

Ideology, Power, and Policy: A Discourse Analysis of the *Merdeka Belajar* Curriculum in Higher Education

Nur Shabrina Atsarina Ramadhani^{✉1}, Elina Nurrohmah², Khuzaimah³, Imma Latifa⁴,
Moh. Mudzakkir⁵, and Putri Dwi Permata Indah⁶

¹²³⁴⁵⁶Universitas Negeri Surabaya

✉ Address correspondence: Jl. Lidah Wetan, Lidah Wetan, Kec. Lakarsantri, kota Surabaya, Jawa Timur 60213 Indonesia

✉ E-mail: nur.21079@mhs.unesa.ac.id

Article Info

Article History

Received:
Jan 2025
Accepted:
Feb 2025
Published:
Mar 2025

Keywords:

*Merdeka Curriculum,
Ideology, Power*

ABSTRACT

As the highest authority in Indonesia's education sector, Nadiem Makarim plays a crucial role in shaping the discourse on ideal education through curriculum policies. However, the implementation of the Merdeka Belajar (Independence Policy) in higher education has sparked both support and criticism. This study aims to analyze the discourse surrounding the policy's implementation using a qualitative approach and Sara Mills' discourse analysis framework, which examines actor positioning within texts. Research data is sourced from media texts, and the study applies Michael W. Apple's theory of ideology and power, which argues that educational institutions not only regulate behaviour but also shape the meaning of knowledge within the curriculum. Findings reveal two key aspects of Sara Mills' discourse analysis: position-object analysis and author-reader positioning. The study identifies the Indonesian government, represented by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Kemdikbudristek), as the dominant actor with authority over decision-making. Meanwhile, students, educators, and education practitioners serve as both implementers and beneficiaries of the policy. The research highlights how Kemdikbudristek, as a power holder, influences the discourse on ideal higher education through the Merdeka Belajar curriculum, which is shaped by various ideological factors, including the perspectives of its leadership. This study contributes to discussions on curriculum formulation in higher education and offers insights for policymakers in designing future education policies.

© 2025 Politeknik Negeri Bali

INTRODUCTION

A brighter future can be achieved by those who prepare for it, and education serves as a passport to that future (Sukmayadi & Yahya, 2020). Education as the backbone of every community's life greatly affects various aspects of the economy, politics, and the welfare of a country (Bigagli, 2019; Etherington, 2019; Suresh & Kumaravelu, 2017). The progress of a nation depends on its education. Education is one of the factors that determine the progress of a nation, as well as supporting the achievement of national development (Zamakhsyari et al., 2019). In modern society, good quality education is very important to emphasize because it can ensure the quality of human resources who are ready to fight in the latest digitalization world (Solas & Sutton, 2018).

The basis of national education has been stated in Law No.20 of 2003 Article 3 on the National Education System which states "National education functions to develop the ability and shape the character and civilization of a dignified nation to educate the nation's life, aims to develop the potential of students to become human beings who are faithful and devoted to God Almighty, noble, healthy, knowledgeable, capable, creative, independent, and become democratic and responsible citizens." This is then used as the basis for curriculum changes that also consider global trends.

In the 2022 Minister of Education and Culture Regulation, as the Ministry of Education and Culture again manages the higher education sector, human resource development under the authority of the Ministry of Education and Culture will focus on global trends related to: (1) rapid advances in technology; (2) socio-cultural shifts; (3) environmental changes; and (4) differences in the future world of work in the field of education at every level and cultural field (Permendikbud, 2020). Successful curriculum transitions are the result of careful planning and the need to focus on three factors: people, programs, and processes (Wardani et al., 2023). (1) People, the new curriculum should consider the society's culture, habits, and behaviour as the main actor of the curriculum implementation, (2) Programs, the planning and mechanism of the new curriculum's program should be clear for everyone that involves in the new curriculum implementation to minimize the probability of failure, (3) Process, the implementation of the curriculum should consider the situation of every region and monitoring every process. These three factors are interrelated, so when there is a mismatch in one of them, it can have a massive impact on national education.

The curriculum is one of the indicators of the success of a nation's education produced through the political policy-making process. In general, the curriculum is defined as an instruction guide plan or written document with content and learning experiences arranged to achieve certain goals (Hasan, 2019; Wahyudin & Suwirta, 2020). However, in the case of Indonesia, the reality of new curriculum implementation is different from what to expect. On the other hand, the making of the new curriculum, should not only consider the planned curriculum, but also the implemented or taught curriculum, the tested curriculum, and the hidden curriculum (Wahyudin & Suwirta, 2020).

