

Voices of English education department teachers on traces of neoliberal ideology in the 'Kampus Merdeka' concept

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ABSTRACT

Neoliberal ideology's influence on higher education has been a concern for researchers on a global scale. Indonesian researchers have also examined the practice of neoliberalism in higher education. However, they only focused on the managerial dimension and there is a dearth of literature on the influence of neoliberalism ideology on educational policy. This study intends to close a gap in earlier studies by investigating the ideological remnants of Neoliberalism in the notion of 'Kampus Merdeka' or Emancipated Learning as perceived by 12 lecturers at English Education Department in Yogyakarta. This study employed a qualitative approach through the use of semi-structured interviews. The study found that university and departmental missions were aligned with industry demands; the curriculum was driven by industry; the teaching and learning process was determined by the market; the Tridharma of Higher Education was extended to industry; little emphasis was placed on moral and religious values; curriculum "vocationalization" was emphasized; collaboration with industry was focused; academic commodification and consumerism increased; and academic commodification and consumerism accelerated. The findings added to a new existing theme, that is increased collaboration with industry. Moral and religious values must be incorporated into the curriculum, as they are absent in 'Kampus Merdeka' paradigm.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The issue of neoliberal ideology in higher education has received a global interest among researchers and practitioners in the field of education. The topics have become the global attention in research works including the neoliberal ideology in the universities' vision statements [1]; the neoliberal ideology and skills agenda in higher education [2], neoliberalism in English teaching materials [3] and neoliberal ideology in public higher education [4]. These researchers have established the importance of investigating the influence of neoliberalism in higher education institution. With the limitation of the research within the Indonesian context, the theme on the practice of neoliberalism ideology in higher education is worthy of further study.

The research of neoliberal ideology within the context of Indonesian higher education has been explored by several researchers. For example, there is an influence of the neoliberalism in good university government [5]. Several researchers have investigated the implication of neoliberal ideology on the lecturers' [6], while the neoliberalism within the field of psychology has been done in Indonesian higher education [7].

Among these studies, they focus on the management practices in higher education, but none of them have been concerned with the Neoliberalism influence in the practice of an educational policy. As a consequence, literature on these issues has been scarce. Therefore, this paper depicts the voices of lecturers in English Education Department in Yogyakarta on the traces of the neoliberalism ideology in the concept of 'Kampus Merdeka' or Emancipated Learning, an education policy recently launched by the Indonesian Ministry of Education.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Neoliberal ideology

2.1.1. Definition of neoliberalism

The roots of neoliberalism which is a form of modern liberalism can be found in the thinking of economic scholars such as Hayek and Friedman which developed in the 1980s and was proposed by politicians, such as Thatcher in the United Kingdom and Reagan in the United States [8]. The main characteristics of the new model of neoliberalism can be attributed to the central tenets of classical liberalism [9]. The ideology of neoliberalism has the following main propositions: i) Individual interests are paramount; ii) The method that is considered the best in managing resources and opportunities is a free market economy; iii) A strong commitment to the principle of laissez-faire which recognizes that free markets have the ability to regulate themselves; iv) A strong commitment to free trade activities which include: eliminating tariffs and subsidies, eliminating state support and interference in market activities and maintaining a floating and open exchange rate.

The current study used the concept of the incorporation of neoliberalism in higher education institutions as proposed by Saunders [4]. He investigated the influence of the neoliberalism ideology in United State universities. The study revealed that four components of neoliberalism influence higher education including: i) Funding, finances and revenue generation; ii) Governance and decision making; iii) The changing role of faculty; and iv) The changing definition of students.

2.1.2. Finances and revenue generation

Finance and revenue generation are important parts in the incorporation of neoliberal ideology in higher education. As budget allocation from government to higher education decreased [10], universities must spend a large amount of budget to operate. The reduction in state support was responsible for steady increases in the prices of university tuition fees [11], and chances to the system of financial aid [12]. This had led the students to become the main financier of their own education [13]. As the students are redefined as customers, they should shoulder full responsibility in funding their education. In addition to this, community colleges demonstrated orientation to entrepreneurialism [14]. In the area of research, higher education institutions increasingly emphasize on applied research whose explicit purpose is the commercialization of the research products [13]. Finally, the collaboration between universities and industries were deregulated to allow higher education institutions to directly enter the market [4].

