

## Transformative learning for MBKM in Indonesia: An epistemology and alternative view

Aprendizagem transformadora para MBKM na Indonésia: Uma epistemologia e uma visão alternativa

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### Abstract

This research aims to provide a transformative learning epistemology in the Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) curriculum in Indonesia. This curriculum has been implemented since 2021. This curriculum allows university students to gain learning experience outside campus for three semesters. This curriculum is relevant to the concept of transformative learning. Epistemologically, students are not only required to understand the object being studied, but also, in their own way, find new perspectives and understanding of the object being studied. This research is qualitative research using a philosophical perspective, especially in the epistemological aspect. Epistemology studies aim to look for things related to knowledge, such as sources of knowledge, processes, criteria for truth and validation. This research concluded that transformative learning and MBKM are philosophically related, especially with regard to human ontology as free being. Freedom learning is well adopted in transformative learning strategies. In this strategy, the role of the lecturer is only to present the object of knowledge, create an actual atmosphere, and then let students discover knowledge in their own way. In implementing MBKM, this transformative learning strategy still has several challenges, including: student learning habits that still depend on lecturers or data sources, and lecturers' lack of knowledge about techniques for implementing transformative learning. However, overall, this transformative learning strategy is very suitable to be applied in higher education, because as adult learners, students must be able to use their minds and reasoning to gain knowledge and understanding in their own way.

**Keywords:** College education; Teaching and Learning; Active learning; MBKM; Transformative Learning; Indonesian Education.

### Resumo

Esta pesquisa visa fornecer uma epistemologia de aprendizagem transformadora no currículo do Independent Learning Campus (MBKM) na Indonésia. Este currículo está implementado desde 2021. Este currículo permite que estudantes universitários ganhem experiência de aprendizagem fora do campus por três semestres. Este currículo é relevante para o conceito de aprendizagem transformadora. Epistemologicamente, os alunos não são apenas obrigados a compreender o objeto em estudo, mas também, à sua maneira, a encontrar novas perspectivas e compreensão do objeto em estudo. Esta pesquisa é uma pesquisa qualitativa que utiliza uma perspectiva filosófica, especialmente no aspecto epistemológico. Os estudos epistemológicos visam buscar coisas relacionadas ao conhecimento, como fontes de conhecimento, processos, critérios de verdade e validação. Esta pesquisa concluiu que a aprendizagem transformadora e o MBKM estão filosoficamente relacionados, especialmente no que diz respeito à ontologia humana como ser livre. A aprendizagem da liberdade é bem adotada em estratégias de aprendizagem transformadora. Nesta estratégia, o papel do docente é apenas apresentar o objeto de conhecimento, criar uma atmosfera real e depois deixar os alunos descobrirem o conhecimento à sua maneira. Na implementação do MBKM, esta estratégia de aprendizagem transformadora ainda enfrenta vários desafios, incluindo: hábitos de aprendizagem dos alunos que ainda dependem de professores ou fontes de dados, e falta de conhecimento dos professores sobre técnicas para implementar a aprendizagem transformadora. No entanto, no geral, esta estratégia de aprendizagem transformadora é muito adequada para ser aplicada no ensino superior, porque, como alunos adultos, os alunos devem ser capazes de usar a mente e o raciocínio para adquirir conhecimento e compreensão à sua própria maneira.

**Palavras-chave:** Educação universitária; Ensino e Aprendizagem; Aprendizagem ativa; MBKM; Aprendizagem transformadora; Educação Indonésia.

