

An Analysis of the Orientation of Achievement of National Education Goals through the Merdeka Belajar Policy in Indonesia

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Abstract:

The purpose of this study is to provide an analysis of the implementation of the Merdeka Belajar policy, whether it has been running according to the achievement of the national education goals or not. This study is important as the basis for the direction of the implementation of education in Indonesia. The assessment process uses the library research method by collecting information in the form of journals, books, and literature according to the theme. Then, analyzed deductively and interpretively, resulting in a conclusion that the policy of Merdeka Belajar is perceived as an effort to create a learning environment that is free to express and free from various obstacles, especially psychological pressure. However, three things become obstacles in the orientation of the policy, including an understanding of the intent and implementation that is still lacking, neglected principles in education, and infrastructure inequality. Resulting in the national education goals cannot be fully achieved.

Keywords:

Orientation, Achievements, National Education Goals, Merdeka Belajar Policies.



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INTRODUCTION

Countries in the world realize that education is believed to have the ability to prepare human resources (HR). The educational process is expected to be able to guide the continuity of life following the nation's ideological and cultural values, to provide awareness to each individual of their human potential, and, more than that, education must be able to stimulate individuals to use this potential by human values. Materially, education must be able to provide knowledge that advances and improves the quality of life, both on the scale of personal, social, and state life.

Education is the need of every individual and always changing with the times, science, technology, and society culture. Education is very important in improving the quality of human resources (Habe & Ahiruddin, 2017). The quality of education is the main basis for adding insight and knowledge that will shape the character of the nation's successor, who is ready to face any situation. The government needs to make continuous improvements to all components of education. The goals of national education can be achieved by developing a strategy related to education problems in Indonesia, including issues of education quality, education equity, and education management.

The education system in Indonesia today seems to have a gap between desire and reality (Hermanto, 2020). From a macro perspective, it can be seen in aspects of management, the role of government and society, curriculum or teaching materials, learning approaches and methodologies, human resources, campus or school environment, funding, and accreditation. The gap in the education system is caused by political, economic, and socio-cultural factors, and so on, which are always changing following the changes and developments of the times.

In critical social theory in education, quality is proportional to the depth of analysis that students have. As a critical form of classroom discourse, critical social theory fosters students' ability to criticize institutional and conceptual dilemmas, especially those leading to domination or oppression (Leonardo, 2016). Quality education is education that is able to carry out the process of maturation of the quality of students, which is developed by liberating students from ignorance and inability. With the existence of quality education, a generation of excellent human resources will be born in all aspects of life. Many policies have been made by the government to (Baro'ah, 2020) improve the quality of education, such as the policy of independent learning. Educational institutions also actively participate in improving the quality of education by continuously improving the quality of human resources and the quality of learning.

National education (Moters & Europe, 2003) functions to develop capabilities and shape the character and civilization of a dignified nation in the context of educating the nation's life, aiming at developing the potential of students to become human beings who believe and fear God Almighty, have a noble character, healthy, knowledgeable, capable, creative, independent, and become a democratic and responsible citizen and the fifth nawacita is to improve the quality of life of Indonesian people. The Ministry of Education and Culture (Kemendikbud), as the leading national education sector, plays an important role in realizing the quality of Indonesian human resources, followed by issuing various important policies, including the "Merdeka Learning" education policy, which focuses on developing human resources as mandated in the fifth Nawacita, to improve the quality of life of Indonesian people.

The concept of learning can be understood as an effort or an activity that aims to make changes in a person, including changes in behavior, attitude, habit, knowledge, skill, and so on (Sardiyanah, 2020). Sudjana added that learning is not just an activity of memorizing and remembering. Moreover, Learning is a process marked by changes in a person, which can be shown through many changes in someone, such as changes in knowledge, understanding, attitudes and behavior, skills, abilities, response, acceptance, and other aspects that exist in individuals (Sudjana, 2013). So, when we talk about learning, it means that we talk about how to change a person's behavior.

Based on the theoretical study above, the concept of Freedom and Learning can be perceived as an effort to create a learning environment that is free to express, free from various obstacles, especially psychological pressure. (Ainia, 2020) For teachers who have this freedom, they can focus more on maximizing learning to achieve the goals (goal-oriented) of National education, but still within the guidelines of the curriculum rules. Students are free to express themselves during the learning process at school, but still follow the rules at school. Students can be more independent,

they can learn more to gain an intelligence, and as the result of the learning process, students will change in positive ways in knowledge, understanding, attitude/character, behavior, skills, and response, in line with what is mandated in the objectives of the 2003 National Education System law (UU SISDIKNAS 2003), Which says; To develop the potential of students to become human beings who believe in and fear of God Almighty, having noble character, healthy, knowledgeable, capable, creative, independent, and become democratic and responsible.

