


# Supporting Transformation of Indonesian Higher Education Quality Assurance: The Advanced Socialization of Merdeka Belajar Policy 26th Chapter

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p><b>Article history</b> Received May 20, 2024 Revised Dec 6, 2024 Accepted Dec 14, 2024</p> <p><b>Keywords</b> Educational Policy, Merdeka Belajar Indonesian Higher Education Quality assurance Transformation</p>	<p>The regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture, Research, Technology, and Higher Education (Permendikbud) Number 53 of 2023 concerning higher education quality assurance standards as the 26th Chapter of the Merdeka Belajar policy, which was officially socialised on August 2023. The Policy is being promoted to encourage quality transformation in Indonesian higher education, which contains several complex reforms and still needs to be better understood by Indonesian higher education stakeholders. Policymakers and implementers in higher education have the potential to make mistakes in following up on this policy. This research aims to formulate a model for advanced socialisation of this Policy, implement it, and report the results. A qualitative, descriptive case study model was used in this research. Selected literature sources from the Scopus database were used to formulate a model of advanced socialisation. The socialisation model as a Webinar was implemented on 6th November 2023 for 838 participants consisting of higher education policymakers, lecturers, students, school principals, and teachers. The evaluation results show that the Webinar's objectives were achieved well, marked by increased participants' understanding. This research recommends continuing dissemination activities to expand and improve knowledge of these transformative policies. As the theoretical implication, this research promotes a new model of socialisation in educational Policy, namely collaborative academic socialisation in higher educational policy.</p> <p>This is an open-access article under the <a href="#">CC-BY</a> license.</p> 

## I. Introduction

The implementation of education in Indonesia is regulated by the national education system, established through law number 20 of 2003. To guarantee the quality of education - through this Policy, the government sets national education standards (SNP), which contain minimum standards as a reference that need to be met by education implementers, including at the higher education level. The implementation of higher education uses the principle of decentralisation (Dewi, 2021; Thoha et al., 2023). This principle divides education policy into two domains. First, national Policy is centred on the government as a national reference. Second, campus policies give the provide campuses with room for autonomy. However, the Ministry of Education and Culture continues to provide high levels of intervention to ensure quality (Yusnaini et al., 2022). For two decades, National and higher education

accreditation standards were regulated separately but integrated with national education policy.

National higher education standards and higher education accreditation standards then, two standards were packaged into one in the 26th Chapter of the *Merdeka Belajar* policy, which was marked by the stipulation of Regulation of the Minister of Education, Culture, Research and Technology (Permendikbud) Number 53 of 2023 concerning guaranteeing the quality of higher education (Permendikbud RI Number 53, 2023). The new Policy highlights various additions, developments, and changes integrated into it. On the other hand, the novelty proposed is a form of transformative effort to accelerate the development of the quality of higher education. On the other hand, these standards are transformative policies that have triggered confusion among policymakers at the higher education institution level. They may not have the same perspective on the Policy (Thohir et al., 2021).

National higher education and accreditation standards were regulated in a separate but integrated national education policy for two decades. National higher education standards and higher education accreditation standards then, two standards were packaged into one in the 26th Chapter of the *Merdeka Belajar* policy, which was marked by the stipulation of Regulation of the Minister of Education, Culture, Research and Technology (Permendikbud) Number 53 of 2023 concerning guaranteeing the quality of higher education (Permendikbud RI Number 53, 2023). The new Policy highlights various additions, developments, and changes integrated into it. On the other hand, the novelty proposed is a form of transformative effort to accelerate the development of the quality of higher education. On the other hand, these standards are transformative policies that have triggered confusion among policymakers at the higher education institution level. They may not have the same perspective on the Policy (Thohir et al., 2021).

The complex reform sparked varied reactions and questions from various entities. In addition to appreciating the goal of accelerating the improvement of the quality of higher education contained in it, many parties from academic and professional associations highlighted the philosophical basis behind the Policy that regulates the change from 'thesis mandatory' to 'thesis not mandatory.' Higher education institutional leaders wonder how to follow up on the new policy. Many lecturers ask similar questions: What are the implications of this Policy for the scope and approach to learning that he teaches? Meanwhile, students who are also responsive to this Policy are surprised to think that increasing the minimum number of credits, which they believe will increase the study load they need to complete. They are all target groups who have a position as an absolute element if the relevant Policy is to be implemented (Cropper et al., 2018).

This appreciative reaction and indications of confusion were recorded in the chat history on the LLDIKTI Region IV What is App Group, a communication medium between policymakers from several universities in Indonesia. This phenomenon shows the need to explain further the concepts, principles, and implementation mechanisms of this transformative policy. Strategically, further explanation needs to be facilitated with the right approach. The socialisation agenda needs to be initiated by academic entities outside of national education policymakers (Kusumawati et al., 2020; Li, 2017). So that the facilitation of further explanations about national education policies is considered more objective, one of the academic entities that meets these criteria is postgraduate students who focus on studying educational planning, Policy, and leadership. So, as postgraduate students in the Department of Educational Administration, we are taking steps to contribute to alleviating the problem of misunderstandings regarding the national standards and accreditation policies for Indonesian higher education. This research aims to design, implement, and publish a

report on that role. We are trying to design an appropriate socialisation model that master's Students of Educational Administration can carry out at the Faculty of Educational Sciences (FIP), Indonesian University of Education (UPI), to increase understanding of related entities, implement it, and report the results. If this phenomenon is ignored, policymakers, lecturers, and students in Indonesia have potential mistakes in following up on this Policy. In addition to responding to a relatively new problem, this research also contains unique novelty (Cahyo & Zaman, 2020) because it also discusses national education policies, which are believed to be the object of public attention, especially among higher education stakeholders in Indonesia. This study tries to answer three research questions based on the previous description. First, how to formulate a model for advanced socialisation of *Merdeka Belajar* policy 26th chapter for Indonesian higher education stakeholders. Second, how to implement this socialisation model. Then, third, how the results.

## II. Method

This research was carried out using a qualitative approach (Chali et al., 2022; Creswell & Creswell, 2018), and a case study method (Trilaksono et al., 2019) with a descriptive type (Susantini et al., 2020). Case studies prepare a description of an intervention or phenomenon and require research to start with a descriptive theory (Prihatsanti et al., 2018) The intended intervention is socialisation support that can facilitate interactive dialogue about the 26th chapter of the *Merdeka Belajar* policy. Policymakers have carried out the policy socialisation contained in Permendikbud Number 53 of 2023, but Indonesian higher education stakeholders need to understand it better.

