

## **Implementation and Challenges of Implementing the Independent Curriculum at SMK Negeri 5 Padang**

**Salsabila Nasution<sup>1</sup>, Firman<sup>2</sup>, Mohd. Suhadi bin Mohammed Sidik<sup>3</sup>,  
Naufal Zaky<sup>4</sup>**

<sup>12</sup> Counseling Guidance, Faculty of Science Education, Padang State University, Indonesia

<sup>3</sup> Sultan Abdul Halim Mu'adzam Shah International Islamic University, Malaysia

<sup>4</sup> Universitas Efarina, Indonesia

Correspondent Email: [firman@fip.unp.ac.id](mailto:firman@fip.unp.ac.id)

---

### **Abstract**

The independent curriculum is a curriculum with a variety of intracurricular learning so that students can be more optimal and have concepts and strengthen their competencies. The aim of this research is to analyze information and challenges related to implementing the independent curriculum at SMK Negeri 5 Padang City. This research uses a descriptive qualitative research method whose data was obtained through observation and interviews with teachers at SMK Negeri 5 Padang. This research resulted that SMK 5 Padang had implemented an independent curriculum in accordance with the program that had been designed, the implementation process was carefully designed, this involved the principal, teachers and school staff. The implementation is not free from several challenges related to students only following the program mechanically, without fully understanding or internalizing the material, but these challenges are not an obstacle because SMK Negeri 5 itself has a solution by filling in evaluation and reinforcement sheets in the morning before the learning process takes place.

**Keywords:** Implementation; Independent Curriculum; Education.

---

### **INTRODUCTION**

Education is an important part in building national civilization and an important part in improving the overall quality of resources (Azkia, 2022), because education is an important aspect in life (Marsen, Neviyarni S, 2021). So, there are several efforts to improve the quality of education that need to be carried out continuously (Director General of PMPTK, 2008; Dwi Atmanti, 2005), because student learning activities have a direct influence on learning outcomes so that changes occur both technically and fundamentally (Daharnis, 2005, 2011a, 2011b). Technical changes include, for example, rules and discipline, resource books and learning tools, and schedule settings. Meanwhile, fundamental changes are related to the comprehensive and fundamental curriculum (now the Independent Curriculum has been implemented) as well as changes in the meaning and function of education implemented (Daharnis, Erlamsyah, Ifdil, Zadrian Ardi, 2014).

Indonesia in implementing the curriculum has experienced various changes and improvements namely 1947, 1964, 1968, 1973, 1975, 1984, 1994, 1997 (revised 1994

curriculum), 2004 (Competency Based Curriculum), and 2006 curriculum (Level Level Curriculum education unit), and in 2013 the government through the ministry of national education replaced it returned to the 2013 curriculum (Kurtilas) and in 2018 there was a revision to become the Revised Kurtilas" (Ulinniam, Hidayat, Barlian, UC, & Iriantara, 2021).

At this time there is a new curriculum, namely the independent curriculum, which has become a new era education policy in facing changes and developments in digital technology that demands teachers and teaching staff to adapt quickly (Zuhdi, Firman., & Ahmad, 2021) . Technological advances increase public awareness thereby forming cooperation (Firman, 2017). Since the pandemic outbreak Covid-19 spread in March 2020, the Ministry of Education and Culture immediately took action integrated steps so that students continue to have their rights and obligations as students (Hayati, Leni Murni., Mudjiran., 2022). Where Independent curriculum is interpreted as a learning design that provides opportunities for students to learn calmly, relaxed, fun, stress-free and pressure-free, to show talent naturally. Merdeka Belajar focuses on freedom and creative thinking (Qurniawati, 2023).

This program is designed to support each school in creating a generation of lifelong learning who has the personality of a Pancasila student (Rahayu, 2022). The independent curriculum is also an effort to capture and overcome lost learning and improve the quality of learning, adapting quickly to the development and progress of the world order of life which requires rapid steps (Sumanti, 2022).

Regarding the phenomenon and expectations of the independent curriculum in schools, researchers are currently interested in conducting research, with the aim of this research being to analyze information and challenges related to the implementation of the independent curriculum at SMK Negeri 5 Padang City so that it will explain and provide insight into the implementation of the independent curriculum at SMK Negeri 5 Padang City.

