

## **Implementation of the Independent Curriculum at SMA Negeri 1 Kayuagung**

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**Abstract:** This study aims to determine and describe the implementation of learning, constraints, and solutions to overcome the obstacles in the implementation of the Independent Curriculum in learning management at SMA Negeri 1 Kayuagung. This type of research is descriptive qualitative research. Data collection tools use interviews, observation, documentation and literature review methods. Data analysis techniques use descriptive qualitative analysis techniques. The results showed that the implementation of the Independent Curriculum in the learning process at SMA Negeri 1 Kayuagung was carried out well but there are obstacles, and in this paper, we provided the solutions.

**Keywords:** Implementation, Independent Curriculum, Obstacles and Solution.

### **A. Introduction**

One of the educational successes can be measured through the extent of student learning achievement. Low student learning achievement indicates the low quality of educational institutions. Indonesia has not shown the expected quality and success. National education has not been able to create superior human resources, both in terms of intellectuality, morality, spirituality, professionalism and the ability of national competitiveness or competition (Utamy, 2020). Widodo (2015) in his research suggests that one of the causes of the low quality of education in Indonesia is low learning achievement. Then research conducted by Oktriany et al (2015) which suggests that school output is of high quality if student achievement is high, both in academic achievement and non-academic achievement.

From the explanation above, it can be stated that learning achievement is the main goal in the educational process. To achieve maximum learning achievement, effective and quality learning is certainly needed. As stated by Setyosari (2017) that effective learning is usually characterized and measured by the level of achievement which shows that a number of learning experiences internally can be accepted by students. Kyriacou (2011) suggests that effective learning includes two main things, namely active learning time and learning quality. The first pertains to the amount of

time devoted by students during the lesson. How the students engage, engage, in the learning process to achieve the expected goals. The second has to do with the actual quality of learning itself. That is, how the learning process or interaction can take place between teacher-student, student-student and student-learning resources (Setyosari, 2017).

Thus, effective learning cannot be separated from quality learning because the quality of learning outcomes depends on the effectiveness of learning that occurs or occurs in the learning process itself. Joyce et al., (2009) suggest that more than forty years of research data that have been collected show that students who receive high-quality learning show more successful learning than students who do not obtain quality learning.

The quality of the education and learning process needs to be aligned with existing process standards. Process standards, as stated in article (1) of Government Regulation Number 19 of 2005 concerning National Education Standards, one of the standards that must be developed is process standards. Process standards are national education standards related to the implementation of learning in educational units to achieve graduate competence, process standards contain minimum criteria for the learning process in primary and secondary education units in all jurisdictions of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia. This process standard applies to primary and secondary education levels in formal pathways, both in the package system and in the semester credit system. Process standards include planning the learning process, implementing the learning process, assessing learning outcomes, and supervising the learning process for the implementation of an effective and efficient learning process (Regulation Minister Education, number 41 of 2007 concerning Process Standards).

The problem faced today related to its implementation is curriculum changes that continue to be carried out by the government. To date, Indonesia's national curriculum has been changed 10 times: 1947, 1952, 1964, 1968, 1975, 1984, 1994, 2004, 2006, and 2013 (Setiawan, 2019). Currently, the curriculum used is an independent curriculum. The independent curriculum is defined as a curriculum with diverse intracurricular learning where the content will be more optimal with the aim that students have enough time to explore concepts and strengthen competencies (Kemendikbudristek, 2022).

An independent curriculum is a challenge that must be carried out by education units. The independent curriculum demands the maximum application of learning, both students and teachers. Teachers must have four competencies and should not reduce them because they are very influential on the learning process. Therefore, many problems are found in the implementation of the independent curriculum.

One of the most basic problems is inadequate school infrastructure in the implementation of an independent curriculum that emphasizes the use of technology and information in its implementation.

As stated by Ruja & Sukamto (2015), technology is very influential in improving the quality of schools. This is what makes most schools constrained in the independent curriculum. Because of this technology, there needs to be complete infrastructure facilities in a school. In addition, there are still many teachers who do not understand its application because the independent curriculum emphasizes the teacher's ability to direct students to be more creative, active, productive and think critically (Sudarsana, 2018).

To overcome the problems that have been stated above, the principal must be able to carry out his role effectively so that the implementation of the independent curriculum can achieve learning objectives. Therefore, the principal through his leadership function has a major role in efforts to apply the independent curriculum to improve the quality of learning in schools. As stated by Sergiovanni (1987) that the quality of education received in schools will produce quality learning as a product of the effectiveness of the principal's leadership. Then Townsend & Butterworth (1992) some of the things that determine the realization of quality education are 1) the effectiveness of the principal's leadership style; 2) continuity of effective teaching and learning process; and 3) relevant curriculum.