The data in this research is divided into scientific articles and increasing understanding of the *Merdeka Belajar* policy 26th Chapter from the Indonesian higher education stakeholders involved. So, data collection uses literature reviews and participant observation. Data analysis uses thematic analysis techniques, namely analysing data to find a pattern through the data that has been collected (Yusnaini et al., 2022). The data collection stage through a literature review (Xiao & Watson, 2019) on policy socialisation (Reid, 2017) was carried out by searching for published scientific journal articles from the Scopus database to formulate how to design effective policy socialisation to facilitate in-depth explanations of a national education policy. We set inclusion and exclusion criteria to obtain valid and eligible literature sources. Look at Table 1.

The articles that resulted from the search process and met the inclusion criteria were determined as the basis for drafting a model for advanced socialisation of the *Merdeka Belajar* policy 26th chapter. The results of this stage are the answer to the first research question. Next, the

socialisation model was implemented with the researcher's role in the committee. The position of being a subject in this activity supports us in conducting participant observation. Then, the second research question. It is about the implementation process. A descriptive approach is used to answer this. Then, what are the results of implementing the policy socialisation model? This is the third research question sought to be answered through data on changes in participants' understanding of the *Merdeka Belajar* policy 26th Chapter after participating in related activities.

Table 1. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria in Research Literature Data Collection.

Aspects	Inclusion	Exclusion
Source Type	Article peer-reviewed journal indexed by Sinta or Scopus	Books publication, missing Links URLs, and Duplicate article
Year Publishing	Journal articles were published from January 2017 – February 2024	Journal articles published before January 2017
Language	English and Indonesia	Other Languages (e.g., Chinese et al. and more)
Context	Socialisation of Educational Policy and Educational Public	Non-educational contexts (e.g., company)
Theme	Higher Education and College Policy	Educational Policy for childhood, primary, junior, and high school

<sup>a</sup> Source: Modified from Dai & Ke (2022)

### III. Results and Discussion

#### A. The Model for Advanced Socialization of *Merdeka Belajar* Policy 26th Chapter

Every educational Policy aims to advance the implementation of education (George & Wooden, 2023). The national education policy for Indonesian universities is no exception as a public policy. According to Wiliam Dunn, the stages in making public Policy are divided into 5 phases: agenda setting, policy formulation, Policy Adoption, Policy Implementation, and Policy Assessment. (Rokim, 2019). A policy needs to be made by the authorities so that it has validity and is recognised within certain territorial boundaries (Rasyidi et al., 2021). If policymakers have determined the Policy, the next stage is policy implementation. In the case of *Merdeka Belajar's* policy in the 26th chapter, the policy was determined by the authority institution in the education sector in Indonesia, namely the Ministry of Education and Culture. However, the previous outreach by the Ministry of Education and Culture left several confusions among Indonesian higher education stakeholders. Certain people even consider neoliberal ideological motives in *Merdeka Belajar's* policies (Hatmanto et al., 2023). This condition indicates that advanced socialisation regarding the same policies needs to meet several criteria, which we illustrate in Table 2.

Table 2. Criteria for the Advanced Socialization Model Regarding *Merdeka Belajar* Policy 26th Chapter

No	Socialisation Criteria	Purpose
1	Organised by an academic entity in the field of education policy studies (Suryadi, 2023)	Encourage objective assessment from participants regarding the advanced socialisation agenda controversial policy
2	Efficient Budgeting (Parthasarathy & Vinayachandran, 2023)	Efficiency of costs incurred for academic entities
3	Presenting resource persons from stakeholder institutions and policymakers (Alazmi & Alazmi, 2023; Viennet & Pont, 2017)	Obtaining appropriate information about policies from policymakers
4	Generally open and easily accessible to Indonesian higher education stakeholders (Pratiwi et al., 2022)	Optimising the reach of expanding information regarding Indonesian higher education policies
5	Providing opportunities for dialogue between Indonesian higher education stakeholders and policymakers (Levyda et al., 2022)	Facilitate the alleviation of confusion about mechanisms for following up or implementing policies

<sup>b</sup> Source: Extracted based on problem findings from various social media after the socialisation of the *Merdeka Belajar* policy 26th chapter.

The first criterion was determined because since the Minister of Education and Culture started the socialisation on 29th August 2023, this national education policy has sparked controversy among students, academics, practitioners, and observers of higher education in Indonesia. So, the advanced socialisation of this Policy, which needs to be implemented immediately and effectively, is not hampered by anomalies and potential negative assessments from the public. In this context, the role of the implementing committee needs to be taken by an academic entity (Suryadi, 2023). This concerns us as postgraduate students in the Department of Educational Administration. As part of society, we need to pay serious attention to the continuity and quality of education.

The second criterion is set considering that academic entities are students, not funding parties, in the socialisation of national education policies. Nor does it have a significant source of independent funds to support a socialisation agenda targeting higher education stakeholder participants from all regions of Indonesia, which is believed to number thousands of people. At the same time, efficient budgeting in socialisation events is always recommended (Parthasarathy & Vinayachandran, 2023).

The third criterion requires the committee in the socialisation agenda to present representatives from related work units at the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture, Research and Technology. Of course, the most effective explanation of a policy can be obtained from the party or institution holding the authority that made the Policy (Viennet & Pont, 2017). It is essential that the gap between policymakers and policy implementers

can be eliminated (Alazmi & Alazmi, 2023). These criteria led us to apply to become resource persons at the Directorate of Higher Education, Ministry of Education and Culture, Research and Technology.

The fourth criterion was created considering that this Policy is valid, needs to be understood, and must be immediately followed up or implemented by higher education stakeholders. (Pratiwi et al., 2022). Spread throughout the territory of the unitary state of the Republic of Indonesia. Socialisation is needed to preserve a profession's status quo (Richards et al., 2018) Without exception, Indonesian higher education stakeholders are required to answer the demand for socialising the latest higher education policies if they want to maintain their existence as higher education practitioners. Meanwhile, in island countries, gathering participants quickly is relatively difficult if it is not supported by funding sources for accommodation for the participants. This criterion encourages advanced socialisation of this Policy not to be carried out on-site.