(Prakoso et al., 2021) Their research found that the majority of teachers considered the Merdeka Belajar policy to be an effective alternative in providing instruction to students in accordance with the resources owned by the school. However, technically, teachers feel the need to be given structured socialization, clear guidance, and freedom based on the abilities and personalities of teachers in schools. In addition, the percentage of portfolio instrument usage seems to have been widely practiced in learning activities. And (Tabroni et al., 2022) showed the results that the Merdeka Belajar policy could increase students' potential, free teachers to innovate, open up school information, and increase community satisfaction with school performance.

METHOD

The research carried out the analysis concept of orientation, achievement and goals of National education through the Merdeka Belajar policy. In this research, the author conducted research by applying descriptive analysis techniques using library research (Samsu, 2017). The research design includes: 1) Topic selection, 2) Exploration of the Information, 3) determining the focus of research based on the information that has been obtained, 4) the sources of data collection are in the form of information or empirical data sourced from books, journals, research reports and other literature that supports the theme of this research, 5) Reading library sources, 6) Making research notes, 7) Processing research notes, 8) Compilation of reports. Data collection techniques used are editing, organizing, and finding. On the other hand, deductive and interpretive analysis are used for the data analysis technique. Thus, the purpose of this study is to describe the analysis of the orientation of the achievement of National education goals through the Merdeka Belajar policy.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Goals of National Education

The goal of National education nowadays is the goal of National education which has been stated in the Law of National Education System (UU SISDIKNAS) No. 20 of 2003 article 3 which says that; National education have functions to develop capabilities and shape the character and civilization of a dignified nation in the context of educating the nation, aiming to develop students to become human beings who believe in and fear of God Almighty, having noble character, healthy, knowledgeable, capable, creative, independent, and become democratic and responsible.

Table 1. Core Values in Indonesia's National Education Goals

| Value Dimension | Core Orientation | Expected Outcomes | Educational and Social Implications |
|------------------------------|--|--|--|
| 1. Divine / Spiritual Values | Oriented toward faith and awareness of God Almighty as the foundation of all thoughts and actions. | Citizens who base their lives on faith, spirituality, and moral awareness of divine power. | Strengthens religious character education and the integration of moral-spiritual values in learning. |
| 2. Social Values | Focused on social relationships, | Individuals who are responsible, | Encourages the development of social |

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| | empathy, and responsibility within the community. | caring, loyal, and willing to contribute to social life. | responsibility and civic engagement. |
| 3. Psychological Values | Centered on love for truth, humility, tolerance, and perseverance. | People who are open-minded, tolerant, patient, critical, and curious. | Promotes emotional maturity and positive psychological attitudes among learners. |
| 4. Intellectual Values | Based on love for knowledge and intellectual development. | Learners who are diligent, creative, and committed to continuous learning for societal benefit. | Supports the creation of a knowledge-based society and fosters innovative thinking. |
| 5. Biological Values | Focused on physical health and well-being. | Citizens who are physically fit, health-conscious, and practice healthy lifestyles. | Integrates health education and promotes holistic well-being in schools. |
| 6. Democratic Values | Rooted in justice, freedom of opinion, and participation in governance. | Communities that uphold democratic principles, justice, and civic participation. | Strengthens democratic culture and civic literacy within education systems. |

Broadly speaking, the values contained in the formulation of National education goals (Lesmana, 2018) are: First, divine values or spiritual values. Divinity values are oriented to the value of faith as the basis of all thoughts and actions related to awareness of the power of God Almighty. In this case, it is clear, the purpose of National education is to expect the Indonesian people to base all their activities on faith and awareness of the existence of God Almighty. Second, social values. In this value, National education aims to expect that the results of this education will be oriented to social relations and will produce and create people who have a responsible, compassionate, loyal attitude and are willing to sacrifice and participate in social life.

Third, psychological values are oriented to an attitude of loving the truth. In the future, the Indonesian people will have no prejudice, a humble and not arrogant attitude, tolerance, not despair, thorough and careful, and a attitude to develop curiosity. Fourth, intellectual value. Intellectual values are oriented toward attitudes of love for science. The Indonesian people are expected to become active in learning, diligent, and developing knowledge creatively for the benefit of society.

