

## Implementation Of Merdeka Curriculum In Public School In Menteng Central Jakarta

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**Abstract.** Based on research by the Indonesia Ministry of Education from January to April 2021, 3,391 elementary school (SD) students from seven districts in four provinces experienced significant learning loss in both literacy and numeracy. Due to the pandemic the learning loss experienced for numeracy was equivalent to five months of study and literacy was equivalent to six months of study. Merdeka Curriculum is a new policy established to develop students' potential character. One of them is the implementation of the Merdeka curriculum which is carried out in two Public Elementary Schools, Central Jakarta. There were five research subjects: the principal, deputy principal for curriculum, and teachers. The research was conducted using descriptive qualitative methods. The research results show that schools welcome the Merdeka Curriculum because it is pro-child. School principals and teachers try their best, starting from preparing the curriculum, teaching modules, implementing the learning process, to evaluating student competency. In the Merdeka Curriculum there is character education based on Pancasila values. However, the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum was considered too hasty with a lack of socialization and training carried out by the education office and supervisors. Therefore, the Merdeka Curriculum needs to be prepared carefully by policy makers in order to prepare expert practitioners who can provide training directly according to teacher needs, so that teachers get clear information to develop themselves and improve their teaching abilities, as well as textbooks that should be adapted to student development.

**Keywords** Merdeka Curriculum; Evaluation; Implementation; Public School

### INTRODUCTION

The curriculum is evaluated periodically to adapt to current developments. Curriculum is essential to help educators and students achieve sustainable educational goals. Curriculum changes in Indonesia have occurred eleven times, starting in 1947 with a simple curriculum, until the 2013 Curriculum which aims to produce creative, productive, innovative and affective Indonesian citizens with the development of attitudes that are integrated with abilities and knowledge (Sutrisna, 2013).

The Covid pandemic in late December 2019 forced a change in education policy in Indonesia, from face-to-face learning to distance (online) learning, to avoid the spread of the Covid-19 virus. Based on research conducted by the Indonesia Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology (Kemendikbudristek) from January to April 2021, there were 3,391 elementary school (SD) students from seven districts or cities in four provinces experiencing learning loss, both literacy and numeracy significantly. Before the pandemic, the learning progress figure for one year for grade 1 elementary school was 78 points for numeracy and 129 points for literacy, however, due to the pandemic the learning loss experienced for numeracy was equivalent to five months of study and literacy was equivalent to six months of study (Kemendikbudristek, 2021).

The Independent Curriculum is a solution offered by the Ministry of Education and Culture to reduce learning loss during the Covid-19 pandemic. The Independent Curriculum is implemented in stages. The Ministry of Education and Culture gives freedom to educational institutions in implementing the Independent Curriculum (Kemendikbudristek, 2022).

Based on the Ministry of Education and Culture's Teacher Information Center, the Independent Curriculum consists of three types of learning, first, intracurricular where students have the opportunity to deepen concepts and strengthen competencies, apart from that teachers are also given the freedom to choose teaching tools that are tailored to the characteristics and needs of their students. The second is co-curricular in the form of a project to strengthen the Pancasila Student Profile, namely learning that focuses on developing students' character and general competencies. Lastly, extracurricular activities are carried out based on student interests and educational unit resources.

After approximately a year, 151,000 schools in Indonesia have implemented the Independent Curriculum. In 2024, the Independent Curriculum will be re-evaluated. This evaluation will become a reference for the Ministry of Education and Culture in determining further policies regarding the Independent Curriculum (Kemendikbudristek, 2022).

The implementation of the Independent Curriculum makes schools feel challenged and has a positive impact. The main challenge is related to teacher readiness in implementing this new curriculum. The positive impact is that there is an increase in students' communication, collaboration, critical thinking and creative thinking skills. The implementation of the Independent Curriculum is more optimal compared to the 2013 Curriculum even though it has only been running for a year (Rizki and Fahkrunisa, 2022, Angga, et al, 2022).

The implementation of the Independent Curriculum is also not free from criticism and weaknesses. The government has succeeded in designing the Independent Curriculum in terms of direction and documentation, but there are obstacles and things that cannot be implemented. The objectives of the Independent Curriculum were not fully achieved due to the weak absorption capacity of educators and schools in implementing all curriculum content, especially the objectives of the Independent Curriculum in reducing learning loss during the Covid-19 pandemic (Pratikno, et al, 2022).

