



The Implementation of Merdeka Learning Curriculum by Minister of Education at Senior High School in Banda Aceh

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Keywords

Effectiveness, Academic Supervision and Teacher Performance.

Abstract

School supervisors have the main tasks of monitoring, supervising and evaluating the implementation of education. The existence of school supervisors is to provide guidance and supervision in increasing the effectiveness of education in schools. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to describe: (1) the supervisory development program regarding the academic supervision competency of the principals; (2) the implementation of the supervisory development program; (3) the evaluation of the supervisory development program; and (4) the follow-ups of the supervisory development program. This qualitative research was conducted by means of a descriptive approach in State Kindergarten 2 and State Kindergarten 6 of Banda Aceh City. The data were collected through interviews, observation, and documentation. The results showed that: (1) the preparation of the supervisory development program was carried out at the beginning of the fiscal year and consisted of a managerial program plan and an academic program plan. In addition; (2) the implementation of the program had particular stages and schedules; and (3) the evaluation of the program was more about the personal assessment of the principal with certain supervision schedules. Lastly, (4) the follow-ups and the solution regarding the obstacles were in the forms of facilitating training programs related to teacher performance assessment, increasing the intensity of supervision or class visits and increasing programs for academic supervision and teacher performance assessment on a regular and continuous basis.



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1. Introduction

Law Number 14 of 2005 concerning teachers and lecturers is one of the implementations of the demands for improvement in quantity, quality, effectiveness, and efficiency related to education which is evidence of the development of a new paradigm of the teaching and lecturer profession and the needs of policy makers. The birth of government policy contained in Government Regulation Number 19 of 2005 concerning National Education Standards (SNP) has also become one of the solutions to the problem of improving the basic competence of teachers. The basic competencies mentioned consist of four components, namely pedagogic competence, professional competence, personality competence, and social competence (Pantiwati, Chamisijatin, Zaenab, & Aldya, 2023).

The progress of a country is certainly inseparable from the development of its education system. Since 2003 – 2018, Indonesia has shown significant improvement to the world through the PISA (*Programme International Student Assessment*) chart. OECD (*Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development*) has noted Indonesia's PISA ranking in 2018 is still at the bottom. The PISA reading ranking fraction is ranked 70th out of 77 countries. For Mathematics scores, Indonesia is ranked 72 out of 78 countries. While the Science score is at 70 out of 78 countries involved. The value tends to stagnate from the previous year. Of course, this is inseparable from the role of teachers in developing teaching and learning efforts or techniques (Purwanti, 2021).

Without proper education, people will languish on the fringes of society, the state will not be able to benefit from technological progress so that progress cannot be processed into social progress. The impact of this is the inability to realize a fair and inclusive policy. In addition, the government will have difficulty involving the community to lead to full change if there is a lack of education. Of course, this is inseparable from the education system, learning methods, teacher creativity, and also other considerations (Restu, Sriadhi, Gultom, & Ampera, 2022).

Article 31 of the 1945 Constitution of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia states that every citizen has the right to quality education. As an effort to continue and develop policies to improve and equalize the quality of education, the Ministry of Education and Culture (Kemendikbud) initiated the Mobilizer School Program. The Driving School seeks to encourage education units to carry out self-transformation to improve the quality of learning in schools, then scan other schools to make similar quality improvements.

Merdeka Belajar is the freedom of thought that begins and ends with teachers who invite educational elements to participate in advancing education in Indonesia (Kusumaryono, 2020). However, the new policy initiated by Minister of Education and Culture Nadiem Makarim during his early term in office caused perceptions in all circles of society, especially in the field of education. Supposedly, ministerial policies can be implemented in all educational institutions in Indonesia. However, whether all these policies have been implemented, exactly is unknown. Therefore, this study intends to analyze how teachers' perceptions in carrying out the implementation of the Ministry of Education and Culture's Freedom of Learning policy at the Senior High School level, especially in Banda Aceh City (Supriati, Dewi, Supriyanti, & Azizah, 2022). The implementation of the Independent Curriculum is realized for learning recovery based on the following policies as stated in Permendikbudristek No.5 year 22 relating to Graduate Competency Standards in Early Childhood Education, Primary Education, and Secondary Education. Graduate Competency Standards are minimum criteria regarding the unity of attitudes, skills, and knowledge that show the achievement of students' abilities from their learning outcomes at the end of the education level (Satiti & Falikhatun, 2022).

The Permendikbudristek No.7 of 2022 relates to content standards in Early Childhood Education, Primary Education, and Secondary Education. Content standards are developed through the formulation of the scope of material in accordance with the competence of graduates. The scope of the material is study material in learning content formulated based on: 1) mandatory content in accordance with the provisions of laws and regulations; 2) scientific concepts; 3) path, level, and type of education. Content standards are a reference for the 2013 curriculum, emergency curriculum, and independent curriculum (Krishnapatria, 2021).

