

Teacher Perceptions of The Implementation of Independent Learning Curriculum at SMP Kristen 1 Mollo Selatan

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Abstract

Currently, the independent curriculum is a new milestone in the journey of education in Indonesia, in the process of improving the independent curriculum teachers are still adapting to various limitations or obstacles they have. This study aims to determine teacher perceptions regarding the implementation of the independent curriculum in terms of planning, implementation and evaluation of learning. The research design uses a qualitative approach based on a case study paradigm conducted on VII and VIII grade teachers at SMP Kristen 1 Mollo Selatan. Research data was collected through interviews, observation and documentation. The results showed that (1) teachers' perceptions of lesson planning had a positive response but were still constrained in preparing the P5 project. (2) Teachers' perceptions of learning implementation show that teachers have implemented the independent curriculum well; and (3) teachers' perceptions of learning evaluation are good because teachers can already understand the essence of assessment in the independent curriculum. Based on these findings, teachers should be able to evaluate the independent curriculum thoroughly and be open-minded to situations that can occur in implementing the independent curriculum in order to improve and make better changes in their service performance at school.

Keywords: *Teacher Perceptions, Implementation, Independent Curriculum*

INTRODUCTION

The curriculum is one of the important components in organizing education to achieve educational goals. The curriculum is an important element in the implementation of the learning process at all levels of education. The existence of the curriculum is very necessary in order to prepare a learning program that is in accordance with the expected targets. This is in line with the opinion expressed by Ormond who describes the curriculum as a set of guidelines designed in a learning program consisting of principles, environment and needs in accordance with the targets of the learning program being implemented (Supriatna et al., 2023).

To improve the standard and quality of education in Indonesia, the curriculum is always being updated. One of the latest forms of curriculum improvement from the Ministry of Education and Culture Research and Technology (Kemendikbudristek) of the Republic of Indonesia is the independent curriculum for primary and secondary level education units; starting from PAUD / TK, elementary school to high school (both SMA and SMK), while in higher education, improvements have been made by developing the Merdeka Learning Independent Campus (Merdeka Belajar Kampus Mengajar = MBKM) curriculum as a form of the seriousness of the ministry of education to continue to improve the quality of education in Indonesia. The Independent Curriculum is an extensive intracurricular learning program where students will have sufficient time to learn concepts and acquire competencies because subjects will be delivered more effectively (Kumala et al., 2023), (Suryati et al., 2023), (Hindri et al., 2023).

Currently, the independent learning curriculum is a new milestone in the journey of education in Indonesia with the main objective of providing greater flexibility to teachers in designing and implementing relevant and meaningful learning for students. At the junior high school (SMP) level, the implementation of this curriculum is important because this phase is the foundation for developing students' skills and knowledge before entering higher education. In essence, the independent learning curriculum requires *continuous* and *continuous* improvement to obtain satisfactory results (Maulana et al., 2023). The Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology (Kemendikbudristek) has launched the Independent Curriculum. Kemendikbudristek Nadiem Makarim said that since the 2021/2022 school year, the Independent Curriculum, previously known as the Prototype Curriculum, has been implemented in nearly 2,500 schools participating in the Driving School Program (PGP) and 901 SMK Centers of Excellence (SMK PK) as part of the new learning paradigm (Windayanti et al., 2023).

The Ministry of Education and Culture defines independent learning as a learning process that gives freedom and authority to each educational institution to be free from complicated administration (Fransiska et al., 2023), (Gunawan & Syafruddin, 2022). The main assumption of independent learning is giving trust to teachers so that teachers feel free in carrying out learning (Nafi'ah et al., 2023), (Fajar & Agustina, 2019), (F. Maharani & Fithriani, 2023). The independent curriculum aims to give freedom to schools, teachers and students to develop their potential, talents, and uniqueness in order to create a conducive and meaningful learning environment according to their needs so that students do not feel burdened (Sihombing et al., 2021), (Dwiputra et al., 2023). The main characteristics of this curriculum that support learning recovery are project-based learning for soft skills and character development according to the Pancasila learner profile, focus on essential materials so that there is sufficient time for in-depth learning for basic competencies such as literacy, numeracy and flexibility for teachers to carry out differentiated learning according to the abilities of students and make adjustments to the context and local content (Nafi'ah et al., 2023).

