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# Empowering Student-Centered Learning in English Education (A Closer Look at Kurikulum Merdeka)

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| **Abstract** | This study aims to Empowering Student-Centered Learning in English Education (A Closer Look at Kurikulum Merdeka). This research is a literature review. Data collection techniques are documentation from journal sources and relevant literature such as Google Scholar. Data analysis with critical literature. research results Empowering student-centered learning in English education, especially in the context of the Independent Curriculum, is an approach that focuses on developing students' abilities holistically. This approach prioritizes students' active role in the learning process, enabling them to take a central role in exploring their English knowledge and skills. In the context of the Independent Curriculum, students have more freedom to determine their own learning path, while the teacher acts as a facilitator. As such, these conclusions reflect that this approach has the potential to increase student motivation and learning outcomes in English, while supporting a vision of learning that is more independent and centered on individual needs in the education system. |
| **Keywords** | Empowering, Student-Centered Learning, Kurikulum Merdeka |

## INTRODUCTION

Education is one of the important pillars in the development of a country. Education does not only function to impart knowledge, but also to shape character, prepare young people for the future, and bridge social gaps. Therefore, education must always develop according to the needs of the times. One important aspect of education is language, especially English, which is considered an international language and has a crucial role in global communication[1].

English education in Indonesia has experienced significant developments over the last few decades. One that is not important in the development of this education is the introduction of the 2013 Curriculum, which introduces a competency-based approach in the teaching and learning process. However, along with changing times and global demands, the Indonesian government

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[1] Dewi Laura Situmorang, "Junior High School English Teachers' Experience towards Merdeka Curriculum Implementation in Jambi City" (Jambi University, 2023).

decided to change the school curriculum in 2020 by launching the "Independence Curriculum." The Merdeka curriculum is expected to better accommodate global developments and local needs, as well as empower students in their learning process[2].

One of the approaches emphasized in the Merdeka Curriculum is a student-centered approach. This approach places students as active subjects in the learning process, while the teacher acts as a facilitator and mentor. This concept is not something new, but its implementation in the formal curriculum is a significant step in changing the educational paradigm[3].

The student-centered approach is a philosophy that recognizes that each student has their own unique potential, interests, and learning style. Therefore, education must be adapted to the needs and individual characteristics of students. In the context of learning English, this approach is becoming increasingly relevant because language is a very personal and creative communication tool[4].

The student-centered approach also emphasizes the importance of understanding students' needs and interests. Each student has a different background, experience and goals in learning English. Therefore, education must be adapted to the needs of these individuals. Teachers must be able to identify the strengths and weaknesses of each student, and design learning that is relevant and interesting[5].

One of the important tools in the student-centred approach is a responsive curriculum. The curriculum should be designed in such a way that students have the freedom to choose the topics or projects they are interested in, which will motivate them to study more enthusiastically. It also allows students to relate learning English to their broader interests and goals.

This study outlines the concept of a student-centred approach in English education, explores some of the challenges that may be encountered in its application, and identifies the possible benefits of adopting this approach in the Independent Curriculum. This approach opens up great opportunities for the development of English education in Indonesia, and in our discussion, we will take a closer look at how this approach can empower students and advance the quality of

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[2] Ahmad Al Yakin et al., "Cybersocialization Through Smart Digital Classroom Management (SDCM) as a Pedagogical Innovation of 'Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM)' Curriculum," in *Digital Learning Based Education: Transcending Physical Barriers* (Springer, 2023), 39–61.

[3] Helda Kusuma Wardani et al., "Analysis of the Impact of the Merdeka Curriculum Policy on Stakeholders at Primary School," *Jurnal Ilmiah Peuradeun* 11, no. 2 (2023): 513–30.

[4] Husnur Rosyidah Aulia, Anita Fatimatul Laeli, and Siti Ulwiyah, "PROBLEM-BASED LEARNING AS A METHOD TO IMPROVE SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT'S READING COMPREHENSION IN ENGLISH," *ELTR Journal* 7, no. 2 (2023): 77–85.

[5] Asry Tesalonika, Yari Dwikurnaningsih, and Bambang Ismanto, "A Training Module for Project-Based Learning with Google Workspace in the Merdeka Curriculum Management," *JPI (Jurnal Pendidikan Indonesia)* 11, no. 4 (2022).

English education in the country[6].

