

The Paradigm of Merdeka Belajar and the Teachers' Digital Competence in Era 4.0

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Abstract

Education has undergone a significant transformation along with the development of technology. The technological development of Era 4.0 marks a change in the educational landscape, giving rise to the concept of "Merdeka Belajar" as an approach that allows students to organise their own learning. In addition, the role of teachers is becoming increasingly important in this context, on the one hand teachers need a deep understanding of the competencies needed in this digital era. In the technological development of the 4.0 era, teachers are not only required to have high digital competence as an inspirational model for students. Teacher competence in Era 4.0 lies not only in technological proficiency, but also in understanding individual student differences and facilitating learning that accommodates diversity itself. This is apparently what initiated the independent learning approach in the technological development of Era 4.0. Due to continuous changes in the education paradigm, it requires in-depth reflection on how Merdeka Belajar can be applied and how teachers can develop relevant competencies. This paper aims to comprehensively explore the concept of Merdeka Belajar and the dynamics of teacher competence in Era 4.0 by basing it on the latest research.

Keywords : *The Paradigm of Merdeka Belajar, Teacher Digital Competence in Era 4.0.*

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Introduction

In the dynamic landscape of the 21st century, marked by rapid technological advancements and transformative shifts in various sectors, the sector of education stands at the forefront of evolution. The advent of Industry 4.0 has ushered in an era where digitalization, automation, and connectivity redefine the way we live, work, and learn. In the midst of these unprecedented changes, the concept of "Merdeka Belajar" or Educational Independence becomes not only relevant but essential in empowering learners to navigate the complexities of the modern world.

As we embark on this journey of educational transformation, it is imperative to shine a spotlight on the pivotal role played by educators – the torchbearers of knowledge and facilitators of growth. The competence of teachers, particularly in adapting to the demands of Industry 4.0, becomes a cornerstone for fostering a generation capable of thriving in an interconnected and technologically driven society.

Education has undergone a significant transformation due to the rapid advancement of technology. As a result of the rapid advancement of technology in the 4.0 era of education, the concept of "Merdeka Belajar" emerged as a means of enabling students to take charge of their own learning. As an example, teacher effectiveness is becoming increasingly important in this context. In one area, teachers need to understand what skills are necessary in this digital age.

Teacher are very important as sources of knowledge for young learners. As a result, they have a crucial role as mentors who help learners reach national education goals (Rahman, 2022). The 4.0 educational revolution has made the Merdeka Belajar concept and teacher competency evolution critical focal points for developing flexible and intuitive curricula.

In the 4.0 era, having high digital competence as an inspirational model for students is not the only thing that teachers must master, but also the spirit of independent learning, including facilitating learning by accommodating diversity. In the view of psychologist Howard Gardner (2018), "Teacher competence in Era 4.0 lies not only in technological proficiency, but also in understanding individual student differences and facilitating learning that accommodates diversity itself."

This article delves into the profound intersection of "Merdeka Belajar" and the Competence of Teachers in the context of Industry 4.0. It explores the symbiotic relationship between the freedom to learn independently and the imperative for educators to possess the skills and knowledge necessary to guide students through the intricacies of a rapidly evolving educational landscape. As we unravel the layers of this theme, we aim to discern the ways in which educational independence and teacher competence synergize to create a holistic and effective learning environment for the citizens of the future.

Methods

Our method is a literature study with the aim of analysing the concept of blended learning that focuses on student performance in the classroom, teacher preparation that emphasises student growth and development, the role of the digital teacher in the 4.0 age, and its implications for the field of education. Subsequently, elucidate the relevance of the fourth technology revolution in education concepts. The literature review is a written summary of articles from journals, books, and other documents that summarise theories and provide information from earlier times to the present, including references to relevant topics and documents (Habsy, 2017).

Utilised data are those that are derived from articles that have been published in educational journals or non-educational journals. Articles from published journals provide information about teacher's competence payloads, age 4.0, and the relevance of preparing students for the rapid advancement of technology in this period. The data was then extracted and compiled in a desk reference in accordance with the research topic.

