

Problems Implementing the Independent Curriculum in History Learning at SMA Negeri 1 Sarudu

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ABSTRACT

Challenges in Implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in History Learning at SMA Negeri 1 Sarudu. Skripsi. Bachelor's degree. History Education Study Program, Social Science Education Department, Teacher Training, and Education Faculty, Tadulako University. Under the supervision of Fajar Nugroho. This research aims to describe the implementation process, identify the challenges encountered, and examine the solutions applied in applying the Merdeka Curriculum in history learning at SMA Negeri 1 Sarudu. This research used a descriptive qualitative approach with data collection techniques through observation, interviews, and documentation. Data analysis was conducted using the Miles and Huberman model, which includes stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion. The research results show that implementing the Merdeka Curriculum at SMA Negeri 1 Sarudu encompasses three stages: planning, implementation, and evaluation, centred on students' needs and characteristics. In the process, various problems were found, including student objections to P5 projects, teachers' difficulties in implementing differentiated learning, facility limitations, teachers' lack of initial understanding, and constraints in assessment time management. The solutions implemented by the school and teachers include socialising the benefits of P5, student mentoring, learning style mapping, teacher training, facility optimisation, and more structured assessment scheduling. This research concludes that implementing the Merdeka Curriculum at SMA Negeri 1 Sarudu still faces challenges, but these can be overcome through collaboration between the school and teachers so that history learning runs more effectively and in line with the principles of independent learning.

Keywords: *Merdeka Curriculum, problems, history learning, SMA Negeri 1 Sarudu.*

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INTRODUCTION

Education is a key pillar in developing a generation of nation with character, intelligence, and competitiveness. (Tilaar 2012:17) emphasizes that education is a means to shape whole human beings who are not only intellectually superior but also possess moral and social awareness. Therefore, curriculum change is a necessity that continues to evolve with the times.

Independent Curriculum has characteristics that distinguish it from previous curricula. According to (Windayanti et al. 2023), the implementation of this curriculum requires teachers to be able to apply differentiated learning, diagnostic assessment, and project-based learning oriented toward student character development. However, in practice, the implementation of this curriculum still faces many challenges, both in terms of teacher understanding, the availability of facilities and infrastructure, and student readiness.

History learning, as a core subject in secondary schools, plays a crucial role in shaping students' national identity, historical awareness, and critical thinking skills. According to (Sutrisno 2019:50), history learning relates to past events that are connected to the present and future, and can shape students' character and personality. Similarly, (Sutikno 2013:31) asserts that history learning can enhance students' understanding of humanitarian values, encourage behavioral change, and foster awareness of the importance of history in life.

However, on the ground, history learning is often considered boring because it tends to be memorization-oriented. The Independent Curriculum is expected to address this by providing more contextual, interactive, and meaningful learning. Research (Sumarmi 2023) also revealed that the challenges in implementing the Independent Curriculum are not only related to teacher preparedness, but also to limited facilities, a lack of supporting literature, and challenges in classroom management.

This situation also occurs at SMA Negeri 1 Sarudu, Pasangkayu Regency. Based on observations and interviews, the implementation of the Independent Curriculum at this school still faces several challenges. Teachers struggle to develop Learning Objectives (ATP), students feel burdened by P5 project assignments, and school facilities do not fully support technology-based learning. This demonstrates a gap between the ideal concept of the Independent Curriculum and its practical implementation. Therefore, this study is important to describe the process of implementing the Independent Curriculum in history learning at SMA Negeri 1 Sarudu, identify emerging problems, and find applicable solutions. Thus, this study is expected to contribute scientifically to the educational literature, while also providing practical recommendations for teachers, schools, and policymakers to optimize the implementation of the Independent Curriculum.

In response to the various limitations of the 2013 Curriculum, the government introduced the Independent Curriculum. This curriculum emphasizes more flexible and contextual learning, prioritizing the development of students' essential competencies. One of its distinctive features is the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5), which emphasizes character building, independence, mutual cooperation, and student creativity (Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, 2021). Differentiated learning, as a key approach in the Independent Curriculum, is an effective strategy for meeting students' diverse learning needs.

However, the ideals of the Independent Curriculum are not easily realized. Curriculum changes face structural and cultural obstacles, particularly related to teacher readiness to understand new concepts. This is consistent with research (Windayanti et al.

