



## Independent Curriculum in Improving the Quality of Education

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### ABSTRACT

Education is an important element in building a developed and prosperous nation. The quality of education is the main key in producing the next generation who are superior and able to compete in the era of globalization. The curriculum as the spirit of education plays a crucial role in determining the direction and goals of learning. The Merdeka Curriculum is present as a new breakthrough in the Indonesian education system, with a focus on developing student character and competency that is more flexible and student-centered. The Merdeka Curriculum has become the main focus in discussing the quality of education in Indonesia. This article discusses the role and impact of implementing the Independent Curriculum in improving the quality of education. With a more flexible and competency-based approach, the Merdeka Curriculum aims to strengthen students' skills according to the needs of the times. An in-depth analysis was carried out to evaluate the extent to which the Merdeka Curriculum has succeeded in stimulating student creativity, innovation and independent learning. The research results show that the Merdeka Curriculum encourages the creation of a more dynamic and inclusive learning environment.

### ARTICLE INFO

#### Article history:

Received

01 April 2024

Revised

20 May 2024

Accepted

01 Juni 2024

#### Key Word

*Independent Curriculum, Improving the Quality of Education.*

#### How to cite

<https://pusdikra-publishing.com/index.php/jsr/index>

#### Doi

[10.51178/jsr.v5i2.1872](https://doi.org/10.51178/jsr.v5i2.1872)



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## INTRODUCTION

Education is the main foundation for the development of a nation, which is the key to social, economic and cultural progress. In Indonesia, efforts to improve the quality of education have become the government's main agenda in welcoming the era of globalization and industrial revolution 4.0 (Hasibuan, Simatupang, dkk., 2023). In this context, the Independent Curriculum emerged as a new paradigm that aims to revolutionize the education system in the country. The concept of the Independent Curriculum is not just about pursuing academic competency standards, but also places emphasis on character building, creativity and student independence (Hasibuan dkk., 2020). With a more flexible approach and oriented to the needs of the times, the

Merdeka Curriculum promises a paradigmatic change in Indonesian education. This article will review in depth the role and impact of implementing the Independent Curriculum in improving the quality of education in Indonesia. By exploring important aspects such as curriculum flexibility, innovation in teaching methods, as well as the challenges faced in its implementation, this article aims to provide a comprehensive picture of how the Merdeka Curriculum can be the key to achieving educational goals that are more inclusive, competitive and relevant to demands of the times (Hasibuan, Batubara, dkk., 2023).

According to Oliva as quoted by Din Wahyudin (2014: 6), the curriculum is seen as a goal, context and strategy in learning through a program for developing instruments or learning materials, social interactions and systematic learning techniques within educational institutions (Ariga, 2022). Thus, the role of the curriculum is very important so that students can achieve educational goals in a structured and sustainable manner. Based on this understanding, curriculum management can be interpreted as management in the field of curriculum so that the learning process runs well, effectively and efficiently, as well as providing feedback and interrelationships with each other (Hasibuan, Fitriah, dkk., 2023). Since Indonesia's independence on August 17 1945, there have been various changes, including policies regarding curriculum changes. At this time, changes have been made to the curriculum from the 2006 Education Unit Level Curriculum (KTSP) to the 2013 Curriculum (Yunita & Siboro, 2024).

## **RESEARCH METHODE**

In this research, the journal entitled "Independent Curriculum in Improving the Quality of Education" uses a literature review approach with qualitative methods (Nursidik, 2023). This is because qualitative methods are more appropriate for understanding and analyzing complex and nuanced phenomena, such as the implementation of the Independent Curriculum and its impact on the quality of education (Anggila, 2022). Research in literature studies is research that processes and collects research materials in the form of library data which can be obtained from books or journals. This research was conducted to examine theories related to independent learning as an effort to improve the quality of learning in schools/madrasahs. This data was obtained from various sources, including books, theses, dissertations, scientific works and other sources. In this way, all sources of data and information can be utilized optimally in developing ideas that are relevant to research (Darmalaksana, 2020).

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

Etymologically, curriculum comes from The Greek words are curir which means runner and curare which means place to race. So the term curriculum comes from the world of sports in Ancient Roman times in Greece, which means the distance that

runners must cover from the start line to the finish line (Nasyirudin & Harfiani, 2022). It can be understood that the distance that must be covered here means the curriculum with the content and learning materials which is used as the time period that must be traveled by students to obtain a diploma (Linda, 2022).

According to S. Nasution (1989), the curriculum is a plan prepared to facilitate the teaching and learning process under the guidance and responsibility of the school or educational institution and its teaching staff. Furthermore, Nasution explained that a number of curriculum theorists were of the opinion that the curriculum not only includes all planned activities but also events that occur under the supervision of the school. So apart from formal curriculum activities which are often called co-curricular or extra-curricular activities (co-curriculum or extra curriculum) (Ulya, 2021).

According to Hasbulloh (2007), the curriculum is the entire program, facilities and activities of an educational or training institution to realize the vision, mission and institution. Therefore, the implementation of the curriculum to support the success of an educational institution must be supported by the following things. First, the presence of competent personnel. Second, there are adequate facilities. Third, there are auxiliary facilities as support. Fourth, the existence of educational support staff such as administrative staff, supervisors, librarians, laboratories. Fifth, there is adequate funding, sixth, there is good management. Seventh, maintaining a supportive culture; religious, moral, national and others, eighth, transparent and accountable visionary leadership (Barlian dkk., 2022).

