



THE INFLUENCE OF KURIKULUM MERDEKA ON THE UNDERSTANDING OF EDUCATIONAL CONCEPTS OF GRADE IV STUDENTS OF SDN 71 PALEMBANG

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to determine the effect of Merdeka Curriculum learning on understanding the concept of education for fourth grade students of SD Negeri 71 Palembang. The Merdeka Curriculum is expected to increase student involvement and creativity in learning, especially in subjects that are often considered boring and theoretical. The method used in this research is a quantitative experiment with a pretest-posttest control group design. The research sample consists of two groups, namely the experimental group taught using the Merdeka Curriculum approach and the control group using conventional learning. Data were collected through multiple choice tests that measured students' understanding of the principles of Pancasila and citizenship. The results showed that learning with the Merdeka Curriculum had a significant effect on student understanding, with a t_{count} value of 12.430 which is greater than the t_{table} of 2.015. This study concludes that the application of Merdeka Curriculum can improve students' understanding of the concept of Citizenship, especially in understanding bad behavior in oneself and the environment.

Keywords: *Education, Kurikulum Merdeka and Student Understanding*

1. INTRODUCTION

As technology and globalization develop, human needs increase, driving competition in various fields, including education. To face this competition, the quality of education needs to be improved in order to produce superior human resources. One important aspect in education is the curriculum that determines the ability of educational institutions to achieve their goals. An effective curriculum helps teachers deliver materials and conduct

assessments according to standards, which is very important especially at the elementary level (Septi Erliasari, 2016; Huda, 2017).

Effective curriculum and material planning play an important role in encouraging student engagement in the learning process (Orodho et al., 2013). Since the 1952 Curriculum to the current Independent Curriculum, the Indonesian curriculum has undergone many revisions. In 1947, 1964, 1968, 1973, 1975, 1984, 1994, 1997 (1994

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curriculum revision), 2004 (KBK), 2006 (KTSP), 2013 (Kurtilas), and 2018 with the Revised Curriculum which combines more than 4,000 changes to adapt to political, economic, cultural, and technological developments, curriculum updates occur gradually (Fitriyanti et al., 2021). This curriculum change is expected to improve the quality of education which has a positive impact on society. The Independent Curriculum, as explained by Khoirurrijal et al. (2022), offers a learning system that allows students to deepen their understanding and develop skills with sufficient time. Although the 2013 Curriculum has been widely implemented in 2019, the challenge of material that is considered too much hinders the achievement of optimal learning outcomes, which ultimately prompted the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology to introduce the Independent Learning Curriculum. This curriculum emphasizes the freedom of students to explore knowledge according to their interests and talents, both from formal and non-formal education, and provides space for student and teacher creativity in the learning process (Madhakomala et al., 2022; Indarta, 2022).

According to Vhalery et al. (2022), the Independent Curriculum gives students the freedom to think critically and innovate, with its flexible implementation according to the needs of each school. Some schools have also adopted a "driving school" program, which aims to produce a generation of Pancasila-based students, towards an advanced and sovereign Indonesia

(Patilima, 2022). On the other hand, Education in the school curriculum is often theoretical, making it less interesting for students and less effective in building a strong understanding (Abdullah Amirudin, 2023).

Education aims to form intelligent, personable citizens who understand their rights and responsibilities, with the knowledge and skills to solve social problems, collaborate, and contribute to society. Unfortunately, many students are less interested because of its rote nature, resulting in boredom (Baehaqi, 2020). Education is expected to build critical, creative, and socially responsible thinking patterns, as well as foster positive democratic attitudes, so that students are ready to adapt in a diverse Indonesian society.

To overcome the lack of student interest in learning, the Ministry of Education and Culture has implemented the Independent Curriculum which encourages active involvement and creativity of students during the learning process. According to Fuad & Zuraini (2016), interest in learning is very important because it has a major influence on student learning success. Muliani & Arusman (2022) added that strong interest makes students more involved without feeling forced. Based on observations in class IV of SD Negeri 71 Palembang, conventional lecture methods still dominate, causing students to be passive. The results of education learning show that out of 35 students, only 12 achieved the KKM score, while the other 23 were below average.

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Therefore, this study is entitled "The Influence of Independent Curriculum Learning on Understanding of Education Concepts in Grade IV Students of SDN 71 Palembang." This study aims to explore how learning with the Independent Curriculum can influence the understanding of grade IV students of SDN 71 Palembang on Education concepts. By focusing on the relationship between this new curriculum and improving student understanding, this study seeks to answer the question of to what extent the Independent Curriculum contributes to deepening students' understanding of Education materials.

