



## Analysis of Teacher Difficulties in Implementing the Independent Curriculum at Pakulonon 01 Elementary School

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### ABSTRACT

The Merdeka Curriculum is a structured and diverse classroom-based curriculum designed to be user-friendly for both teachers and students. In its implementation, the government grants schools full authority and responsibility to develop a curriculum that aligns with their specific needs and local cultures. However, due to insufficient training, teachers often feel unprepared to implement the Merdeka Curriculum effectively. This study aims to examine how the Merdeka Curriculum is enacted at SDN Pakulonon 01, South Tangerang City, identify the challenges faced by teachers during implementation, and explore potential solutions. This research employs a qualitative descriptive approach, collecting data through interviews, observations, and document analysis. The data was analysed using descriptive methods. Findings indicate that teachers encounter difficulties in three key areas: lesson planning, lesson delivery, and assessment. Challenges include adapting learning tools and methods for teaching modules, executing differentiated and project-based learning, limited infrastructure, and constraints in both formative and summative assessments. These findings offer recommendations for enhancing teacher training programmes and improving facilities.

**Keywords:** *teacher difficulties, independent curriculum, elementary school*

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### INTRODUCTION

The curriculum is a combination of subjects and educational plans submitted by the education implementing agency that contains a learning plan to be delivered to students during their educational stages. The purpose of this curriculum is to assist teachers in directing students towards the desired direction and goals in the overall learning activities (Pratycia et al., 2023).

In Indonesia, this curriculum has been changed 7 times. According to Hidayat (in Adam & Wahdiah, 2023) Some of the curriculums that have been used include the 1947 curriculum, the 1975 curriculum, the 1984 curriculum, the 1994 curriculum, the competency-based curriculum (KBK), the 2006 Education Unit Level (KTSP) curriculum and finally the 2013 curriculum. With this many changes, of course, the purpose of each curriculum is the same, namely to improve the previous curriculum. On February 11, 2022, the Independent Curriculum proposed by Nadien Anwar Makarim was launched, with a more flexible, concise, and simple design so that students are able to master the material delivered adequately (Sudarto et al., 2023).

There are changes that can be seen from the change of the 2013 curriculum to the Merdeka curriculum lies in the basic framework, curriculum structure and learning. If in the 2013 curriculum the basic framework is based on the objectives of the national education system and standards. Then the curriculum structure is directed using an integrative theme-based learning approach and a scientific approach for each learning topic. So, in this Independent Curriculum, the basic framework that exists is to build a Pancasila student profile in students through the main learning activities, namely intracurricular project activities based on the Pancasila student profile. The learning activities in the independent curriculum also strengthen differentiation learning that is adjusted to the level of student achievement (Pratycia et al., 2023). With this change, the Independent

Curriculum focuses on the formation of Pancasila students through intracurricular and project-based learning that emphasizes differentiated learning according to student achievement.

The independent curriculum provides flexibility to all involved in the education process to be creative and innovative. The goal is to make learning situations exciting, relevant, and student-centered. Thus, students are expected to learn more effectively and be able to develop their potential to the maximum and teachers as mediators can achieve their intended learning goals.

Understanding the concept of the Curriculum as a whole is a must for a teacher, considering the role of the Merka as an educator and teacher. In the context of professionalism, pedagogic competence is one of the crucial aspects that must be possessed (Windayanti, et al, 2023). Teachers must prepare themselves to implement an independent curriculum. Because they are the parties directly involved in the implementation of the curriculum.

Schools experience limitations in terms of resources, both in terms of teaching materials and learning facilities and infrastructure. In this case, the preparation of materials that are compatible with the Independent Curriculum is certainly an obstacle for teachers (Irene Hendrika Ramapoly, 2023). Baharuddin (2016) mentioned several difficulties faced by teachers such as differences in students' abilities, materials that are suitable for students, strategies and methods to be used and evaluations to be carried out (Nurkamaliah et al., 2024) Then, Sunarti (2014) explained that the obstacles of teachers lie from planning to the implementation of learning activities so that they can hinder the learning process of students (Princess, 2023). Therefore, changes in the independent curriculum pose various challenges for teachers, ranging from planning, implementation, to assessment. These difficulties include differences in students' abilities, material selection, learning methods and strategies, and appropriate evaluations that can hinder the student's learning process. Many teachers feel unprepared to implement an independent curriculum due to a lack of adequate training. Research shows that teachers are still confused about how to create teaching materials that fit into this new curriculum (Rohim & Rigianti, 2023).