The Merdeka Curriculum in improving the quality of education reveals that the more flexible and competency-based approach implemented by the Merdeka Curriculum provides great opportunities for the development of student creativity, innovation and independent learning (Solehudin dkk., 2022). Through in-depth observation and analysis, it was found that the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum has brought significant changes in learning dynamics, by creating a learning environment that is more inclusive and responsive to individual student needs. In addition, it is proven that the Merdeka Curriculum encourages the application of more diverse and contextual teaching methods, enabling teachers to adapt learning approaches according to student characteristics and curriculum demands that are more relevant to the realities of the times. However, the results of this discussion also revealed several challenges that need to be overcome, such as a lack of training for teachers in implementing this new approach and uncertainty in assessing student progress (Maulidya & Indriani, 2023). Therefore, to maximize the potential of the Independent Curriculum in improving the quality of education, there needs to be coordinated and sustainable efforts to strengthen teacher capacity, facilitate the provision of adequate resources, and strengthen cooperation between all (Bvumbwe & Mtshali, 2018).

The implementation of the Independent Curriculum in Indonesia, with its focus on flexibility of curriculum structure, comprehensive character and competency development, and student-centered learning, is like a breath of fresh air that promises positive transformation in the national education system (Widyastuti, 2022). The results of the discussion show that the Merdeka Curriculum has extraordinary potential to improve student learning outcomes, equip them with holistic character and competencies, and prepare them with essential 21st century skills in the era of globalization. However, it needs to be acknowledged that the implementation of the Independent Curriculum is not without various challenges, such as significant changes in teacher thinking patterns, the availability of adequate facilities and infrastructure, and the establishment of close collaboration between stakeholders (Hamdan, 2022).

Therefore, continuous efforts and strong commitment are needed from all parties, including the government, schools, teachers, parents and the community, to ensure effective and sustainable implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum. With solid synergy and collaboration, the Merdeka Curriculum can be the key to realizing quality education that produces the nation's next generation who are superior and ready to face future challenges (Baro'ah dkk., 2023).

Syaiful Sagala (2005), states that learning has two characteristics. First, the learning process involves a thinking process. Second, the learning process builds a dialogical atmosphere and a continuous question and answer process which is directed at improving and increasing students' thinking abilities, which in turn, thinking abilities can help students to acquire knowledge that they construct themselves (Ginanjari, 2019).

From the description above, it can be understood that a good learning process can be carried out by students both inside and outside the classroom, and with the characteristics possessed by students it is hoped that they will be able to interact and socialize with their friends well and wisely. With high intensity and continuous learning, it is hoped that the process of social interaction between friends can be created well and in turn they will respect and respect each other even though along the way they have different opinions, which in the end will develop a democratic attitude among each other.

The current educational methodology paradigm, whether we realize it or not, has experienced a shift from behaviorism to constructivism which requires teachers in the field to have the requirements and competencies to be able to make changes in implementing the learning process in the classroom (Simanjuntak dkk., 2022). Teachers are required to be more creative, innovative, not to be the only source of the learning process (teacher centered), (Maulana, 2012) placing students not only as learning objects but also as learning subjects and ultimately leading to a fun, joyful and democratic learning process that respects every opinion. so that in the end the substance of the learning is truly internalized (Sutiyono & Setiyatna, 2009).

In line with the opinion above, learning according to the constructivist view is: "Learning is built by humans little by little, the results of which are expanded through a limited (narrow) context and not suddenly. Learning is not a set of facts, concepts or rules ready to be picked up and memorized. Humans must construct learning and form meaning through real experience" (Permatasari dkk., 2023).

The implementation of the constructivist approach in learning is realized in the form of student-centered learning (Student Center). Teachers are required to create a learning atmosphere in such a way that students work together in mutual cooperation (cooperative learning) (Asmani, 2016). To create the situation expected in the statement above, a teacher must have the conditions needed to teach and build student learning to be effective in class, work together with each other in learning so as to create a pleasant and mutually respectful (democratic) atmosphere (Mesra, 2023).

From the opinion above, it can be explained that teachers have very heavy duties and responsibilities regarding the progress and improvement of student competence, where the results will be seen from the number of students who pass and fail. Thus, the responsibility for improving the quality of education in schools falls on teachers is very large. We are sure that currently there are many teachers who have implemented constructivism theory in classroom learning but the volume is still limited, because in reality in the field we still encounter many teachers who in teaching still seem to only carry out their obligations. He does not need strategies, methods in teaching, for him what is important is how a learning event can take place. This is a wrong opinion and it is haram to follow, if you don't want to be said to be lazy and unprofessional.

## **CONCLUSION**

Based on the research results, it can be concluded that curriculum Etymologically, curriculum comes from the Greek words *curir* which means runner and *curare* which means place to race. So the term curriculum comes from the world of sports in Ancient Roman times in Greece, which means the distance that runners must cover from the start line to the finish line. It can be understood that the distance that must be covered here means the curriculum with the content and learning materials which is used as the time period that must be traveled by students to obtain a diploma. The Merdeka Curriculum is a curriculum with diverse intracurricular learning where the content will be more optimal so that students have enough time to explore concepts and strengthen competencies. Teachers have the freedom to choose various teaching tools so that learning can be tailored to the learning needs and interests of students. Projects to strengthen the achievement of Pancasila student profiles are developed based on certain themes determined by the government. The project is not directed at achieving specific learning achievement targets, so it is not tied to subject content. Therefore, the implementation of the curriculum to support the success of an educational institution

must be supported by the following things. First, the presence of competent personnel. Second, there are adequate facilities. Third, there are auxiliary facilities as support. Fourth, the existence of educational support staff such as administrative staff, supervisors, librarians, laboratories. Fifth, there is adequate funding, sixth, there is good management. Seventh, maintaining a supportive culture; religious, moral, national and others, eighth, transparent and accountable visionary leadership.

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