

## MERDEKA BELAJAR POLICY AS A STRATEGY TO IMPROVE QUALITY OF EDUCATION

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**Abstract:** Currently, national education does not provide opportunities for educators and students to jointly develop students' potential and abilities. Quality education is education that has had careful planning to improve students' ability by freeing students from all forms of restraints. The quality of national education is highly dependent on the policies that support it. Nadiem Makarim created a new platform, namely Merdeka Belajar, with the latest policies aimed at changing education for the better, improving the quality of human resources in learning, and easing the burden that has been carried so far. The method used in this research is the library method. Sources of data are policies and literature related to Merdeka Belajar as a strategy to improve the quality of education. Related literature includes scientific books, journals, and articles. Analysis and interpretation of the literature through the editing process, theme classification, and meaning. The results showed that the Merdeka Belajar policy could increase students' potential, free teachers to innovate, open up school information, and increase community satisfaction with school performance.

**Keywords:** Strategy to Improve, Education Quality, Merdeka Belajar Policy

**Abstrak:** Pendidikan nasional saat ini tidak memberikan kesempatan kepada pendidik dan peserta didik untuk bersama-sama mengembangkan potensi dan kemampuan peserta didik. Pendidikan yang berkualitas adalah pendidikan yang telah memiliki perencanaan yang matang untuk meningkatkan kemampuan peserta didik dengan membebaskan peserta didik dari segala bentuk pengekangan. Mutu pendidikan nasional sangat tergantung pada kebijakan yang yang dirancang. Nadiem Makarim membuat platform wajah baru, yaitu Merdeka Belajar, kebijakan ini bertujuan untuk mengubah pendidikan menjadi lebih baik, meningkatkan kualitas sumber daya manusia dalam pembelajaran, dan meringankan beban yang dipikul selama ini. Metode yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah metode kepustakaan. Sumber data adalah kebijakan dan literatur terkait Merdeka Belajar sebagai strategi peningkatan mutu pendidikan. Literatur terkait meliputi buku-buku ilmiah, jurnal, dan artikel. Analisis dan interpretasi karya sastra melalui proses penyuntingan, klasifikasi tema, dan makna. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kebijakan Merdeka Belajar dapat

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*meningkatkan potensi siswa, membebaskan guru berinovasi, membuka informasi sekolah, dan meningkatkan kepuasan masyarakat terhadap kinerja sekolah.*

**Kata Kunci:** *Strategi Peningkatan, Kualitas Pendidikan, Kebijakan Merdeka Belajar*

## **Introduction**

Education is an essential grip; education is the basic foundation in building a country. Education aims to be able to print a generation of intelligent, civilized, good attitude, respect and create a generation of children with character. In addition, education is a carrier of change for the nation's generation of children. These changes can make children creative and innovative, from generation to generation (Direktorat Jenderal Pendidikan Tinggi Kemdikbud RI, 2020).

The 9-year basic education policy is a compulsory education program as a government commitment to implement various provisions in the constitution and international policies (Imam Tabroni & Nurarita Nurarita, 2021). This policy can encourage all Indonesian people to increase their knowledge through education. This level of education will be a reference for the nation to be able to compete with Asian countries in particular. (Imam Tabroni, Erfian Syah, 2022).

The level of education is directly influenced by education policies set by the central government, can be translated by local governments, and impacts the level of public education.(M & PS, 2020) The government must be able to provide targeted policies. Careful studies are needed to decide policies that include studies of community psychology, socio-cultural, and regional anthropology (Hersey, Blanchard, & Johnson, 2013).

Education policy in Indonesia based on the Law of the Republic of Indonesia No. 20 of 2003 concerning the national education system is directed to achieve expansion and equal distribution of opportunities to obtain high-quality education for all Indonesian people so that high-quality Indonesian people can be obtained. For this reason, the educational policies taken must be felt and have an impact on improving the welfare of the community through equitable education (Nasional, 2003).

Education policy is the whole process and result of the formulation of strategic educational steps outlined from the vision and mission of education to realize the achievement of goals and how to achieve these goals (Newstrom, 2006).

There needs to be a change and a bold response from the government to change the old paradigm to a new paradigm for the concept of education in this country. The new policy that was introduced and studied by the Minister of Education Nadiem Makarim in the Merdeka Learning policy implied in his message that students were given the freedom to determine their future according to their competencies, not based on the pressure that caused students to lose their identity, enthusiasm, and opportunities to develop their potential (Schunk, 2015).

*Merdeka Belajar*, which is a new educational policy according to Nadiem Makarim, is freedom of thought to be able to develop students' potential (Alaika & Bagus, 2020). Through educators and education personnel, the school plays an essential role in providing adequate educational facilities and infrastructure so that students can optimally develop their desires. The critical role of educators, education staff, parents, and the community to communicate intensively to see the development of students is the principle of achieving the goals of the *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum. This article examines the Independent Learning policy and its impact on the quality of education, which can be seen from the growth and development of children during the *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum program.

