Policy Analysis of the Implementation of Merdeka Curriculum in Elementary School

Nyoman Ayu Putri Lestari[1*], Luh Tu Selpi Wahyuni[2], Ida Putu Bagus Arnyana[3], Nyoman Dantes[4] iD

[1,2] Primary Teacher Education, Universitas Triatma Mulya, Negara, Bali
[3,4] Basic Education, Universitas Pendidikan Ganesha, Singaraja, Bali

A B S T R A K

Kurikulum Merdeka merupakan upaya pemerintah untuk memperbarui pendidikan di tingkat dasar, dengan tujuan memfasilitasi pembelajaran yang lebih relevan, kreatif, dan inovatif bagi siswa. Namun, meskipun konsepnya menjanjikan, implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka di SD masih menghadapi berbagai tantangan. Salah satu permasalahan utama adalah kurangnya pemahaman dan kesiapan dari pihak sekolah dan guru terkait dengan perubahan kurikulum. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah menganalisis implementasi kebijakan Kurikulum Merdeka di SD. Analisis data dalam penelitian ini menggunakan teknik analisis deskriptif kuantitatif. Partisipan penelitian terdiri dari guru, kepala sekolah, dan staf di satu sekolah dasar. Teknik pengumpulan data dalam penelitian ini selain melalui wawancara dan observasi yaitu dengan melakukan survey dengan menyebarkan kuesioner yang telah lolos validasi. Hasil penelitian dengan jumlah responden sebanyak dua kepala sekolah dan dua orang guru kelas dengan persentase 66.68% pada kategori sangat baik, kemudian 33.32% pada kategori baik, dan tidak ada yang memperoleh kategori cukup dan kurang pada setiap elemen. Kesimpulan dalam penelitian ini adalah kurikulum merdeka dapat diimplemetasikan dengan baik dan perlu ditingkatkan. Implikasi signifikan dari penelitian ini memberikan kontribusi dalam pemahaman yang lebih mendalam tentang proses implementasi kebijakan dan memberikan wawasan berharga bagi para pembuat kebijakan, kepala sekolah, guru, dan stakeholder. Direkomendasikan untuk melakukan upaya lebih lanjut dalam mengatasi tantangan yang dihadapi dan mengoptimalkan manfaat Kurikulum Merdeka di SD.

A B S T R A C T

Merdeka Curriculum is a government effort to revamp primary education, facilitate more relevant, creative, and innovative situation for students. However, despite its promising concept, the Merdeka Curriculum in elementary schools still faces various challenges. One of the main issues is the lack of understanding and preparedness among schools and teachers regarding curriculum changes. This study aimed to analyze the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum policy in elementary schools. The data analysis in this study utilizes quantitative descriptive analysis techniques. Research participants consist of teachers, principals, and staff at elementary school. The data collection technique in this study also conducted through interview, and observation is to conduct surveys by distributing questionnaires that have passed validation. The results of the research with the number of respondents were two school principals and two class teachers with a percentage of 66.68% in the very good category, then 33.32% in the good category, and no one got the adequate or poor categories for each element. The conclusion in this research is that the independent curriculum can be implemented well and needs to be improved. The significant implications of this research contribute to a deeper understanding of the policy implementation process and provide valuable insights for policymakers, school principals, teachers, and stakeholders. It recommends in further efforts to overcome the challenges faced and optimize the benefits of the Merdeka Curriculum in elementary schools.

1. INTRODUCTION

A curriculum is a system of plans and arrangements regarding subjects in teaching and learning activities. The curriculum is a series of learning material units that students can learn based on initial abilities or previously mastered (Ardianti & Amalia, 2022; Jannah et al., 2022). Another opinion reveals that the curriculum is the school's maximum effort to achieve the desired results inside and outside the classroom. Therefore, the curriculum has essential role for an individual in the field of education because the curriculum must set as a guide for educational attainment. The curriculum has various objectives, as the main point of the curriculum itself is to assist students in preparing for their future so that they can become individuals who have high skills, have high reasoning power, and think critical and creatively to

*Corresponding author.
E-mail addresses: putri.lestari@triatmamulya.ac.id (Nyoman Ayu Putri Lestari)

be applied later in society (Jamjemah, T et al., 2022; Lestari, 2023). The curriculum concept continues to develop and change dynamically according to technological developments and community needs.