2023:2057), which found that teachers still struggle to implement the Independent Curriculum, both in terms of designing diagnostic assessments and managing project-based learning.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative descriptive approach to provide a systematic, factual, and in-depth overview of the implementation of the Independent Curriculum in history learning at SMA Negeri 1 Sarudu. This approach was chosen because it aligns with the research objectives, which are to uncover the problems faced by teachers and students and identify solutions implemented by the school.

The research was conducted at SMA Negeri 1 Sarudu, Pasangkayu Regency, during the even semester of the 2024/2025 academic year, from May to June 2025. This location was chosen because the school had implemented the Independent Curriculum, thus being considered representative to illustrate the various obstacles and challenges that arise in the practice of history learning. The object of the research was the implementation of the Independent Curriculum in history learning, which includes aspects of planning, implementation, and evaluation. The research subjects consisted of history teachers, the principal, and grades 10 and 11 students at SMA Negeri 1 Sarudu.

Research data was obtained from two sources: primary and secondary data. Primary data was collected directly through in-depth interviews with history teachers, principals, and students, as well as observations of classroom learning activities. Secondary data was obtained from official school documents, learning materials, assessment archives, and various literature in the form of books, journals, and scientific articles relevant to the Independent Curriculum.

In the data collection process, researchers used semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and documentation in the form of notes, photographs, and other supporting documents. The collected data were then analyzed using the (Miles and Huberman 1992) model, which includes three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

RESEARCH RESULT

This research was conducted from January to February 2025 at SMA Negeri 1 Sarudu, involving a total of 13 informants, consisting of the principal, two history teachers, and 10 students in grades 10 and 11. The purpose of this study was to determine the process of implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in history learning, the problems that emerged in the field, and the solutions taken by teachers and schools. During data collection, researchers used interview sheets, notebooks, a digital camera, and a voice recorder to document each research process.

1. The Process of Implementing the Independent Curriculum in History Learning at SMA Negeri 1 Sarudu.

The results of the study show that history teachers at SMA Negeri 1 Sarudu play a central role in implementing the Independent Curriculum, particularly through three main stages, namely planning, implementation, and evaluation

1. Planning

The research results show that the planning stage for the implementation of the Independent Curriculum at SMA Negeri 1 Sarudu was carried out seriously and in a structured manner, despite still facing a number of challenges. This planning is a crucial initial stage, as it involves the history teacher and school administrators formulating documents and learning tools that will serve as guidelines for the teaching and learning process. Several important components prepared at this stage include the Educational Unit Operational Curriculum (KOSP), the Learning Objectives Flow (ATP), and adjustments to the Learning Outcomes (CP) stipulated in the Independent Curriculum.

The principal of SMA Negeri 1 Sarudu, Harniati, S.Pd., emphasized that the Independent Curriculum planning provides teachers with greater flexibility to adapt teaching materials to student needs. She stated:

"In this Independent Curriculum, teachers are also given the freedom to choose various teaching materials that suit their students' learning needs and interests. This approach makes the teaching and learning process more relevant, engaging, and enjoyable for students." (Interview, January 21, 2025).

This statement demonstrates that planning is not merely an administrative formality, but rather an effort to create student-centered learning. This means that teachers are no longer completely tied to uniform teaching tools but can instead develop materials and methods tailored to student characteristics.

The same point was confirmed by academic staff member Muhammad Irdan, who explained the planning elements in more detail. He said: "The planning element in the Independent Curriculum begins with the development of the KOSP (Student Development Plan). In the context of history learning, this planning must focus on student needs and the local context. History teachers at SMA Negeri 1 Sarudu also developed ATP (Analytical Learning Outcomes) and teaching modules as practical guides in the teaching and learning process." (Interview, January 21, 2025).

From this explanation, it's clear that planning isn't just about compiling documents, but also about how the curriculum is implemented according to the school's conditions and the surrounding environment. For example, in history lessons, teachers try to adapt topics to local realities so students can connect the material to their daily lives.

However, based on the researchers' observations, history teachers still face challenges in developing ATP and teaching modules. Several teachers stated that they were not yet accustomed to the flexibility of the ATP format, having previously

been more accustomed to the more rigid syllabus structure of the 2013 Curriculum. History teacher Afdal G, S.Pd., said:

"During the planning stage, we tried to align the learning materials and objectives with the outcomes set out in the Independent Curriculum. There were challenges, especially in formulating more flexible learning objectives. But we're slowly getting used to it." (Interview, January 21, 2025).