With a mature strategy, the principal as a leader can mobilize all elements of the school to support the achievement of effective and quality learning through the implementation of an independent curriculum. In particular, teachers who are in direct contact with the learning process. Because the independent curriculum emphasizes that the position of the teacher is very strategic in determining student success for the achievement of the expected competency standards. The teacher is a figure who will determine the depth and breadth of the subject matter, determine the evaluation tools and learning resources that will be presented in front of the class. This task is outlined in learning tools in the form of Learning Objective Flow and Teaching Tools (Teaching Module). The ability of teachers to plan, create and implement learning cannot be separated from the guidance of the principal in guiding and directing special teachers in academic fields (Saragih, 2016). The learning leadership strategies to improve learning effectively are 1) modeling; 2) monitoring; and 3) professional dialogue and discussion. The existence of this support occurs because one of the efforts to carry out strengthening of teachers is by monitoring classes and monitoring teacher performance continuously. In addition, school principals must hold professional dialogues and discussions with teachers personally to discuss improving the quality of student learning processes and outcomes (Usman & Raharjo, 2013).

In addition, in order to achieve effective and quality learning, the principal must encourage the implementation of a maximum of three core activities in classroom management, the core activities are 1) creating the right learning climate including warmth and enthusiasm, challenges, variety, flexibility, emphasis on positive things, and inculcation of self-discipline; 2) arrange the study room including student seating arrangements, educational media arrangements; and 3) managing teaching and learning activities including lesson opening and closing skills, explanation skills, questioning skills, reinforcement skills, skills to use learning media, skills to guide small group discussions, class management skills, variation holding skills and individual and small group teaching skills (Wiyani, 2013).

The above statement is supported by the results of research conducted by Riyanto & Masniar (2019) which shows that: 1) there is an influence on the managerial competence of school principals with student learning achievement of 6.52%; 2) the managerial influence of the principal on student achievement through teacher achievement motivation 32.12%; 3) There is a direct influence between teacher achievement motivation and student learning achievement of 46.06%. So overall the managerial competence of the principal, teacher achievement motivation on student learning achievement amounted to 84.70%. This means that if the managerial competence of the principal and the motivation for teacher achievement are improved, it will be able to increase student achievement.

This research was conducted at SMA Negeri 1 Kayuagung. Researchers chose SMA Negeri 1 Kayuagung considering that the school had used an independent curriculum in the learning process. In addition, the school is a public school that has excellence when viewed from the achievements that have been achieved. SMA Negeri 1 Kayuagung, which currently has the status of A accreditation, has competent educator and non-educator resources and adequate facilities and infrastructure as well as a strategic and easy to reach school location.

Based on the results of initial observations made by researchers from May 9, 2022 to May 20, 2022, researchers found indicators that stated that teachers of SMA Negeri 1 Kayuagung had not been able to apply the independent curriculum to the overall learning process. The results of the researchers' observations concluded that the difficulty of teachers in applying the independent curriculum in total because teachers have been developing to adjust to the learning needs and characteristics of students at SMA Negeri 1 Kayuagung cannot be implemented in the independent curriculum where the independent curriculum is prepared in one package with the flow of learning objectives making teachers have to prepare the learning process in accordance with the flow of objectives predefined learning. The problem that arises

is the limited ability of teachers to use the dominant learning facilities and infrastructure required in the learning process using an independent curriculum.

In addition, there is no continuous training program that can be followed by all teachers, which is the reason why teachers have not been able to apply the independent curriculum in total in the learning process. This can be seen from some teachers who have designed lesson plans using an independent curriculum, but in the teaching and learning process, some of these teachers still use semi-conventional methods, where teachers seem to be more active than students, although occasionally students are given the opportunity to ask and answer questions. Researchers consider that this learning process is not in accordance with the independent curriculum learning process where teachers try to facilitate and learning that must be student-centered.

In accordance with what was stated by Smith & Ragan (2013) which states that learning is the delivery of information and activities that facilitate or facilitate students to achieve the expected specific learning goals. In the learning process, learning is the center or center of classroom experience for students and teachers both at the primary and secondary education levels.

Setyosari, (2017) who revealed that in order for an effective learning process to occur, it is necessary to focus on learners learner-centered learning instead of teacher-centered and knowledge is seen as a social construct, which can be done through peer interaction, assessing learning activities and cooperation.

