

# How Does the Implementation of *Merdeka* Student Exchange Improve Student Competencies? Evaluation Based on The Goal Oriented Model

Nurokhmah<sup>1\*</sup>, Nur Hidayanto Pancoro Setyo Putro<sup>2</sup>, Yanti Kumala Sembiring<sup>3</sup>, Roni Eka Rahmat<sup>4</sup>, Zahrotun Salimah<sup>5</sup>

**Abstract**—The Merdeka Student Exchange Program provides opportunities for students to take part in the learning process at other universities to strengthen and improve their competencies. In addition, through the Merdeka Student Exchange Program, students are expected to increase their national insight, love their country, and have an understanding of diversity and tolerance. This research aims to describe the goals and benefits of the Merdeka Student Exchange Program of Yogyakarta State University students and analyze the obstacles experienced. This research uses qualitative methods by collecting data through observation, interview, and documentation. The data analysis technique for this research uses the interactive model from Miles, Huberman, & Sadana. Based on the results of the discussion, it shows that the goals of the Merdeka Student Exchange Program were achieved: 1) Increasing national insight, integrity, solidarity, and national adhesive between students through intercultural learning, 2) Developing leadership and Adaptive soft skills to increase the value of unity and nationalism 3) Provide opportunities for students to get learning experiences at the recipient universities, and get credit recognition. 4) Strengthen and enrich student competencies. The Merdeka Student Exchange Program also has problems in the implementation process, there are in socialization, facilities, course conversion, and financing.

**Keywords:** Evaluation, Merdeka student exchange, competencies

## I. INTRODUCTION

Law No. 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System and Law No. 12 of 2012 on Higher Education state that the management of higher education is one of the government's duties as part of the implementation of national education [1] [2]. Higher Education occupies a strategic position to prepare Indonesian human resources, to strengthen the nation's competitiveness.

<sup>1,2,3,4,5</sup>Educational research and Evaluation, Yogyakarta State University, Indonesia.

To ensure that the implementation of higher education is carried out consistently and have a certain quality, the government issued the National Higher Education Standard (SNPT) through the Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture Number 3 of 2020 concerning National Higher Education Standards [3]. One of the objectives of implementing this National Higher Education Standard is to minimize quality differences between universities spread throughout Indonesia. This strategic role is a challenge in structuring and managing higher education which has not been carried out according to *good university governance* standards as national higher education standards in general. [4]

Evidence shows that the application of National Higher Education Standards (SNPT) has not been evenly distributed in all universities in the country, so only a few of them have an international reputation. There are still wide disparities between universities in Indonesia [5]. The factual condition of quality disparity can mainly be seen in universities in Java Island and outside Java Island. The good quality universities are concentrated on the Java Island. The same condition happened with public universities and private universities. This happened because there is no synergy in university development [4]. This does not happen if each university is built through its pattern of comparative and competitive advantages which is reflected in the differentiation of vision and mission owned.

In terms of external factors, several indicators can be identified as an illustration of several university problems there are [4] : (1) the increasing public criticism of the quality of higher education as reflected in the higher education accreditation system, (2) the number of universities continues to grow but the gross enrollment rate (APK) is still low compared to other Asian countries, (3) the cost of higher education is increasing while the proportion of families who can pay the full tuition fees at universities is decreasing, (4) a major revolution in technology with its multi-complex problems that have a revolutionary impact on the teaching system so that it requires multitalented human resources, (5) the profit-making sector has entered the higher education market, (6) political and financial support for higher education is decreasing, and (7) the quality of college graduates is not in line with the demands of industry.

This situation requires a pattern of cooperation between universities in Indonesia to strengthen each other in increasing competitiveness, both at the national and global levels. This cooperation is very important to improving and equitable distribution of the quality of higher education in Indonesia. The education cooperation will provide opportunities for national higher education to improve each other's quality, expand access, and strengthen networks between universities. The cooperation will have an impact on expanding nationality for the academic community, especially students as the nation's young generation, increasing synergy, resource efficiency for learning and research, developing centers of excellence, improving quality standards between national universities, building joint capacity to improve national competitiveness, and strengthening the role of universities as national glues. All of this will support the success of educating the nation's life as mandated in the National Education System law.

