
Merdeka Belajar is Reflected in the Professional Competence of English Teachers

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ABSTRACT

"Merdeka Belajar" (autonomous learning) is a term that emphasizes the freedom and responsibility of students in learning. In this regard, English teachers have an essential role in reflecting their professional competence by facilitating an independent learning process for students. It involves providing appropriate direction and guidance and ensuring that students have sufficient access to resources and technology to assist them in learning effectively and independently. That way, students can reach their potential and build the skills necessary to succeed in a competitive global world. This study uses a qualitative descriptive approach with observation, interviews, and documentation. The results showed that independent learning is an effective learning process and gives responsibility to students. In addition, English teachers also have an essential role in facilitating the process of independent learning because the professional competence of English teachers determines the success of the autonomous learning process. Further research can focus more on learning models that support and facilitate students to be independent in learning.

Keywords: merdeka belajar, teacher competence, professional teacher, English

I. INTRODUCTION

The development of science and technology, marked by advances in information media and technology, has developed rapidly. So, education must also make breakthroughs so that students can

optimize their skills under their talents and interests. Education is a long-term investment in human resources (HR) that has strategic value for the continuity of human civilization (Aziz, 2019b). One of the essential components in education is the

teacher. Teachers in education have a significant and strategic role (Munawaroh & Suwardi, 2022). It is because teachers are at the forefront of the implementation of education. Teachers who communicate knowledge and skills directly to their students, teaching through instruction and examples of positive values. Teachers are actual practitioners of education (Rosyad & Maarif, 2020). Given the strategic role of teachers in education, especially in this global era, the need for qualified teachers is a necessity for the future of a glorious nation. The need for higher-quality teachers must be addressed positively by education managers. This positive response must be demonstrated by constantly improving the quality of the educational programs it offers.

Improving the quality of education in Indonesia is part of the development goals in the field of national education. For this reason, the improvement of human resources needs more attention. Given how important education is to the development of a country, the government strives to continue to improve the quality of education in the country (Aziz, 2019b). The government makes various regulations and policies so educational goals can be achieved. These last two years, the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia has

issued a new approach, "autonomous learning." The program is described in four policies, namely: (1) UN (national examination) Removal, (2) implementation of USBN (school exam-based national) whose implementation is handed over to schools, (3) RPP (course outline) format simplification, (4) New Student Admissions Zoning System (PSB) (Mauizdati, 2020). The policymaking of independent learning in the background is based on research results by the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) in 2019. From the study results, it can be seen that the assessment results of Indonesian students are still shallow. Education or school policies will work well if the policy has certain aspects and eligibility (Gistituati & Aimon, 2020).

The Minister of Education and Culture of Indonesia, Nadiem Makarim, concerning Merdeka Belajar in determining students' graduation, has raised pros and cons from various circles. The concept of "Merdeka Belajar" is to liberate educational institutions and encourage students to innovate and encourage creative thinking (Ainia, 2020). This concept was then accepted considering the vision and mission of Indonesian education in the future to create a quality society and compete in various fields of life.

In the industrial revolution 4.0, every educational institution is expected to have competitiveness and innovation that can collaborate to avoid being left behind. In the era of revolution 4.0, the education system is expected to be able to realize that students can think critically and can solve problems, are creative and innovative, and have the skills to communicate and collaborate (Mardhiyah et al., 2021; Munawaroh & Suwardi, 2022; Yamin & Syahrir, 2020). The concept of Merdeka Belajar is a response to the needs of the education system in the era of the industrial revolution 4.0. Nadiem Makarim, Minister of Education of the Republic of Indonesia, emphasized that freedom of learning is the freedom of thought that starts from teachers (Iqbal, 2021). According to (hooks, 1994), Educating as a practice of freedom is an interesting and exciting form of teaching and learning for teachers and learners. In this practice of freedom, both parties equally contribute to sharing learning experiences (Simonson et al., 2019).

The idea of Merdeka Belajar creates college students who're capable in memorizing studying and feature sharp evaluation and reasoning in overcoming a problem. Students also are anticipated with a purpose to have character. In education,

instructors need to have the cappotential to grasp studying cloth and increase it extensive into thrilling and a laugh cloth to speak about through the use of generation as a medium of studying so that scholars have excessive motivation in studying to increase the talents that exist in themselves. Students' innovative and innovative energy will develop if instructors can layout studying that demanding situations them to create actively.

