

Implementation of Merdeka Curriculum in Improving the Quality of Senior High School

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Abstract

This study aims to determine the implementation of an merdeka curriculum: quality improvement efforts in educational institutions. This research was conducted at SMAN 2 Jember with a qualitative approach through case study research. Data were obtained from observation, interviews, and documentation studies. Informants in the study were the principal, deputy head of curriculum, teachers, and students. In the process of analyzing data, the researcher collects data, reduces data, presents data, and concludes findings. The results of the study show the success of the implementation of the merdeka curriculum in improving the quality of schools through the learning process carried out, namely by preparations including the need to get information about the merdeka curriculum by preparing teachers how they understand what the merdeka curriculum means; teachers take part in online and offline workshops held by the government and the education office besides that the school also conducts its workshops merdekaly by bringing in resource persons related to the merdeka curriculum so that it becomes an excellent contribution to the sustainability and improvement of the quality of education and achieves educational goals that require students to enrich literacy to get to the future era of globalization.

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INTRODUCTION

The curriculum is the "Spirit" of learning that must be evaluated innovatively, dynamically, and periodically by the growth of the era and science and technology, the competencies needed by citizens and users of graduates. Curriculum change is thus a necessity. Moreover, the development of science and technology has had a significant impact on the world of education in Indonesia (Dewi, 2021; Jamun, 2018; Lusiman et al., 2017), so the rapid development of science and technology has provided challenges and requires the world of education to no longer linger in the scope of the "comfort zone" in the curriculum used (Suryana & Ismi, 2019; Suryaman, 2020).

The curriculum is seen as a goal, context, and strategy for learning through the development of learning materials, social relationships, and structured learning techniques in a school environment (Wahyudin, 2016; Jauhari et al., 2017). In other words, a curriculum is essential for students to achieve educational goals systematically and continuously. Furthermore, curriculum management is necessary for educational institutions so that the learning process can run as expected by stakeholders well, effectively, and efficiently, and there is feedback and interrelatedness (Ningsih, 2018; Rofiki, Diana, et al., 2022).

The Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, as an institution that has authority in education, enforces a policy related to curriculum development, namely the merdeka curriculum, which is implemented in educational institutions as one of the choices or additional options for learning recovery in 2022 to 2024. Several programs support the implementation of the merdeka curriculum enacted by the government, including the movers school program and the vocational high school center of excellence (Kemendikbud, 2022; Nugraha, 2022).

From this program, it can seek to improve the quality of a good education by implementing the merdeka curriculum so that it becomes a good practice and the learning content of the merdeka curriculum at



the driving school or vocational high school center of excellence is well-identified. It can be a lesson for other educational units. Several merdeka curriculum strategies for merdeka pathways will be used as a follow-up to the Ministry of Education and Culture policy (Kemendikbud, 2022; Restu et al., 2022), namely: The first strategy, the route of gradual adoption of the merdeka curriculum. The second strategy, providing assessment and teaching tools (High Tech), is a strategic approach that uses information and communication technology that functions in providing a wide selection of reviews and teaching tools (textbooks, teaching modules, project examples, curriculum examples) in digital form that academic units can use in conducting learning based on the merdeka curriculum. The third strategy is to provide merdeka training and teacher learning resources (High Tech). The fourth strategy is to provide merdeka curriculum resource persons (High Touch). The strategic approach used in providing merdeka curriculum resource persons from the movement school/vocational high school center of excellence that has implemented the merdeka curriculum (Nugraha, 2022; Afida et al., 2021).

Efforts to develop the potential of students or learners, then in the world of education, required curriculum. In the world of education, several components work together to realize the educational goals themselves. All members have an essential role, not least the curriculum, which is the main prop in a teaching and learning process. Some experts even say that the curriculum is the heart of education, whether it determines the results of education and whether it can build critical awareness of students or not (Asri, 2017) (Insani, 2019). Along with the times, with various reasons and rationalizations, the Indonesian curriculum continues to change from period to period. The existence of the curriculum has a significant influence on the quality of education in Indonesia (Rofiki et al., 2021).

