

# Independent Learning Concept

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## ARTICLE INFO

### Keywords:

Islam;  
Values  
Pancasila,

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### Article history:

Received 2022-11-25  
Revised 2022-11-27  
Accepted 2022-12-28

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## ABSTRACT

Education in Indonesia continues to experience developments in creating various learning designs, both in the form of strategies, methods and related to administrative or learning implementation designs. Along with the development of an increasingly sophisticated era, it becomes a very difficult task for educators to succeed in learning objectives. Likewise with students being the main task in understanding and learning the material being taught, to be able to become an intelligent young generation. As a country that continues to innovate in developing learning designs, Indonesia has at least experienced more than ten curriculum changes that have affected the style of learning since the beginning of independence. Starting from the 1947 Learning Plan to the one that has just been hotly discussed, namely "Freedom to Learn."

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Merdeka Learning which was proclaimed by the Ministry of Education and Culture under the command of Nadiem Makarim adds to the fact that in less than 10 years Indonesia has updated its curriculum 3 times (Sugiri, Priatmoko, 2020). This is none other than to answer Indonesia's changing needs according to the progress of the times in the success of a learning objective, whether strategy,

method or of an administrative nature or design of the implementation of learning. Thus, Indonesia is expected to be able to prepare students who have competitiveness in the future.

Merdeka Learning is a new policy program of the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia (Kemendikbud RI) launched by the Minister of Education and Culture Nadiem Anwar Makarim. Nadiem made an independent learning policy not without reason. This is because the 2019 Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) research showed that the assessment results for Indonesian students only occupy the sixth position from the bottom; in the field of mathematics and literacy, Indonesia is in 74th position out of 79 countries. In response to this, Nadiem also made a breakthrough in assessing minimum abilities, including literacy, numeracy and character surveys. Literacy does not only measure the ability to read, but also the ability to analyze the content of the reading along with understanding the concepts behind it. For numeracy skills, what is assessed is not mathematics, but an assessment of students' ability to apply numerical concepts in real life. One remaining aspect, namely the Character Survey, is not a test, but a search for the extent to which the values of character, religion, and Pancasila have been practiced by students (Mustaghfiroh, 2020). Apart from the policy program namely independent learning, teachers must also face challenges in the 21st century which are very complex in preparing quality human resources who are competent and able to face educational challenges globally.

The quality of education in the 21st century is our challenge. The quality of education is highly supported and determined by the components of education. Optimizing these educational components causes learning in the classroom according to a predetermined plan. One component that has a big contribution to the success of learning is the teacher. The teacher as the executor of education plays a very important and strategic role. Teachers are required to have professional qualifications. Professional teachers are not only required to master the fields of science, teaching materials, learning methods, motivate students, have high skills and broad insight into the world of education.

Improving the quality of education will not have a significant effect without qualified teachers (Sudirman, Bukingo, 2018). Therefore it is important to redesign the implementation of learning in PAI subjects, in this case as the development of innovation so that the expected learning objectives can be achieved. The teacher is a component that is very influential on the process and results of national education so that the role of the teacher is very important in

the education process, so teachers are always required to improve their competence.

The challenges of teachers in the 21st century are not easy and rather more difficult and the task of a teacher is not simple in the past, but more complex added by the presence of the Industrial Revolution 4.0 or the challenges of the 21st century. So these tougher and more complex challenges can only be overcome with a good curriculum, programs, good schools and superior human resources. The independent learning program is considered a revitalization concept in the world of education in Indonesia.

This concept is a response to the needs of the education system in the industrial revolution 4.0 era, minister Nadiem Makarim said that independent learning is freedom of thought, freedom of thought is determined by the teacher. front of the nation. The concept of Freedom to Learn is assumed to no longer be an idea but rather to be said as a policy to be implemented. Freedom to learn Independence is a word that is often interpreted and described as freedom in its true sense. The point of the problem is that there are still restrictions everywhere, especially education, educators and students have not been able to feel sufficient autonomy to determine the direction of policies in teaching and learning because they are still governed by regulations that make the planned implementation and evaluation processes carried out seem limited and tie. The idea of "free learning" is an initiative program echoed by the Minister of Education and Culture, Nadiem Markarim (Mantra, 2022). The independent learning program aims to provide creative space for students, teachers and parents and reduce pressure in the learning process.

