

IMPLEMENTATION OF INDEPENDENT CURRICULUM IN IMPROVING QUALITY OF LEARNING IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

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ABSTRACT

Infrastructure and technology limitations, teacher readiness and competence , parent and community participation, evaluation and assessment, and resistance to change are some of the obstacles faced in implementing the independent curriculum. The purpose of this study is to determine how the implementation of the independent curriculum improves the quality of learning in elementary schools. This research uses a qualitative research method with a literature study approach. Data sources consist of national and international scientific journals. The data collection process comes from Scopus and Google Scholar focusing on literature from relevant journals, which are related to the implementation of the independent curriculum in improving the quality of learning in elementary schools. Data analysis focuses on the implementation of the curriculum from various references. The results of this study indicate that there is a very large influence between the openness of teachers and related parties in determining a curriculum planning, so that in its implementation it is in accordance with the conditions of students, educational goals and must be adjusted to the student's environment.

Keywords: independent curriculum, quality of learning, elementary school

A. Introduction

Education is an essential element in national development, requiring collaborative efforts from educators, parents, and the community to foster student motivation and engagement. The self-paced learning curriculum, which has been gradually implemented since 2022 in Indonesia, emphasizes student self-development and

adaptive learning strategies that reflect real-life contexts (Pasaribu, 2023; ZAFA, 2024; Sarkity & Fernando, 2023). This curriculum shift is a response to previous shortcomings, highlighted by Indonesia's performance in the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), where the country ranked 74 out of 79 in literacy and numeracy (Nursyaidah et al.,

2023). The self-paced curriculum aims to promote a student-centered approach, allowing teachers to act more as facilitators than traditional instructors. This evolution is in line with Indonesia's educational goals of nurturing character and competence among students (Dwiputra et al., 2023; Azmi et al., 2023). Comprehensive and inclusive curriculum policies are essential to ensure that these educational reforms yield real benefits for all sectors of society (Azizah et al., 2023; Hariyani et al., 2023).

The implementation of the Independent Curriculum in Indonesia is a significant transformation that aims to address the complexities of modern education by focusing on student-centered learning and cultivating essential 21st-century skills and character. This approach provides educators with the flexibility to tailor learning experiences based on the needs and strengths of each student, thereby fostering a more engaging and relevant educational environment (Harefa et al., 2024; Witraguna et al., 2024; Ni'mah et al., 2024). The Strengthening Pancasila Student Profile Project exemplifies this initiative by integrating character

education, social awareness, and critical thinking into the curriculum, providing students with opportunities to develop academically as well as socially and emotionally (Kuwoto et al., 2024).

Teachers are empowered to act as facilitators and innovators, utilizing a variety of teaching strategies to enhance student learning, leading to deeper engagement with the material (Handayani et al., 2023; Cristiana et al., 2023). Furthermore, platforms such as Merdeka Mengajar are designed to facilitate ongoing professional development for teachers, ensuring they are prepared to navigate this ever-evolving educational landscape effectively (Ferdaus & Novita, 2023). Therefore, the Independent Curriculum represents not only a change in education policy, but also a comprehensive movement towards developing a more adaptive, inclusive, and quality-oriented learning ecosystem in Indonesia (Qolbiyah et al., 2022).

The curriculum is not just a rule but a guideline for implementing education at all levels from elementary, middle to high school. So

it is only right that the curriculum preparation policy can be considered broadly and comprehensively, so that the implementation of the education curriculum can be felt by all levels of society. The author here will discuss how the implementation of the independent curriculum in improving the quality of learning in elementary schools by using literature reviews from previous researchers as a reference and reference for the author to evaluate the implementation of the independent curriculum and a deep understanding of the curriculum. The purpose of this study is to find out how the implementation of the independent curriculum in improving the quality of learning in elementary schools.

B. Research Methodology

Research Background

This study uses a qualitative research method with a literature study approach. This approach aims to collect and analyze literature related to the implementation of the independent curriculum in improving the quality of learning in elementary schools which is carried out conceptually through written ideas and analyzed by examining the role of teachers in implementing the

independent curriculum in improving the quality of learning in elementary schools. Data sources consist of national and international scientific journals. The data collection process focuses on literature from relevant journals, which are related to the implementation of the curriculum in the learning process. Data analysis focuses on the implementation of the curriculum from various references.