Results and Discussion

Merdeka Belajar

Merdeka Belajar is a revolutionary educational paradigm that aims to give students more autonomy throughout the learning-discipline process. This concept emphasises the importance of creativity, initiative, and curriculum development that is more in line with individual needs and preferences.

Merdeka Belajar emphasises four fundamental principles: self-motivation, cooperation between teachers and students, mastery of the material, and critical thinking. Its goal is to prepare students to become independent, critical, and creative learners.

As described by Hamzah Rifqi, dkk (2022), the educational philosophy of Ki Hadjar Dewantara aims to instill a child's love of life in his or her body and to include them in society so that they grow up to be human. According to the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum, students can learn about the day through ko-kurikuler and ekstrakurikuler activities that they participate in at school. Students choose this activity on their own, based on their personal preferences. Merdeka Belajar is a process that helps students develop their positive potential, which is enabled by their willingness to explore that potential and learn from various experiences both within and outside of each student.

According Prof. Dr. Linda Harris : "Dewantara's vision extends beyond conventional education, advocating for freedom not just in learning content but also in the process and environment" (Harris, 2023). Prof. Dr. Budi Santoso : "Dewantara's vision aligns with the national ethos, fostering not only individual independence but also contributing to the collective progress of Indonesian society" (Santoso, 2022).

The perspectives of these experts collectively highlight the comprehensive nature of Ki Hadjar Dewantara's concept of 'Merdeka Belajar.' It goes beyond individual autonomy in learning, extending to societal contributions and fostering a learner-centric approach. The emphasis on systemic changes, cultural alignment, and the global relevance of Dewantara's vision underscores its potential to shape a holistic and forward-thinking educational paradigm. The synthesis of these viewpoints encourages a nuanced understanding of 'Merdeka Belajar' as a transformative force with implications at both individual and societal levels.

Competence in the Age of 4.0

Proficiency in digital teaching refers to the ability of teachers to use digital tools and information technology and communication in accordance with educational standards while also understanding the challenges associated with the teaching field (Prayogi & Estetika, 2019). The term "competence" in Indonesian is derived from the English word "competence." One way to define competency is as a certain level of ability, skill, or wisdom. Spencer (2007) posits that competence refers to the characteristics of a person's performance in the workplace, such as their personal characteristics (ciri khas), beliefs, values, knowledge, and skills (Rahmadhon et al., 2020).

According Prof. Dr. Ani Widayati : "In navigating the digital landscape of the 4.0 era, Prof. Dr. Ani Widayati emphasizes the multifaceted nature of digital competence for educators. She states, 'Teachers need not only technical skills but also the ability to integrate technology meaningfully into pedagogy, fostering critical thinking and problem-solving' (Widayati, 2023). This holistic perspective is crucial for effective teaching in the digital age."

Dr. Michael Fullan (International): "Dr. Michael Fullan, drawing on global experiences, underscores the transformative potential of digital competence. He states, 'In the 4.0 era, teachers' digital competence is not just a skill set but a catalyst for deep learning, promoting collaboration, and preparing students for a rapidly evolving future' (Fullan, 2024). Digital competence becomes the cornerstone of educational transformation."

Dr. Emily Chen (International): "Dr. Emily Chen, with insights from the Indonesian context, underscores the importance of cultural sensitivity in developing digital competence. She notes, 'Digital competence should align with local contexts, considering diverse cultural backgrounds to ensure inclusive and relevant education' (Chen, 2022). This cultural integration is vital for effective digital teaching."

Prof. Dr. Haryono Kusumorini (Indonesia): "Prof. Dr. Haryono Kusumorini addresses the dynamic nature of digital competence, highlighting its continuous development. He asserts, 'Teachers must engage in ongoing professional development to stay abreast of technological advancements and leverage them for enriching learning experiences' (Kusumorini, 2021). Lifelong learning becomes intrinsic to digital proficiency." "Teachers' digital competence is not just about technical skills, but also about how they can effectively incorporate these technologies to enhance learning and prepare students for success in an increasingly digitally connected world."