One of the challenges that needs to be highlighted in the education system is the rapid curriculum changes that occur in Indonesia. Since Indonesia's independence, the national curriculum has changed eleven times. These changes occurred in 1947, 1952, 1964, 1968, 1975, 1984, 1994, 2004, 2006, 2013 and 2020. For any education system in any country, it is important to keep the curriculum responsive to changing times. However, rapid changes in a system can result in complex problems and often lead to possible inconsistencies in the educational structure (Bahzar, 2019; Ismanto, 2019; Sukmayadi & Yahya, 2020). Political reasons are often the cause of curriculum change problems in Indonesia so changes occur not through the results of a rigorously implemented evaluation program. In other words, different regimes lead to the creation of different curricula (Ismanto, 2019; Sakinah, 2018; Sukmayadi & Yahya, 2020).

Curriculum transitions or changes should be designed with a strong rationale that can justify why the changes need to be made in the first place and what results are targeted for the future education of the nation. In the process of curriculum change, rather than overhauling the entire education structure, the country should start focusing on one sector first. Next, policymakers carefully evaluate the implementation at that level of education before moving on to evaluate the next structure of education to meet global needs and get rid of obsolete points (Sukmayadi & Yahya, 2020).

In 2024, the curriculum that applies and is implemented in Indonesia is the Merdeka curriculum. The Merdeka curriculum is a renewal effort in the present using the background of increasingly advanced technology and its utilization is driven by the Covid-19 pandemic. The Merdeka curriculum aims to provide a more holistic and inclusive education that emphasizes character development, creativity, and critical thinking skills alongside academic knowledge. With a greater emphasis on student-centred learning and the use of technology, the Merdeka curriculum is also designed to be more flexible and adaptable to the needs of individual students. The curriculum changes in 2020 have significant differences from the curriculum changes in 2006 and 2013, due to the Covid-19 pandemic and two development agendas including (1) improving the quality and competitiveness of human resources; and (2) triggering a sustainable education movement (Zidan & Qamariah, 2023).

Curriculum as a political process is determined by a variety of considerations from various stakeholders. Curriculum as public policy generally refers to regulations from executive and legislative bodies to address public problems by institutionalizing laws and regulations (Pont & Viennet, 2017). The authority to develop the curriculum given to the executive and legislative bodies has caused socio-political turmoil in Indonesia affecting the use of the implemented curriculum. This causes the implementation of the curriculum in Indonesia to depend on the goals that these institutions want to achieve without considering the educational realities that exist in all regions.

Four years on from the implementation of the new curriculum, the implementation process has been criticized for the mismatch between the planning and implementation of the Merdeka curriculum. Research (Sumarno et al., 2024) highlights the implementation of a Merdeka curriculum amid the moral degradation of teachers or educators who can play a role in the moral formation of students. Meanwhile, research (Lusiana & Rahayuningtyas, 2024) resulted in the finding that a comprehensive shortage of human resources hampered the implementation of the Merdeka curriculum. Problems in implementing the curriculum in higher education are also a finding in the research (Sabriadi & Wakia, 2021) which highlighted the collaboration mechanism between universities and other institutions in the MBKM (Merdeka Belajar Kurikulum Merdeka) program.

Very little previous research has criticized the implementation of the Merdeka curriculum through a sociological perspective, especially analysis discourse. Inappropriate implementation can be caused by a mismatch in curriculum planning that does not focus on the reality of education in Indonesia. The curriculum as a product of political policy needs to be criticized for the background and process in its formation so that it can be evaluated by policymakers. The Merdeka curriculum was implemented during the leadership of Nadiem Makarim at the Ministry of Education and Culture. Nadiem Makarim, who acts as a policy maker, has the power to shape the discourse of how ideal education is. On the other hand, the ideals constructed do not follow the current educational context. Therefore, this research aims to find out the mechanism of forming the discourse of the Merdeka curriculum policy and analyze how the role of ideology and power in the implementation of the Merdeka curriculum in higher education.

Based on the previous research, the critics of the implementation of the Merdeka curriculum focus more on the problems caused by the curriculum transition. Meanwhile, the root cause of the new curriculum implementation is more than the planning and implementation. The analysis discourse of the policy maker behind curriculum merdeka needs to be studied to define the role of power relations related to the new curriculum implementation.

