



# Homeroom Teachers' Perception of the Implementation of the Independent Curriculum in Mathematics Learning in Elementary Schools: A Qualitative Study

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## Keywords

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## Abstract

Along with the times, education policies continue to change. One of the policies in Indonesia is the Independent Curriculum. This study aims to analyze the perception of homeroom teachers towards the implementation of the Independent Curriculum in mathematics learning in elementary schools. The method used is qualitative descriptive with interview techniques with third and sixth-grade homeroom teachers at State Elementary School Malang Regency. The data obtained was analyzed using a thematic approach to the results of interviews with the sources. The results show that teachers have a positive perception of the Independent Curriculum. The challenges faced include differences in students' abilities, limited media, and lack of teacher training. To overcome these challenges, teachers apply strategies such as contextual learning, Problem Based Learning, differentiated approaches, and the use of visual media. These strategies can increase student participation and understanding in mathematics learning. The results of this study are expected to be a reference in the development of teacher training and support the effectiveness of the implementation of the Independent Curriculum in elementary schools.

## 1. Introduction

Along with the times, education policies continue to change. One of the policies in Indonesia is the Independent Curriculum, which aims to provide flexibility to schools and teachers in developing competency-based learning to improve understanding for students (Widodo et al., 2023). This curriculum is designed so that learning can be adjusted to the needs of students. Thus, it is expected to be able to improve the quality of education more effectively.

The Independent Curriculum is a refinement of the 2013 curriculum by focusing on two main indicators. First literacy, which is the ability to read and write, as well as the ability to analyze and understand reading. Second numeracy, which is the ability related to numbers and the application of mathematical concepts (Dianastiti et al., 2024). Thus, the Independent Curriculum emphasizes literacy and numeracy skills as basic skills to understand and apply concepts in daily life.

In general, teachers' perception of the Independent Curriculum depends on experience, understanding, and readiness to implement it. According to Sunarni & Karyono (2022), it is stated that most teachers have a positive perception of the Independent Curriculum, especially in terms of flexibility and freedom in designing learning according to the needs of students. However, not a few also have the perception that this curriculum is a challenge faced by teachers. Thus, the success of the implementation of the Independent Curriculum is highly dependent on the readiness of teachers.

The implementation of the Independent Curriculum creates new challenges for teachers, especially in adapting learning to the Independent Curriculum. According to (Herdianto et al., 2024), many teachers in elementary schools still have difficulties in implementing learning based on the Independent Curriculum. The difficulties faced by teachers in implementing learning show the need for more intensive training and mentoring, especially in mathematics learning. In addition, teachers also face difficulties in adjusting learning strategies that suit the characteristics and needs of diverse students (Agustin et al., 2023). This diversity requires teachers to be more flexible in choosing inclusive learning strategies. Therefore, to ensure that the implementation of the Independent Curriculum runs effectively, training and assistance are needed for teachers to be able to adapt learning strategies in accordance with the principles of the Independent Curriculum and the needs of students.

Teachers need to develop various strategies in implementing the Independent Curriculum so that mathematics learning is more effective. Strategies that can be applied by teachers include project-based

learning, problem-based learning, and differentiated learning strategies to adapt learning to the needs of students (Rahma & Feny, 2023). By implementing these strategies, teachers can be more flexible in increasing students' understanding and motivation to learn mathematics. In addition, an effective strategy is contextual-based learning that connects mathematical concepts with students' daily lives (Purwanto et al., 2024). Contextual learning allows learners to be easier because the material taught is in accordance with the experience and the surrounding environment. By choosing the right strategy, teachers can optimize mathematics learning in accordance with the Independent Curriculum.

Several previous studies have examined teachers' perceptions of the implementation of the Independent Curriculum, especially in mathematics learning. Research conducted by Gusmawan & Herman (2023) discusses the perception of mathematics teachers. The findings in the study stated that teachers' perceptions are already in the sufficient category. However, teachers still have difficulties in compiling learning assessments in accordance with the Independent Curriculum. So, teachers need to take part in training that can improve teachers in the implementation of the Independent Curriculum.

