasanah3
1,2,3Teaching and Learning of Madrasah Ibtidaiyah, IAI Sultan Muhammad Syafiuddin Sambas
Correspondensi author email: habbsmbs@gmail.com

Abstract
The Free Learning Policy and Merdeka Curriculum are aimed at improving the quality of education evenly across Indonesia. However, their implementation faces various challenges due to geographical conditions, lack of readiness among teachers and schools. The objective of this literature review is to map the issues in the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum and formulate alternative solutions. Data sources are derived from articles and journals on the evaluation of the Merdeka Curriculum. The analysis technique employs Miles and Huberman's model, including data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. The study results identify the main problems as limited understanding and abilities of teachers, as well as inadequate learning facilities. It is recommended to improve curriculum implementation management by involving collaboration among various stakeholders consistently, so that the goals of enhancing the quality and accessibility of education can be achieved.

Keywords: Implementation, Issue, Merdeka Curriculum

INTRODUCTION

Minister of Education and Culture Nadiem Anwar Makarim has established four main education policy programs called 'Merdeka Belajar' to enhance the quality of human resources in accordance with the direction of the President of the Republic of Indonesia. Indonesia is a large country with vast geographical conditions and consists of many islands separated by seas. This geographical condition hinders efforts to equalize education, as stated in Constitutional Law Number 20 of 2003 regarding the national education system, which must provide quality education that is easily accessible and evenly distributed to all Indonesian people (Tobing et al., 2023).

In the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum (IKM), there is a need for continuous monitoring and evaluation. This is done to assess the success of the program and address emerging difficulties. Schools or madrasas and relevant authorities conduct monitoring involving all stakeholders to ensure that the implemented curriculum aligns with the school's goals and vision. To effectively
implement the Merdeka Curriculum, teachers need training and development. Training may include understanding the concept of the Merdeka Curriculum, appropriate teaching strategies, the use of technology in learning, and competency-based evaluation. Additionally, continuous support and mentoring are crucial to enhance teachers’ ability to implement this curriculum (Akhmadi, 2023).

Many problems are faced by teachers and schools when implementing the Merdeka Curriculum. Schools are not ready to implement this new curriculum. Although the implementation of this curriculum depends on the readiness of schools, the government ultimately has to enforce its implementation. Furthermore, it is challenging to choose the best school because the National Examination has been abolished, and the zoning system used to continue education to the next level. Previous schools had an advantage because everyone could enroll if their home was close to the school. The curriculum always changes with each change of minister, so the term ‘change minister, change curriculum’ is no longer a secret. Because evaluation still requires deeper observation, it is considered immature in its preparation. This research will discuss other issues related to the Merdeka Curriculum comprehensively (Rusmiati et al., 2023).

METHODS

This research employs a qualitative approach with a literature study type to explore and deeply examine the issues that arise regarding the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in schools. The data collection method used is the documentation of articles and scientific journals relevant to the topic of the implementation and issues of the Merdeka Curriculum. The collected documents consist of the results of previous research, both classroom action research and evaluative research on the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum that have been published in reputable national journals. The data analysis technique in this study refers to the interactive model of Miles and Huberman, which consists of three stages of activities: data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. Data reduction is carried out by sorting and focusing on data that aligns with the research objectives, namely the issues of the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum. The data is then presented in the form of brief descriptions based on the recurring themes of the issues. From this data presentation, conclusions and verifications are drawn, resulting in a mapping of problems, obstacles, and solutions related to the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum policy.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

A pioneer school can serve as a guide, training ground, and inspiration for other teachers and school principals. This is due to the perseverance and dedication of the principal of SDN Guruminda 244, who has promoted numerous participatory
programs, unique innovations, and collaboration among teachers that support the leader in building the pioneer school. One significant outcome of a pioneer school is the community support around the school, which promotes education within the classroom, involving parents, community figures, and local government. All of these contribute to the quality of student education in the pioneer school. Previous research indicates alignment with the findings of this study. Other schools appear to perform better after adopting the pioneer school model, such as SDN Guruminda 244 Bandung. However, the author believes that further research is needed to support the pioneer school program. The Merdeka curriculum provides critical, high-quality, expressive, applicable, varied, and progressive learning. Thus, the successful implementation of this new curriculum requires collaboration, strong commitment, sincerity, and practical application (A. Fauzi, 2022).

Based on this opinion, it can be understood that pioneer schools serve as references or guidelines in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum. This is because pioneer schools were experimental schools when the Merdeka Curriculum had not been officially launched by the government. In other words, pioneer schools play a role as a pilot project for implementing the Merdeka Curriculum before it is widely applied across all schools. Therefore, the experiences and best practices from pioneer schools are valuable references for other schools in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum. The implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum must be supported by the enhancement of teacher capacity through various training. This training involves Expert Trainers specifically prepared to equip teachers with the necessary competencies in the Merdeka Curriculum. With adequate training, it is expected that teachers can effectively implement the curriculum in their classrooms (Mayanti, 2023).

