

SMK Negeri 2 Solok: Dynamics of Curriculum Merdeka, Tefa, and Successful Internships in Education Transformation

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Abstract: This study aims to investigate the implementation and impact of the Merdeka curriculum at SMK Negeri 2 Solok, focusing on key stakeholder perspectives, challenges, and successes associated with this innovative educational framework. The study adopts a mixed methods approach, combining in-depth interviews with the deputy principal responsible for overseeing the curriculum, statistical analysis for quantitative data, and thematic analysis for qualitative insights. The findings reveal that the Merdeka Curriculum offers advantages in flexibility and adaptability, despite encountering implementation challenges due to limited resources. Two significant outcomes highlight the necessity for targeted teacher training and the diverse perspectives of students. The results contribute valuable insights for educators, administrators, and policymakers to enhance the effectiveness of their curricula, particularly for professional educational institutions seeking to implement adaptive and student-centered teaching methods. The research underscores the importance of understanding the experiences of deputy principals, providing a unique perspective on the challenges and opportunities presented by the Merdeka Curriculum. Furthermore, the study offers detailed suggestions for resource allocation and career advancement, offering practical implications for educational institutions striving to implement innovative teaching methodologies.

Keywords: Curriculum Merdeka, Educational Innovation, Flexible Learning, Stakeholder Perspectives, Vocational Education

A. Introduction

Education has long been hailed as a powerful instrument aimed at addressing multifaceted challenges spanning economic, social, cultural, and political realms. Throughout history, it has been regarded not only as a pathway to knowledge acquisition but also as a means to tackle various societal issues. Its role extends far beyond imparting academic knowledge, encompassing the broader spectrum of problem-solving within societies. Economically, education is seen as a means to uplift communities by equipping individuals with skills and knowledge necessary for employment and entrepreneurship. Socially, it fosters inclusivity, understanding,

and collaboration among diverse groups, contributing to social cohesion and harmony. Culturally, education preserves and perpetuates cultural heritage, fostering a sense of identity and appreciation for diverse traditions. Moreover, education serves as a platform for political awareness and civic engagement, empowering individuals to participate actively in democratic processes and advocate for change. Therefore, education stands as an indispensable tool, not merely for personal advancement but as a catalyst for societal progress and transformation across various spheres (Chakraborty et al., 2018).

The pivotal role of education resides in its remarkable capacity to function as a solver of problems, tackling an array of issues across different domains. Education serves as a cornerstone not merely for the dissemination of knowledge but as a transformative force within societies. Its significance extends beyond the transmission of information and encompasses its role as a catalyst for change and improvement. By equipping individuals with critical thinking skills, problem-solving abilities, and a comprehensive understanding of diverse subjects, education empowers them to navigate and resolve challenges across economic, social, cultural, and political spheres. Economically, education cultivates skills essential for workforce participation, entrepreneurship, and economic growth, thereby contributing to the resolution of financial disparities and unemployment issues. Socially, it fosters inclusivity, empathy, and cooperation, fostering a harmonious coexistence among diverse communities and diminishing societal conflicts. Culturally, education plays a vital role in preserving and propagating cultural heritage, nurturing a sense of identity, respect for diverse traditions, and fostering cultural harmony. Moreover, education acts as a cornerstone for political awareness and civic engagement, encouraging active participation in democratic processes and advocating for positive societal changes. Hence, education stands as a dynamic force capable of not only resolving immediate issues but also shaping a more prosperous and harmonious future by empowering individuals with the tools and knowledge to address multifaceted challenges encountered within society (Almulla & Al-Rahmi, 2023).

Whether aiming to alleviate economic disparities, foster social cohesion, preserve cultural heritage, or navigate political complexities, education stands as a cornerstone capable of offering pathways toward resolution and progress across these multifaceted areas. The changing complexity and mass adoption of modern societies training - increased the number of things where we need training in the long-term solutions. Despite serious doubts about the almighty power of education, all the most important the challenges we face are “educated” (Green et al., 2020). The cornerstone of societal progress lies in education, serving as the bedrock that shapes the capabilities and knowledge individuals bring to the dynamic and ever-evolving global landscape (Julita & Zulyusri, 2023). Recognizing the pivotal role education plays in fostering competent and skilled citizens, SMK Negeri 2 Solok has embraced

the Curriculum Merdeka as a transformative approach aimed at enhancing educational methodologies. This introduction delves into the overarching research challenge, elucidating the motivations behind the exploration of the dynamics of Curriculum Merdeka, while providing a perceptive overview of the study's contextual background.