## Resumen

Esta investigación tiene como objetivo proporcionar una epistemología del aprendizaje transformadora en el plan de estudios Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) en Indonesia. Este plan de estudios se implementa desde 2021. Este plan de estudios permite a los estudiantes universitarios adquirir experiencia de aprendizaje fuera del campus durante tres semestres. Este plan de estudios es relevante para el concepto de aprendizaje transformador. Epistemológicamente, no sólo se requiere que los estudiantes comprendan el objeto que se estudia, sino que también, a su manera, encuentren nuevas perspectivas y comprensión del objeto que se estudia. Esta investigación es una investigación cualitativa que utiliza una perspectiva filosófica, especialmente en el aspecto epistemológico. Los estudios de epistemología tienen como objetivo buscar cosas relacionadas con el conocimiento, como fuentes de conocimiento, procesos, criterios de verdad y validación. Esta investigación concluyó que el aprendizaje transformativo y MBKM están filosóficamente relacionados, especialmente en lo que respecta a la ontología humana como ser libre. El aprendizaje libre está bien adoptado en las estrategias de aprendizaje transformador. En esta estrategia, el papel del profesor es sólo presentar el objeto de conocimiento, crear una atmósfera real y luego dejar que los estudiantes descubran el conocimiento a su manera. Al implementar MBKM, esta estrategia de aprendizaje transformador todavía enfrenta varios desafíos, que incluyen: hábitos de aprendizaje de los estudiantes que aún dependen de los profesores o fuentes de datos, y la falta de conocimiento de los profesores sobre las técnicas para implementar el aprendizaje transformador. Sin embargo, en general, esta estrategia de aprendizaje transformador es muy adecuada para ser aplicada en la educación superior, porque, como estudiantes adultos, los estudiantes deben poder usar su mente y su razonamiento para adquirir conocimiento y comprensión a su manera.

**Palabras clave:** Educación universitaria; Enseñanza y Aprendizaje; Aprendizaje activo; MBKM; Aprendizaje transformador; Educación Indonesia.

## 1. Introduction

Merdeka Belajar, launched by the Indonesian Ministry of Education, is one of the efforts made by the Minister of Education, Nadiem Makarim, to improve the outcome of the education process. This program is implemented using different methods and strategies from elementary to higher education levels.

Until now, the Indonesian Ministry of Education has not determined one or several learning strategies that are required or recommended for running the program. Thus, every education provider, whether at the level of institutions or educators, can choose the learning strategies, methods, and media that they consider easiest or best. On the one hand, this is a good thing because it gives autonomy to educational institutions or teachers to determine their learning strategies, according to the slogan of independent learning. However, on the other hand, there is certainly a possibility that the learning methods they offer eliminate students' 'independence' in the learning process (Surahman, 2023).

*Transformative learning* is a learning strategy that emphasizes students' freedom to learn (Liu, 2020; Phillips, 2019). In this strategy, the teacher acts as a companion who accompanies students in the learning process. The teacher also provides a variety of references that can be used during the learning process and encourages students to understand the different perspectives that arise from these references.

This transformative learning theory was originally initiated by Jack Mezirow in 1978 (Mezirow, 2020). Although it is not a cutting-edge learning strategy, it is still used in renowned universities in the world with various developments and adjustments referring to the problems and conditions faced. This learning strategy is considered effective to stimulate students to be more creative in making innovations, finding solutions in times of deadlock or problems (Linnenluecke et al., 2020).

This research uses a qualitative method of the *Systematic Literature Review* (SLR) type which seeks to describe various existing studies that will be used as alternative learning strategies in Indonesia, especially related to Merdeka Belajar. By using a transformative learning strategy, students are not only given the freedom to find the educational institution to choose, but will also be given freedom in the learning process. This is very much related to the spirit of learning independence launched by the Indonesian Minister of Education (Surahman, 2023).

Education is a way of human existence in this world. Without education humans will live like animals. It is also with education that the human race shows its dominance over this universe. Quality education will make humans more qualified,

both for themselves, for others, and for nature, now and in the future. Vice versa, an unqualified education will fail to make humans better beings.

To create quality education, various strategies, methods and media are developed. Of course, any strategy has advantages and disadvantages, and any weaknesses that arise will be improved by the next generation according to the conditions and challenges of the times faced. Each school of philosophy will give rise to different schools of education. This is influenced by their perspective on the ontology of education, human ontology, epistemology and axiology.

Transformative learning theory is based on the assumption that ontologically humans are *meaning making* beings (Mezirow, 2020). So learning is a process of using existing opinions as a basis for making new opinions based on one's experience, then using them as guidelines for action. This happens either intentionally, unintentionally, or unconsciously.

In transformative education, a learner is stimulated to discover new things, and innovate based on previous discoveries. Students are not only taught to know, to know what and to know why, but are more directed to create, namely to know *how* (Christie, 2015). If a student can understand how to make something, then he will know how to make something in a way that he finds himself.