Meanwhile, the fifth criterion is the aspect that participants are most necessary. To increase the effectiveness of the *Merdeka Belajar* policy, the Policy needs to be socialised by providing opportunities for dialogue in interactive discussions (Levyda et al., 2022). We believe this after listening again to the various questions in the LLDIKTI Region IV Whats App Group. Many of these are operational, technical questions that require synchronous communication links. This criterion is also an aspect of opportunity that Indonesian higher education stakeholders did not obtain in the agenda for the launch and socialisation of the *Merdeka Belajar* policy 26th chapter carried out previously.

These five criteria encourage us to discuss, ask each other questions, share, and select each other's ideas. This activity encourages increased creative thinking abilities (Fan & Li, 2023) Because it urges us to find alternatives amidst minimum resources, we conducted a discussion process on 7 October 2023. We determined the committee structure and brought the UPI campus 'flag' as the organiser's profile. We have established a model for advanced socialisation of the *Merdeka Belajar* policy 26th chapter in the design depicted in Table 3.

Table 3. Advanced Socialization Model for *Merdeka Belajar* Policy 26th Chapter

Aspect	Description
Activity Name	:National Webinar on Indonesian Higher Education Leadership
Purpose	:Increasing the understanding of Indonesian higher education stakeholders regarding the <i>Merdeka Belajar</i> policy 26 <sup>th</sup> Chapter: Permendikbud Number 53 of 2023
Theme	:Transformation of national standards and higher education accreditation; Best Practice & Policy Analysis

Aspect	Description
Participants Target	:Higher education stakeholders (Chancellors, Deans, Heads of Study Programs, Lecturers, and students), as well as school principals and teachers in Indonesia
Time	:6th November, 2023 at 08.00 – 11.30 am
Mode	:Online in Zoom Meeting
Host	:Mia Nurul Khotimah
Prayer Reader	:Rd. Furqon
Minutes	:Arini Nur Fariha
Welcome	:Deputy Dean I of FIP, UPI
Speech	Deputy Chancellor I of UPI
Moderator	:Mochammad Devi Cahya Ruhimat
Topics and Speakers	:Explanation of <i>Merdeka Belajar</i> Policy 26 <sup>th</sup> Chapter by the Director of Learning and Student Affairs, Directorate of Higher Education, Ministry of Education and Culture (Sri Suning Kusumawardani) as the first speaker Best Practice Implementation of <i>Merdeka Belajar</i> Policy 26 <sup>th</sup> Chapter by the Higher Education Curriculum Expert Team Ministry of Education and Culture (Edy Cahyono) as the second speaker
Committee	:Advisor: Head of the Master and Doctoral Programs in Educational Administration Department, FIP, UPI. Director: Lecturer in Educational Policy Courses, FIP, UPI. Organizing Committee: Master Student of Educational Administration Department, FIP, UPI Class of 2023.
Media	:YouTube Administrasi Pendidikan
Instrument	:Google Form for registration of participants Google Form for Presence Participant Reflection & Feedback Instrument E-Certificate of Resource Persons, Moderators, Committees and Participants
Budgeting	:Voluntary contributions from the committee

The purposive sampling technique was used with four criteria determined by the researcher (Rony et al., 2023; Suharno et al., 2023), namely leaders of public and private universities, lecturers, school principals, senior high school teachers, and college students. The four criteria were established based on their roles and involvement in implementing this education policy. Therefore, we disseminate information about the follow-up socialisation activities of the *Merdeka Belajar* policy 26<sup>th</sup> chapter to the public and parties through various social media. This wide publication aims to engage as many stakeholders in higher education in Indonesia as possible through posters and messages accompanied by a Google form registration link. After disseminating this information for 14 days (October 20 - November 4, 2023), the registration results collected 838 participants. Based on participant categories, look at Table 4. Then, specifically for higher education participants, look at Figure 1.

Table 4. Categories & Recapitulation of Participants

Category	Total Presentation Per category	
Lecturer	338	40%
Principal/Teacher	101	12%
College Student	253	30%

Category	Total	Presentation Per category
Higher Education Leaders	146	18%
Total	838	100%

<sup>c</sup> Source: Google Registration Form

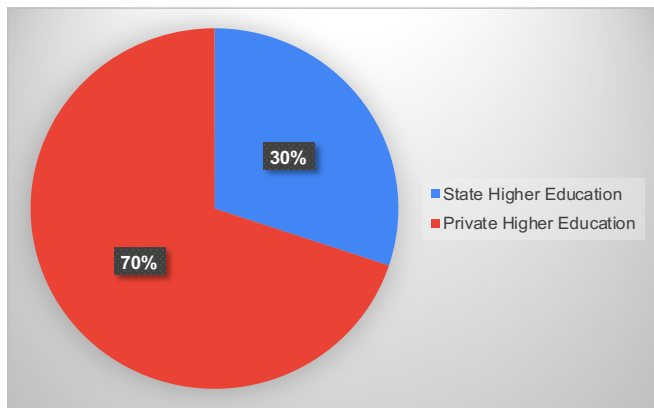


Fig. 1. The Origin of Participant's Higher Education Institution

<sup>d</sup> Source: Google Registration Form

### B. Implementation of Advanced Socialization of Merdeka Belajar Policy 26th Chapter

After making preparations, including publication via various social media, data collection on potential participants, and sending a Zoom link as a media platform (Rukmini et al., 2023) According to the plan, the activity was carried out to registrants on 4 November 2023. We held a national webinar on Indonesian higher education leadership online via the premium Zoom meeting platform and broadcast it live on YouTube. The committee gathered in one workstation in the Faculty of Educational Sciences, Indonesian University of Education (UPI) 's third-floor meeting room building on Monday, 6 November 2023.

Facilitating the central part of the activity, the event was handed over to Mochammad Devi, who served as chairman of the organising committee and moderator. He reviewed the purpose of the ongoing webinar activity as "a manifestation of our devotion and contribution to efforts to transform the process and achievements of the quality of Indonesian education at the higher education level." where This needs to be supported by the implementation of strategic education policies in renewing higher education programs that can meet the needs of national development targets (Al-Momani et al., 2023). He continued his foreword by explaining the mechanism for delivering the material, emphasising the allocation of time for discussion, introducing the background of the speakers, encouraging the conduciveness of the Webinar, and directing participants to optimise the Zoom features to convey opinions and ask questions - within the specified time. Moving on to the first topic regarding the explanation of *Merdeka Belajar* policy 26th chapter

through Permendikbud Number 53 of 2023, the opportunity to explain was given to the first speaker.