To realize this goal, the Ministry of Education and Culture has issued four policies on Higher Education which are summarized in Merdeka Belajar and Kampus Program (MBKM); 1) The opening of new study programs, 2) higher education accreditation systems 3) legal entity state universities, and 4) opportunity to study three semesters outside the study program. MBKM was launched by the government as one of the facilities provided to students to prepare university graduates to be able to develop themselves and provide benefits to the progress of civilization and the interests of the nation according to the needs of the times [6]. To support the MBKM, especially the fulfillment of students' rights to be able to study outside the study program, the Directorate of Higher Education organizes the Merdeka Student Exchange Program. The Merdeka Student Exchange Program opens opportunities for students to take part in the learning process on campuses of any university campus in Indonesia as part of efforts to strengthen and expand their competencies.

In addition, through the Merdeka Student Exchange program, students are expected to increase their national insight, love for the motherland, and have an understanding of diversity and tolerance. Students will have an understanding of cultural diversity, customs, ethnicity, language, and various potential resource wealth and other potentials owned by the nation and state. Indonesia is a country that has a lot of diversity ranging from culture, religion, and ethnicity [7]. Understanding of diversity will be achieved through student exchanges between campuses, regions, and islands, through cooperation between universities throughout Indonesia.

Student exchanges are held to form several student attitudes contained in the regulation of the minister of education and culture (Permendikbud) Number 3 of 2020, namely respecting cultural diversity, views, religions, beliefs, and opinions or original findings of others, collaborating and having social sensitivity and concern for society and the environment. The objectives of student exchanges include: 1)

Learning across universities while living together, so that can improve the understanding of *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* 2) Building student friendship between regions, tribes, cultures, and religions to increase the spirit of unity, 3) Organizing knowledge transfer to cover educational disparities between universities.

Based on the explanation above, it is important to conduct an evaluation research on Merdeka student exchange programs. As a program, it is necessary to carry out a series of activities to see the achievement of goals which can be seen through a series of activities called evaluation, evaluation plays a role in determining value, Value can be determined after evaluating with a series of activities and supporting instruments [8]. Program evaluation is the process of systematically collecting data on descriptive information and assessment in making decisions. Many experts argue related to the notion of evaluation itself, but in general, define evaluation as an investigative process to collect and synthesize data to produce related conclusions about the value, benefits, and effectiveness of a program or policy [9] [10]. The results of this research can be used as one of the considerations for the program to be stopped, revised, continued, or disseminated.

## II. METHODS

This research is an evaluation research program. Program evaluation is an activity to collect information about the working of a program in which the information is used to determine alternatives that are appropriate in making decisions related to the program [11]. The program to be evaluated in this study is the Implementation of *Merdeka Student Exchange*. This study will use a goal-oriented evaluation model from Ralph W. Tyler. This evaluation model emphasizes program objectives that are a measure of the success of a program. There are seven steps in evaluating using a goal-oriented evaluation model including [12] :

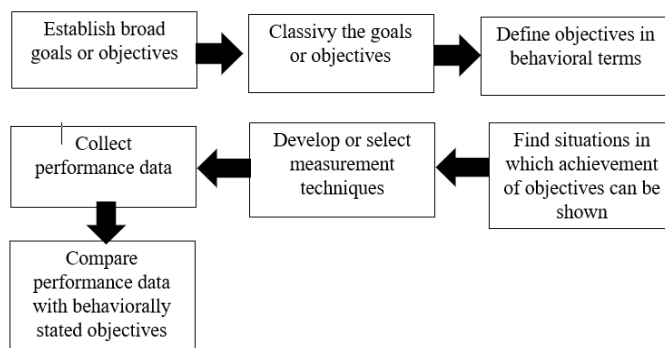


Fig. 1. Evaluating using a goal-oriented evaluation model

This research use qualitative research methods. Data collected through interviews, observations, and documentation. The data analysis procedure to be used in this study is the Miles and Huberman model. The data analysis

process consists of three stages: data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification[13] .