Fifth, biological value. Biological values are oriented towards physical health attitudes so that the goal of national education expects Indonesian people to be physically healthy and care about their health. This can be reflected in the form of diligent people in exercising, avoiding foods and drinks that harm the body, and taking care of their bodies with a healthy lifestyle every day. Sixth, democratic values. The last value contained in the formulation of national education goals is the value of democracy. Democratic values will be reflected in the community if the Indonesian people promote justice and freedom of opinion and are free to participate in government and all other indicators of democracy that apply in Indonesia.

Merdeka Belajar Policy

The policy on Merdeka Belajar launched by the Minister of Education and Culture is considered significant to make education in Indonesia better and more advanced. In addition, the concept of Merdeka Belajar has the same direction and purpose as the concept of John Dewey's educational philosophy of progressivism (Mustaghfiroh, 2020). Both of them offer independence and flexibility to educational institutions to explore the potential of their students to the fullest by adjusting to the interests, talents, and tendencies of each student.

Table 2. Toward Independence and Quality Improvement

| Policy Aspect | Core Content | Main Objective | Academic and Practical Implications |
|---|--|--|--|
| 1. USBN 2020 (School-Based National Examination) | Based on Ministerial Regulation No. 43/2019, examinations are conducted by each educational unit as an assessment of learning outcomes. The format may include portfolios, assignments, written tests, or other forms suited to measured competencies. | To evaluate students' achievement of graduate competency standards more authentically and contextually. | Provides autonomy for schools to design evaluation methods; strengthens competency-based assessment practices. |
| 2. Replacement of National Examination (UN) with Minimum Competency Assessment (AKM) & Character Survey | Measures students' literacy, numeracy, and character. Aligned with PISA and TIMSS frameworks while integrating local wisdom. | To shift focus from rote learning to reasoning skills and character development, preparing students for global challenges. | Promotes a new paradigm of evaluation based on minimum competency and national character values. |
| 3. Simplification of Lesson Plans (RPP) | Preparation principles: efficient, effective, and student-centered. From 13 components, only 3 are essential: learning objectives, learning steps, and assessment. Teachers are free to design their own formats. | To enhance teacher flexibility and creativity in instructional design. | Reduces administrative burden and encourages meaningful learning processes. |
| 4. Student Admission Policy (PPDB) | Admission quota distribution: Zoning $\geq 50\%$, Affirmation $\geq 15\%$, Parental transfer 5%, Achievement 0–30% (remaining quota). | To ensure equal and inclusive access to education. | Promotes educational equity, fair opportunities, and strengthens the social role of schools. |

With this independence and freedom, it is hoped that education in Indonesia will become more advanced and of high quality, which in the future will be able to have a direct positive impact on the progress of the nation and state., These policies include the following:

First, USBN 2020. Based on Permendikbud Number 43 of 2019, states that the exams held by the education unit are an assessment of learning outcomes by the education unit which aims to assess the achievement of graduate competency standards for all subjects, in the form of exams in the form of portfolios, assignments, written tests, or other forms of activity determined by the Education Unit by the competencies measured by the National Education Standards.

Second, as the Minister of Education and Culture stated, UN activities will be replaced by other terms, namely, Minimum Competency Assessment and Character Survey. The assessment is intended to measure the ability of students to reason using language and literacy, reason using mathematics or numeracy, and strengthen character education. As for standardization of exams, following the assessment benchmarks contained in the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) and Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), but full of local wisdom.

Third, regarding the Simplification of the RPP, the contents include: (1) the preparation of the RPP is carried out with the principles of being efficient, effective, and student-oriented; (2) Of the 13 components that become the core components are learning objectives, learning steps, and learning assessments that must be carried out by teachers, while the rest are only complementary; and (3) Schools, Subject Teacher Groups in schools, Teacher Working Groups/Subject Teacher Consultations (KKG/MGMP) and individual teachers can freely choose, create, use, and develop lesson plans formats independently for maximum learning success learners.

Fourth, for PPDB, the percentage of distribution includes: (1) for zoning lanes of at least 50 percent; (2) affirmation path of at least 15 percent; (3) five percent transfer route for parent/guardian duties; and (4) achievement pathway (remaining quota from the implementation of zoning,

affirmation, and transfer of parents/guardians (0-30 percent).

The Kurikulum Merdeka is designed as an effort to restore Indonesian education and transform learning to a higher quality. Therefore, the constraints in one Content of the Merdeka Belajar Policy, namely the implementation of the Kurikulum Merdeka P5, which is at this early stage, may be used as evaluation material, so that a strategic solution plan can be prepared (Palangda et al., 2023).