### C. Explanation Of Merdeka Belajar Policy Chapter 26th

Suning explains the main points contained in the *Merdeka Belajar* policy 26th chapter. In the introductory part of the material, she reveals the background of the preparation of the *Merdeka Belajar* Policy 26th Chapter, which includes two things. First, the policies governing national higher education standards and those governing higher education accreditation in Indonesia were previously separate. Even though the two interact directly, this needs to be 'packaged' in one unified policy product to make it more effective and reduce the potential for disconnection. Second, the *Merdeka Belajar* policy 2nd chapter, *Merdeka Belajar-Kampus Merdeka* (MBKM), is a policy that can strengthen multi-cultural interactions (Suharno et al., 2023). However, the national higher education standards therein need to be considered more appropriate. Because it still places too much of a burden on higher education practitioners due to the details of the eight standards set out in it. To accelerate the adaptation of higher education and encourage the readiness of Indonesia's human resources at the level of global competition and the vision of a golden Indonesia in 2045, higher education standards need to undergo reform. So, the national higher education standards promoted in *Merdeka Belajar* 26th chapter are placed as a framework and only include three standards: output, process, and input. Look at Figure 2.

*Merdeka Belajar* policy 26th chapter through Permendikbud Number 53 of 2023 seeks to simplify the workload in implementing the Tri Dharma of higher education. Previously, there were eight standards for each, with details standardised nationally. With this policy update, every higher education institution in Indonesia can regulate its weight and workload by referring to the three standards frameworks. The explanation of the material was continued with an explanation of graduate competency standards (part of the output standards), which were previously known to have attracted much public attention due to the distribution of a short video by the Minister of Education and Culture, Nadiem Makarim, which stated that "a thesis is no longer mandatory."

The *Merdeka Belajar* policy 26th chapter does not require these as it did before. Theses and dissertations be abolished. However, philosophically, it is suggested that universities review whether theses, theses, and dissertations are appropriate to be chosen as the form of final assignment in the study program. Yes or no, universities have the autonomy to determine this independently. Universities must continue to look for alternatives in developing the academic activities they organise (Salvador et al., 2021).

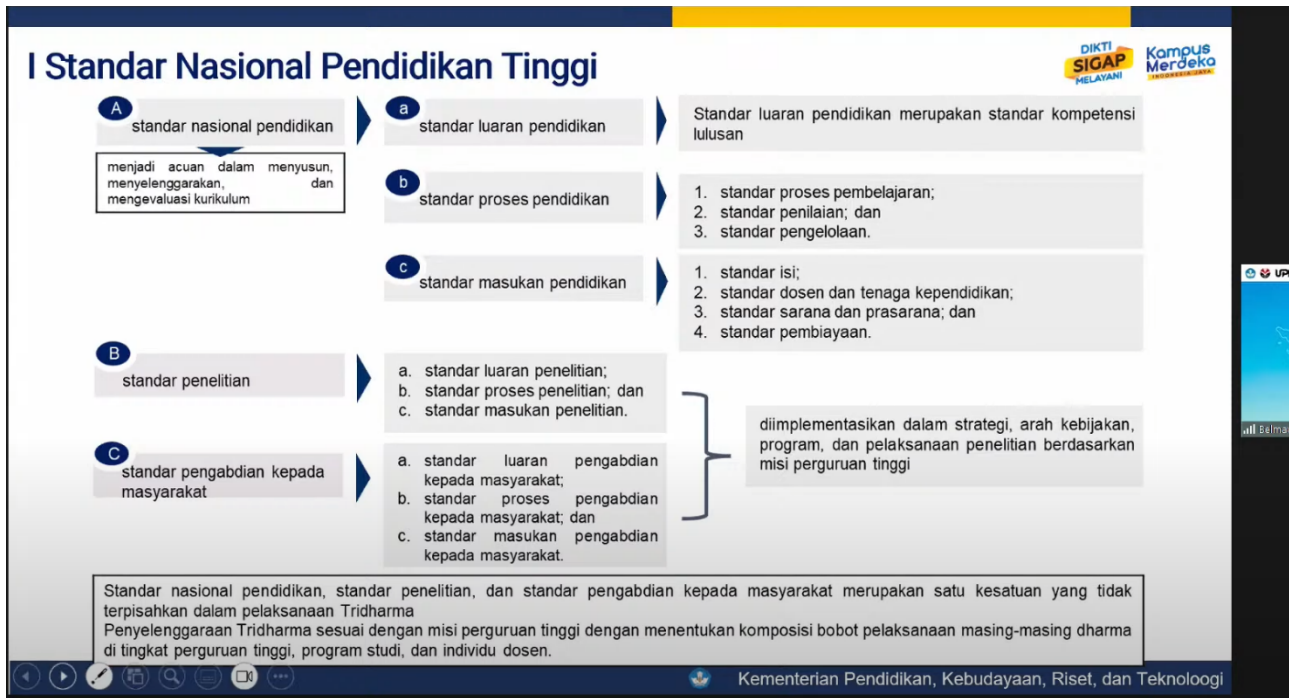


Fig. 2. Mind Map of Indonesia's National Higher Education Standards in the Merdeka Belajar Policy 26th Chapter

