

Challenges and Solutions in the Implementation of Educational Policies in Indonesia: A Literature Analysis of Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka and Teacher Reform

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the obstacles and solutions in implementing educational policies in Indonesia, focusing on the 2013 Curriculum and the Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) policy. The objective is to enhance the quality of education by identifying challenges and proposing effective strategies. The research method used is a Systematic Literature Review (SLR), analyzing relevant literature. The findings indicate that the primary challenges include inadequate infrastructure and a lack of policy understanding. Recommendations from the study emphasize the need for improved teacher training, infrastructure development, and enhanced communication strategies. This research offers both theoretical and practical insights for developing more effective and integrated educational policies.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The curriculum is a comprehensive plan outlining objectives, content, learning materials, and methods used as guidelines for organizing learning activities to achieve specific educational goals. According to experts, the curriculum encompasses critical aspects such as educational goals, learning strategies, and assessment of learning outcomes. In the context of education in Indonesia, the curriculum serves as the primary guide in implementing teaching and learning activities at various educational levels (Wati et al., 2023).

The curriculum in Indonesia can be categorized into several types, including the National Curriculum, School-Based Curriculum (KTSP), and the 2013 Curriculum. Each type has distinct characteristics and approaches in developing learning materials and teaching strategies. For example, the 2013 Curriculum emphasizes a text-based approach and active learning, requiring more active student involvement in the learning process (Ningsih, 2018). Additionally, the curriculum's manifestation can be seen in various learning programs designed to achieve specific competencies in accordance with national education standards (lestari, 2015).

Character education is an initiative by educational institutions to instill moral values, ethics, and character in students. The goal is to form individuals who are not only academically intelligent but also possess integrity, discipline, and social responsibility. Character education includes teaching values such

as honesty, respect, responsibility, and hard work, which are expected to shape positive behavior and attitudes in students (Yandri, 2022).

Character education can be realized through various approaches, including direct classroom instruction, extracurricular activities, and daily school habits. For example, schools can organize mentoring programs that teach character values through real-life examples from teachers or mentors. Additionally, activities such as flag ceremonies, scouting, and social engagements also serve as tangible manifestations of character education (Sofyan, 2019).

The Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) policy, initiated by the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture, aims to provide autonomy to higher education institutions in managing their education (Tobondo & Tondowala, 2023). The main goal is to improve the quality of higher education by offering students opportunities to study outside their study programs, whether through internships, field projects, research, or other activities relevant to their interests and talents (Saptadi et al., 2024).

The MBKM policy is realized through various programs, including internships, student exchanges, and independent projects that allow students to gain practical experience and skills relevant to the workforce. These programs are designed to enhance students' competencies and prepare them for post-graduation challenges. Another aspect of the MBKM policy is curriculum flexibility, allowing students to choose courses or programs aligning with their interests and career goals (Putra, 2022; Tobondo & Tondowala, 2023).

The implementation of educational policies in Indonesia faces significant challenges, such as a lack of understanding among students and educators, infrastructure limitations, and variations in policy adoption across universities. One major challenge is the low level of awareness and understanding of the MBKM program among students and educators (Rahman, 2023). This issue is exacerbated by infrastructure limitations, which remain a significant obstacle in many areas (ekaptiningrum, 2022). Additionally, variations in policy adoption across universities highlight differences in understanding and implementation that can affect policy outcomes (Saptadi et al., 2024).

Literature indicates that the challenges in implementing educational policies in Indonesia are not limited to a lack of understanding and infrastructure limitations but also include issues like educational management and policies that do not fully support the effective implementation of the MBKM program (Hastangka & Hidayah, 2023). Previous studies have shown that existing educational management theories have not comprehensively addressed the problems in policy implementation (Nurhuda, 2022). Therefore, further research is needed to identify and overcome these barriers.

This research aims to identify barriers and solutions in implementing educational policies in Indonesia, focusing on the MBKM program and teacher reforms to improve education quality. The goal is to provide recommendations that can enhance the effectiveness of the MBKM policy implementation at various universities. Additionally, this research explores how teacher reforms can contribute to improving education quality through better and more comprehensive policies (Putra, 2022).

This research is crucial because many barriers in implementing the MBKM policy and teacher reforms still affect education quality in Indonesia. By identifying these barriers and offering relevant solutions, this research can significantly contribute to improving education quality. Based on the presented facts and research objectives focused on practical solutions, this research is expected to provide tangible benefits for policymakers, educators, and students in Indonesia (Wati et al., 2023).

2. METHODS

The object of this research encompasses several key issues in education in Indonesia. First, the curriculum issues that need to be adjusted to local needs as stipulated in Law No. 20 of 2003 and Government Regulation No. 19 of 2005. Challenges in the implementation of the 2013 Curriculum include the need for improvements in guidance and counseling (BK). Second, the Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) policy faces challenges such as lack of understanding and support from students and educators, as well as infrastructure and resource limitations. Third, teacher reform faces the complexity of the teaching context and the need to attract and retain the best talent in the field of

education. Fourth, the COVID-19 pandemic adds a layer of complexity in the implementation of educational policies by forcing the adaptation of distance learning methods and ensuring the safety and well-being of students. Lastly, perceptions and challenges in the MBKM policy include management governance and limited budget allocation, as well as the need for adaptation to new learning methods and better communication strategies.

