The McDonaldization of Merdeka Belajar: How Globalized Standardization is Quietly Erasing Indigenous Indonesian Pedagogies

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Abstrak

Penelitian perpustakaan ini secara kritis meneliti kebijakan Merdeka Belajar-Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) melalui lensa kerangka sosiologis George Ritzer tentang McDonaldization untuk memahami dampaknya terhadap Pedagogi Adat Indonesia. Ketika Indonesia menyelaraskan sistem pendidikan tingginya dengan tekanan neoliberal global untuk kesiapan tenaga kerja, kebijakan MBKM diperjuangkan sebagai gerakan untuk otonomi pendidikan. Namun, dengan memanfaatkan Analisis Wacana Kritis (CDA) dan penjajaran komparatif, penelitian ini mengungkapkan paradoks yang mendalam: implementasi kebijakan bergantung pada mekanisme efisiensi, perhitungan, prediktabilitas, dan kontrol yang kaku yang mencerminkan rasionalisasi industri makanan cepat saji. Analisis ini menunjukkan bagaimana jalur derajat yang dipercepat (Efisiensi) dan indikator kinerja yang terobsesi dengan metrik (Calculability) secara sistematis mengikis pedagogi tradisional Jawa dan Pesantren, khususnya nilai-nilai seperti Ngeli (kedalaman berorientasi proses) dan Olah Rasa (penyempurnaan emosional). Selain itu, platform digital terpusat (Prediktabilitas) dan pengawasan berbasis aplikasi (Kontrol) menggantikan kebijaksanaan spesifik konteks Kodrat Alam dan otonomi spiritual Pamong. Studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa MBKM memfasilitasi grobalisasi pendidikan Indonesia, menggantikan praktik budaya yang signifikan secara lokal dengan bentuk kosong yang terstandarisasi secara global (tidak ada). Ini mengadvokasi strategi de-McDonaldisasi yang menyelaraskan modernisasi administratif dengan pelestarian warisan pendidikan Indonesia yang holistik dan digerakkan oleh karakter.

Kata kunci: Merdeka Belajar, McDonaldisasi, Pedagogi Adat, Ki Hajar Dewantara, Neoliberalisme, Kebijakan Perguruan Tinggi.

Abstract

This library research critically examines the *Merdeka Belajar-Kampus Merdeka* (MBKM) policy through the lens of George Ritzer's sociological framework of McDonaldization to understand its impact on Indigenous Indonesian Pedagogies. As Indonesia aligns its higher education system with global neoliberal pressures for workforce readiness, the MBKM policy is championed as a movement for educational autonomy. However, utilizing Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and comparative juxtaposition, this study reveals a profound paradox: the policy's implementation relies on rigid mechanisms of efficiency, calculability, predictability, and control that mirror the rationalization of the fast-food industry. The analysis demonstrates how accelerated degree pathways (Efficiency) and metric-obsessed performance indicators (Calculability) systematically erode traditional Javanese and Pesantren pedagogies, specifically values such as *Ngeli* (process-oriented depth) and *Olah Rasa* (emotional refinement). Furthermore, centralized digital platforms (Predictability) and app-based surveillance

(Control) displace the context-specific wisdom of *Kodrat Alam* and the spiritual autonomy of the *Pamong*. The study concludes that MBKM facilitates the grobalization of Indonesian education, replacing locally significant cultural practices with globally standardized, empty forms (nothing). It advocates for a de-McDonaldization strategy that harmonizes administrative modernization with the preservation of Indonesia's holistic, character-driven educational heritage.

Keywords: *Merdeka Belajar*, McDonaldization, Indigenous Pedagogy, Ki Hajar Dewantara, Neoliberalism, Higher Education Policy.

INTRODUCTION

Education in the 21st century has shifted from a process of cultural and intellectual cultivation to a strategic engine for economic competitiveness. This transformation is largely driven by global neoliberal pressures, where supranational institutions like the OECD and the World Bank frame education primarily as a means of human capital accumulation. Within this paradigm, nations are urged to align their academic outputs with market demands, using standardized benchmarks like PISA scores to measure success (Rakhmani, 2024). In Indonesia, these global currents have profoundly shaped the *Merdeka Belajar* policy. Now in its advanced implementation phase in late 2025, the policy explicitly promotes Link and Match initiatives, encouraging students to spend up to three semesters outside the university to acquire industry-relevant skills (Prasetyo, 2024). While this shift aims to prepare graduates for a precarious gig economy, it risks reducing higher education to vocational training, prioritizing quantifiable economic value over the holistic cultural depth traditionally valued in academia.

