



## Implementation of independent learning curriculum management to improve the quality of education at the Hizkia Manado special school for autism

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### Abstract

Education is an effort by an institution or a country to improve human resources. The curriculum is not the only determining factor in the development of education in Indonesia, but is one of the solutions and plays an important role in educational progress and adapting to developments in technological progress. The independent curriculum gives educators the freedom to create quality learning that suits students' needs and learning environment. The Hizkia Manado Special School for Autism is one of the schools that has implemented the Merdeka curriculum. However, there is also a need for good management in managing the curriculum itself, which of course starts with planning, implementation and evaluation. Therefore, it is necessary to implement independent curriculum management to improve the quality of education at the Hizkia Manado Special School for Autism. This research uses a qualitative approach. Data collection was carried out by documentation, observation and interviews. Data analysis is carried out by describing, analyzing and identifying problems in the implementation of the Merdeka Belajar curriculum management, finding what is considered important from what has been learned and deciding what can be told to other people. Data analysis was carried out when the researcher was in the field, during data collection, and after all the data was collected or after completion of the field. The research results show that in the curriculum planning aspect, the lack of parental involvement in curriculum preparation has an impact on its implementation. In implementing the curriculum itself, teachers still need more intense training so that dealing with students who experience special needs can be carried out well. Likewise, in the aspect of curriculum evaluation, there needs to be regular and continuous evaluation, both learning evaluation and evaluation of the curriculum as a whole, so as to produce quality education that is in line with national education goals.

**Keywords:** Independent learning curriculum management, quality of education, special schools

### Introduction

Education is an effort by an institution or a country to improve human resources. In this world, most countries are trying to improve the quality of education in an effort to catch up with the various developments occurring in the digital revolution 4.0. Education ultimately becomes the spearhead of development in a better direction, not only in terms of the human resources produced but also the direction of development that is better planned and of higher quality. As time progresses and technological developments run at lightning speed, so does education, which must adapt to existing technology. In general, education in various countries is starting to develop education based on the digital era which forces them to work to adapt to existing technological developments.

Education means a structured process or conscious effort by a person to prepare students through activities to face the future, or a person's conscious struggle to become better than before. Structured education is a set of systems that have been designed to support the teaching and learning process by taking into account internal events that take place in the classroom. According to Ahdar Djamaludin (2014:18). Education is a human effort to grow and develop potentials, both physical and spiritual, in accordance with the values that exist in society and the environment. Every developed country will never be separated from global education. Increasing the quality of a country's education will also increase the quality of human resources that can advance and make their country proud. John Dewey, stated

that education is a process, a renewal of the meaning of experience, this may occur in ordinary interactions or interactions between adults and young people, it may also occur deliberately and be institutionalized to form social continuity. This process involves the supervision and development of the immature person and the group in which he or she lives.

Education is essentially an attitude and improvement of human behavior in an effort to mature or an effort of pedagogy and training through educational processes, methods and actions. The aim of education contains illustrations of good, noble, true and beautiful values for life. Education is a fundamental human right that all citizens, especially children, have. The aim of education is to help students discover and develop their interests and abilities according to their potential (Wuryandani *et al.*, 2018: 87). National Education System Law No. 20 of 2003 outlines that education is a conscious and planned effort to create a learning atmosphere and learning process so that students actively develop their potential to have religious spiritual strength, self-control, personality, intelligence, noble character and skills. That is needed by himself, the citizens, the nation and the state. The national education system is all educational components that are interconnected in an integrated manner to achieve national education goals. In Indonesia itself, education is an issue that is often raised in several political campaigns, for example in the presidential election. From era to era we always talk about existing educational developments. However, education in

Indonesia is slowly starting to move in a quite positive direction. And education in this beloved country is starting to open up and adapt to educational developments in the world in general. Looking at history, education in Indonesia is based on the spirit of Ing Ngarso Sung Tulodo (a teacher is an educator who must set an example or be a role model) Ing madya mangun karsa (a teacher is an educator who is always in the midst of his students and continuously develops their enthusiasm and ideas for work), Tut wuri handayani (which means a teacher is an educator who continuously guides, supports and points the right direction for the life and work of his students). This was stated by an Indonesian education figure, namely Ki Hajar Dewantara.

