

Workshop on *Kurikulum Merdeka* (Freedom Curriculum): Dismantling Theories and Practices

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ABSTRACT

The enactment of Ministerial Decree of the Minister of Education, Culture, Research and Technology, the Republic of Indonesia Number 56/ M/ 2022 on the Guidance of Curriculum Implementation for Learning Recovery in early 2022 has marked the implementation of a new curriculum, namely 'Kurikulum Merdeka' or Freedom Curriculum in Indonesian educational system. The new curriculum brings certain novelties as compared to the previous (Curriculum 2013), for instance focusing on essential contents, providing freedom to students, teachers, and school in the implementation, and employing relevant and interactive activities in learning through project works. To successfully implement Kurikulum Merdeka, the curriculum users, particularly teachers, have to gain solid understanding about the curriculum. Hence, working with Dunia Akademisi, Bina Nusantara (Binus) University organized a workshop on Kurikulum Merdeka targeting teachers and teacher students throughout Indonesia. The workshop focused on discussing theories from which the curriculum had been developed and ways to use it in the classroom. The event was carried out online by using Zoom and YouTube and attended by 300 and over 2.000 participants in each respective platform. By their participation in the workshop, they were expected to have better understanding and readiness to implement the curriculum in their schools as well as classrooms. In overall, the participants were satisfied with the overall organization of the event and the speakers, found the event fulfilling their expectation, and gained useful lesson from the event. Certain recommendations were yielded, which are increasing Zoom capacity, carrying out better preparation, and making the event into a series instead.

Keywords: Freedom curriculum, education, learning.

1. INTRODUCTION

In February 2022, the Minister Nadiem Anwar Makarim announced another a disruptive policy on education, which was the enactment of Ministerial Decree of the Minister of Education, Culture, Research and Technology, the Republic of Indonesia Number 56/ M/ 2022 on the Guidance of Curriculum Implementation for Learning Recovery [1]. The decree enactment has marked the curriculum shift from Curriculum 2013 to a new curriculum, namely *Kurikulum Merdeka* or Freedom Curriculum, in Indonesian educational system. This shift poses significant impact towards early childhood, primary, and middle education.



The Minister Nadiem in his speech of *Kurikulum Merdeka* launch mentioned that the new curriculum possessed three main characteristics that distinguished it from the previous, Curriculum 2013 [2]. First, *Kurikulum Merdeka* puts more focus on essential learning materials and development of student competences in each educational phase. With this focus, learning becomes deep, meaningful, and delightful. Second, in *Kurikulum Merdeka*, the curriculum users (students, teachers, and schools) are granted more freedom to implement it. This characteristic brought certain changes. At high school, concentrations were demolished and thus students can opt any subjects in accordance with their interest, talent, and aspiration. In instruction, teachers teach students based on their academic attainment and development. Under *Kurikulum Merdeka*, schools have right to develop and organize curriculum and learning that fit institution and student characteristics. Last, *Kurikulum Merdeka* puts more emphasis on relevant and interactive activities in instruction through project works. These such activities enable students to actively explore actual issues that support their development of character and competences of *Profil Pelajar Pancasila*: a) believing in God and having good characters, b) respecting diversity in the global community, c) promoting collaboration, d) working creatively, e) possessing critical thinking, and f) becoming self-sufficient.

Kurikulum Merdeka was mainly developed to address the learning crisis occurred in Indonesian education before and during Pandemic COVID-19 [3]. In the last two decades, Indonesia has significantly increased public participation in educational system from 39% in 2000 to 85% in 2018 [4]. Despite the substantial increase of public access to education, the quality of education the public received remained problematic. In the same period (2000 to 2018), Indonesian students' achievement in the program for international student assessment (PISA) was low and gained mere increase [5]. Based on this assessment results, Indonesia was placed below among other countries. For instance, in PISA 2018 out of 78 participating countries, Indonesia bagged the 72nd in math. This low achievement also happened to other areas, science and reading. Moreover, the scores of Indonesian students in PISA did not exhibit major change in the last twenty years [6][7]. *Kurikulum Merdeka* is expected to improve the quality of education and thus in near future student will perform better in global assessments like PISA.