From this quote, it can be concluded that teachers are eager to adapt, although they still need guidance. The planning process at SMA Negeri 1 Sarudu has also not been entirely ideal due to limited resources and teachers' limited experience in developing differentiation-based teaching modules. Some teachers are even adapting old teaching materials and modifying them to comply with the Merdeka Curriculum requirements.

In the researcher's view, this planning stage has two sides: on the one hand, it shows progress, with teachers beginning to adapt; on the other, it still shows limitations. If not strengthened, the implementation stage will also face significant obstacles. Therefore, the planning stage requires support in the form of intensive training, workshops on developing ATP and teaching modules, and the provision of examples of teaching materials that can serve as references for teachers.

Thus, it can be said that the planning stage at SMA Negeri 1 Sarudu demonstrates a real effort by the school and history teachers to adapt to the Independent Curriculum. Although there are still gaps in understanding, the teachers' awareness and commitment to trying demonstrates that the curriculum planning is moving in a positive direction. This planning stage also serves as the foundation for the implementation and evaluation stages, making it increasingly clear that the success of the Independent Curriculum implementation is largely determined by the extent to which planning is carried out in a mature, realistic, and student-centered manner.

2. Implementation

The implementation of history learning based on the Independent Curriculum at SMA Negeri 1 Sarudu is a complex and dynamic process. This process goes beyond simply transferring material from teacher to student, but rather focuses on active student involvement in every stage of the learning process. Teachers act as facilitators, guiding students to discover meaning, develop understanding, and connect historical knowledge to real life. This is evident in the way teachers develop teaching modules that rely not only on textbooks but also utilize various other sources such as the internet, articles, and visual media relevant to local and national contexts.

In practice, history learning is conducted using an interactive, participatory, and differentiated approach. Teachers strive to accommodate students' diverse learning styles, including visual, auditory, and kinesthetic, through discussions, presentations, simulations, and group projects. Muhammad Aswan, a history teacher,

explained that he strives to create a classroom atmosphere that allows students to discuss openly, express opinions, and analyze historical events.

Students' active involvement is also reflected in their testimonials. One 11th-grade student, Muh Akbar, revealed that learning history now feels more enjoyable because they don't just listen to the teacher's lectures but also engage in discussions, watch videos of historical events, and receive reflective questions that encourage deeper thinking. This signifies a paradigm shift in learning from teacher-centered to student-centered, where students become the primary subjects and play an active role in constructing their own understanding.

3. Evaluation

History learning evaluation is conducted comprehensively and continuously. First, diagnostic assessments are used at the beginning of the lesson to map students' initial abilities, interests, and difficulties. Second, formative assessments are conducted throughout the learning process, for example through short quizzes, Q&A sessions, or observing student engagement in group discussions. These assessments are crucial for providing immediate feedback so teachers can adjust learning strategies. Third, summative assessments are implemented at the end of a unit or semester in the form of written tests or creative projects such as history papers, presentations, or video production. This form of evaluation assesses not only knowledge but also students' attitudes, creativity, communication skills, and critical thinking skills.

The evaluation shows that the assessment system implemented aligns with the principles of the Independent Curriculum because it provides a comprehensive picture of student development, not just academic grades. This multi-layered evaluation helps teachers map students' strengths and weaknesses and encourages the development of 21st-century skills such as collaboration, communication, and creativity. Thus, evaluation plays a crucial role as a tool for reflection and continuous improvement in the history learning process.

2. Problems in implementing the Independent Curriculum in history learning at SMA Negeri 1 Sarudu.

The research results show that the implementation of the Independent Curriculum in history learning at SMA Negeri 1 Sarudu follows a more interactive, collaborative, and student-centered approach. The history teacher no longer merely serves as a transmitter of material but as a facilitator guiding the learning process. This is evident in the application of various methods such as group discussions, presentations, Q&A sessions, and small project assignments relevant to the history material.

History teacher, Afdal G, S.Pd, emphasized that the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum is aimed at making students more active in understanding historical events, not just memorizing facts. After planning, the next stage is implementing learning. At Sarudu 1 Public High School, history learning is carried out with a more

interactive and participatory approach. Students are encouraged to actively engage in discussions, group projects, and other learning activities. "Learning is no longer focused on memorizing historical facts, but more on understanding concepts and analyzing historical events." (Interview, January 21, 2025).

Furthermore, another history teacher, Ms. Fatmawati, S.Pd., added that although they still use some teaching materials from the old curriculum, they are trying to modify them to meet the demands of the Merdeka Curriculum. She said: "Although we still use some materials from the old curriculum, we try to modify and adapt them to meet students' needs. We also utilize the internet for additional references." (Interview, January 22, 2025).

