

Competence of Ecce Teachers in Implementing the Independent Curriculum

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ABSTRACT

The curriculum outlines how the school as a system must have clear goals and directions, especially to carry out the learning process. The development of the times causes the curriculum to continue to change from time to time. However, implementation in the field sometimes does not match what has been planned in the curriculum. One of the factors that influence it is teacher competence. Therefore, this study aims to determine the competence of early childhood education teachers implementing the Merdeka curriculum. Using a type of literature study research, this article describes how the Merdeka curriculum as the latest curriculum is implemented in ECCE units. The results showed that the competence of ECCE teachers in implementing the Merdeka curriculum can be viewed from an understanding of the curriculum, educational qualifications, and child-centered learning. In addition, the themes that emerged in this study included the efforts made by ECCE teachers and the factors supporting the success of the implementation of the Merdeka curriculum. The implications of the results of this study can be used as a guide for teachers and policy makers so that the quality of learning in ECCE can improve and be competitive.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The curriculum changes over time, outlining how the school as a system should be clear of its direction and purpose (Westbury et al., 2016). This shows that the curriculum is the heart of education which is closely related to the material to be taught in a school, what learning models and learning methods will be used, as well as strategies in achieving developmental achievements at the end of the phase. Its existence in schools can make it easier for teachers to carry out the learning and teaching process. Teachers can manage classes in a directed manner, plan lessons, and adjust the learning process according to the abilities of each student (Ningsih, Yunimar, S., Suryana, 2020). Therefore, teachers need to design an appropriate curriculum for children in school (Rahmi & Suryana, 2013). Curriculum design and development are at least developed continuously (Nasution, 2011).

Early childhood education is a coaching effort given from birth to the age of 6 years so that children have readiness for further education. Various aspects of development ranging from re-ligious, moral, social, emotional, physical, motor, cognitive, and language values are devel-oped on a daily basis. Early childhood education is education given at the golden age which is the foundation of every ability developed in children (Suttriso et al, 2022). This time is the most appropriate time to boost every potential he has. The government always strives to adapt the educational curriculum to the challenges of the global era. Currently, Indonesia uses a curriculum called the Merdeka Curriculum.

The Merdeka Belajar curriculum is implemented by providing freedom for educational institu-tions, including principals, teachers, and students to determine topics or themes that are of in-terest and want to be studied (Suttriso et al, 2022). They are also free to determine the learning method that suits their needs. Although free, the government still provides a guideline curriculum structure that can be followed by teachers and students, but this structure is not required to be applied se-quentially as in the previous curriculum. The implications of an independent curriculum in ear-ly childhood education are carried out in accordance with the policy fundamentals. According to Lina and Ummu (2022), the policy bases on which this is based include:

a) Permendikbudristek Number 5 of 2002 concerning Graduate Competency Stand-ards in Early Childhood Education, Primary Education, and Secondary Education; b) Permendikbudristek No. 7 of 2022 concerning Content Standards in Early Child-hood Education, Primary Education, and Secondary Education; c) Kemendikbudristek No. 56 of 2022 concerning Guidelines for Curriculum Imple-mentation in the Framework of Learning Recovery; d) Decree of the Head of BSKAP No. 008/H/KR/2022 of 2022 concerning Learning Outcomes in Early Childhood Education in Primary Education and Secondary Educa-tion in the Independent Curriculum; e. BSKA Decree No. 009/H/KR/2022 of 2022 concerning Dimensions, Elements, and Sub-Elements of the Pancasila Student Profile in the Independent Curriculum (Suttriso, 2023)

The preparation of an independent curriculum in ECCE units has a clear process and structure. The government, in this case, the Ministry of Education and Culture and Technology has pro-vided options for each ECCE unit to implement the independent curriculum with various ver-sions depending on the readiness of each unit to implement the independent curriculum. ECCE units can implement the independent curriculum gradually according to their respective readi-ness. The first option is independent learning. If the ECCE unit chooses this option, the educa-tion unit can apply some parts and principles of the independent curriculum without replacing the curriculum of the education unit that has been implemented. The second option is to independently change. This option is applied by the education unit by implementing an independent curriculum using teaching tools that have been provided in the ECCE unit.

