

EXPLORING STRATEGIES TO FACILITATE DIVERSE STUDENT LEARNING STYLES IN SOCIAL SCIENCE EDUCATION

Fawziah Zahrawati B¹, Andi Aras²

Institut Agama Islam Negeri Parepare, Indoensia^{1,2}

fawziahzahrawatib@iainpare.ac.id, andii.aras@iainpare.ac.id

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ABSTRACT

The Merdeka curriculum promotes differentiated learning for diverse student learning styles. This research exploring implementing the Merdeka Curriculum and teachers' strategies and challenges in facilitating diverse student learning styles. The research method was qualitative and conducted at UPT SMA Negeri 4 Parepare. School principals, social science teachers, and students served as informants. Data collection techniques include interviews, observation, and documentation. Triangulation of methods and sources is used to obtain data validity. Analysis of the data followed Miles and Huberman's stages. The Merdeka Curriculum is not fully implemented at all grade levels, according to this research. Social science teachers use strategies to accommodate diverse learning styles, such as identifying styles, using different methods, group learning, varied assessments, technology, reflection, and personalization. Teachers face the challenge of adapting various learning styles in the Merdeka Curriculum. Teachers should generate innovative ideas for the Pancasila Student Profile. Teachers need to prepare tools and materials for different learning styles. Teachers should understand the diversity of students' learning styles and become skilled facilitators in exploring their potential. The findings of this research offer strategies for teachers to implement the Merdeka Curriculum.

Keywords: *Differentiated learning; learning styles; teacher strategies; the Merdeka Curriculum.*

ABSTRAK

Implementasi kurikulum Merdeka membawa konsekuensi pembelajaran berdiferensiasi yang berupaya memfasilitasi keberagaman gaya belajar siswa. Penelitian ini bertujuan mengkaji potret implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka dan strategi serta tantangan guru dalam memfasilitasi keberagaman gaya belajar siswa dalam implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka. Metode penelitian adalah kualitatif yang dilaksanakan di UPT SMA Negeri 4 Parepare. Informan penelitian adalah kepala sekolah, guru ilmu pengetahuan sosial, dan siswa. Teknik pengumpulan data adalah wawancara, observasi, dan dokumentasi. Triangulasi metode dan sumber digunakan untuk memperoleh keabsahan data. Data yang diperoleh dianalisis dengan merujuk tahapan menurut Miles dan Huberman. Penelitian ini menemukan bahwa Kurikulum Merdeka belum sepenuhnya diimplementasikan di semua tingkatan kelas. Strategi yang digunakan guru ilmu pengetahuan sosial dalam memfasilitasi keberagaman gaya belajar siswa, yakni: mengidentifikasi gaya belajar siswa, menggunakan beragam metode pengajaran, pembelajaran berkelompok, penilaian yang

bervariasi, pemanfaatan teknologi pembelajaran, melakukan refleksi secara berkelanjutan, dan melakukan pendekatan personal kepada siswa. Selanjutnya, tantangan yang dialami oleh guru dalam implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka adalah cara guru menyesuaikan gaya belajar yang berbeda sehingga semua gaya belajar dapat digunakan dalam proses belajar mengajar. Guru harus mengeluarkan ide-ide yang lebih kreatif dalam menerapkan Profil Pelajar Pancasila. Selain itu, guru juga harus menyiapkan alat dan bahan yang berbeda untuk setiap gaya belajar. Dengan demikian dalam implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka, guru didorong untuk menjadi pribadi yang fleksibel, adaptif, memahami keberagaman gaya belajar siswa, dan menjadi fasilitator yang terampil menggali potensi siswa. Temuan penelitian ini menjadi pilihan strategi yang dapat digunakan guru dalam mengimplementasikan Kurikulum Merdeka.

Kata kunci: Gaya belajar; kurikulum Merdeka; pembelajaran berdiferensiasi; strategi guru.