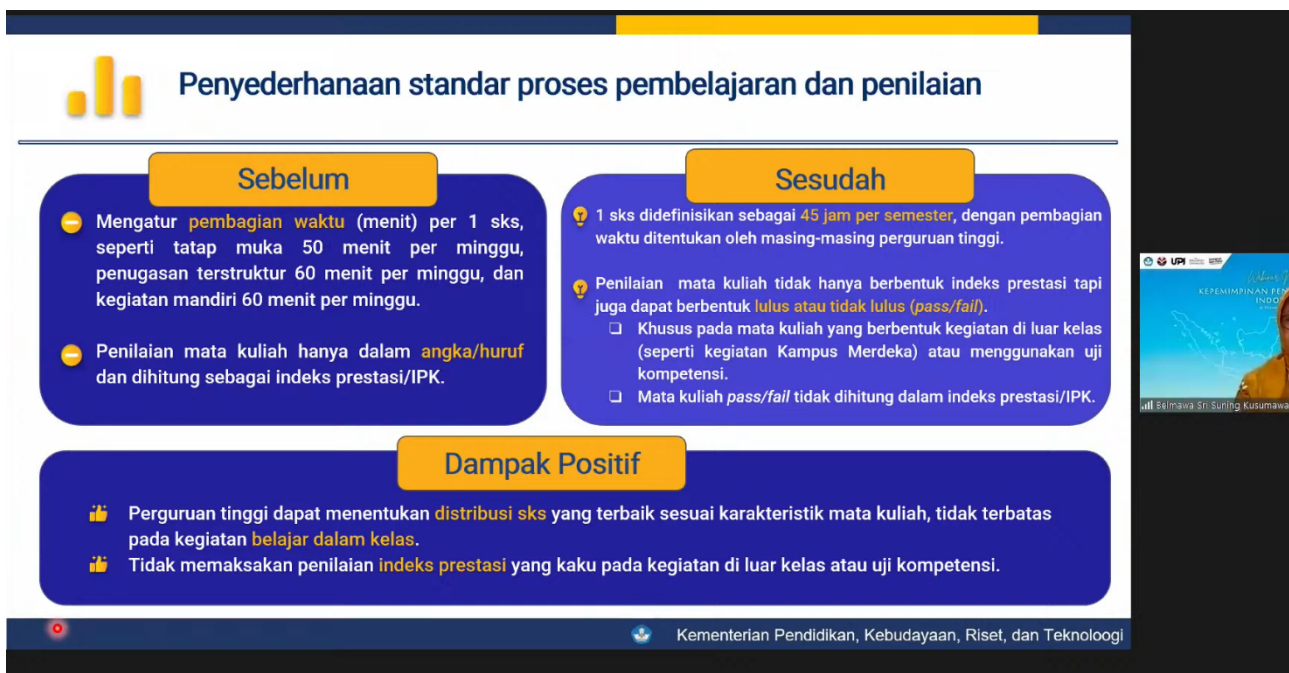


Fig. 3. Explanation of Competency Standards for Higher Education Graduates Source: Master's Student of Educational Administration (2023)

The main idea in this context is that theses, theses, and dissertations are only some of the final assignments suitable for measuring graduates' competency in all higher education study programs in Indonesia. Vocational colleges, universities with exact sciences, or professional colleges, for example, require different forms of final assignments. Because the form of the final assignment must suit the characteristics of each field of science. This Policy contains expectations that Indonesian universities can optimise each student's diverse potential and assess

student learning progress relatively, in addition to considering the vision of each university and labour market demand (Gunarso et al., 2023). At the global level to excel in it. The transformation of higher education needs to continue to be carried out to adapt to current developments (Fadhli, 2020). Suning continued his presentation by explaining the learning process standards. In the previous national standard, the weight of learning time allocation was regulated by the duration of minutes for each study credit unit (SKS): face-to-face 50 minutes

per week, structured assignments 60 minutes per week, and independent activities 60 minutes per week. Meanwhile, in the *Merdeka Belajar* policy 26th chapter, one credit is defined as 45 hours of learning per semester with a division of time determined by each university. This novelty allows universities to develop a more dynamic credit distribution formula according to the needs of creating learning activities and their respective contexts. Another element of information from the *Merdeka Belajar* policy 26th Chapter, which triggered quite a noisy reaction

from higher education stakeholders, was the curriculum duration and study load, especially for master's and applied master's education programs. For master's programs regulated in the content standards in the previous Policy, the minimum study load is 36 credits. Meanwhile, Permendikbud Number 53 of 2023 in Article 19 states that the minimum study load is 54 credits to 72 credits. This means an additional minimum study load of 18 credits to 36 credits. Suning explained the changes. Look at Table 5.

Table 5. Summary of Travel Period & Study Load for Masters, Doctoral, Professional, and Specialist or Subspecialist Programs

Programs	Study Load	Final Project
Magister / Magister Applied	They range from 54 (fifty-four) credits to 72 (seventy-two) credits and are designed with a curriculum travel time of 3 (three) to 4 (four) semesters.	Required skill(s): Microsoft Office in the form of a thesis, prototype, project, or other similar final projects.
Doctor / Doctor Applied	The curriculum is designed for 6 (six) semesters: a. 2 (two) semesters of study that support research; and b. 4 (four) semesters of research.	Required skill(s): Microsoft Office in the form of a dissertation, prototype, project, or other similar final projects.
Profession	At least 36 (thirty-six) credits, designed with a travel period curriculum of 2 (two) semesters.	
Specialists / Subspecies	Universities prepare and set study load and travel time curricula in accordance with the provisions of the legislation with professional organizations, other ministries, and/or non-governmental agencies responsible for quality professional services.	

This slide triggers reactions to questions in the Zoom Meeting chat feature. Most of those who reacted were students who were worried about the additional study load they needed to complete as an implication of implementing this Policy. "What does that mean there will be an increase in the number of courses?" is one of the questions. Suning responded to the forum situation at that time by explaining the situation further. One of the final assignments commonly assigned to master's programs is a thesis. A thesis generally only weighs eight credits. Even though the preparation process from start to finish often ranges from a deadline of 6 months to 12 months (1 to 2 semesters). If the ratio per semester is 20 credits to 24 credits, then the actual time spent on a thesis is equivalent to 20 credits to 48 credits of non-thesis courses.

This explanation shows that increasing the minimum learning load does not increase the number of courses. However, it accommodates more student learning activities outside of class activities, which so far tend to be outside of curriculum implementation activities. This indicates that these or other final assignments will experience weight rationalisation in the future. It is generally eight credits; it may be 20 in the future. With this explanation, the anomaly of thinking about increasing the number of courses has been successfully clarified.

