Building a Culture of Peace through Peace Education as the Foundation for Merdeka Campus Transformation

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Abstract

Higher education is a crucial foundation for shaping individuals who are both high-quality and positively contribute to society. This study reviews the transformation of peace education within the Merdeka Campus environment, an innovative approach in Indonesia's higher education system. The "Freedom to Learn" concept emphasizes students' autonomy in managing their learning processes according to their interests and potential. This approach not only strengthens academic aspects but also instills values of peace and cooperation among students within the campus environment. By fostering creativity and open dialogue, the Merdeka Campus creates an atmosphere conducive to shaping future leaders committed to peace. The study employs a literature review method, providing a foundation for the implementation of the *Merdeka Belajar* concept in the context of peace education. It outlines strategies for curriculum development that support a deeper understanding of conflict resolution and peaceful solutions. Additionally, the study highlights the role of lecturers as facilitators in guiding students towards a holistic understanding of the concept of peace. The findings indicate that the *Merdeka Belajar* approach to peace education within the Merdeka Campus environment positively impacts student development, both in terms of knowledge and attitudes.

Keywords: Merdeka Belajar; Merdeka Campus; Educational Transformation; Peace Education

INTRODUCTION

The implementation of the Merdeka Belajar program cannot be separated from teaching and assessment methods aligned with the characteristics of 21stcentury learning. Learning content in the 21st century must integrate knowledge proficiency, skills, attitudes, and mastery of information and communication technology. These competencies can be developed through methods such as problem-based learning, project-based learning, case studies, and others. Moreover, higher-order thinking skills and character development are the primary focus in 21st-century education.

According to Law No. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System (Sisdiknas), Article 1 explains that education is a deliberate and organized effort to create a learning environment and learning process aimed at enabling learners to actively develop their potential.

This encompasses the development of spiritual strength, religious values, self-control, personality, intelligence, noble character, and the skills required by learners for themselves and society. The learning process is directed toward exploring and developing the full potential of learners. With the rapid advancement of technology and

information, students, as part of the global community, are becoming more connected and oriented toward speed and practicality. This has evolved into a cultural trend that is difficult to eliminate. The impact of globalization has brought significant influence on the development of global citizens, encompassing aspects such as beliefs, norms, behaviors, values, and even active economic and trade aspects (Banks, 2008:132).

Muhammad Syaifudin & Agus Satmoko (2014:670) stated that learners will become bearers of responsibility to lead and bring about positive changes for the nation, steering it in a better direction. The effects of globalization on the development of global citizens must be addressed directly, whether through government regulations or implemented education systems. This aims to prepare citizens possess active who professionalism in integrating into society and the state. Education in Indonesia currently faces significant challenges related to the expanding influence of globalization across various aspects of life, including the education sector (Sutrisno & Murdiono, 2017:56). Therefore, a reconstruction of education system is necessary to prepare individuals as future global citizens. Global citizens are the result developing fundamental human values applied on a global scale, encompassing the development of citizens' rights and responsibilities to fulfill their duties and obligations globally. The formation of global citizens requires a continuous process at all levels of education, starting from elementary school to higher education. In accordance with Article 31,

Paragraph 3 of the 1945 Constitution, the main objective is outlined, mandating the government to strive for and implement a National Education System. This article states the government's obligation to establish and manage a National Education System aimed at enhancing faith, piety, and noble character in the effort to educate the nation. To achieve government entrusts this goal, the responsibilities to teachers within schools, as mentioned by Sherly et al. (2020).

Merdeka Belajar (Freedom to Learn), an innovative policy introduced by the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia (Kemendikbud RI), has been elaborated by Arifin & Muslim (2020) and Mustaghfiroh (2020). The Minister of Education and Culture issued Circular Letter (SE) Number 1 of 2020 to regulate Merdeka Belajar policies regarding student graduation and new student admissions for the 2020/2021 academic year, addressed to Governors and Regents/Mayors across Indonesia, as explained by Chrismastianto (2021).