Another problem is related to the teacher's readiness to use learning tools that support it. Socialization of the Independent Curriculum in schools has often been carried out, but teacher readiness is still at 54% (medium category), the preparations made include designing learning according to the Independent Curriculum (45%), the ability to evaluate learning (45%), the ability to prepare ICT-based media (36%), and participation in teacher mobilization programs

(42%). The obstacles faced by teachers are adjustment and understanding in terms of learning tools (modules and project designs), limited learning media and lack of training regarding the Independent Curriculum (Ibrahim, et al, 2022).

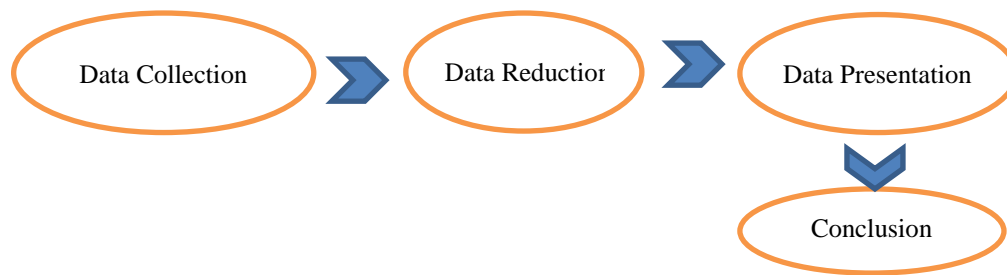
Another challenge is changing the mindset of teachers as the center of the learning process to students as the center of learning. Students as the center of learning is actually nothing new in every curriculum, but in the implementation of the Independent Curriculum, students are required to be more active through the *project-based learning process* (Rizki and Fakhrunisa, 2022). Then regarding learning plans (RPP), the use of Merdeka RPP does not affect learning activities, this means that learning activities are assessed the same, even though there are many types of RPP. Learning activities are actually greatly influenced by the teacher's ability to organize the class and use learning media, the way the teacher teaches will influence the interactions that occur in the class (Munandar, et al. 2021).

Based on the explanation above, the question arises, namely whether changing the curriculum is basically necessary considering that the Merdeka Curriculum seems rushed in its implementation, so the aim of this research is to evaluate the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, especially at the elementary school level.

## **METHOD**

This research uses a qualitative research method with a descriptive approach. This research explores the social conditions that will be studied thoroughly, broadly and in depth (Moleong, 2013). The research was conducted at SDN Menteng 02 and SDN Menteng 03, Central Jakarta. The two elementary schools was chosen because it uses the Independent Curriculum. Data collection was carried out in three ways, first by conducting direct observations at the school, second by interviewing the principal and educators at the school, third by documentation study, namely by analyzing documents related to the research.

After the data is obtained, data analysis is then carried out using the following steps: 1) data reduction, namely by sharpening, selecting, focusing, not using unnecessary data; 2) data presentation, namely compiling previously reduced data and then displaying it in the form of sentences, matrices, graphs or charts; 3) drawing conclusions, this stage is drawing conclusions from all the data that has been obtained in order to find or understand the meaning, plot and cause and effect based on the data that has been reduced and presented (Emzir, 2016). The data analysis process chart is presented in Figure 1.



**Figure 1.** Data Analysis Process

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Learning Planning with an Independent Curriculum

Planning can be interpreted as the process of preparing everything that will be done to achieve the goals set in the future (Ananda, 2019). The planning stage in this research was reviewed from the readiness of the school principal, educators (teachers) and education staff in implementing the Independent Curriculum.

Planning is the first step in every activity that will be carried out later. In implementing the Independent Curriculum in schools, the principal together with the team he formed consists of the deputy principal for curriculum and class I and IV teachers. Apart from that, as a form of the school's seriousness in using the Independent Curriculum, the principal registered his school in the Driving School program, namely a collaborative program between the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Regional Government which focuses on developing student learning outcomes holistically, not only covering competencies in the form of literacy and numeracy, but also on student character, starting with strengthening school human resources through intensive mentoring and training (Kemendikbudristek, 2023), by becoming a Driving School, schools are obliged to use the Independent Curriculum.

