

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE INDEPENDENT CURRICULUM IN ENGLISH SUBJECTS AT MI MIFTAHUL ULUM PROBOLINGGO

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Abstract

The implementation of the Independent Curriculum at MI Miftahul Ulum has been running for one year. Therefore, this study aims to describe the implementation of the Independent Curriculum in English subjects at MI Miftahul Ulum, Probolinggo. This research employed a descriptive qualitative method. Data were collected through interviews, observation, and documentation, then analyzed through stages of data collection, condensation, presentation, and conclusion drawing. The findings reveal that the implementation of the Independent Curriculum in English learning at MI Miftahul Ulum has been conducted effectively. Teachers at MI Miftahul Ulum have prepared comprehensive learning plans by analyzing students' needs, developing teaching modules, and attending training related to the curriculum implementation. Furthermore, they applied enjoyable and student-centered learning methods to enhance engagement. Although several obstacles emerged during the evaluation process, these challenges were successfully addressed. Consequently, the implementation of the Independent Curriculum in English learning at MI Miftahul Ulum can be considered successful.

Keywords: Independent Curriculum, English Subject, Implementation, MI Miftahul Ulum

INTRODUCTION

The curriculum is a systematic plan that includes educational objectives, content, teaching materials, and methods used as a reference in organizing learning activities to achieve specific educational goals (Suparman, 2020). In line with Law No. 20 of 2003, the curriculum is defined as "a collection of learning tools containing objectives, content, teaching materials, methods, and media used as materials and tools in the teaching and learning process to achieve educational goals rationally." The curriculum is considered the core essence of the learning process (Damianti et al., 2024) and continues to change over time in response to the development of science, technology, and society (Saputra et al., 2024; Azizah et al., 2024).

Currently, Indonesia is implementing the Independent Curriculum (Kurikulum Merdeka) as a response to the need for flexible and contextualized learning (Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture, 2024; Yulianto, 2024). The Independent Curriculum grants teachers and schools the freedom to determine learning content, methods, and assessments according to students' characteristics and needs (Mujab et al., 2023).

This policy is inspired by the educational philosophy of Ki Hadjar Dewantara, emphasizing the importance of independence and flexibility in education (Istiq'faroh, 2020).

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English learning plays a crucial role in preparing students to become lifelong learners and to embody the Profile of

Pancasila Students. Through dynamic and flexible learning activities, students are encouraged to select texts and learning tasks that match their interests and contexts (Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, 2022). Given the rapid pace of globalization, English proficiency at the elementary level is essential (Sulaiman & Aprianti, 2024). The concept of *Merdeka Belajar – Guru Penggerak* (Independent Learning – Driving Teacher) emphasizes teacher autonomy in adapting lessons to students' needs, focusing on core material, and promoting meaningful learning experiences (Inayati, 2022; Rahmadayanti & Hartoyo, 2022).

Teachers are thus positioned as driving agents who create enjoyable and student-centered learning environments (Ningrum & Suryani, 2022). The Independent Curriculum is characterized by (1) project-based learning aligned with the Pancasila Student Profile, (2) competency-based and essential-content-focused instruction, and (3) teacher flexibility in designing learning processes (Nafi'ah et al., 2023). Additionally, the curriculum reform replaces USBN with competency-based assessment, UN with the *Asesmen Kompetensi Minimum (AKM)*, and simplifies lesson planning by replacing the RPP with a Teaching Module (Fianingrum et al., 2023).

Although English is not a compulsory subject in the Independent Curriculum (PA Putri et al., 2024), many schools continue to include it as a local content subject (*muatan lokal*) due to its importance in international communication (Meylina & Wijaya, 2024; Ambarwati et al., 2024). This policy shift, however, has led to a shortage of English

teachers with adequate qualifications at the elementary level (Oktavia et al., 2023). Some schools, including MI Miftahul Ulum Probolinggo, have chosen to maintain English instruction for grades I and IV to strengthen students' foundational communication skills (Dewi et al., 2021).