## **Methodology**

This article research uses library research. The data is in the form of relevant literature on the Freedom of Learning policy, the Free Learning Guidebook, and several other kinds of literature related to this policy that impact the quality of education in Indonesia. The data sorting technique uses the classification of themes, topics, the editing process, comparison of literature, and presentation based on the results of differences in literature. Data analysis and interpretation were carried out simultaneously with literature data collection by classifying themes after processing the data with the meaning of the relevant literature and the results of discussions with experts and Javanese friends (Zed, 2004).

## **Results and Discussion**

### **1. *Merdeka Belajar* Concept**

Before we carry out a new thing, we need to have a concept so that the activities to be carried out can be well directed. The *Merdeka Belajar* policy issued by the ministry

of education and culture, in this case, the minister Nadiem Makarim provides opportunities for schools to maximize the government's trust to implement policies objectively (Majir, 2017), (, M. Fahmi Hidayat, Siti Nurul H Imam Tabroni, n.d.).

After the inauguration of Nadiem Makarim as the new Minister of Education and Culture, there have been innovative steps and breakthroughs that education experts predict, and Indonesian human resource development will have a positive impact. It had confused the public, especially education practitioners such as teachers, education staff, students, parents, and education administrators. However, later this policy was deemed adequate and efficient enough to overcome long-standing educational problems, especially regarding the curriculum. The old curriculum is believed to have not been able to translate national education goals, namely to develop students' potential. The new, renewable *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum (Heni Hermaningsih SM Imam Tabroni, n.d.)

a. National Standard School Examination

The existence of the National Standard School Examination in practice does not match its identity. When you hear the sentence for school exams, it is per the ministerial regulation, namely Permendikbud. So as, the new ministerial regulation, namely Permendikbud no. 43 of 2019, concerning the flexibility of academic units in designing USBN according to the school's needs, vision, and mission. USBN was officially abolished in 2020, which was replaced by the implementation of the exam held by the school (Silalahi & Simarmata, 2020). These activities will be carried out in a written test or other comprehensive assessment forms. USBN, originally held as a national standard, has now been returned to their respective schools. The school has full authority and policy, will do it independently or follow the local education office or follow national standards and others according to the school's wishes (Hairun, 2020).

A policy to hand over USBN to schools opens up opportunities for each academic unit to improve the quality of education according to their respective conditions and needs (Mariyati Teluma, 2019). Strengthening that can be realized through the implementation of a genuinely pure evaluation to determine the success of learning and the ability of students so that the results are indeed valid and credible

to be used as the basis for improving school quality in the future (Deming, Cahill, & Orsini, 2013).

b. National Examination

Over the years, the change in the National Examination system has shifted, the shift is felt by the government's determination of the National Examination score, which is assessed on average by the number of previous student scores (both daily grades, grades for grade increase, up to the end of semester grades). However, in principle, the same is achieved only by the cognitive domain. As has been explained by Nadiem Makarim, who sees the burden of teachers, parents, and students who provide a benchmark for the value of the National Examination as a student's learning success. With several phenomena to carry out additional learning programs, the reasoning power and aspects of character in affective and psychomotor also need enrichment. Nadiem Makarim in his policy regarding eliminating the National Examination in 2021 by replacing it as a competency assessment and character survey, also when its implementation was carried out in the middle of the educational process.

The Ministry of Education and Culture's policy of eliminating the national exam and replacing it with competency assessments and character surveys does not merely mean replacing student assessment techniques and instruments in Indonesian education. However, the policy is more directed at the actualization of character education in schools. The impact of the policy is not only educational assessment techniques and instruments but rather a learning process that contains character values or commonly called character education.

Competency assessment is intended to test the success of teachers in carrying out education because teachers are supposed to be responsible for educational achievement. So with this assessment, there is an opportunity for teachers to improve and make improvements to the performance that has been achieved so that the essence of national education can be achieved. This character assessment and survey can be an evaluation tool for teachers to make improvements. Moreover, with increasingly sophisticated technology, it becomes a challenge for teachers to adjust educational patterns to suit the times. Of course, the X and Y generations are different from the Z generation, including the way they study, work, and experience differences.

c. Simplification of the Learning Implementation Plan

Teachers as creators of learning should be able to give a good face or design of learning materials as planned. However, in practice, it becomes a separate administrative burden for teachers because, in dictation, the writing still refers to the rules of the relevant department in its socialization (Firdaus et al., 2021).

It is considered that many components must be written down and detailed so that the time that should be given to students to the maximum is divided into two activities for the teacher, the first is completing the administrative affairs of learning, including lesson plans, and the second is dealing with students during the learning process. So that the policy of Merdeka Belajar that was proclaimed also provided freedom of teaching for the teachers themselves, either in the learning planning format or with others.

The highlight that became the main trigger was the teacher's inability to accept the tasks he experienced; this inability was shown by the dense activity of material preparation, teaching, making evaluation tools to assessments. So there is a need for simplification, so it is necessary to show the transformation process in the current era of Nadiem Makarim. As explained above, initially, the teacher was required to formulate a detailed and detailed lesson plan that became very simple.