The school principal's decision to use the Merdeka Curriculum, apart from being recommended by the Ministry of Education and Culture, also considers that the Merdeka Curriculum is a curriculum that supports children and answers children's problems. Before implementing the Independent Curriculum, schools received socialization from supervisors deployed by the Ministry of Education and Culture. However, it turns out that not all teachers receive socialization, only some. Teachers who have received socialization are expected to be able to pass on the information obtained to other fellow teachers, meanwhile teachers who have not received socialization are expected to be able to learn independently through the online Merdeka Mengajar Platform. The outreach provided by supervisors includes providing a general overview of the Independent Curriculum, curriculum content, curriculum preparation, duration of study hours, and the learning process.

The planning stage will not run well without readiness from the school. Readiness is a guarantee of the results of planning, including how learning will be carried out in the classroom. The preparations made by the school principal are to continue to dig and explore and ensure that the team he forms is the best people in their field. Apart from that, the principal also tries to hold *workshops* at the beginning of the school year to discuss curriculum development.

The school principal also plays a role as a communicator and facilitator, connecting the school with related agencies or supervisors. In this case, the principal transmits information or teaching provided by the department or supervisor regarding the Independent Curriculum to the teachers at the school. Apart from that, the principal also tries to make his school a training place in socializing the Independent Curriculum.

Regarding facilities and infrastructure, the school is trying to meet the Independent Curriculum standards, however the school is also experiencing obstacles related to the distribution of textbooks due to insufficient school funds and the lack of funding from the government for the procurement of textbooks. In the end, schools, especially teachers, took the initiative to create their own textbooks that were adapted to the curriculum used. The teacher's readiness in the Merdeka Curriculum is to always try to continue learning, reading and finding out independently about the Merdeka Curriculum, this can be done with colleagues, the school principal, or through the Merdeka Belajar Platform.

### **Implementation of Learning with the Independent Curriculum**

The implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in elementary schools is carried out in stages, for the first year it is implemented in grades I and IV. Preparation of Learning Implementation Plans (RPP), which in the Independent Curriculum are called Teaching Modules. Teaching modules are arranged according to the format that can be studied by looking at learning outcomes, material, learning objectives, and also the steps. In the Independent Curriculum, learning methods and materials vary, which are arranged based on students' level of understanding and readiness, then adjusted to the development phase. In elementary schools, these phases are divided into three, namely Phase A for classes I, II, Phase B for classes III, IV, Phase C for Classes V and VI (Kemendikbudristek, 2022).

For schools that have classes with study groups, the creation of teaching modules is carried out in collaboration with other teachers, as well as for classes that are in one phase. It is the teacher who distributes learning materials to students according to agreement based on the learning outcomes to be achieved. However, there are also several obstacles experienced by teachers in preparing this teaching module, including determining the appropriate Learning Objective Flow (ATP) according to the phase.

ATP is a learning series that is structured systematically so that students can achieve Learning Outcomes (CP) in the learning phase (Kemendikbudristek, 2022). In the previous curriculum, there were many examples for creating lesson plans (teaching modules), but because the Independent Curriculum is relatively new, there are not many examples so teachers feel unsure about the teaching modules they create. Apart from that, there are different formats for preparing teaching modules, so it is questionable which format is correct.

At the beginning of the school year, an assessment or diagnostic test is carried out which aims to determine the characteristics, potential and needs of students so that teachers can find out the extent of the student's development stage and learning achievements. Its implementation in schools is carried out by teachers for students in grades I and IV, not only to determine students' literacy and numeracy abilities, but teachers also assess students' attitudes, character and emotions.

The results of this assessment are then grouped, for students who are deemed lacking in literacy and numeracy, they will be given additional lessons outside of class hours, or they can also be assisted by peer tutors (classmates who have more abilities) in the teaching and learning process in class. Regarding the teaching and learning process in class, it is carried out according to the teaching module, but the teacher also improvises and adapts it to students' needs so that learning runs well.

Regarding the evaluation of student competency in the Independent Curriculum, teachers not only assess literacy and numeracy skills, but also students' attitudes, character and skills. Teachers also observe students' daily lives to find out their character, such as greeting, saying thank you, saying sorry, asking for help. To evaluate student knowledge, there are two tests, namely formative and summative. Formative tests are to determine students' abilities on a daily basis, and summative tests are carried out in the middle and end of the school year. These assessments are then accumulated to prepare student report cards.