Minister of Education and Culture Nadiem Anwar Makarim spearheaded the Merdeka Belajar initiative with the hope that this program would create an enjoyable learning environment, eliminate boredom, and make learning a hobby for students. The primary focus of this program is to improve the quality of human resources, as outlined by Muhsin (2021). Nadiem emphasized that teachers must first possess the freedom to think before transferring this to students. The Merdeka Belajar program emerged as a response to numerous complaints about education system, particularly the regarding assessment methods that impose certain limitations, as explained by Wijayanto (2021).

Various controversies have arisen concerning perspectives on *Merdeka Belajar* in the education system. Consequently, before the program's implementation, the government conducted comprehensive studies on various aspects included in the *Merdeka Belajar* policy.

The Merdeka Belajar (Freedom to Learn) concept provides a foundation for students to manage their learning independently, creating adaptation to the demands of modern times. In this context, peace education plays a crucial role, given the challenges of conflict and the complexity of intercultural relationships within the campus environment. A campus that upholds the values of peace not only creates a safe and harmonious space but also contributes positively to shaping the character of its students. Social and multicultural diversity on campus underlines the necessity educational approach that differences with mutual respect (Irawan 2021; Irawan & & Bayu Firdaus, Masyitoh, 2023).

The adoption of global trends related to Merdeka Belajar and peace education highlights the need for campuses to serve as active agents of the change shaping younger generation. Higher education institutions scientific entities tasked with providing education and instruction beyond secondary levels, offering education grounded in Indonesian culture and national values in a scholarly manner. According to Law No. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System,

education is a deliberate and planned effort to create learning environments and processes that enable students to actively develop their potential. This encompasses fostering spiritual and religious strength, self-control, personality, intelligence, noble character, and skills necessary for themselves, society, the nation, and the state (Simatupang & Yuhertiana, 2021).

Kampus Merdeka (Independent Campus) is a policy by the Ministry of Education and Culture aimed encouraging students to master diverse fields of knowledge beneficial for entering the workforce. Kampus Merdeka offers students the opportunity to choose courses according to their interests. The freedom-to-learn concept is designed to provide students with flexibility to study outside their campus. This program aims to enhance graduates' competencies, both soft skills and hard skills, to align with contemporary needs and prepare them as future leaders who are excellent, ethical, and moral (Ferdianto & Anindita, 2023; Indrawati & Kuncoro, Rosmansyah et al., 2023).

The Kampus Merdeka policy aligns with Indonesia's Minister of Education and Culture Regulation 2020 on National Higher Education Standards. Article 18 states that undergraduate and applied undergraduate students may fulfill their study periods and credit loads by completing their learning within the study program or partially through external programs. Under this policy, students are allowed up to two semesters to engage in activities outside the classroom, promoting social interaction with external environments. This exposure introduces students to realworld situations, helping them learn life skills within a community. Ultimately, this policy aims to familiarize students with the professional world early on, ensuring they are better prepared for the workforce upon graduation (Suhartoyo et al., 2020; Suwignyo, 2013).

Empowering students the primary agents in Merdeka Belajar and the transformation of peace education stems from the urgent need to equip them with skills, knowledge, and attitudes relevant to the demands of a global society. This education is not solely about academic curricula but also about personal development, a deep understanding of human values, and the ability contribute positively to society. actively involving students in learning process, Kampus Merdeka creates an environment responsive to modern developments while positioning education as a means to foster peace. This transformation produces not only academically competent graduates but individuals who are peaceconscious, capable of engaging in dialogue amidst diversity, and prepared to lead positive societal change.

RESEARCH METHOD

The research approach employed is a qualitative descriptive approach. This qualitative research is used as a research procedure that produces descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words from people being observed. Kirk and Miller, as cited in Moleong (2010:4), define qualitative research as a specific tradition in social sciences that fundamentally relies on human observation, both in their context and their terminology (Gunawan, 2013). The focus of qualitative research is primarily based on the importance, urgency, and feasibility of the problem to be addressed, as well as constraints such as manpower, funding, and time (Sugiyono, 2014:286).