The principles developed in this transformative learning strategy are based on the assumption that humans are free beings, including students. However, Mezirow, as the originator of this transformative theory, also warns that this strategy is only suitable if applied to mature students, who already have basic abilities in creativity, have social sensitivity, are aware of responsibility, understand the possible risks that arise, and have been equipped with other basic sciences (Holdo, 2023; Meerts-Brandsma & Jim, 2021; Mezirow, 2020).

Being creative, and creating new things if you ignore the existence of other people, other creatures and other objects will make the students lose the direction and essence of the purpose of education. However, overly restricting students in exploring their potential and creative power will also only produce 'tools' that can only serve the purpose for which they were made, and cannot make young people into full human beings. If the teacher dictates too much in the learning process, the students' potential will not develop. Students only continue what the teacher says, without adding, without criticizing, and without improving. This certainly makes students will not contribute anything to human civilization.

MBKM, which is part of the Merdeka Belajar program for higher education levels, was initiated by the Indonesian Minister of Education to avoid the possibility of a student only 'following' his lecturer. In this program, a student is allowed, facilitated and accommodated to pursue education outside the study program he is taking, be it in a study program within his campus, or in a study program outside the campus. This program began to be implemented by various universities throughout Indonesia in stages and has not yet shown results because it has not yet had graduates.

Although this program is implemented based on the assumption that students should be given freedom in learning, it does not mention the learning strategy that should be used. It is possible that students who want to experience college in other campuses will actually experience disappointment because the lecture process does not give them freedom.

This research seeks to describe a learning strategy that supports student autonomy in the lecture process, namely transformative learning. As a theory that was initiated since 1978, of course there have been many reviews and writings that discuss this, both in pure theory and its use in the field. However, there has not been a single article that discusses transformative learning in relation to MBKM. Therefore, the Research Team is very interested in discussing this, because this strategy is seen as very compatible with the MBKM program that is being implemented in universities in Indonesia.

## 2. Methodology

This research is library research on a theme, namely transformative learning, which is approached using a philosophical perspective. The three main things discussed in this study are the ontology, epistemology and axiology aspects of

transformative learning strategies. These three aspects are then connected to education in Indonesia, especially with the implementation of the Merdeka Belajar curriculum.

The data described in this study are library data that discusses transformative learning and the curriculum implemented in Indonesia. All data obtained are then analysed in depth using a philosophical perspective to find philosophical conclusions about the theme being analysed. From the analysis carried out the relationship between transformative learning and the official curriculum implemented in Indonesia will be concluded.

Philosophical studies do not produce practical conclusions but rather speculative ones. Therefore, this study will only produce conclusions about the nature of transformative learning and its suitability to the Merdeka curriculum, both ontologically, epistemologically and axiologically.

### **3. Discussion and Result**

#### **a. Epistemology in Education**

Epistemology is one of the branches of general philosophy that talks about knowledge. Etymologically, according to Simon Blackburn in *The Dictionary of Philosophy*, epistemology comes from two Greek words, namely *episteme* which means knowledge and *logos* which means science. So, in simple terms, epistemology means the science of knowledge, and some translate it into a theory of knowledge. Amin Abdullah defines epistemology as a branch of philosophy that discusses the nature of truth, sources, methods, and structures of knowledge (Pajriani et al., 2023; Waston, 2016).

One of the main studies of epistemology is how knowledge is obtained. There are at least two main schools in this field, namely objectivism and subjectivism. Objectivism argues that in the process of knowing, the object plays a role in providing data to the subject, so that, whoever the observing subject is will receive the same data that comes from the object. For example, a black stone in front of a group of people (Pajriani et al., 2023; Waston, 2016). Every individual who sees the stone receives the same information about the stone with all its predicates. This is because the subject is passive in the process of knowing. The knowledge gained in this process is ultimately objective and universal, in the sense that everyone in that place will understand the stone in the same form.

A different opinion is expressed by subjectivism. According to this school, the process of knowing is an active activity of humans as subjects, while objects are considered passive. The same stone in front of many people will be seen differently by each individual in that place. The impression of each person who sees the stone is ultimately different according to their point of view, senses and ability to understand. And therefore truth according to this school is always individual and particular (Pajriani et al., 2023).