According to data from the Ministry of Education, more than 143,000 schools have implemented the Independent Curriculum, with nationwide implementation targeted for the 2024/2025 academic year (Hayati et al., 2024). Several previous studies have explored the implementation of the Independent Curriculum in subjects such as Mathematics (Muna & Fathurrahman, 2023) and Islamic Religious Education (Susilowati, 2022), but research focusing on English learning, especially in madrasah ibtidaiyah, remains limited.

Therefore, this study aims to analyze the implementation of the Independent Curriculum in English subjects at MI Miftahul Ulum Probolinggo, focusing on planning, learning activities, and evaluation processes as carried out by teachers in adapting to the new.

METHODS

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach to explore the implementation of the Independent Curriculum in English subjects at MI Miftahul Ulum Probolinggo. The research was conducted from May to June 2024. Participants included English teachers for grades I and IV, the principal, and several students. Data were collected through interviews, observations, and documentation. Interviews explored teachers' planning and evaluation activities; observations focused on classroom practices; and documentation

included lesson plans, teaching modules, and assessment records.

Before implementation, teachers conducted a needs analysis or diagnostic assessment to identify students' abilities and learning needs (Mudhar & Hasiana, 2022; Ardianti & Amalia, 2022). Data were analyzed using the Miles and Huberman model, consisting of four steps: data collection, condensation, presentation, and conclusion drawing. The validity of findings was ensured through triangulation among interviews, observations, and documents.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the findings obtained at the planning stage, the teachers at *Madrasah Ibtidaiyah* Miftahul Ulum undertook several strategic steps aligned with the principles of the Independent Curriculum (*Kurikulum Merdeka*). The first stage conducted was the needs analysis. The results of this analysis indicated that most students in grades I and IV possessed basic English competencies, such as knowledge of simple vocabulary and elementary sentence structures. However, their speaking skills—particularly pronunciation and the ability to name fruits or surrounding objects—still required improvement.

This finding is consistent with the study conducted by Putri and Sya (2023), which revealed that pronunciation is one of the primary challenges in developing speaking skills among elementary school learners. Furthermore, the analysis showed that students demonstrated a greater interest in learning when game-based methods were used during instruction. This aligns with Budiarta and Kasni (2020), who emphasized that enjoyable and interactive learning methods can significantly enhance students'

motivation to learn English, as reflected in their active participation during classroom activities.

The second step carried out by the teachers was the development of teaching modules, designed to meet the learners' specific needs in terms of both content and methodology. In designing these modules, the teachers integrated the use of digital technology to support English learning. Before preparing the teaching modules, English teachers from grades I and IV had participated in various forms of training, both offline and online, focusing on enhancing their pedagogical competence in implementing the Independent Curriculum.

These professional development programs were often conducted in the form of technical guidance, workshops, seminars, webinars, or collaborative discussions with teacher communities, such as the *Kelompok Kerja Guru* (KKG). One of the key topics discussed during these sessions concerned the stages of curriculum implementation, including the formulation of the Operational Curriculum of the Educational Unit (*Kurikulum Operasional Satuan Pendidikan* or KOSP), Learning Outcomes (*Capaian Pembelajaran* or CP), Learning Objectives (*Tujuan Pembelajaran* or TP), Learning Objective Flow (*Alur Tujuan Pembelajaran* or ATP), as well as the preparation of teaching modules and learning evaluations.

The Operational Curriculum of the Educational Unit represents a curriculum designed by each educational institution, functioning as a framework for the implementation of instructional activities. It includes learning plans and strategies tailored to the learners' characteristics, needs, and potential, while also considering the school's contextual and environmental

factors to achieve optimal learning outcomes in accordance with the National Education Standards (Hasanah et al., 2022).

