

## Sociology Teachers' Opportunities and Challenges in Facing "Merdeka Belajar" Curriculum in the Fourth Industrial Revolution (Industry 4.0)

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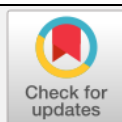
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### ABSTRACT

*This study aims to analyze the opportunities and challenges of Merdeka Belajar as a national education program for high school teachers nationally. Teachers' problem in implementing Merdeka Belajar (Freedom of Learning) curriculum lacks understanding of the procedures. This happened because there was no structural explanation regarding the differences between the curriculum they had been running so far and Merdeka Belajar curriculum. Many problems arise when implementing the curriculum that the education they have been running has made students dependent. In this context, this study questions how high school sociology teachers' opportunities and challenges in facing Merdeka Belajar curriculum in the fourth industrial revolution (industry 4.0)? This study aims to identify problems and strategies for teachers in facing the new paradigm of Merdeka Belajar. This study's analysis is based on theories such as those from Neill, Rogers, Freire, Boal, Giroux, and Knowles to critically analyze the pedagogical paradigm of national education that teachers have used. This study uses Knowles's theory of andragogy to explore the notion of Merdeka Belajar. This study's qualitative research method includes observation of the teacher-student relationship and interviews with several high school teachers in Karanganyar, Central Java. Besides, document studies related to Merdeka Belajar program are also used to understand the policy context. This study found that teachers did not realize that they had been using a pedagogical paradigm (education for children) for high school-level children who had grown up. When they switched to Merdeka Belajar curriculum, they also did not know that the paradigm they should be using is*

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*andragogy (education for adults). In this situation, they improvised as best they could to implement Merdeka Belajar. The teachers only carry out orders from the school. However, the school is still trying to understand how it works based on structural orders without clarity. Students' dependence on teachers has become the cause of teachers' difficulty to move out of the pedagogical paradigm into andragogy. In this situation, the teachers tried to do their best to implement Merdeka Belajar program during the Covid-19 pandemic. Teachers and schools must also face all infrastructural barriers and socioeconomic conditions with limited online learning access.*

**Keywords:** *Andragogy; Curriculum; Merdeka Belajar; Pedagogy; Sociology Teacher*

## 1. Introduction

The education system at the senior high school level has been using a pedagogical paradigm. This paradigm has been sharply criticized by Paulo Freire and Henry Giroux. Freire analyzed the relationship between teachers and students in the pedagogical paradigm that produced students' oppression. The asymmetrical power relationship between teachers and students is the main problem of this paradigm. Schools as educational institutions have implemented a pedagogical paradigm with a "banking system" that continuously supplies students with various school materials from students' structural external interests. As a result, students experience oppression, which results in dependence on teachers and makes students lack independence (Freire, 1976). Meanwhile, Giroux stated that the pedagogical paradigm that has been implemented in educational institutions has made students experience depression, including teachers because they are more required to be responsible vertically to school. Responsibility like this does not make students or teachers have creativity but instead experience depression because of the structural pressures (Giroux, 2001).

Moreover, Ayers (2003), who analyzed what Neill (1960) did, show that Neill had founded a school based on the principle of "Freedom to Learn" which gave freedom to students to process learning with teacher guidance. Nadiem Makarim, as the Minister of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia, in 2020, proclaimed Merdeka Belajar would be implemented in schools to universities. Therefore, it is essential to analyze educational institutions' opportunities and challenges (Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan Republik Indonesia, 2020a; 2020b).

The change in leadership in the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia, since President Joko Widodo's second term (2019-2024 period), has resulted in a keyword in education called "Merdeka Belajar". Nadiem Makarim, in a joint meeting with Commission X of the House of Representatives of the Republic of Indonesia, at the Parliament Complex, Senayan, in 2019, stated that: *"Ini yang Indonesia butuhkan di masa depan. Mohon maaf, dunia tidak membutuhkan anak-anak yang jago menghafal"* (This is what Indonesia needs in the future. Sorry, the world does not need children who are good at memorizing) (Tempo, 2019).

This study discusses aspects of the opportunities and challenges of Merdeka Belajar program among High School Teachers in Karanganyar in responding to and implementing programs to improve human resources quality (HR). Merdeka Belajar Program was initiated because of Nadiem Makarim's encouragement and initiative to create a student-learning atmosphere that makes students feel free of burden with specific scores or grades achievement. The concept of Merdeka Belajar must then be preceded by the teachers' understanding and freedom to convert Merdeka Belajar curriculum's basic competencies before they teach.

Merdeka Belajar Program is a strategy of the Minister of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia to build human resources ready in the fourth industrial revolution (industry 4.0). Students and teachers see Merdeka Belajar as a bridge to a future education system that relies more on communication technology to be mastered. In this case, teachers and students must adapt to the rapid development of communication and information technology to achieve educational goals.

This study analyzes the paradigm shift from the old model implemented towards Merdeka Belajar, which teachers use as an essential aspect. More than that, it focuses on the opportunities and challenges teachers face to find out their knowledge capital and skills as a strategy to deal with a shift in the teaching and learning paradigm. This aspect of the teacher's approach is essential to be developed as a better future model.

## **2. Literature Review**

According to Nadiem Anwar Makarim, his idea is the essence of Ki Hadjar Dewantara's educational strategy. The concept of *Tut Wuri Handayani* from Ki Hadjar Dewantara shows the teacher's position who is behind to support and facilitate the process of empowering students to be smart, critical, and creative to learn independently. Merdeka Belajar policy then became a topic of conversation among educators. They also question whether Merdeka Belajar program will bring changes to the world of education in Indonesia and maybe in the future.

According to Ki Priyo Dwiyarso, a member of Taman Siswa Council, explained that Ki Hadi Sukitno was Ki Hadjar Dewantara's right-hand man during his lifetime, said that what Ki Hadjar Dewantara meant was "Belajar Merdeka" (Independent Learning) not "Merdeka Belajar" (Freedom of Learning). This means being independent in the learning process so that the students' interests and talents must be free to develop as widely as possible. Ki Hadjar Dewantara prioritizes this strategy for national education to hope that each generation will not be quickly eroded by the times ([Medcom. id](https://medcom.id), 2020).

There are four cores in educational policies under the name of the "Merdeka Belajar" program that the Ministry of Education and Culture has launched. According to Nadiem, the concept of Merdeka Belajar curriculum needs to be interpreted by educators as the freedom concept for students to think in the learning process. Merdeka Belajar includes four programs that need to be implemented for each level of education. This study focuses on the senior high school level ([Kompas.com](https://kompas.com), 2019).

