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Evaluation of the Implementation of the Independent Curriculum at SMP Negeri 8 Ambon Using the Discrepancy Model

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Abstract: The curriculum is a crucial component in education that needs to be continuously updated to keep pace with current developments. Curriculum changes help ensure that the education provided not only meets current standards but also supports the holistic development of students' skills and character. This evaluation study uses the Discrepancy Model to assess differences between actual conditions and established standards. This study aims to analyze the design, installation, process, and results of the Independent Curriculum implementation at SMP Negeri 8 Ambon. The method used is an evaluative method with a qualitative descriptive approach. This study was conducted at SMP Negeri 8 Ambon. The research subjects were the principal, the Deputy Head of Curriculum, teachers, and students. Three data collection techniques were used: interviews, observation, and document studies. Data validation used source and technique triangulation, while data analysis followed the Miles and Huberman model. The results of the study show that the Curriculum Design, Curriculum Implementation, Installation, and Curriculum Results are in accordance with the standards set out in the Minister of Education, Culture, Research and Technology Regulation Number 12 of 2024 regarding the implementation of the Independent Curriculum in educational institutions.

Keywords: Evaluation, Implementation of Independent Curriculum, Discrepancy Model.

INTRODUCTION

Since Indonesia's independence in 1945, the curriculum has undergone eleven changes, including in 1947, 1952, 1964, 1968, 1975, 1984, 1994, 2004, 2006, 2013, and the most recent is the independent curriculum. The Independent Curriculum is an evaluation of the previous 2013 Curriculum. There are changes in direction, design, and models that aim primarily to improve the quality and standard of education in Indonesia and adjust to global education standards. (Insani, 2019)

Curriculum transformation is a crucial step in ensuring the education system's adaptability to the dynamic developments of the times, ensuring the effectiveness and relevance of learning quality. Curriculum changes help ensure that the education provided not only meets

current standards but also supports the holistic development of students' skills and character. (Wahyuni et al., 2022)

The Independent Curriculum is a strategy to address post-pandemic educational challenges by providing schools and students with freedom in implementing learning. (Indarta et al., 2022) Autonomy in curriculum development reflects Ki Hajar Dewantara's philosophy of liberating education, where students are encouraged to explore their potential independently. This freedom plays a crucial role in stimulating students' intellectual development while strengthening their self-reliant character profiles. (Vhalery et al., 2022). The idea of free education emerged as a response to a number of problems in the world of education, with an emphasis on improving the quality of human resources. (Baro'ah, 2020; Yamin & Syahrir, 2020).

Based on research conducted by Simon Paulus Olak Wuwur (2023) Regarding the problems in implementing the independent curriculum at the elementary school level, it was revealed that the implementation of the Independent Curriculum in elementary schools still faces various obstacles, from the planning stage, through learning implementation, to the evaluation of learning outcomes. The main challenges faced are teachers' lack of understanding and skills in implementing innovative methods, as well as the influence of the environment, facilities, and available human resources. Furthermore, teachers still experience difficulties in developing learning materials, conducting initial and final assessments, and implementing the Pancasila Student Profile. Despite having received training, the implementation of this curriculum still requires ongoing training due to the many new concepts that must be understood more deeply.

One effective evaluation model for assessing educational programs is discrepancy evaluation. The discrepancy evaluation model measures the gap between actual conditions and established standards. This evaluation aims to examine four components of the discrepancy model: 1) Design; 2) Installation; 3) Process; and 4) Product. A recent study by Firdaus and colleagues (2024) assessed the implementation of the Independent Curriculum in junior high schools in Pontianak City using the Provus Discrepancy approach to identify discrepancies between theory and practice. These findings serve as a basis for program improvement, but this model is rarely implemented and generally does not address the four stages of discrepancy evaluation.