METHODS

This research uses a critical paradigm. Neumann, as quoted by Imam Gunawan, explains that the critical paradigm aims to advocate for research ideas to bring about changes in the substance of society. From a critical perspective, research no longer produces apolitical and neutral scientific works, but serves as a tool to change social institutions, ways of acting, and behaving in a better society. In short, critical thinking is the process of seeking answers by going beyond the surface appearance, which is often dominated by illusions, to transform and build a better society. This research uses qualitative methods employing Sara Mills' model of critical discourse analysis. Discourse is a way of presenting the meaning contained within a text. Discourse analysis is an analysis that dissects the hidden meanings behind a text (Eriyanto, 2001). As Sara Mills stated, discourse analysis can be seen as a reaction to linguistic forms that focus more on the units and structures of sentences consistently and do not focus on the sentences themselves with the language analysis used in several perspectives of discourse analysis.

Sara Mills' discourse analysis model involves examining how the positions of actors are presented in the text. It means who will be the subject of the story and who will be presented as the object of the story, and this will determine the structure of the text, as well as how meaning flows throughout the entire text. In this study, the subject position is the sentences conveyed by the Ministry of Education and Culture through texts and guidebooks, and the object position is the universities, students, and lecturers. In a broader perspective, Sara Mills attempts to emphasize how readers and writers are depicted in the text. Data collection in this research involves selecting the texts to be analyzed, specifically, the texts from Kemendikbudristek titled "Mendikbud Luncurkan Empat Kebijakan Merdeka Belajar: Kampus Merdeka" and the Merdeka Belajar-Kampus Merdeka 2024 Guidebook. The researcher also conducted a selection of texts that contain representations of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Kemendikbudristek) to relevant parties such as universities.

Next, the researchers also positioned the subject and object in the study, with the government through the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Kemendikburistek) as the subject actively involved in formulating and conveying policies using a progressive narrative, while the object is positioned

by universities, academics, and students as the implementers of regulations and beneficiaries of the policies. In addition, there is a writer-reader position where the writer in this context is the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Kemendikbudristek) through the guidebook drafting team. Meanwhile, the position of the readers includes higher education institutions, lecturers, students, and industry partners. Data collection in this research involves dissecting every text and guidebook that represents how the Ministry of Education and Culture (Kemendikbudristek) takes steps to use power as an effort for the benefit of higher education institutions, academics, lecturers, and students. Then, this research is analyzed through the lens of sociological analysis by Michele W. Apple. Apple is one of the figures in critical pedagogy who discusses curriculum and ideology.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Sara Mills' Discourse Analysis in the Merdeka Curriculum Policy in Higher Education

Text Position	Text
1. Subject-Object Position	<p>In the article entitled “Mendikbud Launches Four Merdeka Belajar Policies: Independent Campus”, Nadiem Anwar Makarim as Minister of Education and Culture (Mendikbud) is portrayed as the main actor who has authority and control over higher education policies. In this text, these policies include those related to university autonomy for opening new study programs, re-accreditation, requirements to become PTN-BH and policies related to Semester Credit Units (SKS). The subject position is the party that plays an active role, becoming the “actor” in the text. In this text, the subject position displayed is the Minister of Education and Culture, Nadiem Anwar Makarim, as the initiator and conveyor of the Kampus Merdeka policy. On the other hand, the position of the object refers to the party positioned as “subjected to action” or the focus of the subject’s action. The four policies initiated by Minister of Education and Culture Nadiem Makarim will have an impact on various parties, including universities (public and private), students, and the community who are the recipients of the policy. An example of this is shown in the following sentences.</p> <p><i>“The first policy is autonomy for state and private universities to open or establish new study programs.”</i></p> <p><i>“The second Independent Campus policy is a re-accreditation program that is automatic for all ranks and is voluntary for universities and study programs that are ready to move up the rankings. In the future, accreditation that has been determined by the National Accreditation Board for Higher Education (BAN-PT) remains valid for 5 years but will be renewed automatically.”</i></p> <p><i>“The third Independent Campus policy is related to the freedom for Public Service Agency (BLU) PTNs and Work Units (Satker) to become Legal Entity PTNs (PTN BH).”</i></p> <p><i>“The fourth Independent Campus policy will give students the right to take courses outside the study program and make changes to the definition of Semester Credit Units (SKS).”</i></p> <p>This subject-object position reflects the power relations that place the government, through the figure of the Minister of Education and Culture, in a dominant position</p>

as the main policy-making actor. The minister is portrayed as a subject who plays an active role in formulating and delivering policies, using narratives that emphasize efficiency and progressivity. Policies such as autonomy in opening study programs, automatic re-accreditation, and ease of cooperation with international partners are presented as solution steps to improve the quality of higher education. However, the narrative shows that the power to determine conditions and implementation remains in the hands of the government, so that universities, although given autonomy, are still subject to the regulations set.