Innovation can only be carried out in a vast space. *Merdeka Belajar* policy through Permendikbud Number 53 of 2023 intends to provide more space so that universities can carry out innovations in providing personalised higher education according to the characteristics of each institution and its students. We

found that this idea aligns with the idea that education needs to be oriented toward the principle of subjectivity, namely, seeing students as subjects in their own lives, not as objects of educational intervention (Biesta, 2020). The presentation of the material continued with an explanation of the higher education accreditation system and standards, which were previously regulated separately with national higher education standards and were unified for the first time in the *Merdeka Belajar* policy 26th chapter through Permendikbud Number 53 of 2023. Suning illustrated fundamental changes in the scope of the accreditation system of Indonesian universities. Look at Figure 4.

A good element of information for Indonesian higher education stakeholders from this Policy is the shift in the source of study program accreditation costs initially borne by the higher education institution that oversees the study program - for being borne by the government. Both are carried out by the National Accreditation Body for Higher Education (BAN-PT) and the Independent Accreditation Agency of Education (Lamdik). In addition, study program accreditation, which was previously carried out by scheduling each study program within the same higher education institution, can now be carried out simultaneously at the study program management level. This allows the data compilation process and resource use to be more efficient. Previously, the accreditation status categories for universities and study programs were four predicates: not accredited, well accredited, very good accredited, and excellent accredited.

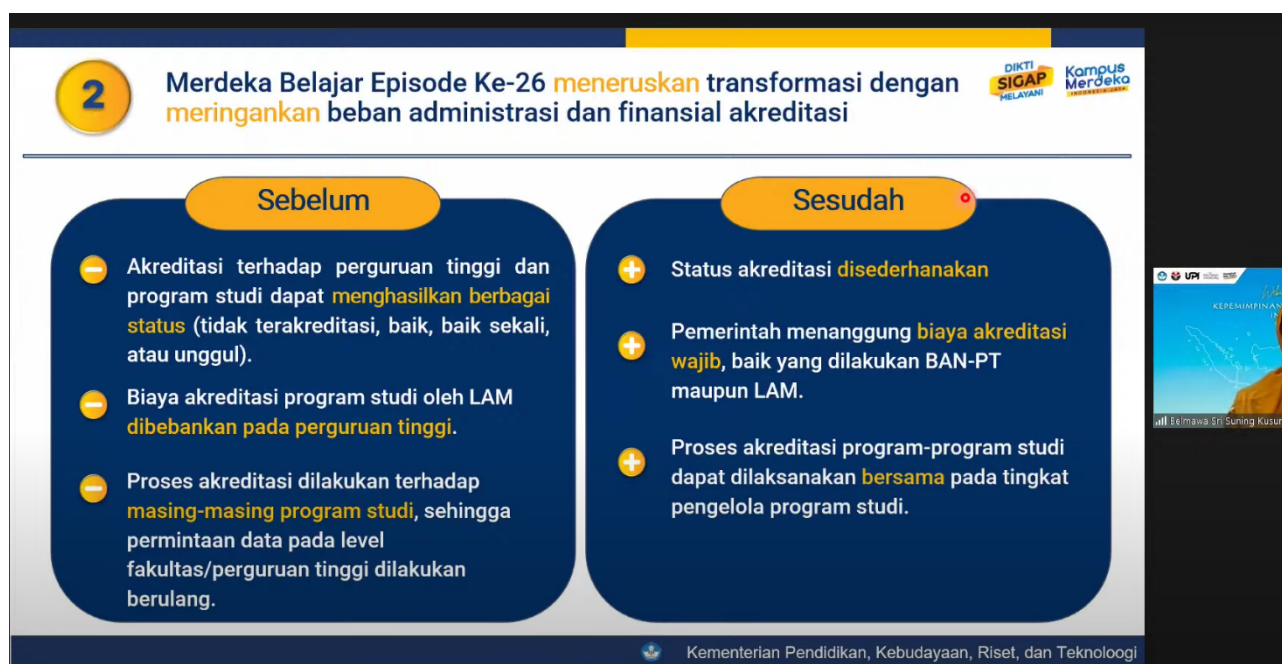


Fig. 4. Fundamental Changes in the Accreditation System of Indonesian Higher Education. Source: Master's Student of Educational Administration.

In the Merdeka Belajar Policy 26th Chapter, this was changed. Only two predicates are determined for universities: unaccredited and accredited. Meanwhile, for study programs, accreditation can produce four statuses, namely not accredited, accredited, which means it meets the national standards of the Directorate of Higher Education (SN-Dikti); superior accredited, which means it meets LAM standards; and accredited by an international accreditation agency which makes the related study program non-compliant. It needs to undergo national accreditation.

Based on the presentation of this first material, the *Merdeka Belajar* policy 26th chapter through Permendikbud Number 53 of 2023 concerning the transformation of national standards and higher education accreditation promises three benefits for the continuity of higher education. First, universities have more expansive space for quality assurance according to mission differentiation. Because one of the meanings of quality is an effort to adapt to stating goals (Fadhli, 2020). Second, the administrative and financial burdens on higher education institutions in accreditation are reduced for resource efficiency. Third, universities can be more adaptive and focused on improving the quality of the Tri Dharma of Higher Education.

#### B. Best Practice Implementation of Merdeka Belajar Policy 26th Chapter

Designed as the material that deepens and illustrates policy implementation, this second material is delivered with a more operational approach. The resource

persons in the second material session were the previously established socialisation model design, namely Edy Cahyono, a team of Indonesian higher education curriculum experts, and the Dean of the Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences, Semarang State University. Attempting to position himself as a policy recipient who is analytical about the *Merdeka Belajar* policy 26th chapter, Cahyono presented a slide presentation titled Analysis and Challenges of Implementing Higher Education Quality Assurance Standards.

The Semarang State University professor began his presentation with a philosophical view that the *Merdeka Belajar* episode 26 policy emerged as a logical consequence of the rapid development of the times. Permendikbudristek number 53 concerning higher education quality assurance is a development that is still related to previous related policies. Permendikbudristek number 53 of 2023 contains several novelties. However, certain aspects still refer to Law Number 12 of 2012 concerning Higher Education, Presidential Regulation Number 8 of 2012 concerning the Indonesian National Qualifications Framework (KKNI), and Minister of Research, Technology, and Higher Education Regulation Number 44 of 2015 concerning national standards for higher education.

Permendikbudristek, number 53 of 2023, is developing a transformation strategy to achieve the goals stated in the previous policies. This means a mandate from Permendikbudristek Number 53 of 2023 has been carried out, but several new things must be adjusted.