The phenomenological school tries to offer a middle ground between objectivism and subjectivism. According to phenomenology, in the process of knowing, subjects and objects play the same role. Objects will not be known without subjects, and subjects will not know anything without objects. Subject consciousness is intentionality. The subject is not only aware, but aware of something, namely the object (Franz, n.d.; Qutoshi, 2018).

In addition to subject and object relations, epistemology also talks about the source of knowledge. Some sources of human knowledge are authority, senses, reason, intuition and revelation. Knowledge that comes from authority is knowledge that is obtained through information provided by people who are considered to have authority on that knowledge. For example, doctors have the authority to provide information about health, historians have the authority to talk about history, religionists have the authority to talk about religion. Information that comes from people who have authority in their fields is considered as knowledge and truth, although the truth from this source is considered the weakest truth (Audi, 2023).

Senses and reason are the two main sources of human knowledge. The truth obtained through these two things is considered the highest truth in epistemology. This happens because the subject knows the truth through himself. Being told that fire is hot is an authoritative truth, but touching the fire with one's own hands gives the belief that fire is hot.

Intuition is also considered a source of knowledge. Intuition is knowledge that is obtained suddenly without the process of thinking and researching. A good example that illustrates this is the event that Isaac Newton experienced when he saw an apple falling from a tree. Seeing the incident, Newton, who was sitting casually, suddenly got the inspiration that all objects thrown away from the Earth would be pulled back to Earth because of the energy from within the Earth that pulls all objects towards it. Then the theory of gravity was created. However, intuition does not automatically become truth. To be recognized as truth, data obtained through intuition must be tested and proven through existing methods of proof, namely ratios and experiments.

Revelation is a source of knowledge that is believed to be true for religious people. The truth obtained from revelation is believed to come from God and does not require proof. People who believe in the truth of a revelation immediately believe it and are considered sinful if they do not believe it. The next problem is that each religion bases its teachings on revelations that they claim to be true but are not recognized by adherents of other religions. So, from the perspective of epistemology, the truth of revelation is only the truth based on the beliefs of the adherents of each religion.

Epistemology is directly related to the world of education because education is the activity and process of a student gaining knowledge. Various definitions of education are delivered by experts, and each school of educational philosophy also has different definitions and concepts about education. However, there is something that is agreed by all parties about education, namely that education always involves three things; teachers, students and knowledge (Fowle, 1991; Siegel, 2018).

The classical learning strategy agreed upon by perennialism or essentialism places the teacher as the source of knowledge. In their understanding, the teacher's job is to channel the knowledge they have to students. In this case, students are like empty glasses waiting to be filled by the teacher. Teacher-based education becomes the role model in the learning process.

This learning strategy is still practiced in formal schools in Indonesia, from early childhood to higher education, with varying intensity. And even more so in Islamic boarding schools (Surahman, 2023).

However, along with the development of the times and competition at the global level, educational strategies that are less supportive of accelerating the process of change are starting to be abandoned and replaced with progressive and reconstructive education. The center of learning is no longer placed on the teacher but on the student (student-based/centered learning). This type of learning strategy is believed to have a greater impact on students, challenging them to innovate and be creative, traits that are needed in the world of work.

The things mentioned above are discussed in the epistemology of education. It also includes what is learned, strategies and media used, learning methods. Each level of education has different learning materials and strategies, because the level of understanding and mastery of the material at each level is certainly different. This is also the case with learning materials. Not all subjects/courses can be taught well using the same strategy. Therefore, every educational institution and the teachers involved must be able to carefully select and master the right learning strategies for their students (Siegel, 2018; Waston, 2016).

An appropriate learning strategy will produce the expected outcomes, and in this case it is to meet work needs. Education does not only aim to make students master pure knowledge, but it is also expected that they are able to find new things to solve existing problems. Mastery of a particular science or technique is determined by the way students learn. If students get knowledge passively from their teachers, it will produce a less creative attitude from within the student, while if students learn creatively, it will also bring out a creative attitude in their lives.



## **b. Transformative Learning**

Transformative learning is a learning strategy developed by Jack Mezirow in the 1970s. This learning strategy is part of the reconstructivist school of education philosophy that emphasizes the purpose of education on changes in society. This school emerged and developed in the Western world and began to be adopted by several other Eastern countries.

