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Vocational High School English Teachers' Perspectives On "Merdeka Belajar" Curriculum

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Abstrak

Tujuan dari penelitian ini untuk mengidentifikasi perspektif guru mengenai konsep Merdeka Belajar dan penyederhanaan rencana pelaksanaan pembelajaran (RPP). Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif-deskriptif dengan melibatkan 8 guru Bahasa Inggris dari sekolah menengah kejuruan (SMK) yang berbeda. Data dari penelitian ini diperoleh dengan menyebarkan angket dan melakukan semi-structured interview. Hasil dari pengolahan data menunjukkan tidak semua guru memahami konsep Merdeka Belajar. Hasil pengolahan data juga menunjukkan bahwa penerapan RPP 1 Lembar oleh guru belum memenuhi ekspektasi ekspektasi Merdeka Belajar. Terdapat beberapa pernyataan yang berbeda dari apa yang subjek tulis pada kuesioner dan pada saat interview. Namun secara keseluruhan, semua partisipan mendukung penuh pelaksanaan Merdeka Belajar

Keywords: Merdeka Belajar, Perspektif, Sekolah Menengah Kejuruan (SMK)

Abstract

This study aims to identify the teachers' perspectives on the Merdeka Belajar curriculum in terms of its concept and lesson plan. The method used was qualitative-descriptive that involved 8 English teachers from different Vocational High Schools in Surabaya. The data collected through questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. After being analyzed, the results showed that not all teachers understand the concept of Merdeka Belajar. The finding also showed that the implementation of a one-page lesson plan (RPP 1 Lembar) had not met the expectation of Merdeka Belajar. What was being stated by participants was different from what was being told during the interview and this affects the final results. However, all participants fully support the implementation of this new curriculum.

Kata Kunci: Merdeka Belajar, Perspectives, Vocational High School

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INTRODUCTION

In order to optimize human development, Indonesia through vocational high school (SMK) tries to develop attitudes and work habits so that the students can meet the social, political, and economic demands. One of the main purposes of SMK as a secondary education institution and formal educational institution is preparing students to enter the workforce by equipping professional attitudes and to prepare the middle-level workforce to fill the demand of the business world and the World of Industry (DUDI) for this time and in the future (Dharma, 2013). Vocational education is one of the key aspects in strengthening economic development and its competitiveness in all countries, both developing and industrialized. Vocational Education and Training Systems are important elements of countries' economic development strategies (Mouzakitis, 2010).

However, this aim will not happen if human resources have not been equipped with good communication skills. As technology develops, economics grows, new curricula come and go, the demand for using English increases rapidly. Global demand forced the economics sector for being involved actively on a local or international scale so that English is inevitably becoming the key to survive. In the corporate world, English is the most regularly used language and the knowledge of English has become one of the most important employability skills (Clement & Murugavel, 2018). Without effective communication skills, competitive advantages cannot be achieved. Everyone can see how English strongly influences our society. Many terms are adapted and adopted into Indonesian language. Regarding its urgency, Indonesia's education is designed to prepare great human resources to fulfill this global demand. As the result, English is being taught in every school in Indonesia including in vocational high schools. By equipping them with English, our human resources are expected to be able to survive and fit in into the global marketplace. Indonesia expects that there will be no more boundaries to tap into new opportunities at home or abroad.

The urgency of having a great quality of human resources is prioritized since this is the key to solve all the nation's problems. No matter how complex the problems are, as long as our human resources have been prepared and equipped well, then there has no to worry about. As stated by (Lestari & Aulia, 2018), Qualified human resources will be able to improve the quality of a country. As the leading sector that plays a crucial role in upgrading the quality of human resources, the Minister of Education follows up this issue by releasing *Merdeka Belajar* as it is an onset to fix and change our monotone system. *Merdeka Belajar* gives learners more freedom since learners will have more opportunities to explore, do discussion more freely, do outing class rather than sitting while their teachers lecturing. Compared to the old system, this concept is more focusing on learners' processes and characters rather than only learners' scores taken through multiple-choice tests. In his speech on 11 December 2019, Nadiem Makarim, Indonesia Minister of Education, explained that this new system is expected to create a fun learning environment rather than burdensome learners by a particular achievement of the score. Moreover, he also stated that the notion of *Merdeka Belajar* is expected to be able to improve the quality of Indonesian human resources. As stated in article 31 section 3 and Law on the National Education System year 2003 about the function of the national education system must be able to improve the quality of human resources.

