

The Implementation of Text-Based Approach Within The Merdeka Curriculum In Junior High School

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the implementation of a text-based approach in the Merdeka Curriculum within junior high schools. The Merdeka Curriculum is a new educational program in Indonesia that aims to promote critical thinking and independence among students. The text-based approach emphasizes the use of texts as the main learning resource, focusing on reading, analyzing, and synthesizing information to develop students' cognitive abilities, psychomotor and social. This study assesses the effectiveness of implementing the text-based approach within the Merdeka Curriculum in junior high schools and its impact on students' learning outcomes.

Keywords: *Merdeka Curriculum, Text-based approach, Junior high schools, Critical thinking, Learning outcomes.*

1. Introduction

Education plays a crucial role in nurturing individuals to become intellectually and emotionally competent citizens. In Indonesia, the government has introduced the Merdeka Curriculum as a new approach to education, focusing on cultivating critical thinking skills and independence among students. One of the key components of this curriculum is the implementation of a text-based approach, which prioritizes the use of various texts as the main learning resource. This innovative method aims to transform the educational landscape by promoting a deeper engagement with learning materials and fostering essential cognitive skills.

According to educational expert John Hattie, incorporating text-based approaches in education can significantly enhance students' learning outcomes. Hattie's meta-analysis of educational research has shown that strategies involving textual materials have a positive impact on student achievement (Hattie, 2009). By exposing students to a variety of texts and encouraging them to actively engage with the information, educators can foster deeper understanding and critical thinking skills. The text-based approach encourages students to think critically, question assumptions, and draw connections between different ideas, thereby cultivating an environment conducive to intellectual growth.

The Merdeka Curriculum's text-based approach aims to develop students' cognitive abilities by engaging them in reading, analyzing, and synthesizing information from different texts. As cognitive psychologist Daniel Willingham points out, reading comprehension is a vital skill that underpins effective learning and critical thinking (Willingham, 2006). By focusing on textual analysis, the text-based approach in the Merdeka Curriculum can help students enhance their cognitive processes and analytical skills, preparing them to navigate complex information and solve problems effectively.

This study aims to assess the effectiveness of implementing the text-based approach

within the Merdeka Curriculum in junior high schools. By examining the impact of this approach on students' learning outcomes, we can determine the benefits and challenges of incorporating text-based learning into the Indonesian educational system. The research will involve a detailed analysis of student performance, engagement levels, and critical thinking skills, providing valuable insights into the practical application of the text-based approach.

Ultimately, this research seeks to contribute to the ongoing efforts to improve the quality of education in Indonesia and enhance students' readiness for the challenges of the 21st century. As global economies and societies become increasingly information-driven, the ability to critically analyze and synthesize information from various sources becomes imperative. The findings of this study will not only inform educational practices in Indonesia but also add to the global discourse on effective teaching methodologies and curriculum development. By fostering a generation of critical thinkers and independent learners, the Merdeka Curriculum aims to equip students with the skills necessary to thrive in an ever-evolving world

2. Methodology

Literature Review

The literature review explores existing research and theoretical foundations related to the implementation of text-based approaches in education, with a specific focus on their effectiveness in enhancing learning outcomes, critical thinking, and cognitive development. This review also considers the broader context of educational reforms in Indonesia, particularly the introduction of the Merdeka Curriculum.

Text-Based Approach in Education

The text-based approach emphasizes the use of various texts as primary learning resources, aiming to improve students' reading, analytical, and cognitive skills. According to John Hattie's comprehensive meta-analysis of educational research, strategies that utilize textual materials can significantly enhance student achievement (Hattie, 2009). Hattie's findings suggest that students who engage deeply with texts tend to develop better critical thinking and comprehension skills, which are essential for academic success and lifelong learning.

Incorporating textual materials in the classroom encourages students to interact with diverse sources of information, fostering a deeper understanding of the content. Daniel Willingham, a cognitive psychologist, highlights the importance of reading comprehension as a fundamental skill for effective learning and critical thinking (Willingham, 2006). Willingham argues that the ability to comprehend and analyze texts is crucial for students to navigate complex information and solve problems efficiently.

Merdeka Curriculum and Educational Reforms in Indonesia

The Merdeka Curriculum represents a significant shift in Indonesia's educational landscape, emphasizing critical thinking, independence, and student-centered learning. The curriculum aims to move away from rote memorization and passive learning, encouraging students to engage actively with learning materials and develop essential cognitive skills. This approach aligns with global educational trends that prioritize critical thinking and problem-solving abilities as key competencies for the 21st century.

Previous studies on educational reforms in Indonesia have highlighted the challenges and opportunities associated with implementing new curricula. Researchers have noted the importance of teacher training and professional development in ensuring the successful adoption of innovative teaching methods (Suratno et al., 2021). Additionally, studies have emphasized the need for adequate resources and support systems to facilitate the transition

to new educational frameworks (Yusuf & Wijaya, 2019).

Impact of Text-Based Approach on Learning Outcomes

Numerous studies have examined the impact of text-based approaches on student learning outcomes. For instance, research has shown that students who engage with a variety of texts tend to perform better in reading comprehension and critical thinking assessments (Snow, 2010). These studies suggest that the text-based approach can effectively enhance students' cognitive abilities by promoting active engagement with learning materials. Moreover, the text-based approach has been linked to improved student motivation and engagement. When students are exposed to diverse and relevant texts, they are more likely to find the learning process interesting and meaningful (Guthrie et al., 2004). This increased engagement can lead to better academic performance and a more positive attitude toward learning.

