

Challenges in Implementing the Independent Learning Curriculum at Primary Schools

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Abstract: With the urgency of research in exploring the implementation of the independent curriculum, this study aims to understand how various classroom teaching methods can be used to strengthen students' understanding of concepts and enhance their abilities. The research data is analyzed through a descriptive approach, which is a qualitative method in the context of this study. The results of the study highlight several issues that arise when both schools implement the independent curriculum. One of the main findings is that the independent curriculum encourages teachers to be more creative in designing teaching modules, setting learning objectives, and organizing the flow of learning. As a result, teachers can no longer produce Lesson Implementation Plans (RPP) independently every week. Consequently, the efforts made by schools are more focused on improving the students' profiles that reflect the values of Pancasila. Summative Assessments (PS) are still given to students every day, but not only during the learning process inside the classroom. One important implication of this research is the need to expand the learning space outside the classroom to encourage active and innovative student engagement.

Keywords: Planning, implementation, evaluation, curriculum

Abstrak: Dengan urgensi penelitian dalam mengeksplorasi penerapan kurikulum mandiri, penelitian ini bertujuan untuk memahami bagaimana berbagai metode pengajaran di kelas dapat digunakan untuk memperkuat pemahaman konsep siswa dan meningkatkan kemampuannya. Data penelitian dianalisis melalui pendekatan deskriptif, yaitu metode kualitatif dalam konteks penelitian ini. Hasil penelitian menyoroti beberapa permasalahan yang muncul ketika kedua sekolah menerapkan kurikulum mandiri. Salah satu temuan utamanya adalah kurikulum mandiri mendorong guru untuk lebih kreatif dalam merancang modul pengajaran, menetapkan tujuan pembelajaran, dan mengatur alur pembelajaran. Akibatnya, guru tidak bisa lagi membuat Rencana Pelaksanaan Pembelajaran (RPP) secara mandiri setiap minggunya. Konsekuensinya, upaya yang dilakukan sekolah lebih terfokus pada peningkatan profil siswa yang mencerminkan nilai-nilai Pancasila. Penilaian Sumatif (PS) tetap diberikan kepada siswa setiap hari, namun tidak hanya pada saat proses pembelajaran di dalam kelas. Salah satu implikasi penting dari penelitian ini adalah perlunya memperluas ruang pembelajaran di luar kelas untuk mendorong keterlibatan siswa yang aktif dan inovatif.

Kata Kunci: Perencanaan, pelaksanaan, evaluasi, kurikulum

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INTRODUCTION

The current education curriculum is based on character and designed to build students' character. Curriculum improvement is an important part of the curriculum, and the curriculum must be continuously updated to meet the needs of society and students (Anggraini et al., 2022). The COVID-19 pandemic is a unique situation that has caused learning loss or missed learning, varying in students' abilities (Jayanti et al., 2021). To address this learning loss, educational units must create learning recovery policies related to curriculum implementation for a specific period. This way, educational units have the ability to adjust their curriculum to meet students' learning needs. Three curriculum options are available: Curriculum 2013, Emergency Curriculum (simplified by the Ministry of Education and Culture) and Independent Curriculum. The Independent Curriculum was discussed by the Minister of Education and Culture, Nadiem Makarim (Jaya S et al., 2023). Freedom to think, create, and respect or respond to changes is called free learning. Independent learning curriculum begins to encourage courage and independence in thinking (Arifin et al., 2023). It stops the need and courage to think independently. Attitudes and moods influenced by curiosity, self-confidence, and optimism are known as the spirit of learning.

According to Sehic (2020), if the education system allows for critical thinking and embraces failure, the learning process will flourish. Three additional policies include simplifying the Learning Implementation Plan (RPP), rules for accepting new students, and the elimination of national exams starting in 2021. Conversely, within the school system, character surveys and minimum competency assessments will be conducted (Lee, 2023). The Minister of Education and Culture of Indonesia recently considered free learning as an important policy that will help improve and advance education in the country (Mitra & Purnawarman, 2019). Free curriculum provides various types of learning outside the classroom, giving students enough time to understand concepts and enhance their abilities. Teachers can utilize various teaching methods to meet the needs and desires of students. The government has set themes for projects aimed at enhancing students' Pancasila profile. These themes are not limited to specific subject matter but aim to achieve specific learning objectives (Fatimah & Nugroho, 2023). Additionally, the Merdeka Belajar program launched by the Minister of Education and Culture consists of four components: the removal of the National Standardized School Examination (USBN) from school policies, the replacement of the National Examination (UN) with the Minimum Competency Assessment (AKM), and the New Student Admission Regulation (PPDB), which previously consisted of thirteen components (Septiana, 2023).