However, this great concept will not be able to accomplish the goals and be successfully implemented without the teachers' role. Teachers are the key to success in curriculum changes so that the roles are always expanded into the new directions under the policy. Teacher plays an important role in providing an engaging teaching and learning environment (Vighnarajah, Luan, and Abu Bakar, 2008). Therefore, teachers are required to be adaptive as their roles are always shifting following the policy applied (Thomson and Bell, 2016) explained in their study that teachers' perceptions played an essential role since their perspectives influenced their teaching ability. Hence, it is important to know teachers' perspectives of the concept and how they design the lesson plan and implement it during the teaching-learning process.

Regarding all the urgency that was stated above, this research aims to identify the teachers' perspectives on the *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum in terms of its concept and lesson plan. They need to be investigated since there are slight differences between the 2013 curriculum and *Merdeka Belajar* in terms of the general concept and lesson plan format. Thus, the findings will be important information for the schools and government concerning whether *Merdeka Belajar* has been applied or not and the teachers' perception including the constraints toward the curr application to the curriculum. Therefore, this study purposed to know teachers' perspectives on "*Merdeka Belajar*" (Freedom Curriculum) in terms of the concept of the curriculum. Then, this study is also held to know teachers' perspectives on "*Merdeka Belajar*" (Freedom Curriculum) in terms of the lesson plan.

Some previous studies related teachers' perspectives on *Merdeka Belajar* indeed have been conducted by some reserachers such as Lestyani on *Analisis Persepsi Civitas Akademika Terhadap Konsep Merdeka Belajar Menyongsong Era Industri 5.0*. The result of the study showed that only 40% of 50 teachers understand the concept of *Merdeka Belajar*. The study used closed interviews and questionnaires, but the finding did not explore the results of the interviews then it was only in the form of percentages. Then what makes it different is this current research tries to seek further about teachers' perspectives through questionnaires combined with semi-structured interviews and the results are presented in form of description. Since this study used interviews, teachers' perspectives can be explored further including their understanding of the concept, obstacles they faced, and their voice regarding this issue. Then the curriculum gap can be found by analyzing their answers rather than only test their understanding of whether their familiar with the concept or not.

Another study was written by Okta Triyudi & M. Giatman entitled *Persepsi Guru SMK di Kota Padang Terhadap RPP Satu Halaman*. The method used quantitative by using questionnaires as the instruments. Taking 38 teachers as the participants, the result indicates that the teachers have a good understanding of the simplification of lesson plans based on the *Merdeka Belajar* concept. Since the study used a quantitative method, then the result was presented in the form of numbers. What makes the study different from the current research is that the method used influenced the final result presented. By using qualitative, the researcher expected the teachers' voice can be more explored rather than only check whether they understand or not.

The purpose of this research in seeking teachers' perspectives of *Merdeka Belajar* is to be beneficial for the Government in evaluating the implementation of "*Merdeka Belajar*" through teachers' voices. By hearing teaches' voices, the gap will be found and it can improve the quality of our education. To reach this purpose, exploring teachers' perspectives by hearing and analyzing their explanations is crucial. Through their explanations, the gaps can be identified and this what makes this current research different from the previous studies. This study was not only checking whether they are familiar or not with the curriculum, instead of exploring teachers' perspectives by knowing their understanding, hearing their obstacles and expectations.