The independent learning curriculum program above is certainly very supportive of educational progress if it can be implemented properly. In other words, this program can be one of the ways to improve the quality of Indonesian education on the one hand and the quality of Indonesian people at large on the other. In addition, this program is very dependent on teachers as the main pillar of education, so it is necessary to see how far the teachers have implemented these programs. For the success of all this, the role of a teacher is needed. The word teacher is the same as educator. Qualified education personnel as teachers, lecturers, counselors, pamong, learning, widyaiswara, tutors, instructors, facilitators. As a professional teacher with the main task of educating, teaching, guiding,

directing, training, assessing, and evaluating students in early childhood education in the formal education pathway of primary education and secondary education (Siti Nurzannah, 2022). Teachers are the main key that is very important in formal education in general for students, educators are often good role models (Ahmad, 2022), (Nurhikmah et al., 2023). So that a teacher must have appropriate attitudes and skills for the overall development of students.

Teachers' perceptions of the implementation of the independent learning curriculum in junior secondary schools are crucial in evaluating its effectiveness and finding potential improvements in its implementation. Teachers have a central role in adapting this curriculum into daily practice in the classroom and facilitating learning that suits students' needs and interests. A person's perception of something will affect their behavior towards objects or events they experience. Therefore, a good teacher's perception will certainly have a positive effect on his or her teaching motivation. Most teachers are willing to work harder if they do not encounter obstacles in realizing what is expected (Supriatna et al., 2023). However, the implementation of Independent Learn still has obstacles. This is based on initial observations by conducting an interview with one of the teachers of the SMP Kristen 1 Mollo Selatan, as it is known that this school has implemented the independent learning curriculum since the 2022/2023 school year. According to the results of observations and interviews, teachers do not fully understand the concepts and objectives of this new curriculum and have difficulties in implementing it, such as limited learning resources being one of the obstacles in implementing Independent Learn, teachers are also still having difficulty and preparing for the P5 project, the learning carried out still uses LKS or student worksheets and package books provided by the school, so learning is still teacher-centered. Students still seem less active and only listen and do what the teacher tells them. In the independent learning curriculum, teachers are expected to be able to explain to students that the independent learning curriculum does not only focus on book sources but can be outside the classroom and other sources of knowledge are also free to access via online or internet, libraries and the surrounding environment.

In accordance with the above problems, subject teachers at SMP Kristen 1 Mollo Selatan must have a high awareness of the importance of the readiness of the independent learning curriculum in learning, because it can change students much better, and students in pursuing education will be happier, students will be more formed good character, independent. On the other hand, with the perception of the implementation of the independent learning curriculum, teachers are more challenged to be creative so that students can be guided and directed according to the concept of independent learning. The concept of independent learning is no longer limited by the curriculum, but students and teachers must be creative, to respond to knowledge students are really trained to be independent (Nurzamsinar, Sudirman, 2018), (Qur'ani, Muhammad Nuzulul, Hasan Basri, 2023).

The importance of this research lies in the need to know teachers' perceptions of how the Independent Curriculum is implemented. This is carried out to ensure that the policies of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research are in line with the programs of each educational unit. Based on this background, the formulation of this research problem is "What are the perceptions of teachers at SMP Kristen 1 Mollo Selatan towards the implementation of the independent curriculum in terms of planning, implementation and evaluation of learning?" The purpose of this study was to determine the perceptions of teachers at SMP Kristen 1 Mollo Selatan regarding the implementation of the independent curriculum in terms of planning, implementation and evaluation of learning.

METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach and is based on a case study paradigm. Case study research is a type of qualitative research that specifically examines human behavior and understanding (Kekeya, 2021). The case study research approach is used in this study to obtain detailed information about teacher perceptions in implementing the Independent Curriculum in aspects of learning planning, implementation, and evaluation.