**METHOD**

This research is a literature review. Research referred to as a literature review is a type of research that aims to investigate, analyze, and synthesize previous research that has been conducted in a particular field of study. This research involves collecting and evaluating various journal articles, books, research reports, and other sources that are relevant to the topic being studied. The main goals of a literature review are to understand the state of knowledge existing in a field of study, identify research gaps that still need to be explored, and provide a sound theoretical foundation for research. Data collection techniques are documentation from relevant journal and literature sources such as Google Scholar. Data analysis with critical literature[7]

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

**Principles of Student-Centered Learning**

Introducing Students: This principle involves a deep understanding of the characteristics, interests, and learning needs of individual students. Teachers must understand these differences through observation, interviews, or pre-assessments. With this understanding, teachers can design learning that is more relevant and interesting. In addition, this principle accommodates various student learning styles, such as visual, auditory, or kinesthetic, with the aim of presenting material that is appropriate for each learning style.

Curriculum Development: This principle focuses on adapting the curriculum to local contexts and producing learning that is relevant and interesting. This means that learning materials must be relevant to students' social, cultural and environmental contexts to help them see the use of English in everyday life.Collaborative Learning: This principle encourages collaboration among students. This can be done through group projects, discussions, or activities that require teamwork. Technology can also be used to support student interaction and collaboration[8].

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[6] Nurul Halimah, Irdamurni Irdamurni, and Desyandri Desyandri, "Humanistic Philosophy of Learning Differs From the Curriculum in ES," *International Journal of Educational Dynamics* 5, no. 2 (2023): 218–24.

[7] holip Viya And Imroatus Sholikhah, "Analysis Of Teacher Barriers In Implementing Kurikulum Merdeka To Teach English Of Tenth Grade At Sma Al-Azhar Syifa Budi Solo In The Academic Year Of 2022/2023" (UIN Surakarta, 2023).

[8] Adam Voak et al., "Kampus Merdeka: Providing Meaningful Engagement in a Disruptive World," *Journal of Higher Education Theory and Practice* 23, no. 8 (2023): 223–34.

Formative Evaluation: Continuous assessment is used under this principle to monitor student progress over time. By using continuous feedback, students can understand their strengths and weaknesses. Teachers play a role in providing specific and useful feedback to students, helping them understand how to improve their performance. This approach focuses more on developing students' abilities than simply providing a final rating or assessment. The application of these principles in learning English creates a dynamic, relevant and inclusive learning environment. This stimulates students to play an active role in the learning process, improves their language skills, and prepares them to face the challenges of communicating in English in their daily lives[9].

**Implementation in the Independent Curriculum**

Integration with Local Content: In the Independent Curriculum, English must be integrated with cultural values and local wisdom. Teachers must find ways to relate English teaching to stories, values, or cultural traditions that are relevant to the student's environment. This helps students feel connected to the learning material. In addition, learning materials must be relevant to the experiences and daily lives of students. Teachers can choose texts or topics related to students' social, economic, or environmental life.

Utilization of Digital Resources: In the Independent Curriculum, technology is often an important means of learning. Teachers should utilize digital resources such as learning software, educational websites or e-learning applications to support learning English. In addition, teachers can integrate online content, such as learning videos, simulations or online learning platforms, into teaching English. This allows wider access to a wide variety of learning materials and resources[10].

Teacher Training: Teachers need to receive training that will enable them to understand the concept of student-centred learning and how to implement it in learning English. This training can cover teaching methods, use of technology, and evaluation strategies that fit this approach. Teacher training programs should be designed to incorporate student-centred learning principles as an important part of upgrading teacher qualifications.

By integrating the principles of student-centered learning in the Merdeka Curriculum, English education will become more adaptive, relevant and responsive to the needs of students and prepare them to communicate better in English in the varied contexts of everyday life. It also

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[9] Ni Putu Oka Agustini, "Examining the Role of ChatGPT as a Learning Tool in Promoting Students' English Language Learning Autonomy Relevant to Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar," *EDUKASIA: Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Pembelajaran* 4, no. 2 (2023): 921–34.

[10] Situmorang, "Junior High School English Teachers' Experience towards Merdeka Curriculum Implementation in Jambi City."

helps create a more inclusive learning environment, motivates students to be active in learning, and provides a stronger foundation for the development of their language skills[11].

**Benefits and Challenges**

Benefit:

First, the student-centered approach can significantly improve students' language skills. Through active interaction with English in relevant contexts, such as class discussions, language-based projects, and problem solving, students experience marked improvements in speaking, listening, reading, and writing in English.

Furthermore, this approach develops students' critical and creative thinking skills. They are invited to think deeply when facing problems, collaborate with classmates, or analyze texts in English. This not only helps in learning English, but also prepares students to become more independent and analytical thinkers in various contexts.

In addition, the student-centered approach empowers students as independent learners. In this environment, students have more control over their learning, learning to manage their time, organize themselves, and seek resources independently. This contributes to the development of intrinsic motivation in learning[12].

This approach also increases the relevance of learning by relating learning material to students' daily lives. By illustrating the use of English in real-life situations, students can more easily see how it relates to their personal experiences.