METHOD

This article used a descriptive-qualitative method to describe teachers' perspectives of *Merdeka Belajar* in terms of concept and lesson plan. According to (Sandelowski, 2000) a qualitative descriptive study is the method of choice when straight descriptions of phenomena are desired. The variables were 8 English teachers from different vocational high schools that are SMK Barunawati, SMK Farmasi Surabaya, SMKN 5, SMKN 10, SMK KAL-1, SMK Al-Irsyad, SMK Bhakti Samudra, SMK Adika Wacana. The source of the data in this research is focusing on whom the data obtained from. Since this research aims to see English teachers' perspectives, so the teachers here are the source of data. All the teachers' explanations, statements, and descriptions will be collected and analyzed to clarify the issues in this research. To obtain the data, the instruments used were questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The data gathering was conducted in a month which 3 weeks for obtaining data through questionnaires and a week for the interviews section.

Some procedures were conducted by the researcher to collect the data, those are : (1) Taking questionnaires to the State Vocational High School English teachers. Then the result is described. This step is done to know the teachers' perspectives of Merdeka Belajar in terms of concept and lesson plan. (2) Doing semi-structured interviews with 3 teachers to clarify their answers on questionnaires. The result is described. This step is to explore selected teachers' perspectives based on the questionnaire's result (3) Doing semi-structured interviews with 3 English teachers to know their perspectives of the lesson plans based on the concept of Merdeka Belajar. The result is described. This step aims to explore selected teachers' perspectives based on the questionnaire's result. There were some considerations why the 3 teachers were selected to be interviewed, those are: cross-checking their answers, having unique perspectives of Merdeka Belajar or there were some points that potentially gave important suggestions for improving Merdeka Belajar's quality.

After the data gathered, the researcher conducted the next steps those are : (1) Analysing the result of the questionnaires which are collected from English teachers (2) Describing the result of interviews regarding teachers' perspectives of the concept of Merdeka Belajar which is done by selected the English teachers that were chosen by considering the result of questionnaires. (3) Describing the result of interviews regarding teachers' perspectives of the lesson plan based on Merdeka Belajar which is done by selected the English teachers that were chosen by considering the result of questionnaires. (4) The researcher concluded; and (5) the researcher presented the results.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

In this section, the researcher describes the findings after gathering the data through questionnaires and interviews. The researcher describes teachers' perspectives of Merdeka Belajar that includes teachers' understanding and the effect of Merdeka Belajar in improving the quality of human resources. Besides, this study also describes teachers' understanding of RPP 1 Lembar and its effect in achieving the learning objectives.

The researcher distributed questionnaires through MGMP and only 8 teachers from different schools submitted the questionnaires. After being analyzed, the researcher decided to interview 3 teachers to clarify their answers and dig some information further. 3 participants were chosen since the answers stated in the questionnaires might be ambiguous and needed to be clarified through an interview and some others might be unique from the majority of answers. The research was conducted in 3 weeks which 2 weeks for distributing the questionnaires and a week for doing interviews. The 3 interviewees were 3 teachers from different schools.

Teachers' Perspectives of the Concept of "Merdeka Belajar"

Understanding the Concept of "Merdeka Belajar"

The data gathered through questionnaires showed that all participants know the term *Merdeka Belajar*. 4 of 7 teachers perceive *Merdeka Belajar* as a curriculum that gives both teachers and students more freedom to learn in terms of methods, place, and time. It does not mean that teachers and students can be free with no guidelines instead, they have full right to choose what methods are suitable to be applied by considering their situation, needs, and conditions. Here are some teachers' answers regarding *Merdeka Belajar*:

...there is freedom to conduct the teaching and learning process without being limited by strict regulations. Teachers also do not need to make long lesson plan models instead of being simplified. The point is emphasizing on students-centered.. (Q/NM)

...Merdeka Belajar allowed students to collaborate by using various concepts and methods so that they do not be tied by the curriculum, instead of using the best method based on their needs.. (Q/H)

