BASICA
Journal of Primary Education

ANALYSIS OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE INDEPENDENT CURRICULUM IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

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Abstract	This research aims to analyze the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum at SD Negeri 005 Tanjungpinang Timur, focusing on textbook availability, teaching strategies, technology use, teacher professional development, challenges, and solutions. Using interviews, observations, and document analysis, the study found that despite challenges such as resource limitations and the need for additional teacher training, the school has made efforts to overcome these obstacles. Most textbooks align with the Merdeka Curriculum, though some teachers still use older materials as references. Teachers have adopted interactive and innovative teaching strategies, utilizing technology to enhance learning. The study concludes that while the implementation is going well, some improvements and adjustments are needed. This research contributes positively to the school's educational development and can serve as a reference for other schools implementing the Merdeka Curriculum.
Keywords	Interactive learning strategies, Merdeka Curriculum, and teacher development.

INTRODUCTION

The practical problems in the implementation of the Independent Curriculum in Elementary Schools (SD) in East Tanjungpinang lie in a number of main challenges, namely the readiness of educators in understanding and implementing the new curriculum, the limitations of adequate facilities and supporting facilities, and the level of public acceptance of this reform. In a practical context, many teachers still need intensive training to be able to implement the competency-based learning approach that is the core of the Independent Curriculum. In addition, not all schools have the same infrastructure or resources to support innovative learning. Theoretically, the implementation of the Independent Curriculum refers to the theory of educational reform that emphasizes the importance of alignment between education policy and the demands of globalization. However, its gradual implementation, only in schools that pass the selection of the Driving School program, has the potential to create inequality in the quality of education. This raises important questions about the effectiveness of this new curriculum implementation strategy in ensuring equitable distribution of education quality and producing a competent young generation to face global challenges. The implementation of the Independent Curriculum is carried out in stages, with the first year only being implemented in selected schools through the selection of the Driving School program (Marheni, Supriyanto, Junaedi, 2023).

The results of the research conducted by the author in this study show that the Independent Curriculum is implemented through technical and implementation stages, using a differentiated learning model and a project to strengthen the Pancasila student profile. However, obstacles arise during the implementation and learning process. The Independent Curriculum emphasizes several main aspects. First, competency-based learning, which focuses on developing students' skills for the world of work or further education. Second, learning independence, which encourages students to become independent learners who can access, analyze, and sort information independently (Zainuri, 2023: 33).

In addition, the Independent Curriculum also pays attention to the development of students' character, by emphasizing values such as honesty, discipline, cooperation, and the spirit of never giving up (Aeni, 2021:123). Another aspect emphasized is the integration of technology in learning, which recognizes the important role of information and communication technology (ICT) in modern education. In addition, the Independent Curriculum also pays attention to local needs. Although it is national, this curriculum is designed to be adapted to local conditions and potentials in each

region, including elementary schools in East Tanjungpinang (Elfrianto, Utama, Akmaluddin, and Amin, 2024: 26). With the good implementation of the Independent Curriculum, it is hoped that the quality of elementary education in East Tanjungpinang will increase, producing graduates who are superior, competent, and able to compete globally. Elementary education in East Tanjungpinang is expected to be a driving force for the progress of national education and form human resources who are ready to face global challenges.

However, the implementation of the Independent Curriculum at East Tanjungpinang Elementary School faces various challenges. Based on observations, several problems were identified, such as resource limitations. This obstacle can be seen from the lack of textbooks and learning materials that are in accordance with the Independent Curriculum. Some schools do not have adequate access to relevant books and materials, which can hinder the effective learning process. In addition, supporting infrastructure such as computers, projectors, and other information technology devices are often inadequate in some classes. Limited access to these devices limits teachers' ability to implement innovative and engaging learning strategies (Wulansari, Abdullah, Suhardi, dan Iskandar, 2023: 2).