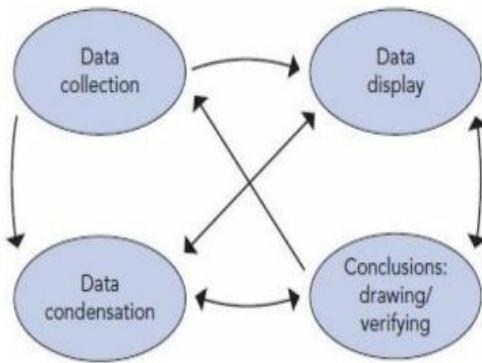


Fig. 2. Components of Interactive Model Data Analysis (Matthew B. Miles et al., 2014)

### III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

#### A. Result

The implementation of a policy, including the MBKM policy, requires high adaptability from the implementers and targets [14] . The intended adaptation is that the implementers and policy targets need to respond positively to the policy so that it can be implemented with high responsibility. Based on the operational guidebook [4] and the standard operating procedures for the Merdeka student exchange program owned by Yogyakarta State University show that the objectives of Merdeka student exchange are 1) Increasing national insight, integrity, solidarity, and national adhesive between students through intercultural learning, 2) Developing leadership and Adaptive soft skills to increase the value of unity and nationalism 3) Provide opportunities for students to get learning experiences at the recipient universities, and get credit recognition. 4) Strengthen and enrich student competencies. The requirements for students who can take part in this program are students at least in the third semester. For the basis of program implementation, and program implementation standards refer to the standard operational guidelines prepared [4]. The stages of implementation of Merdeka Student Exchange are:

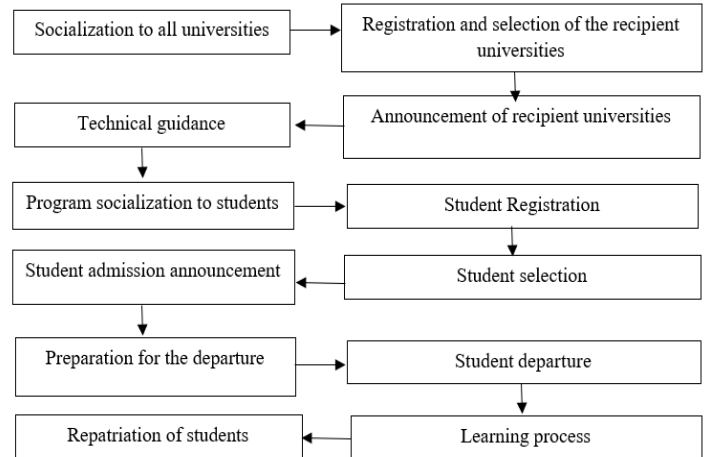


Fig. 3. The Process of implementation of Merdeka Student Exchange

Merdeka Student exchange provides an opportunity for Undergraduate students to study for one semester at the Recipient universities. The location of the recipient universities must different island from the home universities and the student's domicile. Merdeka Student exchange provides lecture options up to a maximum of 20 credits, which include mandatory activities in the Nusantara Module and courses offered by the Recipient universities. If necessary, students who meet the requirements are still given the opportunity to take up to a maximum of 6 credits at the Recipient universities. The recipient universities will carry out credit recognition procedures as regulated in the Decree of the Minister of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia Number 74/P/2021.

