

# Revisiting the EFL Curriculum in the Outcome-Based Education Framework and Freedom Learning

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## English language teaching

### Revisiting the EFL Curriculum in the Outcome-Based Education Framework and Freedom Learning

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#### Abstract

Three dimensions are evaluated in this study: process of developing the curriculum, course distribution to serve quality assurance, and development of courses for Merdeka Belajar (Freedom to Learn) program. This study used a content analysis design and qualitative data analysis. Curriculum documents and papers presented in the Focus Group Dicredit semestersion were data sources for this study. The study included 42 FGD participants. They came from Indonesian public and Islamic universities. The data were thematically analyzed. There are three types of findings. Initial curriculum development focused on Competency-Based Curriculum and Outcome Based Education. Not all learning outcomes and course mapping match the backward design curriculum. Second, the OBE KKNI should be built on the skill and knowledge cluster to properly assess course learning outcomes. Also, the 144-credit course distribution should allow the undergraduate program to be completed in 7 semesters. Third, curriculum developers can divide 40 credits for Merdeka Belajar courses and 104 credits for regular courses. Conversion of credits can be achieved by assigning equal courses in the same semester, combining skripsi with fieldwork, or publishing skripsi in a journal.

**Keywords:** learning outcomes, outcome-based education, competence-based curriculum, freedom to learn, backward design curriculum.

#### 1. Introduction

The purpose of this article is to revisit the English curriculum in the context of Indonesian national qualification framework (*Kerangka Kualifikasi Nasional Indonesia* henceforth, **KKNI**) in Indonesian higher education, with a particular emphasis on four erroneous perceptions about the curriculum. To begin, KKNI has been positioned as a new curriculum model that is aligned with Outcome-Based Education (OBE) (Hejazi, 2011), but its implementation falls short of the OBE concept (Spady, 1994). Second, KKNI was developed using a backward design curriculum model (Richards, 2012) and has since lost its roots as a result of adaptation to an unestablished curriculum development theory (Solikhah & Budiharso, 2020). Third, KKNI as a curriculum model

has placed a greater emphasis on outcome formulation (Mendiknas, 2010) referred to as learning outcomes, resulting in an inadequate and incorrect handling of its curriculum dimension (Budiharso & Tarman, 2019; Bonk & Graham, 2006; Driscoll, 2002). Fourth, while KKNi policy as a curriculum has entered the realm of public policy (Dye, 2017), which is inextricably linked to policy analysis (Dunn, 2018), its implementation is more closely tied to political policy (OECD, 2006; Satoshi, Ismael & Takuya, 2021; Solikhah, 2015a).

However, the dicredit semestersion of curriculum at the level of policy theories and law application conducted by Munadi (2020) is more dominantly presented. Munadi (2020) describes the KKNi's functions in quality control, course distribution, and cooperation patterns. Table 1 shows Munadi's (2020) course distribution.

Table 1. Redesign of Courses Distribution for Merdeka Belajar (Munadi, 2020).

No	Type of Courses	Semester Credit Unit
1	University Obligatory Course	31
2	University Optional Course	2 (Choose 2 of 6 Semester Credit Units)
3	Faculty Obligatory Course	4
4	Faculty Optional Course	2 (Choose 2 out of 6 Semester Credit Units)
5	Study Program Obligatory Course	44 Semester Credit Units
6	Study Program Optional Course	6 (Choose 4 or 6 of 10 Semester Credit Units)
7	Merdeka Belajar (in Campus)	20 Semester Credit Units
8	Merdeka Belajar (offered through e-learning)	9 Semester Credit Units
9	Merdeka Belajar (Out of Campus)	23 Semester Credit Units
10	Merdeka Belajar (Out of Campus)	4 (Choose 4 of 16 Semester Credit Units)
		145

Munadi (2020) describes his description as re-constructing the curriculum of the Courses distribution amounts to 145 Credit semester for undergraduate (S1) program. However, the proposal shows that KKNi study is limited to theories and norms. Backward design, OBE, and curriculum dimension are not adequately dicredit semestersed. There is a regional perspective in the terms University, Faculty, and optional. KKNi as a curriculum should have global reach and standards. Courses for *Merdeka Belajar* off-campus with 23 Semester Credit Units should also be highlighted. The *Merdeka Belajar* guide suggests taking 20-40 Credit semester out of campus (Mendikbud, 2020a, 2020b). The ontological basis of 23 Credit semester should be re-examined. Most importantly, 30.4% of the Study Program credits for 44 Credit semester are science courses, that is only 30% of graduate science competencies. These studies show that the proposed curriculum engineering is not feasible.