Education is learner-centered, focusing on the learner's personality, experiences, perspectives, backgrounds, talents, interests, capacities, and needs in learning (Aziz, 2020; Munawaroh & Suwardi, 2022). In this context, new academic techniques must inspire interplay among instructors and newbies. Creative exercise in training must assist newbies to paintings on constructing their expertise through defining things, which might be very critical of their eyes, and withinside the process, make stronger their self-self belief and individuality. They additionally contain the improvement of newbies' private qualities, together with a robust experience of obligation for oneself and others. With the improvement of training policies, of course, instructors need to be capable of adapt to relevant guidelines. Teachers have a crucial role in learning; as

professionals, teachers must organize quality learning, producing an educated generation that can compete globally and has good morals (Panjaitan et al., 2021). Teachers must be able to change the old paradigm by following new policies.

In facing the industrial era 4.0, teachers must be able to upgrade themselves by developing their pedagogical competencies to guide and direct students to use their reasoning power well (Aziz, 2020). Teachers with freedom of thought can provide stimulus and stimulate students to use their reasoning power well and have creative control over their talents and abilities (Panjaitan et al., 2021; Rahayu et al., 2022). Teachers must be able to use their creative power in designing learning using various existing learning methods and media to create independent learning for students. The learning process will be exciting and fun if the English teacher can design the learning creatively. Teachers can choose suitable methods using learning media to help students understand and understand the material being taught (Syaparuddin et al., 2020). With varied learning methods and appropriate learning media, learning will be created that is not monotonous. Thus, the government's goals and policies on independent learning will be well achieved.

The phenomenon is that there are still many teachers who feel confused and unfamiliar with the use of learning media. The method used by teachers in learning is only the lectures friendly or assignment method. So that students cannot develop their personalities according to their talents and interests. In this case, learning is not centered on the learner but on the teacher (Munawaroh et al., 2022b). This kind of learning process dwarfs the thinking and creativity of students because students are not allowed to express themselves freely and freely. In terms of compiling the learning implementation plan (RPP), some English teachers only copy and paste. It happens because the significant components must be detailed the so that it consumes a lot of time, even though the teacher has to carry out the learning process. In the independent learning program, teachers must have free and independent thinking in designing existing learning according to the needs of students (Munawaroh, 2022). Teachers have independence in choosing elements of the curriculum to be developed in the learning process according to the needs of students. The freedom teachers have in choosing the elements in the curriculum must be able to create learning that challenges students to have critical thinking in solving various existing problems, cultivate creative

inventiveness, and have good character in establishing communication and cooperation with others.

Teacher Professional Competence is the teacher's capacity to grasp getting to know substances and increase them extensively and deeply into extra interesting and a laugh fabric to talk about and use era as a medium to aid getting to know. Broad and in-intensity getting to know permits guiding college students in know-how the situation be counted and assembly the competency requirements set out withinside the National Education Standards.

Teachers must have consist of 4 competencies: pedagogic, personal, social, and professional, but in learning actions in the classroom, a teacher must possess pedagogic and professional competencies. In article 3, paragraph (3) of PP No. 74/2008 concerning teachers, the competence is holistic. A holistic means that a teacher must possess these four competencies that are unitary so they cannot be separated. However, the four competencies researchers focus more on professional competencies. Researchers understand that these competencies are holistic, so they are a unit that cannot be separated. However, here researchers want to know more about the ability of teachers to master and develop

material well and use technology as a medium to support the learning process so that it reflects independent learning where children learn from various sources.

Pedagogic competence is the teacher's capacity to nicely technique gaining knowledge of and manage the classroom. In contrast, expert competence is the teacher's capacity to grasp gaining knowledge of substances, technique substances, and use era to aid the gaining knowledge of technique withinside the classroom. In this article, researchers study the expert competence of instructors in reflecting unbiased gaining knowledge of for college students gaining knowledge of English on the school. The expert competence in query is the capacity of instructors to grasp educational issues carefully associated with the implementation of the coaching and gaining knowledge of technique to perform their responsibilities as educators nicely and responsibly withinside the classroom. In the countrywide training requirements, the reason of article 28 paragraph (3) factor c states that what is supposed through expert competence is the capacity to grasp gaining knowledge of substances extensively and profoundly that permits guiding college students in assembly the competency

requirements mentioned withinside the National Education Standards.