In addition, students, as directly affected parties, are only implicitly mentioned as beneficiaries of the policy, with no room to actively participate in the formation of the discourse. This narrative highlights the government's success in designing policies and legitimizing government authority without providing space for alternative views or criticism.

Author-Reader Position The author of this text is a government institution (MoEC) that functions as the official communicator of the policy. The delivery style is formal, informative and proactive, reflecting the government's authority in delivering education policy. In the text narrative, the author wants to give the impression that the recipients of the policy are presented as the ones who benefit from this policy. Meanwhile, the readers are the public, especially academics, students and education practitioners. The reader's position is guided to understand and accept the policy as a positive step in improving the quality of education. Readers are directed to see the government positively. This is reflected in the use of words such as “making it easier” and “giving rights” in the following sentences.

“The third Independent Campus policy is related to the freedom for Public Service Agency (BLU) PTNs and Work Units (Satker) to become Legal Entity PTNs (PTN BH). The Ministry of Education and Culture will facilitate the requirements for BLU and Satker PTNs to become PTN BH without being bound by accreditation status.”

“Universities are obliged to give students the right to voluntarily, so students may take or not take credits outside their campus for two semesters or the equivalent of 40 credits. In addition, students can also take credits in other study programs within their campus for one semester of the total semester that must be taken. This does not apply to Health study programs.”

The author also uses the words “only changing ministerial regulations” in the sentence below to emphasize the efficiency and ease of policy implementation.

“This Independent Campus policy is a continuation of the concept of Merdeka Belajar. Its implementation is most likely to be carried out immediately, only changing ministerial regulations, not to change Government Regulations or Laws.”

2. Subject-Object Position In the text entitled “Guidebook for Merdeka Belajar - Kampus Merdeka 2024”, the main subject in this text is the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology (Kemendikbudristek), which is described as a decision-maker and authority. Kemendikbudristek actively designs, implements, and evaluates MBKM policies to ensure that universities and students can keep up with the needs of the world of work that follows global changes. The subject is positioned as an agent of

change through a narrative that highlights its active role in “giving freedom” to higher education in Indonesia, as shown in the following sentence.

“Giving freedom and autonomy to educational institutions, and freedom from bureaucratization, lecturers are freed from complicated bureaucracy and students are given the freedom to choose their preferred fields.”

The objects in the text are universities, students, and educational partners who are the recipients of the policy. Universities are described as institutions tasked with implementing the program in accordance with the Ministry of Education and Culture's direction, while students are referred to as the parties who benefit from this policy. The position of the object is relatively passive, as the focus of the narrative is more on receiving benefits than actively contributing to policy formulation.

Author-Reader Position The author of the text is the MoEC through the guidebook drafting team. This position can be seen from the official narrative that conveys the policy in an informative manner with the aim of convincing readers of the relevance and benefits of the MBKM policy. The author uses a formal and authoritative language style, reinforcing their position as a party that understands the needs of higher education and can offer solutions. However, the words used do not seem coercive, such as the absence of the use of the words “mandatory”, “must”, and the like.

The main target readers are higher education leaders, lecturers, students, and workplace partners. Readers are positioned as those who accept and implement the policy. The text is designed to guide them in the implementation of MBKM, but the author still provides space for criticism, input, and suggestions from the parties targeted by the policy, as stated in the sentence below.

“The 2nd edition of this guidebook can certainly still be developed in the future to answer the challenges of the times, therefore we expect input, criticism and suggestions from various parties, especially from university managers.”

Discussion

Discourse on Merdeka Curriculum in Higher Education in the View of Critical Pedagogy Michael W. Apple

The curriculum is at the heart of education because it describes the face of education when it is running (Hidayat, 2011). The curriculum is not only at the micro level but is more at the macro level strategy. This is because, in the process of curriculum implementation, there are social relations from various agents who have interests and are involved in it. The curriculum is also not detached from the relationships between the state and schools, the relationships between schools and society, and even the relationships with capital that are very influential namely the market.