One-sheet RPP is a breakthrough in the world of education in Indonesia. So far, many teachers do not understand what they write in their RPP; many of them only copy RPP from their professional friends without paying attention to the content and suitability when applied in the school where they teach. Each. This is a problem for teachers so that they only pursue the completion of their obligations without conducting an in-depth analysis of what they write in the form of lesson plans.

d. Zoning System for New Student Admission

The zoning system that minister Muhadjir Effendi initially implemented was an aspiration from the evaluation of the integration of the pericenter of education so that it was sustainable and strategic. However, in its journey, the zoning system still does not accommodate differences in regional situations; it is also said that the distribution of the number of teachers has not been said to be ready to carry out so that the implementation of the zoning system in katakana has not been smooth in all regions (Supendi, 2021).

However, the zoning system policy has been required to use the policy. The aim is for equal distribution of education. This zoning system eliminates the status of favorite and non-favorite schools (Imam Tabroni, Husniyah, Sapitri, & Azzahra, 2022). The primary difference from the past system now is the zoning line's quota. The zoning system initially applies a minimum of 80% for the zoning line from 100%, and the rest is divided into achievement and transfer routes. However, after the analysis, not all educational institutions can reach 80% fulfilled because some areas are experiencing difficulties (Tabroni, Imam, Romdhon, n.d.).

The zoning system policy has now changed, and the composition in it has also changed to 4 lines, namely to a minimum of 50% for the zoning line, 15% for affirmations, 5% for displacement, and 30% for achievement. However, all of that goes back again to the conditions and situations in the area. Each. This zoning is not only for equal distribution of education but also focuses on the quantity and quality of teachers in an area which will later become the responsibility of the regional government.

## **2. Education Quality Improvement Strategy**

Quality is essential in education (Takaya, 2013). Quality includes input, process, and output (Winchell & of Manufacturing Engineers, 1992) (Imam Tabroni & Ismiati Ismiati, 2021). Educational inputs are all things that must be available because they are needed for the ongoing process; the readiness of inputs is needed so that the process can take place properly so that the level of quality input can be measured from the level of readiness of the input. The process in question is the decision-making process, the institutional management process, the program management process, the teaching and learning process, and the monitoring and evaluation process (Terry, 1977), (Siti Nurjanah, Syarah Fakhrunnisa Imam Tabroni, n.d.). The process is said to be of high quality if the coordination, adjustment, and integration of school inputs are harmonious and integrated to encourage motivation and interest in learning. The output of education is school performance, namely school achievement resulting from school processes/behaviors (Sallis, 2005) (Nurpita Sari, Rita Ratnasari Tabroni, n.d.).

Each strategy contains activities that must be carried out to realize the goals determined. This activity essentially moves all school components that lead to improving the quality of graduates. Strategies to improve quality include building

capacity at the bureaucratic, school, and classroom levels. Building bureaucratic level capacity, according to Zamroni, requires three things: developing a work culture, preparing infrastructure, and developing educators, especially teachers (Widiyarti Suranto, 2019), (Imam Tabroni, Ayit Irpani, et al., 2022).

In education, teachers have an important role, no matter how good the existing education system is, if, without the support of a qualified teacher, the system will not function properly. Teachers are also responsible for the learning process of students and create an effective and efficient environment; when the learning process takes place, the teacher must be able to create conducive and pleasant conditions because, if the teacher has exciting and creative things, the students will not feel quickly bored or bored when learning takes place. Therefore, educators emphasize the learning process, not the administration. By reducing the burden, it is hoped that educators can improve competence in learning (Deming et al., 2013), (Imam Tabroni, n.d.).

One of the keys to the success of a quality school is the principal. Because the principal plays an essential role in the school's leadership and development, the principal's leading spirit is at stake in the process of fostering teachers, administrative staff, and other school employees (Tabroni & Dodi, 2022). As a leader, he must know, understand and understand all things related to school administration. He must understand the potential possessed by his teachers so that communication with teachers and school employees will help his performance, especially to solve problems faced by the school he leads.

The principal must be creative and able to have ideas and initiatives that support the development of the school; his creative ideas can be used to make plans, organize school organizations, provide direction, manage staffing in the school environment he leads can run smoothly and be able to achieve goals. expected goal (Imam Tabroni, Erfian Syah, 2022), (Tabroni, Munajat, Uwes, & Rostandi, 2022). The principal is also a role model for educators and students both morally and professionally; in achieving quality, the principal has a vital role because quality schools will be reflected in the principal's policies in carrying out their duties.

## **Conclusion**

*Merdeka Belajar's* curriculum allows education managers to implement more creative and innovative school policies. Principals, educators, education staff, students,



and parents can work together to develop an agreed curriculum. The school curriculum is a derivative of the Ministry of Education and Culture curriculum, which aims to provide wider opportunities for schools to provide unlimited opportunities to discover and develop the potential possessed by students. This potential development is in line with the abilities continuously developed by students whom educators facilitate in the learning and education process. Suppose the potential can be developed and ask students to be higher to continue seeking and further developing their potential. In that case, students' enthusiasm for learning will continue to increase and impact the school's quality culture. Quality improvement marked by the optimal development of student's potential is the goal of the *Merdeka Belajar* Curriculum.

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