Permendikbudristek No. 56 of 2022 relating to guidelines for curriculum implementation in the context of learning recovery contains three curriculum options that can be used in education units in the context of learning recovery and the structure of the Independent Curriculum, rules related to learning, assessment, and teacher workload (Yulianto, 2022). Meanwhile, the Decree of the Head of BSKAP No.009/H/KR/2022 of 2022 decided that education units can implement the Merdeka curriculum in stages according to their respective readiness. The decree also lists three options that can be decided by the education unit on the Implementation of the Independent Curriculum in the 2022/2023 school year, namely:

1. Implementing some parts and principles of the Independent Curriculum without replacing the curriculum of the educational unit that is being implemented.
2. Implementing the Independent Curriculum using the teaching tools provided.
3. Implementing the Independent Curriculum by developing various teaching tools yourself.

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Independent Curriculum of the Ministry of Education and Culture at the Senior High School level, especially in Banda Aceh City (Pratikno, Hermawan, & Arifin, 2022).

According to the theory of policy implementation proposed by George C. Edward (in Subarsono, 2011) states that policy implementation is influenced by four variables that are interconnected with each other, namely communication, resources, disposition, and also bureaucratic structure. In particular, this study aims to obtain an overview of:

1. To find out school planning for the implementation of the Ministry of Education and Culture's Freedom of Learning policy in Senior High Schools in Banda Aceh City.
2. To find out the implementation stage of the Ministry of Education and Culture's Freedom of Learning policy in several High Schools in Banda Aceh City.
3. To find out the obstacles experienced by schools in implementing the Ministry of Education and Culture's Freedom of Learning policy in Banda Aceh City High Schools.

To facilitate the formulation of research instruments and data collection in the field, research objectives can be described in the form of research questions as follows:

1. How is the school planning in implementing the Freedom of Learning policy in Senior High Schools in Banda Aceh City?
2. How is the implementation of the Freedom of Learning policy in several high schools in Banda Aceh City?
3. What are the obstacles faced by teachers in implementing Merdeka Belajar in Senior High Schools in Banda Aceh City?

At this stage, researchers search for several studies that have been conducted previously that have a discussion relationship with this study. This is done to determine the correlation of discussion in this study with research that has been done before, so that there is no repetition of discussion or similarity of research. In this case, researchers searched several sources including the following:

Research conducted by (Ratsyari, 2021) related to "School Readiness for the Implementation of Independent Learning at SMK YPP Purworejo" which was carried out with a qualitative approach, based on this research, the results are: (1) the principal's policy on school examinations in 2021 applies an exam form that can be developed by each teacher with flexible exam times in accordance with the form of school exam assessment. (2) The planning of the Minimum Competency Assessment (AKM) in 2021 is based on the principal's policy by assigning literacy summary tasks to students. In addition, teachers also make questions in the learning module which include questions of understanding, comparison, reasoning, analysis, and evaluation. Next, the Guidance Counseling teacher provides time and opens the counseling period every Saturday. (3) The Learning Implementation Plan (RPP) is prepared by observing and using three principles of RPP preparation, namely the principles of efficiency, effectiveness, and student-oriented. (4) Admission of New Students (PPDB) shall continue to follow the rules of the Provincial Education and Culture Office (Rizki & Fahkrunisa, 2022).

Furthermore, research related to the "Survey of the Implementation of the Independent Learning Curriculum in Physical Education Learning at SMA Negeri 1 Purwoasri" conducted by (Subandrio & Kartiko, 2021) with quantitative methods found the following results: (1) the performance of PJOK teachers during the learning process was found to be good with a percentage of 33.33%. (2) The implementation and understanding of the Merdeka Belajar curriculum is good from being at a good stage. (3) The implementation of RPP 1 sheet and the impact on students are also ranked well. The overall result of the percentage of implementation of the Merdeka Belajar curriculum in PJOK learning at SMA 1 Purwoasri can be said to run very well from the teacher's side and from the principal's side with the overall percentage being 66.67% (Very Good). The implementation of the independent curriculum in PJOK learning is expected to increase so as to provide a better impact on students through the experience gained in Merdeka Belajar (Ingtias, Ampera, Farihah, Amal, & Purba, 2022).

From several previous studies that have been stated above, it can be concluded that there are gaps in this study and also previous research, such as research location, research subject, research methodology, and also research results. Based on the research *gap*, the researchers in this study focus on the implementation of the independent learning policy as a whole by applying qualitative research methods.

2. Materials and Methods

This research uses a qualitative research approach with the aim of describing, explaining, explaining, and answering in detail the problem under study. This approach understands the phenomena experienced by the research subject through descriptions in the form of words and language. This research focuses on "Implementation of the

Ministry of Education and Culture's Free Learning Policy in Senior High Schools in Banda Aceh City." This research method involved school principals, vice principals for curriculum, and subject teachers from two high schools in Banda Aceh, namely SMAN 3 Banda Aceh and SMAN 7 Banda Aceh. The main data collection technique is a semi-structural interview with interview guides and documentation as a complement. The data analysis process involves three steps, namely data reduction to summarize and select important information, data presentation through various forms of presentation such as tables and narrative text, and data verification to draw conclusions. Conclusions in qualitative research are provisional and may evolve along with further data collection.