The third option is independent sharing, there is this option for ECCE units to implement an independent curriculum by developing their own teaching tools in ECCE units. Schools can al-so change options in the Independent Curriculum, for example, those that were originally Mandiri Belajar can be changed to Mandiri Change, or Mandiri Berbagi. That is, for those who are very ready, who have been carrying out many good practices related to the development of teaching tools and so on, in terms of facilities and infrastructure, human resource readiness, and if they can work or innovate, not only those on the Merdeka Mengajar platform but also can share with other schools in the form of innovative works and still follow the principles of the Merdeka Curriculum, then given the opportunity to choose the Mandiri Berbagi option. Schools that choose Mandiri Berbagi can share their work not only for schools in East Java, but can be distributed to teachers or principals in Indonesia.

Previous research said, Many teachers of more than 140 thousand education units have chosen and implemented an independent curriculum in the 2022/2023 school year. The independent curriculum is not a replacement for the 2013 curriculum but continues and strengthens the 2013 curriculum, with changes that will be applied to the independent curriculum, as an additional option for education units to carry out recovery during 2022-2024 (Musnar Indra Daulay¹, Mo-hammad Fauzidin²). Based on the results of research and discussion, it can be concluded that the implementation

of the Independent Curriculum in the Foundation Phase (PAUD) has gone well (JECIE (Journal of Early Childhood and Inclusive Education), Vol. 6, No. 1, December 2022)

The success of curriculum implementation is influenced by teachers' ability to approach adaptation (Yeşilpınar Uyar & Eti, 2022). They must be able to process every component in the curriculum to be selected and arranged to suit the needs of students. Implementation may include developing short- and medium-term plans, working in small groups for discussion, and selecting material that can be reused. This ability is closely related to the professionalism of a teacher. Teachers must be able to maximize their professional competence to face existing challenges (Rahmawati, 2018). For example, the ability to use IT must indeed be overcome with a willingness to learn. Teachers can learn to use a simple application that can make it easier to complete the preparation of report cards. They can use the child's Ms.Excel-based eReport system (Rohmadheny et al., 2022). The use of the application can support the professional work of ECCE teachers in preparing progress reports.

2. METHOD

This study used a literature review. The author takes this method because the ability to understand the literature widely can complement and answer questions related to conditions that develop at this time. This situation results in an accurate literature review and able to provide appropriate recommendations. The method in this research is carried out by finding and managing various sources that are in accordance with the problems that are the main focus of our topic. Literature studies are obtained from related journals. Literature review is carried out by analyzing, evaluating, and synthesizing research, theory, or practice findings in certain focus areas.

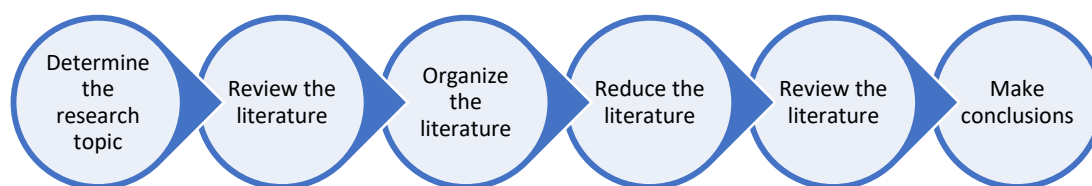


Figure 1. Data Analysis Process

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the data analysis showed that there were three themes that emerged in this study. These themes include: Professional and pedagogic competence of ECCE teachers, Efforts of ECCE teachers to implement the Independent curriculum, Factors that influence the success of the Independent Curriculum Implementation.

Professional Competence of ECCE Teachers

Based on the Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia Number 137 of 2014 Article 25 Paragraph (2) that early childhood educators as professionals must have the following four competencies: "ECCE teacher competencies are developed as a whole to include pedagogic, personality, social, and professional competencies..." The following is an explanation based on Appendix II of Permendikbud RI No. 137 of 2014. First, personality competencies related to the personal attitudes and behaviors of early childhood educators. Second, professional competence related to the understanding of early childhood, from the stages of its development to the understanding of providing educational stimulation, caregiving, and protection in early childhood. Third, pedagogical competence related to planning program activities, implementing educational, nurturing, and protection processes, as well as implementing assessments of educational, nurturing, and protective processes and outcomes. Fourth, social competence relates to the ability to adapt to the environment and the ability to communicate effectively.

