

## **PARENTS' UNDERSTANDING AND INVOLVEMENT IN THE CONCEPT OF MERDEKA BELAJAR AT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**

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**Abstract:** The consideration for this research is the implementation of the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum, which has one of the leading programs, namely parent and school collaboration. The purpose of the research is to provide an on the extent to which parents understand the concept of Merdeka Belajar and the involvement of all the parents by schools. This study used methods of sampling purposive survey. The *Direktorat Sekolah Dasar* (2022) background SD – S2, (2) can access the internet, (3) public school, national private, and based on religious denomination, (4) Have children in grades 1 – 6 elementary school. The results of research related to parental understanding of the concept of Merdeka Belajar indicate that (1) parents disagree with routine activities always in the classroom and too much activity with student sheets (2) parents disagree with excessive pr loading to students (3) parents agree with the activities that are undermining (4) parents agree that ability literacy students is important. As for the involvement of parents in support of independent study, it is stated that (1) parents agree that the role of involvement in independent study is important to do. (2) parents understood the engagement of attending an invitation from school, (3) parents not to take to developing partnerships with schools. Parents understand the Merdeka Belajar curriculum from the perspective of changes in learning activities that lead to education. Parents also have an awareness of the importance of involvement but do not understand what efforts need to be made to develop partnerships with schools. An important finding in this study is the importance of strategic and massive efforts made by schools to strengthen the relationship between schools and parents so that the educational atmosphere in a school is more qualified and collaborative.

**Keywords:** Elementary school; Merdeka Belajar; Parent

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Throughout 2019 until now the words Merdeka Belajar are certainly familiar to us, especially to all Indonesian citizens who are always involved in educational activities from PAUD to higher education. The concept of Independent Learning is still a hot topic today because it has become part of our educational ecosystem. Since the Freedom of Learning policy was launched by the Ministry of Education and Culture, it has received a good response from cross-sector sharing, one of which is elementary school-level educational institutions.

The Independent Learning Curriculum is a curriculum with diverse intracurricular learning, where learning content will be more optimal so that students have enough time to strengthen (Direktorat Sekolah Dasar, 2022) With this curriculum, teachers have the freedom to choose learning tools so that the learning process is adapted to the learning needs and interests of students, which is related to the concept of the National Education Standards Agency. Referring to several works of literature, the meaning of freedom to learn in the learning process can be stated, namely freedom to think, freedom to innovate, freedom to learn independently and creatively (Lao & Hendrik, 2020) freedom for happiness (Freire, 1967).

The practice of the Merdeka Belajar curriculum at the elementary school level is carried out by implementing learning designs that are oriented towards developing students' innovation and creativity abilities. Student activities are not only oriented towards academic ability alone, but schools require holding activities that involve the collaboration of all stakeholders such as the Pancasila Student Profile Project (P5), Differentiated Learning and the use of problem-based methods. Of course, this is a challenge for all educational institutions, where in its implementation parents must be more involved to support successful learning (Direktorat Sekolah Dasar, 2022).

The success of a child's education depends on family involvement. Many studies show that family involvement, especially parents in educational units or schools, has a significant influence on the success of parents, children, teachers and schools in terms of: (1) supporting academic achievement, increasing attendance, providing awareness about healthy living, and increasing positive behavior; (2) improving parents' views of the school, increasing satisfaction with teachers, and strengthening relationships with children; and (3) improving the climate, improving school quality and discipline (KEMDIKBUD, 2017).

The involvement of families in the provision of education in building an educational ecosystem is in line with the vision of the Ministry of Education and Culture, namely "The creation of people and an educational and cultural ecosystem with character based on mutual cooperation," (Kebudayaan, 2020). The involvement of families in the provision of education in building an educational ecosystem is in line with the vision of the Ministry of Education and Culture, namely "The creation of people and an educational and cultural ecosystem with character based on mutual cooperation," (Kebudayaan, 2020) Therefore, family involvement in providing education is expected to be appropriate and meaningful. As the ecosystem element closest to children, parents have many choices in daily interaction and communication. The form and nature of interaction with children in the family influences the growth and development of good character and a culture of achievement in children (Musanna, 2017) The interaction process that children receive from their families is beneficial and becomes the basis or foundation for further development processes in the wider environment, especially in school and society.