As is known, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology launched the Merdeka Curriculum in February 2022 as one of the Merdeka Learning programs to improve the quality of students. The Merdeka Curriculum is a program that is very much in line with the agenda of quality improvement of education that has always focused since the Indonesian nation became independent. According to the Ministry of Education and Culture, this program will be a future learning direction that focuses on improving the quality of human resources (Nadim, A, 2020; Parmaxi, 2020). The Independent Curriculum Program is the idea to improve the national education system. Merdeka curriculum is one of the programs to create a pleasant learning atmosphere at school and make students happy and teachers happy (Lestari, N, A, P et al., 2023; Mustaghfiroh, 2020). The educational level focused on the readiness of students to have faith and piety to God Almighty, have a noble character, have morals by Pancasila values, and develop literacy and numeracy competencies to involve in further education.

The guidelines for implementing the Independent Curriculum, especially in Elementary Schools, there are several main factors (Holik, 2023; Maryono et al., 2018), namely: 1) Curriculum structure with extracurricular learnin and projects to strengthen Pancasila student profiles. 2) Learning outcomes (learning competencies) that must be achieved by students according to the stages that have been distributed and arranged for each subject. 3) Learning and assessment is a process of students in education and learning resources in the learning environment. 4) The project to strengthen the profile of Pancasila students is to carry out project-based co-curricular activities designed to strengthen efforts to achieve competence and character according to the profile of Pancasila students. 5). Educators who can determine teaching materials to achieve Pancasila student profiles and learning outcomes. 6) The operational curriculum refers to the curriculum structure from the government. 7) Mechanism of Implementation of the Independent Curriculum, in the implementation of the Independent Curriculum there are three options: a. carry out several parts and principles of the Independent Curriculum, without changing the Education Unit Curriculum. B. Implementing the Independent Curriculum using the teaching tools provided by the central government. C. Implementing the Independent Curriculum by developing various teaching tools in the Education unit. 8). Curriculum Evaluation in Education units that implement the Independent Curriculum, Curriculum evaluation in Education units is a planned and systematic activity in collecting data and managing valid information and data. It aims to test the effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, and feasibility of Curriculum (Culture) design.

The existence of the Free Learning Curriculum can answer the rapid globalization that has entered the 21st century. Thus, the demands of the times encourage an educational institution always adaptive and solutive to the curriculum (Hasibuan, A, R et al., 2022; Ramadan & Hastuti, 2021). Contextually, many things influence change, including changes to the national curriculum. Curriculum development at least pays attention to several essential components, for example, the progress of science as a whole, the growth and development of students, and the development of the needs of the general public. Because every individual must be able to adapt or adjust to a complex society (Albar & Mastiah, 2022; Sunarni & Karyono, 2023; Suryana et al., 2022). The needs are not fixed or even difficult to predict.

The main objective of this study is to analyze the implementation of curriculum implementation policies independent in elementary schools with the ultimate goal of obtaining conclusions that can provide better insight into the effectiveness and implications of the CurriculumIndependentas a new education policy (Dzulhidayat, 2022; Lestari & Habibah, 2023). This study evaluates teachers' understanding and involvement in curriculum planning and implementation, assesses the level of support and satisfaction of parents and students, and identifies challenges encountered during the implementation process. In addition, this study also evaluates the impact of the curriculumIndependent on student learning outcomes and competency development. By combining these findings, this study has an important objective to contribute to expanding understanding of curriculum policy implementation independently, as well as providing valuable information for decision-makers, principals, teachers, and other related parties to increase the benefits of the Independent Curriculum at the elementary school level. In addition, the urgency of this policy analysis lies in the importance of understanding the effectiveness and implications of the Independent Curriculum as a new educational policy. By analyzing the implementation of this curriculum, there is better result regarding its impact on student learning outcomes and competency development. This analysis can also provide valuable information for decision-makers, principals, teachers, and other related parties to increase the benefits of the Independent Curriculum at the elementary school level.