The discussion of the curriculum in Indonesia is fascinating. This is because of the dynamic changes that occur in the development of the Indonesian curriculum. Even Insani explained that an intriguing expression often appears along with the change of ruler of this country, namely 'change of minister change of curriculum. In fact, in the course of history since Indonesia's independence in 1945, the national education curriculum has indeed repeatedly changed, namely in 1947, 1952, 1964, 1968, 1975, 1984, 1994, 2004, 2006, and the latest is the 2013 curriculum (Insani, 2019; Asri, 2017). In addition, there is currently a new view related to the merdeka learning curriculum. These changes are a logical consequence of changes in the nation and state society's political, socio-cultural, economic, and science and technology systems. Therefore, the curriculum system as a set of educational plans does need to be developed dynamically by the demands and changes that occur in the community (Restu et al., 2022).

The curriculum is indeed a vital thing in the world of education. Due to the crucial importance of this curriculum, educators in the field must understand the content of the curriculum because it is clear that the educational objectives are contained in the curriculum so that the educational process can take place conducive, interactively, effectively, and smoothly (Dewi, 2021). In various matters of these problems, an important aspect that must be answered is how to realize Human Resources (both teachers and students / high school graduates) of quality and character in the global scope (Istiarsono, 2016; Sulthon, 2019). On this basis, the government launched an merdeka curriculum policy (Dirjen Dikti Kemendikbud, 2020) which provides autonomous space for education providers to be creative and create innovations flexibly in their respective institutions, to improve the quality of education, both among teachers and students (graduates) (Assingkily, 2020).

The quality of education will not be satisfactory if the components of education that include the foundation, objectives, curriculum, teacher competence and professionalism, student-teacher relations patterns, learning methodologies, infrastructure, evaluation, financing, and other elements are managed as is without careful planning. Meanwhile, to improve quality education, it is necessary to have good management, especially in the curriculum that will be taught to students regarding the objectives, content or teaching materials, implementation, and evaluation of the curriculum (Yuhasnil, 2020; Wahyudin, 2016). Various problems, such as the low level of school management, characterize the many phenomena of poor quality of some educational institutions in Indonesia. Educational institutions need control that has a type of planning that is not just to respond to changes that are expected to occur in the future but more than that. Educational

institutions need effective management to create future institutions through changes implemented now. In this case, the curriculum is the pinnacle that significantly influences the quality of educational institutions (Rofiki et al., 2021).

Therefore, schools must be adaptive and futuristic because schools are a place for a nation whose space is always in the spotlight in building and improving superior human resources and having high competitiveness, which never ends throughout the ages so that in school management, curriculum development strategies are needed following educational objectives and in order to improve the quality of education (Rahmansyah, 2021; Afida et al., 2021).

From the background described above, this study aims to deeply analyze the substance of the merdeka curriculum policy as an effort to improve the quality of education.

METHODS

This type of research is field research with a qualitative approach. Qualitative research is a research approach that reveals certain social situations by correctly describing reality, formed by words based on relevant data collection and analysis techniques obtained from realistic situations. With this approach, researchers will describe the actual reality based on the analysis of the data obtained. With this descriptive qualitative research, researchers try to reveal efforts to improve quality in educational institutions as they occur in the field and try to avoid the subjective views of researchers.

Qualitative research data is collected with primary and secondary data. The primary data is taken through interviews conducted with research informants. In this study, researchers used in-depth interviews to collect data or information to get a complete picture of the topic under investigation. Meanwhile, secondary data were collected through observation, assessment documents, and learning tools.

Data analysis in qualitative research is carried out since researchers compile proposals and carry out data collection in the field until researchers get all the data. The data analysis technique used in this study uses qualitative analysis. Miles and Huberman's view consists of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Merdeka Curriculum Learning Planning

Curriculum development is a dynamic that can respond to the demands of structural changes in government, developments in science and technology, and globalization. Curriculum development is strongly influenced by supporting resources; human resources have a dominant role in the success of curriculum development; for this reason, human resource development and coaching must be carried out continuously, both through formal and non-formal channels (Luturmas et al., 2022) (Suryana & Ismi, 2019) .

