

Analysis the Implementation of the Independent Learning Curriculum in Grade IV SDN Inpres 2 Talise

Rafika Langimpu¹, Pahriadi^{2*}, Rizal³, Surahman⁴

^{1,2,3} Elementary School Teacher Education Program, Universitas Tadulako, Palu, Indonesia

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Abstract

This study investigates the implementation of Indonesia's Merdeka Curriculum in grade IV at SDN Inpres 2 Talise, addressing critical gaps in understanding elementary-level curriculum reform adaptation processes. Employing a qualitative descriptive approach with triangulation methodology, the research engaged one school principal and four teachers through structured observations, in-depth interviews, and comprehensive document analysis conducted over eleven days in January 2024. Data analysis utilized the Miles and Huberman analytical framework encompassing data reduction, presentation, and conclusion verification. Findings implementation effectiveness, categorized as "good," demonstrating successful execution of four key components: the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project themed "Sustainable Lifestyle" with hands-on upcycling activities, differentiated instruction tailored to diverse learning needs, creation of engaging learning environments through varied instructional strategies, and integrated literacy-numeracy skill development. The curriculum's structural shift from thematic to subject-based instruction significantly improved pedagogical focus and content mastery compared to the 2013 curriculum. However, persistent implementation challenges include teacher difficulties in developing teaching modules and formulating learning objectives, technological barriers faced by senior educators, complex project documentation requirements, and inadequate parental involvement in student learning. The study concludes that sustained curriculum implementation success requires comprehensive professional development programs specifically targeting teaching module design, enhanced digital literacy training for experienced teachers, and strategic initiatives for cultivating productive home-school partnerships.

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Corresponding Author:

Pahriadi Pahriadi,

Elementary School Teacher Education Program, Universitas Tadulako, Palu, Indonesia

Email: fahriadi.amir@gmail.com

INTRODUCTION

The Merdeka Curriculum is an educational curriculum development program designed and implemented in Indonesia. This program was launched in 2021 by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology with the aim of improving the quality of education in Indonesia through a more contextual, inclusive, and student-centered approach. The Independent Curriculum as an alternative curriculum overcomes learning setbacks during the pandemic which provides the freedom of "Independent Learning" to learning implementers, namely teachers and principals in compiling, implementing the learning process and developing the curriculum in schools paying attention to the needs and potential of students (Rahmadayanti & Hartoyo, 2022).

According to Vebrianti & Hidayat (2021) several national and international studies also explain that there is a long-term learning crisis in Indonesia. In addition, differences in education between regions and community groups in Indonesia are also a significant concern. This situation has worsened due to the COVID-19 pandemic. To overcome these challenges, systemic changes are needed that involve various aspects, one of which is through curriculum improvement. The curriculum has an important role in determining the material that will be taught in the classroom. In addition, the curriculum influences the teaching approaches and methods used by teachers to meet the needs of students.

The Independent Curriculum is based on the philosophy of Independent Learning which is the foundation of education policy, as contained in the Strategic Plan of the Ministry of Education and Culture for 2020-2024 (KEMENDIKBUD 2020). In support of this, a curriculum is formed that is flexible, according to competencies, focuses on character development and soft skills, and can be adjusted to the needs of the world. It can be concluded that curriculum changes are necessary to answer the challenges of the times so that education can be realized according to the goals of national education.

(Gkrimpizi et al., 2023) explained that the stages of curriculum implementation are not a regulation or standard set by the Government. This stage is designed to assist educators and educational units in setting targets for the implementation of the Independent Curriculum. The readiness of educators and educational units is certainly different, therefore this implementation stage is designed so that every educator can confidently try to implement the Independent Curriculum.

According to (Inayati, 2022) the implementation of the Independent Curriculum at the elementary/middle school level prioritizes project-based learning in order to realize the profile of Pancasila students. The purpose of this curriculum is to optimize the widespread spread of education in Indonesia with diverse intracurricular learning. Supporting the recovery of learning is the main characteristic of the Independent Curriculum. This curriculum also integrates literacy skills, knowledge skills, skills and attitudes in the use of technology. Students are given the freedom to think and learn from any source, in order to be able to seek knowledge and solve problems faced in real life.

