



Implementation of The Independent Curriculum in Indonesian Language Learning at Primary School

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ABSTRACT

This research examines the implementation of the Independent Curriculum in teaching Indonesian at SD Negeri 058379 Otorita. This research uses a qualitative approach, focusing on the challenges faced by fourth grade teachers in managing students with diverse interests. Findings indicate difficulties in maintaining order due to differences in interests among students. The Independent Curriculum's emphasis on differentiation requires effective strategies in accommodating this diversity. The proposed solution includes improvements to school facilities and infrastructure, along with comprehensive outreach efforts. This analysis emphasizes the importance of overcoming these challenges to increase the effectiveness of the Merdeka Curriculum, especially in the context of language education at the primary level.

Keywords : Independent Curriculum; differentiation; diverse interests; language education; elementary school.

Introduction

Education is a fundamental pillar in the development of a nation, and the curriculum is the main instrument in directing the teaching and learning process (Yaumi, 2016). In line with the spirit of educational reform in Indonesia, the government introduced the Merdeka Curriculum as a step to provide more freedom and flexibility to schools and teachers in designing the learning process (Mustari, 2022). The focus of this article is on the application of the Merdeka Curriculum in Indonesian language learning at the elementary school level, with special emphasis on grade 4 at SD Negeri 058379 Otorita, an educational institution in Sawit Seberang District, Langkat Regency, North Sumatra Province. The Merdeka Curriculum is not only a change in educational methodology, but also reflects a new paradigm in approaching student success (Arviansyah & Shagena, 2022). By emphasizing a differentiation approach, the Merdeka Curriculum recognizes diversity in the pace of growth and interests of children (Halimah, 2023). This provides an opportunity for teachers to group student learning outcomes based on individual growth phases, recognizing that each child has uniqueness and different potential (Susilawati, 2021). Even though this is expected, the experience of implementing the Independent Curriculum does not always go smoothly. One of the challenges faced is the difficulty of disciplining children in grade 4 who have diverse interests. The learning process that accommodates differences in interests and learning pace is complex and requires a planned approach. Therefore, it is necessary to find an effective solution to ensure that the objectives of the Independent Curriculum are achieved without sacrificing order and learning effectiveness. This research not only aims to identify problems that arise in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in class 4 at SD Negeri 058379 Otorita, but also to explore solutions that can be implemented. Efforts to improve facilities and infrastructure in schools as well as effective outreach activities related to the Independent Curriculum are expected to make a positive contribution in increasing the effectiveness of

implementing this curriculum. By digging deeper into this experience, this article aims to provide in-depth insight into the dynamics of implementing the Independent Curriculum in Indonesian language learning at the elementary school level. By understanding the challenges faced and the proposed solutions, it is hoped that we can make a positive contribution to the development of education in Indonesia, especially in the implementation of the Independent Curriculum which is a new milestone in the formation of the nation's next generation who are competent and have character.

This section will present the theoretical framework that is the basis of this research. This theoretical framework will help in understanding the concepts and principles underlying the implementation of the Independent Curriculum in Indonesian language learning in elementary schools. The key elements that we will discuss within this theoretical framework are:

Independent Curriculum

a) Definition and Basic Concepts of the Independent Curriculum

The Independent Curriculum is an educational approach introduced in Indonesia with the aim of giving schools and teachers more freedom in designing the curriculum and managing learning. The basic principles of this curriculum include school empowerment, emphasis on competency-based learning, and reducing pressure on students. Thus, the Merdeka Curriculum aims to create a learning environment that is more dynamic and suits the needs and potential of each student (Yasmansyah, 2022).

b) Differentiation Approach in the Independent Curriculum

One of the characteristics of the Independent Curriculum is the use of a differentiation approach. This approach places attention on individual differences between students and designs learning according to their pace, learning style, and needs. In this way, the Merdeka Curriculum groups student learning outcomes based on the child's growth phase, ensuring that each student can reach his or her potential optimally (Kurniasih & Priyanti, 2023).

c) Flexibility in Curriculum Design

The Merdeka Curriculum provides schools and teachers with greater flexibility in designing learning programs. This includes the freedom to adapt curriculum content to local needs, classroom conditions, and student interests. With this approach, learning can be more contextual and relevant, increasing student involvement in the learning process (Fitriyah & Wardani, 2022).