On the national front, the persistence of this policy underscores a systemic commitment to these market-driven ideals, regardless of political transitions. As of late 2025, *Merdeka Belajar-Kampus Merdeka* (MBKM) remains a flagship initiative under the new Ministry of Higher Education, Science, and Technology, having facilitated experiential learning for over 400,000 students since 2021 (Kemendikbud, 2023). However, the narrative of freedom embedded in the policy's title is increasingly contested. Critics argue that despite the branding of autonomy, the actual implementation is characterized by rigid digital tracking and centralized metrics. This creates a friction between the stated goal of liberating education and the reality of administrative control, raising questions about whether the policy is truly serving student emancipation or merely standardizing the workforce production line.

Despite the policy's rhetoric of autonomy and freedom, a critical examination reveals a troubling paradox where the educational landscape is increasingly governed by the logic of

McDonaldization. George Ritzer's four dimensions, efficiency, calculability, predictability, and control, are evident in the centralized metrics and rigid workflows that now define university governance (Ritzer, 2021). Rather than fostering genuine intellectual liberty, the system enforces a standardized model of success driven by neoliberal hegemony, a trend that has deepened during Indonesia's post-Jokowi transitions (Hayes et al., 2017; Prasetyo, 2024). This disconnect between the promise of emancipation and the reality of bureaucratic control creates a unique urgency for education scholars to deconstruct the mechanisms that prioritize administrative compliance over pedagogical substance.

This standardization poses a direct existential threat to Indonesia's Indigenous Pedagogies, which are historically rooted in holistic human development rather than industrial output. The foundational principles of Ki Hajar Dewantara, such as *Sistem Among* and *Tri Sentra Pendidikan*, emphasize spiritual bonding, natural growth, and the cultivation of character or *Adab*. However, these values clash violently with MBKM's emphasis on fast-track certifications and algorithmic oversight. As the policy expands into the 2025/2026 academic semesters, there is a tangible risk that traditional values like *Rabithah* (spiritual connection) will be erased by the demand for industrial predictability, effectively stripping Indonesian education of its cultural soul (Rakhmani, 2024).

This study focuses on two central lines of inquiry to understand the structural and philosophical shifts in Indonesian higher education. First, it investigates how George Ritzer's four dimensions of McDonaldization, Efficiency, Calculability, Predictability, and Control, are manifested within the specific regulations, digital platforms, and administrative workflows of the *Merdeka Belajar* policy. Second, it explores the extent to which this standardized, efficiency-driven framework conflicts with or actively displaces the foundational tenets of Indigenous Indonesian Pedagogies, particularly the principles of *Sistem Among* and *Kodrat Alam*.

The analysis relies on a comparative theoretical framework that contrasts Western sociological critique with Indonesian educational philosophy. It utilizes George Ritzer's McDonaldization of Society as the primary lens to decode the rationalization of the new policy infrastructure. This perspective is juxtaposed with Ki Hajar Dewantara's Indigenous Pedagogy, specifically his concepts of *Tri Sentra Pendidikan* (Three Centers of Education) and *Manusia Merdeka* (The Free Human). This comparison serves to highlight the divergence between the

market-driven freedom of the current policy and the holistic, humanistic freedom envisioned in the nation's educational roots.

For educators and policymakers, this topic underscores the urgency of balancing global standards with local wisdom, as neoliberal shifts since Nadiem Makarim's era have commodified universities. In higher education research, it highlights Ritzer's framework applied to Asia, where efficiency erodes creativity. Discussing it now equips stakeholders to resist dehumanization, fostering equitable systems.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative library research design utilizing systematic literature review and critical analysis techniques to examine the McDonaldization of Indonesia's Merdeka Belajar policy without conducting field surveys (Booth et al., 2021; Papaioannou et al., 2016; Pollock & Berge, 2018; Snyder, 2019). Primary data sources include official policy documents such as Permendikbud No. 3 of 2020 establishing National Standards for Higher Education, which mandates flexibility in student learning pathways including up to three semesters outside their home institutions, and the eight Key Performance Indicators (IKU) tracking employability metrics, external learning participation, and industry partnerships. Technical guidebooks for Kampus Mengajar, Magang Merdeka (internship programs lasting 1-2 semesters), and the Platform Merdeka Mengajar provide operational frameworks revealing standardized implementation mechanisms. Secondary sources comprise George Ritzer's foundational theories in *The McDonaldization of Society* and *The Globalization of Nothing*, which conceptualize efficiency, calculability, predictability, and control as rationalization forces marginalizing locally distinctive something with centrally controlled nothing (Ritzer, 2004), alongside Ki Hajar Dewantara's *Karya: Bagian Pertama - Pendidikan*, articulating Taman Siswa's holistic pedagogy emphasizing moral development and cultural rootedness (Andika, 2021), plus academic critiques analyzing neoliberalism's hegemony in Indonesian higher education systems.