An emphasis on administrative aspects is common when teaching KKNi in an applied context. In the view of Tyler (1949), Richards (2013), and Spady (1994), the attainment of the curriculum dimension is not adequately addressed. Inconsistencies in curriculum development have been found by Depdiknas (2010). For developing a curriculum for Higher Education, KKNi is used as a model and the curriculum is referred to as the Higher Education curriculum (Depdiknas, 2010). Learning outcomes are used to develop the curriculum in higher education, and the course group and teaching materials

studied are set in a matrix used to determine the curriculum (Depdiknas, 2003). Backward design (Richards, 2013) refers to this pattern, but the government does not indicate that KKNi as a curriculum that is actually developed on the basis of this model (William, Siwen & Richard, 2021; Richards, 2013; Solikhah, 2015b). Furthermore, a number of countries around the world have incorporated the OBE into their National Qualifications Framework. By including the OBE as a basis for curriculum development, Mendikbud (2020a) issued an updated curriculum guideline. According to the government's condition, KKNi as a curriculum refers to OBE and backward design curriculum. The KKNi curriculum has lost its theoretical roots in the development of the curriculum.

KKNi is not a curriculum model (Solikhah, 2020). KKNi is a competency qualification framework that can juxtapose, equalize, and integrate education and work training and experience to recognize work competency in various sectors (Permendikbud No. 49 Year of 2014; Spady, 1994; Solikhah, 2015a; 2015b). The KKNi is governed by Presidential Regulation No. 8 Year 2021 and Ministerial Regulation No. 49 Year 2014 Regarding National Standards for Higher Education. The Minister of Education and Culture stated that KKNi is a reference for curriculum development, not a model. The KKNi covers formal or informal learning outcomes with internationally recognized standards.

The KKNi curriculum was examined in terms of contexts of content and implementation in Courses. Four research findings are reviewed here to highlight research gaps and novelties.

Idris, Tabrani, Fikri & Murziqin (2020) studied at LPTK UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta. This study described the KKNi curriculum, its application, and its curriculum. It emphasized curriculum document study. The findings are based on a review of KKNi curriculum theories, not a critical analysis of curriculum content. None of the KKNi curriculum's application to OBE is evaluated critically. A Study of the Development of KKNi-Based Curriculum in Arabic Language Education Programs in Indonesian Higher Education was conducted by Muhammad & Ariani (2020). More than 5,000 Indonesian students participated in the study, which took place at five state Islamic universities. Results show the KKNi aspects were highlighted in terms of implementation, LO formulation, and program suitability with the Graduate Learning Outcomes (GLO). GLO and Course distribution were not examined critically in the development of the KKNi curriculum. The KKNi, Competency-Based Curriculum and OBE are not defined in this study.

<sup>12</sup> In Medan, Neliwati, Marbun & Mahariah (2020) studied The Implementation of KKNi in Islamic Education Study Program at the Islamic Higher Education. The research findings describe the KKNi in curriculum theories. No critical analysis of the KKNi's curriculum and learning theories is done. Lastly, Solikhah & Budiharso (2019) conducted a research with the title of Investigating the learning outcomes of an INQF-Based English language teaching Curriculum in Indonesia. In general, this research examined the KKNi curriculum on the basis of the Competency-Based Curriculum theories and studied the Course distribution in the KKNi curriculum. This research has discredited semesters the CBC KKNi but it has not explored the KKNi curriculum viewed from the OBE. Finally, Solikhah & Budiharso (2019) investigated the outcomes of an INQF-based English language teaching curriculum in Indonesia. In general, this research

examined the KKNi curriculum using Competency-Based Curriculum theories, and the KKNi curriculum's course distribution. This study focused on the CBC KKNi, but not the OBE KKNi curriculum.

A lack of theoretical basis for curriculum formulation was highlighted by the four researchers who examined the KKNi curriculum. In order to address the shortcomings of previous studies, the gaps are being used as a research focus. As a result, the theories developed in this study, such as backward curriculum design and OBE-based curriculum development, are novel. Methodologically, this study is novel in that it uses Focus Group Diredit semesterson and content analysis to collect data. As a result of this study, the Merdeka Belajar curriculum development process and Merdeka Belajar curriculum preparation are novel.

There has been some deviation and misinterpretation of the KKNi curriculum as it relates to backward design curriculum theory and the OBE education model. This is made worse by the Merdeka Belajar curriculum, whose reference is also OBE, which draws more attention to the KKNi-based curriculum and the Belajar Merdeka curriculum. This study shows a theoretical gap between backward design curriculum, OBE, and KKNi. In terms of policy, researchers and educators place more emphasis on normative aspects based on regulations than on mastery of field-based practices.

### 1.1. Research Questions

On the basis of the previous research studies and findings of gaps of the prior researches, three research questions were sought to answer.

- 1) What problem is found in the process of preparing the CBC KKNi into the OBE KKNi the Teacher Study Programs encountered in Indonesia?
- 2) How does the Courses distribution in the KKNi guarantee the graduates' graduation period and science quality?
- 3) How are the curriculum materials for Merdeka Belajar integrated into the OBE KKNi curriculum by the Teacher Study Programs in Indonesia?