The impact of this limited resource can be seen in the quality of learning. Teachers have difficulty presenting material interactively, which affects student engagement. Gaps in access to resources also create educational inequalities among schools, hindering the achievement of equality and inclusion goals (Jayanthi dan Dinaseviani, 2022).

Teacher readiness is also the main focus. Despite training efforts related to the Independent Curriculum, many teachers still experience difficulties in implementing an interactive and inclusive learning approach. Limited knowledge of new methods and lack of support in implementing curriculum changes affect the quality of teaching. The challenges of teacher readiness in implementing the Independent Curriculum can be further detailed because many teachers are still tied to the conventional learning approaches they have used.

Many teachers have been implementing certain teaching methods for years and are comfortable with the approach. The introduction of new methods in the Independent Curriculum, such as competency-based, independent, and technology-based learning, creates uncertainty and confusion.

Although there is training related to the Independent Curriculum, its success has varied and may not cover all the necessary aspects. Inadequate training can make teachers feel unprepared or lack confidence. Changing the teaching style from conventional to more interactive and inclusive requires time and ongoing support. Many teachers find it difficult to adapt their teaching practices to the demands of the Independent Curriculum because they require a fundamental change in their approach.

Lack of support and resources is also a serious problem. Teachers need adequate access to textbooks, learning materials, educational technology, and professional support to implement the Independent Curriculum effectively. Without this support, changing learning approaches becomes difficult, and teachers feel isolated. Understanding these challenges allows us to take concrete steps to improve readiness and support for teachers (Tuerah dan Tuerah, 2023).

In addition to the challenges of teacher readiness and resource availability, the observation results also show low parental involvement in supporting learning at home. Although communication between schools and parents is carried out, parental participation in learning at home is still low. Several factors that affect parental involvement are related to socio-economic and cultural conditions in society.

One of the factors that plays a role is the socio-economic condition of the family (Mayasari, et.al, 2022. 127). Parents with low economic backgrounds often have limited time and resources to engage in their children's education at home. They usually work hard to meet the basic needs of the family, so the time available to support the child's learning is very little.

In addition, cultural factors also play an important role in determining the level of parental involvement in Education (Jafarov, 2015). The culture of the people of East Tanjungpinang has a certain pattern of behavior related to education, where some parents are not used to or feel uncomfortable to be actively involved in supporting learning at home. Traditional views of the role of parents in education also affect their participation rates.

In addition to the challenges of teacher readiness, parental involvement, and the availability of resources, the issue of learning support facilities and infrastructure is also an important concern. The observation results show that computer laboratories, libraries, and other learning facilities are not always available in every elementary school in East Tanjungpinang. Inequality of access to these tools can limit students' learning experiences and teachers' ability to apply innovative and diverse learning approaches.

Computer laboratories are important facilities to help students develop information and communication technology (ICT) skills needed in today's digital era (Yaumi, 2021: 256-262). However, not all schools have adequate computer labs, and some even do not have access to the necessary hardware and software for effective ICT learning.

Uneven internet access is a serious problem, because in some areas, internet access is limited or non-existent. This limits students and teachers from using digital resources, such as online learning materials and collaboration with teachers or other students. Based on the results of observations, it can be concluded that the implementation of the Independent Curriculum at East Tanjungpinang Elementary School still faces challenges that need to be overcome. Strategic and collaborative steps are needed between the government, schools, teachers, parents, and other related parties to increase the availability of resources, teacher readiness, parental involvement, and supporting facilities and infrastructure. Thus, it is hoped that the implementation of the Independent Curriculum can be more effective and achieve the desired educational goals.

Facing the complexity of the existing problem, it is necessary to take concrete steps to overcome these challenges. Holistic and integrated solutions must be developed so that the implementation of the Independent Curriculum at East Tanjungpinang Elementary School is successful, achieving the goal of a higher quality, inclusive, and in accordance with the demands of the times. Based on this background, the researcher is interested in conducting collaborative research between lecturers and students regarding "Analysis of the Implementation of the Independent Curriculum at State Elementary School 005 East Tanjungpinang."