Data analysis employs Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) following Fairclough's dialectical-relational approach to deconstruct policy language, examining how terms like quality and excellence are discursively reframed as employability and industry alignment within MBKM regulations, revealing power dynamics and ideological assumptions embedded in standardization rhetoric (Miles et al., 2014). The comparative juxtaposition technique

constructs an analytical matrix contrasting McDonaldized indicators, such as quantifiable IKU metrics prioritizing predictable outcomes and algorithmic control via digital platforms, against Indigenous pedagogical values like Ki Hajar Dewantara's Sistem Among (learning through guidance rather than coercion) and Kodrat Alam (natural development respecting individual potentials), systematically identifying tensions and erasures. This methodology provides systematic, logical analysis grounded in established theories to rigorously examine how global standardization forces reshape Indonesian educational philosophy.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 The Four Dimensions of McDonaldization in 'Merdeka Belajar'

A. Efficiency: The Fast-Food Degree vs. *Ngeli* (Flowing)

The McDonaldization principle of efficiency, defined by Ritzer as the optimum method for achieving outcomes with minimal time investment, manifests explicitly in MBKM's credit conversion mechanisms and accelerated graduation pathways. The policy allows students to convert external learning experiences into 20 SKS (credit semester units) per semester, with institutions like BINUS University implementing two-semester MBKM programs totaling 40 SKS in semesters six and seven to expedite degree completion. Universities adopt structured conversion formulas where five-month internships automatically equate to 20 SKS, treating complex, multifaceted learning as standardized units uploadable to national databases like PDDIKTI, prioritizing quantifiable output over nuanced process (Masruroh, 2021). This three-year degree push reflects neoliberal efficiency logic where education becomes a rapid transaction, reducing learning to credit accumulation rather than holistic intellectual maturation (Prasetyo, 2024).

This efficiency-driven framework fundamentally contradicts the Javanese pedagogical concept of *Ngeli*, the practice of flowing or drifting together to achieve deep immersion and mastery within communal learning contexts, as documented in gamelan ensemble pedagogy where temporal flexibility enables collective synchronization and individual depth. Traditional Pesantren education similarly emphasizes *Riyadoh*, a time-intensive spiritual discipline cultivating character through prolonged moral formation processes that resist temporal compression (Riyadi et al., 2024; Tan et al., 2021). By privileging speed and calculable outcomes, MBKM's efficiency paradigm sacrifices what Ki Hajar Dewantara termed the organic unfolding of *Kodrat Alam* (natural potential), wherein authentic learning emerges through unhurried developmental stages aligned with individual readiness rather than industrial

timeline (Andika, 2021; Sagita Krissandi et al., 2023). The philosophical tension reveals how process, central to indigenous pedagogy's conception of wisdom acquisition, is systematically eroded in favor of measurable output compatible with global labor market demands.

Table 1: McDonaldization Dimensions in MBKM vs. Indigenous Indonesian Pedagogies

McDonaldization Dimension	MBKM Manifestation	Indigenous Pedagogy Erased	Key Sources
Efficiency	20 SKS credit conversions; 3-year degree acceleration; standardized conversion formulas	*Ngeli* (flowing/depth); Pesantren *Riyadoh* (time-intensive discipline); process-oriented learning	(Riyadi et al., 2024; Tan et al., 2021)
Calculability	Eight IKU metrics; PDDIKTI database rankings; PISA-driven reforms; graduate salary tracking	*Olah Rasa* (emotional intelligence); *Budi Pekerti* (character); spiritual maturity; immeasurable wisdom	(Arifien et al., 2022; Rati et al., 2024; Suciptaningsih et al., 2017)
Predictability	Platform Merdeka Mengajar standardized modules; centralized best practices; ministry-approved activities	*Kodrat Alam* (contextual pedagogy); local wisdom; place-based curricula; pedagogical biodiversity	(Efendy, 2023; Ratna & Khadafie, 2025; Saddhono et al., 2022)
Control	SISTER app surveillance; algorithmic performance tracking; mandatory evidence uploads; digital portfolios	*Sistem Among*; *Pamong* (spiritual guide); *Rabithah* (sacred teacher-student bond); pedagogical autonomy	(Kholifatul, 2012; Riyadi et al., 2024)