## **METHOD**

The type of research used is survey research to see parents' understanding and involvement in the concept of Independent Learning. The sample used in this research was 220 people. Questionnaires are distributed in the form of a Google Form. The data analysis technique used in this research is qualitative descriptive with graphical presentation. The research constructs used in this research include (1) Understanding Independent Learning (2) Parental Support and Involvement.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This section no longer contains the research design, but focuses on the results of the research that has been carried out. The results of the study must be explained clearly and concisely. The results should summarize (scientific) findings rather than provide very detailed data. The discussion should explore the significance of the research results. We recommend that you provide quotes from previous research that can support the results of your research.

### Understanding the Independent Learning Curriculum

As school partners, parents are required to understand the latest developments in the world of education for their children, one of which is the Merdeka curriculum. Since 2019, this term has become a hot topic of conversation because it is simultaneously applied at all levels of education, especially elementary schools. Of course, parents are important and need to understand this concept so that families and schools have the same vision and mission. Based on research, the data obtained are presented in the following table:

No	Description	Amount	%
1	Have attended training	130	59%
2	Have never attended training	90	41%

This condition is quite interesting in that 59% of respondents admitted that they had participated in socialization and 41% had never participated in socialization. So, it can be concluded that respondents understand Merdeka learning at the socialization level but do not fully understand the meaning of implementing the Merdeka curriculum. For this reason, in an effort to improve the quality of education, it is necessary that the implementation of education is not only the responsibility of educators at school, but the family must play a role in organizing education at home. This aims to form good synergy. This condition is supported by data regarding parents' understanding of the Merdeka curriculum in the following table:

No	Description	Amount	%
1	Do not understand	20	9,1%

2	Not really understand	112	51%
3	That's enough to understand	61	27,7%
4	Understand	27	12,2%

In this condition, the respondent has attended training, but the respondent does not yet understand in detail the implementation of the independent curriculum. Some parents already have a fairly good understanding, while some still need time to understand this concept in depth. It is important to build open communication between schools and parents to bridge the gap in understanding. Information sessions, parent-teacher meetings, or written guides can help convey the goals, benefits, and ways the concept of "Freedom to Learn" is integrated into a child's learning. In addition, efforts are needed to show concrete examples of the implementation of "Freedom to Learn" so that parents can see how this can actually help their children's development. Parents' awareness and understanding can develop over time, especially if they feel the positive benefits of this independent learning approach in their children's learning in everyday life.

The Ministry of Education and Culture stated that there is a need for synergistic cooperation between education programs and those carried out in the family environment. What needs to be a guideline is the Tri Education Center which was initiated by Ki Hajar Dewantara. The Tri Center for Education demands harmony in education across educational units, families and society. Family is one of the pillars that can support the Independent Learning program. Because the most important and important education starts from the family. Research (Baharun, 2016)) states that the active role of families (parents) in schools must be prioritized. However, when asked questions about the learning methods that parents expect schools to carry out as follows:

No	Description	Amount	%
1	Learning methods in the classroom	27	12,3%
2	Learning methods outside the classroom	4	1,8%
3	Learning methods inside and outside the classroom	189	85,9%

Based on the data above, it shows that 85.9% of parents agree that varied learning methods are not always monotonous in the classroom. This spirit is in line with the principle of Merdeka learning that the Merdeka Curriculum is an educational approach that emphasizes developing creativity, skills and character of students. Parents who understand this concept usually appreciate this approach because the focus is not only on providing information, but also on developing the child's potential holistically. The Merdeka Curriculum is a positive step because it teaches children to think critically, be independent and have initiative. It is important for parents to see values such as creativity, collaboration, and problem solving as more relevant skills for everyday life. However, collaboration between schools and parents can be the key to ensuring the successful implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum.

## Support of Merdeka Belajar

The existence of Freedom of Learning is also a response to technological developments in education. So, digitalization of education becomes part of the need. For this reason, simple technology such as smartphones is one of the supporting facilities. From this component the following data is obtained

Table. School Policy on Using Smartphones for implementing learning.

