

**THE CHALLENGE OF IMPLEMENTING THE MERDEKA
CAMPUS PROGRAM POLICY IN THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC
PERIOD**

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Abstract

Education in the 4.0 revolution era is an innovation (student centered) to strengthen creativity and mentality in facing challenges. The challenges during the Covid-19 pandemic require education to use technology assistance. Therefore, the Minister of Education and Culture, Nadiem Makarim, established the Merdeka Campus program policy as a strategic plan for the development of national education. In an effort to implement the Merdeka Campus program, of course, there are challenges during the Covid-19 pandemic. The method used in writing this article is a qualitative approach with the library method. Therefore, the author wants to examine more deeply about the analysis of the challenges of implementing the Merdeka Campus program policy during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Keywords: policy; implementation; merdeka campus program

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INTRODUCTION

The development of the modern world is currently growing rapidly. This development poses a serious challenge for everyone. The current global world has reached the era of 4.0 and 5.0, which has an effect that is not simple. It impacts all aspects of life. Including in terms of education. It is characterized by the central role of technology and information in human life. The 4.0 era gave birth to education 4.0. This concept stems from the changing skill requirements due to the age of industry 4.0. This is a vision of the future of education, which meets the needs of industry 4.0. Education 4.0 is known as an innovation characterized by student centeredness. This innovation can not only develop students who have complex knowledge, but also be able to

create a new mentality that is able to meet life's challenges, strengthen creativity and innovation in all aspects of life (ARIFIN & Muslim, 2020).

Education is the most important part of life and must be in line with the times. Education will be a weapon for humans in facing the challenges of changing times. Encouraging an intelligent nation must be done from basic rights, namely by fulfilling the right to education. There are all-new demands asking various parties to have new breakthroughs in thinking, drafting concepts, and taking actions. In other words, in facing new challenges, a new paradigm is needed. According to the philosopher Khun, if these new challenges are faced using the old paradigm, all efforts will fail. The new challenge demands a breakthrough thinking

process if what is desired is quality output that can compete with the work in an open world (Tilaar, 1992) in (Siregar, Sahirah, & Harahap, 2020).

During the Covid-19 Pandemic, education is required to use technology assistance. However, technology in this case is not able to replace the role of an educational staff because education does not only gain insight and knowledge but is related to cooperation, competence, and values. The pandemic situation forces every individual to develop digital technology-based education. So that creativity in the use of technology can realize the competence of Indonesian students or students in the 21st century. With the demands of digital-based learning, the pattern of education in Indonesia is changing. Initially, the teaching and learning process was carried out face-to-face. But now, the teaching and learning process is carried out remotely by utilizing the internet network and communication and information technology. Thus, making students in Indonesia have to practice independent learning through online learning or webinars. Lecturers and teachers must also ensure that the education delivered online can be understood by the learning materials for students. This online learning is a challenge related to Indonesia's situation with a large area so that these policy makers must make the provision of internet access and technology evenly distributed throughout Indonesia (Hendayana, 2020).

At present, known as the knowledge age, in this period, various efforts to meet the needs of life in various ways are more knowledge-based. Efforts to fulfill the needs of knowledge-based education, knowledge-based economic development, knowledge-based social empowerment and development and knowledge-based industry development (Mukhadis, 2013). Education today is in the age of knowledge with extraordinary developments in the growth of knowledge. the development of increasing knowledge is supported by the use of media and digital technology. Education as part of efforts to

improve the welfare of human life is part of national development. Given the changing times of reform and the process of globalization that also affects life, a vision and a targeted education are needed. The national education strategic plan requires an understanding of the current problem map needed to formulate a vision and strategic plan for national education development. In order to achieve this goal, there must be an improvement in the system, especially in this case the next generation of the nation's struggle from universities. Facing the increasing needs of society, students must be willing to adapt to the situation and become useful people not only for themselves but also for those around them. So in this case it refers to the independent campus program launched by the Minister of Education, Mr. Nadiem Makarim. From the statement that has been put forward by Nadiem Makarim, that the merdeka campus program is a continuation program of the merdeka learning policy that existed when he was the Minister of Education and Culture (Harususilo, 2020).