The outbreak of COVID-19 in Indonesia since early 2020 has worsen the learning crisis in Indonesia. In the last two years, learning loss among Indonesian students was identified, particularly regarding their literacy and numeracy competences. In 2021, the INOVASI center dan The Board of Standard, Curriculum, and Assessment in The Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology conducted a study on learning activities during COVID-19 pandemic [8]. This study involved 3.391 students in four provinces in Indonesia. Its results revealed that learning progress of students (grade 1 at primary school) in a single year prior to the pandemic was 129 and 78 points for literacy and numeracy respectively. However, during the pandemic, their learning progress substantially decreased to 77 and 34 points for literacy and numeracy respectively. This decrease indicated students' learning loss of six months in literacy and five months in numeracy. Once the emergency curriculum was put in place, their learning loss lowered to two months and one month for literacy and numeracy respectively. In other words, this curriculum was effective in addressing leaning loss in Indonesia. Then, the government used the emergency curriculum as the basis for *Kurikulum Merdeka* development [5/9].

The implementation of *Kurikulum Merdeka* will begin in the academic year of 2022/2023 and then be assessed for its effectiveness in 2024 [3/10]. In addition, schools have authority to make decision on the new curriculum implementation. The government in general provides three options for schools in using *Kurikulum Merdeka*. First, schools prefer using Curriculum 2013 because they are not ready to implement either the prototype or the new curriculum. Second, schools tend to continue the prototype curriculum implementation because they need more time to learn and prepare for

implementing *Kurikulum Merdeka*. Third, schools have sufficient understanding as well as resources and thus they opt to fully implement *Kurikulum Merdeka*. Based on the results of self-assessment and implementation proposal carried out by schools throughout Indonesia, there are over 143.000 schools at early childhood, primary, middle, and high educational levels stating to implement *Kurikulum Merdeka* [4/ 11]. This number counts nearly 70% of the entire schools in Indonesia. The tabel below shows the detail of schools which are ready to use the new curriculum. Among these schools, most of which are ready for the new curriculum implementation are those under the Ministry of the Minister of Education, Culture, Research and Technology. Only few schools administered under the Ministry of Religious Affairs take the chance to employ *Kurikulum Merdeka*.

Table 1. Schools ready to implement *Kurikulum Merdeka* by school type

<i>School Type</i>	<i>Number</i>
<i>Early Childhood (PAUD)</i>	24.159
<i>Primary (SD)</i>	84.034
<i>Middle (SMP)</i>	18.938
<i>High (SMA)</i>	6.448
<i>Special Need (SLB)</i>	709
<i>Vocational (SMK)</i>	6.863
<i>Islamic Early Childhood (RA)</i>	62
<i>Islamic Primary (MI)</i>	215
<i>Islamic Middle (MTS)</i>	108
<i>Islamic High (MA)</i>	64
<i>Islamic Vocational (MAK)</i>	0
<i>Society Learning Center (PKBM)</i>	1.665
Total	143.265

More schools decided not to implement *Kurikulum Merdeka* because their stakeholders and teachers did not comprehensively understand ‘what’ and ‘how’ to use the curriculum yet. To overcome this problem, working with Dunia Akademisi, Binus University organized a community development activity which is a workshop on ‘*Kurikulum Merdeka: Dismantling Theories and Practices*’. Although this activity was open for any participant, it mainly targeted teachers and teacher students in Indonesia. Based on the need analysis carried out online few weeks prior to the workshop, many reported their lack of knowledge on principles, characteristics, and use of the new curriculum. Hence, the workshop was aimed to enable participants to have solid understanding about *Kurikulum Merdeka* and thus be able to use it.

2. IMPLEMENTATIO METHOD

This community development activity was organized virtually by using Zoom and YouTube platforms. Few weeks prior to the workshop, the activity promotion and participant registration were carried out in online basis. Until the registration was closed a day before the activity, over 2.700 participants registered. In terms of age, over half of them were between 25 and 44 years old. Those with the age of 55 years old or older only counted for merely small portion of the participants. Based on the occupation, more identified themselves as instructors at either school or college. Nearly one fifth of the participants were college students. The rest were those with non-teaching professions. The figure below shows the details of the registered participants.