In the Independent Curriculum, every instructional plan must refer to the school's Operational Curriculum (Lutfiana, 2022). The process of developing the learning plan begins with the analysis of learning outcomes, followed by the formulation of learning objectives, and the development of a learning objective flow, which serves as a reference in constructing instructional materials in the form of teaching modules. In addition, teachers determine the types of assessments to be used, including diagnostic, formative, and summative assessments (Apriyanti, 2023).

The implementation phase represents the realization of the learning plan previously developed. The implementation of the Independent Curriculum in English language learning at *Madrasah Ibtidaiyah* Miftahul Ulum takes place during classroom sessions, utilizing various strategies and methods adapted to students' needs and characteristics. The most frequently applied method is game-based learning, which helps students enhance vocabulary acquisition and grammatical understanding. This finding is consistent with Nurzaman et al. (2017), who demonstrated that game-based learning effectively improves elementary students' English vocabulary mastery.

Another key component in curriculum implementation is the understanding of Learning Outcomes (Capaian Pembelajaran), which replace the Core Competencies from the 2013 Curriculum. Learning Outcomes describe the competencies students are expected to achieve within a specific phase or period of study (Ardianti & Amalia, 2022).

Meanwhile, the Learning Objectives (Tujuan Pembelajaran) are derived from the

Learning Outcomes and define what students are expected to understand, master, and demonstrate at the end of a learning process. Unlike previous curricula, the formulation of Learning Objectives in the Independent Curriculum does not require the inclusion of four elements: audience, behavior, condition, and degree but focuses instead on audience and behavior, which sufficiently represent the learning intent (Putri et al., 2022).

The next stage involves designing the Learning Objective Flow (Alur Tujuan Pembelajaran), which systematically organizes learning objectives from the beginning to the end of a learning phase. This serves as a guide for teachers in constructing comprehensive teaching modules (Riswakhyuningsih, 2022).

A teaching module in the Independent Curriculum contains at least seven core components: module identity, initial competence, the Pancasila Student Profile, facilities and infrastructure, target learners, learning model, and remedial as well as enrichment activities. The essential components include learning objectives, meaningful understanding, driving questions, learning activities, and assessments (Salsabila et al., 2023).

The successful implementation of the Independent Curriculum, particularly in English language instruction, is strongly influenced by teachers' competence in enacting curriculum reform. Teachers must possess not only pedagogical expertise but also adaptability to continuous educational changes (Anggraini et al., 2022).

Within the context of MI Miftahul Ulum, teachers act as learning facilitators, rather than sole providers of knowledge. They guide and mentor students throughout the learning process, offering individualized support to those requiring additional assistance for

instance, students who struggle with pronunciation or comprehension. Moreover, teachers integrate digital tools into English learning to foster interactivity and engagement.

The integration of technology represents a significant innovation in the implementation of the Independent Curriculum at MI Miftahul Ulum. The use of digital media such as interactive games, multimedia presentations, and video-based exercises has been proven to increase students' enthusiasm and active participation. It creates a more dynamic, meaningful, and enjoyable learning environment, reinforcing the goals of the Independent Curriculum in fostering autonomous and motivated learners.

The use of technology in English language learning within the Independent Curriculum at *Madrasah Ibtidaiyah* Miftahul Ulum typically involves the integration of videos and images related to the learning materials. These visual media are utilized to enrich students' vocabulary and deepen comprehension. This finding aligns with the study conducted by Oktapiani et al. (2021), which demonstrated that the use of video-based learning resources significantly enhances students' motivation and facilitates vocabulary acquisition in English. Similarly, Napitupulu et al. (2023) found that the use of pictorial learning media closely related to instructional content can strengthen vocabulary retention and improve learning outcomes.

The improvement in students' English vocabulary and comprehension at MI Miftahul Ulum can be observed through various forms of learning evaluation conducted by teachers. Evaluation procedures in the Independent Curriculum

consist of three main components. First, diagnostic evaluation, which is administered through pre-tests to measure students' prior knowledge and initial understanding of the topics to be learned. Second, formative evaluation, implemented through daily assignments, class participation, and ongoing observation to monitor student progress and identify learning gaps that need reinforcement. Third, summative evaluation, which is conducted at the end of the semester in the form of portfolios or written examinations to assess students' overall mastery of English concepts taught throughout the term.