According to (Sanjaya, 2008), Professional competence is an ability related to completing teaching tasks. This competency is essential because it is directly associated with the performance displayed. Some of the skills related to this competency include: mastering teaching materials, developing materials, developing professionalism on an ongoing basis by taking reflective actions, and utilizing information and communication technology as a supporting medium in the learning process.

Along with the times, science and technology are increasingly advanced, and a teacher is also required to develop his ability to educate students. Professional teachers, of course, must always be responsive to changing times and advances in knowledge and technology and achieve some criteria for professional teachers. As professionals, teachers must be able to develop personality, interact and also communicate, carry out school administration, carry out simple research as a necessity in teaching, master the educational foundation, master lessons, compile a teaching program (RPP), and also evaluate the learning outcomes that have been carried out. In the learning process, the

teacher must create a pleasant learning atmosphere and provide opportunities for students to seek all knowledge by using their thoughts from various sources to develop Merdeka Belajar (Suparlan, 2015).

Based on the learning method developed by Ki Hadjar Dewantara above, the teaching method emphasizes each student's self-awareness. It can be seen from the stages presented by Ki Hadjar Dewantara, who saw the importance of an approach. Learners are taught to act according to the knowledge gained. Merdeka Belajar is the capacity to think about innovative college students looking for expertise from diverse sources. Students can freely pick to research from a couple of studying assets and unfastened from pressure (as Ki Hadjar term, the faculty ought to be a studying park for college students) (Aziz, 2019b; Munawaroh et al., 2022a). Merdeka Belajar is likewise one of the preliminary applications of the Minister of Education (Nadiem Makarim), who desires to create a glad studying atmosphere, each for college students and instructors. Therefore, instructors with expert competence are required to train via way of means of growing unbiased studying in order that the studying system could make college students greater innovative to benefit

expertise in depth, growing a glad atmosphere.

In Merdeka Belajar, besides acting as one of the learning resources, The instructor additionally acts as a studying facilitator. As studying facilitators, instructors should layout a laugh studying so college students can reap the predicted studying goals. Freedom to evaluate scholar studying with diverse sorts and styles of studies instruments, unbiased from diverse burdensome administrative making, loose from the politicization of the coaching profession, and loose from diverse pressures and intimidation towards them. Teachers with professional competence will be able to realize concepts and reflect independent learning well because they must be more creative and innovative in developing learning materials.

English teachers are educators who teach following their field, namely, English. To become an English teacher who has professional competence and that reflects Merdeka Belajar, an English teacher must be able to make learning in the classroom feel fun and provide opportunities for students to seek and read knowledge from various sources to create a reflection of independent learning where children will find their expertise in their way and according to the

understanding of each student on how to learn English well. English is a foreign language in its position in the National Education system. Understanding it is not easy and requires high thinking and skill.

English consists of a component of knowledge (science) and skills (application). The science components include grammar, vocabulary, spelling, and pronunciation, while skills include listening, speaking, reading, and writing. In the use of Language, English is applied in language skills. Therefore, teachers with professional competence are needed who can constantly develop learning to be better and more enjoyable. It can allow students to imagine and make learning more varied. In this case, English teachers research how independent learning is reflected in the professional competence of English teachers at Mts Negeri 01 Batu.

II. METHOD

(Stake, 2013) explains that the type of case study depends on the purpose of education; instrumental case studies are used to provide insight into an issue; an intrinsic case study is carried out to gain a deeper understanding of the case, and a collective case study is a study of several cases to investigate a specific phenomenon. Other

case studies are based on specific objectives, such as teaching case studies.

Qualitative research is used to test the events that occurred and then search carefully for the factors that can cause those events and instrument keywords (Sugiyono, 2013). Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation. The object of his research was the English teacher Mts Negeri 01 Batu. The data collection technique will produce accurate data, and its purpose is temporary answers to research questions. Data collection is a process or activity carried out by researchers to capture or capture various phenomena, information, or conditions of the research site by the scope of the research. Moleong (2012:168) explains that qualitative data collection depends on oneself as a means of data collection, analysis, data interpretation, and ultimately being a pioneer of the results of its research. In conducting this study, researchers performed several techniques in collecting data; Observation, Interview, and Documentation.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Implications of Independent Learning in Education

Learning is a process of activities carried out consciously by students to achieve certain goals. By learning, students will be

obtained a mental and psychic activity that takes place in interaction with the environment. This activity is expected to result in changes in knowledge, understanding, skills, and attitude values. Learning is the result of activities to change behavior so that new skills are obtained from independent learning activities. Learning outcomes can be known after going through the learning process and then applied or tested in the real world.