As demonstrated by the four previous points, it is clear that the program aims not only to enhance learning but also to make it enjoyable. When learning activities are made fun, teachers will find it easier to deliver the material and focus their attention on developing students' skills. Each student's interests and talents are tailored through the Learning to maximize their potential. Due to some issues, independent learning has not been fully utilized. Self-directed learning requires many things, such as getting support and resources. To achieve the national educational goals, all levels of education, from elementary to higher education, strive to adapt to the current curriculum (Sihombing et al., 2021; Mitra & Purnawarman, 2019). In interviews about the issues faced by teachers regarding the implementation of emergency learning, they found that (1) some teachers have not been innovative and creative in designing classes that suit their students' characteristics; (2) some teachers do not understand how to enhance the four Cs (critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication) in their students because teachers keep giving assignments during the COVID pandemic; and (3) teachers face difficulties in designing classes that suit their students' characteristics. As a result, researchers seek to

explain the "implementation issues of the independent curriculum at Joho 01 Public Elementary School."

RESEARCH METHODS

This research was conducted at SD N Joho 01 Sukoharjo using a qualitative approach (Bhangu et al., 2023), involving the school principal, teachers, and students as the main participants. To ensure the accuracy and validity of the data, the method of triangulation of sources was implemented, which involved comparing and analyzing the data collected through a series of in-depth observations, detailed documentation, and intensive interviews with various stakeholders (Turan, 2021). The overall research process was divided into three main stages: the preparation stage, where all plans and tools were developed; the implementation stage, where data was systematically collected; and the reporting stage, where the research findings were compiled and presented comprehensively.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The free learning curriculum emphasizes student-centered, collaborative, and independent learning. This requires a paradigm shift in teaching methods, available resources, teacher preparation, and support from various stakeholders. This paradigm also requires changes in how teachers deliver lessons, engaging learning designs, and available resources. Compared to conventional learning paradigms, free learning may require more time and support. To implement the free learning curriculum, teachers must possess various skills. Professional training and development programs are crucial to enhance teachers' abilities to face these challenges, including developing innovative teaching methods, providing individual support to students, and using technology to aid student learning.

Resource Provision: Schools must ensure that these resources are available to students to make learning diverse and engaging. The free learning curriculum may require additional resources such as technological devices, reading materials, teaching aids, and interactive learning materials. **Continuity and Consistency:** The Free Learning Curriculum must be implemented consistently and sustainably in the long term. Changes to the curriculum often take a long time to succeed and bring about significant changes in the education system. However, while the Free Learning Curriculum allows learning to become more relevant and meaningful for students, a deep understanding of what they are learning remains a challenge and struggle.

Implementing an independent learning curriculum at primary schools presents various challenges that educators need to address. Research indicates that teachers often face obstacles in aligning lesson plans with the curriculum, implementing learning activities optimally, and assessing student outcomes comprehensively (Aliyyah et al., 2023). To overcome these challenges, providing support and assistance to teachers in curriculum implementation is crucial (Nurzen, 2022). Additionally, ensuring curriculum coherence is essential for successful reform at the school level (Sullanmaa et al., 2019). Curriculum plays a significant role in the effective implementation of reforms and can be measured to gauge its impact.

Assessment characteristics in independent curriculum implementation are vital, encompassing aspects such as planning, implementation, result processing, and reporting, along with addressing obstacles and providing solutions (Pepito et al., 2024). Understanding teachers' perceptions towards the independent curriculum, especially during challenging times like the COVID-19 pandemic, reveals

themes of urgency, challenges, support, and effective teaching strategies (Aliyyah et al., 2023). Moreover, sustainable school development is proposed to enhance learning quality and well-being during curriculum reforms (Tikkanen et al., 2020) The implementation of project-based learning aligned with the independent curriculum aims to strengthen competencies and character development based on specific standards (Annisa Cahya Rahina & Kastam Syamsi, M. Ed, 2023). Teacher readiness and involvement from all stakeholders are emphasized for successful implementation of the independent curriculum (Rosina et al., 2021). The potential for national implementation of the Independent Curriculum in Indonesia highlights the ongoing efforts to enhance educational approaches (Arifin et al., 2023). In conclusion, addressing challenges in implementing the independent learning curriculum at primary schools requires a multifaceted approach involving curriculum coherence, assessment characteristics, teacher perceptions, project-based learning, and sustainable development strategies. By providing support to teachers, ensuring curriculum alignment, and fostering stakeholder engagement, primary schools can navigate the complexities of implementing innovative educational frameworks effectively.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Independent Learning Curriculum focuses on shifting the conventional learning paradigm towards a more student-centered, independent, and collaborative approach. The conventional learning paradigm must also be transformed, and teachers need to be enhanced through training and professional development. Implementing the Independent Learning Curriculum requires consistency and collaboration; this necessitates cooperation among the government, schools, teachers, parents, and the community. Education based on the Independent Learning Curriculum can easily address a number of issues. By using well-prepared lesson plans, teachers must be creative in creating teaching modules, learning objectives, and the flow of instruction. School goals should be reinforced by the students' Pancasila profile, and learning outside the classroom should be conducted to enhance student engagement and innovation.

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