Based on the explanation above, it can be concluded that the concept of implementing the independent curriculum focuses on improving literacy and numeracy skills, character surveys, students are given the opportunity to develop talents and interests, and the equitable distribution of education in Indonesia, which is finally expected to improve education in Indonesia. The

implementation of each educator and/or educational unit can be diverse, according to the readiness and confidence of the educator/educational unit.

According to the Great Dictionary of the Indonesian Language, education is the process of changing the attitude and behavior of a person or group in an effort to mature humans through teaching and training. Education is a guidance given by adults to immature children to achieve a goal, namely adulthood. Education is essentially a conscious effort to develop the personality and abilities of learners inside and outside of school and lasts a lifetime. Indonesian National Education in accordance with Law No. 20 of 2003, namely, education is pursued by starting from humans as they are (actualization) by considering various possibilities that are as they are (potentiality), and directed towards the realization of human beings that should be or human beings that are aspired to (ideality).

Abd Rahman, *et. al* (2021) explained that the elements of education consist of students, educators, educational interactions between students and educators, educational materials/content (curriculum), contexts that affect education, tools and methods, educators' actions, evaluation, and educational goals. The purpose of education is none other than human beings who believe and devour God Almighty, have noble character, are healthy, intelligent, have feelings, are humane, and are able to work; able to meet various needs reasonably, able to control their passions, personality, society and culture. In this sophisticated era, education has become a basic need for every individual. In fact, the government has required its citizens to obtain the right to education for 12 years and is advised to do more than that. The goals of education in one country and another will certainly differ depending on the country's foundation, philosophy of life, and country's ideology. Talking about education certainly cannot be separated from a curriculum that is a guideline in teaching and learning activities. Curriculum is a guideline that contains arrangements, guidelines, content, and educational subject materials. The essence of education is the learning process as an effort to develop students' activities and creativity with interactions that produce learning experiences. In Indonesia, they want better education, this is the background for the continuous change of curriculum (Abd Rahman, *et. al*, 2021).

Lubis, *et. al* (2022) explained that due to the learning crisis caused by the Covid 19 pandemic which had an impact on ineffective learning, the government issued an emergency curriculum to mitigate learning lag during the Covid-19 pandemic, which is now called the Independent Curriculum. The Merdeka Curriculum was designed as part of the Ministry of Education and Culture's efforts to address the learning crisis that we have been facing for a long time, and which has become increasingly severe due to the pandemic. This crisis is characterized by low learning outcomes of students, even in basic things such as reading literacy. The learning crisis is also characterized by a wide disparity in the quality of learning between regions and between socio-economic groups.

Of course, the recovery of the education system from the learning crisis cannot be realized through curriculum changes alone. Various efforts are also needed to strengthen the capacity of teachers and school principals, assistance for local governments, the arrangement of evaluation systems, as well as fairer infrastructure and funding. But the curriculum also has an important role. The curriculum has a great influence on what is taught by the teacher, as well as on how the material is taught. Therefore, a well-designed curriculum will encourage and make it easier for teachers to teach better (Lubis, *et. Al*, 2022).

The novelty of this research lies in a qualitative approach with triangulation of achievements in examining the implementation of the Independent Curriculum in grade IV elementary school with a changed independent model. This research also highlights the integration of the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project with the theme Sustainable Lifestyle and identifies specific obstacles for teachers in adapting teaching modules and technology. These findings make a practical contribution to the development of the implementation strategy of the Independent Curriculum in elementary schools, especially in the context of limited resources and low parental participation. Literature support shows that previous studies were more descriptive without focusing on learning independence (Astari, 2022; Cholilah et al., 2023), so this study offers a new, more comprehensive perspective. This study examines teacher adaptation challenges, strategies for differentiated learning, and integration of the Pancasila Student Profile in a real classroom context

Based on observations made by researchers at SDN Inpres 2 Talise, researchers found that there are no special criteria for schools that can implement an independent curriculum, it all depends on the readiness of the school because the government emphasizes that schools must implement an independent curriculum with three choices, namely (1) independent learning, (2) independent change, and (3) independent sharing. SDN Inpres 2 talise is ready to implement the independent curriculum and choose to change independently as an option in implementing the independent curriculum which began in early 2022, namely in grades I and IV. After approximately one year, two more classes that implemented the independent curriculum were added, namely classes II and V.