A. INTRODUCTION

The Merdeka Curriculum provides an opportunity for stress-free learning. This concept aims to let students showcase their skills in a creative and unconstrained classroom setting. The Merdeka Curriculum is ideal for schools as it met their specific needs. The government believes this curriculum will help teachers understand their students better. The Merdeka curriculum teaches teachers how to research their students' preferences (Daga, 2021; Fitriyah et al., 2022; Nafi'ah et al., 2023; Putri & Arsanti, 2022).

Curriculum improvements have been made in Indonesia. One measure involves enhancing the curriculum's quality. The Indonesian people's experience can serve as a valuable lesson in developing curriculum improvements that align with the current era's changes and technological advancements. This is done to generate outcomes that align with the contemporary requirements (Almarisi, 2023; Rahmatul et al., 2023).

The Merdeka curriculum, which focuses on students, leads to differentiated learning. Differentiated learning is a teaching approach that adjusts to students' individual learning preferences, interests, and readiness levels (Sulistiyosari, Karwur, and Sultan 2022). One of the main issues in education is that many teachers overlook their students' diverse abilities to comprehend and absorb information. It is undeniable that people have different capacities to comprehend and assimilate the taught material. Certain students gain knowledge and skills rapidly, while others progress at a moderate pace, and some require more time, depending on their level of comprehension. The learning style of students refers to how they receive, understand, and absorb the lessons taught by the teacher in a way that they enjoy and find comfortable. This facilitates the retention of the lesson in the student's memory. Because of the diverse range of students with varying learning styles, many teachers find it challenging to comprehend or grasp their students' preferred ways of learning (Saswandi et al., 2023).

People can best absorb, organize, and comprehend information by aligning it with their preferred learning style. When students are aware of their preferred learning style, they are more equipped to process and absorb information effectively. The reason behind this is that students will be more actively involved, grasp concepts more effectively, and internalize the information better when they are offered learning opportunities that are tailored to their preferred learning styles (Gudnason 2017; Mei Ph'Ng 2018; Mufidah 2017).

Students employ various learning styles. For instance, some individuals favor visual information over auditory, and when gaining a new skill, they prefer observing someone else perform it first. The learning style that falls under this category is known as visual learning. Visual learners typically favor information that is organized in a clear and structured manner. The students want to write about what the teacher tells them. They have no interest in taking notes or paying attention to the teacher's actions. Unlike students who prefer auditory learning. Their sole reliance is on their ability to pay attention and keep the information provided by the teacher. Students with a kinesthetic learning style prefer to engage actively in the learning process. Their restlessness and impatience stem from their failure to take responsibility and complete the task (Lestari and Djuhan 2021; Supit, Meiske Maythy Lasut, and Jerry Tumbel 2023).

The primary aim of the teaching and learning process is to assist students in reaching their learning objectives and attaining successful academic outcomes. Every student, in reality, has a unique learning style preference. Certain teachers may not possess the expertise to identify students' abilities because of variations in individual traits or other factors that affect their motivation to learn. Unfortunately, there is unequal treatment of students by some educators during the teaching and learning process. In Indonesia, traditional teaching methods are still used, resulting in classes with 30-35 students and one teacher. This setup makes it challenging for the teacher to address the unique needs of each student because of various issues, such as the lack of empathy and concern for students. This often leads to teachers unfairly treating students in terms of their behavior and even how they are assessed. As a result, certain students may experience lower self-assurance because of disparities in their knowledge and understanding compared to their peers (Munirah 2015).

Every new generation has unique learning traits that are shaped by the environment they grow up in. This is relevant because learning styles are nearly universal and the tools used for teaching and learning vary only slightly. Presently, there is widespread recognition of the changes happening in the classroom, with one of the key factors being the integration of technology to assist teachers in meeting diverse learning needs and achieving educational objectives (Andari 2022).