Analysis of National Education Goals through the achievement orientation of Merdeka Belajar policy

The Ministry of Education and Culture designed a Merdeka Belajar policy program in order to provide every student with the opportunity to learn more comfortably, calmly, and adaptively to their patterns without being tied to various demands. The students can pay more attention to their passions, talents, and interests to create a conducive individual learning atmosphere. The idea was conceived as an effort to produce superior Human Resources (HR) by prioritizing the implementation of character values so that the thinking power and creativity of each student develop (Savitri, 2020).

There are parallels between what was proclaimed by Mas Minister Nadiem Makarim and the concept of education according to the philosophy of the concept of constructivism. Both of them emphasize the aspects of freedom, independence, and flexibility of educational institutions in understanding the competence of students. Learning arrangement with a chaotic approach so that students can be safe, comfortable, and easy to learn. Students as learning subjects –learner control play an important role in structuring the learning. The initiative of children as learners to learn –the willingness to learn- will die when faced with many rules that do not exist in the learning process. It takes freedom, reality, as well as positive attitudes and perceptions of learning as basic capital in the danger of learning initiatives that ultimately result in success in learning (Yusuf & Arfiansyah, 2021).

As the independence of learning was formed, the involvement of students in the learning process will increase. The education system in Merdeka Belajar supports the realization of intelligence through various improvements and equity in the quality of education, expansion of accessibility, and relevance in the application of technology to be able to realize world-class education based on collaboration, communication, critical thinking, and creative skills (Sherly et al., 2020). The purpose of Merdeka Belajar is to explore the greatest potential of teachers and students to innovate and improve the quality of learning independently. Independently is not only following the educational bureaucratic process but truly educational innovation.

Although this system can run according to the expected achievements in the goals of national education, in reality, we have found many obstacles in its implementation, including the following:

Insufficient understanding of intent and implementation

The concept of Merdeka Belajar can bring up the potential of teachers who are talented in teaching. Although, this idea raises various questions in mind, such as the definition of the free

learning concept and the comprehension of the freedom to learn, for example, the Merdeka Belajar instrument abolished the National Examination and then in the following year it used an assessment, what kind of assessment that have used, and what kind of measuring instruments have used for students, as well as what kind of character was applied. By determining that assessment, it needs to study continuously because Indonesia is multi-cultural and has different characteristics.

Actually, many people do not understand what is wanted from this free learning system. Teachers are also asked to be able to develop the abilities and potential of each student, even though in reality, many senior teachers who have taught for decades are not ready to change their teaching method because they are seniors and are used to it with conventional methods. This is a challenge for teachers, namely the difficulty of getting out of the comfort zone of the learning system that has been carried out so far because they do not have teaching experience with the Merdeka Belajar program and also used to listening the explanations from teachers during lectures, the limitations of reference material delivery both in the lesson text and in the teacher's book. and some schools are not ready with the freedom of the program to improve the quality of teachers in making their own assessment system.

Based on the research of (Jamilah et al., 2023) it was found that; (1) physical readiness in the good category where the teacher has a good medical history to welcome the new curriculum at his school; (2) psychological readiness in the sufficient category where the teacher has a sense of interest and motivation to welcome the new curriculum but in the process the teacher still has much to learn; (3) knowledge readiness where the teacher has a high understanding of the preparation of lesson plans (modules) and the zoning PPDB system, while understanding is still lacking on aspects of USBN and UN; (4) material readiness is in the good category where schools have provided infrastructure in good condition in accordance with Permendikbud No. 26 of 2016 while infrastructure facilities for teachers through discussion and training activities on curriculum development.

Principles in education are neglected

The development of digital technology essentially creates knowledge to be ability to go beyond unlimited access to information. Through the policy of Merdeka Belajar in the digital era, education can be carried out at various times and places. Students are free to determine the appropriate way of learning, understand the material, and solve problems according to their abilities of students, and are project-based in their daily life.

If the concept of Merdeka Belajar and its implementation in education on the digital era can be realized properly, it will create smart education, smart learning, smart assessment, smart classroom, smart content and will create a smart city. This can be realized, supported by the character development of students to become superior human beings who have knowledge, are adaptive to intelligent technology, are responsible, and behave nobly in using information and communication technology in the digital era.

The results of the study (Abimubarok, 2022) illustrate that reason, charity, and progress are

the ideas of K.H. Ahmad Dahlan regarding the ideal Islamic education. These three ideas seem relevant to the Merdeka Belajar policy promoted by the Ministry of Education and Culture. Component reason is what shapes students to have high-level reasoning. Charity is a component that makes up the contribution of education to society. Progress is a component that requires schools must continue to improve themselves in order to be able to adapt to the times.