The research method used in this study is qualitative method. Qualitative method is a research approach that aims to describe, explain, and explain the problem under study by using words and language as a means to understand the phenomena experienced by the research subject. The focus of this research is on "Implementation of the Ministry of Education and Culture's Free Learning Policy in Senior High Schools in Banda Aceh City."

The type of qualitative research used in this study is a case study. A case study is research that examines a particular case in a particular time and activity, with the aim of obtaining an in-depth description of the entity under study. The subjects of the study consisted of school principals, vice principals for curriculum, and study teachers from SMAN 3 Banda Aceh and SMAN 7 Banda Aceh.

Data collection was conducted through semi-structural interviews with interview guides and documentation as complementary. Interviews are used to obtain information from research subjects, while documentation is used to provide additional evidence to the data obtained.

The data analysis process consists of three steps, namely data reduction to summarize important information, presentation of data through various formats such as tables and narrative text, and data verification to draw conclusions. Conclusions in qualitative research are provisional and may evolve as further data are collected. This data analysis technique aims to gain a deep understanding of the problem under study.

3. Results and Discussions

All data obtained by researchers will be presented in descriptive form, namely by explaining through word descriptions so that they become sentences that are easy to understand so that the data presented is more directed and obtain a clear picture of the research results to answer research questions pleased with the principal's managerial in improving school quality culture in public elementary schools in Banda Aceh (SDN 24, SDN 54, SDN 44 and SDN 16) the results of this researcher can be systematically described as follows:

Results of research at SDN 24 school

Based on the results of interviews with the Principal about (1) the principal's managerial (2) The principal's managerial strategy in improving the school quality culture.

Managerial principal

SD NEGERI 24 BANDA ACEH is one of the elementary education units in Kota Baru, Kuta Alam District, Banda Aceh City, Aceh. In carrying out its activities, SD NEGERI 24 BANDA ACEH is under the auspices of the Ministry of Education and Kebudayaan. SD NEGERI 24 BANDA ACEH is located at Jl. Tengku Tanoh Abee No.1 Lampineung, Kota Baru, Kec. Kuta Alam, Banda Aceh City, Aceh, with zip code 23125. The school website can be opened via <http://sdn24.bubucollections.com> url. If you want to send an electronic mail (email), it can be sent to sdn24bandaaceh@gmail.com.

Research Results

This research involved two high schools in Banda Aceh City, namely SMAN 3 Banda Aceh City and SMAN 7 Banda Aceh City. SMAN 3 Banda Aceh City is located in the center of Banda Aceh with a school building area of 12,160m² inaugurated in 1977. This school is one of the most popular schools in Banda Aceh. Currently, SMAN 3 Banda Aceh is led by Mr. Muhibbul Khibri, S.Pd., M.Pd with 68 teachers and 900 students. SMAN 3 Banda Aceh is a pioneer school for Mover Schools in Aceh Province.

Meanwhile, SMAN 7 Banda Aceh City located in Geuceu Complex, Banda Aceh City was built on 7,722 m² of land. SMAN 7 Banda Aceh is led by Mrs. Erlawana, with 64 teachers and 739 students. SMAN 7 Kota Banda Aceh is also a driving school since 2011.

Both schools attracted the author's attention to conduct further studies involving principals / curriculum waka and subject teachers. The reason that concerns the author about these two schools is in terms of the quality of education provided and also the school programs offered. School quality indicators can be seen from the highest SNMPTN graduation. The SNMPTN graduation rate is 47 students in 2022 with a total of 506 high school / vocational students in Banda Aceh City.

Meanwhile, SMAN 7 Banda Aceh City is known as a superior school in the fields of art and research, especially when SMAN 7 Banda Aceh City has become a driving school in 2021. SMAN 7 Banda Aceh City

This chapter presents the results of research that has been carried out using interview methods and documentation. The interviews were conducted with the Principal, Waka Curriculum and also teachers in the field of study in 2 (two) High Schools in Banda Aceh City, as for the information obtained based on the results of triangulation to obtain the validity of the data. Then, the results of the study are described and continued with discussion. The information traced is related to the implementation of the Freedom of Learning policy in Banda Aceh City High Schools.

The implementation of the Free Learning policy at various levels of education in Indonesia is one of the things that is still being studied and is also still getting criticism from educators. This is not without reason, for some educators this is a new thing for them, especially this is carried out closely related to technology. The implementation of Merdeka Belajar is actually not new in the world of education, it's just that the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia has only implemented it since the Covid-19 Pandemic.

When viewed in terms of the preparation of this implementation, there are many stages that need to be passed and also these stages need to be applied also by educational institutions such as schools that implement Merdeka Belajar. The schools that have successfully implemented Merdeka Belajar are known as Driving Schools. If studied further, the process or stages that need to be passed by the school to become a Driving School is not only limited to administrative but also contributes to teachers and students in it.