Based on the results of observations, it can be seen that the values of responsibility owned by students are still limited to supervision. Thus it is still necessary to motivate to increase maximum responsibility to himself and to others and responsibility to the environment and their own diri. (Aziz, 2019a) to mean that responsibility is to recognize the accountability of the influence and role of the individual in which the individual is located, and to accept all the consequences of what he has played. During the researcher's observations, the role of the student is still fixated on what the teacher or researcher says, what is instructed, and what is being discussed in classical conditions such as ordinary days. In this condition, there has not been a significant change.

Merdeka Belajar is an educational approach that focuses on giving freedom and responsibility to students in their learning process. This system allows students to select and determine the material they want to study and have independence in managing their learning process. With Merdeka Belajar, students will be more motivated and have a high interest in learning because they can choose the material they want to learn. Students are also invited to take responsibility for their learning process so that they will form self-driving abilities and independence in learning.

Students' responsibility in learning will also increase because Merdeka Belajar focuses on the learning process oriented towards problem-solving and innovation. Students will be more active and creative in learning and get used to making decisions and setting priorities on their own. With increased student responsibility in learning, they will better understand the importance of learning and have a high sense of responsibility for their learning outcomes. Students will also form a good character and have high critical thinking skills to improve their achievement and learning quality. Overall, Merdeka Belajar can be a solution to increase students' learning responsibility, help them develop their potential and

talents, and form positive attitudes and behaviors in learning.

In addition, Merdeka Belajar is also an educational concept that focuses on providing freedom and responsibility to students in the learning process. The implications of Merdeka Belajar for students are as follows:

1. **Increased Learning Motivation:** Students can choose and determine the material they want to study, thus making them more motivated and interested in learning.
2. **Self-Driving Ability:** Students are invited to take responsibility for their learning process, thus forming self-driving ability and independence in learning.
3. **Character Building:** Students are taught to make decisions and set priorities independently, thus helping to form good character and foster a sense of responsibility.
4. **Creativity and Innovation:** Merdeka Belajar focuses on problem-solving and innovation-oriented learning processes, thus helping students to increase their creativity and innovation.
5. **Critical Thinking Skills:** Students are invited to evaluate and analyze the

information they obtain, thus shaping their critical thinking skills.

With Merdeka Belajar, students can learn independently and be highly responsible for their learning processes and outcomes. They will also form a good, creative, and innovative character and have high critical thinking skills. So, Merdeka Belajar can help students to develop their potential and talents and form positive attitudes and behaviors in learning.

The Role of English Teachers in Independent Learning

The ability to speak English is one of the competencies that students must have in the policy of independent learning. This competency will make it easier for students to find learning resources and not be limited to one source. His world of learning became vast, and even as the saying goes, "to master a language is to rule the world," especially with the online learning system during a pandemic like today. Students can be creative and innovate even harder to find learning resources from anywhere with their language skills.

However, it becomes a problem when this ability is not honed during this online learning. Let alone learning English online, face-to-face learning based on some cases, many children avoid it. It's as if learning

English becomes a scary "ghost." Whereas when they have good English skills, then this ability can be a fun "angel."

Therefore, to keep learning English fun for students during this pandemic, English teachers have a huge role. Teachers must be creative and have the ability to be able to realize interesting learning for students. Because of the policy of independent learning in the 21st century, students must be taught skills that can prepare themselves for success in learning, their lives, and success in the world of work.

Several points must be of concern to English teachers to create an exciting learning atmosphere in the context of independent learning, even during a pandemic. First, teachers must have the ability to create learning according to their needs. It means that an English teacher, especially during this pandemic, whose learning is carried out online, must be able to create interactive learning media and utilize existing technology in every learning process. Teachers must be familiar with digital technology to help the learning process even better.

Suppose there are teachers who cannot use and utilize technology in their learning process. In that case, they must be willing to

improve their abilities by attending training or self-taught learning from various existing learning resources. It is imperative to realize a fun learning process for students. When learning English is carried out interactively with media supported by digital technology, it is easier for them to learn. It would be even more interesting if teachers could create various English learning applications. Exploiting and utilizing technology to support the learning process increases student creativity and enthusiasm for learning.