The concept of Freedom to Learn which is an offer in reconstructing the national education system, by rearranging the education system in order to meet the progress of change and progress of the nation that adapts to changing times. With the return of the nature of education which is actually education to humanize humans and education that liberates learning activities which were originally natural activities of children who were deprived of being deprived of adult agendas that are forced on students. Educators require where and when to study, regardless of what the child is experiencing. Educators dictate what materials and goals should be studied by goma students even though they are not relevant in the lives of students. Even Ki Hajar Dewantoro emphasized several times about the independence of learning. "... independence should be imposed on the way children think, that is, don't always take the lead, or be told to acknowledge other people's ideas, still get used to children seeking all

knowledge by themselves using their own minds..." (Taman Siswa commemorative book 30 of 1922-1952) learning independence is a substantial matter, a prerequisite for the fulfillment of a point learning achievement without learning independence, students cannot be fond of learning. Character education will not be achieved because all behavior is not based on awareness.

## **2. METHODS**

Qualitative descriptive research tries to describe things that happen in the field based on real symptoms and conditions that exist in the research location (Sukardi, 2008). Presenting data as it is without adding or manipulating existing variables, and focusing on the results and their meaning. The data that has been collected goes through several stages so that the level of validity and reliability of the research data can be accounted for. The data that has been collected includes notes in the field, recordings, interviews, documentation and others that are considered important. Existing data were analyzed using a qualitative description method to analyze and interpret existing data. Data analysis was carried out through data reduction, display and data verification.

## **3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **A. Understanding the Concept and Freedom of Learning**

According to the Big Indonesian Dictionary, the concept means; understanding, mental picture of the object, process, opinion (understanding), design (aspirations) that has been thought of (KBBI, 1994). In order for all activities to run systematically and smoothly, it takes a plan that is easy to understand and understand. Careful planning adds to the quality of the activity. In the mature activity planning there is an idea or idea that will be carried out or carried out by certain groups or individuals, this planning can be shaped into a concept map.

Basically, the concept is an abstraction of an idea, or according to Kant quoted by Harifudin Cawidu, namely a general or abstract picture of something (Harifudin, 1991). The function of the concept is very diverse, but in general the concept has a function that is to make it easier for someone to understand something. Because the nature of the concept itself is easy to understand, and easy to understand (Idtesis.Com, 2022). From the above understanding the importance of a concept in expressing ideas or ideas so that these ideas and ideas can be implemented towards a more fundamental civilization or educational

change, namely education is able to produce an innovative change that is systematic, directed and measurable.

Meanwhile, the theory of Freedom to Learn was first introduced by Carl Ransom Rogers in the book *Freedom to Learn* (1969). The independent learning theory was born from the theory of humanism which holds that the learning process is centered on student initiatives to learn (learner-centered), which is then popular in the student-learning centered jargon. For this reason, one of the learning principles that Roger believes is effective is the role of the teacher as a facilitator, not a teacher. According to Roger, the learning process in which both the thoughts and responsibilities are fully left to the student's initiative, will produce learning outputs that are fully mastered and recorded strongly in depth (Widyastuti, 2022).

Merdeka Learning is a new policy program of the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia (Kemendikbud RI) launched by the Minister of Education and Culture Nadiem Anwar Makarim. Nadiem made an independent learning policy not without reason. This is because the 2019 Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) research showed that the assessment results for Indonesian students only occupy the sixth position from the bottom; in the field of mathematics and literacy, Indonesia is in 74th position out of 79 countries. In response to this, Nadiem also made a breakthrough in assessing minimum abilities, including literacy, numeracy and character surveys. Literacy does not only measure the ability to read, but also the ability to analyze the content of the reading along with understanding the concepts behind it.

For numeracy skills, what is assessed is not mathematics, but an assessment of students' ability to apply numerical concepts in real life. One remaining aspect, namely the Character Survey, is not a test, but a search for the extent to which the values of character, religion, and Pancasila have been practiced by students (Mustaghfiroh, 2020). Apart from the policy program namely independent learning, teachers must also face challenges in the 21st century which are very complex in preparing quality human resources who are competent and able to face educational challenges globally.

