

IMPLEMENTATION OF STRENGTHENING THE INDEPENDENT CURRICULUM AS AN OPTIMIZATION OF CHARACTER EDUCATION AT TK ABA 05 MEDAN

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Abstract: The purpose of this study uses three important parts, namely: 1) teachers' perceptions in the process of implementing the independent curriculum at Aisyiyah Bustanul Athfal 05 Kindergarten; 2) efforts made by educators and education personnel at Aisyiyah Bustanul Athfal 05 Kindergarten in optimizing students' character education through the independent curriculum. This research uses descriptive qualitative research methods with a phenomenological approach design. The results of this study indicate that in the character cultivation in the educational institutions of ABA 05 Kindergarten, it is carried out together with academic education such as: orderly queuing to wash hands before and after eating such as congregational prayers, throwing garbage in its place, orderly entering and leaving class and starting learning with prayer. In the implementation of character education programmatically, teachers at TK ABA 05 teach exemplary values to early childhood starting from mutual respect for one another, justice and honest attitudes that are part of daily learning both inside and outside the classroom. Teachers become role models for early childhood. This habituation is carried out continuously without pause by TK ABA in implementing the independent curriculum as an optimization of character education.

Keywords: *Implementation, independent curriculum, character education.*

Introduction

According to Law No. 20 of 2003 concerning the national education system (SISDIKNAS) Chapter 1 point 19 explains the function of the curriculum, which is to guide educators and education personnel in facilitating quality education programs that support the achievement of educational goals. The curriculum comes from the Greek word *curir* which means runner. The word *curir* comes from the ancient Greek sports world, which means the distance traveled in a running sport from the start line to the finish line. (Ahmad Dhomiri et al., 2023) The curriculum is a reference spear in teaching quality learning for students. The curriculum in the world of education determines the progress of education in a country starting from the realm of concepts and implementation in the field (Christian, 2023). The curriculum in Indonesia continues to undergo changes with the aim of perfecting the previous curriculum and following the times which are classified as changing rapidly, the curriculum is required to adapt to the times.

According to the Ministry of Education and Culture, the history of curriculum development begins with the 1947 curriculum which focuses on learning plans that do not emphasize education of the mind but education of character, besides that the 1947 curriculum also reflects the behavior of state awareness and socializing to the community. The 1952 curriculum which focuses on learning content that is connected to everyday life. The 1964 curriculum refined the previous curriculum which focused on academic knowledge for provision towards further education. The 1968 curriculum emphasizes an

organized approach to learning material which amounts to 9 materials. The 1975 curriculum was born due to the influence of concepts in the field of management MBO (management by objective) emphasizing more complex and effective education. Furthermore, the 1984 curriculum is positioning students as learning subjects, this model is called active student learning (CBSA). In the 1994 Curriculum, the combination of goals and processes has not been successful because it is considered to burden students. The 2004 curriculum or what is often known as the competency-based curriculum contains three most important elements, namely the selection of competencies in accordance with the specification of indicators, evaluation and learning development.

The 2006 KTSP curriculum is an education unit level curriculum that frees each school to be able to develop its curriculum freely while still paying attention to the characteristics of the needs of students. According to (Setiadi, 2016) Curriculum 2013 is the development of a character-based KTSP curriculum that develops attitude skills, curriculum 2013 emphasizes a scientific approach at the education level from primary to secondary. After the 2013 curriculum continues to the independent curriculum according to (Ripandi, 2023) the independent curriculum aims to improve the 2013 curriculum, the independent curriculum is more flexible and frees students and educators to use quite a lot of learning tools so that students can choose the material they want. According to data from the Ministry of Education and Culture, 73% of the 160,000 schools in Indonesia already use the independent curriculum as a learning guide. The independent curriculum is set to become the national curriculum in March 2024. The independent curriculum is used by all levels of education starting from PAUD / TK, SD, SMP, and SMA.