This research was conducted at SMP Kristen 1 Mollo Selatan, Indonesia with a research focus on teachers who implement the Independent Curriculum, namely VII and VIII grade teachers. Data

were collected through interviews with teachers of each subject who taught in grades VII and VIII, totaling 10 and 4 people were selected to be interviewed and observed during March to May 2024.

The researcher is the main research instrument, and is supported by other research instruments in the form of (1) observation, where the researcher makes direct observations on the research subject and (2) interviews, where the researcher interviews respondents about their perceptions regarding the implementation of the independent curriculum. Data obtained by interviews is supported by recording documentation on a cellphone. The results of the interviews were translated in the form of interview transcripts.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study are related to teacher perceptions in implementing the independent learning curriculum at school, including three aspects, namely planning, implementation and evaluation of learning. Interviews were conducted with the principal (initials: LM) and 3 subject teachers (initials: LB, NB and MK) to obtain data related to the implementation of the independent learning curriculum at SMP Kristen 1 Mollo Selatan. The research results are described as follows.

Teachers' Perceptions of Learning Planning using the Independent Curriculum

The independent curriculum has diverse intracurricular learning so that students have enough time to learn concepts and strengthen their skills. Teachers said that the independent curriculum is dynamic and gives schools the freedom to interpret the basic competencies of the curriculum independently. The curriculum is changed because the times are progressing and changing. It is flexible and dynamic, always changing and adapting to students' characteristics to build competencies that suit current and future needs.

In the 2022/2023 school year, SMP Kristen 1 Mollo Selatan began implementing the independent curriculum and was applied first to students in grades VII and VIII. Effective implementation of the Independent Curriculum requires careful preparation, especially since the government does not provide detailed learning tools in the Independent Curriculum like the 2013 Curriculum. The government only develops learning outcomes (CP = Capaian Pembelajaran), which are then translated into learning objectives (TP = Tujuan Pembelajaran) by the teacher. However, if the teachers are persistent in preparing everything, it will certainly not be constrained because actually examples of learning tools are already available on the Merdeka Teaching Platform (PMM=Platform Merdeka Mengajar) developed by the Ministry of Education and Culture (Kemdikbudristek), as shown in the following interviews with several teachers:

"Teachers already understand learning tools well, but are still constrained in preparing learning tools due to limited IT equipment (laptops) so that some have not been able to prepare learning tools properly, even though learning tools are already in the PMM of each teacher (LM)".

The results of interviews with LM teachers (as principals) said that all teachers had understood the preparation of independent curriculum learning tools, but were still constrained by the provision of laptops in facilitating the preparation of learning tools. In addition, LB teachers have been able to compile ATP by being able to transform CP into TP well.

"I had no difficulty in preparing the ATP because the CP that had been determined by the Ministry of Education, Kemendikbudristek was able to be translated into TP and the example was already in PMM (LB)."

In preparing the teaching module, an interview was conducted with one of the NB subject teachers regarding the definition of Teaching Modules in the Independent Curriculum as follows.

"In the Independent Curriculum, teaching modules replace lesson plans in the 2013 Curriculum. The making of this teaching module is adjusted to the learning outcomes according to the predetermined stages of learner development (NB)."

In addition, the teachers were able to understand the purpose of the teaching module well, as shown in the following interview with LB teacher:

"In my opinion, a teaching module is a systematically organized teaching aid that includes objectives, steps, learning media, and assessment in order to achieve CP and P5 (LB)."

The results of an interview with one of the MK subject teachers showed that the difficulties experienced were related to preparing the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (Proyek Penguatan Profil Pelajar Pancasila = P5). This is because teachers have difficulty in understanding the P5 Project prepared by the Kemendikbudristek.

"We have conducted IHT to prepare learning tools, but still have difficulties in designing P5 projects (MK)."

Based on the description above, it can be seen that the perceptions of teachers at SMP Kristen 1 Mollo Selatan towards lesson planning in the independent curriculum are adequate, as evidenced by the results of interviews and observations of teacher learning tools. However, based on the results of interviews and observations, it was also found that some teachers were still constrained in preparing the Pancasila Student Profile Project so that they still needed assistance through workshops or IHT (*In House Training*) in preparing the project.