No	Description	Amount	%
1	Agree to use a smartphone	170	77,3%
2	Disagree with using smartphones	50	22,7%

The table above shows that 77.3% of parents agree with the use of smartphones for the learning process and 22.7% of parents do not agree with using smartphones in the learning process. As a form of validation, data was obtained from open questions regarding the provision of smartphone facilities to children to support learning. Parents realize that using smartphones provides easier and broader access to educational resources, such as applications, learning videos and e-learning platforms. Parents realize that smartphone use helps children develop digital skills that are important for the future. And the use of smartphones makes communication between teachers, students and parents easier. Parents can interact with teachers, receive updates, and be involved in their child's educational development more easily (Seguin, Kuenzel, Morton, & Duerden, 2021) However, there are parents who do not agree with the use of smartphones because parents are worried that their children will become lazy about studying, lack concentration when studying and not all students have internet access. Parents try to monitor and limit children's access to certain content. And parents are aware of the importance of creating a balance between using smartphones for learning and entertainment, as well as setting limits on usage time, (Genc, 2014)

Parental support in Merdeka Belajar is also driven by parents' hopes that after graduating from elementary school, children will have various abilities. The data obtained is as follows:

No	Description	Amount
1	Literacy skills	44
2	Numeracy abilities	29
3	Creativity	67
4	Good character	115
5	Social emotional abilities	53
6	Ability to use technology	30
7	Learning independence	61

Based on the table above, it can be explained that some parents hope that their children

will have good character. This shows that character is an urgent problem to be resolved. In line with research by (Salirawati, 2021) related to Identification of Problems in Evaluation of Character Education in Schools which explains that education places too much emphasis on intellectual aspects as a measure of success, so that the formation of good character is neglected, therefore elaboration is needed on the substance of the meaning contained in character. The importance of character is stated in Lickona's (2004) hierarchy of behavior regarding moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action. Parental involvement is important in educational success. Data has been obtained in the following table:

No	Description	Amount	%
1	Agree to hold regular activities involving parents	173	78,6%
2	Disagree to hold routine activities involving parents	47	21,4%

The table above shows that parents agree that the school holds regular activities that can involve parents. Parental involvement in children's routine activities has great urgency in forming strong family bonds and supporting children's overall development. that parents involve themselves in students' homework because they believe they should be involved, believe that their involvement will make a positive difference, and feel that their children or children's teachers want their involvement (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2001). According to (Hornby, G. & Lafaele, 2011) parents' interest in being involved in children's stimulation is also a positive predictor of children's learning processes and achievements.

The learning environment at home greatly influences how children understand and apply the concept of Independent Learning. Parents can create an atmosphere that supports children's exploration, reflection and creativity, (Terras & Ramsay, 2016). Parental involvement in children's learning activities at home independence influences the child's level of independence (Van Der Mark, Bakermans-Kranenburg, & Van Ijzendoorn, 2002) Parents who are actively involved tend to encourage children to take the initiative in their learning.

Parental involvement is a process in which parents use all their abilities to support the interests of their children with the various programs they run, (Marrison, 2012). Furthermore, (Korfmacher, 2008), emphasizes a process that connects parents with school programs and uses program services that parents can do at school. More concretely, Hawes and Jeynes (Padavick, 2009), revealed that parental involvement is manifested as parental participation in their child's education and experiences. Thus, parental involvement in education has a positive influence, if parents and teachers together understand the meaning, form, and purpose of this involvement.

However, the situation will be the opposite if both parents and teachers do not understand each other's meaning, form, objectives and the process of involvement itself. Thus, it is important for parents and teachers to truly understand the meaning and meaning of



parental involvement in actual education so that they can decide on appropriate actions for better joint goals. For example, parents' involvement in various activities both at school and at home is a way for them to work together to support their children's education, White and Coleman (Diadha, 2015). In closing, parents and teachers need to build intensive positive communication to identify the problems they are experiencing and jointly develop a solution program. Parents realize that involvement is important and are willing to get involved, this needs to be welcomed by the school to look for concrete forms of involvement so that the goal of the meaning of independent learning can be achieved. Schools also need to understand the background of parents as partners and carry out identification and investigation as a basis for starting collaboration.

## CONCLUSION

This research concludes that most parents know about Merdeka Belajar, but how it is implemented, and the learning process is not yet well understood. The meaning of independent learning is understood as a learning method that is varied not only in the classroom but also outside the classroom and does not provide too much homework. Parents realize that involvement is important, and requires several materials such as parenting strategies, good character and learning assistance strategies. An interesting finding in this research is that parents need products that can link parental and school involvement to achieve educational attainment expectations. It is important to exercise wisdom, assertive communication, and empathetic supervision to help our children face the digital world wisely and healthily. (Goering & Mrug, 2021) The role of parents is very important in guiding their children to become intelligent and responsible technology users (Woodward et al., 2018).

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