In general, Miller and Seller (1990) divide educational schemes into three groups, namely transmissional, transactional, and transformational (Baderiah, 2018; Miller, 1943; Nurdin, 2014). The first type, transmissional, puts the education process in the hands of the teacher. The teacher becomes the main figure in the education process, while students are only passive. In this perspective, the curriculum is structured to focus on learning materials. The teacher is the source of knowledge in charge of sending or giving his knowledge to students in the form of a one-way relationship, and students are considered like consumers or clients. Students are not allowed to argue or reject the knowledge obtained from the teacher. There is only one correct answer, which is the answer that comes from the teacher. The success of education in this perspective is if students are able to memorize and understand the knowledge obtained from the teacher (Baderiah, 2018; Miller, 1943; Nurdin, 2014).

The second type is transactional. In this process, teachers provide a larger portion for students to be involved in the educational process. Teachers and students seem to have an equal position in learning (Nurdin, 2014). Of course, in essence, teachers and students have different positions, but teachers provide space for students to use their potential to play a role in the learning process, to argue, support and even refute what is conveyed by the teacher, of course this has been included in the learning plan used by the teacher. In this type, the curriculum is structured to focus on problems (problem-based learning) that will be solved together between teachers and students (Baderiah, 2018). In this problem-solving process, the teacher does not only act as an expert, but rather as a facilitator, mentor or guide who helps students find answers to the problems they face. The teacher does not provide answers or solutions to problems, but rather assists students so that they find answers to the problems they face in their own way (Nurdin, 2014).

The third type is transformational. Transformational education not only makes the learner equal to the teacher, but gets more portions and is more active in the learning process. The goal of this type of education is for learners to be able to discover new things, knowledge, truth according to their own perspective .(Nurdin, 2014). Therefore, this third type can only be applied if students already understand social and individual values, moral values, responsibility, and understand the consequences of what they do, because all paths to knowledge cannot be separated from elements of science, life experience, spirituality, wisdom, and even existing myths (Baderiah, 2018).

The three types of learning according to Miller and Steller above are currently practiced around the world in the form of formal and non-formal education (Nurdin, 2014). Each type of education has its strengths and weaknesses and faces different challenges. Traditionalists still feel comfortable with the first type of education, transmissional, which puts the teacher as the center and the only source of knowledge. More modern formal education prefers the second type, transactional, which puts students and teachers in a balanced process. While some higher education institutions have chosen the third type of education, transformational, because they consider this type to be more able to stimulate students' creativity and sensitivity.

As a learning strategy, transformative learning developed by Jack Mezirow is only intended for adult learners (Christie et al., 2015; Fowle, 1991; Mezirow, 2020). This is because this learning strategy requires sufficient mastery of scientific materials and maturity in making decisions, including considering the steps to be taken in the learning process (especially when conducting experiments) at all costs, something that cannot be given to child learners.

In education, transformative learning can be defined as a learning that tries to encourage students to create cooperative and collective learning structures, systems and processes. In the learning process, students are invited to experience their own search for knowledge as the teacher does, feels and experiences (Hošman & Baldwin, 2020). One thing that underpins this

learning strategy is the freedom for students to learn in their own way, by positioning themselves (transformed) as a teacher doing research. The teacher, in this case, must ensure that students are in a learning situation, and remind them that what they are doing is a research and learning activity. This needs to be emphasized so that students do not deviate from their goals in the experimental activities carried out. Mezirow's transformative learning has three common themes: the centrality of the learner's experience, critical thinking and reflection, and rational discourse. Teachers do not provide answers for students, but instead deliberately disrupt the learner's worldview, and then stimulate the emergence of attitudes of uncertainty, ambiguity, and doubt about knowledge and experiences that are considered true before, then, educators facilitate the process of inner reflection so that learners have the opportunity to change their minds and ways of thinking, even their views of the world (Phillips, 2019; Singer-Brodowski, 2023).

### **c. Ontology of the Student as Free Being**

Ontology is a branch of philosophy that talks about the nature of what exists. In the perspective of Heideggerian existentialism, humans are autologically free beings. Heidegger refers to humans as *Da-sein* (Arno et al., 2014; Ihde, 2010; Vattimo & Robert T. Valgenti, 2016), being there, to describe the nature of humans who cannot be separated from their environment. Although ontologically humans are free beings, there are some things that humans cannot choose, such as when and where they are born, through which parents, and many other things. However, in those circumstances, humans have the freedom to act according to their choices.