Thus, from the observations made by researchers, it can be stated that the implementation of the independent curriculum at SMA Negeri 1 Kayuagung is still limited to the implementation of learning administration. Or in other words, the implementation of the independent curriculum at SMA Negeri 1 Kayuagung still has not absorbed the characteristics of the curriculum. This condition may be caused by the lack of teacher competence which is highly demanded in the implementation of independent curriculum-based learning, the weakening of the spirit of education, and not yet optimal in carrying out their professional duties.

From the initial observations, it is known that the principal of SMA Negeri 1 Kayuagung has given directions to attend training both carried out by the Education Office and outside it. However, researchers consider that these training activities have not been effective in improving teacher competence. Because the training activity is not attended by all teachers but only represented by one or two teachers. Then the teacher who has the teacher is expected to be able to share with other teachers about the material that has been learned. However, this did not go well, because the teachers who attended the training also still did not fully master what

material had been learned during the training. Therefore, the principal's strategy is employed to improve the quality of learning, especially learning that is able to implement the independent curriculum optimally.

Indonesia has an educational vision, namely "Realizing an advanced Indonesia of sovereignty, independence, and personality through the creation of Pancasila students". Pancasila students are lifelong students who have competence, character, and behave in accordance with the values of Pancasila. The structure of the independent curriculum in primary and secondary education is divided into 2 (two) main activities, namely: 1) intracurricular learning; and 2) projects to strengthen the profile of Pancasila students in co-curricular activities. Intracurricular learning activities for each subject refer to learning outcomes. Project activities to strengthen the profile of Pancasila students are aimed at strengthening the achievement of the Pancasila student profile which refers to the Graduate Competency Standards. So that one of the efforts in realizing the profile of Pancasila students is to implement an independent curriculum. From initial observations, it is known that SMA Negeri 1 Kayuagung has difficulty in implementing the profile of Pancasila students in co-curricular activities at school.

The 2013 curriculum also recognizes the term character education, but is integrated in subjects. In the Merdeka curriculum, character strengthening through the Pancasila student profile strengthening project has its own structure or portion in the curriculum. The implementation of the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project as stipulated in the Independent Curriculum is 20-30 percent of the number of lesson hours per year. The implementation of the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project is carried out flexibly in terms of content, activities, and implementation time. The project is designed separately from the intracurricular. Project objectives, content, and learning activities do not have to be tied to intracurricular objectives and subject matter. Education units can involve the community and/or the world of work to plan and organize projects to strengthen the profile of Pancasila students. This is the latest from previous research.

Based on the explanation described above, it can be concluded that the teachers of SMA Negeri 1 Kayuagung do not fully know and understand about the implementation of the independent curriculum, so based on the background above, the author tries to observe and know how the role of the principal so that learning can run effectively and with quality through the implementation of the independent curriculum in the teaching and learning process. Therefore, the author is encouraged to conduct research with the title, Implementation of an independent curriculum at SMA Negeri 1 Kayuagung.

## **B. Methods**

This research uses descriptive qualitative methods. Moleong (2011) mentions qualitative research as a research procedure that produces descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words of people and observable behavior, where the method used emphasizes the process of tracing data/information until it is felt that it has been used enough to make an interpretation. Then Iskandar (2018) suggests that qualitative research is research that adheres to the naturalistic paradigm or phenomenology of what is understood by research subjects such as perceptual behavior, motivation, action, etc., holistically, and by means of description in the form of words and language, in a special natural context and by utilizing various scientific methods. The descriptive qualitative methods are research that gives a careful picture of certain individuals or groups about the conditions and symptoms that occur. In this study, researchers will describe the findings of researchers related to the implementation of the independent curriculum at SMA Negeri 1 Kayuagung.

## **C. Results and Discussion**

### **Implementation of Independent Curriculum-Based Learning in Learning Management at SMA Negeri 1 Kayuagung**

Based on the results of the research, it can be stated that the implementation of the Independent Curriculum in the learning process is the initial steps of implementing the Independent Curriculum at SMA Negeri 1 Kayuagung which includes (1) efforts to build strong awareness and understanding of the Independent Curriculum; (2) establish a curriculum development team; (3) adapt existing lesson plans or design new lesson plans that reflect the principles of the Independent Curriculum; (4) create a learning environment that supports the Independent Curriculum; (5) encourage students' active participation in the learning process; (6) provide training and support for teachers; (7) provide space for teachers and students to innovate and explore topics that interest them; (8) involve parents and the community in the implementation of the independent curriculum.