Based on the information obtained from teachers at SDN Inpres 2 Talise, it was revealed that teachers need to adjust to implement the Independent Curriculum in its implementation at school. This happens because teachers have not yet 100% mastered the 2013 curriculum and are still in the process of learning about the 2013 curriculum but are required to implement a new curriculum, namely the independent curriculum. The problem that arises from the implementation of the Independent Curriculum at SDN Inpres 2 Talise is that teachers and students have difficulty adjusting to implementing the Independent Learning Curriculum.

Based on the background that the researcher has explained, the formulation of the problem in this study can be taken, namely: how is the implementation of the independent learning curriculum in grade IV of SDN Inpres 2 Talise? The purpose of this study is to describe how the implementation of the independent learning curriculum in grade IV of SDN Inpres 2 Talise.

METHOD

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with triangulation (Tanjung & Ardiansyah, 2022), techniques to obtain an in-depth overview of the implementation of the Independent Curriculum in grade IV of SDN Inpres 2 Talise. The research was carried out for 11 days, on January 15-25, 2024, involving one school principal and 4 grade IV teachers who were directly involved in the implementation of the Independent Curriculum with a changed independent model. The selection of informants is carried out purposively because they have practical experience in curriculum implementation.

1. Data Collection

Triangulation is carried out through observation, interviews, and document analysis to ensure the validity of the data. Observations highlight learning activities in the classroom, while interviews explore teachers' perceptions related to the implementation of the curriculum and the challenges faced. Document analysis was used to review the teaching modules and supporting notes, thus providing a comprehensive overview of the implementation process of the Independent Curriculum at SDN Inpres 2 Talise.

2. Data Analysis Techniques

According to Miles and Huberman (Ananth, & Maistry, 2020), stated that activities in qualitative data analysis are carried out interactively and take place continuously until complete, so that the data is saturated. Data analysis in this study consists of three activities that consist simultaneously, namely: data reduction, data presentation, conclusion drawing or verification.

Data analysis was carried out using the Miles and Huberman model through three stages, namely data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions (Bans-Akutey & Tiimub, 2021). At the data reduction stage, the researcher screens the data from observations, interviews, and documents to focus on the implementation indicators of the Independent Curriculum. Furthermore, the data is presented in the form of a matrix and a table of indicator achievement categories per teacher to facilitate interpretation. The last stage is drawing conclusions, namely interpreting implementation patterns, constraints, and adaptation strategies based on triangulation of data sources obtained from observations, interviews, and documents.

3. Research Instruments

According to Duckett (2021), the instrument in the study is a tool used by researchers to measure social and natural phenomena as they exist in the research variables. Instruments used In this study, it is an observation sheet, interview guidelines, and documentation.

The research instruments used included observation sheets, interview guidelines, and document analysis. The observation sheet contains indicators of the implementation of the Independent Curriculum, including the implementation of the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project, differentiated learning, learning environment management, and the integration of literacy and numeracy, with each indicator given a score of 1-4 according to the level of implementation. The interview guidelines are prepared with open-ended questions to explore the experiences of teachers and principals, for example "How is your process of compiling the Independent Curriculum teaching module?" and "What are the main obstacles in the implementation of the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project in grade IV?". Document analysis was carried out on the teaching module, the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project report, and the record of student learning outcomes by examining the suitability of the documents to the Independent Curriculum standards.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This research was carried out at SDN Inpres 2 Talise from January 15-25, 2024. Based on observations about the activities of grade IV teachers, data can be obtained that the implementation of the independent curriculum is included in the good category. Teachers have implemented an independent curriculum according to their abilities by implementing the Pancasila Student Profile

Strengthening Project (SPSPP), conducting differentiated learning, creating an interesting learning environment, and understanding student literacy and numeracy.