Of the four competencies required for early childhood educators based on Permendikbud RI No. 137 of 2014 above, the focus of attention to be developed is pedagogical competence and professional competence because the other two competencies can be fulfilled by most educators / teachers for early childhood in Indonesia. More professional competence is built by attending strata 1 academic education in fields related to early childhood education. The pedagogical competence in addition to participating in academic education also needs to be done with various trainings so that the pedagogical competence of early childhood educators / teachers can continue to be updated in accordance with the latest early childhood education (PAUD) scientific developments. Pedagogical competencies for early childhood educators in accordance with Appendix II of Permendikbud RI No. 137 of 2014 include the following: 1) organizing aspects of development in accordance with the characteristics of early childhood; 2) analyze play theory according to aspects and stages of development, needs, potentials, talents, and interests of early childhood; 3) designing early childhood development activities based on the curriculum; 4) organizing educational development activities; 5) utilize technology, information, and communication for the benefit of organizing educational development activities; 6) develop early childhood potential for self-actualization; 7) communicate effectively, empirically, and courteously; 8) organizing and making reports on assessments, evaluations of early childhood learning processes and outcomes; 9) determine the target scope of assessment of learning processes and outcomes in early childhood; 10) use the results of assessment, development and evaluation of programs for the benefit of early childhood development; and 11) take reflective, corrective, and innovative actions to improve the quality of early childhood development processes and outcomes.

Professional competence is closely related to mastering learning materials broadly and deeply. Knowledge is closely related to professional competence that will be the foundation for a teacher to implement learning. This includes how teachers understand lesson planning, implementation, and evaluation. The characteristics of professionally competent teachers in implementing the curriculum are curriculum understanding, educational qualifications, and child-centered learning.

According to previous research, the perception of ECCE teachers in learning the new paradigm of the independent curriculum states that the independent curriculum makes it easier for teachers to make teaching tools, meaning that the independent curriculum is simpler in making learning designs. (Rosyida, et al 2022). Although not all ECCE teachers have a background in S1 ECCE education, they have attended various trainings with long teaching experience. Therefore, they have mastered knowledge about the curriculum well. Teachers understand that the Merdeka curriculum is a curriculum launched by the government in overcoming learning loss due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The Merdeka Curriculum is considered an effort to keep up with the times so that students have appropriate competencies as superior human beings. For this reason, the Ministry of Education and Culture and Technology developed an independent curriculum as an important part of efforts to restore learning from the long-experienced crisis.

Previous research stated that the implementation of the Independent Curriculum in the Foundation Phase (PAUD) has been going well (Jayawardana: 2023), this further strengthens the professional competence of ECCE teachers in implementing the independent curriculum. In the study, it was also described that the principal and teachers had made teaching modules, project modules and implemented projects.

PAUD Teachers' Efforts to Implement the Independent Curriculum

First, literature studies reveal that the implementation of the Independent Curriculum in the Foundation Phase (ECCE Level) can be known through seven aspects, namely: 1) Knowledge of Principals and Teachers on the existence of the Independent Curriculum; 2) Knowledge of Principals and Teachers on Independent Curriculum Implementation Guidelines/Regulations; 3) Understanding of Principals and Teachers on Learning Outcomes (CP) in the Independent Curriculum; 4) Understanding of Principals and Teachers on the Strengthening the Profile of Pancasila Students (P5)

Project in the Independent Curriculum; 5) Creation of teaching modules; 6) P5 Project Module Creation; and 7) Implementation of Project P5 (Joyowardana:2022). Evaluation of curriculum implementation is carried out alone or discussed with colleagues. Teachers need to apply to process assessments not results. The successful implementation of the curriculum depends on the commitment of teachers (Sutrisno, Djoko Apriono, 2023).

ECCE units can implement the independent curriculum gradually according to their respective readiness. The first option is independent learning. If the ECCE unit chooses this option, the education unit can apply some parts and principles of the independent curriculum without replacing the curriculum of the education unit that has been implemented. The second option is to independently change. This option is applied by the education unit by implementing an independent curriculum using teaching tools that have been provided in the ECCE unit. The third option is self-sharing. In this option, the ECCE unit applies an independent curriculum by developing its own teaching tools in the ECCE unit.

