

OPTIMALISATION OF TEACHING BY LEARNING GROUPS TO REALIZE INDEPENDENT EQUALITY EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

The learning groups has a role that is no less important when compared to formal educational institutions, namely realizing one of the goals of the Indonesian state, namely educating the nation's life (Al-Tabany, 2014). At this time, many learning groups have been formed. However, they have not been registered with the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology as non-formal educational institutions motivated by limited financial, technological, and human resources. These limitations prevent learning groups from applying the teaching to realize self-equity education using qualified technology. This research will answer the circumstances and constraints that occur in the teaching process by the study group and provide ideas to realize equal and independent education and teaching, especially by the learning groups in terms of rules and policies. The method used is reform-oriented research with a socio-legal research approach because this research is related to law and social sciences. Research shows that several learning groups, especially in Surabaya, East Java, Indonesia, are still experiencing severe obstacles in implementing education and teaching due to limited human, technological, and financial resources. The new Merdeka Belajar curriculum still has not touched the study group, so it can be said that education in Indonesia in the non-formal education path through learning groups has not been evenly distributed and comprehensive. Efforts that can be taken to create independent and equal education to achieve educational equity are the formulation of policies by the Government regarding the implementation of the Merdeka Belajar curriculum for every form in every educational path, especially learning groups in non-formal education.

Keywords: *Learning groups: Equality Education: Independent Learning:
Education: Learning.*

INTRODUCTION

Education comes from the word 'Educate', which, in the extensive dictionary, Indonesian means nurture and train. At the same time, education itself means the process of changing the attitudes and behaviour of a person or group of people to mature human beings through teaching and training efforts, processes, actions, and ways of educating. In essence, education, in a general sense, is a process to develop all aspects of the human personality, including cognitive, psychomotor and affective, to achieve a better individual personality. Quality human beings can be seen from an educational point of view so that the educational process cannot be separated from national development goals (Hamalik, 2015).

Education also comes from the Greek word “pedagogy”, whose root word is “pais” which means child, and “again” which means to guide. So, “pedagogy” means guiding children (Syafri & Zen, 2017). Several experts also explain the definition of education science in Hasbullah, namely:

- a. The science of education is the scientific thought of reality that we call education (educating and educated). (Prof. Dr. N. Driyarkara);
- b. Educational science examines its object to find out what the object’s condition or essence is and also learns how to act. The object of educational science is the process or situation of education. (Prof. M.J Langeveld);
- c. Educational science studies the atmosphere and process of education. (Sutari Imam Barnadib); and
- d. The science of education is the theory of education, contemplation about education. In a broad sense, education is the knowledge that studies the problems that arise in educational practice. (Prof. Brodjonegoro).

From some of the experts’ opinions above, it can be concluded that educational science discusses scientific problems of a theoretical and practical nature, as well as guidelines and principles regarding the implementation of scientific education. In addition, in education itself, various factors can form patterns of interaction or influence each other: objective factors, educator factors, student factors, content or educational material factors, educational method factors, and environmental situation factors. All factors are interrelated and influencing. Thus, it can be concluded that education must help people deal with lifelong learning to improve their quality of life.

Education pathways in Indonesia consist of formal, non-formal, and informal education. The three educational pathways are officially organized based on Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System and Government Regulation Number 17 of 2010 concerning the Management and Implementation of Education. The educational path that has received quite a lot of attention is the formal education path because the formal education path is the main focus for the development of human resources. Formal education consists of primary, secondary, and higher education. If a person cannot pursue formal education, then the person concerned can choose to attend non-formal education. There is still a third educational path that the community can choose if they cannot take the formal or non-formal education path, namely the informal education path. However, informal education pathways still rarely receive attention from the public (Sutanti, 2019).

Education is a fundamental right for every human being. The agenda of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) number 4 is focused on quality education. In other words, everyone has the right to a quality, equitable, inclusive education and to increase lifelong learning opportunities. The right to obtain education in the context of the Indonesian state is clearly stated in the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, Article 31 paragraph (1), which reads, “Every citizen has the right to be taught.” Nevertheless, unfortunately, education in Indonesia has not reached the entire population, which is marked by the widening of educational gaps, especially between regions (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2020). The Government has made various efforts to improve the quality of education, including providing 3 (three) educational pathways, but this until now has not produced optimal results (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2020). This phenomenon, exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic, has hit all countries worldwide, including Indonesia.