2.1.3. Governance and decision making

The chief characteristic of the deployment of neoliberal ideology in higher education is the rationales of institutional decision making, changing from the focus on equity and knowledge generation to the efficiency and competitiveness [15]. Similarly, Ayers found the similar shift regarding university mission statement in the United States, from the priority on the democratization of higher education to incorporation of economic principles in the educational process [1]. An example of using the efficiency principle is the increasing recruitment of faculty members, graduate students and post-doctoral positions to teach undergraduates students [16]. As they are not a part of faculties senates, they are not allowed to engage in the institutional decision-making [17]. The members of the university structure align their corporate logic to the educational decisions focusing on revenue generation, efficiency and other capitalistic purposes.

2.1.4. The changing role of faculty

With the increase of part-time and adjunct labor in universities, the faculty influence over curricular decision decreases [18]. The educational issues are redefined as economic activities, hence removing the need for individual in faculties who are knowledgeable in education in the decision making process [13]. The decision making in the institutions are steered by administration, private business and the government [14]. Furthermore, Levin further said that the faculty are increasingly focused on generating revenue and the institution's orientation shifts to serve the market.

The neoliberal ideology has affected faculty to change their roles from educators, researchers and members of a larger community to entrepreneurs [13]. The redefinition of faculty into entrepreneurs becomes widespread, and is congruent with neoliberalism as is the commercialization, marketization and

commodification of the fruits of faculty labor [4]. The professors who used to be educators, whose one of their responsibilities is to realize the emancipatory power of education, now should be neutral in disseminating ideological content [19].

2.1.5. The changing definition of students

One the most explicit phenomenon in the alignment of neoliberalism in higher education is the redefinition of student from students to customers [19]. Due to the commodification of education within the neoliberal ideology, the economic exchange between students and universities represents defining relationship between them. The students ‘purchase’ their students from universities, hence positioning students as customers and universities as the service providers [20]. While higher education institutions continue to regard students primarily as customers [13]; however, based on Wellen’s study, negative implications arise when students are identified as merely customers [21]. Similar to individuals who are in tough competition with one another [22], students in neoliberal universities focused more on developing their human capital and are solely responsible to themselves, becoming less like members of a community of learners [20]. This has led to increased attention on personal achievement but less attention on the learning and development of the peers in the campus environment. The identity and involvement of the students in campus are gradually defined by their orientation as customers.

2.1.6. ‘Kampus Merdeka’

Currently, universities in Indonesia are increasingly required to change to be relevant to the business world and industry. Therefore, they must be able to prepare their students to enter the world of work by designing innovative learning that includes the development of aspects of attitudes, knowledge and skills optimally. For this reason, the government through the Ministry of National Education issued an ‘Kampus Merdeka’ or Emancipated Learning policy. ‘Kampus Merdeka’ is based on the idea of creating an autonomous and flexible university so as to produce a learning culture that is innovative, flexible and in accordance with the needs of students.

Based on the guideline book of ‘Kampus Merdeka’, the Kampus Merdeka program includes four main policies, namely: the ease of opening new study programs, changes to the higher education accreditation system, the ease of taking higher education as a legal entity, and the right to study for three semesters outside the study program [23]. The current research focused on the last component. Students are given the freedom to take credits outside of the courses taken; an average of three semesters can be taken to study outside the study program at the university and or study outside the university. Learning activities outside of tertiary institutions include internships/work practices, village projects, school teaching, exchange students, research, entrepreneurial activities, independent studies/ projects, and projects where all activities must be guided by lecturers. ‘Kampus Merdeka’ is expected to provide contextual field experience that will improve the college's overall student competence and readiness to work.

The learning process at the ‘Kampus Merdeka’ is one manifestation of student-centered learning (student-centered learning). Learning at the ‘Kampus Merdeka’ provides challenges and opportunities for universities to develop the creativity, capacity, personality, and needs of students, as well as develop independence in seeking and finding knowledge through realities and market dynamics such as ability needs, real problems, social interaction, collaboration, self-management, performance demands, targets, and achievements. ‘Kampus Merdeka’ is expected to be able to answer the challenge of universities to produce graduates along with the development of science and technology as well as the demands of the business world [23].