The first program is the re-enactment of the 2020 National-Based School Examination to be implemented by the school. As stated in the Law on the National Education System, students will be evaluated by the teacher, and the school determines graduation. Student competence or assessment is carried out in the form of a written test as test. On the other hand, through more comprehensive assessments, such as portfolios and assignments.

The second program, in 2020, will be the last year for the implementation of the National Examination. Furthermore, the National Examination in 2021 is planned to be replaced with a

new system in the form of a Minimum Competency Assessment and Character Survey to assess literacy skills with language, mathematics (numerical reasoning), and character education tests.

The third program, related to the Learning Implementation Plan, will be made with a simple administrative model with three core components of the Learning Implementation Plan, including learning, learning activities, and assessment. The aim of simplifying the Learning Implementation Plan is to reduce the administrative burden on teachers who need to pay more attention to their students' academic needs.

The fourth program, the new student admission system based on the zoning plan, is still in effect and through multiplied achievement path quotas. The zoning quota will be changed from 80% zoning, 5% displacement, and 15% achievement to 50% zoning, 15% affirmation for Indonesia Smart Card, 5% displacement, the rest for achievement 30%.

Of course, the four fundamental changes in the "Merdeka Belajar" curriculum impact Indonesian education's changing patterns and characteristics. Particularly on differences in teacher learning aspects in preparing student resources to face the Minimum Competency test and Character Survey. Based on these three competency aspects, it is essential to have adequate teacher competence to realize "Merdeka Belajar" based learning to achieve these three fundamental competencies, including to face global competition.

The phenomenon of globalization moves through the nation, ideas, finance, media, and technology fields which causes an equalization process in various aspects of life (Apadurai, 1996). Technology, media, and ideas fields are essential areas that have conditioned various changes in the ideas field worldwide. The ideas field is the most influenced through the world of education.

Al'Abr (2011) examines policies in developing countries that have changed in anticipation of globalization. Nadiem Makarim anticipates the speed of change due to globalization by making changes in education policy. The aspects of opportunities and challenges teachers and students face have not been considered in the study conducted by Al'Abr. He is more focused on the information literacy and computer education aspects. Implementing Merdeka Belajar policy is a new area in Indonesia that needs to be studied to analyze teachers and students' conditions in dealing with it because the area is not free from various problems.

Changes in educational policy, which are full of problems according to Hasbulah (2015), are related to several factors, namely: 1) The weak conceptual and substantial mastery of policymakers about knowledge, information, explanations, and various educational problems. 2) Policymakers often use various sources of reference, thus making their policies unclear. 3) Information on policy direction is often minimal or even too much, making the contents of education policy unclear. These three factors make it less smooth and not easily understood by policy recipients in implementing government policies.

Merdeka Belajar Policy, if we trace it based on its historical philosophy, will be connected with Alexander Sutherland Neill's ideas. Ayers (2003) observed that Neill had strong beliefs when he founded Summerhill School in 1921 in Leiston, Suffolk, London. Neill applies education without coercion and pressure to his students. Neill (1960) stated that in the school, he founded students learn without coercion from their teachers and pressure from school assignments because he stressed the importance of individual freedom in acquiring knowledge. This idea is based on his liberal ideology.

The relationship between teachers and students in Merdeka Belajar process-based on Neill's model is equal, even with the same responsibilities. The school is run democratically. The teacher has authority, but that authority is not functioned by the teacher as an instrument that burdens the students because students interpret learning as a sovereign right. Philosophically,



this idea is rooted in the concept of liberalism, and then education becomes an instrument to build awareness of citizens' rights.

The school's function with the classical model in Neill's view is that students have to sit back and pay attention to what the teacher explains and study the various fields of knowledge that teachers give to students is useless and a bad model. Rogers (1969), in his book "Freedom to Learn", stated firmly that schools, in general, were still very traditional, conservative, bureaucratic, and even tended to resist change. According to him, one way to save generations from this educational model is "Merdeka Belajar".

Paulo Freire and his student, Augusto Boal, have sparked ideas such as Merdeka Belajar as a criticism of the classical learning model as criticized by Neill as a "banking system" model. Students are only filled with the knowledge that comes from the teacher, while students are not active. This situation has produced students who are scientifically oppressed so that the solution is a learning process that liberates students (Boal, 2006).

Boal later used the idea of Freire in education in the field of theater. In that, he succeeded in arousing an awareness that actors in the theater had only controlled, but the audience had only watched it. Boal then changed the classical theater pattern by building interactions between performers on stage and audiences for education in developing countries whose people were oppressed by the colonial system. The results show that the audience then takes an active part in interacting with the players, which becomes part of the collaborative learning process between the players and the audience (Boal, 2006).

Giroux (2001), who is also a pupil of Paulo Freire's thought, wrote an article entitled "Pedagogy of the Depressed", which discusses that education is not only about empowering people, about the practice of freedom, but he also analyzes a model of education that extinguishes the imagination. Therefore, education with the existing model also has a side that makes a person experience depression.

Giroux then emphasized that a pedagogical model that teaches texts is often practiced in education, matters related to accountability such as student and teacher absences, and objective standards based on quantitative values or rankings. According to Giroux, all of that is designed to weaken students' likelihood of becoming critical thinkers because, with all these models, students experience depression (Giroux, 2001). Therefore, students need to gain freedom so as not to be depressed by the educational authorities.

Aronowitz & Giroux (2003) have mapped three paradigms in education: conservative, liberal, and critical. The conservative paradigm sees social change as a natural process, so it does not need to be fought. The viewpoint influences the nature that inequality in social relations is a natural condition. This viewpoint assumes that those who suffer from socioeconomic, such as the poor, are not educated to be illiterate. The people who are marginalized in the socioeconomic process are the result of their own mistakes. Many people who were poor while working hard have shown success.

Meanwhile, the liberal education paradigm has the perspective that there may be problems in the social structure. Still, those who can have a good education are not related to society's social and economic issues. Even so, liberals give a portion to the state responsible for the education of its citizens. Therefore, that always tries to adjust the needs of education with the socioeconomic situation of the community. This liberal logic often serves to solve educational problems, but it is often superficial, so the structure of inequality persists (Aronowitz & Giroux, 2003).

Unlike the two previous paradigms, the critical education paradigm has an orientation to build reflexively critical abilities. They then use the abilities to respond to social systems and

structures that are unequal and enduring. This critical education is important because it educates students to become agents of change (Aronowitz & Giroux, 2003). It seems that Merdeka Belajar model contains a critical paradigm, although it is not clear whether Nadiem Makarim's intended orientation is in that direction or not. The basic principle of independence is one of its important characteristics.

