Emancipated Learning: Perspectives and Challenges in Transforming an Education System

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Part 1: The beginning
A learning crisis in Indonesia

In 2018, 70% of 15 year-old students showed below minimum competency level in literacy and numeracy.

Source: The OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2018
A vision for
Emancipated Learning

Schools as learning environments which nurture **competent**, **lifelong learners** with **strong character traits** based on Pancasila values, the Indonesian national ideology.
The transformation

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The **Merdeka Belajar** Transformation

**Curriculum and pedagogy: commitment to foundational learning**
1. Measure learning better: replace high-stakes national exam with diagnostic national assessment
2. Introduce a more flexible curriculum framework
3. Replace subject-based public university entrance test with an aptitude based test

**Support (good) teaching**
4. Select master teachers as the next generation of school leaders
5. Redesign the pre-service teacher education

**Open up tertiary education**
6. Allow university students to spend up to three semesters out of their major
7. Encourage practitioners to teach alongside academics

**Utilize technology to scale up and accelerate progress**
8. Provide high quality digital teaching resources
9. Assist principals in managing the school budget
10. Provide matchmaking platform between university students and industries
11. Provide matchmaking platform between universities and industries
Measure learning better through a diagnostic national assessment

1. Sampling representative at the school level, rendering the assessment low-stakes for diagnostic purposes. Students become less stressed.

2. Administered at grades 5, 8, and 11, whereas the transition from elementary to junior high to senior high school happens at grades 6, 9, and 12. Teachers can improve teaching quality based on assessment result.

3. Measures literacy and numeracy skills, not content mastery. No special preparation is necessary.

4. Includes a survey to students that measures six key character traits based on Pancasila, the Indonesian national ideology: being faithful in God, cooperative, creative, critical as a thinker, embodies diversity, and independent.

5. Includes a survey to teachers and students that measures teaching and learning quality, as well as school climate (including incidence of bullying, intolerance, and sexual harassment and assault).
Kurikulum Merdeka, a more flexible curriculum framework

1. **Depth more than breadth**
   More focused on foundational skills. Fewer topics but deeper engagement. Learning becomes less rushed, more meaningful, and more joyful.

2. **More freedom**
   No more natural science, social science, and language tracks in high school. Achievement standards are designed in phases spanning multiple years.

3. **Relevant and interactive**
   Project-based learning gives more opportunities to students to actively explore issues relevant to them such as environmental degradation, the pandemic, etc.
Replace subject-based public university entrance test with an aptitude-based test

1. The aptitude-based test measures more foundational skills: cognitive skills, numeracy, and literacy in Indonesian language and English language.
   - Students are less dependent on test prep centers.
   - Teachers can emphasize meaningful understanding during high school education instead of drilling and memorizing.

2. Students with outstanding achievement in particular subjects can apply through a separate selection track but their overall grades are given at least 50% weight in admission decision. This encourages more holistic education in high school.
Master teachers as the next generation of school leaders

Teachers undergo a competitive selection process and intensive on-the-job training for nine months to become master teachers. The training includes student-centered teaching philosophy, building school culture, techniques such as differentiated learning, student coaching, running school programs, and decision making.

The master teachers form communities of learning to increase teaching skills among other teachers, including using the digital platform for teachers.

Finally, the ministry regulates that recruitment of principals and superintendents must prioritize master teachers who care the most about student learning.
Redesign the pre-service teacher education

1. **Practice-oriented**, relative proportion of theory and practice is 50:50. As much as possible, pre-service teachers practise in schools where they will likely be placed.

2. Selective admission emphasizing **internal motivation** to teach aside from content mastery.

3. Involving **master teachers** as instructors to inspire future teachers and relay best practices.
Provide high quality digital teaching resources

The Emancipated Teaching platform (platform Merdeka Mengajar) provides differentiated learning modules, tutorials on the new curriculum framework, curated teaching materials, as well as space for teachers to share best practices and find inspiration from peers on how to improve their teaching quality.

- 55k+ self-learning content available
- 3.5k+ teacher communities across the nation
- 690k+ teachers downloaded teaching tools
- 99k+ content uploaded by teachers
- 2.3 mio+ total app downloads after six months
- 1.7 mio+ teachers have used the platform
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Assist principals in managing the school budget

**ARAKAS**
Accountable planning, reporting and budget management
- 217k+ schools have used the platform
- 3.5 bio+ USD managed on the platform

**SIPLah**
Official e-commerce platform to simplify school procurement process
- 237k+ schools have used the platform
- 84k+ SMEs engaged in the platform

**TanyaBOS**
Official Q&A forum providing information on budget management
- 3k+ topics posted on the platform
- 11k+ visitors participated
Provide personalized report on national assessment results to each region and school

The Education Report platform (platform Rapor Pendidikan) provides local governments, principals, and teachers with personalized report on literacy, numeracy, character traits, and school climate based on national assessment results, combined with other datasets on education.

- 280+ indicators provided
- 178k+ schools have accessed their report
- 546+ local governments have accessed their report
Part 3: The challenges
Change always generates resistance.
  • Noise is not an indicator of quality or urgency of policy change, but noise reduces political support.

We need scale for irreversible change, but scale means variance in quality.
  • Intensive, adaptive approaches to selected regions still necessary.

People worry about the sustainability of transformation.
  • Secure personnel, regulations, and practices that can outlast an administration.