

Implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum and Its Challenges

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IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MERDEKA CURRICULUM AND ITS CHALLENGES

Wulan Ndari, Suyatno, Sukirman and Fitri Nur Mahmudah

ABSTRACT

Based on the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Kemendikbudristek) Number 126 of 2022 concerning Guidelines for Curriculum Implementation in the context of Curriculum Learning Recovery During the Covid-19 Pandemic which requires schools to gradually use the Merdeka curriculum. The Merdeka Curriculum is a curriculum that provides flexibility to schools and teachers in exploring according to the needs of the school, especially the needs of students. This study aims to describe the implementation of the Merdeka curriculum and challenges in SD Muhammadiyah Warungboto schools in Yogyakarta. This research uses a qualitative approach to the case study method. The subjects of this study were the principal, curriculum coordination team, teachers, students at SD Muhammadiyah Warungboto Yogyakarta city. Data collection techniques use interviews, and observation. The results of the study are as follows: (1) Application of the Independent Curriculum in the Changing Curriculum setatus. (2) The learning model used by teachers is still by lecturing and learning is not all student-centered. (2) There are still many teachers who are not ready regarding the implementation of the Merdeka curriculum. (3) Students based on interests and talents are still just following the choice of friends even because of pressure. (4) Lack of enthusiasm of teachers who are not ready for curriculum changes, especially changing learning tools. (5) Schools develop various strategies to be used regarding the implementation of the Independent Curriculum.

Keywords: curriculum, implementation of independent curriculum, school challenges

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A. INTRODUCTION

Policy as a guide in one's thinking is often translated as political flow, rules, programs, decisions, laws, rules, provisions, agreements, conventions, and strategic plan (Athaillah et al., 2021). To deal with problems arising in the post-pandemic situation that has hit all aspects, including education, the government issued a new policy related to the implementation of curriculum policies independence. The independent curriculum is implemented based on the Ministry of Education and Culture and Technology Number 56 published in 2022 which discusses the Guidelines for Curriculum Implementation in the context of Learning Recovery which is used as curriculum improvement during the Covid-19 pandemic (Kemendikbudristek, 2022b).

According to Susetyo (2020), the curriculum is a set of plans and arrangements that contain objectives, content, and learning materials as well as ways that will be used as guidelines in organizing activities learning to achieve the goals of education. The curriculum as the main tool to improve the quality of education in Indonesia always has a novelty.

Before the Covid-19 pandemic, schools used the K13 curriculum as a guideline in learning. Until the beginning of

the pandemic in 2021, the Ministry of Education and Culture issued a policy related to the use of the K13 curriculum and emergency curriculum (simplified K13 curriculum). The purpose of implementing a simplified curriculum is to make it easier for schools, especially teachers and students, to carry out the learning process to make it easier with more essential material. In the emergency curriculum, a reduction has been made in basic competencies (KD) so that learning only focuses on essential competencies and prerequisite competencies for the continuation of learning in accordance with the next level (Rahmadayanti & Hartoyo, 2022). From 2021 to 2022 the Ministry of Education and Culture issued new policies related to the use of the K13 curriculum, the Emergency curriculum, the Merdeka curriculum.

The dynamics and changes in the field of education, especially the curriculum that makes changes are so dynamic, which is based on rapid advances in technology and information (Sopiansyah et al., 2022). So to restore the early learning of the 2022-2023 learning year, the Ministry of Education and Culture and Technology issued a policy that school policies that have not been able to use the Merdeka curriculum can still use K13 curriculum and Emergency curriculum. The Merdeka Curriculum is an effort to update the present against the background of