This research is a literature study using the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach. SLR uses primary data taken from relevant literature on several key issues in education in Indonesia, including curriculum, MBKM policy, teacher reform, COVID-19 pandemic, and perceptions and challenges in the MBKM policy. Secondary data includes data from books, journals, and other scientific research relevant to the keywords of this research. The SLR method aims to provide a comprehensive synthesis of existing evidence while minimizing bias.

This research uses two fundamental theories as sources of information and assumptions. First, the Public Policy Implementation Theory by Daniel Mazmanian and Paul A. Sabatier with the Implementation Framework Model developed in 1983. This theory outlines the factors that influence the success of policy implementation, including political support, administrative capacity, and economic and social conditions. Second, the Constructivist Learning Theory by Jean Piaget emphasizes that knowledge is built through the active interaction of individuals with their environment. This theory supports the Merdeka Belajar approach, which allows students to learn independently and develop their skills through direct experience.

The research process is conducted through rigorous and structured stages in the SLR approach. The SLR stages begin with formulating clear and specific research questions. The researcher then develops a research protocol that includes search strategies, inclusion-exclusion criteria, and data analysis methods. Data collection techniques involve searching the literature in various electronic databases using predetermined keywords. After relevant literature is identified, the researcher conducts a quality assessment of the studies, data extraction, and systematic analysis.

The data analysis technique in this research uses content analysis methods. This process involves examining and processing data to identify patterns, relationships, and important information contained therein. Content analysis helps researchers compile a comprehensive synthesis of existing research findings, thus providing relevant and evidence-based practice or policy guidelines.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The curriculum in Indonesia has undergone various changes over time. One significant change is the implementation of the 2013 Curriculum, which emphasizes a scientific approach in the learning process. This curriculum is designed to enhance students' competencies through activity-based learning and authentic assessment. Additionally, the Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) Curriculum provides higher education institutions with the flexibility to align their curricula with the needs of industry and society (Vhalery et al., 2022).

Data from literature reviews indicate that the 2013 Curriculum aims to enhance students' critical, creative, and collaborative skills. This approach underscores the importance of meaningful and relevant learning experiences. On the other hand, MBKM offers opportunities for students to develop workforce-relevant skills through internship programs, student exchanges, and independent projects. This curriculum focuses on improving educational quality and aligning curricula with labor market needs (Wati et al., 2023).

Although the curriculum in Indonesia has been designed to improve educational quality, its implementation still faces various challenges. These challenges include infrastructure limitations, lack of support from educators, and variations in policy implementation across educational institutions. This indicates that while the curriculum concept is well-designed, its implementation in the field still needs improvement to achieve the desired goals (Vhalery et al., 2022).

Character education is an integral part of the education system in Indonesia. The main goal of character education is to shape individuals with integrity, discipline, and responsibility. Literature

reviews show that character education is integrated into the curriculum through various programs and extracurricular activities, including the teaching of moral, ethical, and social values aimed at shaping positive attitudes and behaviors in students (Yandri, 2022).

Data from literature reviews indicate that character education can be realized through various methods, including direct classroom instruction, extracurricular activities, and habituation in daily school life. These programs are designed to teach values such as honesty, responsibility, respect, and hard work. Character education also involves the active participation of the entire school community, including teachers, students, and parents (Sofyan, 2019). Although character education has been integrated into the curriculum, its implementation still faces various challenges. These challenges include the lack of teacher training, limited resources, and parental support. To achieve the goals of character education, more efforts are needed to improve the quality and consistency of program implementation across all schools (Nurhuda, 2022).

The Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) policy aims to provide freedom and autonomy to higher education institutions in managing their education. This policy allows students to study outside their study programs through various activities such as internships, field projects, and student exchanges. The main goal of this policy is to enhance the quality of higher education and align curricula with industry needs (Vhalery et al., 2022).

Data from literature reviews indicate that the MBKM policy offers many benefits to students, including opportunities to develop skills relevant to the workforce, expand professional networks, and gain practical experience. This policy also supports the development of soft skills such as communication, teamwork, and problem-solving. However, the implementation of this policy still faces various challenges, such as lack of understanding and support from students and educators, as well as infrastructure and resource limitations (Vhalery et al., 2022).