The merdeka campus program is the first step in improving the Indonesian higher education system. News and information about the existence of an merdeka campus program have dominated various environments, starting from the formal environment in college which is always discussed during learning and on the terraces of cafes which have received many responses from both the academic community and the general public. In general, this merdeka campus program provides freedom to educational institutions from the existence of a convoluted bureaucratic system and provides freedom for students to have the desired study program. With this program, it is hoped that the creation of a culture of educational institutions that are autonomous, not bureaucratic, and the creation of a creative and innovative learning system in accordance with the demands of the modern world. This merdeka campus program in its implementation is regulated in Permendikbud

Number 3 of 2020 concerning Higher Education standards; Permendikbud Number 4 of 2020 concerning Changes in State Universities to Universities with Legal Entities; Permendikbud Number 5 of 2020 concerning Accreditation of Study Programs and Universities; Permendikbud Number 6 of 2020 concerning New Student Admissions for Study Programs at State Universities; Permendikbud Number 7 of 2020 concerning the Establishment, Amendment, Dissolution of State Universities, and the Establishment, Amendment, Revocation of Permits for Private Universities.

From the description above, it can be concluded that the movement of change and dynamics of scientific progress in the world of education is very fast, dynamic and innovative. The issuance of the previous minister of education regulation must be monitored by all universities, which marks the start of the implementation of the above policies in order to be able to make meaningful changes for graduates who are ready to compete in the world of work, both nationally and internationally. Therefore, on this occasion the purpose of raising this topic is to find out more and provide a little analysis of the challenges and implementation of the merdeka campus program policy during the Covid-19 pandemic as a condition faced by almost all students so that they can prepare themselves to become students who better and more useful in the future.

METHOD

The approach used in this article is a qualitative approach with the library method. According to (Sugiyono, 2017) qualitative research methods are research methods used to examine the condition of natural objects where the researcher is the key instrument. While the library approach is a study that uses data analysis according to written materials. Library materials in the form of published notes, books, magazines, newspapers, manuscripts, journals and articles. Data was collected through method

library research. In a library, data is obtained by observing related literature in the form of articles, books, documents, as well as observing literature online which includes e-books and e-journals. Then the data is analyzed and described in a synchronous manner according to the themes discussed. The study in this article has a research focus on the discussion of "The Challenges of Implementing Merdeka Campus Program Policies in the Covid-19 Pandemic Period".

The main source used in this study is the Covid-19 Challenges Against the Implementation of the Merdeka Campus published by Syiah Kuala University Press in 2020. While secondary sources obtained from national or international journal articles, websites official of government institutions such as the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture, Law, and other sources. The technique used in this literature collection is to collect data from journal articles, books, websites government, and others related to the studies discussed. Then the problem was analyzed and became a focus of research problems, namely the Challenge of Implementation of the Merdeka Campus Program Policy, especially its implementation during the Covid-19 pandemic.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Concept of the Merdeka Learning Campus Program

Program merdeka campus program is one of the efforts of the Minister of Education and Culture Nadiem Makarim in order to improve the quality of human resources in Indonesia. The merdeka campus program is a continuation of the Merdeka Learning policy. Where the Merdeka Campus program is the beginning of the transformation of the higher education system in Indonesia. (Kemendikbud, 2020).

Merdeka Campus Program has 4 policy packages, namely as follows :

1. Autonomy for Universities to Open New Study

Programs The Ministry of Education and Culture provides autonomy for State Universities (PTN) and Private Universities (PTS) to open new study programs. There are several requirements for PTN and PTS to open a new study program. Universities, both PTN and PTS, must have A and B accreditation. The university has collaborated with organizations and universities that are included in the QS Top 100 *World Universities list*. However, there are exceptions for health and education study programs. For new study programs opened by universities, they will automatically get C accreditation. The Ministry of Education and Culture will cooperate with organizations in terms of curriculum preparation, practical work activities or internships, and job placements for students. The Ministry of Education and Culture will also cooperate with universities and study program partners to carry out supervision. The Ministry will also carry out strict supervision and require carried out *tracer study to be* every year.

2. Regulating the Re-Accreditation System

For Higher Education Accreditation is the government's effort to standardize the quality of higher education and study programs. The accreditation system in Indonesia is regulated in Law Number 12 of 2012 concerning Higher Education. Where in the regulation requires the extension of accreditation of universities and study programs with the aim of seeing the progress of developing the quality of the institution. However, in reality, in higher education institutions, the extension of accreditation for five years is actually burdensome and drains all available resources in universities. In addition, so far there have also been issues regarding the accreditation system in universities.

1) Manual accreditation system

System is less efficient in improving the quality of learning in higher education. The system has even become a burden and an administrative burden for lecturers and rectors.

2) The accreditation system is quite discriminatory.