Learning Freedom means learning independence, namely providing learning opportunities as freely and comfortably as possible for students to study in a calm, relaxed and happy manner, without stress and pressure, taking into account the natural talents they have, without forcing them to learn or master something. field of knowledge beyond their hobbies and abilities, so that they

have a portfolio according to their interests. Because, giving a burden to students beyond their ability is a disgraceful act in common sense and is impossible for a wise teacher to do. This is like a student who is blind, then the teacher asks him to tell what and how the sun is to his friends.

The concept of education reform that will be carried out by the Ministry of Education and Culture is to give independence to teachers to teach at a level appropriate to students through the Freedom to Learn program. Freedom of Learning is freedom of thought, and the essence of this freedom of thought especially must be in the teacher first. Without the occurrence of independence in teachers, it is impossible for students to happen.

Education that liberates can at least be understood in several ways. First, education that liberates is an educational pattern that instills true values and changes the individual who learns. Of the many subjects or fields of study taught in classrooms, the question is, have all of these resulted in changes in our children? Has it been able to form a person who has life values that are pleasing to God? Second, education that liberates is education that is presented by prioritizing human values and dignity, therefore discriminatory practices and clustering of students must be kept away. Education is for all. So, the implication of this is, every individual who learns has the right to get the same treatment, also has the right to receive the same knowledge and knowledge. Third, education that liberates is education that restores human life (Widyastuti, 2022).

The presence of the slogan "Freedom to Learn" is an effort to liberate the minds of the nation's next generation. The hopes are: 1.) The minds of the younger generation can be independent so that they can get a better economic life. Because we are not yet independent, and that is our aspiration to free the brains of the children who will be our nation's successor. 2.) Liberate economic opportunities when children have left schools and entered the world of work. 3.) Independence for teachers and educational institutions The nation can be independent in innovating. To liberate teachers, to be able to determine what is best for their level of competence, as well as the interests of each of their children, and the freedom of our educational institutions to innovate and try new things. Freedom of thought, freedom of interaction, freedom of institutions, and other freedoms.

Freedom to Learn is the slogan of the policy that has been promoted by Nadiem Makarim since serving as Minister of Education and Culture. Until now, there have been five episodes of Merdeka Belajar. The Freedom to Learn Policy

provides independence for each education unit to innovate. The concept must be adapted to the conditions in the teaching and learning process, both in terms of culture, local wisdom, socio-economic, and infrastructure. In addition, the concept of teacher training will change from a seminar or workshop model to more practical training.

The first change, namely changing the National Examination to a Minimum Competency Assessment and Character Survey, eliminating the National Standard School Examination, simplifying the Learning Implementation Plan, and adjusting the zoning-based New Student Admission quota, the second change is related to the Independent Campus. The third change is related to changes in the mechanism in the BOS funds. The fourth change is related to the policy regarding the Mobilization Organization Program (POP). And, the fifth change, namely the matter of the Teacher Mobilization policy. So, the meaning of Freedom to Learn is that every educational unit, namely schools, teachers and students have freedom.

Meanwhile, from Sanjaya's point of view, the word learning has a literal meaning that emphasizes changes in mental processes resulting from stimulation of environmental interactions. In general, it has been stated that learning is a change in an individual that occurs through experience and not because of the growth or development of his body or the characteristics of a person from birth, therefore independent learning is freedom in determining how to behave, process, think, act creatively for each individual's self-development. individuals by determining their own destiny (Sanjaya, 2020).

The National Education System (commonly called SISDIKNAS) is an acronym that cannot be overlooked in the development of education in Indonesia. This is because the interests of learning at the elementary, middle and high-vocational education levels are accommodated by the enactment of Law no. 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System. The use of the phrase system implies that the course of national education in Indonesia is intertwined in a standard, measurable and stable working mechanism (Nurkholis, 2013).