The results of the interview show that teachers who implement the Independent Curriculum, namely VII and VIII grade teachers, are able to explain the meaning of the Independent Curriculum. In addition, the teacher is also able to distinguish the difference between the Independent Curriculum and the 2013 Curriculum. The Independent Curriculum is different from the 2013 Curriculum because it uses a flow of learning objectives (ATP) based on Learning Outcomes (CP) and the Pancasila Student Profile. Meanwhile, the 2013 Curriculum translates core competencies (KI) into basic competencies (KD), indicators of competency achievement, learning objectives, and lesson plans.

Teachers' Perceptions of the Implementation of Independent Curriculum Learning

Learning tools that have been prepared by teachers are then implemented in learning. When observing learning in class VII and class VIII, teachers conduct diagnostic tests at the beginning of learning. This test is used to measure the state of children's intelligence levels, learning styles, and learning problems. This is further strengthened by the findings of interviews with Class VII and Class VIII teachers as follows.

"Usually before implementing the learning process using this independent curriculum, I first conduct a diagnostic test." This activity aims to find out the condition of intelligence, learning style, and learning problems of students (NB)."

In terms of learning implementation, teachers explain that differentiated learning is what distinguishes Independent Curriculum. Differentiated learning, according to the teacher (LM), is an effort to change the learning process in the classroom to meet and complement the specific learning needs of each learner.

"Differentiated learning is one of the differences between Independent Curriculum and the curriculum. This learning focuses on the special learning needs of students (LM)."

In addition, teacher (LB) added that in the Independent Curriculum, teachers must implement differentiated learning. Teachers should identify students' learning needs based on three factors in the form of learning interests, learning readiness, and students' learning profiles.

"Differentiated learning is learning that provides opportunities for students to develop and improve their potential according to their own learning profile, learning interests, and learning readiness (LB)."

Based on observations of the learning process in the classroom, it is known that most teachers still do not perform optimally and optimally during the implementation of the learning process in the classroom as demanded by the Independent Curriculum, because teachers are still in the adjustment stage because this curriculum is a new curriculum. Some teachers use learning approaches that are in line with the main demands of the Independent Curriculum, such as inquiry-based learning, problem-based learning and other learning methods. This is intended so that the essence of implementing the Independent Curriculum is evident in the classroom.

"Usually I use a project-based learning model, sometimes also inquiry-based learning, of course I adjust it to the learning objectives in the learning module (LB)."

I usually use a project-based learning model even though the planning through the teaching module has not been designed in detail regarding the stages, activity steps and evaluation (LM)".

In addition to adopting the various learning modes required by Independent Curriculum, some teachers continue to use the lecture style.

"The methods that are often used in class are usually lectures, although sometimes with discussions, presentations and others (MK), (NB)."

"Actually in learning, we have implemented P5 projects but it has not been well documented, that is, we have not paid attention to designing the dimensions of the theme and time allocation of the project, and the flow of activities and assessment of P5 projects (LM and MK)."

Based on the description above, teachers' perceptions of the implementation of Independent Curriculum learning in SMP Kristen 1 Mollo Selatan show that some teachers have implemented the curriculum well, as evidenced by the fact that most teachers have implemented learning through problem-based learning methods, inquiry-based learning, project-based learning and other learning methods. Although in preparing for learning, some teachers are still constrained in preparing P5 projects in the prepared teaching modules.

Teachers' Perceptions of the Independent Curriculum Learning Evaluation

Teachers carry out learning evaluations after the learning process is completed as planned. This evaluation is carried out to measure and determine the achievement of learning objectives. In addition, the purpose of this assessment is to determine the extent to which students have understood the material presented. In the independent curriculum, evaluation is carried out continuously and comprehensively using various types of learning assessments. There are two types of assessment in the independent curriculum, namely formative and summative assessment. Formative assessment is carried out during the learning process at the end of each sub-chapter or several learning objectives or the end of competency achievement and also includes diagnostic tests, while summative assessment is usually carried out at the end of the semester, according to the results of interviews with the following teachers.

