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Research Article

Problems of the Merdeka Curriculum Policy in Efforts to Improve the Academic Quality of Students at SMPN

Syaiful Bahri*, Murni Yanto, Dinar Putri Pratiwi

Abstract:

An educational concept known as the Independent Curriculum allows schools more latitude in creating curriculum that meet the requirements of their communities. The goal of this policy is to raise the academic caliber of SMPN students, however there are several obstacles in the way of its execution. Information gathered and acquired by library research. This article analyzes a few of the major obstacles encountered while attempting to raise SMPN students' academic standards. The issues with the autonomous curriculum policy in attempts to raise SMPN students' academic standards are the research's results. These challenges involve differences in quality between schools, difficulties in maintaining consistent educational standards, the readiness of teachers and stakeholders, as well as the need for proper evaluation and monitoring. appropriate. Apart from that, the involvement of parents and other stakeholders as well as an emphasis on local skills are also important aspects in overcoming these problems. This article provides a holistic picture of the condition of the Merdeka Curriculum in the context of efforts to improve academic quality in junior secondary schools, with the hope of contributing to further understanding of the dynamics and improvement of educational policies at the junior secondary school level.

Keywords: Academic Quality, Independent Curriculum Policy, Problems

1. INTRODUCTION

Education is like a research that is endlessly discussed and timeless. It is said so because education is one of the important components of human civilization that continues to develop (Karatsiori, 2023). The human instinct that has the potential to develop creatively and innovatively as well as, the nature of man and the nature of education that continues to evolve makes education found the concept and praxis of education that also changes.

In the 21st century, education is not centered on technical skills alone but is focused on being oriented towards developing human potential in a continuous manner. Particularly in the Age of Industrial Revolution 4.0 and Age of Society 5.0, it makes updating education to better suit the demands of people necessary. Encouraging discussion on improving the quality of education in both urban and rural communities is one of the primary goals

(Aljassim & Ostini, 2020). In order for education to overcome backwardness, free from ignorance, oppression, and from various things that shackle human growth, it is necessary for education to be emancipative and liberative (Budnyk, 2023).

However, curricular modifications alone will not be sufficient to pull the educational system out of the learning crisis. It also calls for initiatives to support local governments, build up the ability of educators and administrators, reorganize the assessment system, upgrade infrastructure, and provide equitable funding. But the curriculum is also a significant factor. It significantly affects the content that teachers teach and the manner in which they teach it. A well-crafted curriculum will support and enable educators to provide better instruction. As a result, the government is working to raise Indonesia's educational standards.

The curriculum used at the level of education units ranging from elementary, junior high, and high school has an impact on the quality of education in Indonesia which is growing. The education curriculum in Indonesia often changes when implemented in education units. Curricula that have been implemented in Indonesia such as the 2006 Education Unit Level Curriculum (KTSP), the 2013 Curriculum, and the currently running Merdeka Curriculum. However, the implementation of this curriculum is not always successful and runs smoothly because there are still many differences in variations to achieve equitable results.
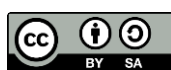
Problematics is a problem that needs resolution and cannot be resolved. Problems occur because of differences and gaps between the facts of what is happening in the field and what should happen ideally or should be. This gap will later produce a problem that needs to be resolved so that it is no longer a problem (Zulfi & Khairat, 2023). In general, problems are divided into two, namely: simple problems on a small scale and have no connection with other problems and difficult problems that are interrelated with other problems and can even cause new problems.

When the independent learning policy was launched by the Minister of Education and Culture Nadiem Anwar Makarim in December 2019. Minister of Education and Culture Nadiem Anwar Makarim (2019) had said, "in the coming year" the teaching system will also change from the nuances in the classroom to outside the classroom. The nuances of learning will be more comfortable, because students can discuss more with the teacher, learn with outing class, and not only listen to the teacher's explanation, but rather form the character of students who are brave, independent, smart in socializing, civilized, polite, competent, and not only rely on the ranking system which according to some surveys only disturbs children and parents, because actually every child has talent and intelligence in their respective fields. Later, students will be formed who are work-ready and competent, as well as virtuous in the community.The policies that have been made by the government over time have undergone changes or improvements, one of which is the policy in the field of education.

Educational policies that have undergone improvements include the Ministry of Research, Technology and Higher Education policy number 371/M/2021 concerning the driving school program. In the ministerial decree, it is explained that the driving school program is a program that seeks to encourage educational units to transform themselves to improve the quality of learning in schools, then to transfer to other schools to carry out similar quality improvements. The driving school program is implemented through an independent curriculum where the curriculum applied in driving schools is a refinement of the 2013 curriculum, namely the independent curriculum by prioritizing student learning outcomes based on the Pancasila learner profile (Simatupang & Yuhertiana, 2021).