3. RESEARCH METHOD

The study used qualitative method using semi-structured interviews. The paper attempts to investigate the voices of English lecturers based on their perspectives and experiences concerning the potential traces of neoliberal ideology in the ‘Kampus Merdeka’ concept. The transcripts of the interviews and the contents were returned back to participants in order to be checked. Therefore, the participants had opportunities to change the contents if they did not represent their actual perspectives, hence enhancing the trustworthiness of the findings [24], [25].

There were 12 lecturers teaching English at six English Education Departments in Yogyakarta who were in charge in preparing the curriculum of ‘Kampus Merdeka’ were voluntarily involved in this research. They provided consent forms for participating in this research. The participants were coded with the participant 1 (P1) to participant 12 (P12). The framework proposed by Gall and Borg, namely systemic analysis approach was used for analysis of the data [26].

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Findings

4.1.1. The mission the universities and departments are aligned with the demand of industries

The university's and department's road map which are aligned with the demand of industries is one of the most important themes that appeared in this study. Enhancing the employability is the component incorporated in the vision statement. In addition to this, the key words including entrepreneurship and research university as well as the development of generic skills and soft skills were adopted in the vision statement and educational philosophy of the departments and universities.

"My university's vision is to become entrepreneurial university and I think this is in line with the 'Kampus Merdeka' spirit which encourage entrepreneurship. For ensuring the sustainability of our university, I suppose that becoming entrepreneur is a good choice for our university." (P9)

"My university has a target to become a research university and my university leaders has an ambitious target so that they always encourage us to enhance our research productivity especially in gaining funding from external resources." (P7)

"Research mechanism explained in our university rules and regulation encourages lecturers and students to obtain fund from outside university." (P6)

"Research is increasingly driven by efforts to fulfill the industrial needs." (P3)

"My university's vision and mission includes employability as one of the main components." (P5)

"Some generic competences to be developed by students dominate the educational philosophy of my university." (P4)

"The development of soft skill related to the graduate competencies has become one of my department's visions." (P10)

4.1.2. Curriculum is steered by industries

As the participants pointed out, the industries largely influenced the way the curriculum is prepared and design. The curriculum was oriented to prepare students to be employable in the market. As a result, subjects which were closely related to the world of works and the current demand in industrial world were aligned into the curriculum structure including Artificial Intelligence, internet of things, big data and other information as well as other technology-based subjects. On the contrary, liberal arts and humanity-based subjects seemed to be abandoned in the curriculum.

"Most of the subjects in our curriculum structure is oriented to the 'market' needs. For example, in my department we have job-oriented subjects such as Reading and Writing for Career Development, English for Tourism, Business Management and Entrepreneurship. There is almost no subject based on humanities liberal arts such as Education Philosophy, Poetry and Literature." (P11)

"In conducting curriculum evaluation, lecturers in our study program include new courses as recommended by the ministry of education such as Artificial intelligence, Internet of Things and Big Data. I think such subjects are recommended because they are related to the current needs in industrial world." (P8)

"Because Nadiem (The current Minister of Education) instructed us to include 21st skills as part of the abilities that our graduates must master, we included study materials related to the internet and information technology. For example, we have IT-based courses including Computer Literacy Online, Digital Technology in Education, Innovative Technology, ICT in Language Learning and Computer Literacy offline." (P10)

"Since internships allow students to take up to 20 credits, conversion of courses linked to students' employability in industry will be an important part of our curriculum." (P1)

"In my opinion, 'Kampus Merdeka' is industry-oriented, so we are currently reviewing our curriculum. Courses that are not in accordance with current needs, of course will be thrown away. For instance, unlike the previous time, now English is not compulsory in elementary school so that fewer teachers will be needed to teach English at elementary school. Therefore, we omit a course of English for Children in our curriculum. On the other hand, we will include courses that are really needed by the market today in the curriculum structure such as Journalism and Interpreting." (P9)

"Nadiem emphasized that in the student exchange program as part of 'Kampus Merdeka', students can take different courses which are not closely linked to our graduate profile. In my opinion, this was caused by the desire to increase graduates' employability to suit the needs of the industry." (P7)