Learning planning is the development of learning in an integrated system consisting of several elements that interact with each other. Merdeka curriculum planning at SMAN 2 Jember was started in 2020 by the principal in overcoming the covid-19 situation, still using Daring to facilitate students in teaching and learning activities (Diana & Rofiki, 2020). So that in, the school, SMAN 2 Jember, uses a new curriculum issued by the minister of education, namely the merdeka curriculum, which can facilitate educational institutions.

The following results from an interview with the principal that the school has been the driving force since the 2021/2022 school year. Although hindered by the pandemic, all school members work together and share tasks according to their respective roles as part of the driving school to carry out the merdeka curriculum, which has now been formalized into an merdeka curriculum. In the driving school, training is given at the beginning. After being selected as a driving school, there is training involving the learning committee (represented by 1 grade X teacher, 1 Islamic religious education teacher, one sports teacher, one principal, and one supervisor). After becoming a driving school, the school operational curriculum (formerly the education unit-level curriculum) is called the school operational curriculum (Hariyono, 2022).

Based on the results of interviews with the deputy head of the curriculum (Nuraini, 2022), several statements regarding the merdeka curriculum and quality improvement in educational institutions were revealed, namely;

- a) The merdeka curriculum was carried out in 2022-2023 and only in class X; the rest used curriculum 13;
- b) There are no obstacles but only implementing policies from the government because related to pandemic conditions, it is held (loss learning) due to difficulties in Teaching and Learning Activities; the merdeka curriculum is the hope of the government; therefore, that school also uses the merdeka curriculum to overcome (loss learning) due to the pandemic.
- c) if curriculum 13 is from the government, the government determines the rules for semesters 1 and 2. However, in curriculum 13, there is teacher discretion to regulate the material to be conveyed, whether in semester 1 or 2, because, in the merdeka curriculum, there is project learning; for project learning, it takes 30% and 70% Intraculicular learning. Within 70%, the teacher has the flexibility to manage to learn in the classroom.
- d) The steps taken are to make preparations; because it is still new, it is necessary to get information about the merdeka curriculum, which is done by preparing teachers to understand what the merdeka curriculum means. Hence, teachers participate in online and offline workshops held by the government and the education office; the school also conducts its workshops merdeka by bringing in resource persons related to the merdeka curriculum.
- e) The implementation strategy for students is that they are given an understanding of the merdeka curriculum and given an overview that in the merdeka curriculum, there will be three lessons, namely extracurricular, co-curricular, and extracurricular. Students have held socialization to understand and implement the new curriculum properly.
- f) The teacher's implementation strategy is to participate in workshops and make preparations, for example, making learning achievements set by the government they parse into learning objectives, from learning objectives and elaborate into indicators of the target. Hence, teachers continue to prepare things related to learning the merdeka curriculum.
- g) The teacher's strategy for students in the merdeka curriculum is that teachers are expected to carry out coordination, which means that when in class, they do not generalize the same treatment, so in class, they divide into low, medium, and high groups. So teachers must prepare for that, especially by paying attention to the content, and the process must be different; then, the evaluation assessment must also be different; you cannot treat students equally.

Based on the results of interviews with school principals and grade X teachers and documentation studies, it shows that they have made independent curriculum learning planning in the form of learning tools by the guidelines for making protopine curriculum learning tools, namely analyzing learning outcomes to develop learning objectives and flow, planning diagnostic assessments, developing teaching modules that adapt learning to the achievement stage and characteristics of students and planning formative and summative assessments (Hariyono, 2022; Anshori, 2022).