According to (Inayati, 2022) the implementation of Independent Curriculum (IIC) emphasizes learning that is comfortable, independent, active, has character, meaning, independence and others. Teachers have the freedom to determine teaching tools that are tailored to the needs and learning interests of students. The characteristics of the Independent Curriculum are (1) printing Pancasila Student Profiles through project-based learning to develop students' skills and character, (2) focusing on the subject matter (essential) so that basic materials such as literacy and numeracy get in-depth competence, (3) more flexible learning with differentiated learning according to the local context and content and in accordance with the students' abilities (MENDIKBUDRISET, 2022).

Based on the results of observation of teachers' activities in implementing the independent learning curriculum that has been implemented in grade IV, results were obtained in the good category, teachers have implemented the independent curriculum according to their abilities. The lack of teachers in implementing the independent curriculum is that teachers are less creative and innovative in learning so that teachers often use conventional methods. This is because of the habit of teachers who only focus on the material in the book so that they no longer want to look for learning resources and teaching media from other places. In this case, it is not forced for teachers to continue to use interesting learning methods, but occasionally it is good to use varied learning methods so that students are not saturated in learning. For example, conducting game-based learning involving literacy and numeracy so that it can improve student learning outcomes.

The independent curriculum has characteristics, namely (1) Project-based learning to develop student character in accordance with the Pancasila Learning Profile. (2) Carry out learning that is centered on the needs of students' talents and interests. (3) Creating a fun learning environment. (4) Focus on the material that is important so that students have plenty of time to study, especially counting and reading.

1. Implementation of the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project

Based on the analysis carried out, data was obtained that the implementation of the Student Profile Strengthening Pancasila Project (SPSPP) in grade IV has been carried out well by combining the character of Pancasila students in curricular and non-curricular learning. Before starting learning, students first pray together to increase their faith in God Almighty. Teachers always remind students of moral and ethical values such as discipline, honesty, and responsibility in classroom learning. Teachers always remind students to love the diversity of cultures, religions and races in Indonesia because they live in a country of *Bhineka Tunggal Ika*. The SPSPP in grade IV has the theme "Sustainable Lifestyle" with the subtheme "Utilization of Used Goods". When working on the SPSPP, students are able to utilize used goods, raise issues from the problem and provide solutions so that they do not throw waste carelessly by reprocessing used goods. Students are able to make a work, namely a pencil case from the used item with the help of the teacher, and students work together with group friends in creating the item into a valuable work. Finally, students are able to create a clean environment. SPSPP itself has its own time allocation and is held on Fridays and because Friday is short, Thursday is added to the last class time. With the existence of SPSPP, it is

hoped that it can develop the character of Pancasila students who are noble, independent, critically reasoning, creative, mutual cooperation, and global competence.

2. Implementasi Pembelajaran Berdiferensiasi

Based on the data analysis that has been carried out, data is obtained that differentiated learning in grade IV has been implemented well where teachers conduct student-centered learning according to the learning needs of each student. For students who have a lacking learning style, the teacher will guide the student separately as invited to study at the teacher's desk.

3. Learning Environment

The independent learning curriculum also provides breadth for educators to create quality learning in accordance with the needs of the learning environment of students (MENDIKBUDRISET, 2023). Based on the observations, it can be analyzed that teachers always provide an interesting learning environment to create a pleasant learning atmosphere such as ice breaking before learning and when students start to get bored in learning. However, teachers are less able to use several strategies in developing and maintaining a safe and comfortable learning environment for students. Teachers often use conventional methods in learning.

4. Literacy and Numeracy Implementation

Based on the results of observations, it can be analyzed that the implementation of literacy and numeracy in grade IV has been carried out well. The literacy movement program in schools (LPS) is carried out by reading in the library once a week and before starting learning, the teacher invites students to read books to improve students' literacy. However, in grade IV there are two students who are not fluent in reading. Therefore, the teacher provides his own guidance to the student by teaching them to read using picture story books. To improve students' numeracy, before starting learning, students are invited to memorize multiplication. In the implementation of the concept of numeracy in learning, there are some students who do not understand, especially in the number section. This causes students to be lazy to do assignments about numeracy. In the application of numeracy, teachers also do not use varied learning methods such as playing games, teachers only focus on conventional methods so that students are bored in learning and student learning outcomes are not optimal.