B. Calculability: The Tyranny of Metrics vs. *Olah Rasa* (Feeling)

Ritzer's calculability dimension, which equates quantity with quality and renders uncountable phenomena invisible, dominates MBKM through its Eight Key Performance Indicators (IKU) that rank universities exclusively on graduate salaries, employment rates within six months, external learning participation percentages, and industry partnership numbers (Arifien et al., 2022; Kemendikbud, 2023; Rati et al., 2024). These metrics transform complex educational outcomes into database entries for PDDIKTI, where institutional reputation depends on numerical performance in categories like percentage of students participating in MBKM activities and percentage employed in multinational corporations, creating what Hayes and Wynyard (2002) identify as the audit culture of McUniversity (Hayes et al., 2017). Indonesia's curriculum reforms similarly respond to PISA rankings, Western-designed standardized tests measuring narrow competencies, driving national policy to optimize scores rather than cultivate culturally grounded capabilities. This obsession with calculable excellence pressures institutions to prioritize metric-friendly activities over immeasurable but transformative educational experiences, as evidenced by universities' focus on tracer study data uploads to satisfy Kemendikbud's quantitative surveillance systems.

The calculability tyranny systematically marginalizes *Olah Rasa* (refinement of feeling/emotional intelligence) and *Budi Pekerti* (noble character), foundational concepts in Indonesian indigenous pedagogy that emphasize moral sensitivity, empathetic responsiveness, and spiritual maturity as primary educational outcomes (Suciptaningsih et al., 2017). Ki Hajar Dewantara's educational philosophy positions character development, cultivated through mentorship relationships, ethical modeling, and contemplative practices, as the apex of learning, yet these qualities resist quantification and thus become invisible within PDDIKTI's database architecture. Traditional Javanese education integrates local wisdom through *Budi Pekerti* curricula teaching values like humility (tawadhu), discipline, and environmental stewardship, which require holistic assessment incompatible with standardized rubrics (Khalifah, 2019; Kholifatul, 2012). As universities compete for IKU rankings, immeasurable but essential dimensions of humanistic education, spiritual depth, cultural identity, ethical reasoning, are structurally devalued, creating what Ritzer terms the irrationality of rationality where measurable success produces hollowed graduates lacking the very qualities Dewantara considered constitutive of *Manusia Merdeka* (liberated human beings) (Ritzer, 2021).

C. Predictability: The Franchise Curriculum vs. *Kodrat Alam* (Nature)

McDonaldization's predictability dimension demands standardized products regardless of location, ensuring consumers receive identical experiences globally, a principle MBKM operationalizes through centralized digital platforms like Platform Merdeka Mengajar (PMM), which provides uniform teaching modules, assessment rubrics, and best practice templates to educators nationwide. Teachers in remote Papua access identical lesson plans as Jakarta instructors, with PMM's digital ecosystem offering pre-packaged pedagogical resources, standardized training videos, and exemplary practices designed for nationwide replication (Kemendikbud, 2023; Ratna & Khadafie, 2025). While marketed as supporting resource-limited regions, this centralization imposes what Ritzer identifies as franchise curricula, context-stripped educational products that prioritize uniformity over local adaptation (Ritzer, 2004). Even student freedom operates within predictable boundaries of ministry-approved MBKM activities (internships, teaching programs, entrepreneurship), where autonomy exists only within pre-structured pathways documented through mandatory digital reporting systems.

This standardization paradigm violates Ki Hajar Dewantara's foundational principle of *Kodrat Alam*, the philosophy that education must organically respond to students' inherent nature (kodrat anak) and environmental context (kodrat zaman), requiring pedagogical approaches tailored to specific cultural, geographical, and spiritual landscapes. Indigenous Javanese education historically embedded learning within local ecological knowledge, community values, and place-specific wisdom traditions, treating curricula as living adaptations rather than replicated franchises. The *Sistem Among* explicitly positions the educator (Pamong) as contextual guide whose methods respond fluidly to individual students' developmental trajectories and communal needs, rejecting one-size-fits-all approaches (Efendy, 2023; Kholifatul, 2012; Saddhono et al., 2022). By imposing predictable, centrally controlled modules, MBKM erases what Ritzer terms something, locally distinctive, culturally rich educational practices, replacing them with globally circulating nothing, generic, centrally conceived content that lacks indigenous rootedness (Ritzer, 2004). This franchise model systematically dismantles Indonesia's pedagogical biodiversity, homogenizing educational experiences in service of administrative efficiency and international comparability.