The Covid-19 pandemic that has hit Indonesia has widened the education gap. The demand for a decrease in the covid-19 positivity rate has made the government issue a policy to do various things from home, including educational activities. These educational activities are no exception for non-formal and informal education. Not all people can adapt to everything that is done online. As a result, many children to adolescents stop receiving education or drop out of school (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2020). Even though the dropout rate in Indonesia has increased from 2021 to 2022, before 2021, it has decreased (Putri, 2022). In fact, during the pandemic until now, a new curriculum has been implemented, namely Merdeka Belajar, but the presence of the curriculum still cannot fully overcome the educational situation.

Children and adolescents who are no longer able to receive formal education in school still hope to continue to get access to education. The presence of a study group initiated by the community voluntarily is one of the alternative options for those who are unable to receive formal education. A study group consists of several people with the same interest in education and learning (Zhu & Baylen, 2005). Learning groups are also non-formal educational spaces that can be used to get additional lessons outside of formal education (Sekar & Kamarubiani, 2020).

The study group has a role that is no less important when compared to formal educational institutions, namely realizing one of the goals of the Indonesian state, namely educating the nation's life. The presence of the study group is also interpreted by the spirit of cooperation so that no one dominates and all group members fill each other (Al-Tabany, 2014). Currently, there are many learning groups, but they have not been registered with the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology because they have not implemented the Merdeka Belajar curriculum, which is motivated by limited financial, technological, and human resources.

The reality is that occurs in the world of non-formal education still not following the expectations of many people, especially people who have not been able to receive a formal education, that there is an expectation that non-formal education can help them gain equal and independent access to education. This reality also shows that the Government has not been able to realize the goal of equitable distribution of education as stipulated in the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, as well as the SDGs agenda regarding education. The limitations experienced by the learning groups, as mentioned above, hinder the learning groups from applying the teaching to realize equitable and independent equality education for the community with the use of qualified technology. This article will answer the circumstances and constraints that occur in the teaching process by the study group, as well as provide ideas to realize equal and independent education and teaching, especially by the study group in terms of regulations and policies in order to achieve the goal of equitable education for all Indonesians.

METHOD

The research carried out in writing this article is reform-oriented research. Reform-oriented research is a typology of legal research that evaluates the adequacy of existing rules and proposes changes to the rule of law with standards or parameters, be it legal principles/principles or legal doctrines/teachings (Hutchinson, 2015). Although the focus of this article is the field of education, it analyzes the phenomenon of education from a legal perspective, so the researchers used reform-oriented research with a socio-legal approach. A socio-legal approach is an interdisciplinary approach that comprehensively uses the help of social aspects, both theoretical and reality aspects, to study law (Wiratraman, 2019). Socio-legal research was chosen because it deals with law and the social sciences.

Data is undoubtedly needed in supporting a study using literature study techniques and interviews to collect data related to the research topic. Literature studies are carried out indirectly to obtain data by reading, studying, researching, identifying, and analyzing secondary data in books, laws, regulations, documents, and writings related to equality education independent of non-formal education pathways. Interviews were conducted directly using interview guidelines, in the form of directed and systematic aimed at respondents as resource persons to know the implementation of non-formal education by the study group. The speakers were several learning groups in Surabaya, East Java, Indonesia. The learning groups include Group Belajar Gerlik Surabaya, Sekolah Rakyat Kejawan, and ITS Mengajar. The interview was conducted at different times and online, considering the increase in the Covid-19 rate in November 2022 in Surabaya. This interview also conducted with students of the Department of Development Studies, Sepuluh Nopember Institute of Technology.

The data from literature studies are concepts, theories, laws, and regulations. Data analysis derived from the literature study uses a conceptual approach, namely by examining concepts in laws and regulations, as well as the views of scholars or books (Peter Mahmud Marzuki, 2017). The data obtained from interviews are qualitative because, in numbers, there are not too many monographic or case informational (Amiruddin & Asikin, 2018). Therefore, the data obtained will be analyzed by deciphering the data into sound and correct sentences according to the rules of scientific writing. The sentences are arranged in such a way as to be easy to read and interpret.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Gerlik Surabaya study group is a community that has been established for ten years since 2012. The community moves with passion and empathy for young, still growing up, developing children who need more attention. The purpose of establishing this community is to provide attention and concern for children in the Wonokromo area, Surabaya, through education, teaching, and education with the concept of playing while learning. The Gerlik Surabaya study group, in carrying out the education and teaching, has not been guided by the Merdeka Belajar curriculum that the relevant ministries have designed. Until now, the community has only provided primary education, such as the ability to read, write, count, and recite for Muslim people. However, the community does not infrequently provide additional learning for children undergoing formal education, such as elementary school, by adjusting the curriculum used in the school. Independence is attached to this community, so for the implementation of all activities, this community uses independent funds or self-help funds of each member, assisted by donations from donors called "Friends of Gerlik." This independence is sometimes also an obstacle to implementing education and teaching if they want to use the Merdeka Belajar curriculum.