## 2. Theoretical Review

### 2.1. KKNi

A qualification framework is a part of a country's greatest education and training system. In a qualification system, all structures and activities leading to qualification are included (Cedefop, 2013). A qualification framework is a set of learning outcomes agreed upon by countries in a region. A national qualification framework compares a country's qualification to other countries (Cedefop, 2017; The European Center for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP)). Tuck (2007) defined a qualification framework as a tool for developing and classifying qualifications based on learning levels. It is either implicit in qualification descriptors or explicit in level descriptors. In a country or internationally, a qualification framework is meant to improve transparency, quality, accessibility, relationship, and public recognition or labor market.

The Qualification Framework is developed globally. In Indonesia, it is known as KKNi. It is a concept of mapping the competency qualification of Indonesian workers based on Presidential Regulation No. 8 of 2012. This concept creates equal labor ability in Indonesia. The ability can be acquired through education, self-education, industry, or profession (Depdiknas, 2010).

The KKNI is a general reference to how one's qualifications are recognized in the workplace. Depdiknas (2010:4) stated that Indonesia urgently needs a KKNI because global challenges and competitions in the national or international labor markets are more **open**. Protective regulations can no longer stop labor migration from and to Indonesia. To juxtapose, equalize, and integrate the fields of education and job training in accordance with job structures in various sectors (Presidential Regulation No. 8 Year 2012 Article 1 Verse (1)). Presidential Regulation No. 8 Year of 2012), defines 9 levels of KKNI, namely:

- 1) Levels 1-3 are operators graduated from Elementary School, Junior High School and Senior High Schools.
- 2) Levels 4-6 are Technicians or Analysts graduated from D1, D2, D3, D4 and S1 programs.
- 3) Level 7 is an expert graduated from professional education.
- 4) Level 8 is an expert graduated from Master or Specialist 1 program.
- 5) Level 9 is an expert graduate from Doctoral or Specialist 2 program.

Conceptually, the KKNI divides each level of qualification into four categories: (1) work skills; (2) scope of science (knowledge); (3) methods and levels of application of science; and (4) managerial ability (Depdiknas, 2003; 2010:18). "Learning outcomes" refers to the internalization and accumulation of the four parameters that should be achieved through a structured education process or through employment (Depdiknas, 2010b:19).

## **2.2. Brief View on the Development of LPTK Curriculum**

Curriculum in Indonesia is divided into five broad categories. The following are the five types of curriculum that Solikhah (2015) outlined. To begin with, the pre-1970 materials covered (1) nationalism, (2) pedagogy, (3) general psychology, and (4) didactic-methodical method, (5) fields of study taught, (6) teaching practices. First of all, the LPTK (Institutes of Teachers' Education) curriculum adopted an integrated system between academic education and the teaching profession during the 1970s and 1990s. Each course was assigned a number, such as 1, 2, 3, or 4, depending on its level of difficulty. There was also a course on the teaching-learning process. Third, the Content-Based Curriculum era spanned from 1994 to 2000. Courses were divided into two categories: the Main Expertise Course and the Minor Expertise Course (post secondary subject matter). General Basic Courses, Specific Basic Courses, Expertise Courses I and II, and Expertise Courses III and IV make up the course distribution.

Fourth, from 2000 to 2005, Content-Based Curriculum was improved. The Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) was developed in 2000 following the Minister of Education's Decision Letters 232/U/2000 and 045/U/2002. These include Main Competencies, Supporting Competencies, and Other Competencies. The courses are divided into five categories: personal development, science and skills, work behavior, work expertise, and social life. Fifth, the KKNI-based curriculum was adopted in 2013. This era is also known as the OBE era, and curriculum development followed a backward design approach. Thematic Curriculum with Scientific Approach was used in the elementary, junior high, and high schools. The Higher Education curriculum refers to work competencies accepted by national and international markets. A Curriculum Referring to the KKNI is one that refers to this qualification. The Ministry of Education

and Culture's KKNi-based Curriculum shows diametral differences between the 2019 and 2020 versions. The KKNi Curriculum prior to 2019 used the CBC, while the 2020 version uses the OBE. For simplicity, this research refers to the 2019 curriculum as CBC KKNi and the 2020 OBE KKNi as the new KKNi curriculum.

### 2.3. Outcome Based Education

William G. Spady (1984), an academician, educational psychologist, sociologist, educational planner, and the father of OBE, introduced OBE for the first time in 1984. As of 2017, OBE was signed by the following countries: Australia Canada Taiwan Hong Kong India Ireland Japan Korea Malaysia New Zealand Russia Singapore Singapore South Africa Sri Lanka Turkey China England England Pakistan (Washington Accord, 2012; Gleason, 2018). Table 2 indicates countries that ratify the application of OBE.