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

The method in this research is a qualitative descriptive method, with research locations in SMK Negeri 5 Padang. Data was collected through observation and interviews. Observations were made to see the condition of the research object, interviews were conducted with guidance and counseling teachers at SMK Negeri 5 Padang. Interviews were conducted to support the data that had been collected through observation (Firman, 2018). The model used in analyzing data is a pattern developed by (Miles, MB & Huberman, 1992) with implementation stages: (1) data reduction, (2) data presentation, (3) conclusion drawing and verification, (4) formulation of findings, (5) make a report on research results. Data collection and analysis was carried out during and after the completion of the research process.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Implementation is usually implemented after all plans are ready and perfect for use. The implementation of the curriculum at SMK Negeri 5 Padang has been carried out optimally, although in its implementation there are still many shortcomings and obstacles. Observations and interviews with guidance and counseling teachers at SMK Negeri 5 Padang resulted that SMK Negeri 5 Padang had implemented an independent curriculum at school,

but there were several points that were not implemented, namely the zoning system for student admissions at SMK Negeri 5 Padang. SMK Negeri 5 Padang opens admissions to new students with interest and aptitude tests which are then analyzed to be taken into consideration in admissions to SMK Negeri 5 Padang. The final exam for class XII students is carried out with a final school exam and a competency exam according to their major. The final exam is carried out in the even semester for class XII.

In the learning process in the independent curriculum program at SMK Negeri 5 Padang, the main focus is aimed at the Pancasila student profile with the aim of producing graduates who are able to compete competently and uphold character values. The structure of the independent curriculum is realized through intracurricular activities, projects to strengthen the profile of Pancasila students, as well as extracurricular activities. School principals, teachers and school staff carefully plan the implementation of the independent curriculum in the Pancasila profile. This was proven by a series of meetings held before the implementation of learning with the Pancasila profile, which involved active participation from school principals, teachers and school staff.

Implementing an independent curriculum with a focus on the Pancasila student profile requires careful planning and the involvement of all relevant parties. With the existence of intracurricular activities, projects to strengthen the Pancasila student profile, and extracurricular activities, it is hoped that students will not only gain academic knowledge, but can also develop strong character in accordance with Pancasila values. With a planned approach and involving the entire school community, the implementation of the independent curriculum at SMK Negeri 5 Padang is expected to have a positive impact on holistic student development. The implementation of the Pancasila learning profile at SMK Negeri 5 provides a special time, namely two weeks for class X and one week for class XI. Every morning students are guided through marching, gymnastics and mutual cooperation activities, then carry out learning by strengthening the profile of Pancasila in the learning process.

However, in the implementation process, several challenges emerged, especially related to students' unfamiliarity with this curriculum program. Some students seemed to only follow the program mechanically, without fully understanding or internalizing the material, which ultimately affected the assessment results to be less than optimal. However, these challenges do not become significant obstacles for SMK Negeri 5 Padang in implementing the independent curriculum program. SMK Negeri 5 Padang succeeded in overcoming this challenge by implementing effective solutions. One solution taken is to provide evaluation sheets to students, which can help them to understand the extent to which they have understood and applied the learning material. Apart from that, the school is also active in providing reminders regarding the program that will be implemented to students in the morning before the learning process begins.

These steps help increase students' awareness of the independent curriculum program and provide encouragement so that they are more actively and deeply involved in the learning process. With this solution, SMK Negeri 5 Padang has succeeded in creating a learning environment that is more conducive and responsive to students' needs in facing the independent curriculum.

Identifying and overcoming the various challenges that arise in the implementation of the Independent Curriculum program, we pave the way towards achieving a more dynamic

and relevant educational environment for students in the 21st century. The Merdeka Curriculum, as an educational innovation based on the needs of students, places the role of the teacher as a learning facilitator who accommodates the uniqueness and needs of each student. The main challenge faced is the limited adaptation of students to this new program. Students who are not used to a more independent curriculum approach may have difficulty adapting, resulting in their involvement being limited to following the program without deep understanding. This can have a negative impact on assessment results, with students perhaps not reaching their full potential.

It is important to remember that in overcoming this challenge, SMK Negeri 5 Padang has taken concrete steps. Providing evaluation sheets to students is a thoughtful way to provide constructive feedback, allowing students to reflect on their understanding of the material and evaluate the extent to which they have mastered it. Additionally, the practice of providing program-related reminders to students in the morning represents a proactive effort to increase student awareness and engagement.

Quoting research from Suriadi (2021), quality changes in teachers are the key to the success of the Merdeka Curriculum. As this curriculum is implemented, teachers need to continue to develop skills, knowledge and attitudes that support a more student-focused curriculum approach. Without these quality changes, student learning outcomes may not achieve the expected improvements.

In this context, the Independent Curriculum becomes a policy that supports positive changes in education. However, its success depends not only on the curriculum design itself, but also on the ability of schools and teachers to overcome challenges and run these programs effectively. Thus, continuing to identify, overcome and adapt to challenges is a critical step to ensure that the Merdeka Curriculum truly becomes an effective tool in shaping relevant and quality education for the future.