Implementation of Merdeka Curriculum

The curriculum is an action or implementation of the curriculum from a plan that has been prepared carefully and in detail. The following is the implementation of the independent curriculum at SMAN 2 Jember based on interviews with the principal (Hariyono, 2022):

- a) Until 2023 there is still an option to run curriculum 13, emergency curriculum, or merdeka curriculum but in 2024 it must run the merdeka curriculum without selection again.
- b) For now the merdeka curriculum is applied only to class X.
- c) Learners become the center of learning.
- d) Learning is mostly carried out in groups, so that mutual cooperation is built in students according to the profile of Pancasila students.
- e) The diversity of students is highly valued.

- f) The merdeka curriculum begins with the implementation of diagnostic assessments.
- g) Project-based learning. Not always a product, but more about habituation and changes in attitude/character (gotong royong). and changes in attitude/character (mutual cooperation, critical reasoning, independence, creativity, etc. according to the Pancasila Learner Profile) in the target. others according to the Pancasila Student Profile) within a certain time target;
- h) Bring out entrepreneurship;
- i) At the beginning of its implementation, the student response was confused and silent, not wanting to talk;
- j) The whole school is encouraged to always be happy.

Based on the results of interviews with grade X teachers, revealed that the merdeka curriculum is as follows. The merdeka curriculum is implemented in class X to become a driving school and whether we can or not we must be enthusiastic, follow because it is a responsibility. The merdeka curriculum is a recovery curriculum from curriculum 13 to the merdeka curriculum which has been formalized by the Minister of Education (Andriyani, 2022). Before learning, students are stimulated beforehand by giving videos or assignments to bring books. When given a learning video, students do not open but do not understand. Once asked about what learning the next day, the learners were silent because they were confused. When students are invited to talk, they remain silent, but when invited to explore, they want to talk to show the things that are asked. So the center of learning is students, the teacher only serves as a mediator between students and learning materials. Learners are required to seek their own understanding of the material (Andriyani, 2022).

In the merdeka curriculum, there is a project divided into two: short-term and long-term. The short term is one month or until the material can be one chapter. Long-term projects are by the profile of Pancasila students (6 profiles of Pancasila students). Long-term projects, not in the form of products but rather to improve and hone the six profiles of Pancasila students. It is preferred to assess the improvement/change in student attitudes; the period can be two or three months. An example of a class X project is making crafts from used goods. The students create the form of the craft. Long-term projects include planting medicinal plants starting from the initial process of planting to the process of becoming ready-to-use medicine. The implementation of the project can be up to two months, but every two weeks, it is reported to the homeroom teacher how the development of the planted medicinal plants is. After the plants grow and can be harvested, students make products from these plants and market them at market day held at school. Long-term projects focus more on life skills. In long-term projects, students collaborate with other students or parents so that Pancasila students' profile emerges in the form of mutual cooperation. Class X's difficulty lies in the character ability and initial knowledge of students who come from junior high school with students who did not go through junior high school education. Many still need clarification about socializing. However, when asked, class I is more silent to answer.

Based on the results of interviews with school principals and grade X teachers as well as documentation studies, it shows that they have implemented an independent curriculum starting with the implementation of diagnostic assessments, implementing learning according to project-based teaching modules, both short-term projects and long-term projects, learning in class according to the characteristics of students, and implementing formative and summative assessments (Hariyono, 2022; Anshori, 2022).

According to one of the teachers, the curriculum development was well implemented, and even the projects were carried out extraordinarily from the teacher's previous expectations; for example, such as holding an exhibition that was expected to be just like an ordinary bazaar turned out that the results of the bazaar were so crowded that there were student initiatives when they exhibited what they made there were Master Ceremonies. There was their entertainment side so that the exhibition event could live. When students are trusted to manage how the exhibition can run well when discussing terms of projects, meanwhile, in terms of learning, the merdeka curriculum is also well implemented because the merdeka curriculum is identical to problem-based and project learning; if the problem is a problem, the teacher does it like a case study and students can follow it well even though some children are difficult to know with a background in a school in a class, of course not all students have the same abilities. Some are all brilliant but have different literacy skills, and some are equally competent. However, when given the same assignment, the results are still different

because their ability to read and literacy students' ability to understand the internet is different. In contrast, in the project, the teacher has done contextualization by directly using file studies, namely learning directly in the field.