In a study conducted by (Irene Hendrika Ramapoly, 2023) at UPT SDN 4 Makale revealed that teachers' lack of experience in using the Independent Learning Curriculum, limited reference resources, and inadequate facilities and infrastructure. In addition, other relevant research by (Competition, Nur Astri & Fadriati, 2023) found a number of obstacles faced by teachers when implementing the Independent Curriculum. These obstacles include difficulties in understanding curriculum implementation procedures, inability to design an assessment system, and obstacles in mapping student competency achievements.

Based on the above problems and the findings of previous research, the results of the initial interview of teachers at SDN Pakulonan 01 are still difficult in implementing the independent curriculum. Teachers have difficulties in implementing project learning based on Pancasila student profiles (P5) and classroom management of differences in students' abilities. The gap between the research and the latest research shows that while there has been recognition of the problems faced by teachers, there is still a lack of in-depth analysis of the specific context in which these difficulties occur. Previous research has tended to focus on general aspects of the curriculum without considering other factors that might influence implementation. Therefore, this research will expand the understanding of teachers' difficulties in implementing the independent curriculum by considering the context of elementary schools, especially in grade IV.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The Independent Curriculum or also known as Independent Learning is a policy launched in 2022 with the basic concept of providing freedom and freedom of thought. This curriculum is carried out by the Ministry of Education under the leadership of the Minister of Education of the Advanced Indonesia Cabinet (Hartati, 2022:1). The idea of "Freedom of Learning" can be interpreted as providing flexibility for schools, teachers, and students as well as other parties involved to carry out reforms, learn independently, and develop creativity. This freedom stems from the role of teachers as a driver of change in the educational process (Sherly et al., 2020). The Merdeka Curriculum no longer focuses on achieving MOH values, but rather focuses on

meaningful learning (Rahmadayanti & Hartoyo, 2022). So it is hoped that this curriculum can form students who are qualified, have character, and reflect the values in the profile of Pancasila students with competencies that are able to meet the challenges of the global world as part of human resources in Indonesia

Through the implementation of the Independent Curriculum, it is hoped that a profile of Pancasila students who are critical, innovative, independent, also have faith and trust in the creator and be virtuous by upholding the value of mutual cooperation and respecting diversity in the global context. In the change in the curriculum, it is followed by various changes, including in the learning process. To make it easier for teachers and students, the Independent Curriculum is made easier to understand and adjust. This is in line with (Cholifah, 2023:7) which explains that the independent curriculum is an idea that proposes a simpler and ideal concept of education where in the teaching and learning stage teachers and students will participate as actors and work together. (Ginanjari, 2022:136) It also provides the understanding that the independent curriculum is a teaching program where students have enough time to learn their ideas and abilities by learning in various classrooms.

So from the explanation above, it is concluded that the independent curriculum is a new policy from the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia that focuses on freedom of thought. This curriculum offers a simpler and ideal educational concept, where teachers and students play an active role as actors in the learning process. With varied intracurricular learning, it gives students ample time to delve into ideas and strengthen their abilities.

The (Ningsih & Sartika, 2023) Explaining the main characteristics of the independent curriculum include the application of project-based learning with the aim of developing students' social abilities and personalities based on the principles of Pancasila Student Profile, strengthening the subject matter with sufficient time allocation to explore basic skills such as reading and arithmetic. In addition, it provides flexibility for teachers to adjust learning to the needs of students. Then, the characteristics of the independent curriculum in (Zainuri, 2023:5) mentioned that there are 3 parts. First, focus more on essential materials where the lesson load will be less, second, the curriculum structure is more flexible and lastly, in the Independent Curriculum there are many teaching tools available.

It can be concluded that the characteristics of the Independent Curriculum can give freedom to teachers to make the learning process focus on the use of project-based Pancasila student profiles with sufficient time division to explore basic skills such as reading and calculation as well as the use of many teaching tools to adapt learning to the needs of students.

The implementation of the independent curriculum is not spared from the difficulties felt by teachers, Nurcahyono et al. (2022) found that in terms of planning, implementing and evaluating learning, teachers face many obstacles as a result of changes in the independent curriculum (Nisa et al., 2023). These difficulties include a lack of understanding of translating learning outcomes into learning objectives, differences in students in the classroom, lack of reference to the preferred learning model, and limited facilities and infrastructure available in schools.