C. Results and Discussion

1. Towards powerful educational knowledge? Addressing the challenges facing educational foundations, curriculum theory and didactics. (Hordern et al., 2021)

The research aims to address the challenges facing the tradition of deliberative educational knowledge from the foundations of education, curriculum theory and didactics. And to address and consider potential ways towards a strong education according to the interests of educators. Educational theory and educational preparation are strongly influenced by the foundations of education and curriculum theory.

The problem in this research is formulated; What are the problems faced by the tradition of fundamental educational knowledge and its reasoning in the context of current educational policies and practices? consolidating or reconfiguring the tradition of educational knowledge in what way can be a roadmap towards a more 'strong' educational study. What contribution can be made by the reconfigured or reconstructed educational knowledge presented in the current discussion on educational policy and teachers in learning. The article presented here is an approach to studying the phenomenon that is collected as a basis for the author's thinking to be presented as a result of thinking that aims to overcome the challenges faced by the tradition of deliberative educational knowledge from the basis of education, curriculum theory and didactics.

The results of this study found that there is a phenomenon of uncertainty about the future shape of professional educational knowledge and the professional authority of teachers. The results of empirical studies in various educational studies collected found

that this was driven by a global educational reform movement that maintains a view of humanity as populated by rationally self-interested individuals who seek to use education only to benefit themselves in the labor market. This view of humanity is directly at odds with the philosophy underlying the deliberative and fundamental traditions, and marginalizes opportunities for more holistic educational practices. As Wheelahan and Moodie (this issue) discuss, such views are influencing reforms in higher education, where there is pressure to reorient curriculum structures toward the provision of micro-credentials because of the assumed demand for employable skills in the labor market. The thinking behind these reforms to educational provision is closely tied to a turn toward ideas from neoclassical economics and various forms of management theory as possible sources of answers to the perceived problems of an education system that seems resistant to innovating and changing fast enough to produce the outcomes desired by policymakers at the primary level.

There are two main strategies that a reconstructed

educational scholarship might take to do this. The first is to try to follow the suggestions of Muller and Hoadley (this issue) and develop an 'entente cordiale' that strengthens the 'strong empirical fabric' of the deliberative traditions, perhaps through a greater integration of social realism and the Didactic traditions, and this might also draw on Vollmer's general subject didactics. The advantage of such a strategy would be to provide a cumulative and verifiable set of theoretically grounded findings against which educational theory could be judged, if an appropriate conceptual language for educational inquiry could be found. This might provide some ballast to challenge the wave of empirical approaches emanating from positivism. A second strategy might be to double down on the 'philosophical and hermeneutical approach' to educational inquiry, maintaining that the study of the 'inner workings of schools' remains a 'practical discipline focused specifically on the practice of educational progress', perhaps most akin to ethics or a form of practical or case-based reflective philosophy. Within such a vision there may be room for 'illumination or empirical

grounding', but this tends to be refracted through the lens of knowledge traditions. While this strategy may initially have greater difficulty in convincing social science disciplines of the 'robustness' of educational inquiry, it has the advantage of greater distinctiveness, emphasizing that educational knowledge is distinctive. However, a key issue that remains is the contested definition of what constitutes educational practice and the relationship between its aims, with policy makers and researchers alike often failing to articulate or critically reflect on their assumptions about the role of education for individuals and society. This remains a substantive issue if education is to be revived as a practical and professional discipline with a coherent educational knowledge base.