Furthermore, the dynamics of learning policies in Indonesia have been accommodated in Article 35 paragraph (1) of Law no. 20 of 2003 that "National education standards consist of content standards, processes, graduate competencies, educational staff, facilities and infrastructure, management, financing, and educational assessment which must be improved in a planned and periodic manner" (DPRRI, 1982). The same principle is also implemented by

several developed countries in the world including Finland through the Journal of Teacher Education for Sustainability, Jyrki Reunamo and Liisa Suomela revealed that the fundamental basis for implementing educational development from time to time is in accordance with the vision of the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development. formulated the concept of sustainable development 1992 in Rio De Janeiro (Reunamo, Suomela, 2013). Meanwhile, the Meeting in Johannesburg in 2002 concluded that the agreement in Rio did not work as expected "Ten years after Rio, the UN meeting in Johannesburg (UN, 2002) had to admit that the aims of Rio had not been successful" thus pushing the UN to declare the decade on Education for Sustainable Development from 2004 to 2015. Based on the declaration, "every nation should set out the principles of sustainable development in all national curriculums (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2005)" which means that every country must determine the principles of sustainable development in all national curricula, especially in the education sector.

Independent learning can be interpreted as giving more space to students with the opportunity to study comfortably, quietly and freely without any pressure, taking into account the natural talents possessed by each student. In his speech on National Teacher's Day, the Minister of Education and Culture, Nadiem Makarim, explained a policy regarding independent learning which consisted of four points which were predicted to bring big changes and impacts in the world of education. In a straightforward manner, Nadiem Makarim explained about independent learning with four topics, the first: USBN, UN, RPP, and PPDB.

## **B. Free Learning Concept**

Talking about the concept of independent learning certainly has some relevance to constructivist learning theory. In his view, the child instructs the knowledge gained as a result of the interaction obtained from the observations and experiences of the objects the child encounters. In the process of constructivism, children's learning is more likely to have a focus point on the activity of each individual in forming knowledge. Students are expected to have the motivation to learn according to what they want without any pressure from any party.



Freedom of learning is freedom of thought and especially the essence of this freedom of thought is in the teacher first. Without it happening in the teacher it is impossible for students to happen," said Nadiem in a discussion on National Education Standards, at the Century Park Hotel, Central Jakarta on Friday, December 13 2019 (Kholis, 2020).

Merdeka Learning has characteristics in the learning process which is critical, creative, innovative, transformative, relevant, effective and efficient. In this case the Ministry of Education and Culture presents this concept in the world of education in Indonesia. Emphasis on independent learning and driving teachers. Which means that students have the freedom to obtain education and the teacher becomes the driving force (motor) to achieve the process of independent learning. The learning process that is lived in a fun way allows students to be able to remember more and longer material, in other words, the retention rate is stronger. In Ki Hajar Dewantara's view above, independent learning in turn produces creativity which is an important element for progress. This teacher becomes a facilitator in the learning process.

The Ministry of Education and Culture emphasized that this movement for independent learning was characterized by the start of the return of the USBN to the school, the elimination of the National Examination and then being replaced by a minimum competency assessment process and a character survey. In this case the Ministry of Education and Culture wishes that there is no value pressure on students so that students are not fixated with numerical values. And finally, forming the character of students who are competent, excel in human resources and have noble character.

In recent decades, the Indonesian Minister of Education has designed the concept of independent learning. Before we get into the concept, we will discuss what independent learning means. Freedom to learn is one of the innovations from the Indonesian Minister of Education which gives freedom to an educational institution and its autonomy, and is free from bureaucratization, where teachers can be free from complicated bureaucracy and students are given the freedom to be able to choose the field they like.

The following are some of the concepts that the Merdeka Learning program will offer:

1. Various places and times

In carrying out the learning process is not only limited by space such as only in class. But also outside the classroom can. Where outside the classroom can provide a better atmosphere in receiving lessons.

2. Free choice

Students can practice learning styles according to what they feel most comfortable with. So that students are expected to continue to hone their abilities.

3. Personalized learning

Teachers can adapt to students in understanding the material, solving answers according to students' abilities, this is like playing a game. Where if he is able to solve a challenge then he will quickly level up so he is no longer using the system of average student abilities.