Based on the results of observations and interviews conducted at SD Negeri 1 Lelateng, Negara District, Jembrana Regency, the core of the problem is the diverse understanding of teachers in seeing the implementation of the Free Learning Curriculum in elementary schools. Teachers are still adapting to the

learning process by implementing the new curriculum. Teachers and principals also tried to implement the curriculum independently, although the reality on the ground says otherwise, obstacles in understanding lesson planning, evaluating student progress, and other related matters. Other problems like understanding the 1-sheet lesson plan to evaluate student progress are things faced by teachers. It shows that a teacher has a strategic role in realizing national education goals in terms of teaching and educating, so it is necessary to focus on developing the teacher's potential as a moral professional, obeys rules, upholds professionalism, and is competent (Suryana et al., 2022; Syaripudin. et al., 2023).

Other influential parties to support the implementation of the Free Learning Curriculum are educational institution, principals and their staff. A bureaucratic system that is easily accessible to all groups, including parents, will create a transparent curriculum system. Moreover, students served as learning centres or Student Centers. Students considered as the essence of education, so they become the main target in the learning process, which must have a facilitator to develop their talents, interests, and potential (Pradipto & Abraham, 2014; Taber, 2023). Facilitators are teachers and principals and their staff. The novelty of this analysis lies in its focus on the Independent Curriculum set as a new program in the context of education in Indonesia. With the changes to the national curriculum, it is essential to understand how this curriculum is implemented at the primary school level and identify the challenges faced. This analysis can also help explore potentials that could be optimized in the Independent Curriculum. Based on the description above, it is necessary to research to ensure the implementation of the curriculum Independent Studying at Elementary School went according to plan. That is the basis of analysis on curriculum policies for independent learning in elementary schools, especially SD Negeri 1 Lelateng.

2. METHOD

This research classified as quantitative descriptive research. Quantitative descriptive research is to describe, to examine, and to explain something that is studied as it is, and draw conclusions from observable phenomena using numbers. Quantitative descriptive describes the contents of a variable in research, not intended to test a particular hypothesis. Thus, quantitative descriptive describes a phenomenon with data (numbers) as they are to test particular hypothesis (Sugiyono, 2015; Witarsa, 2022). The object of this research is the policy analysis of the independent curriculum in elementary schools, which takes place at SD Negeri 1 Lelateng. This research conducted on teachers, principals and staff by distributing questionnaires. Sources and data from this study are the results of observations, interviews, surveys, questionnaires and documents owned by the school.

The data collection technique in this study also conducted through interview, and observation is to conduct surveys by distributing questionnaires that have passed validation. This type of research is descriptive and quantitative by using one variable without testing the correlation or comparing it with other variables. The variable in this study is "Implementation of the Independent Curriculum at SD Negeri 1 Lelateng". The aim is to determine and find out how far the Independent Learning Curriculum implemented at SD Negeri 1 Lelateng. The population in this study were all teachers of SD Negeri 1 Lelateng. Then the samples were grade 1 teachers and grade 4 teachers in 4 people, as well as school principals and supervisors in the total of 2 people. The sampling technique used was purposive sampling. By using a Likert scale measuring instrument which has a weighted score of 1-4 as show in Table 1, the way to fill out the questionnaire is to put a cross (X) on the sheet. Respondents cannot provide alternative answers because the answers determined in the form of statements of strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree.