From its roots alone, education in Indonesia has a philosophy that is very good for the progress of the nation. However, the education problem in this country has too many influencing factors, starting from the level of welfare and also the uneven development in Indonesia, causing inequality to occur. On the other hand, the government is currently trying to catch up with some of the lag in various regions to equalize the level of education in Indonesia. However, the reality is inversely proportional to what is happening in the field where education in Indonesia is considered to still be lagging behind in several aspects of assessment. This can be proven by the inequality between urban and rural areas where the level of education is very different. In urban areas, the education process takes place well, supported by various kinds of facilities. This is different in rural or underdeveloped areas where the education process is not running well and is not supported by various existing facilities, so this is one of the factors causing the lameness of education in Indonesia. This unequal or inequality education process ultimately affects the entire education process in Indonesia, thereby affecting the level of education in the world. Where the level of education in Indonesia is still underestimated and of course this affects the quality of education itself. There needs to be an action or revolution in the world of education to catch up with the processes, resources and infrastructure that support the development of education in this country. Of course, there needs to be big thinking and cooperation to find solutions to the educational inequality that occurs.

Educational planning is the preparation of a set of decisions containing future activities to achieve a goal with optimal use for overall economic and social development. Educational planning itself functions as a basic pattern, instructions and guidelines in making decisions, implementing and controlling educational activities, in developing the quality of education, fulfilling the accountability of educational institutions and for preparing alternative policies for future activities in educational development. According to Muhammad Sahnan (2017) for an educational institution, especially elementary schools, planning occupies a strategic position in the entire educational process. Educational planning provides clarity of direction in the educational process, so that the management of educational institutions can be carried out more effectively and efficiently. For the implementation of effective education in elementary schools, planning is needed. Planning will direct the school to achieve the goals that have been set.

Educational planning conveys clarity of direction in the process of providing education. By using this clarity of

direction, education business management will be able to be carried out more effectively and efficiently. Planning can help achieve a target or goal more precisely and perfectly when it provides the opportunity to be more easily controlled and monitored in its implementation. For this reason, planning as an element and the first step in the management function generally occupies a very important position. Through planning, it will be guaranteed that there will be cost savings and more useful use of resources. According to Aisyah (2018:23) educational planning is the basis for implementing activities in education by looking at the future to develop education so that it can be more effective and efficient in accordance with community needs to achieve educational development targets, so that the goals of education can also be realized according to expectations. The desired future of education is quality education in a structured and programmed manner through planning from the start so that the future is not something that will just happen by chance. One effort that can be made to improve the quality of education in the era of globalization is through implementing good education management. Without good educational management, it is likely that all efforts to improve the quality of educational provision will not receive optimal results. Whether a forum or organization is good or bad depends on the origin of its management and management will be of good value if it is managed by professional people. To become a professional manager, you don't have to just use intention, but you have to put in the effort, namely by producing management as the basis of education. Education management becomes a process or management system. Management activities in an education system aim to carry out relevant, effective and efficient teaching and learning processes which can occur if they are equipped using facilities formed by an organizational platform.

Social change and globalization have given rise to a new knowledge economy where the essential issues are what we call knowledge in an organization, how this knowledge is transmitted and maintained, who owns it, and how it becomes a common property. Thus, globalization affects economic, political, cultural, technical and social aspects in all countries, which inevitably leads to uncertainty; for example, in a changing job market. This is where educational management, as a special science that deals with the organization of education, needs to provide answers to these uncertainties in the context of its role as a tool to combat social exclusion. Educational management is required to reposition educational institutions to meet the needs of a super-complex century.