In implementing the Independent Curriculum there is character education based on the noble values of Pancasila which is called the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5). The Pancasila Student Profile has six dimensions, including: 1) faith, devotion to God Almighty, and noble character, 2) global diversity, 3) independence, 4) mutual cooperation, 5) critical reasoning, and 6) creativity (Kemendikbusristek, 2022 ).

The implementation of P5 itself takes the form of projects, each of which has a theme that can be implemented, the theme is determined by the Ministry of Education and Culture. There are seven themes, including: 1) local wisdom, 2) sustainable living, 3) Bhinneka Tunggal Ika, 4) build your body and soul, 5) democracy, 6) entrepreneurship, and 7) engineering and

technology for the Republic of Indonesia. Of the seven themes, schools can choose at least two themes, and the implementation time is also twice, namely in the middle of the semester and the end of the semester (end of the school year). Those who carry it out are classes I and IV.

An example of implementing P5 is, in the first activity in the first semester, class I chose the theme of a sustainable lifestyle with the sub-themes of enjoying reading, writing and drawing. The character to be developed in this theme is independence and increasing student creativity. The form of the activity is for students to read a short story fluently and then color the pictures. In the second semester, the form of activity is also reading, but it is more about deepening students' understanding of the stories they read, then coloring. The results of P5 are two story books, the process of which is still assisted by the teacher.

implementation of P5 is with the theme of local wisdom, the character to be developed is mutual cooperation and student creativity. The activities carried out include singing Betawi songs with a choir in the first semester, and creating typical Betawi art works in the second semester. The Pancasila Student Profile is not only applied as a co-curricular activity, but can also be applied in extra-curricular activities to improve skills such as music and dance lessons.

According to the teachers, improving students' skills through music, dance, and activities that resemble P5 projects have actually been implemented in the 2013 Curriculum, so for them this is not something new, it's just that in the Independent Curriculum there is a requirement that students must display their P5 projects.

### **Evaluation of the Implementation of the Independent Curriculum**

As the name suggests, the Merdeka Curriculum is a form of implementation of Ki Hadjar Dewantara's thoughts that in an independent education system, the function of education is to educate children according to their respective natures (Latif, 2021), in other words, independent education is education that is centered on students, understand that each child has different potential and characteristics.

Teachers also have an important role, that "independent" children can only be obtained from "independent" teachers, for this reason continuous efforts are needed to improve the quality of teachers (Latif, 2021). The essence of the Merdeka Curriculum is a curriculum that supports children, adapted to the abilities of students, and teachers are also free to determine appropriate learning methods. They are indirectly required to continue learning, collaborating and researching in order to provide interesting learning material for students.

There are advantages and disadvantages in implementing the Independent Curriculum. The advantage of this curriculum is that teachers and students are given freedom in carrying out learning. Teachers also feel more challenged to develop themselves, required to be able to

learn independently and creatively. Another advantage is that there are P5 activities which can develop student character through the projects carried out.

The shortcomings include, among other things, that teachers feel that socialization regarding the Independent Curriculum is still considered insufficient. This is unlike when using the 2013 Curriculum which routinely holds training so that teachers understand the curriculum. Direct socialization and training of the Merdeka Curriculum is still minimal and is mostly done online.

Teachers also complained about the overlap regarding the rules for transitioning students from Early Childhood Education (PAUD) to elementary school with reading books in the Independent Curriculum. In order to implement a pleasant transition for PAUD students to elementary school, the government has banned reading and writing arithmetic tests as stipulated in Government Regulation Number 17 of 2010 concerning Management and Implementation of Education and Minister of Education and Culture Regulation Number 1 of 2021 concerning Acceptance of New Students (Kemendikbudristek, 2022), however Thus, the class I textbook used in the Merdeka Curriculum has a lot of reading that even students who can read do not necessarily understand or understand the meaning of the reading, so there is a lack of continuity between the existing rules and the reality in the field.

## CONCLUSION

Basically, the concept of the Independent Curriculum is not a new concept, but continues Ki Hadjar Dewantara's concept regarding student learning freedom that is adapted to their nature, that learning should recognize students' potential, interests and talents according to their development. Therefore, the Independent Curriculum needs to be prepared carefully by the relevant policy makers. Policy makers must also prepare expert practitioners who can provide training directly according to teacher needs, so that teachers receive clear information and can develop themselves and improve their abilities in teaching students, as well as textbooks that should be adapted to developments. student

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