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Analysis of Teachers' Understanding of the Implementation of the Independent Curriculum in Grade IV of SDN 1 Banawa Selatan

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ABSTRACT

The implementation of the independent curriculum is an approach applied in the education system to provide greater flexibility to educators and students in the teaching and learning process. The success of the learning process depends on the teacher's understanding of the curriculum concept being applied. SDN 1 Banawa Selatan uses the independent curriculum in the 2024/2025 academic year. This study aims to describe the teacher's understanding of the implementation of the independent curriculum in class IV of SDN 1 Banawa Selatan. This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach, with data collection techniques through observation, interviews, and documentation. The results of the study indicate that the implementation of the Independent Curriculum has been running but has not been optimal due to several obstacles, especially related to the teacher's understanding which is not optimal in accordance with the independent curriculum, the lack of adequate supporting facilities to support the implementation of the independent curriculum in accordance with procedures, and also limited training for teachers. So that the implementation of the independent curriculum is not implemented in accordance with the indicators in the independent curriculum.

1. Introduction

Education is an important part of life and offers various changes in a person's life, one of which is the transformation of individual social strata, where access to education must be equal and equitable. (Slameto, et al., 2023). The success of education is determined by various factors such as teachers, students, curriculum, educational environment, and facilities and infrastructure. Among these factors, in this case, teachers occupy a very vital position but do not ignore other factors because both have a complementary unity. The challenges of the world of education are very dynamic, especially the world of education in Indonesia (Trisiana, 2020). Since 2019, the Ministry of Education and Culture has initiated an educational revolution based on the concept of independent learning at elementary, secondary,

and higher education levels (Dimmera, 2022). This independent learning gives students the freedom to choose different learning materials and is free from pressure. The existence of a new curriculum in schools requires teachers to teach more creatively (Widyaningrum, 2018).

The implementation of the independent curriculum is an approach applied in the education system to provide greater freedom to educators and students in the teaching and learning process. According to Alimuddin (2023), this implementation aims to enable students to develop their potential according to their interests and talents, and to create a more flexible learning environment. This flexibility allows for better adaptation to the individual needs of students, compared to a more rigid curriculum approach. Therefore, the learning process in an independent climate emphasizes the importance of active participation from students and the role of teachers. This independent curriculum is relevant to be adopted at various levels of education, including elementary schools, in order to improve the quality of education as a whole.

The implementation of the independent curriculum also has implications for a more holistic evaluation of student development. In its implementation, this independent curriculum requires a form of assessment that does not only focus on the final results, but also on the learning process itself. This includes project-based assessments, portfolios, and other authentic assessments that aim to obtain a comprehensive picture of student abilities and achievements. With a more comprehensive assessment, it is hoped that students can achieve more meaningful learning achievements. With this policy, it is necessary to carry out context analysis activities, school reviews and benchmarking in the implementation process to produce a view that is the crystallization and essence of an ability (competence), capability (ability) and habit (self-efficacy) in seeing, analyzing and interpreting. (Susilowati, E., 2022).

The essence of independent learning is so that students have the freedom to think both individually and in groups, so that they can grow into better, critical, creative, collaborative, innovative and inclusive students in the future. The independent learning program is expected to increase student participation in learning, (Siregar et al., 2020). The concept of independent learning includes; learning takes place at different times and places, there is free choice, individual learning, project-based, field experience and interpretation of information.

Learning is a task given to teachers, because teachers are professionals who are prepared for it. Learning (teaching) is a combination of the concepts of teaching (teaching) and learning (learning). In order for the implementation of learning to be effective and efficient, it must be led by a supervisor or similar official (Priana W, et al., 2020).

Merdeka Belajar is a policy program initiated by the Minister of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia, which aims to return the national education system to the heart of the law, providing freedom to schools, teachers, and students to innovate and learn freely, independently and creatively, where this freedom to innovate must come from teachers as the driving force of national education.

Teachers have several competencies that must be possessed, one of which is pedagogical competence. Jamil (in Hermawati, 2020) argues that, "Pedagogical competence is the ability related to student understanding and management of educational and dialogical learning". The indicators of pedagogical competence include: (1) mastering student characteristics, (2) mastering learning theories and principles of educational learning, (3) curriculum development, (4) educational learning activities, (5) development of student potential, (6) communication with students, (7) assessment and evaluation. Irwanto and Suryana (2016). The purpose of this study is to describe the understanding of grade IV teachers regarding the implementation of the curriculum applied at SDN 1 Banawa Selatan.