The method used in this study is a literature review. A literature review involves analyzing theories, findings, and other research articles obtained as reference material to support research activities. This study uses relevant references aligned with the theme of *Merdeka Belajar* (Freedom to Learn) and the transformation of peace education in the *Kampus Merdeka* (Independent Campus) environment (Istianah, Maftuh & Malihah, 2023).

According to Lofland, as cited in Lexy J. Moleong (2011:157), the primary data sources in qualitative research are words and actions, while additional data include documents and other sources. In this regard, the data in this study are categorized into words and actions, written sources, photographs, statistics. The data source utilized in this study is secondary data. Secondary data serve as supplementary information that complements primary data. From the perspective of data sources, additional material from written sources can be divided into books and scientific journals, archives, personal documents, documents and official (Moleong, 2011:159).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION Freedom to Learn, Independent Campus

Freedom to Learn, Independent Campus is a higher education concept introduced by the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia. This program aims to provide students with the freedom to manage their learning process. Freedom to Learn, Independent Campus strives to create a flexible, more creative, and individualized learning environment. In a broader sense, Independent Campus reflects the transition from a traditional, teacher-centered approach to a studentoriented education model. Students in an Independent Campus are seen partners in the learning process, and this approach fosters an environment that stimulates the exchange of ideas and dialogue. This means open Independent Campus is not only a place to acquire knowledge but also a platform where students are empowered to become critical thinkers, innovators, and future leaders (Simatupang & Yuhertiana, 2021).

Independent Campus also involves responsibility, where students are not only pursuing freedom but are also expected to actively contribute shaping a campus culture that inclusive, just, and harmonious. By freeing students from conventional constraints, Independent Campus encourages the development character, entrepreneurial spirit, and adaptability necessary to face a rapidly changing world. Thus, the meaning of Independent Campus lays foundation for shaping individuals who are not only successful in their careers but also become agents of positive change in society (Istianah et al., 2024; Istianah, Irawan & Mas'ud, 2024).

Independent Campus is the continuation of the Freedom to Learn concept, carrying profound meaning

related to the freedom and responsibility of students toward their personal and academic development. Independent Campus involves liberation from rigid, educational models, students are not only given the freedom to choose their study paths but are also encouraged to explore various forms of knowledge beyond the curriculum. This campus becomes a laboratory for intellectual exploration, creativity, and the development of practical skills that are relevant to the real world, as outlined below:

- a. The right to study for three semesters outside of the study program. Higher education institutions are required to grant students the right to voluntarily take courses outside of their institution for two semesters or the equivalent of 40 credits (SKS). Furthermore, students can also take courses in another study program within the same campus for one semester.
- b. The freedom for public universities (BLU-Public Service Agency) and Satker (Work Units) to become Legal Entity State Universities (PTN BH).
- c. The autonomy of higher education institutions, both public and private.
- d. The program of automatic reaccreditation.

The right to study for three semesters outside of the study program is a government policy aimed at preparing students' competencies to face social and cultural changes, the rapidly advancing industrial world, and technological progress. Students' competencies must be aligned with the demands of these changing times, ensuring a link and match with the industrial world, the

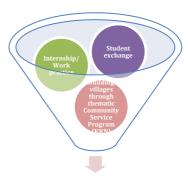
workforce, and the future. According to Permendikbud 3, 2020 on National Standards for Higher Education, it is stated that:

- 1. The forms of learning are conducted within the study program and outside the study program:
 - a. Learning within a different study program at the same higher education institution;
 - b. Learning within the same study program at a different higher education institution;
 - c. Learning within a different study program at a different higher education institution;
 - d. Learning at non-higher education institutions.
- 2. The learning process outside the study program is carried out based on cooperation agreements between higher education institutions and other relevant institutions, and the results of the courses are recognized through the Semester Credit System (SKS) transfer mechanism.
- 3. The learning process outside the study program is conducted under the supervision of a lecturer.
- 4. The learning process outside the study program is determined by the Ministry and/or the leaders of the higher education institution.