## CONCLUSION

The Merdeka Curriculum is a significant step in increasing the flexibility and relevance of education in Indonesia. Providing freedom to teachers and schools in designing learning can increase student motivation by adapting lesson material to their local context. SMK 5 Padang has implemented an independent curriculum in accordance with the program that has been designed, the implementation process is carefully designed, this involves the principal, teachers and school staff. The challenges found in its implementation relate to students following the program mechanically, without fully understanding or internalizing the material, but these challenges are not obstacles because SMK Negeri 5 itself has a solution by filling in evaluation and reinforcement sheets in the morning before the learning process takes place.

## REFERENCES

- Azkie, L. & R. (2022). Principal Managerial Competence on Teacher Performance. *Proceedings: Journal of Islamic Education and Studies* , 8 (4), 1499–1507. [https://doi.org/10.31943/jurnal\\_rilahan.v8i4.381](https://doi.org/10.31943/jurnal_rilahan.v8i4.381)
- Daharnis, Erlamsyah, Ifdil, Zadrian Ardi, RH (2014). Overview of West Sumatra Student Learning Activities. *International Guidance and Counseling Seminar* , 20.

- Daharnis. (2005). Relationship between a number of student characteristics, environmental conditions, learning, learning activities and student achievement at Padang State University. Malang State University.
- Daharnis. (2011a). Analysis of student learning outcomes majoring in Guidance and Counseling at FIP UNP in terms of the quality of learning activities, class, entry status and gender . Padang State University.
- Daharnis. (2011b). The Relationship between Aspirations, Perceptions, Locus of Control, Force and Entry Status with the Learning Activities of Students in the Guidance and Counseling Department . Padang State University.
- Director General of PMPTK. (2008). Teacher Performance Assessment. Ministry of Education.
- Dwi Atmanti, H. (2005). Human Resource Investment Through Education. *Journal of Development Dynamics* , 2 (1).
- Firman, F. (2017). The Role of Anthropology in Cross-Cultural Counseling in the Era of the Asean Economic Community. National Counseling Seminar & Talkshow . <http://repository.unp.ac.id/7240/1/peranthropology.pdf>
- Firman, F. (2018). Qualitative and Quantitative Research. *Qualitative and Quantitative Research* , 1–29.
- Hayati, Leni Murni., Mudjiran., HN & YK (2022). Paradigm of Guidance and Counseling Teachers in the Independent Learning Curriculum. *JPGI (Indonesian Teacher Research Journal)* , 7 (1), 158. <https://doi.org/10.29210/021880jpgi0005>
- Marisa, M. (2021). Innovation of the "Freedom of Learning" Curriculum in the Era of Society 5.0. *Santhet: Journal of History, Education and Humanities* , 5 (1).
- Marsen, Neviyarni S, I. (2021). The role of parents and teachers in developing the morals of elementary school students in the era of industrial revolution 4.0. *JPGI (Indonesian Teacher Research Journal)* , 6 (1), 49. <https://doi.org/10.29210/02928jpgi0005>
- Miles, M. B. & Huberman, M. (1992). *Qualitative Data Analysis*. (translation by Tjetjep Rohendi Rohidi) . UI Press.
- Mustagfiroh. (2021). The concept of "Freedom to Learn" Perspective of Progressivism in Higher Education. *Journal of Teacher Studies and Learning* , 3 (1).
- Qurniawati, DR (2023). Effectiveness of Implementing the Independent Learning Curriculum. *Conference of Elementary Studies* , 195–203.
- Rahayu, R., Rosita, R., Rahayuningsih, YS, Hernawan, AH, & Prihantini. (2022). Implementation of Independent Curriculum in Driving School. *Basicedu Journal* , 6 (4), 6313–6319.
- Saleh, M. (2021). Freedom to Learn in the Middle of the Covid-19 Pandemic. In *Proceedings of the National National Education Day Seminar*.
- Sumanti, V., Firman, F., & Ahmad, R. (2022). The Role of Teachers in Independent Curriculum Policy in Schools. *Teaching* , 10 (2), 49–52. <https://jurnal.uisu.ac.id/index.php/Keguruan/article/view/6434>
- Suriadi, HJF (2021). Analysis of Online Learning Problems on Students' Character

Education. *Educative: Journal of Educational Sciences* , 3 (1).

Ulinniam, Hidayat, Barlian, UC, & Iriantara, Y. (2021). Implementation of the 2013 Revised Curriculum During the Pandemic at IBS Tathmainul Qullub Vocational School Indramayu. *Indonesian Education Journal* , 2 (1).

Zuhdi, Ahmad., Firman., & Ahmad, R. (2021). The importance of education for humans. *SCHOULID: Indonesian Journal of School Counseling* , 6 (1), 22. <https://doi.org/10.23916/08742011>