increasingly advanced technology and its use is demanded during the Covid-19 pandemic (Ihsan, 2022). The Merdeka curriculum as an option is implemented in schools that are ready to implement such as in Driving Schools (SP), and Center of Excellence Vocational High Schools (SMK PK). So that the option is given to schools in the implementation of the Merdeka curriculum. These categories include freedom of Learning, independence, Change, and freedom of Sharing, these categories are explained by the decree of the Head of BSKAP of the Ministry of Education and Culture Number 034/H/KR/2022 in which it discusses the IKM Implementing Education Unit in the 2022 /2023 Academic Year (Kemendikbudristek, 2022a). So that in 2024 new policies related to the national curriculum will be determined based on the evaluation of curriculum implementation during the current learning recovery period (Berlian et al., 2022). The results of the evaluation will become a reference for the Ministry of Education and Culture and Technology in making further decisions, namely new policies related to the implementation of the curriculum after learning recovery. In its implementation, there are several challenges in SMEs. Therefore, this paper examines the Implementation of the Independent Curriculum and its Challenges at SD Muhammadiyah Warungboto Yogyakarta City.

B. CONCEPTUAL DEFINITIONS

Etymologically, curriculum comes from the Greek *cur* which means runner and *curare* which means racing place. The term curriculum originated from the world of sports during Ancient Roman times in Greece, which means the distance traveled by runners to be able to complete the goal of running to the finish line. So it can be understood that the distance that must be traveled by runners has a meaning as a curriculum by having content and subject matter that is used as a reference for the period of time that must be taken by students to obtain the final result in the form of a diploma as a sign that they have reached the finish line.

The curriculum is defined as instructions in a document that has contents in the form of formulations of objectives, learning activities, teaching materials, schedules and evaluations and can be called written documents as the result of joint instructions (Sukirman, et al., 2021). Curriculum can also be interpreted as the content of certain subjects in a program or data and information recorded in guiding learners through the required record documents and provided in the lesson plan. (Julaeha, 2019)

Curriculum Merdeka is a curriculum with diverse intracurricular learning where the content will be more optimal so that each student has enough time to explore concepts and strengthen competencies. The independent curriculum was issued by the Ministry of Education and Culture, Technology and Higher Education with the hope that it would be the right step to transform education for the realization of superior human resources (HR) in Indonesia that refer to the profile of Pancasila students. According to the independent curriculum, it has several characteristics, including the following. (Rahimah, 2022)(Rahimah, 2022)

- 1) Curriculum Structure, Pancasila Student Profile (PPP) is a reference in the development of Content Standards, Process Standards, and Assessment Standards, or Curriculum Structure, as well as Learning Outcomes

- (CP), Learning Principles, and Learning Assessment.
- 2) The New Paradigm curriculum has a term, namely Learning Outcomes (CP) which is a series of knowledge, skills, and attitudes as a continuous process so as to build complete competencies.
- 3) The implementation of the learning process with a thematic approach can be carried out at all levels of education.
- 4) The New Paradigm curriculum does not stipulate the number of lesson hours per week as has been the case in KTSP 2013, but the number of lesson hours is set per year.
- 5) Schools are given the flexibility to be able to apply collaborative learning models between subjects and make cross-subject assessments.
- 6) For Information and Communication Technology (ICT) subjects which in KTSP 2013 were eliminated, in the New Paradigm Curriculum these subjects will be returned with a new name, namely Informatics and will be taught starting from the junior high school level.
- 7) Science and Social Studies subjects at the Grade IV, V, and VI Elementary School levels which have been standing alone, in the New Paradigm Curriculum these two subjects will be taught simultaneously under the name Social Natural Sciences Subjects (IPAS).

A challenge can generally be defined as a demanding task or circumstance. The challenges of schools themselves begin with how teachers become a special concern in the implementation of the independent curriculum policy. Based on the advancement of technology and information that is felt so fast, the learning model becomes a special view to be able to answer challenges so that there is a shift in the role of teachers not just *central learning* (Sopiansyah et al., 2022). So that the existence of an independent curriculum is considered capable of restoring and restoring the situation and position of teachers with existing skills. This is in line with the opinion of teachers given freedom rather than the implementation of learning. This curriculum provides the widest possible opportunity for teachers to be able to design learning according to the needs and characteristics of students (Rahmadayanti & Hartoyo (2022), (Suhandi & Robi'ah, 2022).

C. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In terms of methodology, this research is a type of qualitative research with a case study approach. According to Creswell (2015), the case study approach is a description of a situation, condition, or prestige that contains portraits of individuals, or groups. The subjects of the study were the principal, curriculum coordination team, two class teachers, and three students at SD Muhammadiyah Warungboto in Yogyakarta. The study was conducted from September 22 to October 23, 2022. The method or technique of data collection used by researchers is obtained directly from informants both by interview techniques, and observation. The data source is

determined using *purposive sampling*. *Purposive sampling* is a method to identify information according to certain criteria or considerations (Sugiyono, 2020). The stages in research are carried out in stages or sequences: (1) Problem Identification, (2) Problem Formulation, (3) Determining Research Objectives, (4) Data collection; Interviews, and Observations, (5) Data Processing and Data Analysis, and (6) Making Conclusions. The data analysis process is carried out using *Atlas.ti software version 8. Software-assisted*. The analysis process is carried out to facilitate researchers in making codes and research concept maps (Mahmudah, 2021).

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D. RESEARCH RESULT

Result

Based on the results of the analysis obtained by interviewing, observation techniques and processed using the help of *Atlas.ti software version 8. Software-assisted*, there are results from interviews and observations that have been conducted on school principals, curriculum coordination teams, teachers, and students at SD Muhammadiyah Warungboto Yogyakarta city. So, the phenomena that occur today in the application of the curriculum, namely:

1. Implemented the Independent Curriculum in the Muhammadiyah Warungboto elementary school in Yogyakarta city got the second choice, namely Mandiri Change, which provides leeway to schools in implementing several parts and principles of the Independent Curriculum, gradually replacing the curriculum of the K13 curriculum education unit in grade 1 and grade 4.
2. The learning model used by some teachers is still in the lecture model, this situation is influenced by environmental conditions that are adjusting to new learning habits after the pandemic.
3. The readiness of teachers towards the implementation of the Independent Curriculum cannot be assessed well, in fact there are still many teachers at SD Muhammadiyah Warungboto in Yogyakarta who have not been able to compile and complete teaching modules.
4. The impact of online learning makes students difficult to control by teachers, lack of student manners and students lack focus in learning.
5. The readiness of students in the Independent Curriculum, especially regarding the freedom of students to choose for themselves what they will learn, students still participate in self-development in extracurriculars.
6. The cost of implementing the *market day* project is borne by each student, and the results are reused by the student.
7. Regarding challenges in the implementation of the Independent Curriculum, schools make several strategies for the implementation of the Independent Curriculum.

Discussion

In the development of the world of education in Indonesia,

Fig. 1. Implementation of the Independent Curriculum and Its Challenges at SD Muhammadiyah Warungboto Yogyakarta City.

the quality of education quality is influenced by the application of educational curricula applied starting from Elementary School (SD) to Higher Education or University. The curriculum is designed to realize changes in the quality of student learning in order to achieve goals and in accordance with educational goals. The education curriculum in Indonesia has always made changes in its application. The



current curriculum is the Merdeka Curriculum. The Merdeka Curriculum is a flexible curriculum by providing flexibility to each school in exploring in accordance with infrastructure, input, and giving freedom to teachers in delivering learning essentially. The purpose of implementing the curriculum itself is as a reference to be able to carry out education, especially in the realm of the education unit level. Teachers are freed from convoluted administration, and students are given freedom in choosing areas of interest by students themselves (Leny, 2022)(Aini, 2022)(Yaelasari & Yuni, 2022).

The Merdeka curriculum in Indonesia has not been implemented simultaneously and massively, especially in the Yogyakarta region. This is in accordance with the policy of the Ministry of Education and Culture and Technology which provides leeway to schools in implementing the Independent Curriculum. The Merdeka curriculum is considered an alternative in overcoming student learning setbacks during the pandemic, so the Merdeka curriculum provides freedom in the implementation of learning. The choice of IKM is offered by adjusting the school conditions and the readiness of teachers to participate in IKM. Similarly, schools are given full authority to develop and manage learning curricula that are in accordance with the characteristics of educational units and students (Rahmadayanti & Hartoyo, 2022)(Numertayasa et al., 2022).