Some key points of the Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka involve giving students the freedom to choose courses, learning methods, and skills development according to their interests and talents. Additionally, this program encourages collaboration between students, lecturers, and industry stakeholders to enhance the relevance of the curriculum to the demands of the job

This concept reflects market. of higher education transformation toward an approach that is more responsive the needs and development of students. Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka is expected to improve the quality of graduates, stimulate innovation, and better prepare students to face global challenges. This program is part of a broader effort to renew the higher education system in (Abidah al., Indonesia et 2020; Simatupang & Yuhertiana. 2021; Suhartoyo et al., 2020).

The form of learning activities refers to Permendikbud No. 3 of 2020, Article 15, Paragraph 1, which states that learning can be conducted both within and outside the study program as follows:



Kampus Merdeka

Figure 1. Merdeka Campus Learning Source: Ministerial Regulation No. 3 of 2020

Figure 1. The purpose of Merdeka Campus is to enhance graduates' competencies, both in soft skills and hard skills, to better prepare them and ensure they are relevant to the needs of the times, while also preparing them to become excellent and charismatic leaders of the nation's future.

Education Transformation

The transformation of education through Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka is an initiative aimed at changing the traditional paradigm and model of higher education in Indonesia. This program introduces several significant changes in the way higher education is implemented, with the goal of enhancing flexibility, relevance, and the quality of learning (Asterius Juano et al., 2019; Rahmadayanti & Hartoyo, 2022).

The characteristics prepared for students as global citizens need to be continuously developed and improved through educational learning processes at various educational levels. This is aimed at shaping future global citizens who participate globally can addressing various issues, conflicts, and global challenges as part of their collective responsibility citizens. Therefore, the goal is to realize a fair and prosperous human life order within the context of a global society. These characteristics, as explained by John C. Cogan (1999), consist of several essential abilities, namely:

- a. The ability to identify and approach problems as members of a global community.
- b. The ability to collaborate with others and take responsibility for their roles or duties in society.
- c. The ability to understand, accept, and respect cultural diversity.
- d. The ability to think critically and systematically.
- e. The ability to resolve conflicts peacefully without violence.

- f. The ability to change lifestyles and staple food patterns to protect the environment.
- g. The ability to be sensitive to and uphold human rights, including the rights of women, ethnic minorities, and others.
- h. The ability to participate in political life at the local, national, and international levels.

The skills that must be possessed to face the Big Data Era stimulate the Indonesian government, through the Ministry of Education and Culture, to improve the quality of Human Resources (HR), which must have digital skills and creative thinking (Asterius Juano et al., 2019; Junaid & Baharuddin, 2020). In addition, the government is also working to reduce the national unemployment rate by aligning education with the world of work and industry, so that higher education graduates are job-ready, with expertise and skills that meet the needs of the job market (Arifin & Muslim, 2020; Yusuf & Arfiansyah, 2021). This effort is manifested by the Ministry of Education and Culture launching a new policy, namely Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka, which includes the following:

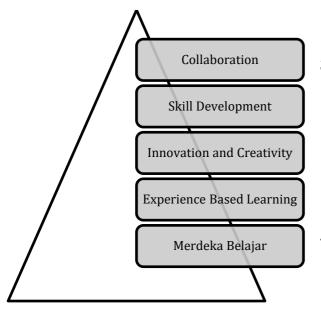


Figure 2. Objectives of Merdeka
Campus
Source: Ministry of Education and
Culture 2020

Figure 2 explains the objectives of the Merdeka Campus, which provides space for students and universities to explore knowledge and experiences in areas of interest, and can be described as follows:

- 1. **Student Freedom:** Students are given the freedom to choose courses, study paths, and learning methods according to their interests, talents, and career goals. b. The learning process is no longer restricted to a rigid curriculum but provides space for students to explore their potential and interests in their chosen fields.
- 2. Collaboration Between Students, Lecturers, and Industry: This program encourages close collaboration between students, lecturers, and industry partners. b. Students can access resources from industry and gain direct insights into labor market demands, ensuring that

the curriculum and learning are relevant to industry needs.

