PEDAGOGIC COMPETENCE FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS AS A REQUIREMENT FOR MERDEKA BELAJAR: A CASE STUDY IN BANTEN PROVINCE

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Abstract

Teachers face challenges in teaching and learning in the industrial revolution era 4.0 and Society 5.0. Ensuring students have communication, collaboration, creation, and critical thinking competencies. This article aims to analyze the educational competence of early childhood educators in realizing Merdeka Belajar in Banten Province, Indonesia. Pedagogic competence is the ability needed by educators to carry out the program Sekolah Penggerak, Guru Penggerak, and Implementation of the Kurikulum Merdeka in their schools. These three programs are the pillars for achieving Merdeka Belajar. The research method used was to collect information through written interviews using the Google Form, which was distributed to representatives of the education and culture offices in 8 districts and cities in Banten Province, including the heads of the PNF and Kasi PAUD, in addition to PAUD supervisors and inspectors in 8 communities and towns. as well as representatives from various schools and early childhood education teachers throughout Banten Province. The results of this study indicate that the 106 informants who are educators and related education stakeholders already understand the Sekolah Penggerak, Guru Penggerak, and Merdeka Curriculum programs and have pedagogic competencies that can support the realization of Merdeka Belajar, but further observations are still needed regarding the implementation of these programs in schools.

Keywords: *pendagogic, early childhood education, merdeka belajar*

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INTRODUCTION

Teachers face challenges in teaching and learning in the industrial revolution era 4.0 and Society 5.0. Ensuring students have the required competencies: communication, collaboration, creation, and critical thinking skills. Teaching by teachers in the classroom involves a transformation to provide provisions for students in dealing with the times.

Teachers require qualifications, competence, and high dedication to support the implementation of their duties (Putri et al., 2020). A teacher must own four essential competencies: pedagogical competence, professional competence, personal competence, and social competence. Pedagogic competence is the teacher's ability to manage student learning (Nur & Fatonah, 2022). Educational competence is a competency that is closely related to the performance of a teacher. This is supported by the results of research, which show that the relationship between pedagogical competence and teacher-teaching performance is 46.7%. This can be interpreted that the higher the teacher's pedagogic competence, the higher the teacher's performance in teaching (Akbar, 2021).

The Ministry of Education and Culture launched the Merdeka Belajar Program as a policy proclaimed to return the national education system to the essence of the law by giving freedom to schools, teachers, and students to be free to learn independently and creatively where this freedom to innovate must start from the teacher as the driving force. National Education (Anwar, 2021). The concept of Merdeka Belajar changes the orientation of education, where teachers and students are no longer focused on values as the final output of the educational process but on the development of character and character, which are increasingly being eroded by the flow of time. Merdeka Belajar policy's emergence is relevant to students' needs and the demands of 21st-century education (Daga, 2021).

Implementation of Merdeka Belajar in schools begins with transforming the school curriculum and learning (Sherly et al., 2020). The emergence of the Kurikulum Merdeka is based on the dynamic nature of the curriculum and changes over time. Kurikulum Merdeka is divided into three stages: Mandiri Belajar, Mandiri Berubah, and Mandiri Berbagi. Schools with Mandiri Belajar stage do not change the curriculum applied to pre-school units, only a few parts or principles. Then at the Mandiri Berubah stage, schools can use existing teaching tools in implementing the Kurikulum Merdeka. Finally, schools can develop their teaching tools at the Mandiri Berbagi stage while implementing the Kurikulum Merdeka.

The implementation of the Kurikulum Merdeka is supported by two other programs, namely the Sekolah Penggerak and Guru Penggerak programs. The Sekolah Penggerak Program is a school that focuses on developing student learning outcomes holistically by realizing the Profil Pelajar Pancasila, which includes cognitive (numeric literacy) and non-cognitive (character) competencies (Patilima, 2022). Sekolah Penggerak that apply the Kurikulum Merdeka can imitate other educational units. The government is also developing a Guru Penggerak program integrated with the Kurikulum Merdeka to stimulate the potential of teachers to develop further. Guru Penggerak are expected to be able to change the paradigm of education in Indonesia so that the learning process can run creatively and innovatively (Faiz & Faridah, 2022).

Based on the description above, it is necessary to carry out an in-depth study of the importance of the pedagogic competence of a teacher in implementing the Merdeka Belajar Program. As a case study, this research aims to determine the pedagogic competence of educators and related stakeholders in Banten Province toward understanding the Kurikulum Merdeka Program.

METHODS

The method used in this study is qualitative with semi-structured written interview data collection methods. Informants answered the same questions but with different sequences. Interviews were conducted by distributing questions to 106 early childhood educators and education staff in Banten Province using Google Form media. There are 30 questions related to the knowledge of educators and educational staff regarding the Sekolah Penggerak, Guru Penggerak, and Implementation of the Kurikulum Merdeka program.