The concept of Merdeka Belajar is close to Knowles' concept of andragogy, although Nadiem did not mention andragogy in his speech. Knowles uses the concept of andragogy to build a comprehensive theory of adult learning that rests on adult learners' characteristics. In 1980, Knowles made four assumptions about adult learners' characteristics (andragogy) that were different from child learners' assumptions (pedagogy). In 1984, Knowles added the 5th assumption. The whole idea is as follows:

- 1) Self-concept, which is when a person becomes an adult, his self-concept moves from one dependent personality to someone who becomes a human being who directs himself.
- 2) Adult student experience, that is, when a person becomes an adult, he/she collects an increasing source of experience, becoming a growing source of learning.
- 3) Readiness to learn, namely, when a person is an adult, their readiness to learn is increasingly oriented to developing their social role.
- 4) Orientation for learning, namely when a person becomes an adult, his time perspective changes from one of postponed application of knowledge to immediate application. As a result, its orientation towards learning shifts from one focus on the subject to being problem-centered.
- 5) Motivation to learn, namely when a person is an adult, the motivation to learn is internal (Knowles 1984, p. 12).

According to Neill, Freire, Boal, Giroux, and Knowles, it can be perceived that it is only suitable for non-adult children. As a result, it has been analyzed by them that education does not make students creative. The asymmetrical power relationship between teachers and students is often maintained, and there is even meaning of the term "killer teacher". In this way, education with this model reproduces the value of "obedient students" as in the feudalistic pattern of social relations. As a result, it keeps students from being creative and thinking critically and is in a state of oppression and depression.

Based on theories that provide criticism of pedagogy (Neill, Freire, Boal, and Giroux) and andragogy theory by Knowles (1980; 1984) concerning freedom in learning, this study analyzes the challenges and opportunities of Merdeka Belajar education practice. This study is important to understand the strategies teachers face in practicing Merdeka Belajar based on communication technology 4.0 as a way out in the context of an entrenched education system with a pedagogical paradigm.

### **3. Research Methodology**

This study uses qualitative research methods. According to Denzin & Lincoln (2017), qualitative research is carried out by collecting various empirical materials such as personal experiences, introspective experiences, life stories, interactions made by research subjects with the problems they face, and information that describes routines, important events, and the meaning of the issues related to the research theme in individual life. Based on the understanding of qualitative methods according to Denzin & Lincoln (2017), to understand the meaning in the context of the teacher's experience in facing Merdeka Belajar program, this study analyzes interpretatively by paying attention to aspects of experience (as historical

aspects) and interactive actions in the present that are interconnected. Besides, it also seeks information related to social practices carried out by teachers to gain a better understanding of Merdeka Belajar education.

Interviews were conducted with three sociology teachers from Public Senior High Schools and two Private Senior High Schools teachers. They were selected because they had teaching experience and were categorized as senior teachers (in the sense of having more than ten years of experience) and juniors (having at least five years of experience). As many as three people were selected for the senior teacher and as many as two for the junior teacher. Meanwhile, the document review was carried out by looking for publications related to Merdeka Belajar program. In the Covid-19 pandemic situation, the methods used are interviews via call by phone and WhatsApp application. They were interviewed to obtain information related to the teachers' views on Merdeka Belajar program as a government effort to improve the quality of future human resources. The interviews covered the problems faced by teachers and students in anticipating the program and online teaching methods because Merdeka Belajar program was running in a pandemic situation.

Information about the use of communication technology 4.0 from teachers and students is essential to explore. Includes implications for teachers to increase the use of communication technology 4.0 in their learning. Information from the teachers is also to explain how students face the challenges of Merdeka Belajar to improve their ability to obtain reading sources available in online journals (online) and current reading materials. Besides, information on how the teacher arranged Merdeka Belajar strategy with students, who had so far depended on their knowledge too much on the teacher.

In addition to interviews related to challenges, this study also sought information in the form of opportunities teachers and students in facing Independent Learning. Information obtained about this opportunity is in the form of teacher action to build existing opportunities to overcome students who have been depending on the teacher. This information is essential to analyze how teachers take advantage of opportunities to solve problems in adapting from old learning patterns to Merdeka Belajar patterns. These opportunities are associated with high school students' ability to access information sources from smartphones or computers networked with the internet.

Corbin & Strauss (2014) introduced axial coding as the second phase of the constant comparative qualitative data analysis method for theory development purposes. The data obtained is then carried out axial coding, namely by building linkages between data. This method is a qualitative research technique that involves data that has been linked to one another to reveal the codes, categories, and sub-categories that are the voices of informants in the data collected. A qualitative methodological framework involves constant comparisons of emerging themes in informant data sets to make theoretical claims about a person's communicative behavior. This strategy is a process to inductively search for linkages between data obtained from observations about behavior, events, activities, strategies, circumstances, meanings, participation, relationships, conditions, consequences, and informants' arrangements.

## **4. Results and Discussion**

### **4.1. Results**

#### **4.1.1. Transitional Phase in Merdeka Belajar**

The independence in the learning process referred to by Nadiem Makarim has similarities to what has been done by Neill (1960). They are equally based on the perspective

that learning is an individual choice and right. Students in the social world of education have structural limitations, as do teachers. This condition becomes a kind of shackle for creativity for students and teachers in its structural context. However, there is a principle that every student has the right to be creative, intelligent, and critical as a right for citizens protected by the Constitution. Therefore, Nadiem promoted independent schools (*Sekolah Merdeka*) for the high school and independent campus (*Kampus Merdeka*) for universities.

The state, through educators, is supposed to serve the rights of these students. Merdeka Learning is a fundamental change in the education paradigm based on rights. In this change, there was a transition period full of tension for teachers and students. Providing educational services for students to make individual choices is the fulfillment of the right to Merdeka Belajar. This means that schools need to immediately fulfill students' rights to choose what they want to get from the world of education.

So far, students can accept what the school provides as an obligation that they have to do. Merdeka Belajar, in Neill's view, thus builds awareness of students' rights and their responsibilities to show creative, critical, and solution work to teachers as educational apparatus organized by the state. Nadiem Makarim seems to be a follower of Alexander Sutherland Neill's thoughts and Freire, Boal, and Giroux to uphold happiness by giving students and even teachers independence. Also, this independent relationship in educational practice carried out by Neill was able to reduce oppression and depression (mental pressure) on students and teachers (Freire, 1976; Giroux, 2001).

Teachers in Senior High Schools may not necessarily be ready to face a radical paradigm shift in education. Freire's educational pattern calls the "banking system" has hegemonized teachers' thinking. The real condition among teachers still faces many problems in providing educational services to students with Merdeka Belajar model because they are used to the old pattern. Besides, the Covid-19 pandemic, which requires teachers to use communication technology 4.0, is still a serious problem.