- 3. Focus on Skill Development: Emphasis is placed on the development of practical skills and soft skills needed in the workforce. Students are encouraged not only to have academic knowledge but also skills that can be directly applied in work situations.
- 4. Innovation and Creativity: Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka provides significant encouragement for innovation and creativity in learning and research. Facilities and support are provided for innovative projects and research that is exploratory and solution-oriented.

5. Experience-Based

Learning: Education focuses not only on theoretical aspects but also on deep practical experiences. b. Efforts are made to align learning with reallife situations that students may face after graduation

Through the transformation of the Merdeka Campus, the goal is to create a more dynamic, responsive, and relevant educational environment that aligns with the times and the needs of society. By giving freedom empowering and students, this program is expected to produce graduates who are better prepared to face global challenges and contribute positively to society. The importance of transformation lies in keeping up with the times, preparing students with relevant skills, ensuring that higher education truly functions as a driver of community and national development as a whole (Laga et al., 2021; Susilawati, 2021).

Peace education is a broad field of study with various definitions. Overall, the goal of peace education is to teach knowledge, attitudes, values, behavioral skills necessary for resolving conflicts nonviolently, as well as to foster and maintain cooperation and harmony (Eliasa et al., 2019). It is also important for educators to contribute to preventing violence in educational environments and creating a peaceful education (Biggs et al., 2008). Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka Education Peace innovative effort in the context of higher education in Indonesia that combines the Merdeka Belajar concept with a specific focus on peace education. This program aims to create a learning environment that not only provides freedom for students to determine the direction of their education but also emphasizes the values of peace, cooperation, and a deep understanding of conflicts and peaceful solutions.

Table 1: Concept of Peace Education in Merdeka Belajar

No	Concept of	Achieveme
	Peace	nts of Peace
	Education	Education
1.	Freedom of	Students are
	Choosing	given the
	Peace	freedom to
	Education	choose
	Courses	courses
		related to
		peace,

2. Collaborativ This e project for program Peace encourages collaborativ e projects involving students, lecturers, and possibly external parties, focusing on			conflict, and diplomacy, and the curriculum is designed to provide a holistic understanding of various aspects of conflict and peace efforts.
e project for program Peace encourages collaborativ e projects involving students, lecturers, and possibly external parties,			
	2.	e project for	program encourages collaborativ e projects involving students, lecturers, and possibly external

		concrete			students
		efforts to			with access
		achieve			to a wider
		peace.			range of
3.	Training in	Students are			resources
	Mediation	encouraged			and
	and	to develop			practical
	Dialogue	mediation			opportuniti
	Skills	skills, open			es.
		dialogue,	5.	Understandi	The
		and		ng of Global	curriculum
		negotiation		and Local	is designed
		as an		Conflicts	to
		integral part			understand
		of their			conflicts at
		learning.			both global
4.	Collaboratio	"The			and local
	n with Peace	program			levels,
	Organizatio	can			allowing
	ns	establish			students to
		partnership			examine the
		s with			challenges
		organizatio			and
		ns or			opportuniti
		institutions			es for peace
		focused on			in a more
		peace,			contextual
		providing			manner.

6.	Learning	Lecturers
	Facilitator	act as
		facilitators
		who
		support
		active and
		critical
		learning for
		students
		regarding
		peace
		issues.