However, after being clarified through interview, it was found that there were 1 of 3 interviewees did not understand the concept of *Merdeka Belajar*. This participant admitted that she was only familiar with the term, but fail in understanding this new curriculum. She added that there had not been any workshop or socialization regarding this issue which is surprising. This curriculum has been applied for two years and socialization has not been widespread. Meaning that there must be others or even many schools that still have the same case like this.

honestly, I have no idea about what Merdeka Belajar means, I have only heard the term from (one of the marketing in internet provider) that came at that time. Also, there has not been any socialization regarding this. I also never try to browse it on google what Merdeka Belajar is but in my opinion, Merdeka Belajar means learning from anywhere.. (I/LY)

On the other hand, two other interviewees explained *Merdeka Belajar* as the freedom to learn without being limited by time and place. EW perceived that this new curriculum is more emphasizing to students-centered as the form of freedom, meaning that students must be independent seeking knowledge and not being spoonfed by the teachers anymore.

Merdeka doesn't mean being totally free. It means that students can gain knowledge and learn anywhere and anytime. In Merdeka Belajar, teachers are not being central information which means that students must seek their own knowledge from any sources. (I/EW)

EW also added that *Merdeka Belajar* pushed students to grow initiative to gain their knowledge. In short, students must have the feeling of independence to learn. However, this independence will not be accomplished if the teachers themselves failed to understand the concept of *Merdeka Belajar*. Nadiem Makariem as the initiator of *Merdeka Belajar* said "*Merdeka Belajar* means the freedom of thinking." To make students have this independence, everything must be started by teachers. This statement is supported by (Bedduside, 2020), who explained to make students have independence in thinking, it must be started by teachers first. Students will fail to reach this freedom if it is not initiated by teachers.

Various answers were stated by participants regarding their understanding of *Merdeka Belajar*. Most teachers perceived *Merdeka Belajar* as the freedom to select the best learning styles based on students' condition, but most of them forget that "*Merdeka Belajar*" will not be accomplished without motivation and initiative from students to seek their knowledge. (Bahar & Herli, Sundi, 2020) their study explained that students must have the initiative to learn independently based on their interests and skills without being dependent on study groups or school lectures.

Merdeka Belajar in Improving Quality of Human Resources

Having eminent and competitive human resources is the key to solve all the nation's problems. There are numerous challenges and threats from both external and internal. However, external factors are not the only threat to think about. Something that is more dangerous comes from inside of the nation itself, which is an internal factor. The rampant use of social media weakened the mentality of our generation these days. How can a nation face and solve all those challenges without being equipped with human resources? Here *Merdeka Belajar* is considered as the answer to fulfill the globalization demand by improving the quality of human resources through education. As concluded by (Yamin & Syahrir, 2020), *Merdeka Belajar* can help Indonesia having great human resources as long as the students can master three aspects of literacy they are: data, technology, and human literacy.

Based on the questionnaires, all the participants agree that *Merdeka Belajar* can improve the quality of our human resources. As what stated by 2 teachers, this new curriculum gives teachers more freedom to choose the most suitable methods and strategies based on students' need. Being free does not mean doing whatever we want without any clear guidelines, instead of given more space to explore, adapt and choose the

best learning model based on students' conditions. The goals are to make teachers be more creative and independent in adopting and adapting the most suitable methods while students are expected to have more initiative in choosing the best way of learning.

