

Reviewing Various Obstacles in Implementing the Independent Curriculum in Junior High Schools

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Abstract: Curriculum development is one of the systemic changes that can improve and support learning. The Merdeka Curriculum is one of the Ministry of Education and Culture's efforts to overcome learning loss due to the long pandemic that hampered the education process. The Independent Curriculum allows every student to develop according to their individual needs and potential. Assuming that there are various policies in both the old and new curriculum, this is one thing that is not explained enough. Therefore, this research aims to analyze the challenges teachers face in implementing the Independent Curriculum. This research uses document analysis methods. The findings of this study indicate a high workload due to work and a lack of ongoing training. Apart from that, teachers also have difficulty encouraging students to learn. This study concludes that increasing teacher capacity through structured and ongoing training programs is very important to support the successful implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum.

Key Words: Challenges; Independent Curriculum; Teachers

Introduction

Education is a path taken to improve oneself in adapting to conditions in the ever-changing era. The objectives of national education as stated in Article 3 of Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System are for students to believe in and be devoted to God Almighty, have noble character, are healthy, knowledgeable, and capable. creatures. It is about developing the potential to become. , become independent citizens who are creative, democratic, and responsible (Pelawi et al., 2021). In the world of education, curriculum changes often occur. The curriculum needs to be evaluated innovatively, dynamically, and periodically to keep up with developments in the era and science and technology. This is important, especially for the curriculum which must be adjusted to the skills needs required by society and users of graduates. The Independent Curriculum began to be implemented in 2021.

In every curriculum change, there are challenges. Mainly in administrative activities that make teachers not optimal in carrying out the learning process that should be given to students. Even because of the independent curriculum, the teaching and learning process is hampered because teachers and schools make administration an obligation that must be fulfilled. Schools, teachers, and students are subjects who play an active role in the implementation of learning so the curriculum must be a challenge for the three subjects (Suhandi & Robi'ah, 2022).

The implementation of the Independent Curriculum provides significant encouragement for the role of teachers, both in curriculum development and in the learning process. However, in its implementation, teachers face various challenges as facilitators in the Independent Curriculum. These challenges are influenced by professional, pedagogical, personality, and social competencies (Adnan Hakim, 2015).

In the early stages of implementing the Independent Curriculum, teachers were faced with various difficulties. This initiative began with the simplification of the curriculum by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology in special situations, known as the emergency curriculum, as an effort to overcome learning delays due to the pandemic (Babbar & Gupta, 2022; Susanti & Wulandari, 2021). The curriculum in Indonesia at the junior high school level has often changed in recent years, before the independent curriculum was implemented there was a curriculum that had been implemented at the junior high school level. Previously there was the 2013 curriculum (K13) which emphasized a competency-based approach and strengthening character and knowledge (Nurdin et al., 2023). The focus of the 2013 curriculum was the formation of students who had knowledge, skills, and attitude competencies. However, in the implementation of this curriculum, there were challenges, such as the lack of training for teachers, as well as limited facilities and infrastructure that support technology-based learning (Susanti et al., 2022; Susanti & Wulandari, 2022). From 2022 until now, the independent curriculum has been implemented at all levels of education, especially at the junior high school level which is more flexible for teachers in designing fun and relevant learning according to student development to create students who are more independent, creative, and have character. There are characteristics of the independent curriculum in junior high schools, such as learning flexibility where schools can choose and determine relevant learning and teaching materials, there is character formation of students through innovation of project values strengthening the profile of Pancasila students, learning through a project-based approach that is adjusted to the subject, there are various assessments such as formative assessments, summative assessments, and project and portfolio assessments that assess the overall development of students.

The independent curriculum in junior high school mathematics is focused on understanding concepts, not just memorizing formulas or procedures so that they can not only solve problems but can understand and apply mathematical concepts in the context of everyday life. Some of the principles of the independent curriculum in mathematics are the emphasis on understanding basic mathematical concepts and problem-solving, identifying problems through mathematical models and critical thinking strategies, and the application of mathematics in everyday life in solving real problems. Mathematics learning in the independent curriculum is centered on students so that students can explore independently through research, experiments, or solving real problems, there are discussion and collaboration activities in groups in solving problems found, and feedback from teachers to help understand problems and develop deeper understanding.

In implementing the independent curriculum in junior high schools, in addition to the advantages, there are also several challenges faced, such as the lack of ongoing training for teachers affecting the success of implementing the curriculum optimally because there is no

adequate training support, the potential for gaps in the quality of education is very likely to occur. After all, the lack of attention to teacher training and the availability of educational resources makes it difficult to achieve the objectives of the independent curriculum, the lack of teacher readiness in implementing student-centered learning can hinder learning for students who need broader pedagogical skills and knowledge, the role of teachers must be able to have digital skills and be able to innovate and think creatively so that they not only teach material, but provide students with provisions in helping them become independent characters, problem solvers, and able to think critically in mathematics learning.

Method

This study will use a theoretical study method to conduct an analysis on the title "Analysis of Teacher Challenges in Implementing the Independent Curriculum in Junior High Schools", to identify and understand relevant concepts related to the challenges faced by teachers in implementing the Independent Curriculum in Junior High Schools. This theoretical study process involves searching and reviewing literature related to curriculum policies, educational theories, and teaching challenges that are relevant to the context of implementing the new curriculum in Indonesia.