The curriculum is not the only determining factor in the development of education in Indonesia, but is one of the solutions and plays an important role in educational progress and adapting to developments in technological progress. The curriculum itself is a reference for an institution to shape the image and rules of a school to realize the ideals and goals that have been designed. Basically, a curriculum is formed and designed to be able to create students who include all aspects, including cognitive, affective and psychomotor aspects. Curriculum changes are one effort to improve educational development. As well as fixing systems that cannot be maintained. Curriculum changes occur continuously if we don't want to be out of date. With the changes to the curriculum, it is hoped that education in the country will be better and achieve the expected targets

The independent curriculum itself gives educators the freedom to create quality learning that suits students' needs and learning environment. In general, the independent curriculum is a diverse intracurricular learning curriculum. Where the content will be more optimal so that students have sufficient time to deepen concepts and strengthen competencies. Later, teachers have the power to choose various teaching tools so that learning can be tailored to students' learning needs and interests. This curriculum is to strengthen the achievement of student profiles, developed based on certain themes determined by the government. The project is not directed at achieving specific learning achievement targets, so it is not tied to subject content.

The quality of education is a very strong area when the implementation of a curriculum fails, therefore in several articles it is stated that the importance of a good curriculum so that in the implementation stage it also has a good impact on the quality of education. According to Hari Sudradjad, quality education is education that is capable of producing graduates who have abilities or competencies, both academic and vocational competencies, which are based on personal and social competencies, as well as noble moral values, all of which are life skills, education that is capable of producing complete humans (complete humans) or humans with integral personalities who are able to integrate faith, knowledge and charity.

A special school is an educational institution specifically for people with disabilities. Those with disabilities do not escape special learning or a curriculum that supports every potential of children with disabilities. The current problem is that these children are only satisfied with the cognitive aspects packaged in a curriculum that requires them to do this. It is very sad when children who have intellectual disabilities or what are commonly known as mentally retarded are fed up with the knowledge that they themselves basically have an IQ below average. Manado Autism Special School is a school that has implemented an independent curriculum but still has problems in implementing curriculum management so that it has an impact on the quality of education.

Good curriculum management will of course have a big impact on the quality of education itself so that schools that have implemented the independent learning curriculum must have strong curriculum management, of course starting from good planning, implementation in accordance with planning and ongoing evaluation to ensure the quality of education itself. This research aims to determine the planning, implementation and evaluation of the implementation of independent learning curriculum management to improve the quality of education at the Hizkia Manado Autism Special School.

### Method

This research uses a qualitative approach, namely research that collects and analyzes data with a scientific background and does not attempt to calculate data or analyze numbers. The research location is the Hizkia Manado Autism Special School. This school is located on Jl. Lumimut VIII No. 12 A Ward 3 Tikala Kumaraka Village, Wenang District, Manado City.

In this research, primary data was obtained from interviews conducted with the principal and teachers at the Hizkia Autism Special School, Manado. Meanwhile, secondary data is taken from documents, observations, photos, relevant

data and previous research. Data collection techniques are observation, interviews and documentation. The data analysis technique in this research was carried out in four stages, namely data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. In order to guarantee the level of confidence in checking the data, the researcher chose data testing techniques by triangulating sources, peers and member checking.

### Results and Discussion

The data presented in this research relates to the implementation of independent learning curriculum management to improve the quality of education at the Hizkia Manado Autism Special School. Where in interviews conducted with the Principal and also teachers at the Hizkia Manado Autistic Special School, there were findings which were of course related to the implementation of independent learning curriculum management.

Apart from being an administrator and supervisor, the principal must also carry out management functions, especially in implementing curriculum management in the school he leads. This aims to ensure that all school components involved in implementing the curriculum can run well.

#### 1. How to Plan the Implementation of the Independent Learning Curriculum to Improve the Quality of Education at the Hizkia Manado Autism Special School

Curriculum planning to improve the quality of education at the Hizkia Manado Special School for Autism was carried out before the start of the new school year. In research findings regarding curriculum planning in improving the quality of education at the Hizkia Manado Autism Special School. The planning is carried out by carrying out in-house training activities which are attended by school supervisors, school principals and all teachers. In this activity, planning and socialization of the curriculum was discussed, especially regarding the learning outcomes of diagnostic assessments and teaching modules.

In the preparation process, it is best to involve other elements such as parents, committees and stakeholders to accommodate the results of student work in the teaching and learning process, namely the implementation of P5 (Strengthening Pancasila Student Profile Project). From the process that occurred in preparing the curriculum, it turned out that no parents were involved, so this had an impact on the learning process and also the implementation of the P5 that had been planned by the school.