## METHOD

In this study, the researcher uses a qualitative descriptive approach, which is a type of research in which the subject or participant is discussed thoroughly and in depth, and the use of the ilamiah method (Alaslan, 2021). Descriptive research is a type of research that aims to describe and interpret certain aspects such as circumstances or situations, the relationships between them, the views that arise and the impact or consequences that arise (Rusandi & Muhammad Rusli, 2021).

The focus of this research is directed at one elementary school in the South Tangerang area, more precisely SDN Pakulonon 01, which is located in Pakulonon Village, North Serpong District. The selection of this location was based on initial findings regarding the obstacles faced by teachers in the implementation of the Independent Curriculum. Class IV was chosen as the focus of study because it is a level that has actively

implemented the Curriculum, and grade IV teachers are considered as the main actors in the implementation process.

Participants involved in this study included school principals, grade IV teachers, and students in the same class. All three are seen as relevant because of their direct involvement in the dynamics of learning based on the Independent Curriculum. Data was collected through various techniques, namely interviews, observations, and documentation studies, all of which were focused on identifying difficulties in the implementation of the Curriculum. The interview technique is a technique that is carried out by collecting information through direct conversations between researchers and participants. Meanwhile, observation techniques are techniques that are carried out to observe the activities of participants at the research site. And documentation studies are data collection techniques that involve finding evidence that is appropriate and relevant to the research topic (Waruwu, 2023). With this, the researcher conducted an interview to find out the problems faced by teachers when implementing the independent curriculum. Then, observation to see how teachers are implementing the independent curriculum. Documentation studies are also used to obtain data in the form of documents. In the data analysis stage, the researcher applied the Miles and Huberman analysis model, which consisted of three stages, including data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing (Mawardi, 2023:128). This model allows researchers to filter and interpret data systematically. Then, the validity of the data is strengthened by using triangulation techniques, which is data collection carried out with different techniques but from the same source (Scott, 2022).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Through a series of data collection techniques that include interviews, observations and documentation studies at SDN Pakulonon 01 South Tangerang City. This research succeeded in revealing teachers' understanding of the Independent Curriculum and a number of difficulties faced by them such as in the process of planning, implementation, and learning assessment. The findings are summarized systematically in the following table, which contains the results of the analysis of the three data collection techniques used.

**Table 1. Findings of Research Results**

No.	Indicators	Research Results
1.	Curriculum Understanding	The understanding of teachers at SDN Pakulonon 01 towards the Independent curriculum can be said to be quite good, as seen from the results of the interviews conducted by the researcher with the teachers as well as the documentation study obtained by the researcher in the form of a training certificate for the Independent curriculum. The teacher said that the Merdeka curriculum is a curriculum that focuses on students, student activeness and student talent.
2.	Learning Planning	The results of the research on learning planning were found Some teachers stated that the preparation of this teaching module did not have difficulties because there were many references on the internet. Then, based on the observations made by the researcher, it is also seen that teachers are not independent in compiling teaching modules that will be used for learning but only use modules that are already many on the internet. However, some other teachers face difficulties in adapting learning tools to the interests of students and choosing methods that suit the characteristics of students. And based on the study of the learning planning documentation prepared by the teacher, it is in accordance with the Independent Curriculum.

3.	Learning Implementation	The implementation of the Independent Curriculum learning is still experiencing difficulties. Teachers still have difficulty in implementing differentiated and project- based learning due to limited time, funds, and existing facilities. In addition, during the implementation of the learning that the researcher observed, the majority of teachers still use learning methods that do not vary, namely lecture methods and group discussions. This is supported by the statement of the principal of SDN Pakulonon 01 South Tangerang City and the results of the researcher's interviews with grade IV students regarding the way the teacher delivers material in a new or different way than before. The documentation study that the researcher obtained from the teacher used balls, pictures or plants in the surrounding environment as a medium in the teaching and learning process.
4.	Learning Assessment	for the assessment of learning itself, even though the results of the research are quite good. to the concept of formative and summative assessment and can be seen from the observations made by the researcher Where in the learning assessment the teacher has made formative assessments during learning in class and also provides feedback to students. However, teachers still find it difficult to cope with the time when the assessment takes place, the need to raise students who have not reached the KKM, and dynamic classroom conditions. The documentation study is in the form of an assessment format that has been prepared in accordance with the Independent Curriculum.