The first study will focus on curriculum theory related to curriculum renewal and its implementation. The theory of the challenges faced by teachers in the context of education will discuss the various obstacles that arise in the process of implementing the new curriculum. In this case, theories about educational change and change management can be used to understand how curriculum changes can cause resistance or difficulties for teachers. The Independent Curriculum requires teachers to have higher flexibility and creativity in designing learning. Therefore, this theoretical study will also include theories about teacher professionalism that focus on pedagogical competence, professionalism in classroom management, and competency-based learning. The theoretical study will also involve an analysis of the education system as a whole. This systems theory sees education as part of an overall social structure and interacting policies.

Results and Discussion

Lack of ongoing training for teachers

In the Practice of the Independent Curriculum Despite online training and efforts to implement a unique curriculum, there is still a gap between the training content and what is practiced in the field, causing confusion among teachers. For example, student-centered learning has not been fully implemented because it still applies the lecture concept which makes students unable to explore the subject matter in depth so training is needed such as project-based learning workshops and interactive classroom simulations, lack of training focused on technology that can help develop new methods for delivering material through training in the use of subject support applications and the use of digital learning platforms, there needs to be training in developing competency-based assessments through formative and summative assessment training and the development of student portfolios. The lack of ongoing training has an impact on the parties concerned. The impact on the teachers

themselves is the loss of motivation and enthusiasm for teachers who tend to feel stagnant and lose motivation in teaching due to the inability to keep up with the latest developments in the field of education. In addition, teachers face various challenges in the classroom, such as students with special needs, new technologies, and changes in the curriculum to master the skills and knowledge needed to teach effectively. So that every training that has been able to be applied to students both in class and outside the classroom, there needs to be continuous evaluation and reflection to ensure that teachers can benefit from the implementation that has been practiced in learning.

Potential for gaps in the quality of education

Factors that create the potential for gaps in the quality of education are in the implementation of the independent curriculum which causes differences in the quality of learning in various junior high schools. The knowledge and understanding of junior high school teachers in various regions may have different levels of the Independent Curriculum. Some teachers may still need further training and guidance so that learning can run smoothly. Teachers have pedagogical skills, such as the ability to design active, creative, and student-centered learning. Access to quality training that is relevant to the Independent Curriculum is also uneven. Teachers in remote or underprivileged areas may have more limited training opportunities.

Lack of teacher readiness in implementing student-centered learning

The lack of teacher readiness in implementing student-centered learning is indeed one of the obstacles to realizing quality education. The factor is that many teachers do not fully understand the concept of student-centered learning. Many teachers still apply traditional teacher-centered learning models because they do not understand the principles of student-centered learning, such as building curiosity, encouraging creativity, and developing critical thinking skills. Teachers are not yet accustomed to designing interesting, challenging, and interactive learning activities due to the lack of sufficient support from schools in implementing student-centered learning. Schools do not provide adequate resources, such as books, teaching aids, and technology, or do not create a school culture that supports active learning.

The role of a teacher must have digital skills and be able to think innovatively and creatively

Teachers are expected to make the learning process in the classroom more innovative and dynamic. Teacher empowerment in the Society 5.0 era includes teachers' ability to use artificial intelligence (AI), the Internet of Things, virtual/augmented reality, and robotics skills. Other skills that teachers need to have include communication skills, leadership skills, digital literacy, entrepreneurship, collaboration, and problem-solving skills. According to Thornhill-Miller et al., (2023), educators should have a creative and critical attitude, think critically, and have good communication and collaboration. Educators must be driving instructors who must prioritize their students, be innovative, take the initiative, be creative, and accompany their

students. The role of teachers cannot be replaced by technology. In other words, direct classroom interaction can foster emotional bonds between teachers and students, develop character, and provide good examples for teachers. Driving instructors are responsible for the student's learning process. Education teacher learning warriors must do four things to produce graduates who are competitive, qualified, and competent in their fields.

Here is the explanation: First, competency-based training is the most important mission of educational institutions. The presence of information technology helps students to learn appropriately according to their respective abilities. Second, the ability to utilize technology, especially the internet, facilitates communication between students and teachers in the online learning process. Third, teachers must be able to utilize and utilize artificial intelligence (AI)-based technology. The existence of sophisticated technology such as three-dimensional artificial intelligence (AI) helps students understand natural phenomena so simulations are needed that can explain what real life is like. Fourth, another advantage of AI is that teachers can identify the needs of each student in the learning process, making it easier for students to understand the entire learning material. Following the guidelines and accepting change means that teachers gain knowledge, skills, abilities, and beliefs (Fives & Buehl, 2008). Acquiring knowledge is of course a very important competency for this new curriculum. Teachers need very comprehensive knowledge to develop learning according to curriculum strategies. Mastery of skills is also considered important because the new curriculum tests teachers' abilities to overcome all the problems listed in the curriculum provisions. Furthermore, acquiring skills to implement this new curriculum direction requires the ability to innovate and produce effective and meaningful learning. In addition, the trust given to teachers is the main key to developing quality human resources and instilling ethical and moral values that are the basis for supporting student development in the learning process. This is no less important to master.

Conclusion

The implementation of the Independent Curriculum in junior high schools presents new challenges for teachers. These challenges require adaptation and continuous competency development. However, with the right support, teachers can overcome these challenges and maximize the potential of the Independent Curriculum to improve the quality of learning, especially at the junior high school level.

It is important for the government and education stakeholders to provide full support to teachers, through training, mentoring, and access to adequate resources. Collaboration between teachers, schools, and communities is also the key to success in facing these challenges.

With a collaborative spirit and strong commitment, the Independent Curriculum for Junior High Schools can be a milestone in improving the quality of education in Indonesia, producing a creative, innovative generation that is ready to face future challenges.

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