The research conducted by Syukur (2014) in Nganjuk Regency, for example, shows a low percentage of the use of laptops in the teaching and learning process. The survey results of 309 respondents indicated that the use of laptops for the teaching and learning process for elementary school teachers was 0.97%, and junior high school teachers were 3.24%, high school teachers were 7.12%, and vocational high school teachers were as much as 10.3%. Besides, survey results show that those who consistently access the internet are 1.29% respectively for elementary school teachers, 2.91% for junior high school teachers, 8.74% for high school teachers, and 9.71% for vocational high school teachers. Meanwhile, for all teacher education levels who rarely access the internet for elementary school teachers, it was 17.15%, junior high school teachers were 10.36%, high school teachers were 14.24%, and vocational high school teachers were 12.94%.

The research conducted by Syukur, although undertaken in 2014 and at the regency level in East Java Province, shows that the use of laptop devices and internet access by teachers in Indonesia in 2020 from an equivalent administrative level has not shown significant changes. Teachers' income for the six years starting from 2014 did not significantly increase. Meanwhile, families' needs always increase. Hence, the need to provide laptops and internet networks was still not the primary requirement. The need for laptops utilization for teachers is likely to increase because they have to use it for teaching.

Teachers who do not have an internet network at home must go to school to use the internet. Implementing Merdeka Belajar, which coincided with the pandemic situation, made students study from home. However, some teachers still went to school because they did not



subscribe to the internet at home. When using a smartphone, the signal is often unstable. The teacher went to the office to take advantage of the internet so that distance learning could still be carried out without signal interference (Interview with Mrs. Fitri, Sociology Teacher, April 2, 2020).

There may still be many schools that do not provide internet. Based on existing conditions, Merdeka Belajar is a serious challenge the government and teachers face regarding infrastructure availability and the mastery of technology 4.0 for teachers. The paradigm shift from the old model to Merdeka Belajar in the conditions of the Covid-19 pandemic has in several ways helped accelerate the implementation of Merdeka Belajar program. There has been a change in the relationship between teachers and students, from face-to-face in the classroom to virtually. If their internet quota constrains students, they do not need to turn on the video, and some even use the Google Classroom facilities that use text-based software.

In situations of virtual learning and teaching, the power relationship between teachers and students changes. The virtual education process that has been conducted since March 2020 now has resulted in a shift in the pattern of relations between student teachers that are increasingly egalitarian, although still asymmetrical. The main problem in this virtual relationship is that a teacher cannot be sure whether his student is always in front of a computer device or not. Even if not, the teacher cannot take any action against the students. This is a new problem that is beyond the expectations of Merdeka Belajar program.

High school teachers in Indonesia do not understand whether to use a conservative, liberal or critical paradigm in the Teaching and Learning Process. They follow what the government rules. The shift from following the government towards Merdeka Belajar encourages teachers to know the teaching paradigm used, whether it is based on conservative, liberal and critical. However, many teachers stated that they did not understand this paradigm because so far, they only carried out what had been guided by the school, and schools were structurally subject to the government.

This situation shows that Merdeka Belajar also affects teachers to be more independent and creative. This is an important asset for the government because it has never provided real explanations to teachers about the types of educational paradigms. The government still uses logic to order teachers as its apparatus. Meanwhile, teachers must interpret the command to implement Merdeka Belajar still requires an adaptation process, so now is a difficult transition phase. According to Knowles (1980; 1984) and Giroux (2001), the pedagogical education model bureaucracy system in practice only makes the bureaucracy stronger, and teachers become structurally dependent on bureaucratic orders, resulting in uncreativity and depression among teachers even though they have creative potential.

The Covid-19 pandemic has indirectly become a transitional phase for teachers to adjust to Merdeka Belajar program. The problem is that they do not know the paradigmatic background of Merdeka Belajar model. This can happen because the government does not provide an adequate explanation, and teachers do not find out Merdeka Belajar model's background. The senior high school level teaching and learning model is still based on the banking system model. However, there have been slight modifications in the form of competition between students and between schools. In the battle to compete, this characterizes the liberal paradigm, although it is still halfhearted because the state's dominance is still powerful.

The content of the liberal model in schools so far can be seen from the ranking process to determine which students can enter a favorite school in the region. Therefore, when the school zoning model is carried out to build inclusive schools between classes, resistance to zoning

tends to come from the middle and upper social classes who have been comfortable with the model of school favoritism without zoning. The upper-middle social class feels that they can pay dearly and have transportation facilities to allow their children to attend their favorite school even though they are not within their zoning.

As the middle class, they feel they have the economic strength to prepare their children to take any lessons to have achievements to determine which school is their favorite. Zoning for them is an obstacle, and they are not willing to bring their children together with children from the lower social class. Meanwhile, the middle to lower socioeconomic groups find it hard to face the competition. This zoning is based on a critical paradigm to build inclusive schools in terms of social class. If this situation continues, the plan for inclusive schools, which is the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) agenda for goal 4, will be challenging to achieve.

The inclusion of zoning to build inclusiveness is part of SDGs goal four which Indonesia has internationally agreed upon to become part of Merdeka Belajar program. The zoning policy is more beneficial for wealthy families to send their children to favorite schools so that these children do not mix with students from underprivileged families. The principle of zoning towards students' inclusiveness is an important model for students to interact with various socioeconomic class differences. Zoning thus becomes a solution in the SDGs to build togetherness inclusively. This strategy is still being carried out despite various resistance forms from the middle to upper class socio-economically. In the context of Merdeka Belajar virtually during the Covid-19 pandemic, underprivileged families faced many obstacles related to ownership of virtual communication technology. As a result, a climate of equal competition cannot occur because there is an infrastructure gap based on social class.

Most teachers do not recognize the combination of the liberal and critical paradigm of Knowles (1980; 1984) in Merdeka Belajar model. They did not even know that Ki Hadjar Dewantara inspired the idea of Merdeka Belajar. They know the term "*Tut Wuri Handayani*" but do not understand its meaning as "Merdeka Belajar". This situation can occur because teachers position themselves more as apparatuses in an education system who have to explain tasks that are present from above to themselves, as in the analysis of Giroux (2001).

Senior and junior teachers interviewed stated that the teachers did not fully know the meaning of Merdeka Belajar proclaimed by Nadiem. They only estimate the meaning of the various information they get from the media. Besides, the school also feels the same situation. Therefore everything must coordinate with the school. In practice, senior teachers have more limited abilities than juniors to develop various improvisations in implementing Merdeka Belajar (Interview with Mrs. Sari, Sociology Teacher, April 5, 2020). This situation confirms the findings of Giroux (2001) and Freire (1970a; 1970b; 1973; 1976), whose knowledge has been neglected because the bureaucracy focuses more on administrative aspects rather than educational paradigms.

