

Transformation of Education Management in Supporting The Implementation of The Independent Curriculum in Indonesia

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Abstrack

Transformation of education management is an urgent need in facing global changes and internal challenges of the education system in Indonesia. The Independent Curriculum initiated by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology aims to provide flexibility in the learning process, emphasize competency, and accommodate technological developments and community needs. This article discusses the transformation of education management in supporting the implementation of the Independent Curriculum in Indonesia. The main focus of the discussion includes changes in the paradigm of school management, strengthening the role of the principal, and strategies for managing human resources and educational infrastructure. This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study method in several schools in Indonesia that have implemented the Independent Curriculum. The results of the study show that the transformation of education management has a crucial role in the successful implementation of the Independent Curriculum, especially in terms of principal leadership, teacher competency development, technology utilization, and competency-based learning evaluation.

1. Introduction

Educational planning is a fundamental aspect in building an effective and sustainable education system. In Indonesia, educational planning has undergone significant transformation since the independence era until now, reflecting changes in the social, economic, and political context of the country. According to Tilaar and Nugroho (2016) educational planning in Indonesia has evolved from a highly centralized model during the New Order era to a more decentralized and participatory approach in the reform era.

In this context, the Independent Curriculum was introduced by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology in response to the urgent need to improve Indonesia's education system. This curriculum emphasizes flexible learning, focuses on developing student competencies, and provides space for teacher creativity and innovation in managing the teaching and learning process. Through the Independent Curriculum, it is hoped that students can be more active in developing their interests and talents, and be better prepared to face the challenges of the increasingly dynamic world of work and community life.

However, the success of the implementation of the Independent Curriculum is not only determined by the quality of the curriculum, but also by how education management at the school and regional levels adapt to these changes. Effective education management is crucial to ensure that curriculum changes can be implemented optimally, especially in terms of human resource management, infrastructure, and the use of technology. Principals, teachers, education personnel, and other stakeholders must be able to collaborate to create an environment that supports the implementation of the Independent Curriculum properly.

This article aims to analyze the transformation of education management needed to support the implementation of the Independent Curriculum in Indonesia. The main focus of the discussion includes paradigm shifts in school management, increasing human resource capacity, utilizing technology, and improving governance that is adaptive to the needs of the digital era. Through this analysis, it is hoped that a more comprehensive understanding can be obtained of the strategies and steps that need to be taken to ensure the successful implementation of the Independent Curriculum in various educational contexts in Indonesia.

Literature review

1. Independent Curriculum

The Independent Curriculum is the latest innovation in the Indonesian education system designed to respond to the needs of 21st-century learning. The Independent Curriculum focuses on freedom and flexibility for schools, teachers, and students in designing learning that is relevant to the local context and the interests and needs of individual students (Kemendikbudristek 2021). This concept is in line with the importance of systemic educational change and involves all components of education (Fullan 2007). Some of the main principles of the Independent Curriculum include:

- a. **Competency-Based Learning:** This curriculum emphasizes the development of basic competencies such as critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication skills. This is in line with the concept of 21st century skills (UNESCO 2015).
- b. **Flexibility in Learning:** Teachers are given greater freedom in designing the learning process, choosing materials and methods that best suit the characteristics of students and the needs of the surrounding environment.
- c. **Project-Based Learning:** The implementation of project-based learning is an important component in the Independent Curriculum, in line with the theory of constructivism in education (Creswell, 2014).
- d. **Technology Integration:** The Independent Curriculum encourages the integration of technology in the learning process) is a crucial aspect in modern education management (Robbins & Coulter 2018).

2. Education Management

Educational management plays a vital role in the implementation of the new curriculum. defines educational management as the process of managing educational resources to achieve educational goals effectively and efficiently. In the context of the Independent Curriculum, the transformation of educational management is the key to successful implementation (Sagala, 2013).

Instructional leadership in educational management, where the principal acts as a learning leader who encourages innovation and teacher professional development. This is very relevant to the demands of the Independent Curriculum which requires transformational leadership at the school level (Glickman et al, 2018). Adaptive education management to global change. In the context of the Independent Curriculum, this means that school management must be able to integrate technology, encourage teacher creativity, and facilitate more flexible and student-centered learning (Tilaar 2014).

