

# Implementation of Basic Guidance and Counseling Services in the Merdeka Curriculum

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## ABSTRACT

The implementation of basic guidance and counseling services is essential to support student development in line with the Merdeka Curriculum's learner-centered approach. However, discrepancies remain between policy expectations and actual school practices, particularly in planning, delivery, and media integration. This study aims to examine how BK teachers implement basic counseling services and identify the challenges they encounter. Using a descriptive qualitative method, data were collected from seven BK teachers through semi-structured interviews and documentation. The findings reveal that while teachers engage in diagnostic assessments and collaborate with school stakeholders, they face obstacles such as limited infrastructure, time constraints, and unfamiliarity with curriculum principles. Media use and large-class guidance remain inconsistent. Nevertheless, teachers attempt to overcome these barriers through adaptation, collaboration, and reflective evaluation. The study concludes that effective implementation requires ongoing support, improved facilities, and targeted training for BK teachers.

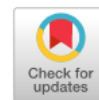
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## INTRODUCTION

*The Merdeka Belajar* (Freedom to Learn) program, launched by Minister of Education and Culture Nadiem Makarim, seeks to overcome learning loss in Indonesia and build 21st-century competencies by integrating cognitive development with character education (Idhartono, 2023). This educational reform emphasizes the importance of collaboration between school leaders, subject teachers, and guidance and counseling (BK) teachers. BK teachers, in particular, are expected to innovate in their approach, as their role is central to supporting students in realizing their potential and shaping their identity (Hayati, 2022).

Within the Merdeka Curriculum, basic counseling services are a core component, delivered through classical guidance, group counseling, large-class formats, and collaboration with other educators and parents (Kemendikbud RI, 2014). These services aim to foster students' growth in personal, social, academic, and career areas, while also helping to develop key dimensions of the Pancasila Student Profile: religious and moral character, global awareness, cooperation, independence, critical thinking, and creativity.

To implement these services effectively, BK teachers must apply sound management principles, including planning, organizing, executing, and evaluating. Effective management is vital in ensuring that guidance services support character formation and enhance educational quality (Aliman & Juarsa, 2017). The Ministry continues to support this reform through policies such as the *guru penggerak* program, zoning systems, and curriculum simplification (Nursalim, 2020), all of which highlight the increasing role of BK teachers.

Preliminary studies in several senior high schools in West Aceh indicate that schools have begun implementing basic counseling services in alignment with the Merdeka

Curriculum. These efforts are supported by special schedules, counseling rooms, and curriculum guidebooks. However, common challenges include low student participation and limited resources, including a shortage of BK personnel and facilities.

Based on these issues, this study aims to examine how basic counseling services are being implemented within the Merdeka Curriculum and to identify the main obstacles faced by BK teachers. The research is titled: "Implementation of Basic Guidance and Counseling Services in the Merdeka Curriculum."

## METHOD

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach to examine the implementation of basic guidance and counselling services within the Merdeka Curriculum. The research involved seven guidance and counseling (BK) teachers as participants, selected through purposive sampling based on specific relevance to the study. Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews and documentation. The analysis was conducted using the Miles and Huberman model, which consists of four key stages: data collection, data reduction to filter essential information, data display in an organized format, and conclusion drawing based on identified patterns and insights.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### **Implementation of Basic Guidance and Counseling Services in the Merdeka Curriculum**

The findings of this study indicate that guidance and counseling (BK) teachers have implemented basic counseling services aligned with the *Merdeka Curriculum* at SMA Negeri 1 Meulaboh, SMA Negeri 2 Meulaboh, SMA Negeri 1 Bubon, and SMA Negeri 1 Woyla. The implementation process generally follows several key stages, as outlined below:

#### *Planning Basic Counseling Services*

BK teachers from all four schools reported planning their basic counseling services based on students' needs. Needs assessments were conducted using diagnostic tools, interest and aptitude tests, classroom observations, and reports from homeroom and subject teachers. These assessments are used to tailor services to students' potential and characteristics. Teachers also emphasized collaboration with homeroom teachers and subject teachers to ensure the services remain relevant and effective.

#### *Delivering Basic Counseling Services*

Teachers provided a variety of services, including classical guidance, group counseling, and large-class sessions. Classical guidance is held in classrooms for approximately two hours per week. Group counseling addresses general student issues, while large-class guidance is often delivered during flag ceremonies. The learning plans follow a one-page format that integrates the Pancasila Student Profile. Topics commonly addressed include bullying, motivation, religious values, tolerance, talents and interests, career planning, time management, truancy, and discipline.

#### *Collaboration with School Stakeholders*

The interviews revealed that collaboration between BK teachers, principals, and other teachers is critical. School principals play a facilitative role by allocating time and resources to support counseling activities. BK teachers work closely with homeroom and subject teachers to identify student issues and determine the most appropriate interventions.