SMIs are carried out independently with three categories that have been explained in detail in the circular letter of the Head of BSKAP of the Ministry of Education and Culture Number 2774/H.HI/KR.00.01/2022. (Kemendikbudristek, 2022c) So that the school registers for the Independent Curriculum independently. Furthermore, teachers and education staff in schools fill out the readiness questionnaire that has been developed. From the readiness questionnaire, appropriate choices were produced regarding the readiness of each school in the implementation of the Independent Curriculum.

The implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in Muhammadiyah Warungboto elementary schools in Yogyakarta city received the second choice, namely Mandiri Change, which provides leeway to schools in implementing several parts and principles of the Independent Curriculum,

gradually replacing the curriculum of the K13 curriculum education unit in grades 1 and grade 4, so that the Independent Curriculum applied to grades 1 and 4 becomes a benchmark to be able to make better changes in the use of the curriculum which is renewable. In the Independent Curriculum, there is a change in the function of teachers who originally taught with a variety of approaches that were uniform or one size for all, now teachers must make someone who creates students as independent learners. In the Merdeka curriculum, it is considered that learning can have a tremendous impact on the development of student potential if the school can provide the best learning for students. So that teachers in this case must be able to be facilitators or mentors in active project-based learning activities (Aprima & Sasmita, 2022).

In the implementation of the Merdeka curriculum so far, teachers continue to teach in the same way as lectures and learning is not all student-centered so that curriculum changes have not had a significant impact on the success of learning objectives. This situation is influenced by environmental conditions that are adjusting to post-pandemic life. Actually, the Merdeka curriculum is not much different from the K13 curriculum. The use of the term from the Merdeka curriculum actually only summarizes from the K13 curriculum, but with different terms. The challenge is when teachers are required to develop their own learning objectives that refer to the objectives of the Merdeka curriculum. So that teachers in the implementation of the Independent Curriculum are required to be able to innovate and practice effective learning methods during face-to-face learning at school. (Bead et al., 2022)

Teachers in the Independent Curriculum are given the freedom to develop *project-based learning*. Teachers as curriculum implementers, are required to be able to realize this noble mission in the learning process (Inayati, 2022). However, in terms of teacher ability and readiness, there are still many who are not ready. In fact, the financing carried out at SD Muhammadiyah Warungboto in Yogyakarta on the *market day* project is charged to students, this is because the school wants cooperation between the school and the participation of parents. Then there are still many teachers at SD Muhammadiyah Warungboto in Yogyakarta who are still unable to compile and make good teaching modules. Because the school is still familiarizing the readiness of students after 2 years of online learning which is far from direct supervision by teachers. So that the impact of online learning makes students less focused on learning. Therefore, mental reinforcement for principals, teachers and school supervisors is important. In addition, the Ministry of Education and Culture also needs to understand that schools need complete guidelines and training as a reference for the Independent curriculum more freely given to schools so that quality is mapped in the implementation of the Independent Curriculum.

Another thing that becomes a challenge is the readiness of students in the implementation of the Independent Curriculum, especially related to the flexibility of students to choose for themselves what they will learn, so this is a concern so that students really choose how to learn based on interests and talents and not just follow the choice of friends even because of pressure, because it requires some students to participate in self-development one of them participate in extracurricular activities.

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For this reason, it is necessary to pay attention to the efforts carried out. According to , in (Hattarina et al., 2022) the implementation of the Independent Curriculum there are important steps that must be present as follows.