So far, the teachers have practiced the pedagogical paradigm but are not aware of it. Meanwhile, they have not yet understood the knowledge of andragogy. In that context, teachers only try to improvise in implementing Merdeka Belajar model without knowing its paradigms essence. Meanwhile, the Minister of Education and Culture's decision was not followed up by academic papers that support the paradigm of Merdeka Belajar. It seems that teachers are expected to uncover the theoretical background of this decision in practice. Still, the administrative workload makes them not have the opportunity to rummage through Ki Hadjar Dewantara's ideas or theories, such as the work of Neill, Freire, Boal, Giroux, and Knowles (1980; 1984).

From a critical perspective, the teaching and learning process aims to develop students who can reflect critically to face their world in the future and at the same time transform them. It is necessary to have educational and teaching methodologies based on andragogy logic to carry out the critical paradigm. Knowles (1980) classifies the methods into two forms of approach, namely pedagogy and andragogy. According to him, the critical paradigm uses an andragogy approach rather than pedagogy.

This approach places students as citizens who have the right to own educational methods, not educational institutions. This methodology teaches about the teaching and learning process in educational institutions. It emphasizes the importance of an individual having the ability to determine the subject's position in the context of the right to acquire knowledge.

So far, teachers have used a pedagogical approach rather than andragogy. Likewise, the bureaucratic system that works behind it is supportive of the pedagogical method. The andragogy methodology reverses the logic in the teaching and learning process because students are the ones who are active in gaining learning experiences, and the teacher facilitates, not patronizes. It appears that the direction of Merdeka Belajar education policy provides more space for students to choose what to learn, it is no longer the teacher who gives it, and students obey the teacher's choice.

The adjustment to implement Merdeka Belajar is faced by teachers and students who have been hegemonic to the pedagogical paradigm. It is not easy to let go of this hegemonic as long as the educational bureaucracy does not support andragogy's de-bureaucratization. The andragogy teaching and learning process paradigm prioritize students to plan the direction of learning, select teaching materials and complementary materials useful for them, and discuss the best way to learn with the teacher.

When obtaining teaching materials and discussions with the teacher, students can analyze and conclude what they got and the benefits of the education they designed. This condition demands a change in the position of the teacher. So far, the role of the teacher is more to patronize students in front of the class. Students become loyal listeners and obey the duties of the teacher. The andragogy paradigm removes the teacher's position as such but as a facilitator in the education system designed with the students.

The andragogy education methodology fosters various patterns of communication between teachers and students. The teacher facilitates and provides motivation, dialogues with students in determining the direction of learning following the students' wishes but is still in the corridor of the relevant subjects. The goal of the Knowles model of Merdeka Belajar is not smart in the sense of being able to answer exam questions (in various forms), but intelligent in identifying (building logical flow), describing (building reasoning processes), and analyzing (building reasoning and critical power) about various things related to life faced by students.

This strategy needs to be done by both teachers and students. As a process of evaluating students' learning progress, teachers can provide tests to be answered by students based on their abilities in terms of identification, reasoning, and analysis to produce solutions to problems. Students, in this case, are not required to memorize but to have logic. Students are no longer like a bank system, as analyzed by Freire (1976), but are educated for dealing with problems

The approach process of Merdeka Belajar requires students to have critical knowledge and teachers to share knowledge. In this way, students experience an emancipatory learning process in acquiring knowledge. In that direction, currently, teachers and students are in a

transitional situation towards learning Merdeka Belajar. There are many challenges and opportunities in the process.

#### **4.1.2. Opportunities for Merdeka Belajar in a Pandemic Situation**

Sociology subjects taught at the Senior High School level as one of the main subjects in the Social Sciences study program clumps have sociology teachers' opportunities. As a social science, the experimental space for Merdeka Belajar is much more open than other subjects. It also opens opportunities for students and teachers to design creative and innovative learning by utilizing the social environment and available communication and information technology 4.0. Experience and knowledge regarding technology 4.0 are important as a teacher's capital towards Merdeka Belajar.

The idea of Merdeka Belajar has just entered a socialization period. It is starting to be introduced in Indonesia's world, but the whole world of education must face the Covid-19 pandemic. In March 2020, the government implemented a work-from-home pattern as a learning method to reduce Covid-19 transmission. The teachers suddenly have to carry out the education process online from their homes. Suddenly without even being able to avoid it, they inevitably do Distance Learning using technological media.

Teachers provide material online through Google Meet, Google Classroom, WhatsApp, and some teachers make teaching recordings by voice and share them with students. Schools hold training to increase teachers' technological skills or learn from fellow teachers, and some know independently. The condition of the Covid-19 pandemic feels like accelerating Merdeka Belajar process, but only in terms of communication technology, not in substance. Teachers and students still do not understand the paradigm of Merdeka Belajar, so they are still figuring out what it means. Meanwhile, the existing bureaucratic system does not support Merdeka Belajar process because it still uses a pedagogical bureaucracy instead of andragogy. As described by [Giroux \(2020\)](#), this situation shows bureaucratic backwardness with the existing conditions.

Merdeka Belajar, whose initial design was implemented in the new academic year 2020, coincided with the Covid-19 pandemic. Finally, like it or not, Merdeka Belajar model follows online teaching patterns. The pandemic condition that suddenly appeared became an opportunity for teachers to prepare Merdeka Belajar model oriented towards student activity. This is not only experienced by high school teachers in Karanganyar but also teachers throughout Indonesia.

Teachers can still not easily fit into the andragogy paradigm (andra = adult, and gogy = education). This is due to paradigmatic backwardness that has been neglected for a long time by the education world in Indonesia, which does not immediately change from pedagogy to andragogy for high school students. Therefore, Knowles's thoughts are still relevant in explaining Indonesia's conditions to make a paradigm shift in education.

The view initiated by [Knowles \(1984\)](#) regarding the andragogy paradigm should be a document to guide teachers about Merdeka Belajar, but the Ministry of Education does not. This situation has made teachers do more and more ways to develop and apply to their students. Most of the teachers interpret "Merdeka" as students and teachers' freedom to develop learning and teaching strategies. The teachers did not go too far with improvisation, but it was not structured based on andragogy principles, as argued by Knowles.

Before Covid-19 spread widely, Merdeka Belajar policy had been used by teachers to prepare the Learning Implementation Plan of Merdeka Belajar format that teachers had implemented. They have listened to the Minister of Education and Culture's socialization from various media since 2019. Several teachers received brief explanations from the school principal.