Table 2. Countries to implement OBE

No	Year	Country
1	1984	First issue of OBE by Prof. William G. Spady
2	1989	Australia, Canada, Ireland, New Zealand, England, USA
3	1995	China
4	1999	South Africa
5	2005	Japan
6	2006	Singapore
7	2007	South Korea
8	2009	Malaysia
9	2011	Turkey
10	2012	Russia
11	2021	Indonesia

OBE is a teaching method that focuses on what students can do after they are taught (Spady, 1994). OBE differs from traditional education in three ways: educational theories, educational structure, and instructional approaches (Killen, 2007). The terms "competency," "standard," and "benchmark" are interchangeable in this model (Uys, et. al., 2005; Bonk & Graham, 2006). OBE focuses on life skills, basic skills, professional and vocational skills, intellectual skills, and personal skills (Meyer, et. al., 2008). The outcomes of OBE should be evident from students' learning outcomes that reflect: (1) what students know, (2) what they can do with their knowledge, and (3) their confidence and motivation in demonstrating their knowledge (Guskey, 1994).

The Minister of Education and Culture (2020a) explained that the OBE-based curriculum is developed in three steps: OBC (outcome based curriculum), OBLT (outcome based assessment and evaluation (OBAE)). OBE is based on GLO and profiles. To develop learning materials, assessment and evaluation tools that is based on the GLO is derived (Mendikbud, 2020a, Birney & McNamara, 2021). OBLT is the interaction of lecturers, students, and learning sources. One of the key principles of OBLT is that students should choose learning forms and methods that align with the Graduate Learning Outcomes. OBAE is a method of assessing and evaluating Graduate Learning Outcomes to improve learning quality. Assessment is done in the learning process and in the GLO results. It is also used in curriculum evaluation to achieve GLO of Study Programs (Mendikbud, 2020a).

## **Merdeka Belajar**

To change the educational literacy paradigm in this digital age, Indonesian Minister of Education and Culture, Nadiem Makarim has implemented *Merdeka Belajar* (Freedom to Learn). Makarim (2019) defines digital age literacy into the mastery of (1) data literacy, or the ability to read, analyze, and use data (big data), (2) technology literacy, understanding coding, AI, and engineering principles, and (3) strengthening humanity, communication, and design. Students and teachers can conduct various literacy activities (Gleason, 2018). “*Merdeka Belajar*” focuses on developing students' cognitive abilities. Students are challenged to think critically and analyze well in order to solve problems (Yamin & Syahrir, 2020).

According to Makarim (2019), educational institutions need not only traditional literacy skills like reading, writing, and counting, but also digital literacy. This viewpoint is in line with autonomous learning and blended learning. According to Gleason (2018), digital literacy should be encouraged in the era of Industrial Revolution 4.0. Teachers, principals, and educational institutions direct, lead, and dig out students' potential and critical power in the era of Industrial Revolution 4.0. (Siobhan, 2021). An educational ecosystem is created to foster students' reasoning, character, creativity, independence, comfort, and expertise (Bonk & Graham, 2006; Driscoll, 2002). *Merdeka Belajar* moves from Elementary to High School (Yamin & Syahrir, 2020).

Mendikbud (2020a) emphasizes *Merdeka Belajar* in Higher Education promotes students to master various sciences useful in the workplace. Students can choose their courses from 8 types of programs: (1) Industrial Practices or Internships, (2) Village Projects, (3) Student Exchange, (4) Research, (5) Entrepreneurship, (6) Humanitarian, (7) Projects, and (8) School Teaching.

This policy is in line with the Minister of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia's Regulation No. 3 Year 2020 Regarding National Education Standards, Verse 18. Students have “three semesters to study off-campus” rights. For three semesters, undergraduate (S1) students can participate in non-course learning activities. The term “learning hour” is replaced by “activity hour”. All activities in Kampus Merdeka must be lectured. Activities outside of Higher Education (like apprenticeships or village projects) can be taken for two semesters or 40 Credit semester. For two semesters, students can take semester credit units elsewhere (to be equivalent with 40 semester credit units). In the same Higher Education, they may take credit semesters in other study programs (to be equivalent with 20 Credit semester).

## **3. Methods**

### **3.1. Design**

This study used a content analysis design (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005) and a qualitative approach (Cresswell, 2014). The research issues were as follows: (1) the process of designing Graduate Learning Outcomes, Learning Outcomes, and Course distribution in the curriculum, (2) differences between CBC KKNi and OBE KKNi in terms of content and implementation of curriculum formulation, and (3) designing the *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum and problems in preparing proper Courses. As a content analysis design, this study focused on documents in the form of FGD results containing discredit semestersion of problems in the KKNi-based Curriculum and the KKNi curriculum document. Because the data analyzed were



information, argumentation, facts, and narration on the content of the KKNI curriculum, a qualitative approach was used (Cresswell, 2014; Yin, 2014). This study was carried out using Zoom, which was hosted by the University of Bandar Lampung, which was designated as the Merdeka Belajar's implementing university.