The implementation of the Merdeka Student Exchange program needs to be evaluated to determine the achievement of program implementation goals and measure the impact of the implementation of Merdeka Student Exchange in Yogyakarta State University. The results of this evaluation are important as a basis for improving program implementation in the coming year so that it can be more effective to ensure that the quality standards of the Merdeka Student Exchange program are maintained and the disparity in the quality of higher education can be minimized. Based on the results of interviews with 11 participants of Merdeka Student Exchange regarding the goals of Merdeka Student Exchange, are:

No	Purpose	Attainment	
		Yes	No
1	Increasing national insight, integrity, solidarity, and national adhesive between students through intercultural learning.	V	-
2	Developing leadership and Adaptive soft skills to increase the value of unity and nationalism	V	-
3	Provide opportunities for students to get learning experiences at the recipient universities, and get credit recognition.	V	-
4	Strengthen and enrich student competencies.	V	-

Based on the results of interviews with 11 Yogyakarta State University students, it shows that the four goals of the Merdeka student exchange program have been achieved.

### B. Discussion

First, Increasing national insight, integrity, solidarity, and national adhesive between students through intercultural learning. Based on the results of interviews involving 11 students who participated in student exchanges, they strongly agreed that Merdeka student exchanges were able to increase national insight, integrity, solidarity, and national adhesive between students through intercultural learning. They explained that Merdeka student exchanges can increase national insight through cultural visits carried out once a week to historical places or cultural centers. In addition, Merdeka student exchanges encourage to know Indonesia's diversity through cultural festival activities held at recipient universities. Indonesia is a country that has a lot of diversity, ranging from culture, religion, and ethnicity to beliefs [7]. With the visit activities carried out every week, automatically make students have an attitude of solidarity and shared ownership of cultural diversity in Indonesia.

This interaction trains students to be more adaptive in facing new environments outside their comfort zone, improves the ability to get along with people from various backgrounds, and allows students to form networks without geographical restrictions [15]. Studies of the impact felt by students on cultural differences in the classroom are widely discussed by several researchers. Glass and Westmont examined the impact of interaction between international and domestic students in a classroom. One of these impacts is the feeling of belonging between students who belong to two or more different cultures [16]. This research shows that academic discussions that occur in class and students' social activities will foster feelings of belonging.

Second, Developing leadership and adaptive soft skills to increase the value of unity and nationalism. The development of leadership is important to institutions of higher learning. Survey of American adults, 70 percent felt strongly that a core function of all colleges and universities should be to develop students as leaders [17]. Based on interviews, Merdeka

student exchange participants stated that they strongly agreed that the Merdeka student exchange program could be a medium for improving leadership soft skills and the ability to collaborate with others. Universities provide a unique opportunity for students to interact with seasoned professionals and learn from their peers [18]. This Program is hailed as an effective tool for imparting fundamental leadership concepts [19]. Competencies include general and role-specific knowledge and skills that a leader requires, including critical thinking, problem-solving, decision-making, inspiring others, and teamwork among other essential skills [20]. Some people believe that leaders are inherently born as such and do not require any formal education or training. However, Evidence suggests the importance of acquiring requisite skills and knowledge before assuming leadership roles. Besides that, reframing students' view of learning allows students to be more successful both inside and outside of the classroom with many activities in Merdeka Exchange programs. Lecturers can engage students in exploring the "why" behind assignments, and to do so using the principles from transformative learning theory including reflection, questioning assumptions, cognitive dissonance, and transformation of habits [21]. Regular interaction with the social community facilitates meaningful learning. The small group interactions provided a safe space to explore before committing ideas to paper. They also provided a space for peer support. These learning communities leverage students' experiences and allow for reflection and idea sharing. This paradigm can also prepare good leaders for the future.

Third, Provide opportunities for students to get learning experiences at the recipient universities and get credit recognition. The Merdeka Student Exchange Policy prioritizes active learning by developing creativity and innovation in problem-solving in the learning process [22]. The implementation of the Merdeka Student Exchange has proven to have a positive impact on student learning, students' hard and soft skills, and lecturer capacity [23]. Based on data from interviews, the facilities and infrastructure used in implementing the student exchange program are registration carried out directly on the Ministry of Education and Culture website without passing through the study program of each student's origin. So this makes it difficult to convert courses because the courses taken at the recipient university are not by the curriculum of the student's study program. This refers to the basic philosophy of independent learning, in addition to students being independent in choosing to study at various universities, students are also allowed to freely choose the desired topics, modules, or courses outside the student's study program.