4.1.3. Teaching and learning process is dictated by market

The data obtained from the participants revealed that teachers had a new role of becoming the 'dosen penggerak' or inspiring teachers whose main task is to facilitate students to communicate with

industries. In addition, teachers were also recruited from professional in industries. Furthermore, the case study, problem-based learning, 'cybergogy' and 'peerogogy' needed to be employed for teaching method as they were deemed suitable to enhance students' occupational skills. Since industries were a part of the teaching and learning, both teachers and industries should be involved in assessing students' competencies.

"In 'Kampus Merdeka', the lecturer has a new role, namely as a 'dosen penggerak'. In my opinion, this is a new demand for lecturers to bridge the students with industry, be it the education industry or the goods and services industry. This is an extended teaching role in my opinion." (P9)

"In 'Kampus Merdeka' the department is encouraged to apply case-based methods and problem-based learning. I think these two methods are the ones used by employees in the industry where they are required to solve various problems." (P12)

"In the 'Kampus Merdeka' concept, together with lecturers, the industry currently plays a bigger role in assessing students. We actually have done this. In doing internship of teaching practice in schools, school teachers have bigger proportion than lecturers in assessing students." (P7)

"Assessments carried out in the context of 'Kampus Merdeka' are not only formative and summative assessments, but after graduating students are also assessed whether they are absorbed in the workforce. Employers are also asked how they perform at work." (P11)

"In 'Kampus Merdeka', the study program must recruit lecturers from the industrial world. In my opinion, this is the policy of the minister of education so that students are taught learning materials that are really needed by industry or educational institutions." (P8)

"In 'Kampus Merdeka', I think the teaching of soft skills is increasingly emphasized because internships in the industry of up to 20 credits allow students to improve soft skills such as problem solving skills, teamwork and communication skills." (P6)

"Lecturers are currently required to use 'peerogogy' and 'cybergogy' approaches because they will train students to be able to work in teams through the internet and information technology which I think will be increasingly needed in today's world of work." (P5)

4.1.4. "Tridharma Perguruan Tinggi" is expanded to industries

As shown by the data from participants, in the 'Kampus Merdeka' concept the "Tridharma Perguruan Tinggi" or three services of lecturers comprising of teaching, research and service to community are expanded to industries. For one example, regarding research, research topics should be matched to industrial needs. Lecturers are also encouraged to obtain research fund from external sources. In terms of teaching, lecturers are required to have industrial experience by working in industries. The community service also takes place in industries.

"Through the 'Kampus Merdeka' concept, lecturers are currently required to link and match their research topics with industry. The research results should be able to be used by industries." (P8)

"Through matching fund grants, which is the government's strategy to encourage the implementation of 'Kampus Merdeka', lecturers are encouraged to find research funds from the industrial world and the research issues investigated must also be able to assist the development of the industry." (P6)

"In the 'Kampus Merdeka' concept, lecturers are encouraged to have experience to work in the industrial sector, and study programs will get good points when many lecturers work in the industrial world." (P3)

"It seems that the 'Kampus Merdeka' concept also encourages lecturers to become entrepreneurs because in the guidelines for the Main Performance Indicators of Higher Education, the ability to become an entrepreneur also increases the score of the Main Performance Indicators of the study program." (P4)

"Lecturers' works, whether research and intellectual property rights, are encouraged to benefit the industry." (P2)

"Community services that are carried out by lecturers in the 'Kampus Merdeka' corridor are also currently being extended to industry. Lecturers can do community service for industry, for example in village-owned enterprises." (P7)

4.1.5. Little attention is given to moral and religious values

The startling finding of the research is that the participant received the absence of religious values promulgated in the concept of 'Kampus Merdeka'. As acknowledged by a participant, the guideline book of 'Kampus Merdeka' did not contain any single word of the term religion. Hence, participants argued that 'Kampus Merdeka' only emphasized the industrial values that should be inculcated in students. Similarly, the

recent regulation to prevent sexual harassment at higher education institutions which would be launched by the Ministry of Education which was also the designer of 'Kampus Merdeka' was perceived as the promotion of secularism. In fact, as expressed by a participant, the pragmatism and utilitarianism based on the industrial values dominated the blueprint of the 'Kampus Merdeka'. As a result, one participant said that it was very important for her university to maintain balance by promulgating the Islamic values through the inclusion of teaching religious values in her department.