### 3.2. Data and Data Source

In this study, the most important data came from a focus group dicredit semestersion (FGD) about the Merdeka Belajar curriculum that took place in the fall. The FGD was held with people from all over the country who were studying at the Teacher Training Faculty. FGD results were used to show how people thought about the KKNI-based curriculum, how to write GLO, distribute courses in study programs, write LO, develop Courses Matrix, implement Merdeka Belajar on campus, implement Merdeka Belajar off-campus, and write KKNI in Merdeka Belajar. A report on the results of the FGD, a recording, and field notes all talked about how the FGD data came from. Documents in the form of articles about the Merdeka Belajar curriculum written by people who were knowledgeable about the subject were used in this study. They also included the course distribution for Merdeka Belajar, the transcripts of the FGD, the guide to making a curriculum for Higher Education, and the course distribution in English language education and Indonesian language curriculum.

### 3.3. Participant

The participants included 42 lecturers from all over Indonesia who were serving as FGD participants. There were 2 resource persons (4.8%) and 40 participant<sup>16</sup>. The participants consisted of 14 men (33.3%) and 26 women (61.9%). The participants were chosen using a purposive sampling technique based on their availability during the Virtual FGD. All participants were lecturers from the following universities: (1) Islamic State Institute Surakarta, (2) University of Lampung, (3) University of Mulawarman Samarinda, (4) Pontianak Islamic State Institute (5) Palembang Islamic State Institute (6) Parepare Islamic State Institute, (7) Cirebon Islamic State Institute, (8) Bandarlampung University, (9), University of Lambung Mangkurat, (10) University of Jendral Soedirman, (11) University of Sanata Dharma, (12) University of Jambi, (13) Islamic University Raden Intan, (15) Islamic University NU Jepara, and (16) University of Veteran Bangun Nusantara Sukoharjo. The main speaker came from the Islamic State Institute Surakarta, and the University of Sanata Dharma Yogyakarta.

### 3.4. Research Instrum<sup>18</sup>

The instrument to collect data in this study was a list of questions developed by the researchers in the form of 8 items of the open-ended questions. The 8 items were: (1) understanding about the CBC KKNI and OBE KKNI, (2) the process and obstacles in formulating Graduate Learning Outcomes, and Learning Outcomes, (3) the Course distribution in the curriculum document, (4) Grouping the fields of science in the Courses, (5) the stages in developing the curriculum using the OBE KKNI, (6) the problems in preparing the curriculum for Merdeka Belajar, (7) the problems in preparing the courses for Program Belajar out of campus, and (8) problems of conversing courses when students join lectures out of campus. Before the questions were prepared, the researchers first dicredit semestersed them with the manager of the Merdeka Belajar

Program in the University of Bandar Lampung, the director of the Merdeka Belajar program and the lecturers in General Higher Education and Islamic Religious Higher Education. The list of questions was then limitedly tried out through interviews with 3 lecturers in Islamic State Institute Surakarta. The results of the tryout were used to improve the items in three things. The questions dealing with CBC KKNi and OBE KKNi were sharpened, the scope of the question was more developed, and the problems dug out were more specific. Moreover, the researcher also wrote the transcripts of interviews and analyzed the results of the interviews using a content analysis technique according to theories proposed by Zhang & Wildemuth (2009) and Hsieh & Shannon (2005). As a whole, the researcher also adapted the qualitative research theory presented by Cresswell (2014) and Yin (2014).

### 3.5. Data Collection Technique

The FGD and an in-depth interview technique were used to gather the primary data. There were 40 participants in total, divided into 8 groups of five each. The FGD committee and virtual IT helped the researcher ask open-ended questions to each group. Two minutes were allotted to each group to discredit semesters the answers to the questions they were given. Other groups were able to see the answers and respond openly. The committee team took notes on every discredit semestersion and response. It took each group 15-20 minutes to adapt to this new method. Verbatim transcriptions were made at the end of the session of all recordings containing verbal dialogues between one group and the others (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009; Hsieh & Shannon (2005), and the transcription results were recapitulated and treated as documents to be analyzed (Cresswell, 2014).

The secondary data from curriculum texts, the Higher Education Curriculum Arrangement, and KKNi curriculum documents were analyzed in three stages. First, we scanned each document for KKNi-related themes. Second, we identified themes and units of analysis in each document that matched the current research's focus. Third, we inventoried the themes and units of analysis in each document and summarized them to present them in accordance with the research questions.