This of course has a big impact on the students themselves in the learning process. When the steps in making crafts from used items are carried out well, of course the impact will be good, especially when this process occurs in autistic children. And that really influences the process or steps that have been determined. Furthermore, in curriculum planning teachers and principals prepare learning outcomes, diagnostic assessments which then prepare teaching modules which will later be used in the teaching and learning process.

From the explanation above it can be obtained that:

- a. In preparing the Merdeka curriculum at the Special School for Autism Hizkia Manado, it still hasn't received more attention from parents or support from parents is still very lacking.

- b. The preparation of teaching tools and learning outcomes is of course all based on the needs of students, in this case namely autistic students.
- c. The need for very serious attention in this planning stage as well as details in compiling all teaching tools because what we are dealing with are children with special needs.
- d. Appropriate division of hours between intracurricular and P5 activities.

## **2. How to Implement Educational Management to Improve the Quality of Education at the Hizkia Manado Autism Special School**

In implementing the independent curriculum at special school level, of course there are several changes from the previous curriculum to carry out learning activities. Implementing an independent curriculum is one of the government's strategies for transforming education. The existence of various new policies in the independent curriculum is a breakthrough with the aim of overcoming the long-standing learning crisis.

From the description above it can be obtained as follows:

- a. In its implementation, the independent curriculum has been designed as well as possible in schools, starting from learning outcomes and teaching modules as well as P5 activities (Strengthening Pancasila Student Profile Project)
- b. Events in the field sometimes come unexpectedly, causing teachers to have to have qualified skills or have to improvise in such a way that the goal can be achieved. This is caused when, for example, an autistic child experiences a tantrum or there are problems at home that cause the child to lose focus in the teaching and learning process.
- c. Activity P5 (Strengthening Pancasila Student Profile Project) is adapted to the conditions of autistic children
- d. Lack of knowledge for teachers who are not from special education is a challenge in itself, so additional knowledge is needed and this is all prepared by the school itself.

## **3. How to Evaluate the Implementation of Educational Management to Improve the Quality of Education at the Hizkia Manado Special School for Autism**

Based on the findings obtained when the researcher visited the school, the school carried out routine self-evaluations in a structured manner and of course looked at several existing developments and adhered to the initial plan which was well prepared. Evaluation itself has a very important role in the process of measuring what has been planned with the results obtained as well as things that might become obstacles during the implementation process.

From the results of the interview presentation, it can be obtained that:

- a. The evaluation carried out by the school itself has been well planned.
- b. The obstacle faced by teachers in the field is the lack of experience that the teacher has, but this can be handled through the evaluation process carried out
- c. There are several teachers who do not have a special educational background and this of course affects the teaching and learning process so that the evaluation process is the basis for future improvement.

## **Findings**

### **1. Planning**

In the planning process for implementing the management of the independent learning curriculum to improve the quality of education at the Hizkia Manado Autism Special School, there are several things that became general findings, namely:

- a. Parent involvement in the process of preparing the independent curriculum is still very lacking, this was conveyed in the interview process conducted at the Hizkia Manado Autism Special School.
- b. There needs to be special preparation both in terms of experience and knowledge in the teaching and learning process because the objects of implementing the curriculum are students with special needs.
- c. There needs to be proper schedule synchronization between intra-curricular, co-curricular and extra-curricular activities.

### **2. Implementation**

At the implementation stage of implementing independent learning curriculum management to improve the quality of education at the Hizkia Manado Autism Special School, there are several things that need to be considered, namely:

- a. There is still a lack of teachers who have professional qualifications or do not have teaching certificates, so this is one of the factors that becomes an obstacle in implementing the management of the independent learning curriculum.
- b. There are several teachers who do not have a background in special education or special education, which of course hinders the implementation process as well as in making decisions or what things should be done when dealing with children with special needs.