According to the findings from the observations conducted at UPT SMA Negeri 4 Parepare, it was discovered that students have different learning styles depending on their individual abilities. This is clear in how students explore their knowledge and abilities by utilizing different learning methods or styles, which ultimately aids them in mastering the information taught by the teacher. Many students struggle to identify the most effective

learning style for comprehending classroom material. The findings are supported by the outcomes of interviews, showing that students possess various learning styles. Some people prefer visual, auditory, or kinesthetic learning styles, while others prefer audio-visual learning styles. A significant number of individuals lack an understanding of the concept of learning styles, as they simply adjust to the teaching methods employed by educators in order to comprehend the material. Students' learning preferences are influenced by the assignments they receive, particularly when it involves analyzing images. This allows them to engage in a visual learning approach. When the teacher explains the task, the learning style employed is auditory. Project assignments or skills can be automated using a kinesthetic learning approach. Similarly, if you want to analyze learning videos effectively, it is important to adopt an audio-visual learning approach (Interview with Mutmainnah, S.Pd., teacher at UPT SMA Negeri 4 Parepare, October 12 2023).

Furthermore, students can achieve successful learning outcomes when teaching strategies are customized to match each student's unique traits. Therefore, by incorporating and valuing human diversity in the learning process, students will experience increased happiness, achieve their goals without feeling overwhelmed, gain greater motivation, and maintain a sense of control over their learning journey. Students are inclined to be more motivated to enhance their understanding when they utilize a learning style that appeals to them and is easily comprehensible, especially when they witness the outcomes of their accomplishments.

Many studies on learning styles have discovered that learning style plays a crucial role in enhancing learning performance. It refers to a consistent approach in which individuals grasp information, the methods they employ to assimilate knowledge, and their reactions and utilization of the stimuli received during the learning process. Based on the findings, it can be inferred that learning style is an internal factor that impacts students' academic performance. Students possess distinct characteristics and varying approaches to receiving and comprehending lessons. Teachers need to develop strategies to comprehend students' circumstances and create a conducive learning environment for them. The material presented can be conveyed well. From a search of previous research, information was obtained that the study of the diversity of learning styles has attracted the interest of many researchers. However, so far, there has been no specific study of the diversity of student learning styles by linking teacher strategies in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum (Awla, 2014; Almarisi, 2023; Aryanti, 2023; Daga, 2021; Fitriyah et al., 2022; Gokalp, 2013; Hu et al., 2021; Lestari & Djuhan, 2021; Madhakomala et al., 2022; Magulod, 2019; Moussa, 2014; Mufidah, 2017; Nafi'ah et al., 2023; Nugraha, 2022; Putri & Arsanti, 2022; Saswandi et al., 2023; Supit et al., 2023; Xu, 2011).

This research aims to exploring how teachers facilitate diverse student learning styles in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum at UPT SMA Negeri 4 Parepare. This study focuses on analyzing the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum at UPT SMA Negeri 4 Parepare. It also investigates the strategies employed by teachers to accommodate the various learning styles of students during implementing the Merdeka Curriculum. The

challenges faced by teachers in facilitating the diverse learning styles of students in the Merdeka Curriculum are examined.

B. RESEARCH METHOD

This study exploring how teachers use different strategies to support the diverse learning styles of students while implementing the Merdeka Curriculum. This research is qualitative because it investigates a phenomenon in its natural environment. The study was conducted at UPT SMA Negeri 4 Parepare in the South Sulawesi Province of Indonesia. The research location was chosen because UPT SMA Negeri 4 Parepare had implemented the Merdeka Curriculum, which aligned with the research objectives. Social science teachers, students, and school principal were the individuals who provided information for this study. The methods used for collecting data include interviews, observation, and documentation. The informants in this research were teachers, students, and school principals to gather information about implementing the Independent Curriculum at UPT SMA Negeri 4 Parepare. Interviews with teachers were conducted to gather data on their strategies and challenges in supporting diverse student learning styles while implementing the Merdeka Curriculum. In order to improve the data, we observed how the learning process was conducted and documented the curriculum and lesson plans utilized by teachers. The accuracy of the collected data was assessed through the use of method triangulation and source triangulation. The data was analyzed by following the stages suggested by Miles and Huberman (2014) which include: data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions/verification. Information on how teachers can effectively address the diverse learning styles of students when implementing the Independent Curriculum. The researcher creates a summary to organize the information, resulting in more focused data and the emergence of patterns or themes. By examining this pattern, we can gain an understanding of how teachers implement the independent curriculum, the strategies they used to accommodate diverse student learning styles, and the obstacles they face in doing so. Subsequently, conclusions are reached, and the data is displayed.