Discussing the curriculum becomes very interesting. This is because, from before the independence era until now, there have always been changes to the Indonesian curriculum, such as the saying "new minister, new curriculum," which is indeed familiar to describe the state of education in this country. Hidayat (2011) and Tilaar (2003) stated that every curriculum change involves a contestation of power. A contest is defined as the struggle of various interested parties to participate in the production of the curriculum. Curriculum changes have become one of the inevitable events, because the curriculum plays an important role in the history of interaction between schools and communities, and it serves as a subject that has the position to analyze what the school possesses and faces with other institutions (Apple, 2021). In sociology, the curriculum cannot be naively understood as an implementational technical operation but as part of a social construct influenced by various factors. Thus, the curriculum can be interpreted as a space of power contestation that engages in mutual negotiation.

The Merdeka Curriculum is a curriculum product developed during the tenure of Minister of Education Nadiem Makarim. The Merdeka curriculum implemented in higher education has several important points highlighted by Nadiem Makarim. Kampus Merdeka is one of the policies that emerged from the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum. Kampus Merdeka is touted as a continuation of the concept of Merdeka Belajar. In the campus Merdeka policy, four policies have been established. The first, State Universities (PTN) and Private Universities (PTS) with A and B accreditation and have collaborated with organizations or universities that are in the QS Top 100 World Universities are granted autonomy in opening new study programs. The second policy of this independent campus is the automatic and voluntary re-accreditation for study programs that are ready to advance. The third policy is to facilitate the transition of PTN-BLU to PTN-BH regardless of the university's accreditation. The last policy from this independent campus is to grant students the freedom to take courses outside the campus. With the implementation of several policies, Nadiem believes that this is one way to break free from constraints and move more freely.

Michael W. Apple has intellectual connections with several critical pedagogy figures such as Henry A. Giroux, Pierre Bourdieu, and other figures who similarly view education as a form of politicization. In this case, it can be concluded that there are political interests behind the policies formed by the government to maintain certain powers. Apple focuses its study on curriculum and power. According to Apple's perspective, educational institutions do not only control an individual's behaviour but there is also the role of schools in controlling the meaning of knowledge encompassed in the curriculum. The dominant group or dominant ideology in schools can carry out the process of meaning control. Thus, there is an assumption that all individuals in the school must accept the knowledge disseminated by the dominant group. Apple also explains that the curriculum serves as a space for the transformation of ideology and the power of the dominant group in society.

Based on that statement, Apple focuses on several aspects such as the relationship between dominant and subordinate groups in the wider society, the relationship in the economic world represented in the market, and cultural dominance in the economic and political context of the education sector. The Merdeka Curriculum is also a product of the political policies in Indonesia. The student-centred approach with a system that liberates students has not been without misunderstandings. Apple also said that the curriculum is a space to maintain economic, political, and cultural dominance. In this regard, Apple explains hegemony, power, and control over the curriculum and its practices in education.

Apple states that education becomes an element in the determinants that are most easily driven by the market. In examining education, Apple focuses on several of his opinions, namely regarding the relationship between educational policy and the level of practice, as well as the relationship between dominant groups and subordinate groups. Secondly, Apple sees that there is a relationship between the market and cultural domination as observed in the world of education. Thus, Apple presents schools as arenas of dominance and struggle.

Apple highlights how the curriculum reproduction process (Komariah et al., 2024). In his view, the curriculum is always non-neutral because it is always influenced by ideology and power. The curriculum becomes part of the tradition, the vision of the dominant group about legitimate knowledge. Thus, the curriculum always reflects who holds power in society. In this regard, the discourse of Minister of Education Nadiem Makarim is transforming higher education into a vocational paradigm by linking and matching university graduates with the needs of the labour market industry. This has directed education towards the agenda of global capitalism by prioritizing market and productivity agendas. It's no wonder the direction of education designed by Nadiem Makarim aligns with the existing ideological background of a businessman with an educational background in business management. Suwignyo (2023) expresses that the Merdeka curriculum has transformed the "meaning of higher education" into merely "job training."