In its implementation, learning also emphasizes the principle of differentiated learning. Teachers strive to adapt teaching strategies to students' learning styles, whether visual, auditory, or kinesthetic. For example, visual learners are given maps, pictures, and chronological diagrams of events; auditory learners are involved in discussions and oral explanations; while kinesthetic learners are more directed to create projects such as history posters or creative presentations. Student responses to learning based on the Independent Curriculum have also been quite positive. Most students reported being more enthusiastic about learning history because the methods used by teachers were more varied and less monotonous. One eleventh-grade student, Muh Akbar, said:

"I feel like learning history is more exciting now because we often have discussions and watch videos about historical events. The teacher also often asks questions that make us think more deeply about the material being taught, so I don't just memorize the material." (Interview, January 21, 2025).

Another student, Zilvia, also added that learning history felt more enjoyable because the teacher often combined the material with digital media: "If there's a video or a presentation with slides, I understand more quickly and don't get bored in class. It makes learning history feel more alive." (Interview, January 22, 2025).

Thus, the implementation phase demonstrates teachers' efforts to shift learning patterns from lectures to active learning. The integration of media, discussions, and small projects has been shown to increase student enthusiasm. However, this implementation still faces challenges, particularly limited school facilities such as projector availability and internet connection.

3. Solutions implemented in implementing the Independent Curriculum in history learning at SMA Negeri 1 Sarudu

The research results show that the implementation of the Independent Curriculum at SMA Negeri 1 Sarudu faces several challenges, including limited teacher understanding, student objections to the P5 project, difficulties with differentiated learning, limited facilities, and suboptimal assessment timing. To address these challenges, the school and teachers implemented various strategic solutions.

The first step was to provide training for teachers to improve their understanding of the Independent Curriculum concept and develop Lesson Implementation Plans (RPPs). The school principal, Harniati, emphasized that "this training is crucial to providing full support to teachers in understanding and implementing the new curriculum" (Interview, February 20, 2025).

Furthermore, teachers have taken the initiative to develop teaching modules that are more flexible and relevant to students' lives. History teacher Muhammad Afdal explained: "We have started using teaching modules that are more flexible and based on student needs. In addition, we also utilize internet resources to enrich the teaching materials" (Interview, February 20, 2025). These modules even integrate local contexts, such as research on Sarudu community traditions linked to national historical events. To support students, the school also provides additional tutoring and group counseling. Tenth-grade student Fitri Ananda expressed that "they feel more involved in learning history now than before. They feel freer to search for information on their own and discuss it with their friends" (Interview, February 24, 2025). Meanwhile, Denis Saputra from the eleventh grade added his hope that "there will be more group projects where they can work together and learn from each other's experiences" (Interview, February 24, 2025).

Other solutions implemented include optimizing school facilities, providing internet access, using simple digital media, and developing a more structured assessment schedule.

DISCUSSION

The process of implementing the Independent Curriculum at SMA Negeri 1 Sarudu includes three important stages, namely planning, implementation, and evaluation.

1. The Process of Implementing the Independent Curriculum in History Learning at SMA Negeri 1 Sarudu.

The research results show that the implementation of the Independent Curriculum at SMA Negeri 1 Sarudu went through three stages: planning, implementation, and evaluation. During the planning stage, history teachers developed the Educational Unit Operational Curriculum (KOSP), Learning Objectives Flow (ATP), and teaching modules. However, there were still limited references and module adaptations from the previous curriculum. This situation indicates that although the principle of flexibility in the Independent Curriculum has been accommodated, its implementation has been suboptimal due to the lack of comprehensive teaching materials.

During the implementation phase, a paradigm shift in history learning was observed. The learning process no longer emphasized memorization, but rather focused on analysis, discussion, group projects, and strengthening the connection between history and students' lives. Teachers implemented a differentiated approach and project-based learning to accommodate students' varying learning styles. This aligns with constructivism theory, which emphasizes active student involvement in

constructing their own knowledge. Thus, students play a more active role as subjects of learning, while teachers serve as facilitators.

During the evaluation phase, schools conduct continuous assessments, both formative and summative, as well as reflection on learning. This approach aligns with the view (Susanti et al. 2023) that the Independent Curriculum emphasizes authentic assessment to measure student learning processes and outcomes. However, research has identified limitations in evaluation instruments and time management constraints, resulting in not all learning objectives being optimally achieved.