According to Commission X of the House of Representatives, Dewi Koriati explained that the budget spent on mentoring and piloting the independent curriculum in 2021 reached IDR 2.86 trillion. The figure spent includes 2,500 driving schools and 18,800 teachers who spent Rp.2.86 trillion (Pratama Putra, 2022). Education observers say there is no concrete evidence of success in piloting the independent curriculum in 2021. An independent curriculum can be defined as a curriculum with highly diverse intracurricular learning. The independent curriculum is a curriculum that aims to hone and improve the interests and skills of students from an early age by focusing on essential, easy-to-understand material, character development and also student competencies. The independent curriculum provides the widest possible opportunity for educational institutions to be able to develop a curriculum according to their own needs. Their curriculum has become very popular in educational institutions, namely the embodiment of the 6 main characteristics of Pancasila learning, namely, faith and devotion to god almighty and noble character, global diversity, mutual cooperation, independence, critical reasoning, and creativity. the profile of Pancasila learners is a distinctive feature of the independent curriculum that distinguishes the independent curriculum from other curricula.

The profile of Pancasila students is contained in the regulation of the minister of education and culture number 22 of 2020 concerning the strategic plan of the ministry of education and culture. The curriculum is an important element in the ongoing education in Indonesia. The changing curriculum that continues to change certainly has both positive and negative impacts depending on each perspective. The curriculum is used from the lowest level, namely early childhood education (Daulay et al., 2023). The national education system makes reforms in a planned, directed and can be utilized as well as possible. Early childhood education is education that is intended to be able to maximize the six aspects of early childhood development, namely, physical motor development, social emotional, language, cognitive, and moral.

Literature Review

According to the records of the North Sumatra Central Bureau of Statistics, there are 11,000 early childhood education institutions in 78 cities in North Sumatra. Early childhood education is growing very rapidly starting from formal and non-formal education. The implementation of the independent curriculum has become a sure step for early childhood education institutions towards the progress of their educational institutions, but the transition between the 2013 curriculum and the independent curriculum which is so fast is a frightening specter for educators. Educators and educators are the main elements to welcome the independent curriculum and keep up with the rapid development of the times. According to the results of a survey conducted by the technology and communication center of education and culture, it explains that the number of teachers in Indonesia reaches 3 million people but only 1.2 million teachers are technologically literate, the remaining 1.8 million Indonesian teachers are still stuttering and not ready for the times. Regional factors of educational institutions are also very influential, such as remote areas that still lack facilities and infrastructure that support updated learning.

The Ministry of Education and Culture provides assistance in implementing the independent curriculum in Medan City. This assistance was carried out to respond to the challenges of implementing the independent curriculum. Zulfikri, the head of BESKAP (Agency for curriculum standards and educational assessment) said that "the socialization of the independent curriculum is aimed at straightening out misconceptions about the implementation of the independent curriculum among teachers and educators". The independent curriculum is believed to be able to develop the potential of students from an early age according to their interests and talents, because the independent curriculum provides freedom for all teachers to focus on essential material.

The independent curriculum has been implemented by one of the kindergartens in the city of Medan, namely Aisyiyah Bustanul Athfal 05 Kindergarten. Aisyiyah Bustanul Athfal 05, located at JL. Mustafa No. 1 West Medan District, North Sumatra Province, is one of the driving schools in the city of Medan. According to the minister of education and culture Nadiem Makarim reported by *kompas.com* (Adityo Prodjo, 2020) explains that a driving school is a school that can mobilize other schools, a school that can be a role model, a training ground, and also an inspiration for other teachers and principals. Tk Aisyiyah Bustanul Athfal has been using the independent curriculum since 2023. The transition from the 2013 curriculum to the independent curriculum of Aisyiyah Bustanul Athfal Kindergarten began with the regulation of the minister of education which requires all schools to use the independent curriculum as a learning guide. In strengthening the implementation of the independent curriculum at Aisyiyah Bustanul Athfal Kindergarten, several educators and education personnel attended training held by the education office in collaboration with the East Medan sub-district supervisor. In the training, it was clearly explained that the transition from the 2013 curriculum to the independent curriculum had been legalized, said Aida Fitriana as the principal of Aisyiyah Bustanul Athfal 05 Kindergarten.