Merdeka Belajar program is very good and has good goals and expectations. National education through Merdeka Belajar will succeed in producing smart and great students and learners. The problem is, whether expectations will be in accordance with existing reality. Hope will be well achieved if the elements of adequate facilities and quality human resources. Not to be pessimistic, but we must realize that the quality of education in Indonesia is still very low. Its ranking is still below the average education system in the world. The government established Merdeka Belajar, of course, also to improve the quality of Indonesian education in the eyes of the world. The concept of independent learning is in line with the concept of the Father of Indonesian Education. According to Ki Hadjar Dewantara, Education is a demand in the life and growth of children (Schaack et al., 2020).

The meaning of education is to guide all the natural strengths and potentials that exist in children, namely momong, among, and ngemong. This was developed into three leadership principles in Taman Siswa: Ing Ngarsa Sung Tuladha, Ing Madya Mangun Karsa, and Tut Wuri Handayani. That teachers as teachers and educators must be able to be role models for their students. Teachers must provide good teaching and examples. Teachers must be able to guide, assist, nurture and foster students to be active and creative in achieving achievements. Teachers must also be able to encourage and motivate students to be more advanced and enthusiastic in learning. In the concept of independent learning, the motto is very suitable.

The teacher only provides material, students must consciously, actively and creatively develop the material independently. The teacher encourages students to be more creative and skillful. That is the hope and goal to be realized in independent learning. State Junior High Schools (SMPN) often face limited resources, be it funds, facilities, or teaching staff. In the context of the Merdeka Curriculum, this challenge can be an obstacle in developing and implementing a curriculum that suits the needs of students. Therefore, there needs to be full support from the government in providing adequate resources (Ong et al., 2020).

The successful implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum is highly dependent on the ability of teachers to design a curriculum that is responsive and in accordance with the characteristics of students. Although giving schools the freedom to develop the curriculum, it is necessary to guarantee that the curriculum still meets the national education standards. This is to ensure that the quality of

education in all regions is maintained and can compete nationally (Rahmatika et al., 2022).

In designing the Merdeka Curriculum, it is important to involve the community and local stakeholders such as parents, community leaders, and business actors. Their involvement can ensure that the curriculum developed truly reflects local needs and potential, so that it can support the holistic development of learners. It is necessary to emphasize the importance of an evaluation system and continuous monitoring of the implementation of Merdeka Curriculum at SMPN. Quality evaluation can provide input for improvements and adjustments needed to increase curriculum effectiveness.

Information technology can be utilized as a supporting tool in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum. The development of an integrated educational information system can assist schools in monitoring, evaluating, and continuously improving the implemented curriculum. By paying attention to a number of the above problems, it is hoped that the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum at SMPN can be a strategic step in improving the academic quality of students, providing freedom of educational creativity, and responding to the dynamics of scientific development and community needs (Schaack et al., 2020).

Many students experience problems in learning coupled with the application of the Merdeka Beajar Curriculum, which is still considered new in its application. The application of the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum certainly takes time to adjust so that this affects students' academic results and does not achieve the appropriate learning objectives. Learning problems can be caused by various factors from students and teachers who participate in the learning process. One of the factors causing problematics to occur is the lack of innovation and creativity in developing learning methods and models in each subject that are appropriate in implementing learning in the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum.

Based on the explanation above, the research question that can be raised is how problematic is the independent curriculum policy at SMPN? The problematics referred to are not only in terms of the principal, deputy curriculum and teachers, but also in terms of students who follow every lesson in the independent curriculum. From this research question, the research objectives can be formulated to find out and explain the obstacles that are problematic for the independent curriculum policy in an effort to improve academic quality at SMPN.

2. MATERIAL AND METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach. A qualitative approach is defined as a process for applying a natural approach to the study of problems which are certainly related to several factors such as individuals, phenomenal symbols and social problems. Based on the above understanding, qualitative research is referred to as research that emphasizes an understanding of problems in social life, of course, based on conditions and facts that occur in reality, complex and detailed. This type of research uses library study research, so the method used is literature research. Library research is a research method by collecting data then understanding and studying from various literature sources related to this research.

This study serves as a basis for research information as a basis for developing research knowledge that is faced directly with the data or text presented, and not with field data or through related sources, researchers only deal directly with sources that already exist in libraries or ready-made data such as articles and books, as well as secondary data used for the research process. Based on the explanation above, it can be concluded that the type of qualitative research with the library research method or literature study is the research method used in this research, namely by collecting data from various literatures related to the problematics of the independent curriculum policy in an effort to improve the academic quality of students.Where in this study looking for as many sources or literature as possible then understood and studied.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In the context of the dynamics of modern education, curriculum development is essential to provide a more relevant and meaningful learning experience for students. independent curriculum is an approach that places students at the center of learning, provides freedom in the exploration of interests and talents, and encourages active participation in the learning process. Implementation of this approach can bring challenges and changes in the educational environment (Yuhastina et al., 2020).