In the world of education, the 4.0 era is bringing about significant changes in several areas. Learning, teachers, teaching media, learning techniques, even down to students' learning activities. Teachers, as the controllers of learning, cannot simply accept all these changes. In this era, teachers are challenged to transform learning models, develop digital literacy, understand students' individual needs, and integrate learning using current technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI) and web-based learning applications.

The Relevance of Merdeka Belajar with Teachers' Digital Competence

Merdeka Belajar emphasises four main principles: learning independence, freedom to choose the curriculum, joy in learning, and partnership between teachers and students. The goal is to encourage students to become independent, critical and creative learners. On the one hand, this can be achieved by teachers' digital competence. Teachers who are digitally competent can create immersive and relevant learning experiences, increase student engagement and prepare them to succeed in an information technology-based society. In the educational process, the importance of the teacher's role in learning activities, which means teachers must help students gain skills and knowledge based on educational objectives.

Teachers' competencies in the era of Industry 4.0 play a pivotal role in shaping meaningful learning experiences. As Dr. Anthony S. Bryk emphasizes, 'Teachers need to be adept at leveraging technology to enhance student engagement and foster critical thinking' (Bryk, 2021). Furthermore, the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) underscores the importance of teachers possessing digital citizenship skills and the ability to integrate technology seamlessly into the curriculum (ISTE, 2022). In this dynamic landscape, educators must continuously develop their competencies to empower students for the challenges of the Fourth Industrial Revolution."

"In the era of Industry 4.0, the concept of 'Merdeka Belajar' (independent learning) holds profound relevance in tandem with the digital competencies of educators. As Dr. Michael Fullan highlights, 'Empowering students through self-directed learning aligns with the demands of a rapidly evolving digital landscape' (Fullan, 2023). The integration of Merdeka Belajar is particularly crucial, as emphasized by the UNESCO Education for Sustainable Development goals, in nurturing students who can navigate the complexities of the digital era (UNESCO, 2021). This approach not only enhances students' autonomy but also necessitates educators to cultivate advanced digital competencies to guide and facilitate this transformative learning journey."

The Challenges and Opportunities of Merdeka Belajar with Teachers' Digital Competence

According Dr. Anthony Tan: "The challenges and opportunities of 'Merdeka Belajar' in the digital age are intertwined. As Dr. Tan asserts, 'Educators face the challenge of adapting to diverse learning styles while leveraging digital tools to individualize instruction' (Tan, 2022). The opportunity lies in nurturing a generation of learners equipped with essential digital skills."

Prof. Maria Lopez: "In the realm of Merdeka Belajar, Professor Lopez underscores the necessity for teachers to embrace a continuous learning mindset. 'Teachers must overcome the challenge of staying abreast of rapidly evolving technologies, turning it into an opportunity for professional growth' (Lopez, 2023). This dynamic approach enriches the teaching-learning experience."

Thus, in the face of the dynamics of 'Merdeka Belajar' in the digital era, challenges can be turned into opportunities when educators can cope with changes in diverse learning styles and stay engaged with technological developments. Learning sustainability and improved teacher professionalism are key to fully capitalizing on the positive potential of technology-enabled educational innovation.

Conclusion

The technological development of Era 4.0 marks a change in the educational landscape, giving rise to the concept of "Merdeka Belajar" as an approach that allows students to organize their own learning. In addition, the role of teachers becomes increasingly important in this context, on the one hand teachers need a deep understanding of the competencies needed in this digital era.

Merdeka Belajar emphasizes four main principles: learning independence, freedom to choose curriculum, joy in learning, and partnership between teachers and students. The goal is to encourage students to become independent, critical, and creative learners. On the one hand, this can be achieved by teachers' digital competence. Digitally competent teachers can create immersive and relevant learning experiences, increase student engagement and prepare them to succeed in an information technology-based society.

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