The merdeka curriculum is differentiated learning, so the teacher carries out a strategy by dividing students in the class into two groups according to their abilities. Namely, there are low groups and upper groups, so the development from the beginning of the implementation of the merdeka curriculum at SMAN 2 Jember until now is going better than before, while when talking about the results of the independent curriculum from students, they still need habits because students are used to the Covid-19 era (Rofiki, Zubaidi, et al., 2022), namely being accustomed to learning such as often listening to lectures, explanations, theories, and open books so when given assignments with close books students are confused because they are not used to it, so they still need habituation to get better.

The obstacles in running the merdeka curriculum for teachers are still groping, meaning groping how to use the correct module, compiling the proper assessments, etc. In contrast, in terms of students, this merdeka curriculum obstacle is in this differentiation learning because now it is still in the zoning era, so there are students in the class with different abilities. This mereka curriculum is only applied in class X at SMAN 2 Jember.

Efforts to Improve The Quality of Education

Efforts to improve the quality of education at SMAN 2 Jember after implementing the merdeka curriculum, namely by holding In House Training (Diana, 2021) sometimes Musyawah Subject Teachers (Rofiki, 2019) hold training for the merdeka curriculum, so the school's efforts to improve the quality of teachers in order to achieve targets according to government standards on the merdeka curriculum, and the second way of school control is very good, How to deal with students in the classroom is that the school strongly implements counseling guidance, so if there are students who have problems or there is no problem but need mental guidance so the teacher always collaborates with Counseling Guidance, and there is also personal subject teacher guidance that is carried out on problem students. How to deal with students in the classroom in differentiated learning is by paying more attention to students who are in the low category group, how to divide the group is by giving the differentiated test simultaneously and divided according to the student's category, and the categories used are several, one of which is a category based on learning ability and a learning style differentiation category, the first step taken is the differentiated test, using previous daily grades, using student habits.

Efforts to improve the quality of education according to one of the teachers because there is still no evaluation for one year; we still need to assess the results of the merdeka curriculum, so we cannot know the shortcomings and advantages. The obstacles in carrying out the merdeka curriculum are in the distribution of teaching time SMAN 2 Jember still needs to find it more accessible because it is not used to implement the Merdeka curriculum, So the teacher only follows instructions from the center regarding learning.

As for the explanation of one of the X-grade students at SMAN 2 Jember, students were surprised by the implementation of the merdeka curriculum because there were no majors but were replaced by projects, namely the Natural Sciences, Indonesian Language, and Entrepreneurship projects. The way of learning in the classroom is 30% for project activities and 70% for ordinary learning, so in 1 year there are 3 projects, namely in the odd semester doing a Natural Science project, namely making flour from fruits or vegetables and making processed food and processing used goods at school and displayed in a show at the school exhibition, The second is the Indonesian language project, namely making a performance, namely about culture with the theme of local wisdom and modernization, and in the even semester there is an entrepreneurship project, while the existence of the merdeka curriculum for class X students who are still unstable is very helpful because in this Merdeka curriculum there are no specific majors so they study everything with these 3 projects, and there are obstacles in making problem-solving products in learning, so 1: 3 in projects and ordinary learning, the obstacle is that in projects students have difficulty in making proposals before holding projects, besides that students cannot focus on their desired majors, so at SMAN 2

Jember class X is flat without majors, but according to students, they are more comfortable with the previous curriculum because it is more synchronized with the objectives of the majors they want.

CONCLUSION

Based on the above discussion, the curriculum is a collection of a set of values that students, both values in cognitive and affective forms, internalize. Merdeka curriculum development is an activity that seeks to compile or design a new curriculum, change and refine/improve the curriculum, implement the curriculum, and control the primary education curriculum. This control includes monitoring and evaluating the curriculum, as well as improving the curriculum based on input from the results of monitoring and evaluation of the primary education curriculum that has been practiced in school and out-of-school educational institutions with various types of varieties that are pursued.

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