### **3. Evaluation**

The evaluation process is of course a very important part in the implementation of curriculum management in terms of the independent learning curriculum because at this stage we can measure the extent of our abilities and weaknesses so that they can be managed again well for the goals that have been set in the planning process. Several things were found in the evaluation process, namely:

- a. Consistency is needed to carry out various evaluation activities so that the more consistent they are, the better impact it will have on the learning process
- b. Evaluation is not only carried out in relation to the learning process but must be carried out as a whole.

## **Discussion**

### **1. Curriculum Planning to Improve the Quality of Education at the Hizkia Manado Special School for Autism**

Curriculum planning is of course very important because of its impact in improving the quality of education. Curriculum planning is planning learning opportunities that are intended to guide students towards desired changes in behavior and assess the extent of changes that have occurred in students. The change in behavior in question is a change in a good direction. According to Hamalik (2011: 141) defines curriculum planning as a process that involves various elements of participants at many levels making decisions about learning goals, how to achieve goals, learning

situations, reviewing the effectiveness and meaningfulness of these methods.

Teachers in the process of preparing the curriculum must make a contribution because the teacher is the one who implements it in the field and is the person who really knows the development of existing students. Likewise, parents are also a very important factor in preparing this curriculum because they will later become one of the supporters of the success of the curriculum itself.

The results of the findings are in line with the opinion of Oemar Hamalik (2011: 155-157), namely:

- a. Objectivity, curriculum planning has clear and specific objectives based on national education goals, real input data according to needs.
- b. Integration, curriculum planning combines types and sources from all scientific disciplines, school and community integration, internal integration, and integration in the delivery process.
- c. Benefits: Curriculum planning provides and presents knowledge and skills as input for decision making and action, and is useful as a strategic reference in the implementation of education.
- d. Efficiency and effectiveness, curriculum planning is prepared based on the principles of efficiency of funds, energy, time and effectiveness in achieving educational goals and results.
- e. Suitability, curriculum planning is adjusted to student targets, the abilities of educational staff, advances in science and technology, and changes/developments in society.
- f. Balance, curriculum planning pays attention to the balance between types of fields of study, available resources, as well as between abilities and the program to be implemented.
- g. Convenience, curriculum planning provides convenience for its users who need guidance in the form of study materials and methods for carrying out the learning process.
- h. Continuous, curriculum planning is organized continuously in line with the stages and types and levels of education.
- i. Standardization, curriculum planning is standardized according to the level and type of education, from the center, province, district/municipality.
- j. Quality, curriculum planning contains quality learning tools, so that it helps improve the quality of the learning process and the overall quality of graduates

Meanwhile, according to the presentation from the Ministry of Education and Culture Team, there are 7 stages in planning the Merdeka curriculum learning, namely:

- a. Analyze learning outcomes to develop learning objectives and the flow of learning objectives
- b. Planning and implementing diagnostic assessments
- c. Developing teaching modules
- d. Adjustment of learning to the stage of achievement and characteristics of students
- e. Planning, implementing and processing formative and summative assessments
- f. Reporting learning progress
- g. Learning evaluation and assessment

## **2. Implementation of the Curriculum in Improving the Quality of Education at the Hizkia Manado Autism Special School**

In research conducted at the Hizkia Manado Special School for Autism, the implementation of the Merdeka curriculum was realized well in accordance with what was expected, when all the previous deficiencies had been properly evaluated, overall the implementation occurred well.

The implementation of the curriculum certainly has stages, namely:

- a. Readiness to implement learning tools, before learning
- b. Teacher readiness
- c. Readiness of facilities and infrastructure

The above is in accordance with what Hamid Hasan (2009:11) said, namely that curriculum implementation is an effort to realize the ideas, concepts and values contained in the written curriculum into reality. Curriculum implementation can be interpreted as the actualization of the written curriculum in the form of learning.

Nana Sudjana (1996:143) explains that curriculum implementation is divided into two levels, namely class level and school level curriculum implementation. At the school level the role is the principal, and at the class level the role is the teacher. While implementing the class level curriculum, the division of teacher duties must be regulated administratively to ensure the smooth implementation of the curriculum in the classroom environment. In its implementation, of course the school principal has a very important role, namely ensuring that teachers have created teaching tools and have also prepared themselves to deal with children with special needs. Teachers also play an important role in implementing the curriculum in schools. In preparing to implement the curriculum, the school involves teachers in training and workshop activities. The aim is so that teachers can understand and know how to make good teaching materials, understand the concepts of the curriculum used, have skills in designing and implementing varied (not boring) learning models and also increase teacher professionalism in teaching.