The final discussion of this article, as presented by Michael Young, provides some commentary on the ideas raised in the various papers. Young argues that there are strengths and weaknesses in both the 'sociological' (e.g. Bernstein and social realism) and the more 'idealist' and 'philosophical' (e.g. German Bildung-inspired Didactics) traditions

of educational knowledge, while both offer some resistance to the tendency for educational knowledge to descend into scientism (Young & Muller, 2016). He suggests that contrasting views of the relationship between the individual, culture and society underpin the Anglophone and German traditions, and notes how the 'looser ties' that Nordic researchers have with 'idealist philosophy' have opened up space for engagement between colleagues in Sweden, Finland and the UK around specialist subject knowledge and teaching. Young highlights the difficulties in reconciling the 'analytical' and the 'normative', and suggests that each tradition of educational knowledge should be allowed to 'grow on its own terms and become a kind of mirror for the others'. These reflections thus provide us with cautious optimism for a continued deeper engagement between educational foundations, curriculum theory and Didactics to provide counter-arguments to empiricism, 'what works' initiatives and limited notions of 'homo economicus' that inform much global educational reform.

2. Working in the shadows: differentiation processes through and

beyond the curriculum. Introduction to the special issue. (Wermke et al., 2024)

The aim of this special issue is to analyze the dynamics of differentiation in education. In particular, the conceptual term differentiation will be explored by focusing on different areas of curriculum making. This differentiation encompasses more than just instructional or didactic considerations and strategies: At the heart of curriculum making lie ideas and assumptions about socio-cultural and political processes and their consequences. Curriculum development and the differentiation processes associated with it are highly dynamic. They emerge in different spatial and temporal contexts in different discursive settings.

This article is written with a descriptive approach to describe the concept of differentiation that occurs as a phenomenon in its environment and a wider scope. The narrative of the results of the study in this article is oriented sociologically and historically in the education system. A brief introduction to this article is discussed with the stages; defining the term differentiation. The

author does this with a sociological meaning and then relates it to educational research. Specifically, regarding the latter, the author defines the research gap, which this article wants to approach. Then, the author presents six contributions to this edition along with their respective contributions to understanding differentiation in education and finally, the author discusses the similarities and differences of these contributions.

In general, it is presented in this article that differentiation signifies the transformation from homogeneous to heterogeneous. Such transformation refers to processes of separation (e.g. of people and institutions) and boundary clarification (e.g. of curriculum content and learning abilities). These processes are essential for the construction and stabilization of social systems, organizations, and individuals. Over time, public education has been differentiated through curricula, pedagogies, and mechanisms of evaluation, assessment, and selection across time (e.g. historical time, one's life course) and space (e.g. geographical locations and institutions). Differentiation processes

are essential for educational systems, allowing them to adapt to changing goals and power relations. The interaction between education and differentiation has historically depended on social, cultural, political, and economic contexts. Common today are comprehensive and targeted national school systems, public and private schools, regular and special education, and higher education systems that include institutions, programs, knowledge structures, professional groups, and academic and vocational students. There is a need to further explore and investigate these practices, as well as their differentiation and integration processes and their consequences.

More research on differentiation processes is needed to trace and analyze educational responses to these developments, in terms of their driving forces, the rise and fall of specific types of educational differentiation, and their consequences for society, professional organizations, and individuals. In short, we need to understand the continuity and change in educational systems over time and across different national and transnational contexts. Against this

backdrop, the main ambition of this special issue is to present work that uses the concept of differentiation to understand the continuity and change that affect education, both through and beyond the curriculum.

According to the results of scientific studies conducted on the various ways of theorizing differentiation, the various perspectives that focus on differentiation as a functional process and, on the other hand, as a social process (and, we would add, an agentic process) are different. The first, functional approach, as also critically discussed in Schulte's article in this special issue, is related to a tradition that began with Durkheim's theory of the division of labor, continued through Parsons' analytical framework of functional requirements, and was further developed by Luhmann and others. The second, social approach refers to the analysis of class and stratification, considering society as a space of conflict over the distribution and allocation of goods. Its roots go back to Marx's critique of political economy and critical theory, including critical pedagogy. These two perspectives should not be considered the only possible options when

discussing differentiation (cf. Schulte's discussion of the various perspectives in this special issue). However, they should be understood as different entry points into the conversation about differentiation: While some focus more on the systemic nature of differentiation processes, others pay more attention to the agents and agendas that drive these processes (or are driven by them). Still others try to integrate the two, focusing on the interaction of systems and agents. This is the classic dialectic of 'structure' and 'agency', revisited from the perspective of differentiation.