Based on interviews, most students choose scientific knowledge that is related to their study program. This is possible because the education system that has been implemented in Indonesia has not accommodated opportunities to study outside certain fields of knowledge, so students experience doubts about taking topics outside their

study program which can be caused by disinterest in the modules offered, fear of learning new things that have not been mastered so that it can have an impact on the academic scores obtained. In addition, the main factor to consider in choosing courses is considering the conversion of courses in their home university. Based on the results of interviews with student exchange participants, it was stated that the original study program could not recognize courses outside the study program curriculum so the courses taken at the recipient university were only included in the diploma companion letter and could not be converted with courses from the home university.

Fourth, Strengthen and enrich student competencies. Merdeka student exchanges can improve academic competence and communication skills through opportunities to study courses outside their field of study. This is due to the role of universities as the primary driver in the preparation of creative human forces in society [24] [25]. The impact of higher education returns is visible in the workforce's creative knowledge and skills in many spheres of life. Thus, education investment is the ideal sort of investment if sufficient finances are available to fulfill the targeted aims while keeping up with global changes [26]. Higher education has become a key driver for the development of societies, whether through the formation and development of skills among their students to facilitate their integration into the labor market after graduating from university.

In addition, Merdeka student exchange is also equipped with non-academic competencies to answer social issues around. In addition to classroom learning activities, Merdeka student exchange activities have social service activities in the community with funding from LPDP. This social service activity is the final project carried out by all participants of the Merdeka student exchange. This program can improve students' problem-solving skills. This is the theory that a human being can face and overcome various problems that press and threaten him by using his knowledge [27]. Problem-solving in education comes from students' own experiences [28]. However, based on the results of the interview, participants experienced problems in terms of funding where the participants experienced delays in disbursing funds which resulted in less than optimal social service activities.

As a program with a very large scope, obstacles in implementation according to students are still found in many inadequate learning facilities at recipient universities. Yogyakarta State University is one of the best educational universities in Java, so when taking an exchange to a lower university there are differences in facilities. Digitalization in lectures also plays an important role in the process of scientific development. Digitalization has provided a more efficient way of knowledge sharing, allowing individuals to access and share information easily and quickly. This has enabled education to be more widespread and accessible to individuals worldwide, creating opportunities for people to improve students knowledge and skills [29] Institutions of

higher education have been at the forefront of digitalization, transforming the way instructors develop courses [30]. This is one of the things that need to be considered when choosing a destination university. Another obstacle faced is funding of the program [31]. Based on research found that the main problems faced by students as the target group in the MBKM policy were environmental adaptation and financial problems related to the cost of living as well as a lack of financial assistance from the university.

## IV. CONCLUSION

### A. Conclusion

Based on the results of the discussion, show that the goal of the student exchange program has been achieved, there are: 1) Increasing national insight, integrity, solidarity, and national adhesive between students through intercultural learning, 2) Developing leadership and Adaptive soft skills to increase the value of unity and nationalism 3) Provide opportunities for students to get learning experiences at the recipient universities, and get credit recognition. 4) Strengthen and enrich student competencies. However, the Merdeka Student Exchange Program has problems in socialization, facilities, course conversion, and financing.

### B. Recommendations

Based on the results of the study, researchers have recommendations to improve the Merdeka student exchange program in the future, 1). There must be socialization from universities and study programs related to the Merdeka student exchange program, 2). There must be adjustments to the curriculum of the study program with the recipient study program so that the courses taken by students can be converted easily without any problems. 3). There must be a system arrangement so that there are no delays in financing that result in constraints on Merdeka student exchange activities.

## V. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We would like to thank the LPDP scholarship which has funded participation in this international conference.