### 3.6. Data Analysis Technique

For this study, a content analysis approach was used, as was a qualitative method of data analysis. Based on Zhang and Wildemuth (2009) content analysis theory, we used transcripts of FGD results to identify themes and units of analysis. Following Cresswell (2013) the qualitative data analysis went through five stages: (1) converting numerical and textual information into narrative data; (2) creating an analysis-specific coding system guide; (3) implementing the coding system; (4) verifying its accuracy and correctness, and (5) selecting the final data (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Cresswell, 2014; Yin, 2014). There were three categories of themes that emerged from the analysis, namely: (1) the themes and units of analysis on the processes of preparing graduate learning outcomes and the learning outcomes, and the distribution of courses in the curriculum; (2) the differences between the OBE and KKNi in terms of

curriculum formulation; and (3) preparation for Merdeka Belajar, which was based on the findings of the analysis of research problems. Further, the first research question determine the process of preparing the GLO, LO, and Course distribution in terms of themes and the units of analysis from which the answers were obtained. The second theme group was used to determine the second research question, which focused on the differences between the KKNi and the OBE. The third research question, which concerned the Merdeka Belajar curriculum, was addressed using the third theme group (Cresswell, 2014; Yin, 2014).

#### 4. Results And Dicredit semesterion

##### 4.1. Curriculum Arrangement Process

The first finding of this research was the process of OBE curriculum arrangement. The answer to the first research question was 9 themes of KKNi curriculum arrangement below:

- 1) The KKNi-based curriculum had diametral changes between the CBC KKNi and the 2020 OBE KKNi due to the orientation of the educational theory.
- 2) As the change in the 2013 curriculum occurred, the designation of KKNi also changed into CBC KKNi and 2020 OBE KKNi.
- 3) The CBC KKNi refers to the faculty Learning Outcomes but what is formulated was special Learning Outcomes Courses.
- 4) The general and special Graduate Learning Outcomes in the CBC KKNi were incoherent since the Courses distribution was diametrically different.
- 5) The Courses Learning Outcomes and the CBC KKNi were difficult to be formulated in an integrated way since the matrix of the type and the goal of the Courses was categorically different.
- 6) The 2020 OBE KKNi determines the GLO and the LO (Learning Outcomes) on the basis of the stages of the curriculum development (OBC), the success in the outcomes (OBLT) and the assessment results (OBAEI).
- 7) The 2020 OBE KKNi specifies the stages of the curriculum development (OBC) on the basis of the LO and the GLO.
- 8) The 2020 OBE KKNi made some curriculum improvement (OBLT) based on the Learning Outcomes and the Graduate Learning Outcomes that have been reached.
- 9) The 2020 OBE KKNi determines the quality assurance (OBAEI) through assessments and evaluation of the LO and the GLO.

The findings above indicate that participants were unaware that there had been changes in the orientation and scientific foundation of the old KKNi and the 2020 KKNi versions. The distinctions were discovered in the theoretical foundations upon which the curriculum was developed. The previous KKNi curriculum was based on the CBC model, and the 2020 KKNi curriculum is based on the OBE model. As a result, participants proposed that the KKNi curriculum be classified as CBC KKNi for the old KKNi and 2020 OBE KKNi for the new KKNi curriculum version. The year 2020 refers to the designation of the 2013 Curriculum as the year of curriculum change. According to the Head of the Mathematics Education Study Program:

- (1) “We are not aware of the change in the orientation from the CBC into the OBE. We just see the curriculum format and its development. What we emphasize is the preparation of the Graduate Learning Outcomes and the Learning Outcomes,” (DD-26-R-20-T-1).

The change had no impact on the Study Program's formulation of Learning Outcomes. Learning Outcomes according to the CBC and OBE KKNi changed fundamentally. The CBC KKNi LO focused on institutional Learning Outcomes. The Learning Outcomes should be based on knowledge distribution and should refer to the course LO. A participant in the FGD confirmed a head of Islamic Religion study program (2).

- (2) “What I know is that there are three Learning Outcomes. An institutional Learning Outcomes to assert the university goal; faculty Learning Outcomes to show the outcomes that would be reached by the faculty and course learning outcomes to show the scientific target. The problem is that the the guide for the CBC KKNi merely leads to the faculty Learning Outcomes.” (D-13-R-34-T-1).

The problem in developing the KKNi curriculum, according to the participants, was threefold: (1) the LO developed were led to the faculty Learning Outcomes, (2) the discourse LO were not developed, and (3) the approach to preparing matrix-based courses made the GLO are not coherent with the faculty Learning Outcomes. The emergence of the OBE KKNi curriculum paradigm results in different categories that result in document reconstruction. One of the FGD participants expressed his opinion in data (3).

- (3) “Clearly, the curriculum structure should be completely changed. In the OBE KKNi, there is an obligation to prepare a curriculum based on Graduate Learning Outcomes, Graduate Learning Outcomes and the evaluation results of the Graduate Learning Outcomes. Indeed, the OB KKNi is rather flexible in preparing the Course distribution, but we have seen how it was practiced. Many Higher Educations have applied this curriculum for tens of years, and it is successful, for example State University of Malang (UM). Although there is a new curriculum, it is impossible for us to change the Courses structure into new courses. What might we do is merely to reorganize it by adding or reducing its contents.” (D-12-R-4-T1)

Until now, the KKNi curriculum has been prepared only when a study program has been accredited. “Well-planned changes based on curriculum evaluation are not implemented” (D-4-R-2-T1). Moreover, the curriculum revision process is not accompanied by a theoretical workshop. “We were asked to review the curriculum. In the field, we fill out a check list and present our findings” (D-31-R-5-T-1).