METHOD

The research entitled "Analysis of the Implementation of the Independent Curriculum in East Tanjungpinang Elementary Schools (Case Study of SDN 005 East Tanjungpinang)" is located on Jl. Sultan Sulaiman No.1, Kp. Bulang, East Tanjungpinang District, Tanjung Pinang City, Riau Islands. The subjects of the study included principals, curriculum representatives, teachers, students, and guardians of students at SDN 005 Tanjungpinang Timur, using *purposive sampling techniques.*

The object of the research is the analysis of the implementation of the independent curriculum, which includes the availability of educational resources, teacher readiness, and parental involvement in the learning process. The data sources consist of primary data, obtained through direct interviews with informants, and secondary data, drawn from documentation and related

literature.

The data collection techniques used are participatory observation, interviews, and documentation. Observations were carried out to observe the implementation of the curriculum directly, interviews were conducted to obtain information from participants, and documentation provided data on the state of demographics, organizational structure, and facilities and infrastructure at SDN 005 Tanjungpinang Timur.

Data analysis is an important step in this research, aiming to compile and interpret information from interviews and observations. Following the inductive method, the researcher carried out three main activities: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawn. In the reduction stage, the researcher selects relevant information and eliminates unnecessary ones. Data presentation is carried out by organizing information in the form of charts or flowcharts to facilitate understanding. Finally, the researcher draws valid and relevant conclusions from the analyzed data. Researchers also apply triangulation to improve the quality of the data, ensuring that the findings of the study provide a deeper understanding of the object being studied.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

The results of this study are the basis for the development or improvement of education policies, especially related to the provision of adequate educational resources, effective teacher training, and strategies to increase parental involvement in supporting education at home. On the availability of textbooks, many schools have begun to provide textbooks that are in accordance with the Independent Curriculum, although there are still some who use old books as additional references. This shows the school's efforts to adapt to the new curriculum, although this transition is not yet fully completed

The use of learning support technology is also a highlight in this study. Different types of technology, such as educational software and online learning platforms, are used to create a more interactive and engaging learning environment for students. This shows that technology is increasingly becoming an integral part of the learning process in the era of the Independent Curriculum. Teachers' professional development has also received special attention which shows that many teachers have participated in training and professional development programs to improve their skills in implementing the Independent Curriculum. Participation in this training

reflects the school's commitment to supporting their teachers to face the challenges of the new curriculum.

Continuous evaluation and improvement is also an important part of the implementation of the Independent Curriculum. The study found that the evaluation process is carried out regularly to identify areas that need improvement. The results of this evaluation show that there is an improvement in the quality of learning, although there are still several aspects that need to be improved.

Overall, this study provides a comprehensive overview of various aspects of the implementation of the Independent Curriculum in schools, including the availability of textbooks, learning strategies, use of technology, teacher professional development, challenges faced, and continuous evaluation and improvement efforts. These findings provide valuable insights for the further development and refinement of the Independent Curriculum in the future. The findings of this study can be seen in the following graph.
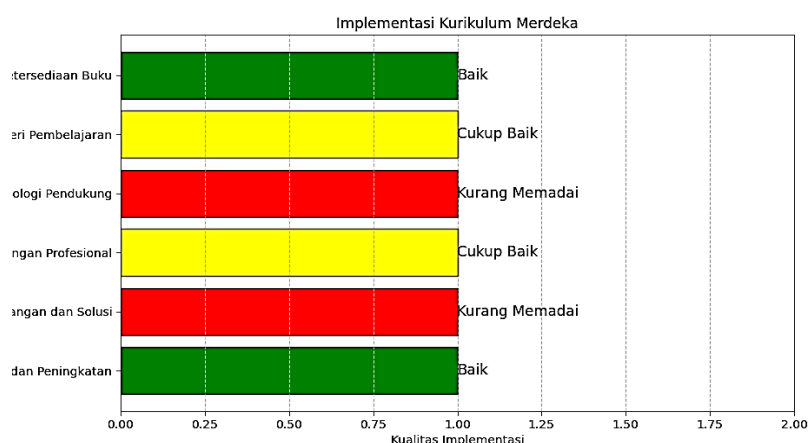