Method

This research uses descriptive qualitative research methods with a phenomenological approach design. (Hanyfah et al., 2022) Phenomenological research is a type of research that explores and investigates an event experienced by an individual, group or group of living beings, becoming part of the life experience of the research subject. In this study, finding out and exploring the experiences of educators and education personnel in implementing the

independent curriculum as an optimization of character education at TK ABA 05. Data collected from the principal, there are several educators at TK ABA 05 who implement the independent curriculum with all the challenges in optimizing character education, as well as experiences related to changes in the character of students after using the independent curriculum. This research uses two research methods, namely the direct interview method with the help of an offline questionnaire. This research hypothesis also uses questionnaire data distributed by several teachers at ABA 05 Kindergarten. This research was tightened with a focus group discussion which was used to examine the importance of implementing the independent curriculum as an optimization of character education at ABA 05 Kindergarten.

Results and Discussion

This research objective uses three important parts: 1) Teachers' perceptions in the process of implementing the independent curriculum at Aisyiyah Bustanul Athfal 05 Kindergarten; 2) Efforts made by educators and education personnel at Aisyiyah Bustanul Athfal 05 Kindergarten in optimizing students' character education through the independent curriculum. Aida Fitriana, principal of Aisyiyah Bustanul Athfal 05 Kindergarten, stated "Aisyiyah Bustanul Athfal 05 Kindergarten has obstacles in implementing the independent curriculum in their school because educators and teaching staff do not fully understand the independent curriculum."

We have done a lot of training and cooperation to learn the independent curriculum but because we have been using the 2013 curriculum for a long time, in its application we still follow the 2013 curriculum guidelines.

The independent curriculum has become the learning guideline that we have been using for the past year. Thank God for optimizing character education for students through the proclaimed Pancasila student profile. Educators and education personnel also have their own ways of implementing the independent curriculum in optimizing character education in their respective classes. Character education in ABA kindergarten is the main thing before because maintaining the morals of early childhood must be maintained from an early age through character education. The principal guides the course of the educational institution TK ABA 05 which is concerned with developing the good character of students through character education. In line with research (Muhammadiyah et al., 2022) which explains that character education is very important to implement sustainability to develop the character of Indonesian children who have begun to fade (interview with the principal of TK ABA 05).

Character education is the main pillar in determining the success of education. Character education is a barometer of the implementation of the independent curriculum at TK ABA 05 with activities by means of structured and exemplary cultivation of disciplinary character in everyday life. Structured means implementing disciplinary character education in the curriculum used in learning guidelines, namely the independent curriculum. In this case, educators and education personnel become role models for early childhood to behave in a disciplined manner at school, and are assisted by the role of parents as examples in the family environment through parental parenting. Parental parenting is also one of the aspects that determine the character of children of age, for example, democratic parenting which has a positive influence on early childhood social behavior (Elminah et al., 2022). In line with the findings of research conducted by (Raniyah, 2023) explaining that parenting patterns and childhood experiences develop inner child wounds.

The school environment has a crucial factor in instilling good character in students. This is in line with research conducted by (Nastiti, 2022) which explains that the school environment, namely early childhood education, has a significant influence on character education. Character cultivation in the educational institution TK ABA 05 is carried out in conjunction with academic education such as: orderly queuing to wash hands before and after eating. By queuing learners learn to respect the prevailing system, discipline and respect for others, queuing culture is very attached to character education (Ayunita et al., 2023). Disciplinary character is an important right to be instilled in children from an early age. Characters are good values that will have a positive impact on early childhood development. Next is the orderly entry to class, obeying throwing garbage in its place, ABA Kindergarten provides trash bins in each class as a learning effort for students not to litter. Character education is also optimized with routine activities, namely dhuha prayers and starting the class by praying together. (Pendidikan, 2024)

Conclusion

In the implementation of character education programmatically, teachers at TK ABA 05 teach exemplary values to early childhood starting from mutual respect for one another, justice and honesty which are part of daily learning both inside and outside the classroom. Teachers become role models for early childhood, because early childhood is a true imitator. According to (Wadu et al., 2019) Teachers are second parents for children who bring students to be better, both morally and morally. This exemplary strategy also TK ABA 05 provides opportunities for students to practice their moral behavior such as learning activities in the classroom environment. This habituation is carried out continuously without pause by TK ABA in implementing the independent curriculum as an optimization of character education, because good morals and attitudes must be taught continuously because fostering good character takes a long time but will produce students who are good academically and also prioritize good morals.

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