Table 1. Likert Scale

Alternative Answers	Weight Score
Strongly Agree	4
Agree	3
Disagree	2
Strongly Disagree	1

The data analysis technique used is descriptive quantitative data analysis technique which techniques used for testing, measuring, and hypotheses based on mathematical and statistical calculations. Methods of data collection using surveys, observations, or interviews. The research instrument used has passed the validation test. The number of questions includes 30 multiple-choice questions that aim to measure the level of implementation of the independent learning curriculum at SD Negeri 1 Lelateng. The questions conceptualized based on several indicators and sub-indicators

determined by the previous researcher. The way to process research data is to calculate using Excel and then analyze it according to indicators and variables. After that, the results described in narrative and evidence supports the result data, including percentage tables according to indicators (Dantes, 2017; Zulkifli Matondang, 2014). In order to see the percentage, it is necessary to display an interval scale which classified into 4 categories, namely very good, good, sufficient, and poor. The interval scale is show in Table 2. The questionnaire grids used in this research is show in Table 3.

Table 2. Interval Scale

Number	Intervals	Category
1	81.25% - 100%	Very Good
2	62.50% - 81.25%	Good
3	43.75% - 62.50%	Enough
4	25.00% - 43.75%	Not Enough

Table 3. Research Questionnaire Grids for Teachers and School Principals

No	Dimensions	Aspect	Indicator
1	Teacher	Teacher performance during the learning process	1) Explain the material 2) Use of learning methods 3) Motivate students 4) Do feedback 5) Facilitate students to collaborate
2		Implementation and understanding of the independent learning curriculum	1) The teacher's patience in following the guidelines 2) Integrating principles 3) Student engagement 4) Integrating technology 5) Authentic assessment
3		Implementation of RPP 1 sheet and impact on students	1) Covers basic competencies 2) Describe indicators 3) Adapt lesson plans according to the needs of students 4) RPP pays attention to the diversity of students 5) Learners feel a positive change or impact
4	Principal and staff	Readiness of Schools in Implementing the independent learning Curriculum	1) Resource 2) Sarana Prasarana 3) Support 4) Identify the needs of students 5) Do an evaluation
5		Implementation of UN and USBN replacement assessments	1) Develop assessment instruments 2) Integrate assessment results 3) Do feedback 4) Parent's satisfaction level
6		Zoning system application and 1 sheet RPP	1) Application of the zoning system 2) Level of success 3) Involvement 4) Ensuring RPP is relevant to the independent curriculum

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

The independent curriculum does not recognize this standard structure, so elementary school teachers are not ready to deal with these changes quickly. The solution given to overcome the obstacles to the independent curriculum is the socialization of the implementation of the independent curriculum through online workshops . However, what happened was that the elementary school teachers were reluctant to follow suit. The results stated that some teachers commented that they became even more confused after attending the independent curriculum workshop. So far, elementary school teachers still have difficulty and confusion in making lesson plans related to the implementation of the independent curriculum, as well as the teachers of Lelateng 1 Public Elementary School. The difficulty and confusion lies in the structure of the independent curriculum that should be done. The existing systematics and examples of the Independent Curriculum's

Learning Implementation Plan (RPP) obscured the SD teacher's beliefs when he encountered another pattern that had been seen. Teachers' disbelief also makes them wrong when Independent Curriculum Learning Implementation at school.

Based on the explanation above, it is crucial to carry out a policy analysis of the implementation of an independent curriculum in elementary schools, considering that research related to the independent curriculum is still rarely carried out because the independent curriculum is a policy that implemented in 2022 in Indonesia. In addition, an analysis of the policy of implementing the independent curriculum in elementary schools carried out to understand the impact and effectiveness of implementing this curriculum. Through policy analysis, strengths and weaknesses in implementation can be identified, as well as the factors that influence its success. It helps stakeholders, such as teachers, principals and policymakers, to make the right decisions in optimizing the use of the Independent Curriculum. In addition, policy analysis also helps identify solutions and strategies that can improve the quality of learning and student learning outcomes. Thus, the policy analysis of the Independent Curriculum in elementary schools provides a valuable guide in increasing the effectiveness of education and student development.