Figure 1. Implementation of the Independent Curriculum at SD Negeri 005 Tanjungpinang Timur

The results of the study show that the school has succeeded in improving the quality of learning and student participation through classroom observation and a planned assessment system. Teacher training has been implemented, but it needs to be strengthened to reach all teachers. The integration of learning according to student interests and support for students with special needs is good, but it still needs to be improved. Cooperation with external parties and internal evaluations demonstrate a commitment to creating an inclusive learning environment. Extracurricular activities have been integrated into the curriculum, although there are areas that need to be improved for the effectiveness of the implementation of the Independent Curriculum. The results of the findings of the achievement of the implementation of the independent curriculum

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at the 005 East Tanjungpinang State Elementary School can be seen in the following table.

Table 1. Achievements in the Implementation of the Independent Curriculum at State Elementary School 005 East Tanjungpinang

No.	Findings	Achievements	Information
1.	Class Observation	It is carried out periodically to observe each other and provide feedback between teachers.	It was well implemented.
2.	Assessment of Student Ability	It is carried out with an initial assessment and scheduled in the curriculum to adapt learning to the needs of students.	Planned and sustainable.
3.	Teacher Training	It is carried out through technical guidance activities and independent platforms, as well as the existence of a learning community forum.	It has been implemented, but it needs to be strengthened again.
4.	Learning Integration	It is determined by making the subject matter the main focus and integrating it with the interests and talents of the students.	It is ongoing, but it needs further development.
5.	Inclusion and Equity	It is done by opening opportunities for children with special needs to study in regular schools and giving them special attention.	It has been well realized, but there is still room for further improvement.
6.	Kerjasama dengan Eksternal	It is established through collaboration with school committees, art institutions, and studios to support the implementation of the curriculum.	It has been well formed, but it needs to be improved again.
7.	Internal Evaluation	It is carried out through performance management, classroom observation, and KKG meetings to share experiences.	It has been running, but it needs to be improved in measuring the effectiveness and adjusting learning strategies.
8.	Handling Individual Differences	It is carried out with initial assessment and differentiation of learning to ensure each student gets attention according to their needs.	It is implemented, but it needs to be improved in identifying and addressing individual differences.
9.	Extracurricular Activities	Providing a variety of extracurricular activities that suit students' interests and talents.	It has been integrated into the curriculum and is carried out regularly.
10.	Dissemination of Experience	Hold forums or seminars to share experiences and learning with other schools or related parties.	It has been done, but it needs to be improved in scope and frequency.

Discussion

The interviews involved interviewees with varying teaching experiences, ranging from 3 to 16 years, providing valuable perspectives on challenges and strategies for dealing with individual student differences. The resource persons consisted of school principals, teachers from various classes, including grades 2, 4, and 5, as well as homeroom teachers who played a role in the learning process. Information was also obtained from several student guardians. The following is a discussion of the research results from the interview.

This study aims to evaluate the implementation of the Independent Curriculum at SDN 005 East Tanjungpinang. The focus includes the availability of facilities, the effectiveness of learning strategies, technology support, teacher professional development, and the role of inclusion and differentiation in learning. The findings of the study are as follows.

1. **Availability of Facilities**

   The school has provided sufficient textbooks based on the Independent Curriculum, although the 2013 Curriculum books are still used as companions.

2. **Effectiveness of Learning Strategies**

   Teachers apply innovative approaches such as *Project-Based Learning* which involves practical activities such as composting.

3. **Use of Technology**

   Technologies such as projectors and internet connections have supported interactive learning, but there are still obstacles, especially for senior teachers.

