



Independent Curriculum Policy in Early Childhood Education Units in Indonesia

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Abstract: The Independent Curriculum is an innovative advancement in the Indonesian education system, namely in Early Childhood Education (PAUD). This study aims to discover the Independent Curriculum policy in PAUD (Early Childhood Education) through a literature review approach. In particular, the researcher will analyze and evaluate policies, regulations, and theories related to the definition of the Independent Curriculum in Early Childhood Education. Information is gathered from reliable sources, including scientific publications, books, and official government papers. The study's findings show that the Independent Curriculum offers PAUD the ability to tailor the curriculum to the specific needs and attributes of students, thus providing flexibility. PAUD is encouraged to develop the Pancasila Student Profile through child-centered learning, play, and exploration. This research also found several challenges in implementing the Independent Curriculum in PAUD, such as limited human resources, infrastructure, and funding. Ultimately, the Independent Curriculum has great potential to improve the quality of early childhood education in Indonesia. Nevertheless, it is crucial for some stakeholders to consistently exert their efforts to ensure the smooth and smooth implementation of the implementation process.

Keywords: Independent Curriculum, PAUD, Early Childhood Education Curriculum Policy

INTRODUCTION

Preschool education, often referred to as Early Childhood Education (PAUD), is a crucial phase of education that plays an important role in laying the foundation for children's development and progress in the future. Therefore, it is very important to guarantee that PAUD (Preschool Education) adopts an appropriate and quality curriculum. The Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology (Kemendikbudristek) adopted the Independent Curriculum in 2022 which brought significant improvements to early childhood education (PAUD). The main goal of this new strategy is to provide autonomy and adaptability to early childhood education units to create learning experiences tailored to children's special needs and interests. (Directorate of Early Childhood Education, Directorate General of Early Childhood Education, 2022).

Education is very important in shaping the quality of human resources and improving the welfare of a nation. Education has an important role in fostering the emergence of creative and original ideas that are in line with the progress of today's times. Education serves as an important instrument for the government to encourage the growth and progress of the nation and its country. According to the 1945 Constitution, the Indonesian government was established with the objectives, among others, to improve the ability to educate the nation and state. Article 3 of Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning National Education states that it is suitable to help improve skills and cultivate the nation's identity and culture as the purpose of educating the community.(Baharuddin, 2021).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Education is the process of fostering individuals who have intellectual intelligence and religious virtues, which allows them to contribute to the progress of the country and its government. Education allows us to improve individual competencies, make them more efficient, and allow them to develop a positive mindset. This allows them to efficiently handle the challenges and obstacles they face. Education is the main factor that determines development and affects the quality of human resources. Therefore, the quality of human resources is always related to the level of education. The progress of a nation is inseparable from education so it has a significant impact on national development. In the world of education, the learning process is a constant and dynamic phenomenon that inevitably undergoes transformation. (Ningtyas et al., 2024).

Education has an important role in shaping the quality of human resources and improving the welfare of a country. Education has an important role in encouraging the development of innovative and unique ideas that are in line with the latest advancements. Education is a vital means for the government to encourage the development and progress of the nation and state. In accordance with the 1945 Constitution, the Indonesian government was formed, among others, with the aim of improving the ability to educate the nation and state. Following Article 3 of Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning National Education, the purpose of community education is to improve competence and foster a sense of identity and culture of the nation. (Anistianingsih1, 2022).

Effective management is essential for the implementation, planning, and assessment of education. Inadequate management hinders the smooth running of educational functions, thus causing expectations to not be met. The government is

implementing measures to reform and improve the curriculum to improve the quality of education. The curriculum currently implemented is an autonomous learning curriculum. (Indah Wulandari, 2021).

The Independent Curriculum is a pedagogical framework that fosters a conducive and peaceful learning environment, allowing children to acquire knowledge without excessive pressure. Emphasizing the cultivation of happiness and the recognition of students' innate potential (Susilowati, 2022). Minister of Education Nadiem Makarim stated that the Independent Curriculum is designed to improve students' individual skills and abilities. The independent learning curriculum offers a comprehensive character education program for students who prioritize Pancasila as their guideline. By adopting Pancasila as a framework, various dimensions emerge, each of which is described through six different elements. These elements include belief and respect for higher powers, embracing global diversity, fostering cooperation, encouraging independence, critical thinking, and fostering creativity. (Situmorang, H. B., Rahayu, P. M., & Munawwarah, 2023).

The Independent Curriculum has the benefit of prioritizing crucial content and encouraging the growth of student competencies at each stage. This strategy allows students to participate in more comprehensive, significant, and enjoyable learning encounters, without feeling the need to rush into learning a topic. Project activities offer students a more relevant and engaging approach to learning, allowing them to actively investigate real-world issues such as the environment and health. This supports the development of the character and competency profile of Pancasila students. The goal of this teaching is to improve students' aptitude in reading, writing, and math, as well as their understanding in each discipline. The phase or level of development refers to the specific learning outcomes that a child must achieve, taking into account individual traits, abilities, and needs. (Wulandari et al., 2018).