Planning for the Implementation of the Free Learning Policy in Schools

In implementing a policy implementation, of course, the first thing to do is to design the implementation. The implementation of the Merdeka Belajar policy is one of the major changes in Indonesian education, especially for teachers in the teaching and learning process. Planning for the implementation of the Freedom of Learning policy is also handed over to each school so that it can be adjusted to the needs of each school and of course follow school resources.

In the process of planning the implications of the Freedom of Learning policy, of course, the school has prepared various efforts so that later teachers and students can carry out the Freedom of Learning process properly. SMAN 7 Banda Aceh and SMAN 3 Banda Aceh have a careful plan to implement this Merdeka Belajar. Some of the steps taken by the two schools are almost similar, such as the formation of a team for implementing the mobilizing school program which also involved several teachers and also participated in workshops related to Freedom of Learning organized by the Ministry of Education and Culture or the provincial education office. Both schools also received direct assistance by BPMP and also received online evaluations. SMAN 7 Banda Aceh City formed a special implementation team, namely a teaching committee of 10 people. The statement was represented by the curriculum waka of SMAN 7 Banda Aceh, as follows"

"There is a special committee team of 10 people involved for the Mobilizer School Program. The teachers received special training by the Principal on the Merdeka Belajar curriculum which could later be shared with other teachers. However, other workshops were also given to other teachers on a rotating basis according to the direction of the Principal. At SMAN 7, the Driving School program has been running for 2 years and for SMAN 7 it is at the stage of going to the independent level"

Meanwhile, SMAN 3 Banda Aceh involves all existing teachers to jointly engage in the Mobilizer School program. Teachers receive direct assistance from the Ministry of Education and Culture through BPMP every month online and BPMP also helps directly if needed by teachers of SMAN 3 Banda Aceh. This was conveyed directly by Waka Curriculum SMAN 3 Banda Aceh, as follows:

"All teachers are involved in this Driving School Program, but for the learning committee team there are 11 people and all of them get direct assistance by the Ministry of Education and Culture through BPMP regularly every month and also get direct monitoring and they will be ready to provide guidance to the field if needed"

The concept of Merdeka Belajar also encourages all parties to be able to build collaboration together with various suggestions and facilities, including digital. The digitization process is carried out in stages according to the introduction of digital media that can be used for the teaching and learning process such as Google Edu and also the Merdeka Belajar platform directly. On the other hand, teachers can also develop modules that have been presented in the Merdeka Belajar platform according to teacher needs.

Based on the author's observations, although not all schools can provide digital facilities such as computers and laptops that are qualified to be used by teachers and students simultaneously in one day. However,

the school has maximized the provision of wifi in schools that can be utilized by teachers and students such as at SMAN 7 Banda Aceh City, wifi facilities are obtained on every floor of the school building. SMAN 3 Banda Aceh City has also provided wifi access openly to be used for learning purposes and students can use their respective gadgets to explore their material even though wifi network points cannot be accessed evenly by students.

Meanwhile, the use of the Merdeka Belajar platform has been used well by teachers and is very helpful for teachers. One of the teachers at SMAN 7 said that all teachers at SMAN 7 Banda Aceh had registered on the Merdeka Belajar platform and teachers also used the platform well. Some of the functions of the platform used by teachers are to conduct exams, share real actions, and also become a forum for teachers to share good practices. One of the teachers has also created a community on the platform such as a literary community that can be accessed by all users of the Merdeka Belajar platform. In addition, SMAN 7 Banda Aceh also has a focus on student research programs where students at SMAN 7 Banda Aceh have a high interest in the field of research as one of the freedoms that are part of Merdeka Belajar. This was conveyed through interviews related to the development of digitalization in schools and how schools utilize the Merdeka Belajar platform by creating a program adapted to implement the independent curriculum, as follows:

"Teachers at SMAN 7 are the most crowded to access and be active in the Merdeka Belajar platform. This platform is a shared platform so we also provide our work on the platform so that other schools can also see the various activities we carry out. In addition, we also create communities on the platform such as literary and Indonesian communities, communities sharing practices in Banda Aceh City. Anyone can create programs on the platform".

On the other hand, SMAN 3 Banda Aceh teachers as many as 90% have accessed the Merdeka Belajar platform and have utilized it as much as possible. SMAN 3 Banda Aceh City has also created several programs adapted to implement Merdeka Belajar such as internal workshops related to Merdeka Belajar, Mandiri Berbagi such as expos related to what students have done.

The implementation of Merdeka Belajar has been implemented well and of course every school has a plan for the implementation of the new policy. It was found that some teachers needed more time to adapt to this policy, but all teachers worked well together and attended various workshops to increase their insight and expertise to continue to innovate in the development of the Merdeka Belajar module so as to create a pleasant learning atmosphere.