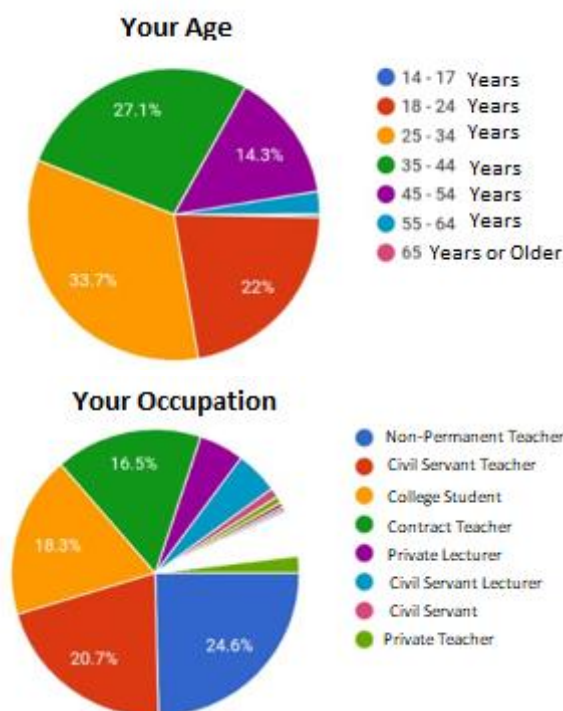


Figure 1. The age and occupation of 2.712 registered participants

The activity was conducted on June 17, 2022 and attended by more than 2.000 participants. Because Zoom was available for only 300 participants only, the rest participated in the activity through streaming YouTube. In this activity, three main methods were involved: 1) lecturing, 2) discussion, and 3) practicing. In lecturing, the speakers gave lecture on history and theories which *Kurikulum Merdeka* was developed upon and best practices to use the curriculum. The first speaker explained 11 curriculum types that had been used in Indonesian education since 1945, the urgency of the current curriculum implementation, and certain theories related to the curriculum characteristics. Then, the second speaker described effective practices in using the curriculum at school and in classroom. After lecturing, discussion was offered to allow the participants be actively engaged in discussing their concerns or issues regarding the curriculum. Last, in practicing, the participants were asked to plan the curriculum implementation.

3. RESULT DAN DISCUSSION

This community development activity was a workshop on *Kurikulum Merdeka* with the focus on theories and practices. This activity was a collaborative work between Binus University and Dunia Akademisi. It was conducted online on June 17, 2022 at 7.30 pm to 10.30 pm WIB (western Indonesia time). More than 2.000 participants attended the workshop by using Zoom and YouTube (live streaming). There were two speakers involved, Taufik Mulyadin, a lecturer at Binus University, and Anindita Yurizqi, a learning designer at Sekolah Murid Merdeka. The first speaker discussed theories related to the curriculum and the second focused on the practices in using the curriculum. To ensure the activity ran smoothly, the workshop was led by Dwi Wulan Sari. As mentioned previously, the activity had three main activities: lecturing for 60 minutes, discussion for 80 minutes, and practicing for 40 minutes.

In the first activity, the participants received lecture on theories and practices in regard to *Kurikulum Merdeka*. They learned the history of curriculum shifts in Indonesian education from 1945 to 2013, the current policy on education, the learning crisis in Indonesia before and during COVID-19 pandemic, the urgency of *Kurikulum Merdeka*, and the learning paradigm of constructivism within the

curriculum. Regarding practices, the participants were exposed with the effective ways to prepare, perform, and assess the curriculum implementation. Also, the speaker gave a number of examples of learning activities which were in line with *Kurikulum Merdeka*.



Figure 2. The first speaker giving a lecture on philosophy and theories within *Kurikulum Merdeka*

In discussion, the participants were allowed to express their concerns and issues regarding *Kurikulum Merdeka*. Whole questions in this activity yielded three major topics yielded: a) the replacement of Curriculum 2013, b) the ideal curriculum for Indonesian students, and c) the differences between *Kurikulum Merdeka* and Curriculum 2013. Many participants questioned the government's decision to replace Curriculum 2013. The speakers responded that based on the study by the INOVASI center and the Ministry of Education in 2021, Curriculum 2013 was less effective in addressing learning loss due to COVID-19 pandemic [8]. Moreover, according to Pritchett and Beatty, many developing countries, including Indonesia, implemented an ambitious curriculum with high expectation to achieve but it provided students less opportunity to meaningfully learn the taught materials [12]. Other studies in the context of Indonesian education revealed criticisms of Curriculum 2013, such as abundant learning materials [13][14], emphasis on learning completion rather than mastery learning [15], complicated procedure [16], and decentralized as well as inflexible procedures [14][17]. Another question that was often expressed by the participants was regarding the ideal curriculum for Indonesian students. The speakers described that an ideal curriculum in Indonesia had to have at least six qualities: a) simple and easy to be comprehended and then implemented, b) focusing on competences and characters of any students, c) flexible in implementation, d) contextual with locals where students learn, e) collaborative to involve entire stakeholders (students, teachers, and leaders), and f) relying on studies and feedback [18][19]. More participants asked about what made *Kurikulum Merdeka* distinct from Curriculum 2013. The speakers mentioned at least three major differences. First, in the new curriculum, the structure was divided into six different phases. Phases A to C belonged to primary education, phase D to middle education, and phases E and F to high education. Second, the number of subjects and learning hours was fewer than the previous curriculum. Third, students had project works outside of classroom to attain the competences of *Profil Pelajar Pancasila*.