Having a theoretical understanding in the field of education policy implementation can be a solid foundation to improve the evaluation process and formulate more effective policies. This research seeks to contribute greatly to education stakeholders, the government, and practitioners and academics by analyzing the Independent Curriculum policy through theoretical studies. The purpose of this study is to improve our understanding of the Independent Curriculum as an educational strategy through the use of theoretical study methodologies. In addition, the results of this study can improve the

development of more effective, applicable, and lasting education policies. (Situmorang, H. B., Rahayu, P. M., & Munawwarah, 2023)

METHOD

This research is included in the qualitative research area. The methodology chosen is theoretical exploration, mostly through literature review. The researcher examines and analyzes laws and regulations, rules, and theories related to the concept of the Independent Curriculum in the Early Childhood Education unit. Information is collected from several sources, including scientific publications, books, and official government documents.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Independent Curriculum was first implemented in 2019 by Nadiem Makarim, Minister of Education and Culture. The decision was triggered by a Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) study conducted in the same year, which showed that Indonesian students were ranked sixth from the bottom. Therefore, the Minister of Education and Culture issued a new curriculum concept. The Independent Curriculum in Indonesia allows for autonomy and freedom in education, allowing individuals to decide on the most effective approach or methodology for teaching and learning (Muh. Alimuddin, n.d.). In response to the COVID-19 epidemic, the government is making significant efforts to overcome the educational setbacks due to this pandemic by implementing the Independent Curriculum. This strategy has gained significant support from various people and groups, including academics, education experts, and other stakeholders. Independent curricular development has involved several curriculum refinements, especially emphasizing active, project-based, and student-centered learning. The Independent Curriculum adheres to an educational framework emphasizing context, diversity, and student-centeredness. This approach emphasizes individualized teaching that meets each learner's different needs and capacities while fostering creativity and active involvement in learning. Nita Apriliani, 2023. The autonomous curriculum will begin to be implemented in 2024.

Contrary to popular belief, the 2013 curriculum did not undergo a complete overhaul and removed its components. However, a simplification is carried out in terms of learning outcomes, learning objectives, and other related words. The Pancasila student profile serves as a means of expressing the purpose of the national approach. The project to improve the profile of Pancasila students is one of the components of the Independent

Curriculum, which is consistently linked to three critical aspects of Early Childhood Education Development Achievements: Religious Values and Character, Identity, and Basics. The subjects discussed are literacy, mathematics, science, technology, engineering, and art.

Several education experts have shared their perspectives on the Independent Curriculum and emphasized the importance of examining this approach through the lens of theoretical studies. Darmawan and Winataputra highlighted that the primary goal of the Independent Curriculum is to increase student independence and encourage student-centered learning, emphasizing empowerment and cultivating 21st-century skills. Riyanto stated that the main purpose of the Independent Curriculum is to free students from the limitations of the curriculum, which focuses heavily on theory and instead prioritizes a more contextual and practical learning approach that can be directly applied to real-world situations. (LPPM Research Team, University of Muhammadiyah Ponorogo, 2023).

Active learning methodologies require students to actively participate in the learning process, individually and in groups, by engaging in various activities that improve their understanding of concepts and the ability to apply them in real-life scenarios. The project-based learning approach allows students to acquire and utilize concepts and abilities through projects relevant to their daily lives. On the other hand, a student-centered approach prioritizes students' active involvement in generating knowledge and fostering understanding through hands-on experience, reflective thinking, and meaningful dialogue. This technique significantly changes the traditional learning model in Indonesia, where teachers play the role of facilitators and guides in the learning process. At the same time, students are actively involved in creating knowledge and abilities. An in-depth understanding of these approaches will help in evaluating the implementation and impact of the Independent Curriculum strategy on improving the quality of education in schools. (Neng Aisyah, 2023).

Various theoretical frameworks can be used to analyze the Independent Curriculum policy:

1. Policy Implementation Theory is an abstract framework that helps understand the process of formulating educational policies, such as the Independent Curriculum. This theory describes several elements that influence the implementation of a policy, including the attributes of the policy itself, the individuals or groups who have an interest in the policy, the social and political environment in which the policy is

implemented, and the responsibilities and actions of those responsible for implementing the policy.