"From my observation, our teachers here conduct formative and summative evaluations." Formative assessments include diagnostic and process evaluations after completing the material in each sub chapter, as well as daily tests and other types of assessments. While summative is the end-of-semester evaluation or UAS (LM)."

Based on observations of teachers at SMP Kristen 1 Mollo Selatan, it appears that teachers use several techniques in evaluating learning in the independent curriculum in the form of written tests, oral tests, and portfolios. However, performance assessment and observation guidelines in P5 project assessment have not yet been implemented.

"I use a variety of assessments, such as written tests and assignments to assess cognitive abilities, peer assessment and class observation to assess learners' attitudes, and practical exams and portfolios to assess students' skills but have not been able to provide an assessment format to assess P5 projects (NB)."

The results of observations and interviews also show that rubrics, checklists, anecdotal records, and progress charts are also used by teachers in evaluating the Independent Curriculum.

"Of course, the assessment instruments I use are adjusted to the assessment techniques used." "Rubrics, checklists, anecdotal records, and progress charts can be used (MK)."

Assessment of these learning objectives is done using four (4) rubric categories, namely need guidance, sufficient, good, and very good.

"I use several criteria in determining the success of learners in terms of achieving learning objectives, for example by using criteria descriptions, rubrics, and score intervals. (LB)"

Based on the description above, teachers' perceptions of learning assessment in the Independent Curriculum are relatively good. They understand the essence of assessment in the Independent

Curriculum, as well as several assessment techniques such as observation, performance assessment, written tests, oral tests, and portfolios. Although the teachers are still constrained in preparing the P5 project and evaluating the project. Thus it can be said that teachers at SMP Kristen 1 Mollo Selatan can already understand the assessment in the independent curriculum and have conducted evaluations in accordance with the provisions of the independent curriculum assessment, namely conducting diagnostic, formative, and summative assessments.

One of the things that distinguish the Independent Curriculum from the 2013 Curriculum is the implementation of the Flow of Learning Objectives (ATP) developed from Learning Outcomes (CP) with the Pancasila Learner Profile (P5) (Sari & Gumindari, 2022), (Ramadhan, 2023). In the 2013 curriculum, core competencies (KI) are translated into basic competencies, indicators of competency achievement, learning objectives, and then compiled in the form of a Learning Implementation Plan (RPP) (Samad, 2013).

The Independent Curriculum frees teachers to plan and implement learning that is interesting, fun and certainly educational (Windayanti et al., 2023), (Pradesa & Rahma, 2023), (Nursyaidah et al., 2023). In addition, this curriculum also forces teachers to be role models for students in implementing the learning process. Then, teachers are also authorized and trusted to hold the mandate as the driving force of learning, especially in the process of planning, implementing, assessing and following up on the evaluation results (Firmansyah et al., 2024), (Yasih et al., 2011). Currently, the learning process in education in Indonesia implements an independent learning curriculum. As a new curriculum, it requires teachers in Indonesia to be able to understand and implement the curriculum, as well as teachers at SMP Kristen 1 South Mollo. In implementing the new curriculum, all things need to be adjusted to implement it, be it planning, implementation and evaluation. Based on the results of the research, it shows that teachers at SMP Kristen 1 South Mollo have understood the independent curriculum well. This is shown through the results of the interview that the teacher is able to explain the meaning of the Independent Curriculum. In addition, the teacher is also able to distinguish the difference between the Merdeka Curriculum and the 2013 Curriculum. The Merdeka Curriculum is different from the 2013 Curriculum because it uses a flow of learning objectives (ATP) based on Learning Outcomes (CP) and the Pancasila Learner Profile. Meanwhile, the 2013 Curriculum translates core competencies (KI) into basic competencies (KD), indicators of competency achievement, learning objectives, and lesson plans.