The success of learning certainly depends on the teacher himself, other educational resources such as facilities, infrastructure, costs, organization and environment, are also the key to educational success, but teachers are the main key to the success of curriculum implementation. With limited facilities, infrastructure and costs, but having creative and highly dedicated teachers, we can certainly develop innovative programs, activities and learning aids. The existence of teachers as the spearhead of curriculum implementation and learning means that teachers must always improve their competence. In its implementation, there is still control carried out by the school principal and supervisor, both of whom supervise the learning process with objective and transparent principles in order to continuously improve quality.

## **3. Curriculum Evaluation in Improving the Quality of Education at the Hizkia Manado Special School for Autism**

Evaluation of the independent learning curriculum to improve the quality of education in special schools is a complex and important process. This involves monitoring and assessing various aspects of the curriculum to ensure that the education provided at the school meets the needs

and potential of each student with a disability. The following is an evaluation of the independent learning curriculum in special schools:

#### a. Identify the needs of students with disabilities

Evaluation begins with identifying the special needs of students with disabilities who attend special schools. This includes the type of disability, severity, and support requirements required. Identifying the needs of students with disabilities is a very important first step in ensuring effective inclusive education. This involves the process of gathering information and data to better understand the characteristics, severity, and individual educational and support needs of each student with a disability in special schools.

This process of identifying the needs of students with disabilities is the basis for effective inclusive education. With a good understanding of each student's needs, special schools can design learning approaches that are appropriate and support maximum student development.

#### b. School Self-Assessment

Special schools must carry out regular self-assessments to evaluate the implementation of an inclusive independent learning curriculum. This includes an assessment of infrastructure, human resources and school facilities that support inclusive education. School self-assessment is an internal process undertaken by schools to evaluate themselves and identify strengths, weaknesses and areas of improvement in various aspects of their operations. The aim is to ensure that schools function effectively and provide quality education to students.

#### c. Assessment of Learning Outcomes

Evaluation also includes assessing the learning outcomes of students with disabilities. This assessment should be tailored to individual student needs, including the use of alternative assessment tools if necessary.

#### d. Consultation with Parents and Stakeholders

Evaluations should include views and input from students' parents as well as other stakeholders such as therapists, counselors, or inclusive education experts.

#### e. Evaluation of Teachers and Educators

Evaluation should involve an assessment of the teacher's readiness, training, and ability to teach students with disabilities.

#### f. Continuous Improvement

Evaluation results should be used to formulate plans for continuous improvement. This includes additional training for teachers, changes in teaching methods, additional supporting resources, and other efforts to improve inclusive education.

#### g. Continuous Monitoring

Evaluation should be an ongoing process that is repeated regularly to ensure that implemented improvements produce the desired results. Comprehensive and ongoing evaluation will help special schools to continually improve the quality

of their education and ensure that every student with a disability receives an education that meets their needs.

### Conclusion

1. Planning in this case is very crucial in implementing good curriculum management. Curriculum planning is the planning of learning opportunities which are intended to guide students towards desired changes in behavior and assess the extent of the changes that have occurred in students so that in the future the things they gain can be applied well in society and even in the world work later.
2. Curriculum implementation is an effort to realize the ideas, concepts and values contained in the written curriculum into reality. Curriculum implementation can be interpreted as the actualization of the written curriculum in the form of learning. In its implementation, of course the school principal has a very important role, namely ensuring that teachers have created teaching tools and have also prepared themselves to deal with children with special needs.
3. Evaluation of the independent learning curriculum to improve the quality of education in special schools is a complex and important process. This involves monitoring and assessing various aspects to ensure that the education provided at the school meets the needs and potential of each student with a disability. Comprehensive and ongoing evaluation will help special schools to continually improve the quality of their education and ensure that every student with a disability receives an education that meets their needs.

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