Challenges and Considerations

While the text-based approach offers numerous benefits, it also presents certain challenges. One major challenge is ensuring that teachers are adequately prepared to implement this approach effectively. Professional development and ongoing support are crucial to help teachers develop the skills and confidence needed to facilitate text-based learning (Darling-Hammond, 2000). Additionally, access to a wide range of high-quality texts is essential for the success of this approach. Schools must invest in diverse and relevant reading materials to provide students with rich learning experiences. Another consideration is the need to adapt the text-based approach to the local context. In Indonesia, cultural and linguistic diversity must be taken into account when selecting texts and designing instructional strategies. Ensuring that texts are culturally relevant and accessible to all students is key to promoting equity and inclusion in the classroom (Gay, 2018)

3. Finding And Discussion

Teacher Experiences and Implementation Strategies

Teachers reported a range of experiences and strategies in implementing the text-based approach within the Merdeka Curriculum. Many educators highlighted the positive impact of using diverse texts on students' engagement and critical thinking skills. They observed that students were more motivated and interested when working with texts that were relevant and varied in content. Teachers also noted an improvement in students' analytical abilities, as they were encouraged to question assumptions and draw connections between different ideas.

However, some challenges were also identified. Teachers expressed the need for more professional development and support to effectively implement the text-based approach. They emphasized the importance of training in selecting appropriate texts, facilitating discussions, and integrating textual analysis into the curriculum. Additionally, access to a wide range of high-quality texts was cited as a critical factor for the success of this approach.

Student Engagement and Learning Outcomes

Students reported a high level of engagement with the text-based approach, particularly when the texts were interesting and relevant to their lives. Focus group discussions revealed that students appreciated the opportunity to explore different perspectives and develop their critical thinking skills. They felt that the text-based approach made learning more interactive and enjoyable compared to traditional methods. Observations in the classroom supported these findings, showing that students were actively participating in discussions, asking questions, and making connections between texts and their own experiences. The analysis of student work samples indicated that students were able to demonstrate improved

reading comprehension and analytical skills, aligning with the goals of the Merdeka Curriculum.

Challenges and Considerations

Despite the positive outcomes, several challenges were noted. One significant issue was the varying levels of reading proficiency among students, which affected their ability to engage with complex texts. Teachers had to differentiate instruction to cater to diverse learning needs, which required additional time and resources. Additionally, the availability of culturally relevant texts was a concern, as it was essential to ensure that all students could relate to and benefit from the learning materials.

Discussion

The findings of this study highlight the effectiveness of the text-based approach in enhancing students' critical thinking and cognitive skills within the Merdeka Curriculum. The positive impact on student engagement and learning outcomes aligns with previous research by John Hattie (2009) and Daniel Willingham (2006), who emphasized the benefits of using textual materials to foster deeper understanding and analytical abilities.

Implementation and Teacher Support

The success of the text-based approach heavily depends on the preparedness and support of teachers. As indicated by the findings, professional development and access to high-quality texts are crucial for effective implementation. This underscores the importance of ongoing teacher training and resource allocation, as suggested by Suratno et al. (2021) and Yusuf & Wijaya (2019). Providing teachers with the necessary tools and knowledge can help overcome the challenges identified in the study, such as varying student reading levels and the need for culturally relevant texts.

Student Engagement and Critical Thinking

The increased student engagement and improved learning outcomes observed in this study demonstrate the potential of the text-based approach to transform educational practices. By promoting active learning and critical thinking, the approach aligns with the goals of the Merdeka Curriculum to develop independent and intellectually competent individuals. The findings support the argument that engaging students with diverse and relevant texts can make learning more meaningful and effective, as noted by Guthrie et al. (2004).

Addressing Challenges

Addressing the challenges identified in the study requires a multifaceted approach. Differentiating instruction to accommodate diverse reading levels is essential, and teachers need support in developing strategies for this. Ensuring access to a wide range of culturally relevant texts is also critical. This involves not only investing in educational resources but also encouraging local content creation that reflects the diverse cultural backgrounds of Indonesian students.

Implications for Educational Practice and Policy

The insights gained from this study have important implications for educational practice and policy in Indonesia. Policymakers should prioritize professional development and resource allocation to support the effective implementation of the text-based approach. Additionally, curriculum developers should consider the diverse needs of students and ensure that learning materials are inclusive and accessible to all.

By fostering a generation of critical thinkers and independent learners, the Merdeka Curriculum aims to equip students with the skills necessary to thrive in an ever-evolving world.

The findings of this study contribute to the ongoing efforts to improve the quality of education in Indonesia and offer valuable lessons for educational reform globally

4. Conclusion

The implementation of the text-based approach within the Merdeka Curriculum has shown promising results in enhancing student engagement, critical thinking, and learning outcomes. While challenges remain, particularly in terms of teacher support and resource availability, the overall impact of the approach is positive. Continued efforts to address these challenges and support educators will be crucial in realizing the full potential of the text-based approach in Indonesian junior high schools.

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