C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Examining the Merdeka Curriculum Implementation at UPT SMA Negeri 4 Parepare

Rapid technological advancements make it easy for society to adjust to these changes. In education, the curriculum undergoes changes in response to developing demands. Implementing the Merdeka Curriculum policy is closely linked to the findings of the 2019 Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), which revealed that Indonesian students ranked poorly in mathematics and literacy, placing in the bottom sixth. Among 79 countries, Indonesia holds the 74th position (Andari 2022).

Based on this, a transformation occurred in the education system, where previously most students engaged in activities inside the classroom. They now have the freedom to learn outside the classroom through outings. During the learning process, students are provided with opportunities to explore and build their own knowledge, while the teacher

takes on the role of a facilitator, guiding the student's learning journey. This way, students will have a comfortable learning experience that caters to their individual learning preferences and styles (Maipita, Dalimunthe, and Hafiz Sagala 2021; Ndari et al. 2023; Ramadhan et al. 2023).

The Merdeka curriculum implemented in the 2022/2023 academic year, bringing its own challenges for academics. Implementing this curriculum brings about a transformation in implementing learning. Regarding the implementation of this curriculum, the Ministry of Education and Culture, Research and Technology provides policies for implementing the Merdeka curriculum. Schools that are not ready to implement the Merdeka Curriculum are given the policy of continuing to use the 2013 curriculum. Meanwhile, schools that are ready, such as driving schools, are given an appeal to implement this curriculum. Thus, the Merdeka curriculum has not been fully implemented in all schools. As at UPT SMA Negeri 4 Parepare, the Merdeka curriculum is only applied to class 10. Meanwhile, classes 11 and 12 still use the 2013 curriculum.

Implementing the Merdeka curriculum involves several steps outlined in the content map. These include understanding the curriculum outline, grasping learning and assessment methods, comprehending the development of educational units within the curriculum, and recognizing the projects aimed at strengthening the Pancasila student profile. To begin the implementation process, it is crucial to grasp the overall structure of the Merdeka curriculum. To achieve this goal, it is necessary to establish regulations for the Merdeka curriculum and evaluate the curriculum to revive the learning process. The next step involves comprehending the process of learning and assessment. To complete this step, you will need a comprehensive learning and assessment guide that covers principles of learning and assessment, customized learning approaches for different student stages, effective planning of learning and assessment, and proper processing and reporting of assessment outcomes. Next, the third step involves comprehending how to create a curriculum that functions effectively within the Independent Curriculum framework for educational institutions. The operational curriculum of the educational unit is developed by analyzing its characteristics, compiling its vision-mission-goals, organizing and planning learning activities, providing mentoring and evaluation, as well as professional development. Last, the fourth step involves comprehending the project's progression to enhance the image of Pancasila students. The development guidelines comprise several components, such as preparing the school environment, creating projects to enhance the Pancasila students' profile, project management, and assessments. Now, please provide an update on the outcomes of the project. On. The last task is to assess the progress of the implemented project (Pusat Kurikulum dan Pembelajaran 2022).

Portrait of implementing the Merdeka curriculum at UPT SMA Negeri 4 Parepare based on interview results that implementing the Merdeka curriculum is based on the Pancasila Student Profile or P5. There are six aspects that cover the Pancasila Student Profile, namely: 1) Faith, Devotion to God Almighty, and Noble Character, 2) Global Diversity, 3) Cooperation, 4) Creativity, 5) Critical Reasoning, and 6) Independence. These

six aspects will gradually be used in the learning process. In one year, there are three Pancasila Student Profile projects implemented. For semester 1, there are 2 projects selected. Meanwhile, semester 2 is more.