4. **Professional Development of Teachers**

   Training based on the Independent Teaching Platform (PMM) improves teachers' understanding, but the implementation of differentiated learning still faces time constraints and complexity.

5. **An Inclusive Approach**

   Inclusion efforts have been well underway, but there is still a need to support students with special needs more comprehensively.

6. **Evaluation and Assessment**

   The assessment is carried out holistically, combining academic and non-academic aspects, but requires reinforcement in literacy and numeracy.

The results of the research findings regarding the implementation of the Independent Curriculum at SDN 005 East Tanjungpinang above show a strong relationship with several educational theories. One of the relevant is the Constructivist Learning Theory, in which project-based learning strategies reflect the principle that students actively build knowledge through hands-on experience. The Independent Curriculum also integrates the Principle of Differentiation in Education, emphasizing that learning must be tailored to meet the individual needs of students, including through initial diagnostic assessment. In addition, the integration of technology, such as the use of projectors and internet access, supports the theory of the role of technology in increasing learning interactivity, enriching the student experience, and making it easier for teachers to deliver material.

The implementation of the Independent Curriculum at SDN 005 East Tanjungpinang shows a number of conformities with the results of previous research, especially in three main aspects: the use of technology, differentiated learning, and the implementation of the P5 Program (Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project).

Use of Technology

Research by Hakim and Abidin (2024) found that the Independent Teaching Platform (PMM) plays an important role in increasing collaboration between teachers and facilitating digital-based learning. This can also be seen at SDN 005 East Tanjungpinang, where PMM is used as the main tool in learning planning, material management, and evaluation. Teachers reported that PMM features, such as good practice guides and training modules, helped them understand and apply the concepts of the Independent Curriculum. This alignment shows that integrated educational technology is able to improve the quality of learning and collaboration at the elementary school level.

Differentiated Learning

Sarnoto (2024) in his research stated that early diagnostic assessments are a crucial component in differentiated learning, because they help teachers identify students' needs, interests, and abilities. At SDN 005 Tanjungpinang Timur, this assessment is also the first step before teachers design appropriate learning strategies for each student. For example, teachers assign tasks of different difficulty levels to students based on assessment results. With this approach, each student can learn according to their abilities, which is in line with research findings that differentiated learning can significantly improve student engagement and learning outcomes.

P5 Program (Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project)

The P5 program implemented at SDN 005 East Tanjungpinang, such as a composting project based on religious values, has similarities to research by Nurwidyayanti et al. (2024). In the study, community-based projects are an effective medium to integrate character values, such as mutual cooperation, environmental care, and religiosity, into learning activities. At this school, students' involvement in composting projects not only helps them understand the concept of recycling, but also instills the value of responsibility towards the environment and cooperation. This reinforces the finding that P5 can be an effective platform for developing students' character and competencies holistically.

By looking at the compatibility between the results of previous research and the implementation of the Independent Curriculum at SDN 005 Tanjungpinang Timur, it can be concluded that the approach applied has been on the right track. However, continuous evaluation and innovation are still needed to overcome existing challenges and ensure optimal learning outcomes.

CONCLUSION

Basic education has a strategic role in forming the foundation of knowledge, character, and skills of the younger generation. In order to improve the quality of education, the Independent Curriculum was introduced as a reform step that emphasizes competency-based learning, differentiated learning, and character strengthening through the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5). At SDN 005 East Tanjungpinang, the implementation of the Independent Curriculum is a challenge as well as an opportunity to optimize the potential of students and teachers.

The implementation of this curriculum involves various elements, including innovative approaches in learning strategies, technology integration, and collaboration with parents. Although initial results show a positive impact, a number of challenges, such as the need for technology training for teachers and the application of inclusion principles, still need to be addressed. Based on the analysis conducted, several recommendations were submitted to support the sustainability and success of the implementation of the Independent Curriculum in this school.

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