Basically, the impact of the problematic Merdeka Curriculum policy on efforts to improve the academic quality of students at SMPN may vary depending on how the policy is implemented and how schools and stakeholders are involved in the process.

Uncertainty in education standards if the implementation of Merdeka Curriculum is not accompanied by clear guidelines and standards, schools may face difficulties in setting consistent education goals and standards. Differences in quality between schools The freedom granted by Merdeka Curriculum may result in significant differences in curriculum between schools. Some schools may succeed in developing an effective curriculum while others may face difficulties.

Local skills development The Merdeka curriculum provides an opportunity to place more emphasis on local skills development and cultural context. If this is implemented well, learners can gain skills that are more relevant to local needs. Increased Creativity and Innovation freedom in curriculum design can encourage schools to be more creative and innovative in learning approaches. This can provide opportunities for learners to develop critical and creative thinking skills (Hadi et al., 2023).

The difficulties of evaluation and measurement of Merdeka Curriculum implementation may present challenges in the development of consistent and measurable evaluation tools. This can affect schools' ability to measure and report on learners' academic progress. Teacher empowerment and stakeholder engagement The successful implementation of Merdeka Curriculum can also depend on the involvement of teachers and other stakeholders in the curriculum development process. If they are effectively involved, this can improve academic quality. Monitoring and evaluation difficulties The government and education agencies may face difficulties in monitoring and evaluating the success of Merdeka Curriculum due to the diversity of approaches and outcomes between schools.

In implementing the Merdeka Curriculum, it is important to address these issues in a way that promotes learners' academic quality, maintains a balance between school freedom and national standards, and ensures the active participation of all stakeholders. Periodic evaluation and policy adjustments may be needed to ensure the long-term success of Merdeka Curriculum in improving learners' academic quality (Abidin & Achadi, 2023).

Improving the academic quality of learners at SMPN involves various efforts that include schools, teachers, parents, and related parties. Develop a relevant curriculum update or develop a curriculum that includes material that is relevant, motivating and appropriate to learners' needs. Ensure the curriculum includes aspects of 21st century skills, such as critical thinking, collaboration and communication. Quality teacher training provide regular training and professional development to teachers to improve teaching skills, utilization of educational technology and understanding of the latest learning methods (Mugirotin et al., 2022).

Teacher empowerment and school leadership facilitate teacher participation in decision-making and provide freedom in designing learning strategies that suit students' needs. Effective school leaders can support the development of academic quality. Active and interactive learning approaches use learning methods that involve students actively, such as discussions, projects and hands-on practice (Sutarno, 2023). Utilization of educational technology can also make learning more engaging. Continuous measurement and evaluation Implement a continuous measurement and evaluation system to monitor students' academic progress. Regular feedback can help students and teachers to identify areas for improvement.

Early intervention identify learners who may have learning difficulties early and intervene accordingly. Additional support can involve guidance and counseling teachers, as well as remedial programs. Parent involvement Encourage parents to be actively involved in their children's education. Regular meetings, progress reports and participation in school activities can increase parental support for student learning (Cholilah et al., 2023). Adequate educational facilities Ensure that schools are equipped with adequate facilities, including libraries, laboratories and educational technology. An environment that supports learning can increase student motivation.

Parents should realize that all teenagers need positive guidance from their parents, teachers or relatives. Wise consultations, advice given in an understanding and friendly manner can help children from their difficulties, raise their confidence in self-esteem, give reasons and examples that can be understood, once in a while do not be ignorant, let them drown in their growth difficulties (Bahri, 2018).

In addition to focusing on academic aspects, character and ethical development should be given attention to character development, ethical values, and good study habits. This can shape students into holistic individuals. Extracurricular program development Provide a variety of extracurricular programs that support the development of students' additional skills and interests. This can help create a diverse learning

environment. It is important to remember that efforts to improve learners' academic quality require collaboration between all stakeholders and need to be evaluated regularly to adjust strategies according to evolving needs.

4. CONCLUSION

The conclusion regarding the problems of the Merdeka Curriculum policy in an effort to improve the academic quality of students at SMPN includes a number of aspects that need to be considered and overcome so that its implementation can have a positive impact. Such as Challenges in Standards and Consistency, Quality Differences Between Schools, Appropriate Evaluation and Monitoring, Teacher and Stakeholder Readiness, Emphasis on Local and Contextual Skills. In this conclusion, the success of Merdeka Curriculum in improving the academic quality of learners at SMPN requires a balanced approach between giving schools freedom and ensuring adequate guidance and support. With a deep understanding of these challenges, relevant parties can collaborate to minimize the negative impact and maximize the positive potential of Merdeka Curriculum in supporting the improvement of education quality.

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