4. Project based

Students are invited to be able to apply the skills they have learned in various situations. This experience will be felt to be applied in his daily life.

5. Field experience

Match and Link in the world of work is very important. At this time the material that has been given to students has nothing to do with the world of work. So the existence of field experience can help students to be more efficient in the world of work.

6. Data interpretation

Students will get a lot of information. It is hoped that with the amount of incoming information, it can solve the problem of needs, can be used to analyze problems, etc.

### **C. Four Principles of Free Learning Policy**

In the concept of independent learning, there are four main programs of education policy which are used as a focus point on improving the quality of human resources," the "Free Learning" program has 4 (four) policies which include:

1. Comprehensive USBN Assessment Process, namely the implementation of the USBN (National Based School Examination) will be carried out with exams held by schools in the assessment process. The school can conduct exams in writing or orally, or can use writing or collecting portfolios. So

that the school is able to compile and have authority according to policies which of course support the child's knowledge process.

2. The National Examination (UN) will be changed to a Minimum Competency Assessment and Character Survey consisting of reasoning abilities using language (literacy), reasoning abilities using mathematics (numeration), and strengthening character education. The exam process will also be carried out in the middle of the education level, for example in grades 4 SD, 8 SMP, 10 SMA, this will be material for evaluating learning at the educational level which will be carried out by the teacher or educator (PP, No. 22, 2020).

3. Simplification of the Learning Implementation Plan (RPP), in the process of preparing the RPP the Ministry of Education and Culture trimmed several components. In this policy teachers can freely choose, create, use, and develop lesson plans formats. The three core components of lesson plans consist of learning objectives, learning activities, and assessments.

4. New Student Admissions (PPDB), there is a change in the Composition of the PPDB zoning pathway can accept a minimum of 50% students, a minimum of 15% affirmation, and a maximum transfer path of 5% then on the achievement track or the remaining 0-30% adjusted to regional conditions each city. Each region has policy autonomy to determine the final composition of the zoning so that equity and the quality of students and teachers are balanced (Kompas, 2022).

#### **D. The Essence of Free Learning**

Exploring the great potential of school teachers and students at home to innovate and improve learning independently, not only through the education bureaucracy, but truly educational innovation, the diversity of learning approaches supported by technology. So that every student is able to think critically, innovatively, creatively, transformatively in order to become superior and competent human resources.

#### **E. Independent Learning Goals**

With the existence of a new policy from the Ministry of Education and Culture or (Kemendikbud) regarding the Free Learning Concept, the goal is to create a

link and match or link the world of learning and the world of work. The Freedom to Learn Policy also aims to realize the quality or quality of sustainable education. As we know with Merdeka Learning, students have the flexibility in learning not only in one segment because according to Nadiem Makariem, children are multi-intelligence, each child must have intelligence according to their interests in their respective fields, so they are given freedom in art. learn with his own intelligence and according to his potential, should not be managed with just one intelligence, also learn thoroughly and holistically, and create a pleasant learning atmosphere from any point of view, and students as learning centers, and as learning subjects and dimensions main course, and the teacher adjusts the goals of student learning outcomes and prepares concepts that are suitable and relevant to the goals to be achieved, with independent learning not torturing the Educators, students and parents. With this, Merdeka Learning aims to liberate students from a system of pursuing value targets, applying learning in a fun way, and learning is not only for pursuing graduation, or to get the highest score, learning can also be carried out outside the classroom, not only in class but, students are expected to be able to discuss with teachers, outing classes, and learn many things such as learning to ask questions, think smart in socializing, and be independent.