There has been no socialization or directive from the government that explains how to implement Merdeka Belajar. It is also not followed by the provision of guidance modules for teachers.

They only received the text of the Minister of Education and Culture's speech about Merdeka Belajar program. Teachers, especially teachers who are no longer young, are still confused about applying it in their daily learning. So far, they are more accustomed to the pedagogical paradigm in teaching. The teachers stated that they had several times sought information from the internet regarding the explanation of the Minister of Education and Culture as follows:

*Guru Indonesia yang tercinta, tugas Anda adalah yang termulia sekaligus yang tersulit. Anda ditugasi untuk membentuk masa depan bangsa, tetapi lebih sering diberi aturan dibandingkan dengan pertolongan. Anda ingin membantu murid yang mengalami ketertinggalan di kelas, tetapi waktu Anda habis untuk mengerjakan tugas administratif tanpa manfaat yang jelas. Anda tahu betul bahwa potensi anak tidak dapat diukur dari hasil ujian, tetapi terpaksa mengejar angka karena didesak berbagai pemangku kepentingan. Anda ingin mengajak murid keluar kelas untuk belajar dari dunia sekitarnya, tetapi kurikulum yang begitu padat menutup pintu petualangan. Anda frustrasi karena Anda tahu bahwa di dunia nyata kemampuan berkarya dan berkolaborasi akan menentukan kesuksesan anak, bukan kemampuan menghafal. Anda tahu bahwa setiap anak memiliki kebutuhan berbeda, tetapi keseragaman telah mengalahkan keberagaman sebagai prinsip dasar birokrasi. Anda ingin setiap murid terinspirasi, tetapi Anda tidak diberi kepercayaan untuk berinovasi (Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan Republik Indonesia, 2019).*

*Dear Indonesian teacher, your job is both the noblest and the most difficult. You are tasked with shaping the future of the nation but more often given rules than help. You want to help a student lagging in class, but you are running out of time on administrative assignments with no apparent benefit. You know very well that the test results cannot measure a child's potential, but you are forced to chase numbers because of pressure from various stakeholders. You want to take your students out of the classroom to learn from the world around them, but the curriculum is so dense that it closes the door to adventure. You are frustrated because you know that the ability to work and collaborate will determine a child's success in the real world, not the ability to memorize. You understand that every child has different needs, but uniformity has trumped diversity as a basic bureaucracy principle. You want every student to be inspired, but you are not given the confidence to innovate.*

In a transition towards Merdeka Belajar, several teachers felt immensely benefited by the policy recommendations related to the pandemic. This means that the pandemic situation is an opportunity for Merdeka Belajar process. Teachers are given the freedom to develop Merdeka Belajar strategy but still follow the program that has been announced. According to Mur, a Sociology Teacher, from Senior High School in Karanganyar, with the Covid-19, teachers can apply Merdeka Belajar concept. Together with other teachers, then determine teaching methods for students, including free use of online media that students can receive well.

The free Microsoft Office 365 course program has enabled them to use it for online teaching and learning with students. Schools provide training to teachers, and this training is an

opportunity to run Merdeka Belajar during this pandemic (Interview with Mrs. Mur, Sociology Teacher, April 2-6, 2020, via online communication). Although they can do the involvement of teachers and students through the use of online media technology for the teaching and learning process, they have not yet entered the andragogy and critical paradigms such as the design of Merdeka Belajar in a theoretical perspective from Knowles (1984) and Freire (1973) or Giroux (2001; 2020).

The teacher's explanation shows that what they are doing is more technical related to multimedia facilities in Merdeka Belajar process, not the paradigm aspect. This situation indicates that they do not understand the paradigmatic meaning of Merdeka Belajar. Even students do not know it, and in the end, students tend to wait for the teacher's orders. This condition shows that both teachers and students do not have the readiness and understanding of the andragogy paradigm and are still fixated on the pedagogical paradigm that Neill, Freire, Giroux, and Knowles criticized decades ago.

In practice, Merdeka Belajar method in a pandemic situation has encouraged teachers to experiment differently with other teachers. This situation is an opportunity for teachers to create teaching and learning creativity in Sociology courses for students. Teachers also try to give their students freedom to be creative in making activities, either individually or in groups. This is interesting if we think of it as an opportunity because every teacher can innovate to develop alternative techniques that make it easier for students to understand.

A teacher named Fitri experienced this. She applies online learning through various innovative learning methods. She gave the material to her students to study first before she explained the content of the material. After students have had time to learn the material, they discuss the material online with their students on their teaching schedule. She feels that this way makes it easier for students and makes them less dependent on teachers. Students also gain independent experience to study material and discuss in class online (Interview with Mrs. Fitri, Sociology Teacher, April 2-6, 2020, via online communication).

Another opportunity from Merdeka Belajar with distance learning for teachers is exploring and gaining knowledge from teacher explanations in schools and material books used as guidance. Students get additional from various other references that can be downloaded from the internet in articles, other teachers' writings published on the internet, and even YouTube to get other sources to provide a lot of added knowledge.

Merdeka Belajar also provides another opportunity for teachers not to be always in the classroom. Students can study outside the school to broaden their horizons of knowledge. The teacher can invite students to observe the school environment or visit a place outside the school to observe a sociology research method. Students then make reports of what they follow from their social environment for them to present. This method has provided additional knowledge to students about observation.

The pandemic situation with distance learning allows teachers and students to carry out habituation to change from a pedagogical paradigm to andragogy. At this stage, school institutions need to follow their bureaucratic mechanisms from pedagogical to andragogy ones so that educational institutions become independent student learning support systems. This independence is important to gain intellectual independence so that students become more independent to face their future.

The various things that have been done by teachers who have been improvising on Merdeka Belajar need to be respected. However, they are not accompanied by documents that guide them with pedagogical logic. The ability of both junior and senior teachers in this phase tends to lead to a maturation process, which needs to be supported by the educational

bureaucracy that frees educators more from the administrative burdens that have so far depressed them, thus disrupting the quality of education for students.

#### **4.1.3. Teacher Strategies against Student Dependence on Teachers**

This study found that many teachers were still confused about Merdeka Belajar model. Still, they kept trying to solve it as a challenge in that confusion. The teacher's heaviest challenge is students' dependence on what the teacher says in front of the class rather than discussing teaching materials. Merdeka Belajar curriculum focuses more on the relationship between teachers and students, which does not create dependency but rather student independence. This is a principle that Neill (1960) has practiced decades ago but must be faced by senior high school teachers in Karanganyar in the first half of the 21st century with students from the millennial generation who are accustomed to smart communication technology.