3. Teachers as national curriculum makers: does involvement equal influence? (Finnanger & Prøitz, 2024)

The background to this article is the phenomenon of curriculum reform in Norway, where this article presents a study of teacher involvement and influence in the creation of the national curriculum through participation in the official comment process. Education policy documents present teacher involvement in the reform as important for the legitimacy and ownership of the curriculum in schools, but the central question in this study is whether involvement in the process also

translates into influence over the final curriculum. This study presents the case of teacher involvement and influence in curriculum creation through participation in the official comment process. In 2020, Norway introduced a new national curriculum under the Knowledge Promotion Reform 2020 (LK20). During the development of the LK20 curriculum, all stakeholders were invited by the central authorities to participate in an official digital comment process over a two-year period during which they could provide feedback on the draft curriculum and provide input into the new curriculum. This process was open to anyone who wanted to participate, and individual teachers were by far the largest group of participants. The broad involvement was intended to give legitimacy to the curriculum and increase local ownership, especially for schools and teachers. However, teacher involvement and consultation did not always mean that teachers had real influence over the final curriculum. The purpose of this article is therefore to shed light on the complex process of involving teachers in curriculum creation and to investigate the influence that individual teachers may

have on the final curriculum through their participation in the formal comment process. Influence here is understood as the ability of actors to shape decisions according to their preferences.

The study in this article focuses on a major new element of the curriculum, the interdisciplinary topic of democracy and citizenship, and analyzes how teachers influence the content of the new curriculum. Qualitative document analysis and reflexive thematic analysis are applied to the draft curriculum, responses to the official comment process, and the final curriculum. The main object of study of this research is teachers and teacher influence. Another group of actors in this study are subject experts from higher education. This study focuses on an important and major new element in the national curriculum: the interdisciplinary topic of democracy and citizenship in the field of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Norwegian education policy emphasizes how English is essential to deal with the contemporary globalized world, and the EFL subject is an interesting and relevant case in the wider international academic

context since English is a common foreign language in schools in many parts of the world.

The analysis shows that teachers' opinions were disregarded during the development process, while content suggested by educational experts was given prominence. In the final curriculum, teachers' suggestions for content were omitted. This finding may have consequences for future reforms as well as for the interpretation and operationalization of the curriculum in schools. The strategy for curriculum development outlined emphasized broad involvement and encouraged all actors in the education sector to engage in a formal digital comment process. Such involvement was described as 'critical for the implementation of the reform'. Between September 2017 and March 2019, five comment phases took place. In each phase, a draft curriculum and a digital questionnaire were published on the Norwegian Directorate of Education and Training website. Individuals could easily access the documents and provide feedback and input on the draft. The transparency of the process and the broad involvement of relevant actors

as well as the general public constitute a new and innovative way to develop a national curriculum in Norway. The comment process was open to anyone who wanted to participate, and this resulted in a large-scale response from interested actors, with individual or small groups of teachers from across the country forming the largest respondent group.

The author found a clear example of the emphasis on intercultural competence in the final curriculum LK20. The concept permeates the curriculum for all 11 years of compulsory EFL in the Norwegian school system. From the very first paragraph, it becomes clear that intercultural competence is an essential part of EFL. The text explaining the core values of the subject states that English is important for cultural understanding and communication, that English lays the foundation for communication with others regardless of cultural and linguistic background, and that EFL 'will help students to develop an intercultural understanding of different ways of living, ways of thinking and communication patterns'. This is continued in the description of the core elements, which states that through

working with different types of texts, students will develop intercultural competence that enables them to deal with different ways of thinking, living and communicating. The analysis shows that the opinions of EFL experts on intercultural competence are strongly emphasized in the final curriculum, while teachers' input on political aspects is neglected. Intercultural competence is clearly emphasized in the EFL curriculum LK20, which covers a large and significant part of the competence objectives, core elements and core values.