ECCE teachers in Indonesia are faced with the demand to carry out diverse projects by integrating the values of local wisdom in programs or activities that interest education participants. This aims to introduce and foster a love for culture and local wisdom values simply, as well as reveal the hidden and obvious values of Pancasila in local wisdom works (Mimin, 2023). The Pancasila student profile strengthening project is a form of interdisciplinary learning that involves observing and thinking about solutions to overcome problems around the environment. The aim is to strengthen various competencies included in the Pancasila Student Profile (Har-yono et al., 2023).

The curriculum structure at the Early Childhood Education (PAUD) level regulated by Kepmendikbudristek Number 262/M/2022 consists of two main components, namely Intracurricular Learning Activities and the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project. Intracurricular learning activities are designed with the aim that children can achieve the abilities set in learning outcomes (CP). The essence of this intracurricular learning activity is through play which has significant meaning as an implementation of the principle of freedom to learn, freedom to play.

Factors Influencing the Successful Implementation of Their Curriculum

Previous studies reported that the success of curriculum implementation was influenced by the competence of the principal, the age of the teacher, and the learning approach used (Fadlillah, 2018). Principals who have mastered the theory and practice of the 2013 curriculum make it easier for teachers to implement it. To improve teachers' ability to develop curriculum, principals need to encourage them to attend training. Many experts argue about the meaning, purpose and benefits of training. But from these various opinions, in principle, it is not much different. Sikula in Sumantri (2000: 2) defines training as: "a short-term education process that uses methods and Journal of EMPOWERMENT Volume 4, Number 1 February 2014, ISSN No. 2252-4738 7 systematic and organized procedures. The trainees will learn knowledge and skills that are practical in nature for a specific purpose". According to Good, 1973 training is "a process of helping others in acquiring skills and knowledge" (M. Saleh Marzuki, 1992: 5).

According to Good, 1973 training is "a process of helping others in acquiring skills and knowledge" (M. Saleh Marzuki, 1992: 5). While Michael J. Jucius in Moekijat (1991: 2) explains the term exercise "To show each process to develop the talents, skills and abilities of employees to complete certain jobs". Related to the factors that affect the success of the implementation of the Independent Curriculum, one of them is by participating in seminars, training, workshops and such activities.

What is of note is that the trainings that are followed should be continued with discussion forums and joint learning for teachers so that they can discuss the obstacles experienced when compiling and implementing the Merdeka curriculum with friends from other schools. They can exchange information and views. In addition, the principal also needs to supervise according to school conditions. Such supervision includes classroom supervision and classroom observation, to truly ensure that learning is on the side of the learners.

In addition, with the enthusiasm of young teachers, they are more creative and easy to adjust changes in curriculum policies. The level of creativity of educators affects the implementation of fun learning for children (Lupi, 2017). The more creative teachers are in delivering learning material, the easier it is for students to understand the material presented. Teacher creativity is needed to create a learning atmosphere that motivates students, chooses appropriate learning methods, and uses learning materials that suit the abilities of each student by precipitating the process rather than the results. This is where the successful implementation of the Merdeka curriculum in PAUD lies.

The learning committee also has a considerable role in the implementation of the independent learning curriculum through training on the implementation of learning with a new paradigm for teachers and related parties. Through the Committee Teachers will receive training related to personal and career development, professional learning practices, and digital platforms. (Muniroh Munawar: 2022)

Support from parents is also reported to be one of the success factors in curriculum implementation. Intensive parent-child interaction is needed related to their schoolwork. Through these interactions, children build knowledge gradually. Parents who are patient and calm will provide a cool climate to children, so they can do their tasks calmly and comfortably. Great parents to-day are not only able to accompany children to learn, but also create a sense of comfort and calm for their children when doing tasks by increasing interaction (Pelista Karo Once:2023).

4. CONCLUSION

Teacher competence is very important in the implementation of an independent curriculum. Teachers' competencies develop along with the willingness and experience they gain both in-side and outside of school. Training and mentoring in implementing the Merdeka curriculum is important so that every teacher has a role in the development and preparation of the school curriculum. If teachers have a hand in it, then in implementation they will always be guided by what they make. This research is expected to be a guideline for ECCE teachers in implementing the Merdeka curriculum and be a solution to the problems they encounter.

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