In the philosophy of existence, facticity, throwing is a condition experienced by humans when they are in this world. In this case, humans as subjects of existence cannot do anything but accept the fact that they are thrown into a certain space, time and even circumstances. A person cannot choose which parent he is born from along with all the chromosomes he inherits, or where he wants to be born, the desired gender. These things are attached to a person the moment he is born without him being able to pick and choose. He is immersed in the crowd, following their behavior, following their norms.

Heidegger divides human ways of taking action into two groups, namely authentic and inauthentic. Fallenness into the world means an absorption in Being with one another, in so far as the latter is guided by idle talk, curiosity and ambiguity. Falling is the inauthenticity of *Dasein* (Heidegger, 2019). The position in which a human being cannot act according to his will puts him in an inauthentic condition, while the position in which he plays an active role and consciously determines choices as well as answers to life's problems puts him in an authentic position. (Dreyfus, 2006). This happens in almost every aspect of one's life. A person is often in a situation that makes him unable to choose, or at least not free to choose, to do the things that are in front of him, including in education. Students are often not free in the learning process, not free in choosing what they want to learn, when, where they learn and to whom they learn. Everything is provided by the education system. In this state, the person has become inauthentic.

Authentic is a state in which a person determines for himself everything he will do. All actions to be carried out are chosen according to their own circumstances and considerations, not because they are ordered or forced. Of course, this is not without risk. Individual considerations are often based on individual interests, and lack of information, so that the consequences can be not in accordance with what is expected.

Thus, not all students can be authentic, even though all humans are ontologically free. To be authentic. A student must be equipped with sufficient knowledge, have maturity and broad insight, be able to predict all the possibilities that can occur as a result of his actions.

Being authentic or inauthentic is basically a choice, especially for adult learners, namely students. By nature, students, like humans in general, are given the power to choose what they will do, especially in relation to the knowledge they seek. But sometimes students are in a situation where the available options are very limited. Available courses, reference books, lecturers

and their learning strategies, facilities and other things sometimes do not match what is expected. Students need a wide range of options so that they can more freely choose lecture material that suits their needs and other matters related to it.

#### **d. Transformative Learning and MBKM, strong relation**

Transformative learning and MBKM are both based on the main thing, namely that students are free-learning humans. Epistemologically, students are subjects who are aware of their relationship with the object of knowledge. The relationship between students and knowledge is not a distant relationship. When a student uses his mind to think, it means that he is thinking about an object of knowledge. He does not think in an empty way, because his consciousness and thoughts are always directed at something.

The spirit carried in the MBKM program is the spirit of independence, the spirit to free students from a restrictive curriculum. The human mind is not something that can be disciplined as the body is disciplined. The human mind will seek to understand and know things that interest it. It is needs and desires that are able to attract the human mind to think in order to get their needs and desires.

In this global era, work needs are one of the things that underlie the development of educational curricula. Every educational institution wants to produce graduates who are ready to work, and moreover able to excel in their workplace. The MBKM launched by the Indonesian Minister of Education also has the same goal. MBKM is structured in such a way that students who graduate from college become young people who are ready to work in accordance with the field of study they take.

In MBKM, students are given the opportunity and freedom in their epistemology, related to their right to gain experience and knowledge in several ways, namely choosing the institution or institution where they seek knowledge and experience, lecturers who teach the courses taken, and activities that can be converted into course grades.

In all three schools of epistemology, the process of knowing involves the presence of subjects and objects. Therefore, determining the object that is presented in front of the subject greatly determines the results of the knowledge obtained. If the object is forced to be presented in front of the subject, then the knowledge obtained by the subject also comes from compulsion and the process of reluctance in observation and research. Reluctant subjects will produce imperfect knowledge and can lead to invalidity. In addition, knowledge gained through the process of reluctance will not be memorable to the subject and will be forgotten immediately in a short time. If this happens, then the epistemological activities carried out will not produce adequate knowledge.

Students are adult learners who have been equipped with basic knowledge and are able to predict the possibilities that occur during the learning and research process. Students have been able to determine, find and assess new things obtained during the lecture process, both transmissively, transactionally, and transformatively.

