

CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS IN IMPLEMENTING THE INDEPENDENT CURRICULUM

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Abstract. Challenges and solutions in implementing an independent curriculum at RA AL- WAHDAH. *This study aims to examine the implementation of the Independent Curriculum at RA AL-Wahdah.* The type of research used is descriptive qualitative research by conducting literature studies, observations and interviews. In collecting data on the implementation of independent curriculum in PAUD, the author conducted a literature study, then the author in collecting data used primary data in the form of survey questionnaires and direct observation data in the field by using observations and conducting direct interviews with the principal of RA Al-Wahdah Sumber and observing learning activities in the classroom. The results of the research and the results of the discussion can be seen that using the Merdeka Curriculum at the PAUD level, especially with regard to resources, differences in child development, and teacher adjustment to the new curriculum. The case study at RA Al-Wahdah shows various steps to overcome these challenges, such as utilizing the surrounding environment, teacher creativity, and collaboration with parents. The conclusion of this study is that the Implementation of Independent Curriculum at RA Al-Wahdah supports early childhood development with a pleasant learning atmosphere. Cooperation with the community and teacher innovation are the keys to success. Children are involved in active learning and developmental evaluations are carried out regularly.

Keywords: *independent curriculum, implementation, early childhood.*

INTRODUCTION

Early childhood education is a fundamental phase that receives significant attention from various stakeholders. The process of assistance and guidance to children through various stimulations in accordance with the stage of child development is an important activity so that the achievement of child development can be maximized. These stimulation activities are of course designed and compiled by teachers in learning planning as a curriculum described in documents such as semester programs, learning outcomes, flow of learning objectives and teaching modules (Ita et al., 2024).

The curriculum plays a crucial role in shaping the learning process in education. Judging from the national standards of education, the curriculum is part of the content standards. Content is the main idea that serves as a foundation and guide in preparing learning activities at school. Without a curriculum, schools will not know the direction to take. This is related to the learning objectives and what is to be achieved. This curriculum is mandatory not only for tertiary institutions but also for all schools. Education levels ranging from PAUD, SD, SMP, and SMK (Jannah & Rashid, 2023). The independent curriculum is a new generation in overcoming educational challenges in the current era. The independent curriculum proposed by Minister of Education and Culture Nadiem Anwar Makarim formulates a number of new policies. In terms of concept, this independent curriculum offers freedom for institutions and students in carrying out their learning process (Marlina STAI Al-Fithrah Surabaya, 2022).

Implementation is the addition of activities that are mutually adjusted. Meanwhile, the curriculum is defined as the distance that a runner must cover from start to finish. It can be interpreted that the curriculum is an educational time that must be passed by students who aim to get recognition which is usually in the form of a diploma or certificate. The curriculum is also considered a very important link to achieve the ultimate goal of a journey and is marked by the acquisition of a certain diploma (Ramadhan & Tabroni, 2020).

The implementation of an independent curriculum aims to address long-standing problems related to the quality of Indonesian individuals and issues in education. Specifically, it also aims to support students' development in the learning process

to match their natural interests, talents, potential and needs. Students are given the freedom to be the main actors and an important part in directing changes in learning. However, when implemented, it is clear that challenges cannot be ignored, and in-depth analysis and solutions are needed to achieve the main objectives of national education through the independent curriculum approach promoted (Nofitasari et al., 2023).

Evaluation is a crucial element in the education curriculum. Through evaluation, we can understand the strengths and weaknesses of the curriculum implemented in schools. The success of education depends on a curriculum whose components are well planned. Curriculum development should not only focus on the theoretical aspects, but should also be reflected in practice. Assessment of the implementation of an independent curriculum in schools is very important to analyze the objectives, benefits, impacts, successes, and weaknesses of the curriculum. Challenges and strategies to overcome the obstacles that arise from the implementation of the current independent curriculum (Social et al., 2024).

METHODS

Type of Research

The type of research conducted is descriptive qualitative research. The research process begins with a literature review on the implementation of the Independent Curriculum in Early Childhood Education (PAUD). This review focuses on managing independent learning in line with project-based methods, curriculum implementation, learning objectives, evaluation challenges, and the role of technology. The literature review was conducted by collecting data from books and journal articles.

RESEARCH SETTING

This study was conducted at RA Al-Wahdah, located on Jl. Sultan Agung No.38, Sumber, Cirebon Regency, West Java 45611. This research was conducted in the third semester of the 2023/2024 school year. The population in this study was to provide questionnaires to school principals. The first research was conducted on November 04, 2024 and the second research was conducted on December 03, 2024.

DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUES AND INSTRUMENTS

Observation method is a way to collect data through observation, accompanied by recording of the situation or actions of the observed object. Non-participant observation means that the researcher does not actively engage in or influence the observed activities (Hasibuan et al., 2023). Interviews are conducted to collect data through direct question-and-answer interactions with respondents. In research on school principals, interviews can be used to dig deeper information about the experiences, views, and attitudes of school principals related to the implementation of the independent curriculum. Observations is a method of collecting data by directly and regularly observing a phenomenon or event that occurs in the field, but the researcher only observes from the outside without being involved in the activity.

DATA RELIABILITY

Data collection was carried out using primary data in the form of a survey questionnaire and direct observation data in the field by using observation and conducting direct interviews with the principal of RA Al-Wahdah Sumber and observing learning activities in the classroom. Guidelines and interviews cover the implementation of learning based on the implementation of the independent curriculum at RA Al- Wahdah Sumber.

RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the independent curriculum research at RA Al-wahdah have the main objective of learning management in the early childhood curriculum (AUD) is to create a learning environment that supports holistic child development. This includes cognitive, social-emotional and physical development. The objectives of learning management are: Creating a learning plan, Creating a plan that meets the needs and characteristics of young children, Increasing children's participation: Encourage children's active participation in the learning process through interactive and fun methods, Encourage social and emotional development this can help children interact with peers and learn to manage their emotions, Alignment The

school curriculum can ensure all learning activities are aligned with the established ECD curriculum objectives.

The effective implementation of the PAUD curriculum in the classroom requires several important steps, such as a deep understanding of the curriculum, careful planning, the use of various learning methods, and continuous evaluation and reflection. In addition, it is important to create a conducive learning environment, involve parents, and continue to develop teacher professionalism. The first step in implementing the curriculum is that teachers need to understand the basic principles of the PAUD curriculum, learning objectives, and indicators of success. Furthermore, teachers need to prepare learning plans that are tailored to the characteristics of children, age development, and local context. In addition, in the learning process, teachers should use active learning methods, and teachers must be able to create a safe and comfortable learning environment for children. From the various steps in implementing the curriculum, teachers should improve their competence through various training, attending seminars and other self-development. In addition to learning at school, teachers also need to involve parents both in learning at school together, and in communicating child development.

The main challenges in implementing the ECD curriculum include limited resources such as physical equipment, teaching materials, and qualified early childhood educators. Additionally, differences in child development pose a challenge for teachers in designing suitable learning methods. Furthermore, many teachers are still in the process of adapting to the Independent Curriculum.

Solutions to overcome challenges in implementing an independent curriculum. If there is a lack of limited resources, teachers and other educators can work with the community such as inviting parents, communities, and community organizations to donate tools, teaching materials, or volunteers. Utilizing the surrounding environment such as using nature as a learning resource, such as parks, gardens, or rivers. Creativity Teachers can make their own learning tools from easily available and cheap items.

Utilizing existing technology, such as free learning applications, learning videos, or educational games, the researcher reported that the use of technology can be used as a medium in conveying the concept of numbers and how children think.

However, not all teachers can maximize and utilize the use of innovation appropriately. Many teachers, especially schools in villages, do not understand how to get data through the web, youtube and tv players or VCD players are only used as a medium to play sports recordings for children, even though the utilization of this media can be more than that (Susanti, 2020). Challenges to children's developmental differences Teachers can provide individualized learning such as giving special attention to each child, providing developmentally appropriate tasks and activities. Provide group learning such as forming learning groups. The curriculum is diverse, so that better children can help friends who are struggling. Challenges of Curriculum change Teachers and educators can participate in ongoing training such as conducting regular training to improve teachers' ability to implement an independent curriculum. Collaborative Discussions Teachers can create a discussion forum between teachers to share experiences and solutions.

The implementation of Merdeka curriculum in RA Al-wahdah gives teachers a lot of freedom for educational institutions, including RA, to create a more child-focused learning process. The implementation of this curriculum at the RA level offers a more enjoyable and meaningful learning experience for young children. Teachers and education staff first understand the basic concepts of Merdeka Curriculum, create lesson plans that are interesting and relevant to children's lives, include children in planning learning activities in RA, and provide learning spaces that are safe, comfortable, and can stimulate children's creativity. Teachers are freed to use learning media that are as interesting as possible in the learning process and methods that are in accordance with the themes at school. Teachers can involve parents in building children's learning activities at home. In RA Al-wahdah, education personnel are also freed in making educational game tools for learning media.

Evaluation at RA Al-Wahdah institution, Assessment once a month to measure the progress of children's development. children's learning in each class is different but using the same theme, Assessing Children's progress, to measure the progress of each child's development in various aspects such as cognitive, social-emotional, and motor aspects, Parent input, including parents about changes in behavior and development of their child's skills at home as a result of the program

at school and Teacher reflection, namely Encouraging teachers to reflect on their practice and student learning outcomes as part of continuous assessment. The definition of assessment is a general term that includes ways to obtain information about student learning (observations, average written test results) and ways to assess learning progress. The previous theory says that assessment in the learning process is an official step or effort to obtain information related to the learning process with important factors in learning as a basis for teachers to improve student learning processes and outcomes (Arumsari & Putri, 2020).

The utilization of technology by RA Al-Wahdah in teaching and learning activities remains tailored to learning needs. One example is storytelling, teachers at RA Al-Wahdah institutions have integrated technology such as laptops as a supporting medium to present more interesting stories to students. Teachers can use their laptops to display images, videos, and even sound effects related to the stories they read. This will certainly make the storytelling process more interactive and stimulate children's imagination. The utilization of technology shows RA Al-Wahdah's efforts to keep up with the times and provide a richer learning experience for students. The previous theory says that educational technology provides a basis that can help the successful implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum. Educational technology provides easy and flexible access to learning resources (Amin et al., 2022).

CONCLUSIONS

The implementation of the Independent Curriculum at RA Al-Wahdah has positively contributed to the holistic development of early childhood learners. This curriculum gives teachers the freedom to create a learning atmosphere that is fun and suits the needs of children. The challenges faced, such as lack of resources and differences in children's progress, have been overcome in various creative ways. Cooperation with the community, use of the surrounding environment and teacher innovation are key to success. The main focus of this implementation is active learning: Children are encouraged to be directly involved in the learning process through play, exploration and engaging activities. Curriculum Development covers

all aspects of child development, including cognitive, social-emotional and physical.

Teachers, parents and the community work together to create an ideal learning environment. Ongoing evaluation of children's development can be monitored regularly for ensuring effective learning. The use of technology such as laptops to tell stories shows RA Al- Wahdah's efforts to keep up with the times and provide a more in-depth learning experience for children. Overall, the implementation of Independent Curriculum at RA Al-Wahdah is the right step in providing quality education for early childhood.

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