Banten Province has 8 Regencies and Cities, namely Kab. Pandeglang, Kab. Tangerang, Kab. Serang, Kab. Lebak, Cilegon City, Serang City, Tangerang City and South Tangerang City. However, until this year, Sekolah Penggerak only existed in 4 districts/cities, including Kab. Pandeglang, Kab. Lebak, Cilegon City, and Tangerang City, with approximately 256 schools from the total number of schools throughout Banten Province, from early childhood education to high school. As many as 13,933 school teachers (Source from Dapodik September 2022), in each Sekolah Penggerak, there is a teacher has attended In-House Training (IHT) organized by the Banten Provincial Sekolah Penggerak Center. Until now, routinely every month, the Operational Management Working Group Forum activities are carried out.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

One hundred six informants answered written interviews via Google Form from the link distributed to 120 informants, including representatives of the Head of Division, Head of Section, Supervisors, Principals, and Teachers from 8 Regencies and Cities in Banten Province. Researchers narrowed the range of informants' answers to as many as 30 answers and focused on school principals and teachers in Banten Province.

Table 1 Research Informant Data

No.	Informant Name	Informant Code
1.	Nadiah, S.Pd	I1
2.	Heriyani, M.Pd	I2
3.	Neng Rosmawati, S.Pd	I3
4.	Nia Kaniasari, S.Pd	I4
5.	Umyati, S.Pd	I5
6.	Leni Fujiawati	I6
7.	Fanny	I7
8.	Ida	I8
9.	Flithrotul	I9
10.	Muniroh	I10
11.	Nardiah	I11
12.	Arni Haryani, S.Pd	I12
13.	Siti Fatimah, S.Pd	I13
14.	Sister Nurintania	I14
15.	Onah Srimanah, S.Pd.AUD	I15
16.	Nurul Fazriah	I16
17.	Siti Khodijah	I17
18.	Nia Kaniasari	I18
19.	Rakhmi Karmila	I19
20.	Nyi Henah, S.Pd	I20

No.	Informant Name	Informant Code
21.	Salma	I21
22.	Siti Aisha	I22
23.	Afrilia Defi	I23
24.	Yusa Octaviani	I24
25.	Leni Fujiawati	I25
26.	Cindy Laura	I26
27.	Tita Rosita, S.Pd	I27
28.	Gistni Agustin, S.Pd.I	I28
29.	Ernawati, M.Pd	I29
30.	Fauziah, S.Pd	I30

The results of each question item have been analyzed and summarized using the Prepostseo application in the statement below. Answers from informants can be accessed on the following Google Form link: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/13cwmcozd7woXxroFiOVdqi4ga8p1F70fQjfBrbyMoEE/edit#responses

Sekolah Penggerak embodies the vision, mission of education, development of Pancasila competence and character of students, and superior human resources (I1.2023). To become a Sekolah Penggerak, the Principal registers through the Ministry of Education and Culture's website, www.school.penggerak.kemdikbud.go.id (I2.2023). The Sekolah Penggerak Program is not the same as the Model School Program or Reference School. PSP is a collaboration between the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Regional Government, while the Model School is a program from the central government (I3.2023). The advantages of becoming a Sekolah Penggerak are improving the quality of student learning outcomes, Principals and Teachers, accelerating school digitization, achieving the Profil Pelajar Pancasila, getting an additional budget for buying books, and being a model or role model for other schools (I4.2023). The difference between the Center of Excellence (COE)* and Sekolah Penggerak is how schools are determined and collaborate with industry. COE is aimed at the vocational school and Sekolah Penggerak levels from pre-school to high school (I5.2023). The Sekolah Penggerak Program targets schools with different conditions so that they change for the better, and the Model School Program is a school that can be a role model and moves other schools towards better changes (I6.2023). The link between the Sekolah Penggerak and the Penggerak Community is part of Merdeka Belajar which focuses on developing student learning outcomes (I7.2023). Learning with the New Paradigm allows teachers to adjust learning activities according to the interests and needs of students, so students can better master concepts and improve competence (I8.2023). Regencies/cities that have yet to be designated as organizers in 2021 cannot run the Sekolah Penggerak Program independently because assistance is still needed for digital applications and training (I9.2023).

Motivator teachers have a professional character and want to improve their abilities along with changing times and developments in the digital era (I11.2023). They attended various online and offline training (I12.2023). However, the lack of instructional media, students' diverse characteristics, and children's different maturity ages are examples of obstacles teachers face in carrying out teaching activities (I13.2023). Even so, teachers always try to find suitable solutions to overcome these problems. Most sources stated that teachers, school principals, supervisors, and related agencies had supported teachers in selecting Guru Penggerak (I14.2023). Other findings show that teachers (100%) support other teachers participating in educational progress (I15.2023). Then, all respondents also

indicated that the school, supervisors, or pre-school owners also support teachers to innovate in classroom learning (I16.2023). Therefore, using authentic learning media and a pleasant classroom atmosphere, the teacher gets positive feedback from the children involved (I17.2023).