The second research conducted by Fatmiyati (2022) discusses the perception of classroom teachers in implementing the Independent Curriculum. The findings in the study stated that in building teachers' perception of the Independent Curriculum, it can be seen from the quality and quantity of training that teachers follow. If the teacher has participated in the training, then the perception will be better. Based on this statement, the following is a comparison of previous research:

**Table 1. Comparison of Previous Research**

| No | Researchs  | Focus Research  | Main Findings  | Relevance  |
|----|--|---|--|--|
| 1  | Perception of Mathematics Teachers on Their Abilities in the Implementation of the Independent Curriculum. Gusmawan, D., & Herman, T. (2023)         | Teachers' ability to implement the curriculum and difficulties in preparing assessments | Perception is quite good, but teachers have difficulty compiling assessments according to the curriculum | The need for training in curriculum-based mathematics assessment     |
| 2  | Classroom Teachers' Perceptions in Implementing the Independent Learning Curriculum at SDN 140 Seluma on Mathematics Materials. Fatmiyati, N. (2022) | The effect of training on teacher perception  | Perception increases as more training is attended  | The importance of training to shape positive perceptions of teachers |

Based on the above statement, the two previous studies have similarities with this study, where the research discusses teachers' perceptions of the implementation of the Independent Curriculum in mathematics learning. The difference between the two previous studies and this study lies in the focus of the research. The first research focuses on teachers' ability to implement the curriculum and difficulties in compiling assessments. The second research focuses on the influence of training on teacher perception. This research focuses on the challenges and strategies of homeroom teachers in the implementation of the Independent Curriculum. However, there have not been many studies that have explored classroom teachers' perceptions of implementing strategies in mathematics subjects.

This study aims to analyze the perception of homeroom teachers towards the implementation of the Independent Curriculum in elementary schools. The analysis was carried out to determine the challenges and strategies of teachers in the implementation of the Independent Curriculum, especially in mathematics learning. The results of this research are expected to be a reference in designing training and mentoring programs for teachers. The implications of this research include increasing teachers' understanding of curriculum flexibility, so that they can be more adaptive in managing mathematics learning according to the characteristics and needs of students.

**Literature Review**

**Teacher's Perception of Homeroom Teachers**

The perception of homeroom teachers towards the implementation of curriculum policies is reflected in how they respond and adjust to changes. One of the characteristics of constructive

perception is shown through openness to learning innovation and willingness to reflect on teaching practices (Syifa & Julia, 2023). Teachers with positive perceptions tend to actively participate in training and develop learning strategies that are adaptive to curriculum policies.

Meanwhile, negative perceptions are characterized by resistance to change, dependence on old methods, and doubts about the effectiveness of new curriculum policies. Teachers with negative perceptions feel burdened by curriculum administration and lack concrete support from educational institutions. This can hinder the curriculum adaptation process and reduce teachers' motivation in improving the quality of learning.

### **Implementation of the Independent Curriculum in Mathematics Learning**

The implementation of the Independent Curriculum in mathematics learning is characterized by the flexibility of preparing learning objectives, the use of contextual teaching modules, and an approach that emphasizes strengthening numeracy and problem solving. Teachers play the role of facilitators who adjust learning strategies to the needs and characteristics of students (Basyori, 2025). This encourages more meaningful, active, and fun learning.

Successful implementation depends on the application of diagnostic assessments and learning differentiation. Teachers who understand and implement this strategy are able to increase the activeness, understanding, and overall learning outcomes of students. Meanwhile, suboptimal implementation occurs due to limited teacher understanding, lack of training, and lack of contextual and flexible learning support facilities.

## **2. Method**

This research uses a qualitative descriptive method, namely by collecting, processing, and analyzing information from sources. The subjects in this study are two homeroom teachers, namely a 3rd grade homeroom teacher and a 6th grade homeroom teacher in one of the State Elementary Schools in Malang Regency, who have implemented their curriculum in mathematics learning. The selection of two teachers is based on purposive considerations, namely because both represent the beginning and end of the learning phase, and have direct experience in implementing the Independent Curriculum. Thus, information is obtained in the challenges and implementation strategies at different grade levels.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews conducted directly with pre-arranged interview guidelines. Interviews are recorded with the permission of the interviewees to maintain the accuracy of the data. The data obtained from the interview results were analyzed using thematic analysis. First, the transcription of the interview from the recorded results into a written script. Second, data reduction by sorting out information relevant to the research. Third, categorization by grouping data based on research focuses such as perceptions, challenges, and strategies. Fourth, the presentation of data is arranged in a descriptive form.

Based on this study, the researcher validated the data through the member check technique. Where the researcher reconfirms the results of transcription and interpretation to the resource person to ensure that the information conveyed is in accordance with the intention of the source. This step aims to increase the credibility and accuracy of the data in this study.

## **3. Results and Discussion**

### **3.1 Results**

They should be combined. The study results should be clear and concise. Restrict the use of tables and figures to depict data that is essential to the message and interpretation of the study. The results should be presented in a logical sequence in the text, tables and illustrations. The part of result exposes the findings obtained from research data which is related to the hypotheses. The results should summarize (scientific) findings rather than providing data in great detail. The discussion should explore the significance of the results of the work. Explains the findings obtained from research data along with theory and similar research comparison. Make the discussion corresponding to the results, but do not reiterate the results. The following components should be covered in discussion: How do your results relate to the original question or objectives outlined in the Introduction section (what/how)? Do you provide interpretation scientifically for each of your results or findings presented (why)? Are your results consistent with what other investigators have reported (what else)? Or are there any

differences?. Include in the discussion the implications of the findings and their limitations, how the findings fit into the context of other relevant work, and directions for future research.