"As far as I know in the 'Kampus Merdeka' manual, I don't find the term religion. So, I think that the 'Kampus Merdeka' concept does not pay attention to religious values explicitly, as well as other moral values." (P5)

"The values emphasized in the 'Kampus Merdeka' in my opinion are the values of professionalism in the industrial world such as teamwork, leadership and other soft skills because these are the phrases that I often find in 'Kampus Merdeka' guidebooks and speeches from the minister of education, not values explicitly taught in religion such as honesty, justice and integrity." (P9)

"In my opinion, the 'Kampus Merdeka' concept is not too concerned with religion, therefore my Islamic-based university certainly still teaches Islamic-based courses to balance the industrial values adopted by 'Kampus Merdeka'." (P1)

"The proposed regulation of the Ministry of Education on the prevention of sexual violence which is currently being debated has convinced me that education in higher education to be built through the 'Kampus Merdeka' concept is increasingly secular, meaning that it does not involve explicit religious values in policy making." (P6)

"After I attended various workshops, attended the education minister's speech and read guide books, I came to the conclusion that the priorities in the 'Kampus Merdeka' concept are utilitarian and pragmatic values taken from industrial ones which may not explicitly demonstrate the importance of moral and religious values in the educational process in higher education." (P8)

4.1.6. "Vocationalization" of curriculum is emphasized

The curriculum promoted in the 'Kampus Merdeka' concept was more vocationalized. It was started with the design of the curriculum through needs and environment analysis in which the department interviewed people from educational institutions and industries to seek information of what competencies were needed by the graduates. This was followed by the formulation of the learning outcomes and forming the subjects in the curriculum structure. The opportunity for students to take outside compulsory credits in the department by doing some tracks in 'Kampus Merdeka' was perceived by a participant as a way of sharpening students' occupational skills. In fact, in formulating the learning outcomes of the 'Kampus Merdeka' tracks, the department should collaborate with the industries. One participant believed that given the opportunity to study and do activities outside the department, students would be able to implement the theories into practice. Hence, students are not only required to know but to apply the knowledge.

"In designing the independent campus curriculum, students take at least 80 credits on their own campus and for the rest of the credits students engage in off-campus activities. The maximum number of credits that must be taken is 140-160 credits. In my opinion, credits beyond 80 are aimed at improving students' occupational skills so that when they graduate, they are ready to work." (P3)

"In my opinion, 'Kampus Merdeka' is more vocational than the previous Higher Education Curriculum because 'Kampus Merdeka' provides more opportunities for students to practice theory through 8 track activities." (P10)

"In conducting the internship, the department together with the industry creates learning outcomes. This implies that the skills that must be mastered by students are really the skills needed in the industry." (P11)

"In the era of content-based curriculum, students are usually encouraged to know and understand knowledge. But now in the era of 'Kampus Merdeka', the expected learning outcomes allow students to analyze, evaluate, find solutions to problems and apply them in the world of work according to a higher level of Bloom's taxonomy." (P1)

"The current curriculum preparation starts from graduate profiles. We design the graduate profiles by conducting needs analysis and environment analysis by interviewing industry and educational institutions. After that, we design the graduate learning outcomes and the learning materials. So, the learning material in lectures is currently more vocational because it refers to work ability." (P6)

4.1.7. Collaboration with industries is enhanced

With the implementation of 'Kampus Merdeka', then new expectation of the department, as perceived by the participants, was the increasing collaboration with industries including the educational

institution where they will work after graduation. The collaboration with more industrial partners allowed the department to send increased number of students to do internship. Furthermore, as requested in the 'Kampus Merdeka' concept, lecturers could work to enhance their industrial skills in the industrial partners. In addition to this, the department could invite the people from industries and educational institutions to teach and give career motivation to students. Interestingly, one participant believed that the graduates would be potentially recruited by the industrial partners once they graduated.