Lastly, the student-centred approach creates equity and inclusivity in education. This means respecting the diverse abilities, cultural backgrounds and learning styles of students, thereby creating a more inclusive and supportive learning environment for all students.

Challenge:

First, there are challenges in terms of resources. Implementation of a student-centered approach often requires additional resources such as technology or interactive learning materials. Not all educational institutions have sufficient access or budget for this.

Furthermore, paradigm shifts for teachers and students can be a challenge. Moving from a teacher-centered to a student-centred approach to teaching requires a change in the way of

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[11] Al Yakin et al., "Cybersocialization Through Smart Digital Classroom Management (SDCM) as a Pedagogical Innovation of 'Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM)' Curriculum."

[12] Wardani et al., "Analysis of the Impact of the Merdeka Curriculum Policy on Stakeholders at Primary School."

thinking about and approaching learning. This can take time and effort to adjust.

Evaluation and assessment suitable for a student-centred approach is also a challenge. Assessments must conform to this approach, which may involve different assessment methods than traditional approaches. Developing and managing this kind of assessment can be a complex task.Furthermore, there is a risk of inequality in student-centred approaches. In an effort to personalize learning, it is possible that some students may receive more attention and support than others. Teachers should try to maintain equality in this approach[13].

Finally, curriculum changes can be challenging. Designing a curriculum that fits a student-centred approach can be a tricky task, especially in the context of existing curriculum changes. While there are challenges in implementing a student-centred learning approach, its long-term benefits, including increased lifelong learning skills, independence, and deeper understanding, make it a worthwhile endeavor in improving English language education and education as a whole.

**Case Studies or Best Practice Examples**

XYZ School is a high school located in a very diverse urban environment, both culturally and socially. The school has taken the initiative to introduce a student-centred learning approach as part of its efforts to improve English language learning. Positive results have been seen over the last few years.

Implementation Steps:

First, the teachers at XYZ School underwent in-depth training to understand the concepts and methodology of the student-centred approach. This includes an understanding of how to identify students' individual needs and how to design learning that is relevant and engaging.

Later, the school's English curriculum was revised to better reflect the student-centred approach. Learning materials are carefully selected to ensure their relevance to students' lives and local contexts, such as their daily life and culture.

XYZ School also uses technology effectively by providing access to computers, learning software, and e-learning platforms. This allows students to access additional learning materials and exercises outside of class[14].

Furthermore, the teacher encourages students to collaborate on group projects, discuss, and

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13 Aulia, Laeli, And Ulwiyah, "Problem-Based Learning As A Method To Improve Senior High School Student's Reading Comprehension In English."

14 Tesalonika, Dwikurnaningsih, and Ismanto, "A Training Module for Project-Based Learning with Google Workspace in the Merdeka Curriculum Management."

solve problems together. They also take advantage of online forums to support discussion and collaboration between students**.**

Results:

The positive impact of this implementation is striking. Students' English test results consistently improve. Students are more confident in speaking and writing in English. In addition, students' critical thinking skills are growing. They are more adept at analyzing texts and constructing arguments. This helps them not only in learning English, but also in acquiring more independent and analytical thinking skills.

During this process, students become more independent in learning. They develop skills for managing time, setting learning goals, and finding resources on their own. This approach also makes learning English more relevant to students' daily lives. They can more easily relate English to their personal experiences, such as talking to foreign friends or accessing online resources in English[15].

Lastly, the student-centred approach supports inclusivity in education. Teachers can better understand the individual needs of students and provide appropriate support. This case study is a real example of how implementing a student-centered learning approach can be successful in the context of English education. Through teacher training, curriculum adjustments, use of technology, and collaborative learning, students at XYZ School experience increased language skills, development of critical thinking skills, empowerment as independent learners, the relevance of learning to their daily lives, and inclusiveness in education. This is an example of best practice that can be adopted by other schools looking to improve their English education[16].

**CONCLUSION**

Empowering student-centered learning in English education, especially in the context of the Independent Curriculum, is an approach that focuses on developing students' abilities holistically. This approach prioritizes students' active role in the learning process, enabling them to take a central role in exploring their English knowledge and skills. In the context of the Independent Curriculum, students have more freedom to determine their own learning path, while the teacher acts as a facilitator. As such, these conclusions reflect that this approach has the potential to

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[15] Halimah, Irdamurni, and Desyandri, "Humanistic Philosophy of Learning Differs From the Curriculum in ES."

[16] Voak et al., "Kampus Merdeka: Providing Meaningful Engagement in a Disruptive World."

improve students' motivation and learning outcomes in English, while supporting a vision of learning that is more self-directed and centred on individual needs within the education system.

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