The above description is in line with the research conducted by (Inayati, 2022), which states that the implementation of the Independent Curriculum at the elementary/middle school level prioritizes project-based learning in order to realize the profile of Pancasila students. This is also very relevant to 21st-century learning where learning focuses not only on the realm of knowledge but also emphasizes on aspects of character, mastery of literacy, skills and technology.

Based on the results of the interviews, data was obtained that the independent curriculum is a curriculum that provides freedom to teachers and students to use their learning styles according to the learning needs of students. In SPSPP, it is expected that students will have the character of Pancasila students. Teachers are required to provide a pleasant learning environment for students. Teachers are expected to carry out varied learning so that students are not bored in the learning process. Teachers are also expected to understand students' literacy and numeracy. In its implementation, teachers have applied according to the teacher's ability. In the implementation of

the independent curriculum, it can be said that it is good even though teachers have to adapt and have to learn a lot. Everything from teachers, curriculum whether or not to change is all returned to teachers. Even if the curriculum changes but the teacher does not change, it seems difficult.

According to (Rahmadayanti & Hartoyo, 2022) the advantages of the Independent Curriculum explained by KEMDIKBUD focus on essential materials and the development of student competencies in its phases so that students can learn more deeply, meaningfully and funly, not in a hurry. Learning is much more relevant and interactive through project activities providing wider opportunities for students to actively explore actual issues such as environmental, health, and other issues to support the development of character and competencies of Pancasila Student profiles. The purpose of this teaching is to strengthen students' literacy and numeracy skills as well as their knowledge in each subject. The phase or level of development itself means the learning outcomes that must be achieved by students, adjusted to the characteristics, potentials and needs of students. The Independent Curriculum provides freedom and is student-centered, teachers and schools are free to determine appropriate learning.

Based on the results of interviews that have been conducted, data was obtained that the independent curriculum is a curriculum that gives freedom to teachers to apply their learning style in accordance with students' talents and interests centered on students' learning needs. The implementation of the independent learning curriculum at SDN Inpres 2 Talise has been implemented in the 2022/2023 school year until now. The implementation of the independent learning curriculum, especially in grade IV, has been carried out well.

Based on the results of the interviews that have been conducted, teachers have implemented the independent curriculum in accordance with the teacher's ability and adapted to the changes in the 2013 curriculum. The difficulties for teachers in the implementation of the independent curriculum are the preparation of teaching modules, steps to formulate learning objectives. This is because of the new curriculum so that teachers need to adapt to the independent curriculum that used to be made for lesson plans, now for modules. Considering that the most important task of teachers is to teach, so teachers do not pay much attention to the creation of teaching modules but teachers still use teaching modules. The age of grade IV teachers who have entered the age of lungs also affects curriculum changes so that it is difficult to use technology. Teachers also do not participate in webinars, so teachers must be able to learn on their own through the independent teaching platform (ITP). But it is returned to the teacher if they want to learn and find information from various sources about the independent curriculum, surely teachers can. So for now, teachers only copy teaching modules that are already available on the internet. However, teachers continue to learn so that they can understand the steps to make teaching modules. Teachers need to learn a lot more and are advised to take part in training on making teaching modules. To conduct assessments in the classroom, there are two steps taken by teachers, namely formative is a daily assessment and summative is an end-of-semester assessment. The structure of this independent curriculum changed from the previous curriculum of thematic learning to subject-based learning. If in 2013 curriculum in one meeting can contain three subjects in the form of a theme, but the independent curriculum in one meeting only focuses on one lesson. When compared to the 2013 curriculum, teachers have difficulties in the learning process because in the 2013 curriculum in one meeting up to three subjects can be discussed because the 2013 curriculum uses themes. Meanwhile, the independent curriculum has returned per subject. So that teachers and students

can focus more on the learning process and more easily understand the learning material in the independent curriculum because when analyzing it it is more directed. The purpose of the independent curriculum at SDN Inpres 2 Talise is based on the school's vision and mission. The vision and mission summarize three domains, namely cognitive, affective, and psychomotor that must be implemented with the aim of educating the life of the nation and especially realizing the profile of Pancasila students. Because the elements in the profile of Pancasila students are faith and devotion to God Almighty and it should not be separated.