Mr. Ari, a teacher, understanding Merdeka Belajar policy as a various teaching-learning process, in the classroom, outside, or through other creative ways. This is a strategy he uses to create new habits to be more active and break away from their teachers' dependence. This strategy is important as a model that can be replicated to other teachers in other schools. In fighting dependence on teachers, he teaches students outside the classroom, for example, by taking students to markets, cities and observing street vendors. The teacher and the students used this opportunity to discuss the sociological perspective on the social situation they were observing.

According to him, this strategy was indeed funded by the students and teachers. The obstacle he faced was that not all students from families were economically well off, but it affected making students involved in discussions. To solve financial problems, Mr. Ari overcame it by asking students to observe the same phenomenon around their school and home, and then they made a report from their observations. This andragogy strategy makes students more independent, even though it can be difficult for them to get started.

A teacher named Mur, understands Merdeka Belajar in the sense that the learning process is carried out by students actively. In reality, students are still dependent on teachers and schools. As a result, it is tough to get students to be active. Then the students also depend on the reading from the teacher. Students prefer to listen to the teacher's lecture in front of the class rather than read (Interview with Mrs. Mur, Sociology Teacher, April 3, 2020). Teachers named Ari and Mur show high dependence on the pedagogical education paradigm as analyzed by Neill, Knowles, Freire, and Giroux.

Meanwhile, Merdeka Belajar, according to a teacher named Mrs. Fitri, demands that students also be proactive. The teacher acts as a driving force and facilitator to run well, and the learning process is facilitated independently. According to Mrs. Fitri, the existence of Covid-19 inevitably makes students learn from home. Even though the teacher has provided material to students, in practice, not all students read so that when asked questions, a kind of test that can answer only a few pro-active students. What happened was not par with Merdeka Belajar model seen by Neill, Knowles, Freire, and Giroux. This situation is understandable because it is still in a transitional condition, so it takes time to complete challenges.

Many of them are constrained by communication tools such as smartphones, and many do not even have laptops and the internet. Some students have to share smartphones or computers with their siblings and are forced to send answers at night. This condition causes the teacher not to monitor students to explore the material because of communication problems. The school even provides loans to students who do not have smartphones. The teacher then

created a WhatsApp group to discuss and remind students to read the material that had been sent.

Communication problems between teachers and students are not only due to lack of smartphone ownership but also disturbed by the unstable signal problem in several places in Karanganyar, and teachers experienced the same thing. As a result, the teaching process was often interrupted. Apart from virtual face-to-face, several teachers also received WhatsApp questions if they could not hear the teacher's explanations. There are even teachers who have signal problems or do not have Wi-Fi at home. This condition causes digital communication to hinder the teaching and learning process. Teachers often cannot respond quickly to students' questions. On the other hand, teachers also face slow responses from students.

Mrs. Fitri even recorded her voice to explain the material so that students listen because reading is still not a culture, let alone learning from home. The teacher cannot monitor it like in a real class. Mrs. Fitri chose to record the sound because most students object to using many student quotas applications. As a solution, the school has provided quota assistance for low-income family students. The allocation for communication for some student families is also burdensome because several children do Distance Learning in these families.

Mrs. Fitri, in implementing Merdeka Belajar, once tried to provide space for students to discuss Ethnographic novels. The discussion did not go as she had hoped. According to her, students' awareness of reading still lacks because students depend on the teacher's explanation. The problem of student dependence on teachers has conditioned most teachers to use the old pattern in Merdeka Belajar, which provides teaching material to students, not students who choose material for discussion.

Mrs. Eri, a teacher, said that students' ability to learn independently was very lacking, so they were not ready for Merdeka Belajar. Students' incomprehension still causes the teacher first to explain the content of the material. This means that the pedagogical paradigm is always applied to students. As a result, Merdeka Belajar still needs time for adaptation for teachers and students to understand it.

Students who are less interested in reading when given material in animated videos face problems with internet quotas. Even students have to join their friends because they do not have a quota or stay at a relative's house with Wi-Fi. Another obstacle for senior teachers is also their mastery of technology. Technical problems can be resolved by taking technical training in using computers and smartphones. For that, teachers need to prepare extra time for exercise and prepare materials online. Meanwhile, married female teachers often experience double burdens, namely domestic affairs and work affairs. Their children also went to online schools during the pandemic, so teachers who were housewives had to deal with their children who were overdoing distance learning.

Mrs. Eri stated that she only understood bits and pieces of the media and circulars about Merdeka Belajar. She does not know the basic paradigm because she only understands that she has followed what other teachers have done following school rules. In the context of Merdeka Belajar, as a sociology teacher, she tries to invite her students to make observations in their social environment on a limited basis and follow pandemic protocols. This method requires additional costs and more time in some cases than the regular class.

According to the teachers, teachers can teach with sophisticated media technology for public schools with laboratories with comprehensive technology in the 4.0 era. Students' lessons are not always in the form of text because they can display pictures and videos as more attractive. Although the teacher provides material that is different from the text, it is still the teacher's choice, not the student's choice. This means the availability of 4.0 technology



equipment paradigmatically as a learning medium, but it does not follow the andragogy paradigm that separates students and teachers.

The challenge that must be faced by teachers, students, and the education bureaucracy is the difficulty in breaking the hegemonic circle of the pedagogical paradigm of the banking system that has been running so far. The idea of Merdeka Belajar is indeed important. Still, it needs the education bureaucracy's readiness that needs to be simplified not to become a burden to the educational apparatus or students.

## **4.2. Discussion**

### **4.2.1. The Old versus the New Curriculum (Merdeka Belajar)**

According to Knowles (1984), there are four important principles in the andragogy paradigm: 1) Participatory, meaning that students as adults need to plan and evaluate their teaching. 2) Adult Experience, in which students have a variety of positive and negative experiences that they have had in life, is the basis for the learning process. 3) Relevance and Impact, meaning that adult students tend to choose subjects relevant to themselves and impact themselves in the future so that the freedom to choose relevant subjects is an important aspect of Merdeka Belajar. 4) Problem-centered, meaning that learning carried out by adults has an orientation to face problems and the process of solving them, rather than being oriented to the content of the material provided by the teacher.

The description of the various strategies employed by high school teachers in Karanganyar shows that the andragogy principle of Knowles (1984) was not the basis when deciding to improvise Merdeka Belajar policy, which was not accompanied by clear instructions. The teachers have tried to build student participation into the teaching and learning process based on social problems that focus on the sociology subject. Meanwhile, the second and third aspects of Knowles's idea were not followed as a goal of andragogy education.