#### *Developing Counseling Media through Teacher Creativity*

BK teachers utilized various media to enhance counseling services. These include digital tools such as PowerPoint presentations, videos, and posters, which were presented using projectors. The use of visual, auditory, and kinesthetic media caters to different student learning styles and enhances engagement. However, some teachers still face limitations in developing advanced media due to time constraints and limited experience, focusing instead on direct service delivery.

#### *Providing Services Through Media*

*Implementation of Basic Guidance and Counseling Services in the Merdeka Curriculum*

There is variability in the use of media across the schools. At SMA Negeri 1 Meulaboh, peer counseling is a primary method for both collecting information and delivering services. In contrast, SMA Negeri 2 Meulaboh relies mainly on PowerPoint without additional media tools. SMA Negeri 1 Bubon had previously developed a media board but used it inconsistently. SMA Negeri 1 Woyla uses a "problem box" once a month, allowing students to express concerns anonymously. More interactive media, such as bulletin boards, leaflets, or online platforms like YouTube, have not been widely adopted. The limited use of media is attributed to teachers' limited time, experience, and recent entry into the profession.

*Evaluating and Reporting Counseling Activities*

BK teachers emphasized the importance of evaluating their programs to measure effectiveness, ensure alignment with student needs, and identify areas for improvement. Evaluations are typically conducted through discussions with fellow BK teachers and help refine future programs to better meet student needs and remain consistent with the goals of the Merdeka Curriculum.

Teachers also stressed the significance of compiling reports on their counseling activities. Some collaborated with colleagues to compile reports that include achievements, challenges, and causes of unmet goals. Others used digital tools such as Appsheet and online journals to streamline reporting and ensure accuracy. Reports are submitted regularly to the school principal and serve as a basis for program evaluation and future planning. These reports help BK teachers identify student problems, adjust services accordingly, and enhance the overall quality of counseling in line with curriculum expectations.

**Barriers to Implementing Basic Counseling Services**

The study also identified several challenges faced by BK teachers in delivering basic counseling services within the Merdeka Curriculum framework. These obstacles appeared throughout the various stages of service implementation. In the planning phase, BK teachers experienced difficulties in identifying the unique needs of individual students, which required the design of personalized and context-sensitive interventions. This task was further complicated by the lack of adequate facilities and infrastructure in some schools. Moreover, several BK teachers expressed uncertainty regarding the concepts and practical application of the Merdeka Curriculum, which made aligning service plans with curricular goals more difficult.

Challenges also emerged during the implementation of classical guidance services. Time constraints were frequently cited, especially when sessions were scheduled at the end of the school day, leading to student fatigue and diminished participation. Inadequate physical environments, such as hot classrooms, and the absence of proper facilities further reduced the effectiveness of these sessions. Teachers often had to conduct activities outdoors, which, while necessary, introduced distractions and inconsistent delivery.

Similar barriers were reported in group guidance sessions, where students felt uncomfortable with unfamiliar methods, such as U-shaped seating arrangements. The lack of student openness and engagement limited the depth and effectiveness of group interactions. Large-class guidance posed additional logistical difficulties, particularly in scheduling. Teachers needed to coordinate with curriculum staff and subject teachers to organize these sessions, which often resulted in delays or irregular implementation. Collectively, these challenges reflect the ongoing need for institutional support, adequate infrastructure, and professional development to enhance the effectiveness of basic counseling services in the context of the Merdeka Curriculum.

**Discussion***Implementation of Basic Guidance and Counseling Services in the Merdeka Curriculum*

The implementation of basic guidance and counseling services in the Merdeka Curriculum involves a comprehensive process encompassing planning, delivery, collaboration, media integration, and evaluation. BK teachers across four schools—SMA Negeri 1 Meulaboh, SMA Negeri 2 Meulaboh, SMA Negeri 1 Bubon, and SMA Negeri 1 Woyla—began by identifying student needs through diagnostic assessments, aptitude tests, classroom observations, and teacher input. These methods helped determine learning styles

and career interests, forming the basis for more targeted and effective service planning (Hunaepi et al., 2024; Kamarruzzaman, 2024; Kholilah & Khusumadewi, 2018; Sudibyo, 2019).

Classical guidance services were conducted regularly, especially in grade 10, with some requiring coordination for older grades. Lesson plans (RPL) often integrated the Pancasila Student Profile, though not all teachers were confident in applying the Merdeka Curriculum principles. Counseling topics ranged from personal values and motivation to time management and career choices, delivered through interactive formats such as discussions and quizzes (Bangkara et al., 2022; Halmahera et al., 2024).