This study contributes by evaluating the implementation of the Independent Curriculum at SMP Negeri 8 Ambon. The research conducted by Firdaus et al. (2024) and this study both examine the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum at the junior high school level, emphasizing the implementation of project-based learning and the use of technology, and using the Discrepancy (Provus) evaluation model. The difference lies in the focus and depth of analysis. Firdaus et al.'s research focuses more on identifying gaps between policy and implementation at the city level, particularly in Pontianak, as well as the various technical obstacles that arise. While this study not only identifies gaps but also explores the process of adaptation, mentoring, and continuous improvement carried out by the school by emphasizing the alignment of implementation with the school's vision and mission, student needs, and the local context, resulting in a more contextual and comprehensive evaluation.

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to assess the implementation of the Independent Curriculum at SMP Negeri 8 Ambon using the discrepancy model. This assessment will prioritize design, installation, process, and outcomes. It is hoped that these findings can provide recommendations for SMP Negeri 8 Ambon to better implement the Independent Curriculum in the future.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative descriptive research design to evaluate the implementation of the Independent Curriculum at SMP Negeri 8 Ambon. The discrepancy evaluation model (Design, Installation, Process, Product) developed by MM Provus in 1969 emphasizes differences in program implementation. The gap model evaluation process aims to establish program standards, analyze whether there are differences between several program elements and those standards, and utilize information regarding gaps to identify weaknesses in the program. Data were collected through structured interviews with the interviewees being the principal, the curriculum vice principal, teachers, and students. Then, learning observations and document studies were also conducted. The documents analyzed were the Independent Curriculum Planning Report, Learning Implementation Report, Modules, Lesson Plans, P5 Activity Reports, and Infrastructure Data.

The instruments used to collect data included interview questions, observation, and document analysis. The data obtained were then analyzed using the Miles and Huberman method. The results were then explained based on the four stages of discrepancy evaluation (design, installation, process, and results). Afterward, the researcher compiled a discussion and explained the implementation of the Merdeka curriculum at SMP Negeri 8 Ambon to determine whether it met the criteria for successful implementation of the Merdeka curriculum set by the Ministry of Education and Culture.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results address the research questions regarding the implementation of the Independent Curriculum regarding how to design, install, process, and implement the independent curriculum at SMP Negeri 8 Ambon.

Independent Curriculum Planning Design

The findings indicate that the background to the implementation of the independent curriculum is because SMP Negeri 8 Ambon is a driving school, at that time every school that is a driving school is required to implement the independent curriculum.

According to Decree of the Minister of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia Number 56 of 2022 concerning guidelines for curriculum implementation for learning recovery, the Merdeka curriculum will be implemented in the new academic year 2022-2023 (Minister of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, 2022). The Merdeka curriculum was created to address the needs of the ever-changing era and the challenges faced by our educational institutions. Deni and his colleagues' statements align with this, stating that the curriculum was designed and developed to further optimize potential and build character in facing the demands of the times. (Solehudin et al., 2022:748).

In response to current developments, SMP Negeri 8 Ambon, as one of the pioneering schools, also plays a role in implementing the Merdeka curriculum and is one of the schools in Ambon City to implement it in 2022/2023. SMP Negeri 8 Ambon implements the Merdeka Curriculum as a manifestation of the school's commitment to improving the quality of learning to better align with student needs and current developments.

School readiness and support for implementing the Independent Curriculum at SMP Negeri 8 Ambon align with the standards in Minister of Education Regulation Number 12 of 2024. A school is considered successful if it has demonstrated clear readiness in supporting the implementation of the curriculum. The success criteria are measured through a number of indicators, such as the existence of official policies in schools that regulate the implementation of the Independent Curriculum, the availability of adequate learning facilities and equipment to support the teaching process, and efforts to improve the quality of human resources, especially teachers, through participation in training, workshops, or learning communities. These three indicators are met and have been implemented continuously, so it can be concluded

that SMP Negeri 8 Ambon is ready and provides good support in implementing the Independent Curriculum.