Implementation of Independent Learning in Senior High Schools in Banda Aceh City

The implementation of Merdeka Belajar has actually been carried out since 2020 with the aim of creating more enjoyable education for teachers and students. However, to achieve this pleasant implementation, several things also need to be considered, such as the role of the principal / waka curriculum / and also teachers in facilitating and also monitoring the implementation of the policy in schools. The role of the principal is the first step to realize this and is coupled with supportive teamwork in implementing the policy.

Merdeka Belajar is predicted to be able to equalize education in Indonesia in the future. This is because each school is able to realize learning in accordance with the readiness of each school and also the capacity of students in their respective schools. Merdeka Belajar is a concept in the world of education that gives freedom to schools to explore the modules that have been provided.

According to the results of interviews conducted on curriculum waka and teachers in 2 Senior High Schools in Banda Aceh City during the implementation of Merdeka Belajar in schools, the Principal/curriculum waka/and teachers took part in facilitating and monitoring the implementation of the implementation, this is in accordance with the results of interviews with the curriculum waka of SMAN 3 Banda Aceh, as follows:

"My role in the implementation of Merdeka Belajar is almost on all fronts such as planning programs, implementing, monitoring, and also evaluating. While the principal is very supportive in the sense that there are times when he is directly involved, especially in planning the program and there are times when he just monitors. The teachers also participated in planning the modules because it was to adjust the KSP that had been made".

The answer regarding the role of the principal/waka curriculum/teacher from SMAN 7 Banda Aceh also facilitates and monitors every activity of implementing the Merdeka Belajar policy, this was conveyed through an interview with one of the teachers as follows:

"As a teacher we facilitate of course. We also support various programs such as Pancasila student profiles as well as monitoring all student development as well as approved programs".

The role of the entire school community is indeed one of the keys to getting success in the implementation of this policy even including the students themselves. The existence of good teamwork will actually make it easier to adapt to this Merdeka curriculum. Openness to input – input is needed to improve the program to be run.

In implementing this Free Learning policy, there is no right and nothing wrong because everything follows and adjusts to the needs of each school. The programs that have been run will be reviewed later related to the process and also the progress achieved, and this is part of the monitoring carried out by both the principal and the waka curriculum.

In addition, there is a need for strategies used by schools to improve the implementation of the Freedom of Learning policy in schools. These strategies can be carried out individually by direct teachers or special strategies from the principal/waka curriculum. Some strategies run by teachers in the two schools have almost the same strategies such as giving freedom to students in the learning process following their respective skills but still following the themes given by the Ministry of Education and Culture, developing existing modules and tailored to students' interests and talents, and giving freedom to students to develop their ideas that will have a good impact on them. This was obtained from the results of interviews with teachers in 2 high schools, as follows:

Results of an interview with teachers of SMAN 7 Banda Aceh:

"They have freedom, we also teach how students can be independent, create things. They are given the freedom to choose their own field they want but still in accordance with the theme determined by the Ministry of Education, such as the example of class X entrepreneurship theme, children are free to develop ideas related to entrepreneurship.

Hasil wawancara guru SMAN 3 Banda Aceh:

"We in that class liberate students by how we free students to develop their skills. For example, in the classroom there are those who have drawing skills, so they can convey information through pictures. Some are IT proficient so that they are able to create animations that contain information related to the learning concerned".

Based on the results of the interview, it can be said that special strategies were also developed by each school in order to realize success in the implementation of the Merdeka Belajar policy. The Free Learning policy is able to balance between freedom of learning and also academic standards that have been set. These two high schools have the same strategy, namely by standardizing the selection of subjects, some schools have collaborated with counseling guidance (BK) because BK has its own assessment instrument and will be combined with grades and also analyzed based on children's abilities and school needs.

The way teachers analyze learning outcomes and effectiveness in compiling learning goals and flows to be better in a formative and summative way. Where formative assessment is an assessment of activities carried out while in class. While summative assessment is an assessment carried out through a joint examination.

In Merdeka Belajar, this assessment is carried out in these two categories, standardization in student development reports will be in the form of numbers and descriptions where teachers have the freedom to provide completeness scores which are certainly adjusted to the child's abilities. However, in this Merdeka Belajar policy, numbers are not too much of a specific benchmark because student achievements have been described in detail what needs to be improved and what major achievements they have achieved during the learning process.

The implementation of the Merdeka Belajar policy not only liberates students but also gives teachers a very wide freedom to develop teacher abilities and use special strategies to achieve the expected learning goals. The teachers also took strategies to perfect their learning modules by doing self-reflection both individually and with colleagues. This was stated by one of the teachers at SMAN 3 Banda Aceh in an interview, as follows:

"After learning, I always evaluate what I have taught today, at least after 1 meeting. However, for joint evaluations with other teachers, it is scheduled every 1 week with teachers who teach chemistry subjects together. As for reflection with all other teachers, it is held in meetings once a month".

Obstacles in Implementing the Free Learning Policy

The Merdeka Belajar Program is a transformative policy in the world of education, of course, there are various obstacles that must be felt by teachers in implementing this new policy. It is undeniable that Indonesia experiences frequent curriculum changes compared to other countries and this also makes teachers continue to learn new things. No wonder we see that this new policy has not been maximized as expected by the Ministry of Education and Culture, especially in regional schools.