Education stands as a linchpin in the development of individuals and communities, serving as a catalyst for innovation, critical thinking, and socio-economic progress. Education for sustainability has stimulated curricular innovations. Education policies (including curriculum reform) in many countries have encouraged learning for sustainable development (Diemer et al., 2020). In the contemporary context, the global landscape is marked by rapid technological advancements, cultural shifts, and economic transformations, necessitating an educational paradigm that is not only responsive but also anticipatory of these changes. In this context, Curriculum Merdeka emerges as a promising initiative, embodying the spirit of independence and adaptability to equip students with the skills and knowledge required to navigate the complexities of the 21st century.

SMK Negeri 2 Solok, as an educational institution, has chosen to embrace Curriculum Merdeka, reflecting a commitment to staying abreast of educational best practices and contributing to the broader goals of national development. This curriculum, with its emphasis on flexibility and adaptability, presents a departure from traditional pedagogical approaches, aiming to create an educational environment that fosters creativity, critical thinking, and holistic skill development. Implementation of the curriculum is part of preparation for the challenges of the future. In the future, the world of work will be filled with educators who are currently learning to achieve their goals, they are students (Quratul Aini & Adiyono, 2023)

The purpose of this research is to delve into the intricacies of the implementation of Curriculum Merdeka at SMK Negeri 2 Solok and to understand its impact on educational practices. By examining the perspectives of key stakeholders, particularly through in-depth interviews with the deputy principal responsible for overseeing the curriculum, this study seeks to unravel the challenges and successes associated with this cutting-edge educational framework.

The significance of this research extends beyond the confines of SMK Negeri 2 Solok, offering insights that can inform educational practices at a broader level. As the global educational landscape continues to evolve, understanding the dynamics of Curriculum Merdeka becomes imperative for educators, administrators, and policymakers seeking to create adaptive and student-centered learning environments.

In the subsequent sections of this study, a quantitative methods qualitative insight through thematic analysis. The results of this research are anticipated to shed light on the advantages, challenges, and opportunities presented by Curriculum Merdeka, providing practical implications for enhancing the effectiveness of educational curricula.

In conclusion, this introduction sets the stage for a comprehensive exploration of the dynamics of Curriculum Merdeka at SMK Negeri 2 Solok, emphasizing the transformative potential of this approach in shaping the educational landscape. The goal of this self-directed learning is that teacher-students and parents can create a pleasant atmosphere. It is hoped that from that independent learning, teachers and students will be freed from thinking, so that it can also be applied in the innovation of the teacher in the delivery of teaching materials, not only that students will be encouraged in independent learning, because in Learning (Quratul Aini & Adiyono, 2023). Through a nuanced examination of stakeholder perspectives and research findings, this study aspires to contribute valuable insights to the broader discourse on educational innovation and the quest for excellence in preparing students for the challenges of the contemporary world.

B. Methods

This study uses a qualitative method, qualitative research often uses language as data, both written and spoken, but can also use photos, videos, or other types of behavioral recordings. Qualitative data is often collected through interviews, focus groups (structured group discussions), or observation. Qualitative research seeks to reveal the subject's or patient's point of view in relation to the research question. It uses "emergency design", which refers to the process (L. Haven & Van Grootel, 2019).

This qualitative study aims to investigate the implementation of the Curriculum Merdeka at SMK Negeri 2 Solok from the perspectives of key stakeholders in the curriculum department. The primary participants will be the Vice Principal overseeing the curriculum and other members of the curriculum team. Through in-depth interviews with the Vice Principal, opinions, experiences, challenges, and insights regarding the Curriculum Merdeka's implementation will be recorded and analyzed thematically. The study is significant for understanding how crucial stakeholders, particularly the Vice Principal, contribute to effectively implementing the Curriculum Merdeka, potentially influencing future strategies for innovative teaching methods in vocational education.