2. Method

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study method to investigate the transformation of educational management in the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in Indonesia. This method was chosen because it allows for in-depth exploration of complex phenomena in real contexts (Yin, 2018). This study adopts a multiple case study design with a descriptive-analytic approach. Multiple case studies allow researchers to explore differences within and between cases, with the aim of replicating findings across cases (Stake, 2006). The research sample was selected purposively, involving 10 schools in Indonesia that have implemented the Merdeka Curriculum. The sample selection criteria include: Variation in geographical location (urban, suburban, and rural), School status (public and private). Education level Elementary School (SD), Junior High School (SMP), and Senior High School (SMA). Data was collected through three main methods:

- a. **In-depth interviews:** Conducted with principals, teachers and other stakeholders.

- b. Participant observation: Involves direct observation of the school management process and implementation of the Independent Curriculum.
- c. Document analysis: Includes a review of school policies, Independent Curriculum implementation guidelines, and internal school reports.

Data analysis used a thematic approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006) with the following stages:

- a. Familiarization with data
- b. Initial coding
- c. Theme search
- d. Theme review
- e. Defining and naming themes
- f. Report production

To increase the validity of the research, data triangulation and member checking were carried out with research participants.

3. Result and Discussion

3.1 Transformation of the Principal's Role

The results of the study show that the implementation of the Independent Curriculum has driven a significant transformation in the role of the principal. There is a shift from the traditional administrative role to the role of an instructional leader.

3.2 Visionary Leadership

Principals who are successful in implementing the Independent Curriculum demonstrate characteristics of visionary leadership. They are able to articulate a clear vision of how the Independent Curriculum can improve the quality of learning in their schools. For example, the Principal said: "We see the Independent Curriculum as an opportunity to create a more dynamic and relevant learning environment for our students. Our vision is to develop a school that encourages creativity, innovation, and 21st century skills. This finding is in line with the concept of transformational leadership where leaders inspire and motivate their followers to achieve ambitious shared goals (Bass & Riggio 2006).

3.3 Teacher Professional Development Facilitator

Principals also act as key facilitators in teacher professional development. They are active in planning and coordinating training programs that support teachers in adopting learning approaches that are in line with the Independent Curriculum. The Principal explained: "We hold weekly training sessions where teachers can share best practices and discuss challenges in implementing project-based learning. I also encourage teachers to attend webinars and external workshops related to the Independent Curriculum." This role is in line with the concept of instructional leadership emphasized by Hallinger (2003), where principals are actively involved in curriculum development and improving the quality of teaching.

3.4 Teacher Competency Development

The implementation of the Independent Curriculum requires a significant increase in teacher competency. The research results identified several key areas in developing teacher competency.

3.5 Creativity and Innovation in Learning

Teachers reported an increase in their creativity and innovation in designing learning. For example, a teacher from a junior high school stated: This finding is consistent with the constructivist

learning principle that emphasizes the importance of students' active involvement in constructing their knowledge (Vygotsky, 1978).

3.6 Digital Literacy and Technology Integration

Improving teacher competency in digital literacy and technology integration is a major focus. Many schools hold special training to improve teacher skills in using digital learning platforms and educational technology tools. The importance of teachers' digital literacy in the context of modern education has been emphasized by several researchers, including in their TPACK (Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge) framework (Mishra & Koehler 2006).

3.7 Infrastructure and Technology Management

The implementation of the Independent Curriculum also requires significant changes in the management of school infrastructure and technology. The results of the study showed that there was quite a large variation between schools in terms of technological infrastructure readiness.

3.8 Digital Divide

There is a significant gap between schools in urban and remote areas in terms of access to technological infrastructure. Schools in large cities reported: "We have successfully implemented an integrated learning management system (LMS), allowing students and teachers to interact online and access learning materials at any time." In contrast, Principals in remote areas stated: "We still rely on traditional learning methods due to limited access to the internet and digital devices. This is a big challenge in implementing certain aspects of the Merdeka Curriculum." These findings underscore the importance of policies that address the digital divide, as discussed by Van Dijk in his theory of the digital divide (2020).