Furthermore, the application of the Independent Curriculum in the learning process is carried out by planning learning based on the Independent Curriculum by (1) identifying the learning outcomes to be taught to students; (2) tailor lesson plans to meet students' needs, interests, and abilities; (3) develop clear and measurable learning objectives that reflect the learning outcomes to be achieved by students; (4) choose learning strategies that are in accordance with the learning outcomes taught and student learning styles; (5) provide diverse learning resources, including textbooks, digital materials, journals, videos, online resources, or interactive materials; (6) determine assessment methods relevant to the learning outcomes taught; (7) pay attention to student diversity in lesson planning; (8) plan the use of

technology as a learning aid; (9) evaluate the learning planning that has been carried out and respond to changes in student needs or the effectiveness of learning strategies.

Furthermore, the implementation of Independent Curriculum-based learning was carried out by (1) Teachers of SMA Negeri 1 Kayuagung starting learning by building student involvement; (2) The teacher conveys the learning outcomes to be taught to students; (3) The teacher acts as a facilitator; (4) Teachers support students in developing critical thinking, collaboration, communication, and creativity skills through activities that involve students directly; (5) Teachers encourage student learning independence; (6) Teachers provide guides, learning resources, or reference materials accessible to students to support independent learning; (7) Teachers utilize technology in learning by using learning platforms; (8) Teachers provide constructive feedback to students; (9) Teachers encourage students to reflect on their own learning outcomes, identifying strengths and areas for improvement; (10) Teachers adapt and develop learning according to student responses and evaluation results.

The evaluation stage of Curriculum Merdeka-based learning is taken with the following steps: (1) Teachers of SMA Negeri 1 Kayuagung use formative assessment during learning to monitor student progress and provide constructive feedback; (2) Teachers of SMA Negeri 1 Kayuagung conduct summative assessments as the final evaluation of a learning period; (3) The teacher encourages students to do self-reflection, that is, students evaluate themselves; (3) Teachers can use student portfolios as a form of independent curriculum-based assessment; (4) Teachers can involve students in the collaborative assessment process; (5) Teachers apply authentic assessments that reflect real-life situations and the context in which competencies are used; (6) Teachers use clear and detailed assessment rubrics to provide objective and transparent feedback to students; (7) Teachers utilize technology in the evaluation process.

### **Constraints on the Implementation of Independent Curriculum-Based Learning in Learning Management at SMA Negeri 1 Kayuagung**

The problems faced by teachers in managing learning based on the Merdeka curriculum include (1) Limited school resources; (2) Some teachers are still fixated on traditional learning approaches and find it difficult to switch to more flexible and actively engaged approaches; (3) Lack of teacher skills and competencies; (4) The implementation of the Independent Curriculum requires more time and effort from teachers in planning and implementing flexible and actively involved learning; (5) Students have diverse needs, interests, and learning styles; (6) Centralized curriculum limits teachers' creativity and flexibility in designing student-centered

learning; (7) The project of strengthening the profile of Pancasila students is difficult to implement in school co-curricular activities.

As revealed by the Putri, et al., (2022) stated that many problems experienced by educators in developing learning tools, including not being able to read Learning Outcomes (CP) well, not being able to determine the Learning Objectives (TP) from CP, not being able to compile Learning Objectives Flow (ATP) from TP, difficulty developing teaching modules and independent curricula allowing thematic forms.

Furthermore, there are several obstacles such as the lack of understanding of the concept of the Independent Curriculum by educators, students, educators, and even parents, thus hampering the process of its implementation. This is in line with what was conveyed by Miladiah, et al., (2023) said that with a lack of understanding of educators, students, education staff, and even parents will result in an independent learning process that is not fully achieved according to the concept of the Independent Curriculum.

Other obstacles as conveyed by Amalia & Sa'adah (2020), the results of their research show that COVID-19 has an impact on teaching and learning activities in schools with several challenges that need to be faced related to limited adaptability and mastery of information technology by teachers and students, inadequate facilities and infrastructure, and limited internet access and determining assessments.

This is reinforced by the research of Zulaiha, et al., (2022) who stated that teachers do not have much difficulty in conducting diagnostic, formative, and summative assessments, it's just that they are constrained in determining assessments that are in accordance with the learning objectives to be achieved, determining assessments during project-based learning. This confuses teachers because of the many types or forms of assessment such as presentations, projects, oral, written and so on.