The above explanation aligns with the Ministry of Education and Culture (2022), which states that principals must be willing and able to utilize all available resources within the school to realize the vision and mission and achieve the set goals. In this regard, in preparing principals as supervisors, they can utilize their authority to encourage the implementation of a flexible curriculum in their educational institutions by maximizing the independent learning curriculum policy and improving the evaluation process in academic supervision. This can serve as material for reflection to create a better learning environment. Furthermore, according to Yamin & Syahrir (2020) The context of the independent curriculum includes teacher preparation, including mental readiness and their ability to apply new learning methods, in order to provide the best learning experience for students. Therefore, teacher preparation can be interpreted as a commitment to take part in the process of educating, teaching, guiding, training, advising, and evaluating students. The development of independent learning education in the study of learning techniques must be adapted to educational trends in the era of the Industrial Revolution 4.0. In the era of the Industrial Revolution 4.0, the main goal to be achieved in the education system, especially in learning techniques, is for students or learners to master new literacy. According to Haryanto (2019), teachers play a crucial role in adapting the Independent Curriculum to their local environment, selecting and developing appropriate teaching materials, and designing learning methods that suit students' needs. A study conducted by Wibowo et al. (2020) revealed that teachers have a crucial role as agents of change in the implementation of the Independent Curriculum. Teachers need to acquire the latest knowledge and skills, and must be able to collaborate with fellow teachers in designing and implementing learning processes that focus on developing student abilities. Research from Wasilah et al. (2023) which states that facilities and infrastructure are crucial factors in supporting student learning activities at school. Effective management of these facilities and infrastructure is essential for preparing for the implementation of the independent curriculum.

Independent Curriculum Installation

The installation of the independent curriculum at SMP Negeri 8 Ambon adheres to the standards set out in the Minister of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology Regulation No. 12 of 2024 concerning the implementation of the Independent Curriculum in educational institutions. At this stage, teachers are able to actively develop students' potential to be more independent, critical, collaborative, and ready to face future challenges.

SMP Negeri 8 Ambon has implemented the Independent Curriculum in accordance with regulations stipulated by the Minister of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology Number 12 of 2024 as guidelines for its implementation. The curriculum implementation process is carried out in stages and planned, adjusted to the conditions of each educational unit, the readiness of teachers, and the needs of students. The principal emphasized that the Independent Curriculum provides greater opportunities for teachers to design student-focused learning activities, motivate character building through the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project, and improve the quality of the teaching and learning process to be more meaningful, contextual, and relevant to current developments.

Teachers at SMP Negeri 8 Ambon have planned lessons tailored to student needs, and the learning materials are in accordance with the Merdeka Curriculum. This is supported by research findings from GIANTO (2023) This study shows that physical education and health teachers at junior high schools (SMP) and Islamic junior high schools (MTs) in Grabag District, Magelang Regency, have implemented student-centered learning methods. The learning materials used by the teachers align with the Merdeka curriculum. Evaluations conducted over

the course of one academic year indicate improvements in student knowledge, attitudes, and skills.

Thus, it can be concluded that the evaluation of the installation of the independent curriculum has referred to the regulations of Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System and refers to the standards for the components of the implementation of the independent curriculum, namely planning, implementation, and evaluation.

The Process of Implementing the Independent Curriculum

The successful implementation process is inseparable from the school's prior planning. With proper planning, it is hoped that implementation will be in accordance with the standards of the independent curriculum. This is also in line with what was expressed by Princess (2024), that the role of designing learning is very important because it provides clear guidance and targets to students during learning activities. A well-planned learning approach supports a structured learning system, increases efficiency in the learning process, helps students develop thinking skills, stimulates motivation in learning, and encourages them to learn independently.

In the aspect of learning planning, a school or teacher is considered successful in this aspect if the teacher can systematically compile a learning plan, including Learning Outcomes (CP), Learning Objectives (TP), Learning Objective Flow (ATP), teaching modules, and assessment plans that are appropriate to the characteristics and needs of students. This success criterion is evident from the existence of comprehensive planning documents, namely CP, TP, ATP, teaching modules, and learning plans that integrate different learning strategies and strengthen the Pancasila Student Profile. Therefore, it can be concluded that teachers at SMP Negeri 8 Ambon have possessed and implemented these documents appropriately in the learning process, so that in its implementation the Independent Curriculum can be considered to have met the standards of success.