The following study group is the Kejawan People's School (SRK). SRK was established in Surabaya in 2008 in the Kejawan Putih Tambak area and is a manifestation of one of the pillars of family activities in the area. SRK is a study group or non-formal education community for underprivileged communities, providing additional guidance for children in villages around the Kejawan Putih Tambak area. Additional guidance is provided from the academic and non-academic sides. Some of the programs provided in the learning process, in addition to additional guidance by SRK, are outing activities (shared cycling sports, collaborative activities with other communities such as Bizar and Hindu Children's Community). However, like the Gerlik community, SRK has not been guided by the Merdeka Belajar curriculum that the relevant

ministries have designed to carry out education and teaching. In addition, there is no cooperation with government agencies in the implementation of learning activities by SRK. The limited human and financial resources are why this community still has not implemented its activities according to the Merdeka Belajar curriculum.

The last study group as a resource person was ITS Mengajar. This community was founded in 2014 under the auspices of the ITS Student Executive Board (BEM). This community is run by active students who are members of BEM ITS and focuses on teaching outside of school for children in remote areas in the East Java region. The teaching provided includes subjects similar to formal schooling and character development activities. Teaching activities are provided in collaboration with other educational communities and are carried out by adjusting the curriculum used in the traditional schools of the assisted students who attend. However, the Merdeka Belajar curriculum has not been implemented as a whole, only partly due to limited human and financial resources.

The policy on the Merdeka Belajar curriculum is currently contained in several regulations at the ministry level. These regulations include:

1. Regulation of the Minister of Education, Culture, and Research and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia Number 5 of 2022 concerning Graduate Competency Standards in Early Childhood Education, Basic Education Level, and Secondary Education;
2. Regulation of the Minister of Education, Culture, and Research and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia Number 7 of 2022 concerning Content Standards in Early Childhood Education, Basic Education Levels, and Secondary Education;
3. Decree of the Minister of Education, Culture, and Research and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia Number 56 of 2022 concerning Guidelines for Curriculum Implementation in the Context of Learning Recovery;
4. Decree of the Head of the Education Standards, Curriculum, and Assessment Agency of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology No.008/H/KR/2022 of 2022 concerning Learning Outcomes in Early Childhood Education, Basic Education Level and Secondary Education Level in the Merdeka Belajar curriculum; and
5. Decree of the Head of the Education Standards, Curriculum, and Assessment Agency of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology No.009/H/KR/2022 of 2022 concerning the Dimensions, Elements, and Subelements of the Pancasila Student Profile in the Merdeka Belajar curriculum.

Of the five policies regarding the Merdeka Belajar curriculum above, there is not a single policy that regulates the use of the Merdeka Belajar curriculum for learning groups as non-formal education. The policy in number 2 only regulates the content standards of non-formal education against the Merdeka Belajar curriculum. However, the non-formal education referred to in the policy is not a study group, but only non-formal education that provides general education equivalent to elementary/MI, junior high school/MTs, and high school/MA, including package A, package B, and package C programs.

DISCUSSION

Education in Indonesia began during the Dutch occupation. In the Dutch colonial era in Indonesia, the curriculum was applied in Dutch-controlled schools that controlled Indonesia so that the curriculum was only for the benefit of the Netherlands. The Dutch colonial mission at

that time was to spread Christianity and educate the Indonesian people to make it easier to trade with indigenous peoples. However, there are differences in providing education for Dutch children; eastern foreign children and natives also experience differences. Furthermore, children of lower social strata and *priyayi* also experience differences even though they are still in the category of indigenous children. While the goal of the Japanese people in Indonesia was to win the war against the Dutch who ruled Indonesia, the Dutch rule was replaced by the Japanese, and the Japanese established a People's School called "Kokumin Gako" for six years for the Indonesian people.