Involving teachers in the development of the national curriculum is one way to increase credibility and commitment to the curriculum, as well as making the decision-making process more accountable and transparent, thereby increasing trust in authority. The authors found that teachers participating in the development of the national curriculum found themselves caught between worlds of expertise. The process was characterized by a negotiation between different types of knowledge valued by teachers and experts. Teachers brought practical, hands-on knowledge about their

subjects and students, but this knowledge was considered less valuable than expert knowledge. It could be that different ways of producing knowledge based on research in academia or based on experience in schools have different hierarchical statuses, which again could influence the process of selecting content for the curriculum.

4. Reconceptualizing open schooling: towards a multidimensional model of school openness (Sarid et al., 2024)

This article sets out against the backdrop that 'Open schools' have become a rapidly growing theme in discourse on how to rethink education for the 21st century in recent years. It addresses the gap between calls for open school approaches in policy papers and international reports and the dearth of rigorous academic discourse on what open schools mean theoretically and practically in terms of school organisation and curriculum. To this end, it presents an ecological model of school openness comprising eight interrelated dimensions: shared governance, 'open' curriculum, internal school community, learning community, student participation, social engagement, parent

engagement and community collaboration. These dimensions are organised into three categories, which take into account the organisational, pedagogical and communal aspects of school openness. The multidimensional nature of the model presented here provides a more sophisticated and nuanced account of open schools that recognises the complexities and challenges that the move towards greater openness poses for school communities. From an educational research perspective, the model serves to inform understanding and examination of the multidimensionality of opening schools to communities. From an educational practice perspective, this model can spark deep and meaningful dialogue within school teams about what open schools are and their benefits.

Although some progress has been made in the articulation and, more specifically, the practical implementation of open schools including their accompanying specific tasks, certain aspects of open schools remain underdeveloped theoretically. We identify three major theoretical gaps in this discourse: (1) the current understanding of open

schools lacks a clearly conceptualized relationship to community and community building. While collaboration and partnership with community stakeholders are highlighted, various aspects of the community approach are not explicitly articulated and organized into a coherent framework of school openness. The dimensions of shared governance and community-based curriculum design adapted with and for communities are case in point; (2) the current discourse of open schools is closely linked to science education and inquiry-based pedagogy. While RRI and inquiry-based processes are central to the current understanding of open schools, they need to be expanded further into a whole-school approach that applies to the entire school curriculum. Thus, a more general or expanded conceptualization is needed, one that takes into account the organizational, pedagogical, and communal dimensions of school organization. (3) The current discourse typically articulates open schools, or school openness, by listing key features. This method of articulation does not address the complex relationships among the various features of

openness and ignores the dynamic and complex nature of school openness. A more sophisticated and nuanced account of open schools is needed, one that identifies the interconnections among the dimensions of school openness with an awareness of the complexities and challenges posed by the movement toward greater openness in relation to the school community. The multidimensional model presented here seeks to address these three gaps.

The model of school openness presented in this work assumes that 'open schools' is a useful concept for reimagining schools in line with current realities. Other related visions for schools are set out in international research and reports. However, given that policy reports implementing open schools influence policy makers, it is increasingly clear that a more in-depth theoretical account of school openness is needed for it to be a viable reform initiative. The model of school openness introduced here is one element in a broader effort to gain an understanding of what open schools are and their contribution to school learning and curriculum. Further

research is needed to empirically validate the model, the relationships it articulates between its dimensions, and to consider its overall applicability to the development of open schools in diverse contexts.

E. Conclusions

Based on several literature studies above that have been published or researched, it can be seen that there is a very large influence between the openness of teachers and related parties in determining a curriculum planning, so that in its implementation it is in accordance with the conditions of students, educational goals and must be adjusted to the student's environment. In the implementation of the independent curriculum in Indonesia, it is very appropriate and relevant to apply a curriculum model like this, because it prioritizes freedom of imagination in carrying out the teaching and learning process, both from teachers and from students. Teachers have the freedom to use learning strategies with various methods, models and learning media that vary for students. Likewise with the students themselves, they have

the freedom to determine for themselves how their learning process is, with the broadest possible freedom to explore knowledge, skills, and attitudes to achieve educational goals.

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