The Merdeka Campus policy, which provides students with the freedom to design courses outside the campus, is implemented in the MBKM program. MBKM (Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka) is one of the programs designed to prepare students to have several competencies or skills from various fields of study as a foundation for entering the workforce (Nugroho, 2022). The existence of the MBKM program not only benefits students but also provides advantages that can be felt by the state and the companies involved in the MBKM program. In line with Apple's thinking,

the program organized by the Ministry of Education and Culture is not entirely neutral but contains the interests of various parties, such as the interests of the state and companies. Apple emphasized that schools are not merely places for "seeking knowledge" because schools have transformed into economic institutions that shape the reproduction of the division of labour and support the perpetuation of hegemony (Nugroho, 2022). Thus, this program becomes one form of ideological domination carried out by the government because the results of this program become a unique advantage for the economy of a country and certain companies (Nugroho, 2022). Furthermore, (Mawarningrum, 2021) emphasises that the state has the authority and legitimacy to control the people through the establishment of curricula and the implementation of programs in the educational space.

Furthermore, Apple reveals how schools play a role in power and capitalism. Apple emphasizes that schools are not neutral because they contain political activities to control individuals and the production of knowledge. Apple explains that in education, there is a relationship between power and knowledge. In the context of education, there is power and injustice reflected in the curriculum. That means, schools not only have a role in controlling the production of knowledge in behaviour but also play a part in controlling the production of knowledge in the curriculum. This process can be carried out by ideology or dominant groups. Therefore, the dominant groups always hold the view that individuals in schools must accept the knowledge produced by the dominant groups (Hidayat, 2013). In this case, we can see that Nadiem, as the Minister of Education, has become the dominant group in controlling knowledge in higher education regarding the ideal curriculum that should be implemented in the era of Industry 4.0 through four policy points in the independent campus curriculum.

In the independent campus curriculum, the next policy is about the ease of transitioning from PTN-BLU to PTN-BH. The transition of a university's status to PTN-BH has several impacts. On one hand, universities have more authority and independence in managing higher education institutions. However, the transition to PTN-BH status for unprepared universities will create a boomerang effect. This is because universities will perpetuate the process of dehumanization. The concern about the PTN-BH status in the long term is that it will lead to insularity, vulnerability, and the process of proletarianization, which contradicts the initial goal of democratizing higher education.

The emergence of PTN-BH has become part of the commercialization in the world of education. This is because the government is considered irresponsible regarding education for its citizens. This statement can be seen from the government's policy of reducing higher education subsidies by 20%. This policy sometimes presents challenges for universities, such as a lack of operational funds, and low quality of educational services, and infrastructure. This policy of granting autonomy is part of the agenda for market expansion and economic improvement based on knowledge. This is closely related to the ideology of neoliberalism (Christiana, 2024). It can be seen that, in this curriculum, there is a reproduction of a certain ideology, namely neoliberalism. With the critical analysis of the implementation of the independent curriculum in higher education conducted by researchers, it is hoped that it can serve as a consideration for policymakers in formulating the curriculum to be applied in higher education institutions.

CONCLUSION

This study underscores the significant influence of ideology and power in shaping the Merdeka Belajar curriculum, as analyzed through Sara Mills' discourse analysis and Michael W. Apple's critical pedagogy perspective. The findings highlight the dominant role of the Indonesian government, particularly the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Kemdikbudristek), in directing educational policy, while universities, students, and the broader community function as policy recipients with limited agency. Despite the curriculum's stated goal of granting universities greater autonomy, the government retains substantial control, reinforcing its authority over higher education institutions.

Apple's perspective further reveals that curriculum design is not merely an academic matter but also a tool for maintaining economic, political, and cultural dominance. The lack of adequate consultation with key stakeholders—such as educators, students, and universities—suggests a need for more inclusive policy formulation. Ensuring open dialogue and providing structured forums for feedback could help address concerns and improve policy effectiveness.

This research encourages critical engagement with educational policies, urging academics and the public to remain vigilant against the potential politicization of education. Future studies should further investigate the interplay between ideology, power, and curriculum development to ensure that higher education policies serve the interests of all stakeholders rather than reinforcing existing power structures. By fostering greater inclusivity and transparency, Indonesia's higher education system can better align with the needs of its academic communities and society at large.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The author expresses his gratitude to the parties involved in writing this scientific article. Thank you to Mr Moh. Mudzakkir and Mrs. Putri Dwi Permata Indah for providing inspiration and motivation during the preparation of scientific articles. Apart from that, the author also thanks the reference providers who have provided open access so that information on research data can be completed by researchers through available secondary sources.