According to Giroux (2020), the world of education in the last three decades, even in the United States and Canada, has declined rapidly in its capacity to educate young people to become reflective, critical, and socially involved agents. He further explained that education under the current neoliberal regime in developed countries such as Canada and the United States had become the target of the dangerous forces of privatization and an unreasonable standard curriculum. As a result, teachers are subjected to intolerable labor conditions. The educational process that gives freedom to students has real potential to promote social equality and support democracy. However, education at the high school to university level now imitates the business culture run by managerial bureaucrats, who are crazy about market values.

Pedagogical problems were critically discussed decades ago by Paulo Freire. The pedagogical paradigm model of education (peda = child, and gogy = invitation or education) is more appropriate to educate someone in the childhood phase. Education for adults in Indonesia is treated the same as children, so the model used is like the banking system and memorization to measure investment return. This means that the pedagogical paradigm has been left for decades if calculated from 1970, there will be changes in 2020, which resulted in bureaucratic and paradigmatic gaps. The pedagogical paradigm has made students dependent and oppressed and even become accustomed to all of it to create obedience without creativity to develop them (Freire, 1970a; Giroux, 2001; 2020).

The pedagogical effect implemented in Indonesia's education system has become a hegemony in a conservative teaching pattern (pedagogy). As a result, students do not have their independence. They cannot decide a direction for themselves. Giroux, to overcome this

problem, by referring to Freire, proposed critical pedagogy as an alternative to ordinary pedagogy to educate children at the high school level so that they are ready when entering the education phase that emphasizes the principles of andragogy (Giroux, 2020). Experience from high school teachers' strategy in Karanganyar by encouraging students to be active is a challenge that is not easy for teachers. They have changed the pedagogical paradigm that they have been running for decades and students need to adjust to the andragogy paradigm. This strategy is an important asset for teachers to implement the andragogy paradigm in Merdeka Belajar.

In a transition from the old curriculum to Merdeka Belajar, teachers often face sluggish classroom situations because they do not have reading habits and literacy is low. In the current educational model, it seems that it has not created a culture of independent reading. Even the teachers admit that they do not read new books because administrative work due to bureaucratization makes technical work pile up.

The strong bureaucratization of education shows that even though it has attempted to carry out the teaching and learning process using Merdeka Belajar method, it still uses the old pattern, only being moved in a virtual space. Giroux suggested that they should also reconsider the important role they might take in general education and higher education to oppose corporatization and bureaucratization of the school's teaching approach as a critical part of education (Giroux, 2020). In the Indonesian context, this is not an easy thing to do because the existing political system has made teachers dependent and subject to the current educational power structure.

According to Giroux (2020), critical education is imperative because part of the stagnant situation is based on the assumption that educators fiercely reject every attempt from liberal educational thinking to reduce their role in school to technicians or company workers. Merdeka Belajar is a liberal thought from Nadiem Makarim, followed by teachers and the education bureaucracy. The existing bureaucracy's existing conditions are challenging to transform itself to get out of the comfort zone so far.

Based on the critical logic developed by Giroux, Freire, Neill, and Knowles, it seems clear that educators need to be more progressive by redefining their role as engaged public intellectuals capable of teaching students critical language. Their experience in implementing the strategy towards Merdeka Belajar is an important experience that needs to be equipped with theoretical aspects. The high school sociology teacher's experiences in Karanganyar to make direct observations in sociology's real social world are important for students and teachers. This experience is a prerequisite for change and lays the foundation for strategic thinking from critical education. In the context of Merdeka Belajar, teachers and the education bureaucracy need to redefine the aims, meaning, and politics of education by showing that critical educators have basic knowledge in critical educational practices so that teachers and students alike become social agencies with civic responsibilities. Merdeka Belajar is an opportunity for critical and independent education.

## 5. Conclusion

Merdeka Belajar program initiated by Nadiem Makarim is an important idea for changing Indonesia's paradigm of education. However, teachers have not fully understood the government's policies concerning Merdeka Belajar program. Besides, there is no socialization related to Merdeka Belajar method's paradigm, and the existing bureaucratic system still shows a reluctance to change in response to Merdeka Belajar model. This study concludes that the education bureaucracy is still hegemonic by the pedagogical paradigm and has difficulty

adjusting using the andragogy paradigm.

Besides, the competence of teachers who have been subject to the bureaucratic system structurally has made them drawn into the educational bureaucracy's routine so that they are hegemony by the pedagogical paradigm. Junior teachers tend to be more flexible to face challenges and take advantage of pandemic conditions to take advantage of communication technology 4.0. They are better able to improvise Merdeka Belajar program. Meanwhile, senior teachers need time first to learn how to operate computers for distance learning activities. The school also provides facilities to provide short courses to senior teachers who never use computers.

So far, the teachers only carry out orders as the educational apparatus structurally. This condition has impacted the character of teachers who have lost their creative independence, even though they can be creative. The existing education bureaucracy system has made it drift into the routine of the education bureaucracy. In the context of Merdeka Belajar, teachers need a transition time to prepare for it because moving away from pedagogical hegemony towards the andragogy paradigm is not an easy thing to do, as long as the bureaucracy does not follow it.

Teacher competence in the pedagogical bureaucracy so far has shackled them into a space full of restrictions and caused them to join the current structure structurally. As a result, the administrative burden makes teachers busy with these matters, which continue to pile up as evidence of accountability for teaching activities. This is a loss of investment in the education sector because teachers who are supposed to play a role in strengthening the nation's capital are busy in managerial matters. So far, the education system's pedagogical bureaucracy has no suitability for supporting Merdeka Belajar process.

In such a situation, the bureaucracy needs to make changes to have an andragogy paradigm. Without it, the opportunity for Merdeka Belajar tends to be hampered. Freedom in learning is not based solely on individual students or teachers. Still, it is also related to those around the world of education, including the bureaucratic system, the administrative structure, students, and parents' habituation towards Merdeka Belajar. Merdeka Belajar needs to be achieved, experienced, and moved in developing the experience of students, teachers, and parents, including the education bureaucracy.

The problem that appears to be a challenge for Merdeka Belajar process is that most educated teachers are not independent. Hence, hegemonic still dominates their thoughts and actions. As a result, the way they have is also done to their students. Therefore, habituation is needed as a transition towards Merdeka Belajar, and many opportunities can be done to achieve the right level of independence.

Relying on teachers and students alone to run Merdeka Belajar program can be said to be a fundamental mistake because the definition of policies is not based on a clear and easy-to-understand paradigmatic basis. Teachers need to be independent first in terms of welfare. The bureaucracy also needs to free the educational apparatus to be free and prosperous in managing the administrative system. The education apparatus, teachers, and students have been depressed with various burdens, in Giroux's view. Therefore, Merdeka Belajar is freeing teachers, students, education apparatus, and bureaucracy to organize Merdeka Belajar education, which provides students with academic welfare.

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