2. METODE

The methodology of this study includes the identification of the main variables and their operational definitions to facilitate the measurement process (Sugiyono, 2019, p. 74). In this study, the independent variable is "Independent Curriculum Learning," which emphasizes a creative, meaningful, and student-focused approach, while the dependent variable is "Understanding the Concept of Education," which is important for forming students' understanding of the principles of democracy, rights, and obligations of citizens according to Pancasila. According to Ridha (2017, p. 63), the operational definition of this variable facilitates measurement, with Education seen as an important subject that provides knowledge and values for students, and an independent curriculum that provides sufficient time for students

to understand concepts and develop their competencies.

During the odd semester of the 2024-2025 academic year, this study was conducted at SD Negeri 71 Palembang, located in Kelurahan 2 Ulu, Seberang Ulu I District, Palembang City. The population of this study consisted of 55 fourth grade students; 28 students in class IV A as the control group and 27 students in class IV B as the experimental group (Sugiyono, 2019, p. 146). For this study, all fourth grade students were sampled using the nonprobability total sampling approach (Sugiyono, 2020, p. 154).

This study used a quantitative experiment with a pretest-posttest control group design. The experimental class was given treatment through citizenship learning, while the control class was not. Data were collected through multiple-choice tests and documentation, with instrument validity tested using Pearson correlation and reliability calculated with Cronbach Alpha. The difficulty test of the questions showed an index between 0.31 and 0.70, and the discriminatory power of the questions was tested with a value between -1.00 and 1.00. Data analysis included normality, homogeneity, and t-test tests to test the hypothesis.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**A. Description of Research Implementation**

In the initial stage of the research, the researcher submitted a research permit letter on July 12, 2023 and

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received a cover letter from Universitas PGRI Palembang on July 13, 2024. Furthermore, the researcher submitted a research permit to the National Unity and Politics Agency of Palembang City on July 15, 2024 and received approval on the same day. After that, the permit was submitted to the school to continue the research process. Before conducting the research, the researcher prepared various learning tools needed, including the syllabus, Learning Implementation Plan (RPP), and multiple choice test questions for the pretest and posttest. The test instrument used was validated by an expert lecturer and tested on students to ensure that the questions were valid and reliable.

In the implementation stage, the study began by administering a pretest to both classes on July 16, 2024, which aimed to measure students' initial understanding of bad behavior for themselves and the environment. In the experimental class, the researcher provided treatment using an Independent Curriculum-based approach that included three stages of activities in each meeting. The second meeting in the experimental class, on July 17, 2024, began with preliminary activities such as greeting students, praying together, checking attendance, and providing apperception and explanations about learning objectives. Then, in the core activity, the researcher taught material on bad behavior for oneself and the environment using audio-visual technology and a constructivist and collaborative approach. At the end of the meeting, the researcher invited students

to conclude the learning together and close the lesson with a prayer.

At the third meeting in the experimental class, which was held on July 23, 2024, the researcher again gave the same treatment, repeating the same stages of activities with more in-depth material about bad behavior that is contrary to Pancasila values. Students were given the opportunity to read texts, discuss, and participate in learning games to deepen their understanding. At the end of the meeting, the researcher gave a posttest to measure the extent to which students' understanding had developed after learning.

On the other hand, the control class, which was not given treatment using the Independent Curriculum, followed a more traditional learning flow. In the first meeting on July 18, 2024, students in the control class were given a pretest with the same purpose to measure their initial understanding. During the next two meetings on July 20 and 24, 2024, the control class carried out learning using conventional methods without using a technology-based approach or active learning model. Activities in the control class included the delivery of material by the teacher, reading texts, and discussions. At the end of the study, the control class was also given a posttest on July 24, 2024 to determine the development of students' understanding of bad behavior for themselves and the environment.

B. Research result

In this study, the results of the pretest and posttest analysis for the

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experimental class showed an average value of 81.08 for the pretest and 85.90 for the posttest, with standard deviations of 10.84 for the pretest and 8.06 for the posttest, respectively. Meanwhile, for the control class, the average values obtained were 45.74 for the pretest and 55.20 for the posttest, with standard deviations of 14.28 for the pretest and 10.05 for the posttest, respectively.

1) Normality Test of Pretest and Posttest Values of Experimental Class

SPSS 22 software was used in this study to test the distribution of sample data using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov normality test. If the significance value (asymp.sig. 2-tailed) is higher than 0.05, then the sample is said to be normally distributed. Based on the results of the normality test, the pretest p-value is 0.217, which is higher than 0.05, and the posttest p-value is 0.062, which is also higher than 0.05. Therefore, the results of the normality test in table 1 show that the pretest and posttest data of the experimental class have a normal distribution.

Table1.

Normality Test Results of Pretest Values

Tests of Normality				
	Kelas	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a		
		Statistic	Df	Sig.
Perilaku buruk bagi diri sendiri dan lingkungannya	Pre-Test Eksperimen	.152	28	.217
	Post-Test Eksperimen	.195	28	.062

2) Normality Test of Pretest and Posttest Values of Control Class

The results of the normality test showed that the pretest in the control

class was normally distributed with a significance value of 0.431, while the posttest had a lower significance value of 0.040, indicating a slightly non-normal distribution.