By using the most suitable methods for students, teachers can give the best for their students. Even teachers can be independently to choose best elements from curriculum to improve the quality of human resources to grow their initiative without being restricted both students and teachers to speak up.. (Q/H)

Merdeka is being free of restraint and independent. Merdeka Belajar gives students and teachers freedom, but freedom here means being more independent in performing their functions, so independence is the main point (Q/EW)

Two statements expressed by teachers above are in line with what was explained by (Widiyono & Irfana, 2021) that the core of *Merdeka Belajar* is to explore the biggest potential of teachers and students to improve the education quality independently. The improvement of the education system will automatically affect the quality of our human resources to be more eminent. Besides, 2 other participants think that *Merdeka Belajar* provides them a flexibility of time and place to learn. This flexibility is absolutely beneficial in improving our quality of human resources as stated by these 2 participants:

the process of teaching and learning can be conducted anywhere and anytime and make use of any media (Q/NM)

Because learning is not limited by time (Q/LY)

However, students need to understand that they have to be active participants of knowledge building no matter anywhere and everytime. (Susilawati, 2021) explained in her study "*Indikator keberhasilan belajar adalah peserta didik senang, bergairah, inisiatif dalam belajar dan terjadi perubahan pola pikir, perilaku, sikap atas kemauan sendiri.*" the indicators to show the success of learning when the students are happy, have a huge enthusiasm, grow initiative to learn that showed by the changing of thought, behavior and attitude independently. She also added that through *Merdeka Belajar*, students are expected to be free, brave, independent, and have full responsibility without trespassing to the norms.

The Simplification of One-Page Lesson Plan (RPP 1 Lembar)

Understanding RPP 1 Lembar

The new policy of RPP 1 Lembar is expected to ease teachers' burden by simplifying the lesson plan and to make teachers be more focused on preparing and evaluating the learning process. As written in Circular Letter number 14 in the year 2019 by the Ministry of Education and Culture (Mendikbud), there is no strict standard that rules how teachers must design their lesson plans. As long as it is efficient and students oriented, then there will be no problem. The concept is sketched based on students' needs, goals, and the situation of their schools then the goals will effectively achieve.

All teachers stated in the questionnaires that they have been familiar with RPP 1 Lembar. They also explained briefly that this new form of lesson plan eases their burden. However, after interviewing some teachers, the result of the interviews showed the opposite. 2 teachers admitted that there is no significant difference in terms of lightening the teachers' burden. This is not what they expected. We called in RPP 1 Lembar, but the truth is that there are still more papers and other attachments.

I thought it only had a page, but it wasn't. There are more explanations, attachments and that's a lot. If the previous lesson plan. we allowed to plan 2 meetings in a lesson plan, but now we can't. We make it for each meeting that's why it's a lot (I/EW)

I think it was just the same as the previous one. RPP 1 Lembar still has so many attachments (I/MS)

Otherwise, one of three teachers stated differently. This participant admitted that this lesson plan can ease their burden since it is only one page of lesson plan.

in short, it is not exactly a page of paper. If we have 5 chapters the we have 5 sheets, a sheet for a chapter. We can make it (the lesson plan) for each chapter. It depends on how we want to design it, but the template has been set from school (I/LY)

Those answers from 3 teachers above indicated that teachers have been familiar with RPP 1 Lembar and they have implemented it. However, the implementation needs to be evaluated by the government since the data above showed dissatisfaction stated by the teachers. Even though workshops and socialization have been conducted, but the government needs to pay more attention in evaluating it so that the implementation can meet the expectation. It needs to be crossed-check whether the implementation has been in line with what is conceived in *Merdeka Belajar*.

Besides lacking of evaluation, this also lack of socialization since it has not been reach all schools. Socialization of new curriculum and its implementation is indeed takes time, but it has been 2 years since this curriculum is launched and there are still some schools that have not been reached yet, as stated by one of teacher in her questionnaire below.

one sheet of lesson plan that lack of socialization during the implementation (Q/JA)

This must be highlighted that socialization is crucial since this is such a new experience for Indonesian teachers. Alsubaie explained in his finding that making sure teachers mastering the concept is the key to curriculum success since their understanding will influence how they bring curriculum into the classroom. Better teachers support better learning because they are most knowledgeable about the practice of teaching and are responsible for introducing the curriculum in the classroom (Alsubaie, 2016). The study that was conducted by Prakoso et al found that some challenges appeared because of lacking dissemination. Several things that are considered to be challenged include the need for clarity and continuous socialization to ensure that the perceptions of each teacher are the same and truly understand the intent of the policy (Prakoso, Ramdani, & Rahmah, 2021). It showed that the lack of socialization can cause so many problems. The dissemination of *Merdeka Belajar* has not been widely or equally spreading and if this condition is. Even though this lesson plan allowed teachers to be more creative and free in designing lesson plans, but it does not mean the government can clamp down on the implementation.