Second, teachers should reflect on various learning activities in the classroom. Reflections on what students have done in class, the methods and techniques used, whether they are appropriate, the material presented, and whatever happens throughout the learning process must be reflected. The reflection of a teacher is essential for the better improvement of the learning process at the next meeting. Third, develop teacher competencies. Competence is the main key to a professional teacher. The quality of the language used by English teachers in teaching will bring knowledge and understanding to students' critical thinking, good attitude, and enthusiasm for learning. Therefore, good quality of

communication must be achieved by English teachers.

Fourth, conduct alternative learning outcomes assessments and not just focus on traditional assessments. It means that in providing assessments, teachers must conduct a comprehensive assessment. All aspects describing a student's abilities should be part of the assessment. The assessment is not only based on the fill-in-the-answer paper. But communication skills, learning motivation, and activeness in every learning process should be part of the assessment.

So that the assessment is no longer limited to high scores or failures. But the evaluation is carried out to find the strengths, weaknesses, and progress that the students have achieved. It will make students' learning motivation increase. Especially during this pandemic, the opportunity for face-to-face is minimal. Alternative assessments will provide space for students to be able to correct their shortcomings and improve their abilities. Fifth, teachers must be committed to carrying out the learning process for the better. This commitment is essential in motivating and teaching students so that learning English can be fun even though learning online during a pandemic.

Teachers are not the only source of knowledge to improve English competence. Because students can search for many sources on the internet, especially during this pandemic, but in any case, the presence of a teacher in a child's learning process is irreplaceable. The role of the teacher in providing direction, guidance, and motivation to his students. It all cannot be replaced by digital technology. Hopefully, English teachers will always give their best to students and play an active role in carrying out the policy of independent learning during this pandemic.

Relationship of Professional Competence of English Teachers and Independent Learning

Merdeka Belajar is an educational movement that promotes unlimited education, where students can learn whatever, they want and develop their potential. In this regard, the teacher plays an essential role in helping students achieve their goals. Therefore, professional competence of English teachers must be qualified to meet the demands of Merdeka Belajar.

The professional competence of English teachers includes several aspects, such as teaching ability, material understanding, communication skills, and technology skills.

Teachers who have good professional competence will be able to provide quality learning and help students understand the material well. Thus, students will be more motivated to learn and achieve their goals in Merdeka Belajar. As an international language, English is essential in supporting student success in Merdeka Belajar. English teachers must understand English well and be able to teach English as a global language of communication. Thus, students will find it easier to understand and master English, which is one of the conditions for participating in Merdeka Belajar.

Technological skills are also an essential aspect of the professional competence of English teachers. Teachers who have good technical skills will be able to utilize technology to help students learn and achieve their goals (Aziz & Dewi, 2020). Thus, it will be easier for teachers to provide quality learning and help students understand the material well. Overall, the professional competence of English teachers plays a vital role in assisting students to achieve their goals in Merdeka Belajar. Therefore, teachers must continuously improve their competence to provide quality learning and help students achieve their goals.

IV. CONCLUSION

Professional competence is a skill that a person has in a particular field and has been able to contribute his professionalism (science) to people in need. Teachers who have professional competence are those who master the material well, develop it, use technology as a medium to support learning, and provide opportunities for students to find knowledge from various sources to reflect the freedom of learning to students.

From the results and discussion, it can be concluded that some English teachers at Mts Negeri 01 Batu have the potential to master the material and develop English skills in reflecting the freedom of learning in each student. 2 teachers have applied English knowledge in various classes, namely grades 7, 8, and 9. Not all do not yet have the basic English skills to teach. Adequate facilities such as textbooks, lesson plans, focus, videos, and speakers as teaching materials to support teachers in teaching English.

Based on data obtained from observations, interviews, and documentation, researchers concluded that good learning in reflecting independent learning, proven by mastering the subject matter well, developing the subject matter, and using technology as a supporting medium basically to improve professional

competence in reflecting independent learning for students in seeking knowledge and skills in English from various sources. Merdeka Belajar is an effective learning process and gives responsibility to students, so English teachers have an important role in facilitating the Merdeka Belajar process. The professional competence of English teachers determines the success of the Merdeka Belajar process. English teachers must improve their professional competence, and the school must provide support and facilities to facilitate the Merdeka Belajar process. Students must also make optimal use of the Merdeka Belajar process to improve the quality of learning.

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