The teaching aspect in the classroom is carried out with an approach that focuses on students, applying differentiated learning, relevant to the context, and supporting character building in accordance with the Pancasila Student Profile. Indicators of success can be seen from the learning activities carried out by teachers, such as the application of active learning methods, active student participation in the learning process, and the implementation of formative and summative assessments to monitor student learning progress. Assessment of this success can be obtained through various data collection techniques, such as observation of learning activities in the classroom, analysis of learning documents, the use of instruments to obtain feedback from students, student reflections on the learning process, and interviews with teachers and students. The results from various data sources indicate that learning takes place actively, can adapt to student needs, and supports character development, so the implementation of learning can be declared to meet the criteria for success.

In active learning methods, students are directly involved in the learning process, both individually and in groups, through various activities that enhance conceptual understanding and application in real-life situations. Project-based learning methods offer students opportunities to learn and implement concepts and skills in projects related to everyday life. Meanwhile, student-centered approaches emphasize students' active role in constructing knowledge and understanding through direct experience, reflection, and dialogue. (Idamtus et al., 2023). From the description above, it can also be concluded that both teachers and students must have the ability to create and inspire throughout all stages of learning from beginning to end. In this context, the existence of a learning model plays a crucial role in creating a pleasant learning atmosphere. The learning approach implemented by teachers throughout the learning process will have a significant impact on students, so it is important for each teacher to understand the concept of a learning model that suits their students' needs, considering the learning characteristics of each student are diverse. (Khoerunnisa & Aqwal, 2020)

In the learning planning process, there are still teachers who experience obstacles in creating teaching materials according to student needs, the use of IT, and incomplete learning support tools, however, in the implementation process, these teachers have been assisted with training and mentoring so as not to disrupt the implementation of the independent curriculum at SMP Negeri 8 Ambon.

Issues and challenges in implementing a curriculum are crucial aspects to consider. Several studies have shown various obstacles in implementing the Independent Curriculum, particularly at the elementary school level. Fitriyah & Wardani (2022) revealed that obstacles in implementing the Independent Curriculum in elementary schools are caused by teachers' lack of understanding of the characteristics of the Independent Curriculum, as well as a number of changes to the Independent Curriculum that make teachers feel less enthusiastic and burdened. In addition to problems originating from teachers, research by Sasmita and Darmansyah (2022) shows that facilities and access in schools are also obstacles to implementing the Independent Curriculum. Furthermore, Based on a 2024 study by Armidawati and colleagues, they found that several challenges arose in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum, including a shortage of teaching staff, suboptimal technological skills among teachers, and problems with time management and adapting to the new curriculum. Various strategic steps have been taken to address these issues, such as improving IT facilities, training in technology use, establishing an active teacher team, and organizing creative activities for students. Through strong collaboration between the principal, the vice principal for curriculum, and the teachers, these challenges can be overcome, enabling the Merdeka Curriculum to be implemented effectively.

Based on the description above, the following are several steps taken by the principal to overcome the problems faced in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum. The principal at SMP Negeri 8 Ambon faced the challenges in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum by increasing cooperation and coordination among teachers through regular meetings, academic guidance, and assistance in creating learning materials. To address teachers' lack of understanding of the Merdeka Curriculum concept, the principal held training/workshops, as well as activities to share good experiences among teachers. In addition, he made gradual efforts to meet the needs of facilities and infrastructure while establishing partnerships with relevant parties to support project-based learning and strengthen the Pancasila Student Profile. With a communicative and solution-oriented leadership style, the principal succeeded in creating a flexible school atmosphere and supporting the successful implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum.