- 1) Learn and understand *ragulasi* by participating in socialization such as training/webinars/bimtek preparation for the implementation of the independent learning curriculum.
- 2) Coordinate in making decisions to implement the type of curriculum to be applied.
- 3) Create a preparation team for the implementation of the Independent Curriculum and a curriculum development team.
- 4) Teachers prepare tools regarding the Independent Curriculum independently.
- 5) Conducting socialization to stakeholders.
- 6) Gain insight with driving schools.

Changes in the curriculum and the implementation of new curricula in the implementation of education are a need to accelerate education recovery, but curriculum changes that are immature, hasty, and too fast to change are very burdensome for schools and other education units as implementers. Because this causes a lack of enthusiasm from teachers who are not ready for this curriculum change, when teachers have to overhaul the RPP and its tools, especially learning assessments. Without careful preparation, not maximum educational results can be achieved but only experimental results, and instead schools are bothered with demands for continuous adjustment. This is because the old curriculum has not had time to be implemented properly, it has been replaced with a new curriculum. (Fitriyah et al., 2022)

Related to these challenges, schools need to make strategies so that the implementation of an Independent Curriculum is carried out. Some things that become strategies at SD Muhammadiyah Warungboto in Yogyakarta include, *first*, related to the legal umbrella of project-based learning activities (*project based learning*) still focusing on student adaptation and student focus, as well as student adab. *Second*, in terms of human resources, always coordinate with parents and cooperation between teachers. *Third*, in terms of facilities and infrastructure. Implement the Independent Curriculum, of course, requires facilities and infrastructure to support learning activities, teachers prepare facilities and infrastructure with tools and materials that can support the running of project-based learning activities. *Fourth*, in terms of budget, funding for the implementation of the Independent Curriculum needs to be budgeted appropriately, considering that schools are still feeling in the Independent Curriculum, funding comes from independent funds, namely students, such as the implementation of *market days* or work degrees.

In addition, several solutions can be made to teacher readiness in the implementation of the Independent Curriculum learning policy are as follows.

1. SD Muhammadiyah Warungboto Yogyakarta must prepare very careful planning, so that the learning process can be carried out in accordance with curriculum guidelines.
2. Regarding grade 1 and 4 learning activities related to *project-based learning*, SD Muhammadiyah Warungboto, Yogyakarta city, needs to convey first the

- objectives of learning and socialization to students as they go on adapting to new habits and social students.
- SD Muhammadiyah Warungboto Yogyakarta city in coordinating with parents and cooperation between teachers needs to improve the quality of cooperation between teachers and parents, if every collaboration is done without cohesiveness there will be no maximum results, there will continue to be miscommunication between teachers, students, parents, and *stakeholders* of the school.
 - The readiness and provision of facilities and infrastructure of SD Muhammadiyah Warungboto Yogyakarta city is not only in the media but also activates the use of the Merdeka Mengajar digital platform so as to minimize obstacles.
 - SD Muhammadiyah Warungboto Yogyakarta city in funding for SMEs needs to improve project implementation management, so that the capital and budget to make the project are no longer from independent costs.

I. CONCLUSIONS

Implement the Independent Curriculum as an additional option in education recovery after the Covid-19 pandemic requires cooperation from all *stakeholders* in order to have an effective and significant impact on all aspects, especially the quality of education. Some of the challenges at SD Muhammadiyah Warungboto in Yogyakarta in the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum include the readiness of competencies and skills as well as the *mindset* of educators as implementers of education, the readiness of infrastructure and infrastructure. SD Muhammadiyah Warungboto Yogyakarta city needs efforts to improve this readiness, especially the government and SD Muhammadiyah Warungboto Yogyakarta city on supervision need to encourage the implementation of the Independent Curriculum to be implemented effectively and efficiently in order to accelerate education recovery, among others by; (1) encourage the Ministry of Education and Culture and Technology so that the implementation of the Independent Curriculum is carried out with more mature, precise and clear regulations; (2) encourage budgeting in the implementation of projects not burdensome to students; (3) encourage the readiness of human resources and infrastructure to implement the implementation of the Independent Curriculum.

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