### **Solutions to Overcome Obstacles in the Implementation of Independent Curriculum-Based Learning in Learning Management at SMA Negeri 1 Kayuagung**

The solutions taken in overcoming obstacles are by (1) Providing training and professional development to teachers to improve their understanding of the concepts and principles of the Independent Curriculum; (2) Increased access to resources; (3) Encourage collaboration between teachers through learning communities, both within and between schools, to share experiences, ideas, and best practices in implementing the Independent Curriculum; (4) Provide coaching and mentoring to teachers who have difficulty in implementing the Independent Curriculum; (5) Conducting differentiated learning in the implementation process of the Independent Curriculum; (6) Increase flexibility and adaptability in learning

planning and implementation; (7) Optimization of the Merdeka Mengajar Platform; (8) Encourage a strong and supportive leadership role in supporting the implementation of the Independent Curriculum.

To overcome the obstacles encountered, especially in optimizing teachers' skills and competencies in understanding the Independent Curriculum, SMA Negeri 1 Kayuagung formed a learning community to encourage collaboration between teachers. This learning community holds regular meetings every 1 month to discuss matters related to the implementation of the Independent Curriculum at SMA Negeri 1 Kayuagung such as sharing experiences, ideas, and good practices in the implementation of the Independent Curriculum. This is in line with research conducted by Riowati, & Yoenanto, (2022) which states that every teacher and education practitioner must understand the role of the mobilizing teacher, one of which is in the scope of the learning community, where the mobilizing teacher acts as a trainer for other fellow teachers and provides changes to the quality of learning and teaching as an ideal educator and able to develop themselves independently.

Then, to bridge the needs, interests, and learning styles of diverse students, SMA Negeri 1 Kayuagung conducts differentiated learning. Differentiated learning is an effort to adjust the learning process in the classroom to meet the learning needs of each individual. However, differentiated learning does not mean that teachers have to teach 35 different ways to teach 35 students. Nor does it mean that teachers have to increase the number of questions for students who work faster than others. In differentiated learning, teachers must have innovation in choosing methods, models, and strategies in an effort to improve the quality of learning in the classroom.

Differentiated learning is an adjustment to student interests, learning profiles, and learning readiness in order to achieve improved learning outcomes. This is in line with research conducted by Herwina (2021) stating that in classes that apply differentiated learning, teachers must think that students have diverse learning needs and are different from one another. Teachers must be proactive in finding and planning in various ways to express how their students learn. Furthermore, in classes that apply differentiated learning, group formation will be flexible, where students who have strengths in certain fields will join and cooperate with other friends. Students who are strong in one field do not necessarily have the same strengths in another field. For example, maybe the student will have strength in understanding a reading, not necessarily in writing, he will be able to write with correct spelling or write sentences correctly or can also experience weakness in counting and others. In this flexible group, the teacher will understand that there may be some students who are doing new tasks but work slowly and will then be given explanations to speed up their work while others learn but done slowly. In

differentiated learning, groups will always change based on student needs and learning experiences.

To overcome the obstacles in the implementation of the Pancasila student profile strengthening project, based on the results of an interview with Martha Rahmi, data was obtained that SMA Negeri 1 Kayuagung did the following: 1) The project module was made early as a guideline for implementing the project to strengthen the profile of Pancasila students, 2) Project coordinators and facilitators conducted literacy studies through the Platform Merdeka Mengajar (PMM), 3) MoUs with related parties, especially at the project identification stage that required Guest Speaker, and 4) Coordination with the Principal regarding all matters related to the implementation of the Pancasila student profile strengthening project at SMA Negeri 1 Kayuagung.

This is in line with research conducted by Susilawati & Sarifuddin (2021) whose research results show that: 1) the Pancasila Student Profile is essentially one of the efforts to internalize Pancasila values in learning, 2) PMM has a significant role in the application of the Pancasila Student Profile in learning the new paradigm, and 3) Internalization of Pancasila values in the application of the Pancasila Student Profile in the New Normal period assisted by the Platform Merdeka Mengajar by applying it in the daily character that is built and brought to life in each individual student through school culture, intracurricular, co-curricular, and extracurricular learning at school.

To overcome obstacles in optimizing the leadership role of the principal by carrying out supervision activities and formulating supervision activities to follow up on the results of supervision of learning implementation. Then the principal conducted some preliminary studies as material before supervising the teachers. Thus, the principal and a team that has been formed consisting of 2 teachers have prepared a program in advance of supervision activities before its implementation.

#### **D. Conclusion**

The principal plans the implementation of learning supervision of teachers to see the development and changes made by teachers in the teaching and learning process. At the end of the even semester of the current year, an evaluation and follow-up assessment of teacher performance in managing Curriculum Merdeka-based learning is carried out with the aim of being able to find out the extent to which these programs have been realized and which activities need to be revised because they are not relevant to be implemented. Likewise, it can identify things that can hinder the implementation process of the Merdeka Curriculum.

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