The theoretical basis for the CBC KKNi and the OBE KKNi has been oriented as described above. Neither program directors nor lecturers in higher education were aware of the change. The change included the GLO, LO, and Courses distribution based on the difficult matrix.

#### 4.2. Theme 2: Science Courses as Quality Insurance

The second finding of the substance of the CBC KKNi and OBE KKNi is used to answer the second problem formulation. The themes found in the FGD included:

- 1) The CBC KKNi and the 2020 OBE KKNi did not determine the Course matrix based on the study program knowledge cluster.
- 2) The formulation of the study of teaching materials to become courses among the same study programs substantially and categorically is different.
- 3) The number of 144 Credit semester has not been explicitly formulated so that it can be completed in 7 semesters and 8 semester in average.
- 4) A Grouping of university, faculty and study program occurs diametrically due to understanding of concepts and authorities.
- 5) A course cluster does not refer to the clear fields of science and responsibility so that the weight of study contents are difficult to meet quality assurance.
- 6) The Courses cluster proposed for the English Education study program is as follows: Nationalism course, basic English skills, linguistics, teaching, curriculum and scientific development.
- 7) The guarantee of success for the English knowledge cluster of at least 60% is poured into basic English skills, language knowledge and English teaching.

With this in mind, it can be concluded that KKNi curriculum content development has been hindered by the lack of knowledge clusters in the courses. As an example, the English Language Education program has a knowledge cluster that includes: (1) nationalism development courses such as Indonesian, Citizenship, and Religion; (2) basic English skills; (3) language teaching; (4) curriculum development and research; and (5) linguistics, among others. Knowledge cluster development is expected to make it easier to formulate courses LOs and thus GLOs according to participants of the FGD. In accordance with the previous finding, 144 Credit semester must be the minimum number of credits required for the undergraduate program. Students are possible to complete their undergraduate degree in at least seven semesters, if the curriculum documents legally rules it. Consequently, a clear hierarchy and set of rules should be established for distributing courses and organizing knowledge clusters. Participants in the focus group, including the director of the English Language Education program, all agreed:

- (4) “The Regulation of the Minister of the National Education of the Republic of Indonesia allows smart students to complete their undergraduate program in 7 semesters. However, the Courses distribution in our curriculum still determines 8 semesters to complete the final task So, no legal foundation exists that students may complete their undergraduate program in 7 semesters. If there are students who graduate in 7 semesters, the graduation is incidental,” (D-19-R-16-T-2).

According to this research, the distribution of courses that support the final task, such as research method and data analysis, proposal writing, and science courses like curriculum and teaching materials development should be set early in the semester. “A research course usually hinders the writing of a skripsi. These courses should be scheduled earlier,

like in Semester 4. Early semester 5 data on student skripsi candidate allowed the study program to determine advisors” (D-32-R-23-T-2). The findings in this theme confirmed the importance of science courses as quality assurance. The KKNi curriculum credit weight is 33-40 Credit semester, or 30.30%. This does not guarantee that the graduates will be competent in their chosen science field. “The weight of science courses is a real issue.” It usually reaches 33%. How can we be sure of their knowledge if we just give them so much weight?” (D-2-R-10-T-2). “I totally agree,” says one supporter. The issue is that the KKNi curriculum does not specify the weight of each field of expertise. This was stated in the old curriculum. Science courses range from 40-80%,” (D-13-R-27-T-2).

#### 4.3. Theme 21 Materials Development for Merdeka Belajar in the OBE KKNi

The answer to the third research question regarding the process of the Merdeka Belajar materials development in the OBE KKNi consists of 7 themes, namely:

- 1) In general, the number of credits in the OBE KKNi was divided into two, 40 semester credit units for Merdeka Belajar Courses, and 104 credits of regular courses.
- 2) The Merdeka Belajar materials among study programs in a university were developed together with the study programs in a faculty or other faculties so that the contents of the materials may be matched.
- 3) The Merdeka Belajar courses materials out of a university is converted according to the contents, fields of science, and the number of credits .
- 4) The Merdeka Belajar courses materials studied out of campus with the weight of 20-40 semester credit units were conversed with obligatory courses at that time..
- 5) A final task in the form of skripsi may be done together with the Merdeka Belajar out of campus with the weight of 20 or 40 semester credit units.
- 6) The final task (skripsi) is written with a theme in accordance with the field of expertise of the study program with the number of credit equivalent with skripsi.
- 7) The skripsi may be equalized with an article published in Sinta 2 journals or indexed international journals.