The assessment aspect of learning is considered successful if the assessment conducted by teachers is continuous, fair, valid, and focused on the student learning process and outcomes. Signs of success are seen in the use of various types of assessments by teachers, such as diagnostic assessments to evaluate students' initial abilities, formative assessments to monitor learning progress during teaching, and summative assessments to assess students' final outcomes. In addition, the assessments are also used as a basis for enhancing and improving the quality of learning. The instruments used in the assessments have been designed in accordance with Learning Outcomes (CP) and take into account student characteristics. Based on analysis of assessment documents, reports on educational report cards, observations of learning activities, and interviews with teachers regarding the implementation and use of assessment results in the learning process, it is in accordance with student needs.

The aspects of teacher autonomy and professionalism are said to be successful if teachers have professional freedom to design, implement, and evaluate the learning process according to student needs and predetermined learning objectives. Success can be indicated by the teacher's ability to independently develop teaching modules, adapt learning methods to student characteristics, and reflect on the implementation of learning as a step to improve quality. It was found that this aspect is successful can be seen from the availability of learning documents

such as teaching modules and lesson plans, and is reinforced by the results of interviews with teachers who showed the existence of reflection practices and continuous professional development in the implementation of the teaching and learning process.

The Student Profile Strengthening aspect is considered successful if the school can incorporate the values of the Pancasila Student Profile into various educational activities, both in the classroom learning process, school culture, and through project activities called the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5). Signs of success can be seen from the implementation of the P5 project that has been planned and carried out continuously, the integration of Pancasila values in the learning process, and the active participation of students in various project activities. In addition, the success of this aspect can be proven through P5 planning and implementation documents, project activity reports that show the process and results of these activities, and the results of interviews with teachers and students that reflect their involvement and understanding of the values instilled in P5 activities. If these indicators can be met, then the strengthening of the Pancasila Student Profile in schools can be considered to be running well. Based on document studies, interviews, and observations, it was found that this aspect has been implemented in accordance with the indicators mentioned.

Strengthening the character of Pancasila students is crucial, with dedicated time allocated to provide students with opportunities to master knowledge as part of character formation and also opportunities to learn from their environment. Through the development of a Pancasila learning profile, it is hoped that individuals will emerge with good morals, a strong sense of solidarity, and the ability to increase tolerance and cohesion in society as a whole. Therefore, the primary focus in the character education transformation process is students. (Wahidah et al., 2023).

The P5 aspect is considered successful if the school can implement the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5) activities in an organized, contextual, and sustainable manner, in order to build student character and abilities in accordance with Pancasila values. Signs of success can be seen from the existence of clear P5 project planning documents and modules, project implementation that is in accordance with national themes and themes related to the school's local context, and active student participation in every step of the project activities. In addition, success can also be seen through reflection activities on project implementation and the preparation of P5 activity results reports as an evaluation and documentation of the program. Assessment of this aspect can be done by examining documents related to P5 planning and implementation and conducting interviews with teachers and students to understand the process, learning experiences, and impacts of the project activities. Based on document studies and interviews, it was found that the program implementation has been running according to the indicators of this aspect, in P5 with the theme "Voice of Democracy" this activity makes students capable of critical thinking and effective communication, and fosters a sense of concern for issues in the school environment and society. Meanwhile, P5, with the theme "Farming," empowers students to develop independence, togetherness, and a love for the environment. Students are very active in P5 activities.

From the description above, it can be seen that the P5 implementation process has been carried out and coordinated well by the person in charge, the teachers, and the participating students. This is supported by research conducted by Safitri & Rahim (2024) The results of the study indicate that the project design was well-executed and comprehensive. This included the formation of a facilitator team, identification of school readiness to implement the project, determination of dimensions and themes, time allocation, and development of a project model. Furthermore, learning objectives were established and topics, flows, and assessments were developed. Project management was well-executed and comprehensive through the implementation of initial, core, and closing activities, optimizing partner participation, and organizing assessments and reporting by collecting and compiling assessment and report

results, as well as conducting evaluations and follow-up. Supporting factors included the principal and stakeholders, good collaboration between the school and relevant agencies as partners, and existing facilities and infrastructure at the school.