D. Control: The Algorithmic Bureaucrat vs. *Pamong* (Guardian)

Ritzer's control dimension involves replacing human autonomy with non-human technological systems to minimize unpredictability, a process fully realized in MBKM's app-based surveillance infrastructure where educators operate under algorithmic management.

The SISTER (Sistem Informasi Sumber Daya Terintegrasi) application mandates lecturers continuously upload evidence of teaching activities, research outputs, and community service, with performance metrics automatically calculated for institutional IKU compliance and individual career advancement (Ritzer, 2021). Platform Merdeka Mengajar similarly controls K-12 teachers through mandatory digital portfolios, standardized lesson uploads, and automated assessments, transforming pedagogical work into data production for centralized monitoring (Hanipah, 2023; Hayes et al., 2017; Ratna & Khadafie, 2025). This technological control shifts educators from autonomous professionals exercising contextual judgment to administrators managed by platforms, where algorithmic systems dictate acceptable practices, evaluate performance, and mediate teacher-student interactions through prescribed digital workflows.

This surveillance apparatus destroys the *Sistem Among*, Ki Hajar Dewantara's philosophy positioning educators as *Pamong* (shepherds/guardians) who cultivate students through loving guidance, spiritual mentorship, and intuitive responsiveness to individual needs. The *Pamong* role embodies Dewantara's triad *Ing Ngarso Sung Tulodho* (leading by example), *Ing Madyo Mangun Karso* (inspiring from within), and *Tut Wuri Handayani* (empowering from behind), requiring relational autonomy and pedagogical creativity incompatible with algorithmic prescription (Kholifatul, 2012; Sa'diyah, 2023; Suciptaningsih et al., 2017). Traditional Indonesian education emphasizes *Rabithah*, the sacred spiritual bond between teacher and student forged through mutual trust, moral modeling, and prolonged relationship-building, a connection severed when platforms mediate interactions and reduce teaching to evidence-uploadable transactions. As control shifts from human judgment to technological systems, educators lose capacity for the improvisational, emotionally attuned responsiveness central to indigenous pedagogy, producing what Ritzer terms dehumanization, the ironic outcome where rational systems create alienated, mechanized educational relationships antithetical to genuine learning communities.

3.2 The Grobalization of Indonesian Education

The MBKM policy facilitates what George Ritzer conceptualizes as grobalization, the imperialistic ambitions of corporations, nations, and organizations to impose standardized practices across geographic areas, overwhelming local distinctiveness in pursuit of profit through homogenization. Grobalization operates through three motor forces: capitalism, McDonaldization, and Americanization, creating systems where globally conceived nothing

(standardized, centrally controlled content) displaces locally rooted something (unique, culturally embedded practices). In Indonesian higher education, this manifests through MBKM's industry partnership mandates that structurally prioritize multinational corporate interests in curriculum design, transforming students into standardized labor units rather than *Manusia Seutuhnya* (whole human beings) as envisioned by Dewantara's philosophy (Prasetyo, 2024; Rakhmani, 2024). The policy's Link and Match framework grants industries direct roles in shaping coursework, providing internships, and defining competency standards, effectively outsourcing educational objectives to market actors whose primary concern is workforce readiness for global capitalism rather than holistic human development (Saa, 2025; Voak et al., 2024).

This grobal transformation is evidenced in MBKM's structural alignment with World Bank and OECD human capital frameworks that position education primarily as economic investment yielding measurable labor market returns. Universities face pressure to forge partnerships with multinational corporations, with IKU metrics explicitly measuring graduate employment in global firms and industry-aligned curricula, creating institutional incentives to prioritize corporate needs over indigenous pedagogical values (Arifien et al., 2022; Rati et al., 2024; Suparno & Ekopriyono, 2022). The internationalization of Indonesian higher education through MBKM enables what Ritzer describes as capitalist penetration, where global corporate interests gain direct access to shape curricula, extract student labor through extended internships, and pre-train workers according to standardized competency profiles compatible with transnational production systems. This represents a fundamental shift from Dewantara's vision of education as cultivating *Jiwa Merdeka* (liberated spirit) and national cultural identity, to neoliberal instrumentalization where students become interchangeable human resources optimized for multinational employability (Kholifatul, 2012).