One of the things that distinguishes the Merdeka Curriculum from the 2013 Curriculum is the implementation of the Flow of Learning Objectives (ATP) developed from Learning Outcomes (CP) with the Pancasila Learner Profile (Sari & Gumindari, 2022). In the 2013 curriculum, core competencies (KI) are translated into basic competencies, indicators of competency achievement, learning objectives, and then compiled in the form of a Learning Implementation Plan (RPP). Regarding lesson planning, the teachers of Christian Junior High School 1 South Mollo have a positive response to lesson planning on the independent curriculum in preparing learning tools because they can compile teaching modules along with the stages of preparation and the constituent components, and can distinguish between lesson plans and teaching modules, only they have difficulty in understanding the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5) so that they have not been able to prepare project guidelines to evaluate the project even though in learning they still apply P5 in learning activities, even though P5 is a special characteristic of the independent curriculum. The Merdeka Curriculum has a framework and distinctive feature, namely the implementation of the P5 programme (A. I. Maharani et al., 2023). The P5 programme is one of the implementations of the Merdeka Curriculum which seeks to build character and Pancasila values in students.

Teachers' perceptions of the implementation of Merdeka Curriculum learning at SMP Kristen 1 South Mollo show that some teachers have implemented the curriculum well, as evidenced by the fact that most teachers have implemented learning through problem-based learning methods, inquiry-based learning, project-based learning and other learning methods. This shows that teachers understand all the learning methods recommended in the independent curriculum so that teachers

freely present material using learning methods that are suitable for the material or project developed to students.

The Merdeka Curriculum frees teachers to plan and implement learning that is interesting, fun and certainly educational (Windayanti et al., 2023). In addition, this curriculum also forces teachers to be *role models* for students in implementing the learning process. Then, teachers are also authorised and trusted to hold the mandate as the driving force of learning, especially in the process of planning, implementing, assessing and following up on the evaluation results.

Teachers' perceptions of learning assessment in the Merdeka Curriculum are relatively good. They understand the essence of assessment in the Independent Curriculum, as well as several assessment techniques such as observation, performance assessment, written tests, oral tests, and portfolios. This shows that teachers at SMP Kristen 1 South Mollo can understand the assessment in the independent curriculum and have conducted evaluations in accordance with the provisions of the independent curriculum assessment, namely conducting diagnostic, formative, and summative assessments.

Diagnostic assessment is an assessment conducted by teachers at the beginning of learning. The purpose of this assessment is to determine the characteristics, interests, readiness and learning styles of each learner (Nur et al., 2023), (Adek Cerah Kurnia Azis & Siti Khodijah Lubis, 2023). After conducting diagnostic testing, teachers are required to record student learning outcomes and make formative and summative assessments. Summative assessment is done when learning has been completed, which could be after a scope of material is completed, at the end of the semester or the end of the phase (Nur Budiono & Hatip, 2023).

CONCLUSION

Based on the results and discussion of this study, it can be concluded that the teachers of SMP Kristen 1 Mollo Selatan have a positive response to learning planning in the independent curriculum in preparing learning tools because they can compile teaching modules along with the stages of preparation and their constituent components, and can distinguish between lesson plans and teaching modules, only they have difficulty in understanding the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5) so that they have not been able to prepare project guidelines to evaluate the project even though in learning they still apply P5 in learning activities. Teachers' perceptions of learning implementation show that teacher have implemented the independent curriculum well, as evidenced by the fact that most teachers have implemented learning through problem-based learning methods, inquiry-based learning, project-based learning and other learning methods. Although in preparing for learning some teachers are still constrained in preparing P5 projects in the prepared teaching modules.

In addition, teachers' perceptions of evaluation are good because teachers can understand the essence of assessment in the independent curriculum. Various assessment techniques used both normatively and formatively have been used in various methods in the form of written tests, oral tests, observation, portfolios and performance assessments that include elements of knowledge, attitude and skills assessment. Teachers have also implemented diagnostic tests at the beginning of each lesson. Based on the results of this study, it is hoped that more training and guidance will be carried out for teachers related to the independent curriculum in terms of planning, implementing and evaluating learning based on the curriculum context. Teachers are also expected to be able to evaluate the independent curriculum thoroughly and be open-minded to situations that can occur in implementing the independent curriculum in order to improve and make better changes in their service performance at school.

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