Based on the author's observation when visiting several schools to collect data for this study, most schools have provided adequate internet access, although there are schools that only provide limited internet access to teachers. But there are also some schools that have internet barriers if they experience a spike in usage or also the influence of weather. This was conveyed by one of the teachers of SMAN 3 Banda Aceh when interviewed, as follows:

"For the internet at SMAN 3 Banda Aceh, this is quite adequate. However, if asked about obstacles to the internet network, there must be obstacles, such as *uneven WiFi* points, network interference, especially if the weather is rainy and also excessive usage, for example when teachers conduct online training."

Meanwhile, computer laboratories are also one of the obstacles in some schools because one school only has one to two computer laboratory rooms so that to be used simultaneously by two different classes is not possible. This was also conveyed by the teacher of SMAN 7 Banda Aceh, as follows:

"For obvious barriers exist, moreover computer labs are not for all students. Although SMAN 7 Banda Aceh has 2 computer lab rooms, it still cannot be used simultaneously for learning. But we will distribute usage sessions for each class on the same day."

However, the lack of computer room facilities can be overcome well by teachers. The implementation of exams using computers can also be carried out well in the two schools so there is no need to borrow computer facilities from other schools. Obstacles in terms of internet networks that are not always friendly are considered commonplace.

However, teachers' views on the lack of these facilities do not reduce the enthusiasm of teachers and students. Some teachers consider that there are no obstacles in the implementation process of Merdeka Belajar, instead they make it a learning how in the future they can improve and continue to balance the development of education. Some teachers change their perception of obstacles as a step for them to implement this policy well, of course, they learn to complete things that are considered still not optimal every day.

On the other hand, the attitudes, interests, and motivations of students in class are different. However, students' attitudes, interests, and motivations towards Merdeka Belajar are very high and they are more interested in Merdeka Belajar. If illustrated by numbers, only 2 out of 10 students have a less interested attitude to this new curriculum. This was represented by one teacher in an interview with the author, as follows:

"They are more excited about Merdeka Belajar than K-13. For example, in the past Indonesian only wrote texts, but in Merdeka Belajar they felt more appreciated with various things that they were free to express and also the results were better. In practice, introducing new things must be introduced slowly, but the teenager learns faster. It is precisely teachers who experience obstacles because they do not want to develop themselves for this new thing, teachers are still attached to the old thing".

The steps taken by teachers in implementing Merdeka Belajar were found by doing self-reflection after each teaching to make teaching considerations for the future better. The learning curriculum may continue to change, but teachers must also continue to learn new things. Various steps were taken by teachers to adapt to this new policy including assessment. Another thing that is carried out by teachers is to develop themselves through webinars – workshops related to Merdeka Belajar.

Some teachers also took steps to discuss adapting to this new policy both with superiors and colleagues, this was conveyed by the waka curriculum and also teachers of SMAN 7 Banda Aceh City, as follows:

"Teachers must be open in the context of insight and acceptance, not just stick to one concept. Teachers also need to learn all the time. Each teacher has a different adaptation process, inevitably, our school has entered the Mobilizer School. Encouragement from superiors also gives us the spirit to adapt and also discussions with colleagues".

Based on the results of research that has been conducted in two schools, namely SMAN 3 Banda Aceh and SMAN 7 Banda Aceh, the biggest obstacle in the implementation of Merdeka Belajar is the funds to run Merdeka Belajar, because in the future these two schools will become Independent Mover Schools, where funding will be issued directly by the school for all programs that have been run. This is conveyed directly through interviews, as follows:

"First, this program costs a lot, besides we get funding from the Ministry of Education, but later when we become an Independent Mover School, we no longer get financial support. While the programs we make are classified as large funds, especially research programs, once entering the research lab they need 200 thousand funds to buy the equipment / mixture they need. We also do not know whether in the future the local government will help or not, because so far it is only a form of appreciation when our school children managed to get awards in competency events representing the region".

The change from an ordinary school to a driving school provides benefits such as improving the quality of learning outcomes within three years. In addition, increasing the competence of school principals and teachers is also an advantage obtained and directly provided by the Ministry of Education and Culture. Another advantage is the acceleration of digitalization in schools, because the Driving School is based on the basis of digitalization.

Discussion

Planning for the Implementation of Independent Learning in Senior High Schools in Banda Aceh City

In general, the implementation of the Merdeka Belajar policy aims to produce superior human resources who are ready to compete in the global world. On the other hand, the planning for the implementation of Merdeka Belajar is related to two important things in implementing this new education policy, namely Merdeka Belajar and mobilizing teachers. Merdeka Belajar means that teachers and students have the freedom to innovate in the teaching and learning process.