The free learning curriculum is a new curriculum that emphasizes the well-being of students and involves more student engagement in the teaching and learning process. This curriculum also gives students the Merdeka to choose subjects they like, helping them develop their interests and talents. In its implementation, the role of teachers is crucial in making learning more interesting and enjoyable for students. The evaluation of student learning outcomes in the free learning curriculum is conducted with the aim of understanding and measuring students' abilities in the teaching and learning process (Melati, n.d.).

Based on the above opinion, it can be understood that the role of teachers is crucial in the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum. This is because teachers play an active role in making learning more interesting and enjoyable for students. Teachers have the primary task of facilitating learning and helping students develop new skills, competencies, and understand the required material. The crucial role of teachers in the success of the Merdeka Curriculum implementation is inseparable from the characteristics of the curriculum itself, which provides flexibility for teachers to design learning according to students' interests and needs. As per the student-
centered learning principle, teachers are required to creatively design contextual and enjoyable learning experiences so that students can learn optimally. Without full support from teachers, the implementation of the student-centered learning model in the Merdeka Curriculum may not be realized effectively (Widiyaningsih & Narimo, 2023).

This study found that teachers are ready to implement the Merdeka curriculum in Grade V at UPT SDN 73 Gresik. In terms of lesson planning, Grade V teachers have met the requirements for formulating learning objectives (LO), developing the flow of learning objectives (LOF), and delivering learning objectives. Teacher readiness to implement the Merdeka curriculum in Grade V was evaluated through learning assessments. The results showed that all Grade V teachers met the criteria for readiness and availability in all aspects of learning assessment, including initial assessment, formative assessment, and summative assessment (Andina et al., 2023).

Based on the above opinion, it can be understood that the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum must be adjusted to the readiness of teachers in that implementation. Aspects related to teacher readiness that need attention include lesson planning and evaluation. The success of the Merdeka Curriculum implementation depends on how prepared teachers are to plan innovative learning and meet students’ needs. Teachers are expected to be able to develop learning tools ranging from syllabi, lesson plans, teaching aids, to assessment systems that support project-based learning models in the Merdeka Curriculum. Additionally, teacher readiness in conducting authentic evaluations that measure students’ competency achievement, rather than mere factual recall, is crucial. In other words, teachers’ understanding of the concept of active learning and authentic assessment significantly determines the success of the implementation. Without thorough preparation related to lesson planning and evaluation, the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in the classroom may not run optimally (Marwan, 2023).

Field results indicate that SDN 015 Sungai Pinang is already prepared to implement the free learning curriculum, although still in the early stages. This readiness is supported by the fact that many teachers, especially those in grades I and IV, have implemented the free learning curriculum and attended related training. Additionally, these teachers have received training on the free learning curriculum before its implementation (Oktaviani & Ramayanti, 2023).

Based on the above opinion, it can be understood that the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum should begin with training for teachers to understand the curriculum itself. This training is crucial to enhance teachers’ readiness in implementing the new curriculum. Training provided to teachers should encompass a deep understanding of the basic concepts, main principles, and learning models used in the Merdeka Curriculum. Through this deepening, teachers are expected to map significant changes from the previous curriculum, making them ready for adjustments and innovations in teaching. Besides conceptual aspects, training should also provide
space for teachers to practice developing new teaching materials, activities, and authentic assessments. With thorough preparation through comprehensive training, the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in schools can proceed effectively and optimally (Wahira et al., 2023).

As a result of the data processing and analysis process, it can be concluded that (1) both external and internal elements significantly influence the difficulties faced by teachers in Tanjung Jabung Barat Regency in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum. (2) Most teachers face difficulties accessing the PMM service to gain an understanding of Kurma due to inadequate telecommunication network and unreliable power supply issues. (3) Power outages and blank spots often disrupt teacher activities. (4) Internal constraints are influenced by the age limitations of teachers and their ability to use android devices. (5) Initial diagnosis is not conducted because teachers lack sufficient understanding (Budi Teguh Harianto, 2023).

Based on the above opinion, it can be understood that there are several common challenges during the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum. The main challenges include the lack of teacher understanding of the Merdeka Curriculum concept, inadequate school facilities, and the need to improve teachers' ability to design innovative learning. The challenge of insufficient understanding among teachers pertains to their mastery of both online and offline learning models that align with the scientific approach and student-centered learning principles in the Merdeka Curriculum. Meanwhile, facility limitations relate to the readiness of information and communication technology infrastructure and laboratories that support active learning methods in schools. The ongoing development of teachers' abilities is needed, especially regarding lesson planning and evaluation, such as the preparation of lesson plans and the creation of authentic assessments. By mapping these various challenges, teacher training and mentoring programs can be designed more strategically to ensure the smooth implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum (Wantiana & Mellisa, 2023).