This third finding revealed issues with the number of semester credit units, equivalence of off-campus courses, writing of skripsi, equivalence of skripsi and scientific articles published in journals. The first stage divided the 144 Credit semester into two categories: 40 credits for Merdeka Belajar and 104 credits for the regular campus courses. The issue is that the 40 semester credit units should match the course type, credit amount, and science field specified in the curriculum. The FGD participants said it was difficult to convert regular courses and apprenticeships or teaching assistance. The issue is how the guidance process is done if students taking Merdeka Belajar courses intend to finish their skripsies off-campus. If they are in higher education, they can ask the lecturers on campus to help them if they need guidance. Then another thought is required.

Students write reports, which are then turned into articles for publication in Sinta 2 scientific journals or non-Scopus indexed international journals. The reports should be on topics related to the study program's science field. This study found that the KKNi curriculum development process is constrained by educational theory, curriculum

development theory, and course distribution that is not based on knowledge cluster. It is thus difficult to develop the GLO and LO formulas. Another issue is that the CBC KJNI has become the OBE KJNI. Adding 20-40 Credit semester to Merdeka Belajar courses also limits their conversion to regular courses.

The issue sparked debate on three sides. The first finding showed that changing the scientific orientation from CBC to OBE causes problems in curriculum formulation. Consequently, the curriculum document's GLO, LO, and Course distribution are limited. This finding supports Spady (1984), Uys et al (2005). By bridging the gaps between the CBC theory and the OBE theory, this study addressed the shortcomings of previous studies by explaining the OBE and its integration process in curriculum development (Satoshi, et. al., 2021; Spady, 1984). The backward design curriculum theory can be included as a problem solving approach based on the curriculum development theory (Richards, 2012; Birney & McNamara, 2021). As a result, the OBE KJNI should be developed using both the backward design curriculum development theory and the OBE educational theory (Killen, 2007; Meyer, et. al., 2008; Budiharso & Tarman 2019; Solikhah & Budiharso, 2020; Siobhan, 2021).

The second finding that revealed the scientific field of study is given with a proportion of 60%-80%, and the knowledge cluster is set in line with the study program's field of expertise are in agreement with the findings of Solikhah & Buddiharso (2020) on quality standards in KJNI, Buddiharso & Tarman (2019) on curriculum implementation, and Dye (2017) and Dunn (2018) on accountable, transparent, quality-oriented public policy implementation. From the policy side, this finding is in support to the studies on (1) public policy strategies (Dunn, 2018; Satoshi, et. al., 2021), (2) quality assurance (Tuck, 2007), and (3) curriculum evaluation (Richards, 2013). Convincingly, the OBE KJNI public policy courses distribution (Dunn, 2018; Dye, 2017) and the demand to meet a legal foundation in terms of policy formulation are novelties in this part (Spady, 1984; Mendikbud, 2020a; Tuck, 2007; OECD, 2006; Satoshi & Takuya, 2021).

There were 40 semester credit units of Merdeka Belajar coursework and 104 semester credit units of Merdeka Belajar coursework in the OBE KJNI, according to the third discovery. Merdeka Belajar course development is hampered by course conversion, credit number, and scientific field. However, courses for the Merdeka Belajar program off-campus is equivalent to 20-40 Credit semester, so it is not mutually exclusive. OBE theory (Spady, 1984), blended learning (Bonk & Graham, 2006; Driscoll & Niekerk, 2008), and performance qualifications framework (Meyer, Salomé & Niekerk 2008) are all supported by this finding (Cedefop, 2013; 2017; Gleason, 2018). As theories of the OBE, blended learning, and self-directed learning had not been previously explored, the inclusion of OBE and its analysis in the KJNI curriculum under study is our novelty.

## **5. Conclusion and Suggestions**

Redefining our novelty, we highlight how the new KJNI curriculum incorporates OBE theory. We show how OBE changed the KJNI curriculum and how Merdeka Belajar should be developed. The backward design curriculum, the OBE, and the public policy-based curriculum reformation theories are all used in this study in a novel way. The OBE KJNI uses blended learning theory in the construction of its courses and analyzes the distribution of courses based on knowledge clusters.

To sum up, the change of CBC KKNi curriculum into OBE KKNi curriculum result confusion. The OBE KKNi preparation has its constraints by the understanding of GLO, LO, and course distribution. OBE KKNi has not properly set the course distribution of 144 Credit semester for the guideline; determining of GLO and LO formulation; determining course distribution in curriculum evaluation materials. To create the Merdeka Belajar Courses, the OBE KKNi can simply divide the 144 Credit semester into 40 Merdeka Belajar and 104 regular Courses. However, the equivalence of Merdeka Belajar courses (20-40 Credit semester) with regular courses remain the big issue to solve.

It is recognized that this research has some weaknesses in the form of data collection method through virtual FGD that we could not control. It is suggested that future researchers change the data collection technique via direct observations and interviews. The pandemic era certainly becomes a constraint for implementing face-to-face researches, but a Covid-19 protocol should be carefully programmed.

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