2. Problems in implementing the Independent Curriculum in history learning at SMA Negeri 1 Sarudu.

This study found several obstacles in implementing the Independent Curriculum at SMA Negeri 1 Sarudu. First, limited facilities and infrastructure made it difficult for teachers to develop a variety of learning media. This condition is similar to the findings of (Delida Silvie et al. 2023), who stated that limited facilities were one of the main obstacles in implementing the Independent Curriculum at SMA Negeri 1 Anjongan.

Second, teachers experience difficulties in implementing differentiated learning. Each student has different abilities and learning styles (visual, auditory, and kinesthetic), requiring teachers to develop more varied strategies. This aligns with the opinion (Windayanti et al. 2023) that teachers often experience difficulties in developing ATP and determining learning methods appropriate to student diversity.

Third, there are time management constraints, particularly in the implementation of P5 projects and assessments. Regular learning time is often insufficient to complete project-based activities. (Ernawati et al. 2024) also found similar problems at SMK NU Banjarmasin, where time constraints were a major obstacle in implementing the Independent Curriculum.

Fourth, teachers' understanding of the curriculum is uneven. Some teachers remain confused about developing teaching modules and using technology-based media. This reinforces the literature that states that curriculum changes always require teacher readiness in both pedagogical and professional competencies (Fatih et al., 2022).

3. Solutions implemented in implementing the Independent Curriculum in history learning at SMA Negeri 1 Sarudu.

To address these challenges, the school and teachers at SMA Negeri 1 Sarudu implemented several strategies. First, training and outreach were provided to improve teachers' understanding of the principles of the Independent Curriculum. This effort aligns with the recommendation (Delida Silvie et al. 2023) that the government needs to increase teacher training to better understand the concept and implementation of the Independent Curriculum.

Second, teachers map students' learning styles so that learning strategies can be tailored to their needs. This approach is crucial for reducing achievement gaps

between students and aligns with the concept of differentiated learning in the Independent Curriculum (Khoirurrijal et al., 2022).

Third, schools strive to optimize existing facilities, even if they are limited. Utilizing computer labs, libraries, and audiovisual media is one way to support history learning. This aligns with Sumarmi (2023) who emphasized the importance of media variety in supporting in-depth learning.

Fourth, a more structured assessment schedule was implemented. Evaluations were directed not only at assessing outcomes but also at assessing the process. This demonstrates alignment with the principles of authentic assessment recommended in the Independent Curriculum (Susanti et al., 2023).

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of research on the implementation of the Independent Curriculum in history learning at SMA Negeri 1 Sarudu, it can be concluded that the process of implementing this curriculum has gone through three important stages: planning, implementation, and evaluation. In the planning stage, teachers strive to develop the Educational Unit Operational Curriculum (KOSP), Learning Objective Flow (ATP), and teaching modules tailored to student needs, although there are still limited references and most teaching materials are still adaptations of the previous curriculum. In the implementation stage, there is a visible shift in the learning paradigm from one that previously emphasized memorization to one oriented towards understanding, analysis, and collaborative projects that more actively involve students. Meanwhile, the evaluation stage emphasizes continuous assessment that not only assesses results but also pays attention to the student learning process in accordance with the principles of authentic assessment in the Independent Curriculum.

However, the implementation of the Independent Curriculum in this school still faces several challenges, including limited facilities and infrastructure, teachers' difficulties implementing differentiated learning due to the students' diverse abilities, and time management challenges, particularly in implementing the P5 project, which often does not align with the regular learning schedule. Furthermore, there are still gaps in teachers' understanding of the basic concepts of the Independent Curriculum, resulting in uneven implementation in the field.

To address these challenges, schools and teachers are seeking solutions through training and outreach to better understand the principles and practices of the Independent Curriculum, mapping student learning styles to support differentiated learning, optimizing available facilities, despite their limitations, and restructuring assessment scheduling to ensure they remain on track. These efforts demonstrate the school's commitment to ensuring the implementation of the Independent Curriculum continues as intended.

Overall, this study confirms that the implementation of the Independent Curriculum at SMA Negeri 1 Sarudu has had a positive impact on history learning by encouraging active student engagement, increasing the relevance of learning, and strengthening 21st-century skills. Although its implementation still requires improvements

in facilities, teacher understanding, and time management. Therefore, the results of this study are expected to provide input for teachers, schools, and education policymakers in optimizing the implementation of the Independent Curriculum going forward.

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