3.9 Innovation in Limitations

Some schools with limited resources have shown creativity in overcoming technological limitations. Schools, for example, have developed a rotation system for the use of computer labs and implemented innovative blended learning models. This approach reflects the concept of "frugal innovation" in education, where limited resources actually encourage creativity and efficiency (Radjou et al., 2012).

3.10 Competency Based Learning Evaluation

One of the crucial aspects in the implementation of the Independent Curriculum is the paradigm shift in learning evaluation. The results of the study show that this is one of the biggest challenges for teachers and school management.

3.11 Shifting from Summative to Formative Assessment

Many teachers report difficulties in shifting from traditional assessment systems that focus on end results (summative) to more process-based and ongoing assessments (formative). This shift is in line with formative assessment theory, which emphasizes the importance of ongoing feedback in the learning process (Black & Wiliam 2009).

3.12 Comprehensive Assessment Rubric Development

Some schools have begun to develop more comprehensive assessment rubrics to accommodate competency-based evaluations. Schools, for example, have developed portfolio assessment systems that cover multiple aspects of student development. This approach reflects the concept of authentic assessment proposed by (Wiggins 1990), which emphasizes the importance of assessments that reflect real-world performance.

3.13 Implementation Challenges and Adaptation Strategy

Despite many positive developments, the implementation of the Independent Curriculum also faces various challenges. Some of the main challenges identified in this study include:

1. Resistance to change: Some teachers and administrative staff show resistance to change, especially those who have long used traditional methods.

2. Resource constraints: Many schools face limitations in terms of budget, infrastructure and trained human resources.
3. Lack of in-depth understanding: Some stakeholders, including parents of students, do not fully understand the concept and objectives of the Independent Curriculum.
4. Coordination between stakeholders: There are challenges in coordinating various stakeholders, including local education offices, school committees, and communities.

To address these challenges, several adaptation strategies have been identified:

1. Intensive socialization and training programs: Many schools hold regular socialization sessions for teachers, staff, and parents to increase understanding of the Merdeka Curriculum.
2. Collaboration and sharing of best practices: There are initiatives to form networks between schools to share experiences and best practices in curriculum implementation.
3. Phased approach: Some schools take a phased implementation approach, starting with certain grades or subjects before implementing it across the board.
4. Partnerships with the private sector and universities: Some schools have formed partnerships with technology companies and universities to support infrastructure development and teacher capacity.

4. Conclusion

This study shows that the transformation of educational management has a crucial role in supporting the implementation of the Independent Curriculum in Indonesia. Some of the main conclusions that can be drawn are:

- a. The Role of the Principal: Visionary and transformational leadership from the principal is a key factor in the successful implementation of the Independent Curriculum. The principal needs to act as a learning leader who encourages innovation and professional development of teachers.
- b. Teacher Competency Development: Increasing teacher creativity, innovation, and digital literacy is the main focus in the transformation of education management. Continuous and contextual professional development programs are essential.
- c. Infrastructure and Technology Management: There is a significant digital divide between schools, but there are also creative innovations in overcoming resource constraints. Policies are needed that pay attention to equal access to technology.
- d. Learning Evaluation: The paradigm shift in evaluation from summative to formative assessment and the development of a more comprehensive assessment system are both challenges and opportunities in the implementation of the Independent Curriculum.
- e. Challenges and Adaptation: The implementation of the Independent Curriculum faces various challenges, but also gives rise to innovative adaptation strategies from various schools.

The transformation of education management in the context of the Independent Curriculum demands fundamental changes in the way of thinking and practice of school management. A holistic approach is needed, involving all stakeholders, and taking into account the diversity of local contexts to ensure the successful implementation of this curriculum nationally. Further research is needed to measure the long-term impact of this transformation of education management on the quality of learning and educational outcomes in Indonesia. In addition, comparative studies with other

countries that have implemented similar curriculum reforms can provide valuable insights for continuous improvement in the implementation of the Independent Curriculum.

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