Source: Processed by the Author 2023

Through the integration Merdeka Belajar with Peace Education, it is hoped that students will not only become experts in their academic fields but also conscious and proactive actors in promoting human building peace, values, and creating positive change in both local and global communities. According to UNICEF, as reported by Fountain (1999), peace education refers to the process of advancing knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values needed to bring about behavioral change that will enable children and adults to prevent conflict and violence, both real and structural, to resolve conflicts, and to create conditions conducive to peace at intrapersonal, interpersonal, intergroup, national, and international levels (Kartadinata, 2014). In line with this, Gabriel Solomon, as cited by H.B. Danesh (2006), presents a comprehensive view of peace education activities by dividing them into four main categories. Below is a brief explanation of each category identified by Solomon:

- a. Peace Education as 'Mindset Change Activities': Focuses on changing the mindset of individuals and communities. Aims change to attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions regarding conflict and peace. Emphasizes the importance of a deep understanding of the cultural, social, and psychological aspects of peace.
- b. Peace Education as 'The Cultivation of a Set of Skills': Emphasizes the development concrete of skills necessary for building peace. in negotiation, Includes training mediation, non-violent communication, and conflict skills. resolution Focuses on individuals with empowering practical skills to address conflicts.
- c. Peace Education as 'Promotion of Human Rights': Relates to promoting human rights as the foundation of peace. Promotes respect for individual and group rights. Emphasizes justice, equality, and the elimination of discrimination as key elements of sustainable peace.
- d. Peace Education as 'Environmental Management, Disarmament, Promotion of a Culture of Peace in Educational Environments': Involves efforts to understand and address conflicts arising from environmental issues, weapons, and culture. Teaches the importance of environmental preservation, demilitarization, respect for cultural diversity. Builds educational environments that values support of peace and sustainability.

This approach reflects the diversity of strategies that can be undertaken in the of context peace education. Understanding that peace education encompasses not just one aspect but is related to multiple dimensions of life, this approach attempts to cover a wide range of relevant aspects to create a more peaceful and just society (Anselmus Dami et al., 2022; Woehrle, 2002). It is illustrated in the teacher's guide titled "Learning the Way of Peace: A Teacher's Guide to Peace Education" published by UNESCO in 2001, which mentions that peace education can be implemented at four main levels: (1) the individual or self-development level, (2)the school/campus and community level, (3) the national level, and (4) the global level. Therefore, every child needs to be equipped with skills to resolve conflicts without violence, which should be developed within the family, school, and social environment (Irawan, Hermawan & Wijayanti, 2021; Irawan, Masyitoh & Sundawa, 2023; Irawan et al., 2024).

The Merdeka Belajar curriculum gives students the freedom to organize learning. and direct their own Responding to the challenges presented by aligning the freedom to learn, the curriculum of freedom, and the profile of Pancasila students, it balances academic freedom with sustainability integrates the values of Pancasila effectively. The potential benefits derived from the application of the peace education concept (Anif Istianah, et al., 2023).

Peace education is emphasized more as a practice rather than just a theory of conflict occurring around the school environment. Competition in behavior and social interactions is not only limited to the cognitive and affective levels but also includes higher levels of thinking, such as application, adjustment, evaluation, and the creation and peaceful resolution of problems. Thus, peace education is directed at shaping individuals who not only have theoretical understanding but are also able to implement, navigate, and resolve conflicts with a peaceful approach.

CONCLUSION

The transformation of peace education through Merdeka Belajar in the campus environment today creates a new paradigm that is highly relevant in the complex dynamics contemporary society. By providing students with the freedom to manage their own learning, this program not only strengthens academic quality but also positions students as change agents who are sensitive to conflict and committed to peace. Merdeka Belajar not only provides space for creativity and flexibility in learning but also instills essential peace values in shaping students' character. This paradigm allows students to explore their full potential, not only as seekers of knowledge but also as individuals who can understand, absorb, and respond to conflicts in a constructive manner. This program becomes key in shaping graduates who are not only academically competent but also socially sensitive and capable of contributing to creating a peaceful environment. By integrating students' lives, peace values into Merdeka Belajar in the campus environment has a positive impact in addressing challenges and conflicts that may arise within society.

As an innovation in higher education, Merdeka Belajar in today's environment forms campus foundation for shaping a generation that excels in science while also having a deep spirit of peace. With continued development and strengthening of the implementation of this program, it is hoped to answer the call of the times to produce highly competitive individuals who can become pillars of peace in society.

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