2. The Theory of the Educational System examines the entire education system, including curriculum policies. This theory views education as a complex system of interconnected elements, such as policies, educational institutions, teachers, students, and society.
3. Curriculum Change Theory is a theoretical framework focusing on the curriculum reform process, which involves decision-making, implementing changes, and evaluating results. This method emphasizes the importance of understanding social, political, and cultural factors in curriculum modification. This approach recognizes that the curriculum development and implementation process is not isolated but strongly influenced by broader social, political, and cultural factors. Social context includes values, conventions, and social institutions that prevail in a particular society.
4. Progressive Education Theory prioritizes learner-centered learning strategies to foster critical thinking skills, creativity, and social talent. The Independent Curriculum is generally associated with this strategy because it offers students broad opportunities to realize their full potential. This method prioritizes active student engagement, experiential learning opportunities, and the incorporation of different fields of study to foster holistic growth in students' understanding, abilities, and perspectives. (Tuerah & Tuerah, 2023)

The Independent PAUD Curriculum is the latest policy issued by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology (Kemendikbud Ristek) of the Republic of Indonesia. The goal is to give autonomy to PAUD units to develop a curriculum that is tailored to the unique needs and attributes of children in their respective regions:

1. Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture Number 4 of 2022 sets the criteria for skills and knowledge expected of graduates of early childhood education, primary education, and secondary education. Graduate competency standards are an essential benchmark that includes a blend of attitudes, skills, and knowledge, demonstrating a student's capacity to achieve desired outcomes based on their learning at the peak of their educational level. The SKL is a comprehensive reference for the 2013 Emergency and Independent Curriculum.
2. The Minister of Education and Culture has issued Ministerial Regulation Number 7 of 2022, which stipulates the Content Standards for Early Childhood Education, Primary

Education Levels, and Secondary Education. Content Standards are set by describing a collection of materials based on the skills expected of graduates. The scope of the material includes study materials in the educational content produced based on three factors: 1) mandatory content as determined by laws and regulations, 2) scientific principles, and 3) paths, levels, and types of education. The Content Standards serve as a directive for the 2013 Emergency and Independent Curriculum.

3. Decree of the Minister of Education and Culture of Research and Technology Number 56 of 2022 provides guidelines for implementing the curriculum in the context of learning recovery. It contains three curriculum options suitable for educational units in the context of learning recovery, along with the Independent Curriculum framework, regulations related to learning and assessment, and teacher workload.
4. The Head of BSKAP has issued Decree No.008/H/KR/2022 of 2022 concerning Academic Achievement in Early Childhood Education, Primary Education, and Secondary Education Based on the Independent Curriculum. We are covering educational objectives for all levels and disciplines within the framework of the Independent Curriculum.
5. Decree Number 009/H/KR/2022, issued by the Head of BSKAP, outlines the dimensions, elements, and sub-elements of the Pancasila Student Profile in the 2022 Independent Curriculum. This document provides a detailed explanation and outlines the various stages of developing a Pancasila student profile. This is especially useful for programs that aim to improve and strengthen the profile of Pancasila students.(AN POST, 2022)

In adopting the Independent Curriculum, we are faced with supporting aspects and problems that can affect the effectiveness of its implementation. Various factors can facilitate the implementation of the Independent Curriculum, including policy support from the government and related ministries. This assistance has the potential to significantly increase the success of implementing the Independent Curriculum. This includes ensuring that teachers have adequate resources, receive appropriate training, and are given opportunities for professional development. In addition, this involves continuous monitoring and evaluation of their performance (Maulida et al., 2024). Teacher Readiness is a critical element that ensures teachers have the necessary knowledge, skills, and attitudes. The Independent Curriculum Method will be more proficient in implementing the curriculum. The main component that can encourage the effectiveness of implementing the

Independent Curriculum is the readiness of teachers to understand and implement it. (Nisa Fadillah and Hibana, 2023)

In addition, implementing the Independent Curriculum may face obstacles due to various problems, including limited resources such as textbooks, educational materials, and physical infrastructure. Inadequate access to these essential materials can limit the capacity of instructors to design and implement the intended curriculum effectively. (Purnomo, 2022). The next obstacle is the lack of understanding and support from several stakeholders, including school principals, parents, and the community, which may hinder the implementation of the Independent Curriculum. (Sunardi et al., 2019)

CONCLUSION

The curriculum has a significant influence in determining the level of educational achievement. The curriculum serves as a tangible means to achieve national education goals. The curriculum is dynamic to achieve educational goals. The curriculum can be changed or adjusted dynamically in response to today's progress while still upholding the noble principles of society. The process of change and adjustment is called the development process. The Independent Curriculum is an educational framework that allows schools and educators to create a curriculum tailored to meet the unique needs of students and the surrounding community. This aligns with policy theory, which emphasizes the importance of being responsive and inclusive when implementing curriculum modifications. This research contributes significantly to the knowledge and formulation of education policies by understanding the comprehensive, responsive, and student-centered approach used in the Independent Curriculum. The process of identifying elements that support or hinder the implementation of the Independent Curriculum has been successfully completed. Education stakeholders must prioritize these areas to maximize the benefits of the Independent Curriculum.

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