Results of the Independent Curriculum Implementation Assessment

The curriculum implementation process went smoothly thanks to the school's thorough preparation. Educators created an organized lesson plan, encompassing Learning Outcomes (CP), Learning Objectives (TP), Learning Objective Flow (ATP), learning modules, and evaluation plans, tailored to the characteristics and needs of students. This preparation ensured planned learning, increased effectiveness, sparked student enthusiasm, and supported independence and critical thinking skills. Challenges such as difficulties in developing teaching materials or using technology were addressed through teacher training and guidance, ensuring smooth implementation.

In implementing the learning process, teachers use a student-focused approach through active methods and differentiation in teaching, and conduct formative and summative assessments to monitor student progress. Student engagement is very high, both individually and in groups, especially through project-based activities. This learning not only deepens conceptual understanding but also develops reflection, creativity, and collaboration skills among students. The results of observations, documentation, and interviews indicate that the learning process can be adapted to student needs and helps in character development in accordance with the Pancasila Student Profile.

In terms of assessment, teachers conduct ongoing assessments in a fair, valid, and process- and outcome-oriented manner. The assessment types used—diagnostic, formative, and summative—aim to improve the quality of learning using tools tailored to the CP and characteristics of students. Evaluation documents, reports, classroom observations, and interviews demonstrate that the evaluation process aligns with existing standards and supports student development.

The freedom and expertise of teachers were also successfully implemented. Teachers have the right to design, implement, and evaluate the learning process according to student needs. This is evident in the teachers' ability to develop independent learning modules, modify teaching methods, and conduct evaluations to improve educational quality, supported by lesson plans, learning modules, and teacher interviews.

In an effort to strengthen the Pancasila Student Profile, the school has successfully integrated Pancasila values into the learning process, school culture, and through the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5) activities. The P5 implementation was carried out in a planned, contextually relevant, and sustainable manner. Students were actively involved in projects with themes such as “Voices of Democracy” and “Farming,” which helped develop critical thinking, communication, independence, cooperation, and environmental awareness. The P5 evaluation and report results showed that the project management was carried out well, including theme selection, activity organization, assessment, and next steps. Several factors contributed to this success, including the leadership of the principal, collaboration between teachers and stakeholders, and the availability of adequate facilities and infrastructure.

Strengthening literacy in the 21st century is considered successful if most learning tools combine reading, mathematics, and digital literacy and include activities that enhance the 4C skills. Observations show that students actively participate in the learning process, which requires critical, creative, collaborative, and communicative thinking skills. Furthermore, interviews revealed that teachers understand and apply 21st-century literacy principles in their teaching, and students perceive the benefits of these learning activities in improving their reading, thinking, collaboration, and communication skills.

Overall, the implementation of the Independent Curriculum at SMP Negeri 8 Ambon has shown success in almost all aspects, including planning, implementation, assessment, teacher autonomy, Strengthening the Pancasila Student Profile through P5 and strengthening 21st-century literacy. Despite facing several challenges at the beginning, mentoring, training, and collaboration efforts between the principal, teachers, and related parties have succeeded in creating more adaptive, relevant, and student-focused learning, thereby improving the quality of education and overall character development of students.

CONCLUSION

The research results show that the implementation of the Independent Curriculum at SMP Negeri 8 Ambon has been successful overall and in accordance with established standards. In terms of planning, teachers have developed teaching materials with a clear structure and tailored to student needs. During learning, an approach that emphasizes active learning, differentiation, and project-based methods has successfully increased student engagement, creativity, and collaboration. In terms of assessment, teachers have conducted continuous diagnostic, formative, and summative assessments aligned with learning objectives. The Independent Curriculum also provides opportunities for teachers to be more independent and creative in designing and evaluating the learning process. Strengthening the Pancasila Student Profile has been integrated into relevant P5 learning and activities, thus developing student character and skills. In addition, learning also supports 21st-century literacy and 4C skills. Overall, despite initial challenges, the implementation of the Independent Curriculum at this school has had a positive impact on improving the quality of learning, making it more flexible, relevant, and student-oriented.

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