Many universities really want accreditation, but in practice it is hampered by the bureaucracy which seems not to provide opportunities. Meanwhile, universities that do not require re-accreditation are forced to do so.

3) Unrecognized international accreditation

For universities that have obtained international accreditation, they do not automatically obtain national accreditation. However, these universities must also re-accredit the accreditation process to obtain national accreditation.

With the problems above, the Minister of Education and Culture Nadiem Makarim initiated changes to the university's accreditation policy so that the realization of good accreditation in accordance with its main objectives.

The five-year accreditation that has been set by the National Accreditation Board for Higher Education (BAN-PT) will still be carried out but there is an automatic renewal of accreditation. Universities wishing to re-accredit either their institution or study program, can apply as early as 2 years after the last accreditation was obtained. Accreditation is carried out on a voluntary basis. There is no compulsion for universities to carry out accreditation. However, universities who want and are ready can apply for accreditation. So that universities with B

and C accreditation can apply for re-accreditation at any time.

For tertiary institutions that have obtained international accreditation, they will automatically obtain national accreditation without the need to re-process. Getting an international accreditation will automatically get an A accreditation. However, this applies if the international accreditation obtained by the university has been recognized and is included in the list of Ministerial Decrees.

3. Arrangements to Become a Legal Entity PTN

Through this Merdeka Campus policy, the Ministry of Education and Culture will simplify the process for Public Service Agency (BLU) PTNs and Work Unit PTNs (Satker) to become Legal Entity PTNs (PTN BH). Where the Ministry of Education and Culture will simplify the requirements for PTN BLU and PTN Satker to become PTN BH without having to be accredited A. Because at this time only PTNs that can become PTN BH have accreditation A.

4. Three-semester Learning Outside Study Programs and Changes in the Definition of Credit

In the policy The fourth is more focused on student learning which has a direct impact on the interests of students. Students have the right to freedom to take or not study for 2 semesters off campus which is equivalent to 40 credits (Tinggi, 2020). In addition, students can also take 1 semester to study other study programs in one campus.

According to the Ministry of Education and Culture, at this time the credits for learning outside campus are very small and do not encourage students to gain new experiences. Thus, through the Merdeka Campus program, the weight of credits outside the campus becomes higher and students can use

them to explore their potential as well as possible and gain new experiences.

In addition to implementing three semesters of learning outside the study program, the Merdeka Campus policy also applies changes to the definition of credits. Where previously SKS was defined as hours of study, but now SKS is defined as hours of activity. The activities in question can be in the form of classroom learning, internships in organizations, work practices in industry, student exchanges, entrepreneurship, research, independent studies, and teaching activities in remote areas (Amelia & Mustaqin, 2021).

The Challenges of Implementing the "Freedom of Learning, Merdeka Campus" Policy in the Pandemic

1. Mechanism of Collaboration between Private Universities and Study Programs with External Parties

In the policy of opening new study programs, accreditation of universities and study programs are the 2 visions of the Minister of Education and Culture which are appreciated by the private sector. This collaboration is carried out with external parties, namely service companies, industry, communities, universities, and government or private agencies. This has become a confusing polemic between private universities, but small private universities feel the impact of this problem. Small private universities have limited resources, infrastructure, and geographical locations that are not possible. Therefore, the government should provide solutions and regulations that can make it easier for small private universities to collaborate with other parties.

2. Acceleration of State Universities (PTN) Go International with the policy of PTN Legal Entities (PTN-BH)

Policies for PTN Legal Entities (PTN-BH) as an effort to achieve a university that is able to compete internationally. This policy is considered difficult because it must have many requirements, one of which is PTN must be accredited A before becoming a PTN-BH. In this merdeka campus policy, the Minister of Education & Culture, Nadiem Makarim, denied the bureaucracy and complicated requirements. There is no minimum accreditation limit and the time for submitting PTN-BH is considered flexible and feels ready and meets the qualifications. Therefore, the government must dare to have a high target for PTN with easy bureaucracy and sufficient budget for Go International, so that PTN does not only compete domestically.

3. Internship Mechanisms Outside the Study Program

Internship policy which lasts 3 semesters outside the study program & PT is able to provide freedom for students to develop knowledge and work experience. In this case, the problem of financing activities during the internship arises. Internship activities at least require transportation costs and other supporting costs.