## REFERENCES

- [1] Pemerintah Indonesia, *Undang-Undang No. 20 Tahun 2003 Tentang Sistem Pendidikan Nasional*. Indonesia, 2003.
- [2] "UU Nomor 12 Tahun 2012".
- [3] "Permendikbud-Nomor-3-Tahun-2020".
- [4] D. Jenderal, P. Tinggi, K. Pendidikan, and D. Kebudayaan, "Buku Panduan Merdeka Belajar-Kampus Merdeka," 2020.
- [5] M. I. Mustofa, M. Chodzirin, L. Sayekti, and R. Fauzan, "Formulasi Model Perkuliahan Daring Sebagai Upaya Menekan Disparitas Kualitas Perguruan Tinggi," *Walisongo Journal of Information Technology*, vol. 1, no. 2, p. 151, Dec. 2019, doi: 10.21580/wjit.2019.1.2.4067. <https://doi.org/10.21580/wjit.2019.1.2.4067>

- [6] M. Zainudin and A. D. Utami, "Evaluasi Pertukaran Mahasiswa Merdeka Berbasis Mata Kuliah Menggunakan Double Smart," vol. 2, no. 4, pp. 10–21, 2021.  
<https://doi.org/10.56806/jh.v2i4.34>
- [7] I. N. Agustin, "Permasalahan Pendidikan Di Indonesia," *Prosiding Seminar Nasional - Jurusan Administrasi Pendidikan Fakultas Ilmu Pendidikan Universitas Negeri Malang Arah Manajemen Pada Masa Dan Pasca Pandemi Covid-19*, 2023.
- [8] S. Sopha and A. Nanni, "The cipp model: Applications in language program evaluation," *Journal of Asia TEFL*, vol. 16, no. 4, pp. 1360–1367, Dec. 2019, doi: 10.18823/asiatefl.2019.16.4.19.1360.  
<https://doi.org/10.18823/asiatefl.2019.16.4.19.1360>
- [9] D. M. Mertens, *Research and evaluation in education and psychology: integrating diversity with quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods*, 4th ed. California : SAGE Publications, Inc., 2015.
- [10] D. M. Fournier, *Encyclopedia of evaluation*. Thousand Oaks. CA: Sage, 2005.
- [11] Ambiyar and D M, *Program evaluation research methodology*. Alphabeta, 2019.
- [12] J. L. Fitzpatrick, J. R. Sanders, B. R. Worthen, and B. R. Worthen, *Program evaluation: alternative approaches and practical guidelines*.
- [13] M. B. Miles, A Michael Hubberman, and Johnny Saldana, *Qualitative Data Analysis\_A Methods Sourcebook ( PDFDrive )*, 3rd ed. United States of America: SAGE Publications, Inc., 2014.
- [14] Rochana dkk, "Pengaruh Implementasi Kebijakan Kampus Merdeka terhadap Minat dan Keterlibatan Mahasiswa," *Journal of Business Management Education (JBME) 6(3):11–21*, 2021.
- [15] A. Roy, A. Newman, and T. , & P. A. Ellenberger, "Outcomes of international student mobility programs: A systematic review and agenda for future research. Studies in Higher Education," <https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2018.1458222>. pp. 1630–1644, 2019.
- [16] C. M. Chris R. Glass, "Comparative effects of belongingness on the academic success and cross-cultural interactions of domestic and international students," *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, pp. 106–119, 2014.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2013.04.004>
- [17] T. A. Kolditz, L. Gill, and R. P. Brown, *Leadership Reckoning: Can Higher Education Develop the Leaders We Need?* Oklahoma City, OK, USA: Monocle Press, 2021.
- [18] H. Raza, A. Ali, N. Rafiq, L. Xing, T. Asif, and C. Jing, "Comparison of Higher Education in Pakistan and China: A Sustainable Development in Student's Perspective," *Sustainability (Switzerland)*, vol. 15, no. 5, Mar. 2023, doi: 10.3390/su15054327.  
<https://doi.org/10.3390/su15054327>
- [19] Chan M-K and et al, *Collaborating internationally on physician leadership development: why now?* Leadersh Health Serv, 2016.  