The grobalization process systematically erases indigenous pedagogical frameworks that conceptualize education as holistic formation of spiritually grounded, culturally rooted, morally mature individuals embedded in communal responsibilities (Sagita Krissandi et al., 2023). Traditional Indonesian educational philosophies, whether Taman Siswa's emphasis on *Budi Pekerti* and *Kodrat Alam*, or Pesantren's cultivation of *Adab* and *Rabithah*, position learning within sacred, relational, and community-centered contexts incompatible with capitalism's instrumentalization logic (Andika, 2021; Sa'diyah, 2023). As MBKM's standardized platforms, metric-driven evaluations, and industry partnerships impose grobal uniformity, the

distinctive something of Indonesian pedagogy, its spiritual depth, relational richness, and cultural specificity, is displaced by the efficient, calculable, predictable, and controlled nothing of McDonaldized education. This transformation produces graduates potentially employable in global markets but culturally alienated, spiritually impoverished, and disconnected from the indigenous wisdom traditions that historically constituted Indonesian educational excellence, fulfilling Ritzer's warning that grobalization's homogenizing forces ultimately generate societies of standardized consumers and workers lacking the local knowledge and cultural identity necessary for authentic human flourishing (Drakulovska Cukalevska & Dragovic, 2018).

Table 2: Grobalization Forces in MBKM and Their Educational Impacts

Grobalization Element	MBKM Implementation	Impact on Indonesian Education	References
Capitalist Penetration	Industry partnership mandates; multinational curriculum influence; Link and Match policy	Transformation of students into standardized labor units; education as economic investment	(Rakhmani, 2024; Voak et al., 2024)
McDonaldization	Efficiency, calculability, predictability, control through digital platforms and metrics	Erosion of holistic development; prioritization of measurable outcomes over character formation	(Hayes et al., 2017; Ritzer, 2004)
Standardization	Uniform modules via PMM; centralized assessment rubrics; nationalized IKU targets	Displacement of local wisdom; homogenization of pedagogical practices; cultural alienation	(Ratna & Khadafie, 2025; Ritzer, 2004; Saddhono et al., 2022)
Erasure of Indigenous Values	Marginalization of *Manusia Seutuhnya*; devaluation of	Loss of *Jiwa Merdeka*, *Budi Pekerti*, *Rabithah*; disconnection from cultural identity	(Andika, 2021; Kholifatul, 2012; Sagita Krissandi et al., 2023)

	spiritual/relational pedagogy		

CONCLUSION

This study has demonstrated that the *Merdeka Belajar* policy, while rhetorically championed as a movement for educational liberation, structurally functions as a vehicle for the McDonaldization of Indonesian higher education. Through the lens of George Ritzer's theory, the analysis reveals that the drive for efficiency (accelerated credit conversions), calculability (quantitative IKU metrics), predictability (standardized digital modules), and control (algorithmic surveillance of educators) has created a McUniversity model. This rationalized framework systematically marginalizes the slow, holistic, and spiritually grounded processes inherent in Indigenous Indonesian Pedagogies. The obsession with quantifiable output renders invisible the unmeasurable qualities of *Olah Rasa* and *Budi Pekerti*, while the centralization of curriculum through digital platforms erodes the context-specific wisdom of *Kodrat Alam*.

The theoretical implications of these findings suggest that the freedom offered by MBKM is what Berlin might characterize as negative freedom, a deregulation of market entry, rather than the positive freedom envisioned by Ki Hajar Dewantara, which emphasizes self-actualization within a community. The policy facilitates the grobalization of education, where global corporate interests gain the power to displace local cultural distinctiveness. In this process, the unique something of Indonesian pedagogy, its emphasis on *Adab*, *Rabithah*, and communal responsibility, is replaced by the nothing of globally standardized competencies. This shift signals a transformation of the student from a *Manusia Seutuhnya* (whole human being) into a standardized labor unit, optimized for global capital but estranged from their own cultural heritage.

Ultimately, this research argues not for a rejection of administrative modernization, but for a conscious de-McDonaldization of the curriculum. A hybrid path is proposed: one that retains the administrative flexibility of the new system but firmly rejects its pedagogical standardization. Policymakers must move beyond the one-size-fits-all metrics of the IKU and empower regional institutions to define success through local wisdom. To preserve the nation's character, the *Sistem Among* must be reintegrated not merely as a historical footnote, but as the

ethical core of the educational system. This ensures that the pursuit of global competitiveness does not come at the cost of Indonesia's cultural soul, allowing future generations to be both globally employable and deeply Indonesian.

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