This study aims to find out how homeroom teachers perceive the implementation of the Independent Curriculum in mathematics learning in elementary schools, as well as to identify the challenges faced and strategies used by teachers in dealing with the learning process. The data was obtained through interviews with two teachers, namely grade 3 teachers and grade 6 teachers, at one of the State Elementary Schools in Malang Regency. Data were analyzed using a thematic approach with three research focuses: teacher perception, implementation challenges, and learning strategies.

**Table 2. Three Research Focuses**

| No | Research Focus   | Main Findings   | Description   | Researchers   |
|----|--|---|---|---|
| 1  | Teachers' Perception of the Implementation of the Independent Curriculum | Positive perception   | The 3 <sup>rd</sup> grade homeroom teacher stated that the Independent Curriculum encourages innovation and contextual learning. The 6 <sup>th</sup> grade teacher stated that the Independent Curriculum provides flexibility to choose approaches. Both feel that the Independent Curriculum encourages meaningful, student-centered learning | Elementary school teachers' perception of the implementation of the Independent Curriculum in numeracy learning. Putri, D. A., & Hidayat, R. (2023)           |
| 2  | Challenges in the Implementation of the Independent Curriculum           | Numeracy difficulties and resource limitations                                  | Grade 3 students have diverse numeracy skills. Grade 6 students are still weak in basic math operations. In addition, there are limitations in learning media and teacher training  | Challenges of Teachers in the Implementation of the Independent Curriculum in Elementary Schools. Sari, M. R., & Wijaya, H. (2023)                            |
| 3  | Teachers' Strategies in the Implementation of the Independent Curriculum | Contextual approach, Problem Based Learning (PBL), and differentiation approach | The 3 <sup>rd</sup> grade homeroom teachers use a differentiation approach. The 6 <sup>th</sup> grade homeroom teachers use contextual learning and Problem Based Learning (PBL). The strategy is tailored to the needs and abilities of the students.  | Differentiation-Based and Contextual Mathematics Learning Strategies in the Implementation of the Independent Curriculum. Anggraeni, I., & Lestari, S. (2022) |

## 3.2 Discussion

### 3.2.1 Teachers' Perception of the Implementation of the Curriculum

Perception is a person's opinion of social symptoms and solutions given by others (Hakim et al., 2021). There are two types of perception, namely positive perception and negative perception. Positive perception is a person's perception of information with a positive view or in accordance with expectations, while negative perception is a person's perception of information with a negative view, contrary to the expected reality.

Based on the results of the interview, the two teachers who were the resource persons showed a positive perception of the Independent Curriculum. The sixth-grade teacher stated that the Independent Curriculum provides flexibility in choosing a learning approach that suits the student's conditions. According to him, this freedom makes learning more meaningful because it is not too tied to administrative completeness, but focuses more on the needs and characteristics of students.

Meanwhile, third-grade teachers also said the same thing that the Independent Curriculum opens up space for innovation in designing learning, including in accommodating the diverse learning needs of students. According to him, the Independent Curriculum allows teachers to develop learning activities that are more contextual and relevant to students' cognitive development. Thus, students become more enthusiastic about learning because the material presented is closer to daily life.

The two teachers agreed that the Independent Curriculum provides space for teachers to optimize their potential and creativity in teaching, as well as pay more attention to student development. This can strengthen the view that the Independent Curriculum is not only oriented to the achievement of learning outcomes, but also to the student-centered learning process. These findings are in line with the research of Putri & Hidayat (2023), which examines how elementary school teachers' perception of the Independent Curriculum, especially in mathematics learning. The results of the study show that most teachers have a positive perception of the flexibility provided by the Independent Curriculum.

### **3.2.2 Challenges in the Implementation of the Independent Curriculum**

In general, a challenge is a condition, obstacle, or situation that requires a person to think, try, and act in the face of difficulties or changes to achieve a certain goal. Challenges usually come in the form of obstacles that require adaptability and solutions that must be overcome. Based on the results of the interview, the teacher admitted that there were challenges in implementing the Independent Curriculum, even though they had a positive perception. The sixth-grade teacher revealed that even though they are in the final grade of elementary school, most of their students still have difficulty in understanding basic concepts of numeracy, such as multiplication and division operations. In fact, this ability should have been mastered in the previous class. This condition can hinder the smooth learning process, because teachers have to readjust the teaching material, even retreating to the basic concept.