Fig. 5. Correlation Permendikbud Number 53 of 2023 with Previous Related Policies. Source: Master’s Student of Educational Administration (2023).

Cahyono explained that Permendikbud Number 53 of 2023 summarises four policies regarding quality assurance in higher education that were in effect previously, namely Permenristekdikti Number 62 of 2016, Minister of Education and Culture Regulation Number 3 and Number 5 of 2020, as well as Permendikbudristek Number 56 of 2022 because the four of them are considered no longer suitable to be used as a reference in the transformation process of higher education in Indonesia. In connection

with the pros and cons regarding the form of final assignments for bachelor's, master's, professional, and doctoral programs widely discussed on various social media, Cahyono extracted an overview of the main competencies detailed in Permendikbud Number 53 of 2023. The keywords obtained from the results of the competency review can be a basis for universities, especially study programs, in determining the appropriate form of the final assignment; look at Figure 6.

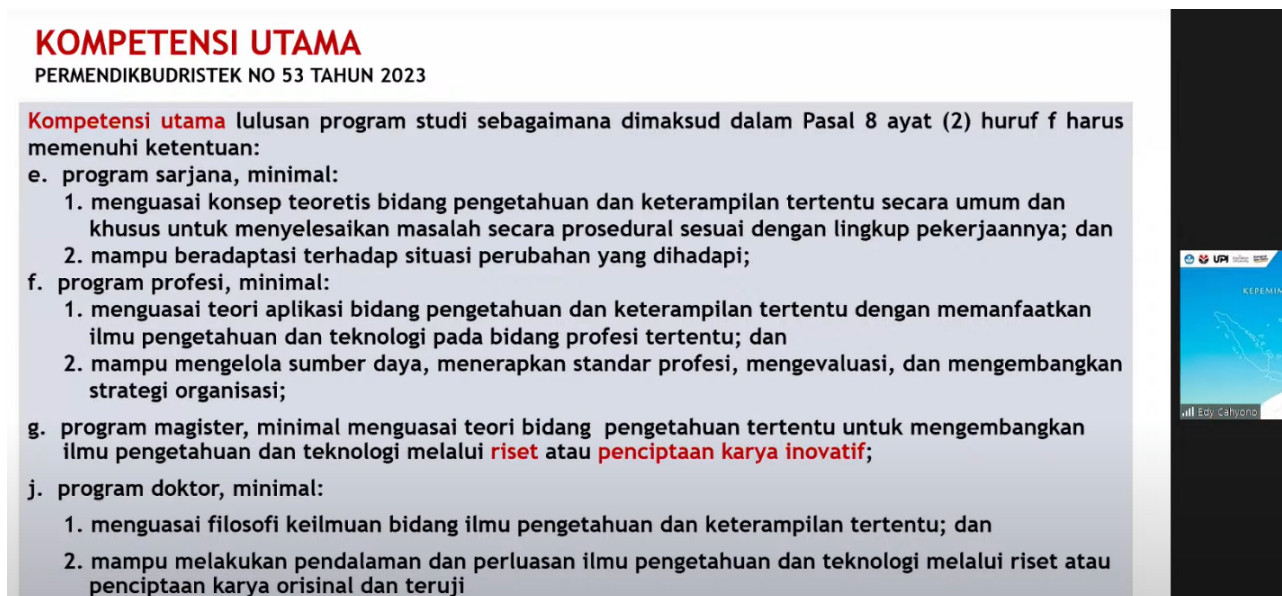


Fig. 6. Overview of Main Competencies for Various Programs. Source: Master’s Student of Educational Administration (2023).

Regarding the increase in the minimum number of credits, Cahyono illustrated how learning activities and graduation prerequisites for the doctoral program at Semarang State University were previously in effect.

Graduation requirements that apply outside of the proposal trial, qualification exam, and dissertation are publication in reputable journals, national and international seminars,

and TOEFL score. However, this requirement needs to be recognised as weighting credits; look at Figure 7.

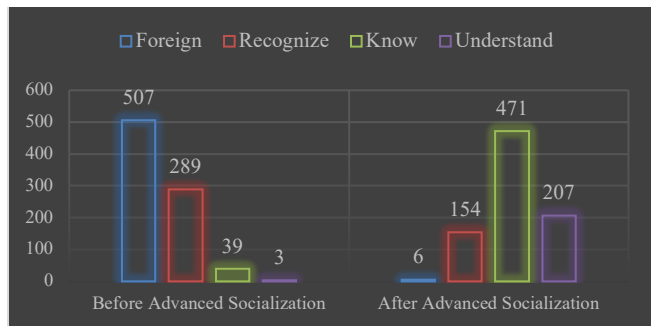


Fig. 7. Graduation Requirements in Science Education Doctoral Program Semarang State University Before Permendikbud Number 53 of 2023

The graduation requirements, divided into 5 points in the middle column of Figure 8, apply to something other than Semarang State University. Many doctoral and master's programs impose similar graduation requirements but are not recognised as having credit weight. Research activities and preparing scientific articles for publication in reputable journals require complex competencies. In addition to solving problems procedurally, this activity tests students through publication stages requiring challenging knowledge, attitudes, skills, and abilities. This burdens most students with the challenges of international language skills, publication costs, choosing the right journal publisher, lack of experience, duration of publication, difficulty writing or revising, and stress (Hidayat et al., 2024). Activities to fulfil similar graduation requirements can be more appreciated by giving credit

weight to them. This can be an alternative to the credit distribution policy that universities can implement to increase the minimum number of credits. This is related to the pedagogical competence of lecturers, which is very important in any field of science (Özer et al., 2020) held by universities.

Permendikbud Number 53 of 2023, as a manifestation of *Merdeka Belajar* policy 26th chapter, does provide several new challenges. However, this Policy encourages every university in Indonesia to innovate more. This Policy is relevant to the concept of 21st Century leadership, which emphasises the importance of leading with an authentic, open mind and transformative attitude (Komariah, 2021). In line with the need for universities to encourage the improvement of students' competencies and skills as lifelong learners, which is very important in current adult education practices (Sentürk & Duran, 2020). This can be seen from the simplification of national higher education standards and simplification and new support from the government for accreditation of study programs.