d) Project Based Learning

The Merdeka Curriculum encourages project-based learning, where students engage in practical and contextual tasks. Through these projects, students not only develop an understanding of concepts, but also practical skills that can be applied in everyday life. This approach promotes critical thinking, creativity, and collaboration among students (Ningrum & Andriani, 2023).

e) Competency Based Assessment

The Merdeka Curriculum uses competency-based assessments that measure students' understanding and skills in accordance with established competency standards (Nasution, 2022). This assessment aims to provide a more holistic picture of students' abilities and provide more relevant feedback for their development.

f) Strengthening Literacy and Numeracy

Apart from academic aspects, the Merdeka Curriculum emphasizes strengthening literacy (the ability to read and write) and numeracy (mathematics ability) as an important foundation in education (Widiyasari & Eminita, 2023). It aims to equip students with the basic skills essential for success in a variety of subjects and everyday life (Feriyanto, 2022).

g) Inclusive Education

The Merdeka Curriculum seeks to create an inclusive educational environment that takes into account the various needs of students, including those with special needs (Feriyanto, 2022). This is in line with the principles of equality and justice in education.

h) Character Development

The Merdeka Curriculum does not only focus on academic aspects, but also on developing student character (Mustoip, 2023). Character education becomes an integral part of learning, emphasizing moral values, leadership and social responsibility (Barlian & Solekah, 2022).

Indonesian Language Learning in Elementary School

Learning Indonesian in Elementary School (SD) is a critical aspect in students' academic development, especially at grade 4 level. Indonesian is not only a means of communication, but also a means of developing students' understanding of national culture and literature (Princess, 2020). Implementing the Independent Curriculum in Indonesian language learning requires teachers to be more responsive to the diversity of students' interests and potential (Elviya & Sukartiningsih, 2023). This theoretical framework will help in analyzing how the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in elementary schools influences Indonesian language learning, especially in the context

of curriculum differentiation and adaptation. This will also allow us to explore how student character development and strengthening literacy and numeracy are integrated in Indonesian language learning in accordance with the principles of the Independent Curriculum.

Research Methodology

This research methodology adopts a qualitative approach with a case study as the research design. The research was conducted at SD Negeri 058379 Otorita, Sawit Hulu, Sawit Seberang District, Langkat Regency, North Sumatra Province. This location was chosen because it is representative as a study object in the context of implementing the Independent Curriculum in Indonesian language learning in grade 4 with a total of 25 students consisting of 9 male students and 16 female students. This research involves class 4 as the research object, focusing on the experiences of teachers and students in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum. The data collection instruments used were classroom observations to understand learning dynamics and interviews with teachers and students. Class observations are carried out to observe direct interactions between teachers and students, as well as capture the nuances of the class by implementing the Merdeka Curriculum. Interviews with teachers were conducted to gain a deeper understanding of their challenges and experiences in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum. Interview questions focused on teaching strategies, obstacles encountered, and proposed solutions. Interviews with students were conducted to understand their perceptions of learning Indonesian using the Independent Curriculum approach, as well as to capture students' various interests and needs in the learning context. The collected data will be analyzed qualitatively through a descriptive approach. The findings will be interpreted to identify general patterns, obstacles that may arise, and the impact of implementing the Merdeka Curriculum. The results of the analysis will be used to formulate conclusions and discussions, as well as provide deeper insight regarding the implementation of the Independent Curriculum in Indonesian language learning at SD Negeri 058379 Otorita.

Results and Discussion

This research aims to investigate the application of the Merdeka Curriculum in Indonesian language learning at SD Negeri 058379 Otorita, Sawit Hulu, Langkat Regency, North Sumatra Province. In the research process, various data collection methods were used, including interviews with teachers and school staff, lesson observations, and analysis of documents related to the curriculum and its implementation. The results of this study revealed several important findings:

Experience of Implementing the Independent Curriculum in Class 4

Teachers at SD Negeri 058379 Otorita felt the impact of implementing the Independent Curriculum in Class 4 through a differentiation approach. In this case, the approach leads to grouping students based on the child's growth phase level. In this diverse class, it becomes clear that students have different interests. Over time, major problems emerged in disciplining the children in the class, given the significant variation in interests, especially students who tended to be more active and initiative. The level of difficulty in achieving this order involves grouping students according to appropriate learning styles to understand and meet their individual needs. For example, some female students show a high interest in learning science, while other students are more interested in arts or sports. As a result, creating a learning environment that accommodates all interests becomes a challenge, and teachers feel the need to find adequate solutions. Facilities and infrastructure in schools apparently play a key role in overcoming this obstacle. Providing supporting facilities, such as libraries with diverse collections and sports facilities, helps create variety in learning. Apart from that, the successful implementation of the Independent Curriculum also depends greatly on effective socialization. Involving parents, students and school staff in a deep understanding of the principles and objectives of the Merdeka Curriculum helps create better understanding and the necessary support. By combining adequate facilities and infrastructure and in-depth understanding through socialization, the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in grade 4 achieves greater effectiveness. Grouping students based on the child's growth phase becomes more regular, and a differentiation approach helps respond to individual student needs. In this context, the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum at SD Negeri 058379 Otorita provides a real picture of the challenges and solutions that arise in efforts to create an inclusive and competency-based learning environment.

Solutions and Actions

The experience of implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in grade 4 shows several obstacles, especially in controlling children with different interests. To overcome this problem, schools need to take focused action. First, it is necessary to improve facilities and infrastructure in the school environment. This includes providing adequate learning facilities and classrooms that support project-based learning activities. By providing an adequate environment, it is hoped that it can facilitate the implementation of the Independent Curriculum more effectively. Furthermore, efforts are needed to disseminate the Independent Curriculum to all related parties, including teachers, students and parents. Effective socialization will help the entire school community understand the principles of the

Independent Curriculum, the objectives of its implementation, and its benefits in developing student skills. Through intensive socialization, it is hoped that a common understanding and support for this curriculum change will be created. Apart from that, schools need to develop learning strategies that are more differentiated in nature. This includes adapting teaching methods and learning materials to better suit students' individual needs and interests. Teachers need to be trained to identify students' learning styles and needs more accurately, so that learning can be tailored more effectively. Implementing this differentiation strategy will help overcome the challenges of managing classes with diverse interests.

The discussion of the results of this research will explore the implications of the findings above and provide insight into the application of the Merdeka Curriculum in Indonesian language learning in elementary schools. One of the main findings was the challenges that emerged in grade 4, which required a more adaptive approach. This is in line with the principle of differentiation in the Independent Curriculum, where there needs to be a more personalized response to student needs. The proposed solution is additional training for teachers, which could equip them with the skills necessary to deal with different interests among students. Apart from that, improving facilities and infrastructure in schools is very important to support the implementation of the Independent Curriculum. With adequate facilities, teachers can more easily access a variety of resources and teaching materials needed to support differentiated learning. Therefore, it is important to ensure that schools have adequate access to textbooks, learning tools and educational technology. In conclusion, the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in learning Indonesian at SD Negeri 058379 Otorita faces several challenges that must be overcome. By understanding and addressing these challenges, schools can be more effective in delivering learning that focuses on individual student progress. Furthermore, this research contributes to our understanding of how the Merdeka Curriculum can be implemented at the elementary level and face the various challenges that arise in the process.

Conclusion

In this research, an investigation has been carried out regarding the application of the Merdeka Curriculum in Indonesian language learning at SD Negeri 058379 Otorita, Sawit Hulu, Langkat Regency, North Sumatra Province. The research results show a number of important findings. The implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in the school has been active, with teachers making efforts to integrate the principles of the Merdeka Curriculum in Indonesian language learning. However, there are some challenges to overcome, especially in grade 4, where students have different interests in this subject. Apart from that, improving facilities and infrastructure in schools is an important factor in supporting the implementation of the Independent Curriculum. Suggestions for developing service activities in the future are as follows:

1. Teacher Training: Schools need to provide additional training to teachers to develop skills in dealing with the diverse needs of students in grade 4.
2. Development of Teaching Materials: Teachers and schools need to develop teaching materials that are more in line with the differentiation principles of the Independent Curriculum.
3. Improving Facilities and Infrastructure: Schools must improve physical facilities and ensure the availability of textbooks and educational technology that supports learning.
4. Collaboration with Parents: Schools need to collaborate with parents to understand students' interests and needs.
5. Periodic Evaluation: Conduct regular evaluations of the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum to evaluate the success of the program and make improvements if necessary.

By implementing these suggestions, it is hoped that the application of the Merdeka Curriculum in Indonesian language learning in elementary schools can be more effective and support students' comprehensive development in accordance with the principles of the Merdeka Curriculum.

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