In addition to teacher-based assessments, the school principal actively participates in evaluating the implementation of the Independent Curriculum in English learning. This supervision is conducted through direct classroom observations and performance reviews. Moreover, evaluations are routinely discussed during teacher coordination meetings and peer-sharing sessions. The objective of these evaluations is to assess both the effectiveness and the challenges encountered in the application of the Independent Curriculum, ensuring continuous quality improvement in instructional delivery.

The Independent Curriculum at MI Miftahul Ulum has been implemented for one academic year, specifically in grades I and IV. The school plans to extend this implementation across all grade levels in the upcoming academic year. However, the implementation process has not been without challenges. One of the major obstacles faced by English teachers concerns the development of curriculum components, such as learning outcomes (*Capaian Pembelajaran*) and learning objectives (*Tujuan*

Pembelajaran) for English subjects. This difficulty arises due to the limited availability of training and discussion forums related to the formulation of these curriculum components.

This challenge has also been reflected in the discussions held during the Teacher Working Group (Kelompok Kerja Guru – KKG) sessions, where the formulation of English learning outcomes and objectives was often highlighted as a critical issue. Another challenge identified during classroom implementation is the variation in students' abilities. Some students already possess a relatively strong foundation in English, while others still face difficulties in understanding linguistic concepts or pronouncing vocabulary accurately.

To address these issues, the English teachers at MI Miftahul Ulum have taken proactive measures by participating in various training programs on curriculum design and teaching material development in alignment with the Independent Curriculum. Additionally, the teachers have also undertaken professional development programs focusing on differentiated learning approaches.

Differentiated learning is an instructional strategy that adapts teaching methods, learning activities, and assessments according to students' diverse abilities, interests, and learning styles within the same classroom (Wulandari, 2022). This approach enables teachers to personalize instruction, ensuring that every student regardless of their proficiency level can engage meaningfully in the learning process.

The adoption of differentiated learning aligns with the findings of Zulkarnain and Khoir (2023), who emphasized that differentiated instruction is an effective solution for addressing heterogeneous

learning groups, particularly in English language education. By applying this approach, teachers at MI Miftahul Ulum have been able to create more inclusive learning environments where students receive tasks and materials suited to their level of competence, thus promoting equity and engagement in English learning.

Overall, the findings indicate that the implementation of the Independent Curriculum in English learning at MI Miftahul Ulum has shown positive progress, particularly in the areas of student engagement, vocabulary development, and teaching innovation. Nonetheless, continued professional training and collaboration among teachers remain essential to sustain and enhance the quality of curriculum implementation in the following academic years.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings of this research, the implementation of the Independent Curriculum in English learning at MI Miftahul Ulum has been carried out effectively. Teachers have demonstrated adequate readiness by conducting needs analyses, developing contextually relevant teaching modules, and participating in professional training related to the curriculum. Furthermore, they have employed enjoyable and student-centered learning methods that enhance engagement and participation in the classroom.

Although several challenges emerged during the evaluation stages such as limited facilities and varied student learning readiness, these obstacles were successfully managed through adaptive teaching strategies. Overall, the implementation of the Independent Curriculum in English learning has shown positive outcomes in improving

students' linguistic competence and learning motivation.

To further optimize its implementation, teachers are encouraged to design technology-integrated teaching modules and utilize interactive digital learning media to foster active learning environments. Continuous professional development programs should also be provided to enhance teachers' pedagogical innovation and digital literacy.

The use of digital platforms and e-learning applications is highly recommended to make learning materials more engaging and accessible. These strategies are expected to strengthen students' interest, motivation, and overall achievement in English learning, ultimately supporting the vision of the Independent Curriculum to develop independent, creative, and globally competitive learners.

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