"With the current implementation of 'Kampus Merdeka', our university must cooperate with more industries and educational institutions for the places of student internship. If students want to work as teachers, then they can choose to join internship in schools where they can practice their teaching skills. But if students want to work as business persons, then they can have internship in companies or English courses where they will know how to manage business." (P12)

"By collaborating with more industries, we can recruit people from industries more easily to teach in our department." (P11)

"We need to build cooperation with industry and educational institutions because we need them for our lecturers' workplaces because it is the requirement in the 'Kampus Merdeka' concept." (P5)

"Most of the 'Kampus Merdeka' tracks taken by students are internships, so like it or not we have to cooperate with more industries for internship." (P4)

"If we have partnerships with many companies and educational institutions for internships, our graduates will have more opportunities to be recruited as the employees by our industrial partners." (P8)

"We can invite professionals in the companies we work with to provide business and career motivations to our students." (P7)

4.1.8. Academic commodification and consumerism increase

Another finding revealed from the interview was the rise of academic consumerism either 'selling' the courses or 'purchasing' the educational services. Through 'Kampus Merdeka', a department could offer their courses to other departments inside and outside universities, hence generating the income of the department. One lecturer said that many students outside the department would be interested to occupational-based subjects such as English Speaking. Implementing 'Kampus Merdeka', the participants also said that the department should pay for extra money to run the internship program including providing the incentive for lectures and people from industries to guide the students in doing internship. Similarly, the department also spend fund for professional from industries to teach in the department. In terms of 'Kampus Merdeka', students needed to pay the extra credits they took for doing some 'Kampus Merdeka' tracks.

"In the 'Kampus Merdeka' program we have the opportunity to increase revenue by 'selling' our courses to other study programs outside our university." (P11)

"Our study program is accredited A and has many courses that are suitable for work such as English Speaking and English for Tourism. I'm sure students from other colleges will be interested if we offer this course to them." (P5)

"For example, in the context of student exchange, we will look for university partners with better quality. Although the tuition fees may be more expensive, we will still send them because our goal is to produce quality graduates so that they can gain better knowledge and skills in better quality study programs." (P4)

"An example is an internship program; we have to pay an honorarium to the coordinator of the institution concerned. However, the funds we have to pay are reasonable because the coordinators from these institutions assist our students in improving their competence and soft skills." (P8)

"To implement the 'Kampus Merdeka' program, the new funds we have to prepare are incentives to pay professionals from companies or educational institutions that we will recruit for teaching in our department." (P7)

"With the implementation of 'Kampus Merdeka', of course, we will spend more money to fund the 'Kampus Merdeka' tracks that will be taken by students. The easiest solution is that these additional costs will of course be afforded by students, but we will also look for other sources." (P10)

4.1.9. Students are defined as "agents of capitalism"

The redefinition of students as 'agents of capitalism' and as an economic entity emerged in the data findings. The main goal of 'Kampus Merdeka' concept, as perceived by the participants, is to prepare students to work in industries. In other words, the university's responsibility is to produce human capital which is coined by a participant as producing 'agents of capitalism'. This was evidenced by one indicator in

the 'Kampus Merdeka' that the success of a department was measured by the percentage of graduates employed in the job market. In easing the effort to produce more employable graduates, developing partnership with industries was considered as a good option for the department as the industries will provide environment where students could develop the generic skills which were important for jobs.

"When I talk to students, their main target for college is they can work, so I think that the direction of 'Kampus Merdeka' is in line with student expectations because the main goal of 'Kampus Merdeka' in my opinion is to produce graduates who are ready to work." (P4)

"The concept of 'Kampus Merdeka' in my opinion is to prepare human capital for the needs of today's industry, so it is a kind of 'agents of capitalism'." (P9)

"In my opinion, the Main Performance Indicators in 'Kampus Merdeka' measure the success of a study program from how many percent of graduates of the study program can get a job." (P5)

"So, I think the purpose of the departments collaborating with many industries is to introduce students with the world of work from an early stage because they will be prepared to work for these industries." (P7)

"In my opinion, 'Kampus Merdeka' provides more opportunities for students to develop generic skills so that when they graduate, they will become skilled workers." (P12)

4.2. Discussion

The research aims to reveal how English lecturers perceive the alignment of the neoliberal ideology in the concept of 'Kampus Merdeka'. The data shows that traces of neoliberal ideology can be found in the component of goals of education in university, curriculum and teaching, lecturers and students. In other words, the 'Kampus Merdeka' concept is laden with the neoliberal ideology which in turns affects the educational practice in English Educational Departments and universities.