After Indonesia obtained independence, there was a change in the educational curriculum, which consisted of a period of "simple curriculum (1947-1964), curriculum updates (1968 and 1975), process skills-based curriculum (1984 and 1994), and competency-based curriculum (2004 and 2006). The curriculum has changed over a decade, from 1975 to 2013. Curriculum changes are seen not only from philosophy but also lead to aspects of humanism, psychology, and needs in the present (Aslan & Wahyudin, 2020).

There is a new curriculum by 2020, namely the Merdeka Belajar curriculum. Merdeka Belajar curriculum has varied intracurricular learning through a more optimal content presentation to ensure students have enough time to explore concepts and strengthen competencies. This curriculum also accommodates teachers to choose various teaching tools so that learning can be tailored to the needs and interests of students' learning. Through this program, it is also held to strengthen the achievement of the Pancasila student profile, which is developed based on specific themes set by the Government. This project is not directed toward achieving specific learning achievement targets, so it is not tied to the subject's content. The presence of this curriculum stems from various national and international studies that show that Indonesia has long experienced a learning crisis characterized by many Indonesian children who are unable to understand simple reading or apply basic mathematical concepts. At the same time, Indonesia has an unequal education gap between regions and social groups. This situation then got worse due to the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic. Therefore, there is a need for systemic change through Merdeka Belajar (Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan Republik Indonesia, n.d.).

We can find the concept of freedom in learning long before the modern world in the thought of Ki Hajar Dewantara. He stated that the freedom of learning is realized in the way of thinking, where students must use their minds to seek all knowledge. In other words, independence in determining how to learn and not relying on others to organize activities is the core to achieving freedom of learning. Students must have an independent spirit mentally and energetically to maintain the core of lifelong education (Ainia, 2020). This thinking is also relevant when juxtaposed with the concept of independence in the Merdeka Belajar curriculum. Learning is directed to give freedom to teachers and students, especially in determining the learning system. The concept of Merdeka Belajar focuses on freedom of thought and innovation. The concept of Merdeka Belajar is also in line with one of the theories in the world of education, namely the theory of constructivism, which views that learning actively constructs knowledge (Schunk, 2011).

As a new idea, of course, the Merdeka Belajar curriculum is expected to bring change and progress to the nation's education evenly and thoroughly. These changes and progress cannot be obtained instantly but need to be done gradually, considering that education in Indonesia can be considered uneven and distributed thoroughly. Geographical conditions,

economic level, the dissemination of technology, the quality of human resources, and especially the mentality of the nation's children as a result of social media are factors that affect the current state of Indonesian education (Kusumaryono, 2020).

As it is known that the Indonesian Government has regulated in the Law of National Education System that to organize and achieve educational goals, the education path in Indonesia is divided into 3 (three), namely formal education, non-formal education, and informal education. The learning groups in the context of this research belongs to the non-formal education path; according to Article 26 paragraph (4) of the Law of National Education System states, "Non-formal education units consist of course institutions, training institutions, learning groups, community learning activity centres, and tackle assemblies and similar educational units."

The current educational challenges are not only that students can master theory but follow the leading development of the Industrial Revolution 4.0, which has entered various parts of the world, namely data literacy, technological literacy, and human literacy. This human literacy also includes the development and strengthening of self-character. The presence of learning groups, part of non-formal education, plays an essential role in supporting the implementation of equal education in tandem with the transformation of the Industrial Revolution 4.0. That is just because the study group is a non-formal education forum that can replace, supplement, and complement formal education, as the function of non-formal education is stated in Article 26 paragraph (1) of the Law of National Education System. In addition, the study group also provides self-development benefits for students who join it, namely new knowledge (Dziubinski, 2014), relationships between individuals (Tannehill & MacPhail, 2016), self-confidence and networking (Brown et al., 2018) for future career uses. The presence of learning groups also makes people with insufficient economic abilities unable to take formal education to be helped. Therefore, the existence and sustainability of learning groups need to be supported by all elements, from the Government to the community, so that education can be carried out thoroughly and equally.

Government support is crucial to continuing education, including the continuity of learning groups that are part of non-formal education. Such support is not limited to a particular educational system and a specific educational path but all educational systems and educational pathways. With the new Merdeka Belajar curriculum at this time, it is necessary to apply it equally and thoroughly to all elements of education in Indonesia, including learning groups. It is said that the curriculum is not only devoted to specific educational pathways but all educational pathways and all Indonesian people. The question support is not only motivational but also in terms of policies including administrative arrangements, human resources, technology, and finance.