REFERENCES

- Apple, M. W. (2021). *Ideologi dan Kurikulum (Terjemahan)* (K. Sari, Trans.). Cantrik Pustaka.
- Bahzar, M. (2019). Authentic Leadership In Madrassas: Asserting Islamic Values in Teacher Performance. *Journal of Social Studies Education Research*, 10(1), 259–284.
- Bigagli, F. (2019). School, Ethnicity and Nation-building in Post-colonial Myanmar. *Research in Educational Policy and Management*, 1(1), 1–16.
- Eriyanto. (2001). *Analisis Wacana: Pengantar Analisis Teks Media*. KliS Pelangi Aksara.
- Etherington, M. (2019). The Challenge with Educational Transformation. *Journal of Culture and Values in Education*, 2(1), 96–112.
- Hasan, S. H. (2019). *Perkembangan Kurikulum: Perkembangan Ideologis dan Teoritik Pedagogis (1950–2005)*.
- Hidayat, R. (2011). Perspektif Sosiologi tentang Kurikulum. *Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Kebudayaan*, 17(2), 178–188.
- Hidayat, R. (2013). *Pengantar Sosiologi Kurikulum*. RajaGrafindo Persada.
- Ismanto, H. (2019). *Ketika Lisan Menjadi (Tu)lisan: Kumpulan Artikel Pendidikan*. Cipta Media Edukasi.
- Komarlah, S., Wilodati, & Wahyuni, S. (2024). *MERDEKA BELAJAR: Konstruksi Pedagogi Kritis dalam Kurikulum Merdeka*. Unisma Press.
- Lusiana, D., & Rahayuningtyas, W. (2024). Kontradiksi Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka Di SMP Negeri 4 Malang. *JoLLA Journal of Language Literature and Arts*, 4(3), 217–224.
- Mawarningrum. (2021). *Kata Michael W. Apple Soal Eksistensi Universitas dan Program Kampus Merdeka*. Kumparan.
- Nugroho, A. W. (2022). *Program MBKM dengan Analisis Pemikiran Michael W. Apple*. Kompasiana.
- Pont, B., & Viennet, R. (2017). *Education Policy Implementation: A Literature Review and Proposed Framework*.
- Sabriadi, H., & Wakia, N. (2021). Problematika Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar di Perguruan Tinggi. *ADAARA: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam*, 11(2), 175–184.
- Sakinah, K. (2018). *Potret dan Tantangan Pendidikan Zaman Now*. Republika.
- Solas, E., & Sutton, F. (2018). Incorporating Digital Technology in the General Education Classroom. *Research in Social Sciences and Technology*, 3(1), 1–15.
- Sukmayadi, V., & Yahya, A. H. (2020). Indonesian Education Landscape and the 21st Century Challenges. *Journal of Social Studies Education Research*, 11(4), 219–234.
- Sumarno, Sumarna, C., Rosidin, D. N., & Zaenudin. (2024). Kritik atas Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka di Era Dekadensi Nilai Moral Pendidik. *Risalah: Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Studi Islam*, 10(1), 84–93.
- Suresh, & Kumaravelu, A. (2017). *The Quality of Education and its Challenges in Developing Countries*. 2017 ASEE International Forum, Columbus.
- Suwignyo, A. (2023). *Guncangan Kampus Merdeka*. kOMPAS.ID.
- Tilaar, H. A. R. (2003). *Kekuasaan dan Pendidikan; Suatu Tinjauan dari Perspektif Studi Kultural*. Indonesia Tera.
- Wahyudin, D., & Suwarta, A. (2020). *Politics of Curriculum in the Educational System in Indonesia*. 11.
- Wardani, H. K., Sujarwo, Rakhmawati, Y., & Cahyandaru, P. (2023). Analysis of the Impact of the Merdeka Curriculum Policy on Stakeholders at Primary School. *JURNAL ILMIAH PEURADEUN: The Indonesian Journal of the Social Sciences*, 11(2), 513–530.
- Zamakhshari, Suhendri, & Lubis, D. E. (2019). Penerapan Manajemen Kurikulum dalam Meningkatkan Mutu Pendidikan di SMA Dharmawangsa Medan. *Almufida: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Keislaman*, 4(1).
- Zidan, M. R., & Qamariah, Z. (2023). A Literature study on the implementation of merdeka curriculum. *Jurnal Riset Rumpun Ilmu Bahasa (JURRIBAH)*, 2(2).