Based on the interviews, observations and surveys from 10 to 14 April 2023 at public elementary school 1 Lelateng. There were research results which include information on some data obtained from respondents by conducting an assessment and classifying according to the aspects of the indicators listed on the questionnaire grid. Classification will make it easier for researchers to present and calculate data. In this study, for teachers there were 3 aspects of assessment, namely, 1) Teacher performance during the learning process, 2) Implementation and understanding of the independent learning curriculum, and 3) Implementation of the 1-page lesson plan and impact on students. Whereas for school principals and supervisors, there are 3 aspects of the assessment, namely, 1) School readiness in implementing the independent learning curriculum, 2) Application of assessments to replace UN and USBN, 3) Application of the zoning system and 1 sheet RPP. However, the data displayed is the overall data or the result of the average (mean), variance, standard deviation (SD) and percentage. Below are the results of the research data that will be presented in the discussion.

So based on the results of a survey using a questionnaire at SD Negeri 1 Lelateng, data obtained overall shows an average of 3.29 from the highest value of 4 and the lowest 1. While the standard deviation is 0.21 and the variance is 0.05. Based on the percentage of the interval scale, the category is very good, with respondents being 4 people, namely 2 school principals and 2 class teachers with a percentage of 66.68%. Then for the Good category, the number of respondents was 2 class teachers and the percentage was 33.32%. As for the Enough and Less categories, there were no respondents or a percentage of 0%. Based on the results of this presentation, it can be concluded that the majority of the implementation of the independence curriculum at SD Negeri 1 Lelateng is Very Good or at least in the Good category.

Discussion

Based on the results of the data processing, it can be said that the Independent Learning Curriculum is a contribution to learning that prioritizes comfort and suitability for subjects. The data above shows the percentage of leaning towards good to implement the Free Learning Curriculum. The Free Learning Curriculum is a new system which in the process of implementation requires careful steps and intense discussion (Yunaini et al., 2022; Zahir et al., 2022). It takes more control from the central government to maintain. Because logically if something moves freely there must be a problem or a collision (Fahmy et al., 2015; Lestari et al., 2023). So the ultimate goal of teaching and learning activities is to have a good impact on students. Developing potential, making students have achievements, and cultivating manners and ethics. So the presence of teachers is needed especially teachers who are competent and have a professional attitude (Lestari et al., 2022; Sumarsih et al., 2022; Sunarni & Karyono, 2023). A teacher is someone who has intelligence and expertise in a particular field to provide knowledge to students. The teacher can be said to be a job that requires a lot of demands and pressure. Many efforts have been made to carry out the best possible Free Learning Curriculum. Starting from equalizing perceptions so that one vision, implementing it carefully, and will immediately evaluate if there is a problem (Ikhtiara et al., 2022; Indarta et al., 2022; Silaswati, 2022). So that in the end, every new policy will have a significant impact on the sustainability of teachers, educational institutions and students (Ekawati & Susanti, 2022; Purani & Putra, 2022; Sunarni & Karyono, 2023). Based on data showing 66.68% in the "Very Good" category, it can be seen that several schools in Indonesia are trying to optimize the potential for change for the better. With these data, it is necessary to make efforts to maintain a positive trend. This perception is something that needs to be understood by subject teachers in general.

Based on the interviews that have been conducted, some teachers feel that they are not ready to implement the independent curriculum because they do not understand the nature of the new curriculum. The lack of understanding of teachers is since the training conducted by the District and City Education Offices, the Province, and even the government at the national level has not been properly designed (Armadani et al., 2023; Fransiska Faberta Kencana Sari et al., 2023). Some information stated that the

impression was that the training was held haphazardly, for example, the training time was often congested or the training time lasted until late at night. In the practice of implementing the Independent Curriculum in making lesson preparations, teachers do not make lesson plans.