Unfortunately, the support expected to be given to the study group has not been seen. It is said that because the facts based on the interview results show that both in terms of implementation and regulations, it is still not optimal. The implementation of the study group until now is still carried out, only limited to basic abilities such as reading, writing, counting, studying; sociability; and simple art skills. Education and teaching by the study group is still far from implementing the Merdeka Belajar curriculum guidelines. This phenomenon is influenced by limited human, technological and financial resources. Not only limited resources, but the study group is also still fumbling independently about the appropriate Merdeka Belajar

curriculum and how it should be implemented in the education and teaching they provide to students.

The lack of maximum sustainability of the study group is also supported by the fact that in terms of policy, the Government has not given its support and attention to the study group, especially after the Merdeka Belajar curriculum was implemented. Only the Law of the National Education System states that learning groups fall into a non-formal type of education. Even that is just a general rule. Concerning the Merdeka Belajar curriculum, no specific policy regulates the implementation of the Merdeka Belajar curriculum by learning groups as part of non-formal education. Currently, all that can be found in the old rules are similar to learning groups, namely learning services. Pamong Belajar and tutors are educators assigned to the non-formal education unit of the Learning Activity Center (SKB). Pamong Belajar is regulated by the Minister of Education and Culture Regulation Number 39 of 2013 concerning Technical Guidelines for the Functional Position of Pamong Belajar and its Credit Number.

Support in terms of the policy is needed for the sustainability of learning groups because learning groups as a form of non-formal education can also support the implementation of educational equity in Indonesia. Without policies, the steps taken in optimizing learning groups become unfounded and challenging to implement. The Government is a party that can act on this issue, considering that the Government is a stakeholder with authority to form a policy or rule in a country, including educational affairs (Bangkara et al., 2022). In Indonesia, the Government consists of central and local governments. For non-formal education matters, it is the responsibility of local governments, including education management, curriculum, educators and education personnel, educational licensing, and literature (Pemerintah Daerah, 2014). This responsibility is in line with the concept of decentralization adopted by the Indonesian Government (Dewi, 2016) as a new paradigm in education (Departemen Pendidikan Nasional Republik Indonesia, 2001) where the concept is stated in Article 9 of Law Number 23 of 2014 concerning Local Government and the annexe to the explanation of the law.

Concerning the optimization of learning groups to realize independent and equal education according to the Merdeka Belajar curriculum, it is necessary to form a policy that regulates and emphasizes that the Merdeka Belajar curriculum is applied to all types of education, including non-formal education of all forms. The central Government, through the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, also needs to form guidelines for implementing the Merdeka Belajar curriculum, along with related achievement standards, for each form of each educational path. The formulation of policies by the Central Government will be coordinated with local governments so that local governments can formulate relevant policies, primarily technical ones for learning groups as non-formal education, to implement the Merdeka Belajar curriculum. Not only that, the policies that will be prepared need to be complemented by human, technological, and financial support for learning groups, especially those that have not yet officially become non-formal educational institutions.

CONCLUSION

Learning groups in Indonesia, normatively, have been recognized by the Government as a form of non-formal education. Nevertheless, unfortunately not all learning groups have the status of non-formal educational institutions, even further still as ordinary learning groups with various limitations in providing education and teaching. The birth of the new Merdeka Belajar curriculum has not yet reached the existing study group, so the study group has not realized the

curriculum for the education and teaching they do. This phenomenon occurs due to the limitations of the study group on human resources, technology, and finance, although currently, Indonesia is improving and increasingly sophisticated thanks to the Industrial Revolution 4.0. In addition, the study group on these limitations has not received support from the central and regional governments in terms of policies to technical support such as human resources, technology, and finance.

An effort must be made to optimize the study group that is recognized as a non-formal education unit to realize an independent and equal education according to the Merdeka Belajar curriculum. The Government carries out this effort by formulating and issuing policies strictly regarding implementing the Merdeka Belajar curriculum for all educational pathways, including non-formal education of all forms, especially in the learning groups. The policy is followed by the formulation of guidelines for implementing the Merdeka Belajar curriculum and related achievement standards for each form of each educational path, which must later be coordinated with local governments so that local governments can formulate relevant policies, primarily technical for learning groups as non-formal education. Technical support, such as human, technological, and financial resources, can also be incorporated into formulating such policies. Later, it is hoped that the policy will achieve the goal of equitable distribution of education for all Indonesians.

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