The first theme implemented was the Democratic Party, which was coupled with the election of the student council chair and now the theme of Sustainable Lifestyle is implemented, namely waste management. How students reduce waste, make proposals and create recyclable works. Then the results will be resold. For semester 2, the school will apply the Entrepreneurship theme. Each P5 at the last week's meeting held a work exhibition using the term harvest. The work that students have created will be displayed at art exhibitions and can also be bought and sold.

The Merdeka curriculum was recently introduced this year, so only the students in 10th grade are currently following it. The curriculum from 2013 is still being used for classes 11 and 12. The displayed work is created by students in the 10th grade. In grades 11 and 12, students are only expected to take part in and contribute to the exhibition doing no actual work. If they are interested in the work, they have the option to purchase what they produce. The lack of implementation of the Merdeka curriculum in grades 11 and 12 specifically refers to the content map that outlines the understanding and preparation for its implementation. One factor is that teachers are required to comprehend the learning stages and styles of their students. Grades 11 and 12 have not implemented this because the prerequisite of conducting learning style mapping for differentiated learning has not been fulfilled.

In connection to this matter, flexibility is necessary when implementing the Merdeka curriculum in educational institutions. Implementing learning involves more than just devices. Human Resources is a crucial aspect that requires attention. Teachers must excel in programming activities and possess effective facilitation skills while implementing this curriculum. Learning activities, whether they are projects or practice exercises, are created under the consensus of the class and are focused on producing tangible results. (Nafi'ah et al. 2023).

Facilitating Diversity in Student Learning Styles with Teacher Strategies

Implementing the Merdeka Curriculum presents the concept of independent learning for students. The consequence of the presence of this curriculum is the implementation of differentiated learning, so that it requires mapping of students' learning styles. Diversity of learning styles is one challenge for teachers in carrying out the teaching and learning process. Here, teachers are expected to have strategies to facilitate the diversity of student learning styles in implementing the Merdeka curriculum (Safitri and Markamah 2023).

This research identified strategies teachers used to cater to diverse learning styles, such as identifying styles, using varied methods, group learning, diverse assessments, technology, reflection, and personal approach.

The first thing a teacher does is identify their students' learning styles. Teachers distribute questionnaires to categorize students' learning styles. Students' learning styles

are based on their comfort in the learning process. Students are given the opportunity to explore their abilities, knowledge, even talents and interests, so that they have more freedom to choose a learning style that is suitable and comfortable to use in class. The following are student learning styles in implementing the independent curriculum at UPT SMA Negeri 4 Parepare, namely: 1) Visual learning style. Students with a visual learning style are calmer than other learning styles because their way of learning is more focused and paying attention to the material. They also prefer playing with colors, pictures and taking notes. Apart from that, those with a visual learning style need calm and must focus on what they are doing. Then the learning outcomes report is dominated by papers and pictures, so the school has prepared materials such as stick notes, colored markers and other materials that support the teaching and learning process. 2) Auditory learning style. Students with an auditory learning style prefer the lecture method. They can focus on studying even though there are many sound sources. They are calmer studying while listening to music. In the Merdeka Curriculum, the package books provided can facilitate all 3 learning styles, especially audio learning styles, barcodes are provided to scan the material in the book, so that they can be accessed by watching video explanations of the same material in the book. This makes it easier for them to understand more than having to read. 3) Kinesthetic learning style. Students with a kinesthetic learning style are more active than other learning styles. They like to move a lot and explore their abilities with creative and unique forms of work or skills. The advantage is that they are more confident in describing their work in front of their friends, even more, they can also make learning videos or content that can be uploaded to YouTube.

Teachers must employ a range of teaching methods to accommodate the diverse learning styles of students. Teachers utilize visual aids to cater to students who learn best through visual means, engage in discussions to accommodate students who prefer auditory learning, and incorporate physical activities to support students who have a kinesthetic learning style. Group learning is another technique that teachers utilize. The purpose of this is to foster collaboration among students who have different learning preferences. Group learning enables students to learn from one another and enhance their understanding. Teachers can incorporate educational technology to simplify the learning process. Technology in education offers diverse learning resources tailored to students' needs, including instructional videos, quizzes, and more. Besides that, educators also conduct different assessments. Educators offer evaluations in different formats. Some examples include written exams, projects, or oral presentations. This accommodates students' unique learning styles, allowing them to demonstrate their knowledge freely in accordance with their preferred style.