<https://doi.org/10.1108/LHS-12-2015-0050>
- [20] Grunberg NE and et al, "A conceptual framework for leader and leadership education and Development," *International Journal Leadership and Education*, pp. 44–50, 2019.
- [21] S. F. Odom et al., "Design Principles for Sustainable Leadership Learning: A Complex Analysis of Learner Experiences," *Sustainability (Switzerland)*, vol. 15, no. 17, Sep. 2023, doi: 10.3390/su151712996.  
<https://doi.org/10.3390/su151712996>
- [22] M. R. Baharuddin, "Adaptasi Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (Fokus: Model MBKM Program Studi)," *Jurnal Studi Guru dan Pembelajaran*, vol. 4, no. 1, pp. 195–205, Apr. 2021, doi: 10.30605/jsgp.4.1.2021.591.  
<https://doi.org/10.30605/jsgp.4.1.2021.591>
- [23] I. N. Hapsari et al., "Peninjauan Implementasi Kebijakan Merdeka Belajar-Kampus Merdeka Berdasarkan Perspektif Dosen pada Program Studi Teknik Informatika Universitas Esa Unggul," 2021.
- [24] G. Ocak and A. Yamaç, "Examination of the relationships between fifth graders' self-regulated learning strategies, motivational beliefs, attitudes, and achievement," *Kuram ve Uygulamada Egitim Bilimleri*, vol. 13, no. 1, vol. 13, no. 1, 2013.
- [25] S. Li and J. Zheng, "The Relationship Between Self-efficacy and Self-regulated Learning in One-to-One Computing Environment: The Mediated Role of Task Values," *The Asia-Pacific Education Researcher*, vol. 27, no. 6, pp. 455–463, 2018.  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s40299-018-0405-2>
- [26] B. J. Zimmerman and A. R. Moylan, *Self-Regulation: Where Metacognition and Motivation Intersect*. New York: Routledge, 2009.
- [27] H. Suparlan, "Filsafat Pendidikan Ki Hadjar Dewantara Dan Sumbangannya Bagi Pendidikan Indonesia.," 2016.  
<https://doi.org/10.22146/jf.12614>
- [28] Tabrani Za, "Sistem Pendidikan di Indonesia-Antara Solusi dan Ilusi," n at: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/318587807>, 2017.
- [29] B. Bygstad, E. Øvreid, S. Ludvigsen, and M. Dæhlen, "From dual digitalization to digital learning space: Exploring the digital transformation of higher education," *Comput Educ*, vol. 182, Jun. 2022, doi: 10.1016/j.compedu.2022.104463.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compedu.2022.104463>
- [30] X. Huang, H. Li, L. Huang, and T. Jiang, "Research on the development and innovation of online education based on digital knowledge sharing community," *BMC Psychol*, vol. 11, no. 1, Dec. 2023, doi: 10.1186/s40359-023-01337-6.  
<https://doi.org/10.1186/s40359-023-01337-6>
- [31] N. Safrida, "Indonesian Journal of Teaching and Teacher Education Implementasi Kampus Merdeka: Implikasi pada Mahasiswa Perguruan Tinggi Negeri di Aceh Barat," *INDONESIAN JOURNAL OF TEACHING AND TEACHER EDUCATION*, vol. 1, no. 1, 2021, doi: 10.35308/xxxxx.  
<https://doi.org/10.58835/ijtte.v1i1.62>

## Biography



Nurokhmah, from Yogyakarta State University, Indonesia with an educational research and evaluation study program. The publications that have been carried out include proceedings at various international conferences and national journal publications. The last publication carried out was at The 5th International Conference of Current Issues in Education (ICCIE) 2023. The researcher's previous achievements are be the part of the outstanding students in the faculty of social sciences, Yogyakarta state university and an awardee of LPDP scholarship.