Group guidance was carried out flexibly, sometimes during extracurricular periods or in informal settings like prayer rooms or outdoor spaces. These sessions addressed issues such as bullying and low self-confidence using participatory methods like peer discussion and games, supporting students' emotional and social development (Emawati et al., 2024; Pratama et al., 2023). Large-class guidance was delivered during school events like flag ceremonies or orientation, providing practical information on academic planning and extracurricular involvement (Anisah & Qamariah, 2023; Guidance & Guidebook, 2021).

Collaboration with principals, homeroom teachers, and subject teachers played a vital role in ensuring service relevance and effectiveness. School leaders provided structural support, while fellow teachers contributed insight into student challenges, reinforcing the importance of teamwork in counseling delivery (Rahmawati et al., 2019; Wijayati & Tirtoni, 2024).

To support diverse learning styles, BK teachers used projectors, videos, and posters, although some faced barriers in maximizing these tools due to limited resources or training (Murtopo et al., 2013; Suryawati et al., 2025). In some schools, peer support systems and anonymous suggestion boxes were also used to enhance student voice and participation, aligning with national recommendations for diverse media use in counseling (Sailana, 2024).

Finally, program evaluation was conducted through teacher reflection and discussion, informing adjustments for improvement. Reports were compiled manually or digitally using tools like Appsheet, capturing both achievements and challenges. These reports were shared with school leadership and served as a foundation for ongoing development and accountability (Fauziah et al., 2022; Ramadhan et al., 2024).

#### *Barriers and Solutions in the Implementation of Basic Counseling Services in the Merdeka Curriculum*

In implementing basic guidance and counseling services aligned with the Merdeka Curriculum, BK teachers face several significant challenges. One major difficulty lies in identifying the unique needs of each student. Differences in learning styles, shaped by individual personality traits, interests, and prior experiences, require teachers to design personalized and flexible service plans. This challenge is compounded by limited facilities in some schools, particularly the availability of essential tools such as computers and projectors. Furthermore, some BK teachers still struggle to fully understand the philosophy and structure of the Merdeka Curriculum, which hinders effective implementation (Anisah & Qamariah, 2023; Wijayati & Tirtoni, 2024).

To address these issues, BK teachers are encouraged to conduct regular classroom observations and initiate collaborative discussions with homeroom and subject teachers. These strategies help determine the most pressing student needs and support the development of service plans that are both targeted and responsive. Understanding student learning preferences in depth also allows counselors to tailor their guidance to enhance student outcomes (Emawati et al., 2024; Wijayati & Tirtoni, 2024).

In classical guidance sessions, common barriers include time constraints—especially when sessions are scheduled at the end of the school day—causing student fatigue and reduced engagement. In some schools, specific time slots for BK activities are not yet formally integrated into the timetable. Environmental discomfort, such as hot classrooms, and low student enthusiasm further diminish the effectiveness of these sessions. As a result, teachers often resort to conducting sessions outdoors, which introduces new distractions and inconsistencies in delivery (Gipalen & Madrigal, 2020; Suryawati et al., 2025).



Group counseling also poses challenges. Students may find unfamiliar seating arrangements, such as U-shaped layouts, uncomfortable or awkward. Additionally, some students are hesitant to participate openly, which limits the depth and impact of the session. Large-class guidance, meanwhile, is often hindered by scheduling conflicts and the need for coordination with vice principals and subject teachers. These challenges reflect broader issues identified in previous studies, such as limited time allocation, insufficient resources, inadequate facilities, and low awareness of counseling services among students (Bangkara et al., 2022; Gipalen & Madrigal, 2020).

To overcome these barriers, several solutions are proposed. BK teachers should optimize the time allocated by schools, making efficient use of available periods for delivering counseling services. Incorporating multimedia resources such as educational videos and interactive digital platforms can make sessions more engaging and reduce student fatigue. This approach not only modernizes service delivery but also aligns with the principles of *Merdeka Belajar*, which emphasize learner-centered education (Hunaepi et al., 2024; Murtopo et al., 2013). Moreover, school administrators are encouraged to formalize designated counseling periods in the school schedule and provide greater institutional support to BK teachers (Rahmawati et al., 2019; Ramadhan et al., 2024).

## CONCLUSIONS

The implementation of basic guidance and counseling services within the Merdeka Curriculum reflects a structured yet adaptive approach by BK teachers in addressing students' developmental needs through diagnostic assessments, collaborative planning, and varied delivery methods such as classical, group, and large-class guidance aligned with student-centered learning principles. Despite challenges like limited resources, scheduling constraints, and varying curriculum understanding, the integration of media, stakeholder collaboration, and reflective evaluation has strengthened service impact in secondary schools. To further enhance effectiveness, BK teachers should intensify collaboration with stakeholders, conduct thorough assessments to design relevant and measurable programs, continuously improve classical and large-class guidance, and provide balanced group counseling for students requiring special attention, while schools should improve facilities, offer private counseling spaces, provide training on Merdeka Belajar, and formally support BK services within the school system.

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