Meanwhile, the third-grade teacher also revealed that in one class there are students with very diverse numeracy skills, ranging from those who are able to count fluently to those who still have difficulty recognizing numbers. These challenges show that teachers need to be more careful in developing inclusive learning that can accommodate the different learning abilities of students. In addition to challenges in students' abilities, teachers also have limited supporting resources such as varied learning media and training on the implementation of the Independent Curriculum. This shows that the success of the Independent Curriculum depends on teacher facilities and training. These findings are in line with the research of Sari & Wijaya (2023), which discusses the main challenges in the implementation of the Independent Curriculum. In the study, there are several challenges such as student ability gaps, lack of training, and limited learning media.

### **3.2.3 Teachers' Strategies in the Implementation of the Independent Curriculum**

A strategy is a way or plan that a person uses to achieve a certain goal (Muallif, 2024). In education, strategy is a guideline for teachers in designing and implementing learning to suit the needs of students and curriculum goals. Thus, strategies have an important role in an effective, directed, and meaningful learning process for students.

Based on the results of the interviews, in overcoming these challenges, teachers apply adaptive learning strategies. Sixth grade teachers choose contextual learning and Problem Based Learning (PBL). Contextual learning is a learning approach that relates teaching materials to students' real situations that can encourage students to connect the knowledge they have with its application in daily life (Purwanto et al., 2024). The contextual learning approach aims for students to understand the material meaningfully, by involving direct experience, critical thinking, and being active in the learning process. Problem Based Learning (PBL) is a type of learning that constructs students' knowledge by allowing students to solve problems that exist in the real world (Ardianti et al., 2021). In the PBL approach, students play an active role in solving a problem, while teachers only play the role of facilitators or supervisors.

In both approaches, teachers relate math material to everyday situations through contextual approaches, such as calculating allowances that can help students better understand mathematical concepts. In addition, Problem Based Learning (PBL) also encourages students to actively solve problems and think critically in mathematics learning.

Meanwhile, third-grade teachers apply a differentiation approach in their learning. A differentiated approach is a learning method designed to meet the unique needs of students by tailoring students' experiences, abilities, interests, and learning styles. This method involves using resources, strategies, and tools to allow students to learn in their learning way. According to him, arranging different activities according to the abilities and learning styles of each student. For example, students with high abilities are given more complex challenge questions, while students with difficulties are given additional

guidance. The teacher also said that students with high abilities are given the opportunity to help other students who are still struggling.

Teachers also use visual approaches and games in the delivery of mathematics materials so that the classroom atmosphere becomes more fun and students understand the material more easily. These strategies not only increase understanding of concepts, but also increase students' active participation in learning. This research is in line with Anggraeni & Lestari (2022), which discusses contextual and differential learning strategies that teachers use to overcome differences in students' abilities and make mathematics learning more engaging and relevant.

Based on the results of the interviews, it shows that the learning strategies used by teachers complement each other in facing the challenges of implementing the Independent Curriculum. Sixth grade teachers use contextual approaches and Problem Based Learning (PBL) to foster in-depth understanding of concepts and practice critical thinking skills. Meanwhile, third-grade teachers apply a differentiation approach that allows each student to learn according to his or her abilities. Both approaches reflect the flexibility of learning strategies, and strengthen teachers' positive perceptions of the Independent Curriculum.

This shows that teachers' positive perceptions of the Independent Curriculum have an effect on the selection of strategies applied. Teachers' perceptions provide space to innovate in designing learning. However, to optimize these strategies, teachers need ongoing training. The training focuses not only on understanding the content of the Independent Curriculum, but also pedagogic skills such as designing differentiated learning, using contextual methods, and Problem Based Learning (PBL) effectively, as well as the use of appropriate learning media. Thus, synergy between perceptions and strategies is needed in realizing meaningful, flexible, and student-centered learning in the implementation of the Independent Curriculum.

### 3.3 Conclusion

Homeroom teachers have a positive perception of the implementation of the Independent Curriculum in mathematics learning because it provides flexibility and encourages learning innovation. However, in its implementation, teachers also face challenges such as differences, student abilities, limited learning media, and lack of teacher training. To overcome these challenges, teachers apply strategies such as contextual learning, Problem Based Learning (PBL), and differentiation approaches.

The Independent Curriculum is considered to provide opportunities to improve the quality of learning, but its success depends on the support of facilities and continuous training for teachers. Therefore, this study suggests strengthening teacher training and providing adequate facilities, as well as encouraging research that examines more deeply the impact of the Independent Curriculum on student learning outcomes. Further research can expand the number of subjects and focus on the impact of strategies on learning outcomes.

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