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The policy of "Freedom of Learning, Merdeka Campus" was established on January 24, 2020. At that time, no one knew about the situation and condition of the pandemic that would affect all sectors of life, especially in the field of education. The universities are facing big challenges in

preparing all Human Resources. This is of course done so that lecturers and students can adapt to existing conditions. Moreover, the learning system that has changed to Distance Learning (PJJ), makes students and lecturers have to be able to adjust the learning mood so that the learning process can run effectively. In addition, the use of technology requires all students and lecturers to be able to access digital for learning materials. If the use of technology experiences problems, the system will not be optimal. Considering that not all students do not have the equipment for this online system, the impact is felt for students who come from the middle to lower economic class. Internet access is the main barrier because in Indonesia the internet connection is considered quite slow. Plus the price of the internet package is quite draining the pocket. Some off-campus programs that require meeting people, such as teaching activities in remote schools, running village projects will experience problems. Therefore, the implementation of this policy must be adjusted to the conditions of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The merdeka campus program is one of the programs to take advantage of the time while still in college to develop themselves and gain experience. The government opens opportunities for students to develop themselves outside the campus through programs from the Merdeka Campus. There are three programs that can be followed by students from various levels of higher education. The following is a summary of the Merdeka Campus program from the Directorate General of Higher Education, namely as follows:

1) Independent Student Exchange Program. With the Merdeka Campus providing a student exchange program that can be followed by all students. The Independent Student Exchange Program aims to provide cross-campus and cross-cultural learning programs. Through this program, students are expected to be able to

explore and learn about the diversity of the archipelago. Besides that, it can also increase friendship relations with students from other campuses in various regions and strengthen academic competence.

- 2) Campus Teaching Program. This program is specifically for students who have a high interest in education. This program can be a place for students to learn and develop themselves outside the campus by helping learning at the elementary and junior high school levels for one semester.
- 3) Certified Independent Study and Internship Program. The last Merdeka Campus Program is a program aimed at students who are interested in gaining experience working in the professional world or interested in realizing great works.

However, the condition of the Covid-19 pandemic has forced stakeholders in the education sector to adjust their own policies in implementing these programs. The world of education inevitably has to make adjustments to this situation. The government's call to stay at home, study from home or do any activities from home changes the face of the learning process that has been taking place face to face to take place online. Or it could be said that the above programs should have been carried out offline, but this experienced an unexpected obstacle, namely the pandemic situation so that they were carried out online. The above program should provide benefits where students are given the opportunity to get a wider learning experience and new competencies through several learning activities outside their study program. With this program, they are also required to develop independence by going directly to the field to seek and find knowledge and experience through field realities such as qualifications of abilities, real problems, collaboration-social interactions, self-management or management, targets and achievements. But in reality it can't be conveyed properly.

CONCLUSION

An era of industrial revolution 4.0 is an era that uses increasingly rising technology, this technology is able to be a friend as well as an enemy depending on how we use it. By using these technological advances, it can result in a job that can be replaced by using a machine and new jobs arise that require various fields of knowledge. So in this case a concept that was initiated by the Minister of Education, namely Mr. Nadiem Makarim, is related to the concept of the Merdeka Campus. The "Merdeka Campus" policy issued by the Minister of Education and Culture Nadiem Makarim includes: 1) autonomy for universities to open new study programs, 2) setting up a re-accreditation system, 3) setting up a legal entity PTN, and 4) three-semester learning outside the study program. and changes to the definition of SKS. In observing the four policies related to the concept of an independent campus, this is a form of concern and a form of concern for the higher education system in Indonesia. The merdeka campus policy provides high opportunities for students, namely through independent student exchange programs, campus teaching programs, internship programs and certified independent studies. However, it is unfortunate that the COVID-19 pandemic has also had an impact on the education sector. The Merdeka Campus programs that have been issued by Nadiem Makarim have also been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. There are several challenges in implementing the Merdeka Campus policy during the COVID-19 pandemic, including the world of education, inevitably having to make adjustments to this situation. The government's call to stay at home, study from home or do any activities from home changes the face of the learning process that has been taking place face to face to take place online. Or it could be said that the above programs should be carried out offline, but this experienced an unexpected obstacle, namely the pandemic situation so that it was carried out online. In

addition, this also has an impact on the lack of experience experienced by students who should be given direct learning by being faced with various real-world problems.

The advice we can give related to the concept of an merdeka campus is that this program or policy is actually very good to implement, although it may not be easy to implement perfectly in the future, but in this case the most important thing is that collaboration between universities is needed to work together. Same for the better and of course, in-depth socialization is needed regarding the application of the concept of an merdeka campus both to lecturers and to the entire community.

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