The Merdeka Belajar Policy is not the first program in the world. Norway as one of the best education systems, for example, has implemented a policy to give young students more choices and responsibilities in learning. For example, encourage them to work with teachers to design their learning activities. However, several national evaluations found that only excellent students had enough motivation to study independently, while most other students did not. The good intentions of the policy failed to be realized in the field.

So, when is the gap between teachers and students constantly widening? How do we encourage students to take charge of their own learning process? In the success of the policy of Merdeka Belajar, it is not enough if we only give space for students to design their own education. Schools and teachers must also design a digital learning environment that can really maintain their attention, motivation, and independence to learn. In addition, a principle that we must always enforce in education is that education must be carried out with the principle of obeying the law. It means that education must run correctly, obeying the set rules. Precisely, schools or teachers do not often break the rules, such as when the curriculum program is implemented consistently, the provisions regarding the standards of school administration are complied with, and others. Then, in the principle of exemplary or role model education is not limited to the transfer of knowledge but also sharing attitude, meaning that teachers must be able to instill life values such as discipline, courtesy, teamwork, sympathy, empathy, and others in students by giving good examples.

The next one is a principle of being conscious and serious. The implementation of education should not be carried out carelessly, because errors in educating will have a wide and long impact on the poor character of students and the culture of the community. In the principle of being honest and objective, education must be carried out with full honesty, and the assessment process must be carried out objectively. In other words, education requires the statement "Say it if it is right, and vice versa". It will affect the interest and enthusiasm of students to learn, which will ultimately affect the quality of their educational outcomes. The last is the principle of love. Educating must be based on love, especially from the teacher to the students. An effective educational process cannot occur without love, especially emotional bonds. Students will find it hard to catch the information conveyed by the teacher if they do not like the teacher; otherwise, the teacher will be lazy to teach if he does not like the students.

Infrastructure inequality

Learning with a Merdeka Belajar system is based on technological advances. Actually, this system is good. However, by looking at the aspect of the availability of facilities related to this technology, it must be reconsidered. Not all schools can follow it well because of technological and economic backwardness in their area.

Fatmawati, in her research, said that in implementing the policy of Merdeka Belajar, library support is needed, as an effort to increase the literacy skills of students. However, the library facilities in each school are not evenly distributed, and there are still minimal references (Fatmawati, 2021). Widiyono and Millati also added that to implement a policy of Merdeka Belajar, the technology needed to play a role in improving the quality of education (Widiyono & Millati, 2021).

Problems related to educational infrastructure, competency of human resources (teachers), readiness of parents, and the condition of digital literacy of students are various things that the government should pay attention to in implementing free learning policies. Let's say that the current COVID-19 pandemic is a laboratory that can test and analyze the readiness of Merdeka Belajar. If we pay attention, in its implementation, some conditions must be met. For example, quality human resources, family readiness to support the policy, infrastructure readiness, and educational curriculum which is the basis of guidelines in the implementation of Merdeka Belajar must be clear, precise, and provide the best solution to achieve the quality educational goals.

Concerning the existing problems, the author can analyze that the implementation of the Merdeka Belajar policy encounters various obstacles in its implementation, and it greatly affects the achievement of national education goals. In terms of transfer of knowledge and independence, it can be achieved well, but in terms of sharing of attitude, the result is still questionable. The formation of independent students can indirectly eliminate educational values that have been entrenched for a long time, such as politeness, teamwork, sympathy and empathy, and the character embodied in Pancasila. Students only focus on themselves in determining the appropriate way of learning and seem to be selfish with their own affairs. Teachers have limitations in sharing of attitude with indirect learning conditions like this.

To be able to implement this policy properly, synergy is needed to optimize the role of government, education, and educators in providing supervision and assistance, revitalizing deliberations, and preparing infrastructure facilities that support the quality education process.

CONCLUSION

Based on the explanation above, it can be concluded that the Merdeka Belajar policy is hoped to it will provide each student with the opportunity to learn more comfortably, calmly, and adapt to their respective patterns without being bound by certain demands. So, the students can pay more attention to their passions, talents, and interests and can build a more conducive individual learning atmosphere, but the question is with problems such as educators' understanding of policies and their implementation, which is still lacking, neglected educational principles, and the uneven distribution of infrastructure across the region. Will this policy be effective in implementing and meeting the achievements of the national education goals? Therefore, to implement the Merdeka Belajar Program, synergy is needed to optimize the role of government, education, and educators in providing supervision and assistance, revitalizing deliberation, and preparing infrastructure facilities that support the quality education process.

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