The effect of Using RPP 1 Lembar in Achieving Learning Objectives

All 8 teachers answered in their questionnaires that they agreed if RPP 1 Lembar is beneficial in helping teachers to set and reach the learning objectives more easily. Compared to the previous model of stating the objectives, RPP 1 Lembar stated the goals briefly and more general while the previous form of lesson plan specified too many details of objectives. This what makes learning objectives in RPP 1 Lembar is easier to achieve.

focusing on goals (Q/WS)

straight to the point (Q/MS)

yes, automatically (easier to be achieved) because the old lesson plan is written so many details while the new form is more general. When the basic competence has been achieved, then it's done, and it's different from the previous lesson plan since we had criteria (details) (I/EW)

Even though the result of the questionnaires showed that all participants agreed that learning objectives are achieved easier by using RPP 1 Lembar, there are some different statements between what was stated in questionnaires and interviews. MS stated on the questionnaire that RPP 1 Lembar makes learning objectives can be achieved easily, but the result of the interview showed the opposite.

Personally, I see no difference. I only see that the new form of lesson plan is more focusing on indicator and learning objectives. It makes teachers be more focused on the objectives and indicators while for the previous one, some teachers were more focused on methods and the activities (I/MS)

Having the same case as MS, LY thinks that the lesson plan does not affect how easily the learning objectives are achieved. She explained that it depends on how the teachers present the materials to their students. She stated that the objectives are simplified indeed, but it does not make the objectives can be achieved more easily.

I think it doesn't depend on the lesson plan, instead on how the teachers deliver the materials. Actually, for the content, it has no difference (compared to the previous lesson plan), but the new one is just more simple and specific. The learning objectives also be more simple, we only take the points while the previous lesson plan had so many details (I/LY)

Regardless of those issues above, all participants support this simplification of lesson plan. Through the questionnaires, 5 of 8 participants support since it eases their administrative burden in making lesson plans so that they can be more focused on preparing and evaluating the learning process. However, EW suggested that this lesson plan can be more simple since he had ever worked for an education company and the lesson plans they used were more simple than this while the rest of the participants stated that the freedom they got in designing lesson plans makes them more innovative and creative.

Teachers' suggestions for the Implementation of Merdeka Belajar

Knowing teachers' perspectives are one important way of improving the curriculum. Teachers are stakeholders who directly apply the curriculum in the field and feel both challenges and benefits of the curriculum applied. The teachers' perspectives are important to reveal the actual challenges in the classroom to determine the best solution. (Wahyuningsih, 2018) Therefore, knowing teachers' perspectives are crucial since their perspectives influenced their teaching quality. How do they can implement the curriculum optimally if they failed in understanding the concept? This is the reason why the study of teachers' perspectives needed to be conducted due to curriculum improvement. By knowing their perspectives, curriculum former can spot the gaps. If teachers' views are not sufficiently taken into account the already challenging nature of implementing something new can be exacerbated (Mathura, 2019). Through the questionnaire, the participants suggest that the government needs to conduct socialization especially for the concept and lesson plan more often. This might happen because socialization has not reached every single school in Surabaya, proven by two answers stated in the questionnaires.