The last session in the workshop was practicing. The participants were asked to design the implementation of the new curriculum in their schools and classrooms. Also, they had to perform SWOT analysis to identify certain factor might contribute to either succeed or fail the curriculum implementation. Due to an excessive number of participants, only few could share their works and received feedback from the speakers and other participants.

Before the activity ended, the participants were asked to give their feedback to assess the quality of the workshop and to identify what to be improved in the future event. Interestingly, the number of responses (over 5.000) were much higher than the number of participants (more than 2.000) on the day of the event. It was because more people accessed the recorded workshop on YouTube and gave their feedback. Figure 3 indicates that many of were satisfied with the overall organization of the event (94%) and the speakers (96,2%). Meanwhile, in Figure 4, most of the participants reported that they found the event fulfilling their expectation (92,7%) and gained useful lesson from the event (96,5%).

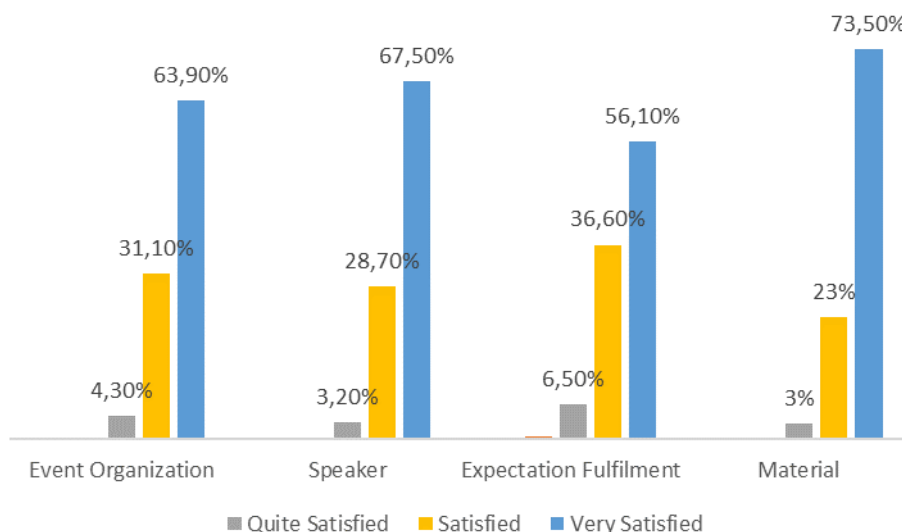


Figure 3. The feedback of 5.076 participants on the workshop

The participants gave suggestions to improve the event in the future. First, they asked to increase the capacity of Zoom to at least 1.000 participants. second, they recommended to carry out better preparation because nearly during the event, the MC experienced technical problem. Third, they requested to have longer time or separate the workshop into two different events. With longer time or separated events, the participants would have more time to explore and practice. Last, some asked the organizers to organize the similar event on site in their schools. Certainly, these suggestions were accepted and considered to enhance the quality of the event in the future.

4. CONCLUSION

This community development activity was a workshop on *Kurikulum Merdeka* to elaborate the theories from which the curriculum was built upon and the practices to implement the curriculum effectively. The activity was carried out to address the substantial need among teachers and leaders at school to better understand the new curriculum and then be more ready to implement it. The main organizers of the workshop were Binus University and Dunia Akademisi. The workshop was conducted online by using two platforms, Zoom and YouTube, in June, 2022 and successfully attracted over 2.000 people from different areas in Indonesia to participate. It had three main methods which are lecturing, discussion, and practicing. In discussion and practicing, the participants were actively engaged to express and share their concerns, issues, and ideas regarding *Kurikulum Merdeka*. In their feedback on the workshop, the participants reported their positif satisfaction and benefits they received from their participation. In addition, they gave a number of recommendations in preparation and organization of the event.

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