2. Methodology

Research Approach

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach. According to Sugiyono (2022), the descriptive qualitative research method is a study based on the philosophy of postpositivism used to research the conditions of natural objects where researchers are key instruments. This approach aims to describe teachers' understanding of the implementation of the independent curriculum at SDN 1 Banawa Selatan. Data collection was carried out through observation, interviews and documentation.

Data Collection Techniques

This study uses three main data collection techniques, namely observation, interviews and documentation. These three techniques aim to obtain comprehensive data on teachers' understanding of the implementation of the independent curriculum in grade IV at SDN 1 Banawa Selatan.

Observation

According to Hardani in Kharisma (2023), observation is a data collection technique by observing ongoing activities directly or indirectly. Observation sheets are used to record activities and interactions between teachers and students during the learning process in grade IV. This observation is non-participatory, where researchers are not directly involved in learning, but observe the learning process and interactions that occur. Observation of teachers aims to see teachers in implementing the independent curriculum.

Interviews

According to the Big Indonesian Dictionary (KBBI), an interview is a question and answer activity carried out between researchers and resource persons. According to Sugiyono, an interview is a meeting between two people to exchange information and ideas through questions and answers so that meaning can be constructed in a particular topic (MP Peppy, 2024). Interviews were conducted in depth with grade IV teachers. This technique is used to obtain more detailed qualitative data

regarding teachers' understanding of the implementation of the independent curriculum. The tools used for interviews include a recording device and a list of questions.

Documentation

Sugiyono in MP Peppy (2024) documentation is a collection of records of events that have occurred, either in the form of writing, pictures/photos or monumental works from a person/agency.

Data Analysis Techniques

Miles & Huberman in Hasanah et al. (2024) analysis consists of three streams of activities that occur simultaneously, namely: data reduction, data presentation, drawing conclusions/verification. Data analysis aims to simplify data into a form that is easier to read and interpret. The benefits of data analysis can help make more accurate decisions, predict trends, and improve operational efficiency. The data obtained were analyzed using qualitative analysis of observation, interviews, and documentation. The steps for data analysis are as follows:

Data Reduction

Data from interviews and observations are reduced by selecting information that is relevant to the focus of the research. Irrelevant data is set aside, while important data is sorted based on themes such as teacher understanding, implementation of the independent curriculum, and challenges faced.

Data Presentation

Qualitative data from interviews and observations are presented in the form of descriptive narratives to describe teachers' understanding of the implementation of the independent curriculum in grade IV.

Drawing Conclusions

The researcher will draw conclusions based on the relationship between the results of observations and interviews. The researcher will evaluate whether teachers understand the implementation of the independent curriculum. This conclusion is expected to provide a comprehensive picture of teachers' understanding of the implementation of the independent curriculum in class IV of SDN 1 Banawa Selatan.

3. Results and Discussion

The results of a study conducted at SDN 1 Banawa Selatan, that the school has implemented the Independent Curriculum in the 2024/2025 academic year with the aim of creating a more flexible and responsive learning environment to students'

needs. This curriculum is designed to encourage character and skill development, which are very important in facing today's global challenges. Although this curriculum has been implemented, challenges in its implementation are still a major concern. Table 1 shows the results of observations of the learning process in class V of SDN 1 Banawa Selatan.

Table 1. Observation List in the Research

No	Aspects Examined	Indicator	Yes	No
1	Planning	Teachers develop learning objectives based on CP and student needs	✓	
		Learning plans include differentiation based on student interests, needs, and readiness		✓
		Teachers design teaching tools/modules including learning flows, activity steps, and media used.	✓	
		Teachers determine varied and active learning methods (discussions, experiments, projects, problem-based learning).		✓
		Teachers design formative and summative assessment tools and techniques according to learning characteristics..		✓
		Teachers prepare learning facilities and infrastructure including supporting learning technology and media.	✓	
		Teachers conduct simulations or initial reflections on learning plans to estimate effectiveness and readiness.	✓	
2	Implementation	The teacher greets students and conducts apperception that is relevant to students' lives.	✓	
		The teacher conducts apperception to link new material with students' knowledge and experiences.		✓
		The teacher explains learning objectives in a flexible and easy-to-understand manner.		✓
		The teacher implements differentiated learning based on students' interests, needs, and learning styles.	✓	
		The teacher presents material in an interesting and contextual way, using supporting media and technology.		✓
		The teacher facilitates students to participate actively through discussions, questions and answers, and group work.		✓
		The teacher provides feedback that motivates and fosters students' self-awareness.	✓	