In addition, to realize what has been discussed by Minister of Education and Culture Nadiem Makarim regarding the implementation, of course, each school and teacher needs to make their own plans, because each school will adjust to their respective abilities and needs. Currently, not all schools are able to become driving schools in Aceh Province. In 2021, only a few schools have succeeded in becoming driving schools, including SMAN 3 Banda Aceh and SMAN 7 Banda Aceh.

In realizing the implementation of the new policy, schools have already made plans for what they will do to succeed the policy. Complex planning needs to be done by each school to drive successful implementation of policies in their schools. Some of these steps and planning have been carried out following the direction of the Ministry of Education and Culture and this has also been carried out by other schools in Indonesia as stated by (Ratsyari, 2021) related to school readiness in the implementation of Independent Learning in SMK, namely;

"Several implementations for Merdeka Belajar have been implemented such as the principal's policy on school examinations by implementing an examination form that can be developed by each teacher with flexible exam times in accordance with the form of school examination assessment. In addition, teachers also make questions in the learning module which include questions of understanding, comparison, reasoning, analysis, and evaluation. Next, the Guidance Counseling teacher provides time and opens a counseling period every Saturday for students to voice their talents and interests to make it easier for teachers to adjust school programs".

According to all aspects that need to be considered in implementing the Merdeka Belajar policy, teachers must also continue to learn all the important points in developing a plan for the implementation of Merdeka Belajar in their classrooms. Teachers and students continue to strive to work together to realize learning and teaching goals such as through direct discussions with students. The principal and also the waka curriculum also encourage teachers to continue to adapt to new things.

(Yamin & Syahrir, 2020) also stated that there are several aspects of Merdeka Belajar oriented to learning that prioritizes literacy while still carrying out the development and development of education including honesty, fairness, discipline, tolerance, creativity, responsibility, high curiosity, respect, care for the environment, love peace, care for social, and also the spirit of nationhood.

Based on the statement above, it can be said that the planning for the implementation of the Merdeka Belajar policy is not solely to develop the quality of schools but also remains with the aim of developing human resources so that they become superior human resources as the initial purpose of this policy. Thus, careful planning involving all aspects is carried out by driving schools not only in Aceh but throughout Indonesia by following their respective needs.

Implementation of the Free Learning Policy in Senior High Schools in Banda Aceh City

In its stages, the implementation of the Merdeka Belajar policy follows the Indonesian Education Map in which several important aspects need to be considered such as the direct involvement of school principals / curriculum waka / and also teachers in full. In addition, the implementation of policies related to various strategies used by teachers to improve implementation implementation, the process of balancing student freedom with academics, teacher strategies in analyzing student learning outcomes, and the reflection of the principal and his staff on the implementation process so far they have been running.

The implementation of the Merdeka Belajar policy cannot be separated from the monitoring of the principal and waka curriculum on what has been done by the teachers. Referring to the Indonesian Education Map section of Merdeka Belajar (2021), the principals / waka curriculum / and teachers work together to build an innovative learning environment. Meanwhile, the role of the principal himself in developing Merdeka Belajar is several of them:

1) Educating teachers regarding freedom of learning so that teachers do not lose their direction. The trick is to pay attention to teacher competence, provide direction, provide encouragement, and facilitate teacher needs. One way that principals can do this is by providing training to teachers.

2) Monitoring school activities by ensuring that school activities and all programs that have been fostered run properly. The principal also participates in the maintenance and professional development of teachers.

3) The principal also acts as a supervisor in the implementation of the Merdeka Belajar policy. In this case, school principals need to ensure that teachers have begun to implement teaching styles in accordance with the Merdeka curriculum, such as applying differentiated learning methods, implementing digitalization during the learning process, and including Pancasila student profiles.

4) Creating a good working climate so that teachers provide superior performance. This can be done by structuring school activities clearly and informing all teachers. Tell the teacher about each teacher's work goals. Can listen to all input from teachers in the preparation of work programs and school programs.

The explanation above clearly explains that the planning for the implementation of Merdeka Belajar is not only for teachers who do it but there is the involvement of all parties in synergy. In addition, the implementation of the Merdeka Belajar policy requires all parties to work together and learn to continue to improve themselves, in other words, Merdeka Belajar is one of the first steps in implementing lifelong learning for both teachers and students.

Meanwhile, although Merdeka Belajar aims to be independent of students and provide freedom to students in determining their ways and interests, it is inseparable from complex learning assessments. This was stated by (Ratsyari, 2021), namely:

"The Minimum Competency Assessment (AKM) planning in 2021 is based on the principal's policy by assigning literacy summary tasks to students. In addition, teachers also make questions in the learning module which include questions of understanding, comparison, reasoning, analysis, and evaluation".

This is done to make students have more critical abilities, have emotional sensitivity, are talented and have high imagination. In addition, the assessment is still carried out in numbers and descriptions. However, assessment in Merdeka Belajar is still based on the ability of exams and students' daily lives.