4.2.1. Educational goals in university

As revealed in the data findings, one of goals stated in the university's and department's mission are defined in economic terms, namely producing the employable graduates. While other missions are related to develop the whole human beings and to serve society are also stated, the discourse of economics is increasingly dominant in shaping the goals of the universities and departments. Hence, there seems to be more focus on directing educational process to empower students and preparing them in the world of work. However, this also implies that students are only taught to meet the needs of the future employers. These findings support the study done by Levin stating that since 1900s higher education institutions have begun to focus on economic goals rather than educational ends [14].

4.2.2. Curriculum and teaching

With regards to curriculum and teaching, the dominance of the market role in the 'Kampus Merdeka' concept in determining the educational objectives is evident. Participants point out that in addition to skills-based subjects including reading, writing, speaking and listening as well as pedagogy-based subjects, some new courses should be included in the curriculum structure such as artificial intelligence and internet of things and this implies that the interpretations of the market activity become the ingredients of the curriculum. In fact, teaching and learning process which are expanded outside the classroom such as internship program in industry has demonstrated that teaching and learning process emanate from endeavors of business and industry and teachers should add their role as the bridge between students and industry.

On the contrary, some values including religious and moral ones, as a participant explain, are not explicitly articulated in the guidance book of 'Kampus Merdeka'. Non-commodified knowledge, skills and wisdom delivered through civic and liberal education move from the core of higher education to a distance periphery [27]–[30]. The colonization of the neoliberal ideology into the educational world is troublesome as the markets do not reward moral behavior [27]–[30].

In addition, lecturers coming from the industry as requested by the 'Kampus Merdeka' system allows the business people to promote economic discourse and occupational programs that should be accepted by the department. This implies that it is market which provide rationales behind the creation, evaluation and renewal of educational programs. The dominance of market in determining the curriculum fails to recognized students and community in planning, designing and evaluation educational programs. In the Fairclough's words, it is market, not people, which is the agent of change [31]. This leads to the positioning of industries as knowledge legitimators to inculcate market ideology into the students' learning experience.

4.2.3. Students and lecturers

As the participants expressed in their comments, learners are reduced as human capital and is coined by a participant as the ‘agents of capitalism’ whose main role is to remain competitive in the labor market. Similarly, lecturers’ chief job is to facilitate the students to become competitive and employable. The participants’ views on to redefined role of students emerges in that the outcome of the students’ education is economic competitiveness. Students exist to fulfill the employers’ need. In other words, power relation between learners and employers position employers as stronger entity. This, in turn puts learners as inferiors to employers and abolish the recognition of learners as individuals [31]–[34].

5. CONCLUSION

Neoliberal ideology impacts the educational practices in higher education institution in four areas including finances and revenues generation, governance and decision making, the changing role of faculty, and the redefinition of students. As perceived by participants of the current study, these components also occur in the implementation of the ‘Kampus Merdeka’. In fact, the findings of the current study add the themes found in Saunder’s study, namely enhanced collaboration with industries. Hence this study enriches the body of knowledge in the existing literature. In addition to the theoretical benefits, the current studies should leave the lecturers, faculty members and university leaders with reflecting thinking in that ‘Kampus Merdeka’ is not immune from the Neoliberal ideology. As outlined in the discussion section, this ideology contains potential detrimental effects in the areas of educational goals, curriculum and teaching as well as teachers and students. This is not to generalize that all aspects of the ‘Kampus Merdeka’ is not useful as some of its tracks including community service, humanity projects and research will lead students to develop social awareness and critical thinking. Together with the implementation of some useful aspects in ‘Kampus Merdeka’, faculty needs to inculcate moral and religious values and include learning process that develop students’ awareness to hold integrity and justice and to contribute to society. Hence, departments and universities can produce not only employable graduates but also individuals who hold moral values.





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