3	Evaluation	The teacher manages a conducive and inclusive classroom atmosphere so that all students can learn optimally.	✓
		The teacher concludes the learning by linking it to students' interests and real lives.	✓
		Assessment is carried out flexibly according to students' learning achievements and learning styles.	✓
		Teachers use various assessment techniques (written, oral, projects, observations) according to the context.	✓
		Teachers carry out formative assessments in the form of quizzes, assignments, or practices to measure students' understanding periodically.	✓
		Evaluation results are used to improve and adjust subsequent learning	✓

Through interviews with the principal and homeroom teacher IV as well as direct observation, the researcher found that teachers' understanding of the Independent Curriculum is still limited. The homeroom teacher IV, Mr. Reski Anugrah, S.Pd said that although he understood that the Independent Curriculum gives freedom to teachers and students, he still felt confused in its implementation. This shows that despite efforts to introduce this new curriculum, a deep understanding of its principles and practices is still lacking.

The results of the observation showed that the learning process in the classroom was not entirely in accordance with the existing teaching modules. Teachers tend to be less active in managing learning, and students take more notes from textbooks, which results in monotonous learning. In addition, the minimal use of learning media, such as audio-visual media and concrete media, is also an obstacle in implementing the Independent Curriculum. Mr. Reski Anugrah expressed the difficulty in implementing this curriculum optimally due to a lack of understanding and adequate support facilities. He said: "I try to apply some principles of the Independent Curriculum, but I often find it difficult because of a lack of understanding and adequate support. I need adequate support facilities, this school only has 1 infocus facility. So it requires access to relevant teaching materials and supporting facilities."

This shows that even though there is good intention from teachers to implement the new curriculum without adequate support, the implementation will be difficult to achieve. From the interview results, it was revealed that although Mr. Reski Anugrah had attended socialization and seminars on the Independent Curriculum, his understanding and implementation were still inadequate. Mr. Reski Anugrah, S.Pd stated: "I have attended socialization and seminars related to the independent curriculum in 2023, but regarding understanding and implementation,

I am still confused, one of the reasons is inadequate facilities. Even though it will be implemented, it will still be lacking due to incomplete facilities."

This shows an urgent need to improve the quality of training provided to teachers. More comprehensive and ongoing training is needed so that teachers can understand the basic principles of the Independent Curriculum and how to apply them in the context of everyday learning. In addition, adequate support facilities, such as textbooks, teaching aids, and technology facilities, are also very important to support the successful implementation of this curriculum. There are changes in the way students are assessed which are expected to better reflect individual abilities and potential. However, the interview results show that Mr. Reski Anugrah still has difficulty implementing assessments in accordance with the principles of the Independent Curriculum. He said: "There are some changes in the assessment method, but I am still confused about how to assess effectively according to the principles of the Independent Curriculum which is divided into several phases."

Observations also show that teachers do not provide adequate evaluation to measure students' understanding of the material. Therefore, it is very important to get clearer and more practical guidance on the assessment methods that can be used. Fair and objective assessment is very important to ensure that every student gets an equal opportunity to demonstrate their abilities. The main obstacles in implementing the Independent Curriculum at SDN 1 Banawa Selatan include limited teacher understanding, lack of ongoing training, and minimal support for supporting facilities. Many teachers feel pressured in their efforts to implement this curriculum, and they really need support from colleagues and the school. In addition, the lack of collaboration between teachers and school management in planning and implementing the curriculum is also an inhibiting factor. Therefore, more comprehensive and ongoing training, as well as the provision of adequate facilities, are needed to support the successful implementation of the Independent Curriculum at SDN 1 Banawa Selatan. Thus, it is hoped that teachers can be more prepared and confident in implementing this curriculum, so that it can have a positive impact on student development and the quality of education as a whole.

4. Conclusion

Based on the results of the study at SDN 1 Banawa Selatan, it can be concluded that the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum has been running but has not been optimal due to several obstacles such as teacher activity in explaining learning materials, also related to teacher understanding that is not optimal in accordance with the Merdeka curriculum, lack of adequate supporting facilities such as infocus, teaching aids or other teaching media to support the implementation of the curriculum in accordance with procedures, learning evaluations carried out the same as before the Merdeka curriculum was implemented, and also limited training for teachers. So that the implementation of the Merdeka curriculum has not been implemented in accordance with the indicators in the Merdeka curriculum.

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