Most of the teachers in preparation for learning are armed with the material in the student book. Seeing this condition, what needs to be improved is the mentality of the teachers, not curriculum changes (Daga, A, 2022; Huang & Wang, 2022). They admitted that the Merdeka curriculum training was given without regard to the principles of good learning because the training was conducted from 08.00 to 22.00 (night). The teachers who took part in this training felt that they could not absorb the material optimally, especially if the participants were elderly. Many of the instructors from the provinces and districts also have no experience in implementing this curriculum, because they only received previous training when participating in national-level training. As a result, many instructors only understand the concept, so the examples given are not applicable. Regarding material that was not understood by the teachers, most of them stated that they did not understand thematic learning, and stated that they did not understand the cognitive learning approach. Based on interviews with the teachers, they hope that they will receive assistance after the completion of the training. Assistance can be provided by school principals, supervisors or district instructors. This is because according to them the key to the successful implementation of learning innovations is not in the training but in the mentoring (Hasibuan, A, R et al., 2022; Lestari, E. et al., 2022; Pratami et al., 2021). Therefore, according to them, school principals and school supervisors must also be trained in the Independent Curriculum so that they can also assist teachers.

Researchers also obtained a lot of information from informants at school that the school community's support for implementing this curriculum was felt to be lacking, although they also stated that they welcomed the Independent Curriculum. This low support is because they do not know what each party should do in providing support for the successful implementation of this Curriculum (Ekawati & Susanti, 2022; Winter & Hyatt, 2023). Therefore, according to them, it is necessary to immediately review training for school principals, school supervisors, school committees and administrative staff regarding the Independent Curriculum. According to researchers, in implementing the curriculum what is needed is learning program innovation. Innovation like this will emerge if the school has a visionary principal's leadership. Principals must be able to create a good working climate that allows teachers to work comfortably, especially in the context of developing various teaching preparation tools for the new curriculum (Chu et al., 2017; Dzulhidayat, 2022). Therefore the curriculum to be implemented is new, so, naturally, teachers need more time than usual to make lesson plans and learning media. In addition, teachers should also apply learning models that enable students to actively participate in learning. Among them is the use of various models where the content will be more optimal so that students have enough time to explore concepts and strengthen competence.

Based on the results of interviews conducted by researchers, several factors can support the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in the field (Sartini. & Mulyono, 2022; Silaswati, 2022), namely (1) clear budgeting from the local government to support the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, (2) good coordination from the regional and provincial governments with the central government in procuring learning and training facilities, good planning, and (3) the availability of other learning facilities such as LCDs and internet connections. Although the implementation of the Independent Curriculum has been running effectively in recent months, there are still some obstacles such as a lack of experience with learning independence, limited references, uneven access to learning, and time management (Sudarto, Hafid & Amran, 2021; Sumarsih et al., 2022). Even though the existence of books is sufficient, there needs to be further evaluation of whether the contents of these textbooks have a global dimension.

Based on the research findings, several things are urgently needed including improving the management of the implementation of the independent curriculum. As much as possible, the central government and regional governments must jointly set targets for how many schools will implement them in the next 1 year, 2 years and 3 years. The independent curriculum implementation cycle must be made starting from budgeting, procuring educational facilities, training, implementation and mentoring, as well as evaluating successes and failures. Next, training should be carried out in stages with good coordination between the Central Government, Provincial Governments, and District/City Governments. The training is carried out by heeding the principles of good learning and is provided by instructors who are experienced in implementing the curriculum (Jayawardana, H, B et al., 2022; Saputra, D. & Hadi, M., 2022). Not just fulfilling the formalities of coming to the training site, there is training, and returning home with pocket money. Teacher training should also focus more on thematic approaches for elementary school teachers because these are the things that most of the teachers who became informants of this research in the field complained about. Assessment guidelines for teachers in providing assessments of student learning

outcomes must also be immediately issued by the Central Government and will be adopted by District/City Governments. As quantitative research combined with qualitative investigations, the findings of this research can be understood as a picture that may also occur in several other regions. Thus the results and discussion in this article are useful as reinforcement for policymakers to immediately address the problems of implementing the independent curriculum that is occurring in the field.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the research and discussion that have been presented, it can be concluded that there are still several challenges that need to be overcome to achieve full effectiveness in implementing the independent curriculum in elementary schools. These challenges include the readiness of teachers to implement an independent curriculum, school support in implementing the curriculum, supporting factors, and inhibiting factors for implementing an independent curriculum. The key to successful implementation of the independent curriculum in learning is not only in training but in ongoing assistance.

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