The last strategy is for the teacher to take a personal approach to students. In learning with the Independent Curriculum, students are given freedom in choosing and carrying out their learning process. Therefore, teachers must have an understanding of their students' interests, talents and needs (Anggraini et al., 2022).

Challenges in Accommodating Diverse Learning Styles when Implementing The Merdeka Curriculum

Implementing the Merdeka Curriculum introduces a student-centered learning approach. Here, the teacher acts as a facilitator who facilitates the student's learning experience. One consequence of implementing this curriculum is differentiated learning methods according to students' learning styles. The diverse learning styles of students present challenges for teachers in facilitating the diversity of student learning styles. This research found several challenges experienced by teachers at UPT SMA Negeri 4 Parepare.

The challenge experienced by teachers in implementing the Merdeka curriculum is how educators adapt different learning styles so that all learning styles can be used in the teaching and learning process. Each student's learning style is given facilities to make it easier for them to carry out the tasks given by the teacher. The challenge faced by educators is that each class has an uneven composition, in one class, there are more visual, auditory and even kinesthetic learning styles. If you want to be grouped into one team, there are usually people who disagree because of differences in learning styles.

Then the next challenge is that teachers have to come up with more creative ideas in implementing the Pancasila Student Profile. For example, in every P5 or making a project, the teacher must come up with a new idea that has never been used before so that it makes students interested and enthusiastic about doing their assignment because there are differences in learning styles so the results or work will be different in form. If children have a visual learning style, they will choose works with images that have been designed using lots of colors, which makes the results more unique and interesting. Then, for the auditory learning style, the dominant form of work is learning videos which are filled with voice notes from each group member. Kinesthetics are no less interesting than other learning styles, it could be said that those with this learning style are more unique because they will come up with new ideas to maximize the results of their work, usually the results of their work are objects for which each process will be documented and then made into a video style. Everyday vlog style from the beginning to the last step so that it becomes a work.

Another challenge is that teachers have to prepare different tools and materials for each learning style. The teacher must prepare all tools and materials every class hour. For a visual learning style, the teacher prepares colored markers or stick notes to beautify the students' work. Meanwhile, for the auditory learning style, the teacher only needs to prepare a projector as an intermediary for students to display learning videos. Finally, for the kinesthetic learning style, which involves physical movement for arts subjects, musical instruments such as guitar or pianika will be prepared to channel the abilities of those who prefer movement and imaginative images. Teachers sometimes face the problem of limited resources to provide learning experiences that suit various learning styles.

As Sulistyosari et al., (2022) stated, implementing differentiated learning cannot be free from challenges, namely teachers have difficulty differentiating the teaching materials that will be used for different learning styles. Differentiated learning in the Independent

Curriculum provides space for students to carry out their learning process based on the interests and potential of each student.

In this regard, Sine (2019) stated that teachers who have a low understanding of student learning styles will make the learning process run ineffectively. Teachers are expected to improve their competence continually. The competencies in question are pedagogical competence, professional competence, personality competence, and social competence.

D. CONCLUSION

The Merdeka curriculum is not fully implemented in all schools. UPT SMA Negeri 4 Parepare applies the Merdeka curriculum only in class 10. The 2013 curriculum is still used for classes 11 and 12. Teachers must have strategies for facilitating diverse learning styles in this curriculum. Teachers use strategies like identifying learning styles, using different teaching methods, group learning, varied assessments, utilizing technology, reflecting, and personalizing approaches to students. Implementing this curriculum has challenges. Teachers must adapt to various learning styles. Teachers need to be more creative in implementing the Pancasila Student Profile. Teachers must prepare tools for different learning styles. Teachers should undergo comprehensive and continuous training on implementing the Merdeka curriculum.

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