Table2.

Results of the Normality Test for Pretest and Posttest Values of the Control Class

Tests of Normality				
	Kelas	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a		
		Statistic	Df	Sig.
Perilaku buruk bagi diri sendiri dan lingkungannya	Pre-Test Kontrol	.120	26	.431
	Post-Test Kontrol	.184	26	.040

Sumber: SPSS 22

3) Homogeneity Test of Pretest and Posttest Values of Experimental Class and Control Class

Levene's homogeneity test shows that the pretest and posttest values of both groups have a significance of 0.024, which is higher than 0.05, so the data is considered homogeneous.

Table3.

Results of the Homogeneity Test of Pretest and Posttest Values of the Experimental Class and Control Class

Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
3,287	3	89,48	,024

Sumber: SPSS 22

4) Hypothesis Testing Results

Table4.

Hypothesis Test Calculation Results

Independent Samples Test										
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Hasil Belajar	Equal variances assumed	2.060	.157	12.430	52	.000	30.701	2,470	25,744	35,657
	Equal variances not assumed			12,328	42,940	.000	30,701	2,490	25,693	35,708

Sumber: SPSS 22

Students' understanding of inappropriate behavior in citizenship

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class is positively influenced by the implementation of the independent curriculum, as indicated by the t-test significance value of 0.000, which is smaller than 0.05. H_a is accepted and H_o is rejected because the t-value (12.430) is higher than the t-table (2.015), indicating a strong impact of the independent curriculum.

Table5.
**Average Posttest Calculation of
Experimental Class and Control Class**

Pemahaman Peilaku buruk				Std. Error of
Kelas	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Mean
Post-Test Ekperimen	85.89	28	8.657	1.523
Post-Test Kontrol	55.19	28	10.048	1.971

Sumber: SPSS 22

Based on the table, the average posttest of the control class was 55.19, while the experimental class implementing the independent curriculum had an average of 85.89, with a difference of 30.70%. This shows that the implementation of the independent curriculum produces higher scores compared to technology-based learning, constructivism, and collaborative learning in the control class. Thus, it can be concluded that the independent curriculum has a positive effect on citizenship learning in grade IV of elementary school.

C. Discussion

The study "The Effect of Independent Curriculum Learning on Understanding the Concept of Education in Grade IV Students of SDN 71 Palembang" shows that the implementation of the independent curriculum contributes to the understanding of bad behavior for oneself and the environment in the subject of citizenship. This is in line with

the study of Veronica Resty Panginan and Susianti (2022) in the study "The Effect of Implementing the Independent Learning Curriculum on Mathematics Learning Outcomes Reviewed from a Comparison of the Implementation of the 2013 Curriculum", which also uses quantitative methods and shows that the implementation of the independent curriculum has a positive impact on learning outcomes, including mathematics at SD Frater Bakti Luhur Makassar.

The findings in this study are in line with the results of the study by Chaniago Silviya et al. (2022) entitled "Analysis of the Implementation of the Independent Learning Curriculum on the Learning Outcomes of Grade X Students in Geography Subjects at MAN I Koto Baru." Both studies have similarities in the implementation of the independent curriculum on learning outcomes, although they differ in material, population, location, and time of the study. The results of their study indicate that the independent curriculum has just begun to be implemented and is still in the adjustment stage. In addition, the research of Barlian et al. (2022) in "Implementation of the Independent Curriculum in Improving the Quality of Education" also found that the independent curriculum can improve the quality of education, although there are several aspects that need to be improved, with suggestions to continue developing innovation at SDN 244 Guruminda, Bandung City.

This study reveals the impact of implementing the independent

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curriculum on the understanding of bad behavior in grade IV in lessons. The sample consisted of 54 students in grades IVA and IVB, with data collection through pretest and posttest in the experimental and control classes. Statistical tests, including the t-test, showed $t_{\text{count}} = 12,430 > t_{\text{table}} = 2,015$ and a significant value < 0.05 , which means H_a is accepted. Therefore, it can be concluded that the independent curriculum has an effect on the understanding of bad behavior that is not in accordance with Pancasila values. This study is in line with the study "The Effect of Independent Curriculum Learning on the Concept of Education" at SDN 71 Palembang, which shows that the implementation of the independent curriculum helps students understand bad behavior, especially in lessons.

4. CONCLUSION

This study examines how fourth grade students' understanding of dangerous behavior towards themselves and the environment is influenced by independent curriculum learning, especially in the topic of Citizenship. The t-test shows that the t_{count} value of 12.430 is higher than the t_{table} value at a significance level of 0.05 ($dk = N-2$), which is 2.015, in accordance with the results of data analysis and hypothesis testing. As a result, H_0 which states there is no effect is rejected, while H_a which states there is an effect is accepted. This indicates that students' understanding of inappropriate behavior in the context of their environment and themselves in the Citizenship class is

significantly influenced by independent curriculum learning.

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