### C. The Interactive Dialogue

The first and second materials received significant attention and response from the participants. The high response was seen using the chat feature on the Zoom meeting platform and live YouTube broadcasts. Referring to the fifth criterion in the previously established socialisation model design, namely providing opportunities for dialogue, the moderator allows participants to give responses and questions synchronously. Table 6 shows a summary of the interactive dialogue that occurred between participants, with the moderator and people resource.

Table 6. Interactive Dialogue Summary

Participant Account	No	Statements & Questions	Answer
Dadun Kohar	1	What is the relationship between the weight of the curriculum and the study period determined by the university?	Suning: The curriculum travel period follows the university PIN based on the maximum provisions of 2x terms studies
	2	Redaction of the sentence regarding the form of the final assignment for master's programs in articles 19 and 20 of Permendikbud Number 53 of 2023 seems like a thesis, prototype, and more at once. What does it mean to choose one form of final assignment?	Suning: This article aims to provide options for final assignments that study programs can determine according to their respective visions. Then, the form of the final assignment can be selected but not limited to one.
	3	Study program accreditation is carried out simultaneously at the program management level studies. Is this a choice or a necessity?	Suning: It is optional.
Dewa Ayu Susi	4	It was found that the implementation of <i>Outcome-Based Education (OBE)</i> still needed improvement. So, it is recommended that we appeal again.	Suning: We accept this input for further action. At the same time, we hope that SPNI University's height can be further optimised
	5	It is recommended that SPNI be added with specific linement matrices that show direct connectivity between external standards and other standards.	Suning: The National Higher Education Standards in Permendikbud Number 53 of 2023 confirm the correlation between output and other standards.
	6	Extracurriculars have tended to be separate. We recommend that these be integrated with Learning Outcomes Outer (CPL)	That is right; this needs to be recognised in the accreditation instrument, which is currently in the process of development
Ibrahim Jamil	7	Appreciation for the initiation of organising Webinar activities	Mohammad Devi: Thank you very much

Participant Account	No	Statements & Questions	Answer
	8	The previously described implementation of Permendikbud Number 53 of 2023 could begin within the next 2 years. Is that allowed if a university wants to change the thesis, thesis, and dissertation to another form of the final project earlier (before 2 years)?	Cahyono: It is perfect if it is done earlier as long as the form of the final assignment chosen is deemed to be more effective than the form of the final assignment that was applied previously
Muhamad Arsan	9	What are the challenges of implementing strengthening science amidst global competition?	Higher education aims to turn people into vital resources for organisations in politics, education, economics, or other fields (Kartakusumah et al., 2023). However, there needs to be a stronger connection between higher education activities and the characteristics of practical activities. So, universities need to ensure that students master 21st-century competencies.
Ellen RB Sitorus	10	Is every state or private university obliged to change the form of the final assignment?	Permendikbud Number 53 of 2023 does not require a change of form thesis. This Policy allows for similar decisions.

A more significant number of questions emerged from activity participants than the number of responses or suggestions. This reinforces our previous assessment that Permendikbud number 53 of 2023 still needs to be better understood by Indonesian higher education stakeholders. Even though both speakers and moderators have emphasised that this Policy does not necessarily require the replacement of theses and dissertations into other forms of final assignments, participants still repeatedly raise questions to confirm the accuracy of their meaning. The time available in the dialogue session needed to be increased to facilitate all participants' responses to the presentation of the material they had read. However, question 8 in Table 5 shows that stakeholders are enthusiastic about immediately implementing the *Merdeka Belajar* policy in the 26th chapter. The interactive dialogue session felt the spirit of collaboration to improve the quality of higher education in Indonesia.

### 3. The Result of Advanced Socialization of *Merdeka Belajar* Policy 26th Chapter

The national webinar activities for Indonesian higher education leadership were carried out using the previously

established socialisation model design. Although the limited time for holding the Webinar did not allow for a detailed discussion of all parts of Permendikbud Number 53 of 2023, the main points, especially the new aspects that differentiate this Policy from various previous related policies, were successfully socialised. This webinar allowed Indonesian higher education stakeholders to conduct collaborative analysis and dialogue. Participants gained increased understanding and new instructions regarding implementing Permendikbud Number 53 of 2023. This can be seen from the compilation of data from participants filling in feedback instruments, which we distributed with Google Forms before and after the event. Look at Figure 8.

Along with statements about increasing understanding, hundreds of positive assessments were pinned by participants in the Google form provided by the committee. "This webinar succeeded in providing very valuable benefits." "Expert resource persons and communicative moderators are successful." "Waiting for the next webinar!" wrote several participants.



Fig. 8. The Changes in Participants' Cognitive Levels between before and after the advanced socialisation

The Webinar ended with the handing over of e-certificates to the two-resource people and a photo session for the participants. The committee emphasised its hopes with the statement that through this Webinar, universities nationwide will be prepared to follow up on policies. Freedom to learn Chapter 26 can increase significantly. So, we can transform all the quality of higher education to create a future generation for Indonesia that is increasingly competitive globally. Of course, quality education will

increase achievements in other public sectors, such as economic and social opportunities. (Dryden-Peterson et al., 2019). This result indicates that a new model for socialisation, like this one, is necessary. Furthermore, as the theoretical implication, this research promotes a new model of socialisation in the context of educational Policy, namely collaborative academic socialisation in higher educational Policy, which includes stages: 1) the Well-being of academic entities, 2) Noting the problems, 3)

formulating the socialisation approach based on relevant literature, 4) implementations, 5) Evaluate the result, 6) publish the impact.

#### IV. Conclusion

The Merdeka Belajar Policy, outlined in Permendikbud Number 53 of 2023, introduces transformative changes to higher education quality assurance, including simplified national standards, enhanced accreditation systems, financial support for study program accreditation, and increased credit units for extracurricular activities. However, challenges in understanding and implementing the policy have highlighted the need for effective socialisation efforts. A national webinar on higher education leadership, held on 6th November 2023, addressed these challenges with insights from the Ministry of Education and Culture and Semarang State University, focusing on institutional innovation and adaptive final assignments to assess competencies. With 838 participants from Indonesian higher education institutions, the event significantly improved understanding and encouraged the dissemination of insights within institutions while advising policymakers to extend outreach. This initiative proposed a collaborative academic socialisation model with six stages: engaging academic entities, identifying problems, formulating a literature-based approach, implementing socialisation, evaluating outcomes, and publishing impacts.

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