Implementing your own policies so grades do not depend on written grades as before but assignments can be taken from individual or group daily assignments, assigned assignments can be in the form of papers, or portfolios and so on. As explained by the concept of independent learning by the Ministry of Education, there is the application of the National Examination (UN) which was abolished which turned into a Minimum Competency Assessment and Character Survey, so usually students' mastery of learning absorption is tested and carried out at the end of the school level by testing subjects. mathematics, Indonesian, and others, this time the National Examination has been replaced with literacy and numeracy mapping, which is not the same as Indonesian and Mathematics, but also includes Natural Sciences, Social Sciences and the like, which it is hoped that students will be able to fully understand and analyze a reading and being able to apply the concept of counting in everyday life, strengthening character and learning applications that will later be carried out in the middle of the school level. Furthermore, namely the Character Survey which is different from the test, usually the government is considered to only have cognitive data from students, but does not know the actual condition of the ecosystem in schools, then later students are given a number of questions, for example a survey on the

implementation of mutual cooperation in schools, then whether is there bullying going on, is the level of tolerance healthy and good at school and have students applied the principles of Pancasila in the lives of students, so students not only learn subjects but also learn to respect one another, help each other so that students are right can really feel and can be implemented, and then this Character Survey is expected and used as a benchmark or guide as feed back for schools and the government as improvements and changes to Education Policy in the future (Rosyidi, tt).

## **F. Strengths and Weaknesses of Independent Learning**

The independent learning program, which was not long conveyed in the speech by the Indonesian education minister Nadiem Makarim, is one of the programs that can awaken the Indonesian education system which just happens to be more passionate and advanced like the name of the program, namely Merdeka Learning. The independent learning program certainly reaps pros and cons from various groups because of the advantages and disadvantages of the program.

### 1. The advantages of independent learning:

#### a. Free Expression Students.

That is, students are free to express in the sense that they are free in learning because they are not governed by just one lesson, in essence students learn according to their respective potentials.

#### b. Students Are Not Demanded Equally.

The independent learning program has actually brought changes to the Indonesian education system, because so far students have been targeted by academic grades alone, the independent learning program makes students look special because of different skills, in the process of learning to recognize their talents, we as teachers must always be there so that children do not give up in the process.

#### c. IDR 1 sheet.

Because students learn according to their respective potential, we as teachers who guide students only need to adjust the direction, with the

lesson plan 1 sheet the teacher's burden is slightly reduced because it is hoped that the supervising teacher will focus on directing and accompanying students.

## 2. Disadvantages of Free Learning:

### a. Requires a lot of time and money.

With the free expression of students in learning, of course it takes a lot of time and costs because in the process students have different understandings.

### b. Lack of independent teachers

To realize students who are independent in learning, of course, requires teachers who are independent in teaching as well, but the experience of independent teachers is only a little mostly seen from the experiences of teachers in their college days, this is due to the lack of experience of the teachers, because the independent learning program is new -recently published.

### c. Lack of references

To run this independent learning program, of course, you need references or referrals such as books as learning tools, books that are currently available are rated low, therefore you need books that are more efficient to carry out learning and realize this independent learning program. Those are the advantages and disadvantages taken in outline.

## 4. CONCLUSION

Freedom of learning is freedom in determining how to behave, process, think, act creatively for the self-development of each individual by determining his own destiny. The key to Freedom of Learning is in the activating teacher, and the activating teacher will not materialize when they are not completely independent. So realizing Freedom of Learning must be done fundamentally, not just through technical matters and changing new policies. This Independent Learning will be realized when the teacher is truly independent which can be achieved with several solutions.

First, freeing teachers from administrative burdens. Times are fast-paced, practical, but if government regulations are still wordy and burden teachers with a myriad of administrations, then Merdeka Learning will be in vain. In fact, until this moment administration is still the main task of the teacher. While teaching is still the second job of the teacher.

Second, diverting additional tasks to educational staff. This is important so that teachers focus on learning according to the main task of the teacher. So far, teachers themselves often do additional tasks at home until evening, even the duties of being the head of the family or a housewife are neglected because of the unclear mapping of tasks.

Third, increasing teacher salaries and distributing teachers with the status of Government Employees with Work Agreements (PPPK) to the regions. This is because the Presidential Regulation (Perpres) concerning PPPK Payroll and Allowances has not been completed until now.

Fourth, selecting teachers who are physically and mentally ready so that they truly become teachers who can be admired and imitated, not just salary hunters. The selection pattern must be tidied up and teacher capacity building must be continuously improved.

Fifth, liberating teachers from the shackles of the establishment and "robot souls". The teacher as a role model, transferring knowledge, character, and morals must be a good example, "digugu" and "imitated", not wagu and sarcasm.

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