Conducting and widespread the socialization that can be helped by MGMP (Q/JA)

For the simplification of lesson plan needs more socialization to all teachers both state or even private schools to achieve national education goals (Q/NM)

These answers indicated that the dissemination of Merdeka Belajar has not been widespread equally. Even though the answers on questionnaires stated that all teachers knew about this concept, but proven through interviews the reality showed the opposite. One of three teachers admitted she did not understand about the concept, but only familiar with the term instead. She added that there was no socialization conducted to clarify this issue. It showed that there is a correlation between dissemination and teachers' perspectives so

the government needs to widespread the dissemination evenly to make this curriculum can be applied thoroughly. Lack of information was considered as the major problem that makes the implementation of this curriculum change was not optimal. As the result, the implementation is not as good as expected. Proven by what stated by GSY:

Giving teachers more freedom in terms of administrative, overall the whole concept was good, but it lacks of dissemination during the implementation (Q/GSY)

Besides, others explained that government also needs to consider the quity facility in every single area includes remote areas before designing curriculum. MS expressed that facility also plays a crucial factor in determining the success of curriculum. Meanwhile, EW thinks that effectivity is the key. These participants explained in his interview that both students and teachers must have the same understanding of Merdeka Belajar so that the goal can be reached effectively.

All the stakeholders must understand the concept of Merdeka Belajar. Secondly, we can use the more simple form of lesson plan as used abroad and I think it's enough (without any additional attachments) (I/EW)

During these long changes of curriculum, teachers are the only actors that always to be pressed about adapting and understanding the concept of curriculum. Meanwhile, Merdeka Belajar needs an epic collaboration from all stakeholders and students. While teachers facilitate and lead students to explore more about what they learn, students also must use this freedom to grow more initiative and more critical. By this good synergy, Merdeka Belajar will meet its expectation then we no need to be overwhelmed by following curriculum changes.

Discussion

Even though *Merdeka Belajar* has been applied for almost 3 years, there are so many gaps were found in the implementation. The results showed that not all teachers understand the concept of *Merdeka Belajar*. The same result was also found in (Lestiyani, 2020) that only 40% of 50 teachers understand the concept of *Merdeka Belajar*. However, all participants fully support the implementation of *Merdeka Belajar*. This is such contradicting when they agreed on *Merdeka Belajar*, but they did not even have understood the concept well.

Besides the implementation of RPP 1 Lembar also needs to be guided and evaluated. One of the purposes of its implementation is to ease teacher burden in designing lesson plans since teachers are free to design them as long as it is still in line with the Circular Letter of Ministry of Education and Culture number 14 the year 2019. Meanwhile, the finding found that some teachers feel no different in terms of lightening their burden. The study that was conducted by (Triyudi et al., 2020) also showed the same results that not all teachers agreed if this policy eases teachers' burden in administration.

However, those previous studies above only tested through options then there were no explanations stated by teachers to clarify their answers. That is why this current research is conducted, to explore further teachers' voices about *Merdeka Belajar*. Also, it aims to know why there are still teachers who have not understood the concept, what obstacles they faced, why it happens, and how to solve or prevent the following challenges. In order to answer those questions, teachers need to be interviewed and filled questionnaires to give their answers then what is done in this research.

In exploring teachers' perspectives, the researcher thinks that filling questionnaires are not enough. What can be drawn from this study is what is being stated in the questionnaires are different from what is being said during the interview. That is why further research by using interviews to see teachers' perspectives of *Merdeka Belajar* needs to be conducted since this study is only limited to small amounts of participants. After conducting interviews, there were so many different answers and points of view stated by the interviewees which affected the final results of the study.

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CONCLUSION

To sum up, not all teachers understand the concept of Merdeka Belajar and one of the major causes is lack of dissemination. On the other hand, all participants have applied and understood the simplification of the lesson plan (RPP 1 Lembar). Regardless of all issues that were appeared, all participants fully support this "Merdeka Belajar". Some suggestions are also given by all teachers to improve the implementation of "Merdeka Belajar" since the quality of curriculum affects the quality of the education system.

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