The Learning Recovery Policy was held to overcome the different learning lags in student competence during the Covid-19 pandemic. Therefore a new curriculum was created that was by student learning needs so that the lagging student competencies could be fulfilled. (I19.2023). The Merdeka Curriculum is learning with diverse content and deepening of concepts for students to increase student competency. Teachers are given the freedom to use learning tools tailored to students' needs and interests (I20.2023). The Kurikulum Merdeka is needed to overcome the learning crisis in Indonesia, which has been exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic so that Indonesian children have the ability to understand and apply concepts in depth. This curriculum gives teachers the freedom to conduct learning according to the needs and interests of students (I21.2023). Changing the curriculum is an effort to restore learning, so it needs to be done to create the best education for all students in Indonesia (I22.2023). The Kurikulum Merdeka was made an option because the government wanted to emphasize that schools have the responsibility and authority to develop a curriculum that fits the needs of each school. This option allows changing the national curriculum to run smoothly and gradually (I23.2023). The criteria for schools that may implement the Kurikulum Merdeka are interest and motivation to improve student learning and competence in their respective schools (I24.2023).

The Merdeka Curriculum does not prohibit the teaching of Calistung in pre-school, But we need to pay attention to the teaching method. The Merdeka Curriculum aims to prepare early literacy and numeracy, not limited to reading and counting skills (I25.2023). Standard Level of Achievement of Child Development is used as a reference for academic units in formulating the vision, mission, and profile of "graduates" operational curricula, and Learning Outcomes are tools/media designed to achieve more optimal child development and refer to Standard Level of Achievement of Child Development (I26.2023). Pre-school units develop learning paths and objectives based on school characteristics, children's needs and interests, the surrounding environment, and related learning outcomes. Each unit/school has different learning paths and objectives (I27.2023). The development of teaching modules in early childhood education program must follow the child's characteristics and meet aspects of early childhood development (I28.2023). The main characteristic of the Merdeka Curriculum in pre-school units is that children learn through playing so that the learning and assessment process becomes more flexible, which is the basis for the next level of education (I29.2023). The Sentra method can still be used in the Kurikulum Merdeka Program because, in the center method, students can learn while playing or playing while learning (I30.2023).

The results of the answers from 106 informants regarding the Sekolah Penggerak showed that 44.72% of the informants had an understanding of the Sekolah Penggerak, 75% of the informants had an understanding of the Guru Penggerak, and 58.75% had an understanding of the Implementation of the Kurikulum Merdeka. The percentage results for each topic are obtained from the total percentage of questions divided by the number of questions. Therefore, the overall percentage of 59.49% of informants understand the prerequisites of Merdeka Belajar. The percentage results are obtained from the total percentage of topics divided by the number of topics.

Similar research regarding the relationship between teacher pedagogical competence in the realization of Independent Learning has the same results, namely,

whether there is a correlation between the two variables. Teachers must continue to improve their competence in the Free Learning era so that they can carry out the learning process optimally (Sutrisno, 2022); in realizing Merdeka Belajar, consistency and understanding is needed, which must be continuously built so that teachers are not trapped in the same or classical teaching pattern.

CONCLUSION

Based on the summary of the informants' answers, it can be concluded that from the district/city Education and Culture Office, Supervisors, Supervisors, Principals, and early childhood Educators in Banten Province theoretically already have knowledge about education policies, especially Early Childhood Education regarding Sekolah Penggeraks, Guru Penggeraks, and the Implementation of the Kurikulum Merdeka, although not yet comprehensive and evenly distributed, information obtained through the Banten Province Guru Penggerak Center, there are webinars and information from supervisors and inspectors in each sub-district.

The facts on the ground are many who do not understand and are still unfamiliar with Sekolah Penggerak, Guru Penggerak, and the Implementation of the Kurikulum Merdeka, so there are still many schools feeling afraid of being asked to register as Sekolah Penggerak, Guru Penggerak, and implementing the Kurikulum Merdeka, because according to the K13 curriculum, the Education Unit has not yet 100 percent is used, there are still many education units adopting from other education units.

Principals and educators must keep updating their information on Sekolah Penggerak, Guru Penggerak, and implementation of the Kurikulum Merdeka. Principals and educators can take part in training on Sekolah Penggeraks, Guru Penggerak, and implementation of the Kurikulum Merdeka both held by the Regency/City Education Office, the Banten Province Guru Penggerak Center, as well as webinars held by the Directorate General of GTK or other Directorates.

Researchers found similarities in the analysis of informants' answers with articles on Google. This can be a note and a weakness in data retrieval using Google Forms. In addition, this research should have been carried out within a period of approximately three months, but due to time constraints. Researchers can only do this research with the time that has not been maximized. It is hoped that in the future, we can continue this research at the appropriate time so as to get maximum results and as expected.

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