Obstacles in the Implementation of the Free Learning Policy in Senior High Schools in Banda Aceh City

Every policy implementation will definitely have obstacles that will also become lessons so that in the future the policy will be more perfect, especially for a new policy. This is also part of the policy of implementing Merdeka Belajar in Senior High Schools. Moreover, this new policy is very different from previous policies, even some critics state that Indonesia is not ready to implement such a policy especially based on digitalization.

In reviewing the inhibiting factors of the implementation of the Merdeka Belajar policy, it is necessary to study from the aspects of internal factors and external factors. The internal factor is in terms of students' readiness to receive material and how to learn Merdeka Belajar. While external factors are from the condition of school and teacher readiness to implement this Merdeka Belajar. This was also expressed by Sugihartono (in Neva Lionita, 2020), among these internal factors are as follows: 1) student intelligence level, 2) student behavior, 3) student talent, 4) student interest, 5) student motivation, 6) student emotions, 7) student adjustment.

However, on the other hand, the biggest obstacles in the field related to school readiness and also the implementation of Merdeka Belajar are school facilities such as inadequate internet network availability, such as uneven internet points, lack of access caused by excess usage, and also due to weather disturbances. There are also barriers related to other facilities such as lack of projectors and access to computer labs. This is also stated by Neva Lionita (2020) related to the inhibiting factors in the implementation of Merdeka Belajar as follows:

"Although the learning equipment and facilities in supporting the implementation of Merdeka Belajar are good, there are still several other obstacles that still need to be fixed such as the lack of projectors in the classroom, some teaching aids, and also computer laboratories that cannot be accessed simultaneously".

A similar situation also occurs in SMAN 3 and SMAN 7 Banda Aceh, but they can respond by distributing time to every teacher and student who wants to use facilities such as projectors, teaching aids, and laboratories. It is undeniable that these facilities are learning supports, but also teachers must look for other creative ideas so that students continue to be enthusiastic about learning despite these obstacles.

Another obstacle in the implementation of Merdeka Belajar is the ability of teachers to adapt better than students. Teachers are still adapting to the *culture shock* of this policy change and are still adjusting even though many teachers are still carried away by the learning atmosphere of the previous curriculum. (Pujianti, Setiawan, & Hendriana, 2023) shared the culture shock of teachers towards the implementation of Merdeka Belajar into four phases, namely:

1. Honeymoon phase. This phase occurs before the implementation of Merdeka Belajar is carried out.
2. Crisis phase. This phase illustrates the difficulty of teachers in implementing Merdeka Belajar in the classroom.

3. Phase adjustment. This phase is the phase where teachers begin to find solutions to problems experienced before.

4. Integration phase. This phase is when teachers and schools are accustomed to implementing Merdeka Belajar.

Principals / waka curriculum and teachers who are at SMAN 3 Banda Aceh and also SMAN 7 Banda Aceh at this time are still in the adjustment phase and some have been in the integration phase. Teachers are getting used to implementing Merdeka Belajar learning even though they are still looking for various solutions to every problem they face.

4. Conclusion

Based on the results of research encountered in the field and the discussion of this research, the implementation of the Freedom of Learning policy in Banda Aceh City High School is carried out well even though the stages of implementation are still being studied and developed by schools. So, from the research conducted, the following conclusions can be drawn:

The implementation of the Freedom to Learn policy has been carried out since 2021 where SMAN 3 and SMAN 7 are the pioneers of Driving Schools in Aceh Province. Careful planning has been carried out in accordance with the direction of the Ministry of Education and Culture where teachers continue to try to adapt to the steps of participating in webinars and workshops as well as direct assistance by the Ministry of Education and Culture.

The implementation of the Merdeka Belajar policy at SMAN 3 and SMAN 7 can be said to be going well where these two schools have met the requirements to become driving schools such as digitalization, participation of principals, waka curriculum, and teachers in facilitating and monitoring the implementation of Merdeka Belajar, standardizing student progress reports, and also creating a learning environment according to student talents and interests.

Factors supporting the successful implementation of Merdeka Belajar at SMAN 3 and SMAN 7 include: 1) direct support and encouragement from the principal for teachers to continue learning and adapting to learn the Merdeka Belajar program. 2) There is direct guidance from the Ministry of Education and Culture even though it is online every week. 3) There is direct guidance and evaluation from BPMP every month who comes to school so that teachers are more focused. 4) Students prefer the Merdeka Belajar program compared to K-13 because they feel their abilities are more valued.

The obstacles experienced by SMAN 3 and SMAN 7 Banda Aceh City in implementing the Freedom of Learning policy are as follows: 1) The internet network available at SMAN 3 Banda Aceh has not spread at all points. Meanwhile, both schools experienced network bottlenecks when internet usage was crowded. 2) The use of computer laboratories in schools cannot be used simultaneously by students to carry out computer-based examinations. However, the shift division step was carried out by the two schools. 3) Merdeka Belajar is a program that requires large funds in the future when both schools have the status of Independent Mover Schools. 4) There has been no discussion from the Provincial/Regional Education Office regarding financial assistance for Independent Mover Schools in the future, which is one of the obstacles as well as learning for both schools.

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