Firstly, graduate profiles, supporting courses, and related courses must be identified to ensure the successful implementation of the MBKM curriculum in the study program. The Free Learning Program requires a natural or organic learning process to achieve individual Merdeka. There are various obstacles to implementing the MBKM curriculum in universities. Every learning activity has its challenges. Additionally, every university, lecturer, and student faces difficulties in implementing MBKM, including changes to the curriculum structure, study programs struggling to adjust course loads with partner universities, difficulties finding partners for collaboration, and a system that still does not fully support the program (ADILA et al., 2023).

Based on the above opinion, it can be concluded that obstacles in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in universities include difficulties in adjusting course loads
with partner universities, challenges in finding partners for collaboration, and a system that still does not fully support the program.

It cannot be denied that a revamped system comes with numerous challenges, and many things will happen if they are altered. The examples above illustrate that all organizations must collaborate to build and resolve this new system to successfully achieve its goals. The free learning curriculum is created with the aim of identifying the educational identity of Indonesia. Thus, the term "changing ministers, changing curriculum" will no longer apply. Despite ongoing efforts, current problems cannot be resolved. By implementing the free learning curriculum, teachers and schools face a range of new challenges in teaching (Rusmiati et al., 2023).

Based on this opinion, it can be understood that challenges will always exist in the implementation of the curriculum, whether it is the old curriculum or the latest free learning curriculum. All educational elements must always work together to minimize obstacles that arise during the application of a new curriculum.

The Merdeka Curriculum is an educational program that allows students to think and work independently and adapt to changes. The teaching system in the future will shift from traditional classrooms to more comfortable outdoor spaces. In this environment, students can interact more with educators, participate in extracurricular activities, and not just listen to teacher instructions. They can also grow into individuals who are brave, independent, socially adept, cultured, polite, and value competition, without relying on a ranking system that some surveys worry about. However, the Merdeka Curriculum still faces some challenges when implemented. The success of Merdeka Learning is influenced by the availability of human resources and supportive facilities. Schools strive to adjust their current curriculum to continue achieving national education goals. Some challenges faced by teachers in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum include a lack of experience and skills, limited access to learning, time management, lack of supporting media, and teachers' limited knowledge of information technology. By enhancing capabilities, improving access and resources, and building supportive infrastructure, the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum can run more smoothly and achieve better learning outcomes for students. Solutions to the above problems have been explained in this article. Knowledge of teaching methods must be expanded, through internal and external workshops, and shared with fellow educators (M. N. Fauzi, 2023).

Based on this opinion, it can be understood that the success of the Merdeka Curriculum is influenced by the availability of human resources and supporting facilities. This poses challenges and constraints in the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum because not all schools have human resources or teachers with the necessary skills according to the Merdeka Curriculum, as well as inadequate facilities.

Research results on the problems of implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in elementary schools show that there are still many issues and obstacles in applying the Merdeka Curriculum in elementary schools. Teachers’ skills and understanding of
innovative and creative learning methods, school environmental conditions, facilities and infrastructure, and available human resources are some of these issues. However, with hard work and support from educational stakeholders, these challenges can be overcome. Solutions that can be implemented include the development and training of teachers and education staff, increased support from parents and the community, improvement of facilities and infrastructure, enhanced supervision and monitoring, the development of cooperation among educational stakeholders, and encouragement to participate in the teacher mover program (Wuwur, 2020).

Based on this opinion, it can be concluded that the development and training of teachers and education staff are needed to overcome obstacles and ensure the success of the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum.

This study found many problems faced by elementary school teachers in implementing the free curriculum. Research results show several significant issues. One of them is that teachers do not understand the values and goals of the Merdeka Curriculum, hindering them in creating effective learning. Additionally, there are constraints in using independent learning lesson plans. Teachers face difficulties in reflecting the curriculum principles well due to a lack of guidance and adequate training. This research found that, although technology is considered an essential part of implementing the Merdeka Curriculum, there are additional barriers. The results indicate that further efforts are needed to improve teacher understanding, provide sufficient training, and ensure better access to resources and technology so that the Merdeka Curriculum can have a significant impact (Ramadhani, 2023).

Based on this opinion, it can be understood that the problem that occurs in the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum is the difficulty of teachers in using independent learning lesson plans. And there is also a need to increase teachers' understanding to address this issue.

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis conducted, it was found that the implementation of the Freedom Curriculum is not free from issues or problems. This is because the application of the new curriculum, namely the Freedom Curriculum, must be accompanied by the readiness and capabilities of teachers in its execution, covering aspects of planning, implementation, and learning evaluation. Common problems encountered in the implementation of the Freedom Curriculum include a lack of understanding and skills among teachers in carrying out the curriculum, as well as insufficient facilities for the implementation of the Freedom Curriculum itself.
REFERENCES


Copyright © Habib, Eliyah, Mauizatul Hasanah