Although the MBKM policy has been designed to improve the quality of higher education, its implementation is far from perfect. Challenges in implementing this policy include lack of stakeholder support, limited resources, and variations in implementation across universities. To achieve the goals of the MBKM policy, more effective strategies and stronger support from all involved parties are needed (Wati et al., 2023). The use of the SLR method can identify several research findings as presented in the following table:

Table 1. Research Findings

Aspect	Challenges	Solution
Curriculum 2013	<u>Lack of infrastructure support (Rahman, 2023)</u>	<u>Improving investment in educational infrastructure (Mayang, 2022).</u>
	<u>Variations in implementation across institutions (Bhakti et al., 2022)</u>	<u>Standardization of curriculum and training methods (Hastangka & Hidayah, 2023)</u>
	<u>Lack of understanding and support from educators (Yandri, 2022)</u>	<u>Training for educators to understand and effectively implement the curriculum (Bisri et al., 2023).</u>
MBKM Policy	<u>Lack of understanding and support from students (Rahman, 2023).</u>	<u>More effective communication strategies to enhance student understanding of MBKM (Hastangka & Hidayah, 2023)</u>
	<u>Limited human and financial resources (Bhakti et al., 2022)</u>	<u>More effective and efficient resource allocation, along with funding enhancements (Mayang, 2022).</u>
	<u>Variations in policy implementation across universities (Maghfiroh & Sholeh, 2022).</u>	<u>Collaboration between universities to share best practices and resources (Saptadi et al., 2024)</u>

Teacher Reform	<u>Complexity of teaching contexts</u> (Yandri, 2022)	<u>Professional development and support for teachers to address modern teaching challenges</u> (Bisri et al., 2023).
	<u>Need to attract and retain top talent</u> (Saptadi et al., 2024).	<u>Incentives and career development programs for teachers to improve retention and performance</u> (Bhakti et al., 2022).

The research findings indicate that the implementation of the 2013 Curriculum and the Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) policy in Indonesia faces various challenges. Although the 2013 Curriculum is designed to enhance student competencies, it is hampered by a lack of infrastructure support and variations in implementation across different educational institutions. Similarly, the MBKM policy, which aims to improve the quality of higher education through curriculum flexibility and internship programs, encounters obstacles such as a lack of understanding and support from students and educators.

This research aligns with previous studies showing that the implementation of educational policies in Indonesia is often hindered by external factors such as infrastructure and stakeholder support. However, this research adds value by demonstrating that the MBKM policy has great potential to increase the relevance of higher education to labor market needs if supported by better implementation strategies. The strength of this research lies in its comprehensive approach to examining various aspects of educational policies, from curriculum to infrastructure and human resources support (kemdikbud.go.id, 2020).

Reflecting on the research results shows that despite significant challenges in policy implementation, there are substantial opportunities to improve educational quality through policy reforms focusing more on infrastructure support and educator training. This research indicates that the success of the MBKM policy heavily depends on the understanding and active involvement of all stakeholders, including students, educators, and university management (Bhakti et al., 2022).

The implications of this research suggest the need for developing more effective implementation strategies for educational policies in Indonesia. This includes enhancing infrastructure support, providing adequate resources, and continuous training for educators. The findings also show that the MBKM policy can offer substantial benefits if correctly implemented, focusing on developing skills relevant to industry and labor market needs (Putri & Rochmah, 2023).

The primary causes identified in this research are the lack of coordination and support from various stakeholders in policy implementation. The lack of understanding about the goals and benefits of the MBKM policy among students and educators is also a major hindrance. Additionally, limited resources and inadequate infrastructure contribute to the challenges in effectively implementing this policy (Bisri et al., 2023).

Based on these research findings, several actions are recommended to enhance the implementation of educational policies in Indonesia, including: (1) improving coordination between the government, educational institutions, and industry to ensure adequate support, (2) providing continuous training for educators to enhance their understanding and capability in implementing policies, (3) improving educational infrastructure to optimally support policy implementation, and (4) developing more effective communication strategies to enhance student understanding and support for the MBKM policy (Budhi et al., 2022).

4. CONCLUSION

This study reveals significant findings regarding the implementation of the Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) policy and the 2013 Curriculum in Indonesia. Despite various educational reform efforts, substantial obstacles hinder the achievement of these policy goals. Challenges such as lack of infrastructure support, variations in implementation across different educational institutions,

and insufficient understanding and support from students and educators remain major hurdles that have not been effectively addressed.

This research makes significant contributions to both theoretical and practical knowledge. Theoretically, it enhances the understanding of factors influencing the success of educational policy implementation, emphasizing the importance of infrastructure support and comprehensive stakeholder understanding. Practically, the research provides strategic recommendations that policymakers and educational institutions can use to improve the effectiveness of the MBKM policy and the 2013 Curriculum implementation. These recommendations include enhancing teacher training, developing adequate infrastructure, and creating more effective communication strategies between schools, the government, and the community.

Although this study provides valuable insights, several limitations need to be considered. The primary limitation is the scope of data, which is restricted to the available literature, potentially omitting some important aspects. Additionally, variations in policy implementation across different educational institutions may affect the generalizability of the findings. However, these limitations open opportunities for further, more in-depth, and comprehensive research. Future studies could expand the data scope and include specific case studies from various educational institutions to provide a more holistic view of educational policy implementation in Indonesia.

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