C. Results and Discussion

Perceptions of Vice Principal on Curriculum Merdeka Implementation

An independent curriculum must be made every driving school must pass independent curriculum that is reliable Nadiem Makarim as Minister of Education Culture, science and technology of the Republic from Indonesia (Wanti & Chastanti, 2023). This curriculum is called independent learning which aims to create a pleasant learning atmosphere. Freedom to learn here is an educational process that builds a pleasant learning environment, both for educators, students, parents and fun for everyone. The emergence of this independent curriculum is also expected to support equal distribution of education in Indonesia with affirmative policies that have been designed by the government for all students in disadvantaged, outermost and foremost areas (3T) (Istaryaningtyas et al., 2021).

Freedom to learn is defined as freedom to think, create, and be able to pay attention to or respond to change. Apart from that, this curriculum aims to change learning methods carried out in the classroom into learning activities outside the classroom. The learning situation will feel more comfortable by providing greater opportunities for students to discuss with their teachers, socialize well, so that it is hoped that the character of students who are independent, brave, intelligent, polite, civilized and competent can be formed (Hanif, 2020). The independent curriculum also does not determine students' abilities and knowledge in terms of grades alone, but also looks at students' attitudes and skills in certain fields. Students are given the freedom to develop their interests and talents. In the independent learning curriculum concept, educators and students simultaneously realize a more active and productive learning concept in learning activities (Nurhayati et al., 2022).

The in-depth interview with the Vice Principal in charge of the curriculum at SMK Negeri 2 Solok yielded intricate insights into their opinions about Curriculum Merdeka. Several key themes emerged, providing a comprehensive understanding of the implementation's successes and challenges. The Vice Principal underscored the critical importance of Curriculum Merdeka's flexibility and adaptability. The curriculum's dynamic design allows it to be adjusted to meet diverse student needs and align with the unique circumstances of SMK Negeri 2 Solok. This adaptability was deemed advantageous, enabling customized learning sessions tailored to individual student requirements. Although the Merdeka Curriculum boasts several advantages, its implementation faces several challenges (Riyan Rizaldi & Fatimah, 2022). Inadequate resources, including insufficient training and materials, hinder the curriculum from reaching its full potential. The transition from a more structured curriculum to a more flexible one poses difficulties in terms of teacher readiness and student engagement (Mincher et al., 2023).

SMK Negeri 2 Solok Striving to maximize the implementation of the independent curriculum in achieving educational goals. At the same time, educational institutions that have successfully implemented an independent education system have been able to innovate and adapt to changes in teaching methods, models, strategies and techniques. Despite this success, the teacher was able to translate students' learning desires and aspirations. The translation ability is because the teacher managed to find out the interests of the students so that they can implement a study plan that achieves a significant learning orientation. So learn methods, models and with the help of strategies, teachers create a learning atmosphere that directs students to be motivated to participate in independent learning (Yamin, 2023)

Perceptions of Student and Teacher's Perceptions

In the learning process there is a "student-centered" method that is commonly used. (Benlahcene et al., 2020). Student-centered refers to an approach in education where the focus and direction of learning activities primarily revolve around the needs, interests, and abilities of the students rather than being solely directed by the teacher or curriculum. This method emphasizes active participation, collaboration, and personalized learning experiences tailored to individual students' learning styles and preferences (Ghafar, 2023). Many concepts are associated with SCL, including agile learning, experiential learning, and self-directed learning, and commonly used SCL terms can have different meanings for different developers (Morris et al., 2023). The practice can also be complicated because there are so many different terms to cover. Teacher-centered teaching makes students obedient, disinterested and boring from a pedagogical point of view (Pertiwi et al., 2022).

In fact, the presence of the instructor should not hinder the growth of the students, but rather the instructor himself. This shows that teachers help students who need help (Agyekum, 2019). This student-centered learning method appears as an alternative problem-solving pedagogy that is not in accordance with teacher-centered (teacher-centered) learning methods (X. Zhang et al., 2023). Student Centered Learning is a learning style that focuses on students. Teachers must fulfill their duties as facilitators, motivators and innovators in SCL learning. Teachers not only have to study in front of the class, but also help students in solving problems during the learning process (Khairi et al., 2023).