MBKM is very inappropriate if the lecture process uses a transmissional strategy, which considers students as empty glasses that only expect to be filled by their lecturers. Transactional strategies are also inadequate if applied to adult learners because the ability of lecturers is sometimes limited and cannot keep up with market needs, as is the main goal of the MBKM program. The most appropriate learning strategy to fulfill the objectives of MBKM is if students are given the freedom to determine the learning process they will follow, and of course this does not mean without shortcomings and risks.

Through MBKM, students are directed to seek knowledge and experience in a place that will become their workplace, or at least have a work environment as expected. Being in a location or institution that is in accordance with the work objectives makes students face objects of knowledge that are in accordance with the curriculum. Objects that are in accordance with the needs will make students better prepared to face the world of work when they graduate from college.



Transformative learning strategies aim to create adult learners who are ready to discover new things and apply them to the world of work. Epistemologically, students are not only required to understand the object under study, but also, in their own way, find new perspectives and understanding of the object under study. In this strategy, the role of the lecturer is only to present the object of knowledge, create an actual atmosphere, and then let students discover knowledge in their own way. In this way, each student will come up with their own understanding according to their knowledge and critical abilities. Different critical abilities will produce different depth and breadth of understanding, just as different sensory abilities will produce different perceptions despite observing the same object.

#### **e. Challenges of Transformative Learning in MBKM**

Carrying the spirit and principles of independence in attitude and action is not without risk. Students who are accustomed to receiving transmissional education tend to be passive and wait for the teacher to give their knowledge. Students as subjects only wait for objects to send data. Passive subjects will only receive minimalist data due to the lack of critical nature and communicative interaction with the object.

Students' learning habits or learning strategies that depend on lecturers or teachers are the main challenges in implementing transformative learning in higher education. The next challenge is the lack of knowledge of lecturers about techniques for implementing transformative learning in MBKM. The essence of MBKM itself is independent learning and independent teaching. In this case, students must be able to find knowledge in their own way, which is certainly adapted to their learning style, obtain from various sources, and discuss it in class with peers and lecturers. So, in other words, students organize and acquire knowledge in their own way. However, in this case the lecturer still plays a role in the discussion process in class. Different knowledge and understanding from students will be discussed in class and will be confirmed by the lecturer at the end of the lesson. So that students still get knowledge from lecturers after passing through the stages in transformative learning. Conceptually, students as adult learners should be able to apply this transformative learning strategy, lecturers as facilitators must also understand the concepts and techniques of transformative learning well.

## **4. Conclusion**

The *Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka* (MBKM) curriculum is a new curriculum implemented in Indonesia since 2021. This curriculum provides opportunities for students to study off campus for two to three semesters. In addition, students are also given the opportunity to obtain learning from other study programs within the university. The essence of this curriculum is that students are given the freedom to acquire knowledge in their own way (*Merdeka Belajar*) and lecturers are also given the flexibility to choose teaching strategies that are considered appropriate and relevant (*Merdeka Mengajar*). This is very much in accordance with the transformative learning strategy proposed by Mezirow. This strategy has three common themes, namely: the centrality of learner experience, critical thinking and reflection, and rational discourse.

In MBKM, students as adult learners are given the opportunity and freedom in their epistemology, related to their right to gain experience and knowledge in several ways, namely choosing the institution or institution where they seek knowledge and experience, lecturers who teach the courses taken, and activities that can be converted into course grades. Students try to find new things and apply them to the world of work. Epistemologically, students are not only required to understand the object under study, but also, in their own way, find new perspectives and understanding of the object under study. In this strategy, the role of the lecturer is only to present the object of knowledge, create an actual atmosphere, and then let students discover knowledge in their own way. In this way, each student will come up with their own understanding according to their knowledge and critical abilities. Different critical abilities will produce different depth and breadth of understanding, just as different sensory abilities will produce different perceptions despite observing the same object.

In the implementation of MBKM, this transformative learning strategy still has some challenges, including: students' learning habits that still depend on lecturers or data sources, and lecturers' lack of knowledge about transformative learning implementation techniques. But overall, this transformative learning strategy is very suitable to be implemented in higher education, because as adult learners, students must be able to use their senses and reasoning to gain knowledge and understanding in their own way. The depth and breadth of understanding depends on students' critical thinking skills.

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