The independent curriculum is more directed than the 2013 curriculum because the learning process of the independent curriculum uses subjects while the 2013 curriculum uses themes. In the 2013 curriculum, the core competencies that must be achieved are basic competencies (BC) and achievement indicators (AI) while in the independent curriculum the core competencies that must be achieved are learning outcomes (LO), learning objectives (LOB). In the 2013 curriculum, before the learning process begins, teachers must prepare a learning implementation plan (LIP) while in the independent curriculum it is called a teaching module. The difference in the structure of 2013 curriculum is that in grade 3 there is no IPAS but in the independent curriculum of grade 3 there is already a science subject because it is no longer thematic.

The implementation of the independent learning curriculum at SDN Inpres 2 Talise is more effective than the 2013 curriculum. From an intra perspective, almost all students achieve the criteria and the independent curriculum is easier than the 2013 curriculum. The target that has not been achieved by schools in the implementation of the independent learning curriculum lies in the readiness and understanding of teachers for the independent curriculum which is still minimal. In the observation and interview process, there are obstacles experienced in applying the independent learning curriculum. Internal obstacles include understanding the learning system of the independent learning curriculum because there are rules from the government that are not in accordance with the conditions of its implementation. The assessment or exam process is an exam question pattern that is equalized by the center, in the independent learning curriculum assessment is adjusted to the student's ability, so that the school makes changes to several questions so that they are in accordance with the material they have provided. The external obstacles in the implementation of the independent curriculum at SDN Inpres 2 Talise are that students are not used to finding independent learning resources and are required to be active in learning. Here the role of teachers is needed to move their students and guide their students in learning.

The above description is in line with the research conducted (Rahmadayanti & Hartoyo 2022) The Independent Curriculum with the concept of independent learning in elementary schools provides "independence" for education implementers, especially teachers and principals in compiling, developing, and implementing the curriculum based on the potential, and needs of students and schools. Independent learning frees teachers to prepare learning that emphasizes essential materials by considering characteristics so that learning outcomes will be achieved more meaningful, fun, and deep. Project activities that are arranged according to their phases and relevant to environmental conditions help students develop the character and competencies of the Pancasila Student Profile in themselves.

CONCLUSION

The implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in grade IV at SDN Inpres 2 Talise achieved effectiveness, demonstrating successful integration of four core components: the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project with "Sustainable Lifestyle" theme, differentiated learning accommodating diverse student needs, engaging learning environments, and integrated literacy-numeracy development. The curriculum's transition from thematic to subject-based learning improved instructional focus and enabled deeper content engagement compared to the 2013 curriculum. Despite these achievements, significant challenges persist that require systematic attention. Teachers struggle with teaching module development and learning objective formulation due to insufficient training and the complexity of transitioning from traditional lesson planning. Senior educators face technological barriers affecting digital platform utilization. The Pancasila Student Profile project documentation proves administratively complex, and parental participation remains inadequate. These findings underscore that successful curriculum implementation depends on comprehensive teacher capacity building rather than policy adoption alone. Recommendations include: (1) intensive professional development programs targeting module creation skills, (2) digital literacy training tailored for senior educators, (3) structured mechanisms for increasing parental engagement through workshops and communication platforms, and (4) simplified documentation requirements to reduce administrative burden. The study provides empirical evidence of elementary-level Merdeka Curriculum implementation, revealing both progress and persistent challenges. Future research should examine long-term implementation sustainability, measure curriculum impact on student learning outcomes, and investigate effective strategies for overcoming barriers in resource-constrained elementary school contexts.

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