## Discussion

### Teachers' Understanding of the Independent Curriculum

The curriculum is one of the supporting aspects in National Education. The curriculum certainly continues to undergo changes in accordance with the times. Therefore, teachers' understanding of the curriculum is certainly important so that the implementation of the Independent Curriculum can be fully achieved and conveyed well to students. The results of the teacher's interviews show a conceptual understanding of the essence of the Independent Curriculum, namely a curriculum that focuses on students, student activeness and student talents. Then the existence of training and webinars attended by teachers is proof of the form of participants in competency development activities related to the curriculum.

The teachers' statements are in line with the statements according to (Ginanjar, 2022:136) that the independent curriculum is learning in a varied classroom where students have a lot of time to learn about their ideas and strengthen their skills. That way, the strengthening of students' learning abilities will focus on them and their talents will be further developed.

### Teachers' Difficulties in the Implementation of Learning

In the education unit, one of the duties of teachers is to plan learning. The learning plan, which in the Independent Curriculum is called a teaching module, has several aspects such as general information about the school, Learning Outcomes, allocation of learning time, learning methods used, Learning Steps and others. The results of the interview explained that some teachers stated that there were no difficulties in preparing this teaching module because there were many references on the internet. However, some other teachers face difficulties in adapting learning tools to the interests of students and choosing methods that suit the characteristics of students.

The same is true of the research that has been carried out by (Nurkamaliah et al., 2024) who said that the difficulties experienced by teachers are in choosing learning methods and strategies that are appropriate and suitable for children so that the learning process will be more enjoyable. So this shows that there is a difference in the level of teacher readiness which has an impact on the quality of learning planning.

### Teachers' Difficulties in the Implementation of Learning

In the process of implementing learning, of course, there are obstacles or difficulties faced, as well as the teachers of SDN Pakulonan 01 South Tangerang City. Teachers still experience some difficulties such as implementing differentiated and project-based learning. In addition, the way teachers teach still tends to be monotonous and infrastructure is limited. Similar to research that has been conducted by (Sartika et al., 2024) which revealed that teachers do not understand the learning model too much in implementing the independent curriculum. They still use one-way learning methods or models in their learning. Meanwhile, in the independent curriculum, students must be more active than before.

### Teachers' Difficulties in Learning Assessment

Learning assessment is an important component in a learning process. This assessment serves as a measuring tool to measure student competency achievement and provide feedback for teachers and students. Formative assessments that have been applied in learning take place by providing good feed. However, some teachers still experience difficulties when students' grades are below the KKM and there is a need for students even though they have not reached the minimum competence.

Thus the research that has been carried out by (Ana et al., 2023) that teachers still have difficulties with raising students even though their abilities are not considered feasible so that they will fall behind in the next class. In addition, the need to raise students is felt to make it difficult for students to implement learning later in the next class. (Sartika et al., 2024) It also explained that teachers who serve as educators will certainly be overwhelmed in teaching if their students do not have the ability to move up in class. Thus, the difficulties faced by teachers will have an impact on the accuracy of assessment and the effectiveness of further learning.

Based on the results of the research and discussion that has been explained, the most prominent difficulty lies in the stage of implementing learning. This can be seen from the obstacles faced by teachers, especially in the implementation of differential learning that adjusts to the needs and characteristics of students, as well as project-based learning. In addition, the learning methods used still tend to not vary so that student activeness and involvement are not optimal. Meanwhile, the difficulty that seems not too significant is in learning planning because of the ease of access to various reference sources on the internet used by teachers to compile teaching modules so that the planning process can be carried out more practically even though it has not been fully compiled independently.

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

This curriculum will continue to change so as not to be left behind with the changing times. Therefore, as educators, teachers must always be ready for this change because something new will certainly not escape the difficulties that will be faced in the process of implementing it. And the implementation of the independent curriculum at SDN Pakulonan 01 South Tangerang City still faces difficulties in planning, implementation, and assessment of learning such as compiling teaching modules according to student needs, differentiated and project-based learning approaches and the need to upgrade even though they have not reached the KKM. The efforts that can be made to overcome these difficulties include: more intensive teacher training on differentiated and project-based learning, then the provision of adequate facilities, especially in aids such as projectors.

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