Student-centered learning emphasizes the active involvement of students and encourages discussions where the teacher assumes the role of a facilitator (Sørensen et al., 2023). Through active participation, students are anticipated to nurture and enhance their sense of creativity. This approach not only focuses on rote memorization but encourages critical thinking, problem-solving, and the application of acquired knowledge in practical scenarios. With advancements in science and technology, the learning process has transformed significantly. Today, children have

access to diverse tools and resources that aid in absorbing knowledge beyond traditional visual aids. Interactive platforms, digital simulations, multimedia resources, and augmented reality applications are some of the modern techniques enhancing the learning experience. These innovations provide immersive learning environments, allowing students to engage with the subject matter in more dynamic and interactive ways (Santi & Gorghiu, 2022). Consequently, this diversified learning approach contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of concepts, promotes independent thinking, and enables students to apply their knowledge more effectively in various real-world contexts. (Syaharani & Fathoni, 2023).

Independent study program at that time applied to change the teaching method which was originally done in the classroom learning outside the classroom (H. Zhang, 2023). So the quality and technology-based learning tools are necessary students can easily understand them (Munte, 2022). Students at SMK Negeri 2 Solok expressed varied perspectives on Curriculum Merdeka. While some valued the flexibility to study subjects aligned with their interests, others found the unstructured format challenging and sought more guidance. Student feedback emphasized the need for a balanced approach that fosters independence while providing essential support networks.

The consensus among the instructors aligns with the Vice Principal's viewpoint, acknowledging the potential of the Merdeka Curriculum in enhancing both adaptability and student engagement within the educational framework. However, their collective sentiment underscores concern regarding the requisite need for additional professional development opportunities. They emphasize the necessity for a more profound understanding of the nuanced aspects inherent in implementing this adaptable curriculum. This understanding is perceived as pivotal in ensuring effective utilization and optimization of its potential benefits. The instructors highlight the significance of collaborative platforms as essential tools for sharing best practices and knowledge exchange among educators. These platforms are seen as instrumental not only in disseminating successful methodologies but also in collectively addressing challenges that may emerge during the execution of the Merdeka Curriculum. The recognition of the need for further professional development reflects a proactive approach among the teaching staff, aiming not just for compliance but for a comprehensive grasp of the curriculum's adaptability and its optimal integration within the educational landscape. The acknowledgment of collaborative platforms as crucial mediums for mutual learning and problem-solving underscores the collective drive towards refining and maximizing the efficacy of the Merdeka Curriculum, ultimately benefiting both educators and students alike.

The results suggest implications for future curriculum development at SMK Negeri 2 Solok, emphasizing the need to address limited resources, provide targeted professional development, and establish collaborative platforms for knowledge

exchange. A comprehensive strategy that addresses implementation issues while maintaining the advantages of Curriculum Merdeka is recommended.

The experiences at SMK Negeri 2 Solok, as highlighted by the Vice Principal and stakeholders, align with the global discourse on educational reforms. The focus on adaptation and flexibility, along with the challenges in their practical implementation, resonates with trends observed in various global educational contexts. Comparative analyses contribute to a deeper understanding of Curriculum Merdeka within the broader global education system.

Recognizing the limitations of this research, such as its reliance on qualitative insights and context-specificity, is crucial. Future investigations could explore the enduring consequences of Curriculum Merdeka, considering ongoing modifications and enhancements. Additionally, comparative analyses with other vocational schools could provide valuable insights into the broader applicability of the findings.

D. Conclusion

In conclusion, the extensive conversations and findings underscore the intricate dynamics associated with the adoption of Curriculum Merdeka at SMK Negeri 2 Solok. While the merits of the curriculum were acknowledged, evident challenges in resource allocation and pedagogical readiness surfaced. The perspectives shared by the Vice Principal, instructors, and students serve as a foundation for informed decision-making, emphasizing the imperative for targeted interventions and collaborative efforts in shaping the trajectory of vocational education at SMK Negeri 2 Solok. This study provides valuable insights that can guide future strategies, fostering a holistic approach to address the complexities and opportunities presented by Curriculum Merdeka in the context of this educational institution.

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