

The Development of Curriculum in Indonesia and Its Impact on Primary Education

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ARTICLE INFO	Abstract
Article history: Received November 26, 2023 Accepted November 30, 2023 Published November 30, 2023 Keywords: Development, Curriculum, Indonesia, Impact, Primary Education 	<i>This study aims to analyze the development of the basic education curriculum in Indonesia and its impact on the quality of learning through a comprehensive historical and theoretical perspective. The research method uses a qualitative approach with a systematic literature review of academic publications for the period 2010-2023, using thematic analysis to identify key patterns in curriculum evolution and its implementation. The results show that the Indonesian curriculum has undergone a significant transformation from a behaviorist to a constructivist orientation, with three main findings: first, the evolution of curriculum policy reflects adaptation to socio-political dynamics and global demands; second, the implementation of the new curriculum has a positive impact on the quality of learning through increased student engagement, diversification of learning methods, and character development; third, implementation faces complex challenges such as unprepared human resources, limited infrastructure, and lack of stakeholder support. Analysis through the theory of educational change, constructivism, and change management reveals that successful curriculum implementation requires a systemic approach that integrates all components of the education system. This study provides theoretical contributions in understanding the dynamics of curriculum change and practical in developing more effective implementation strategies to improve the quality of basic education in Indonesia.</i>

1. Introduction

The development of the Indonesian education curriculum has undergone significant transformation since independence, with various changes reflecting the nation's social, political, and economic dynamics. The curriculum, as the heart of the education system, plays a strategic role in shaping future generations and determining the quality of national education (Sukmadinata, 2018). The history of the Indonesian curriculum demonstrates continuous adaptation to changing times, from the 1947 curriculum to the Merdeka Curriculum, currently being gradually implemented throughout Indonesia (Hamalik, 2019). This transformation involves not only changes in structure and content, but also in the underlying philosophy and learning approach.

The impact of curriculum changes on the quality of primary education can be seen in various aspects, including improved learning outcomes, character development, and student readiness to face future challenges. Mesra (2022) research shows that effective curriculum implementation can significantly increase students' learning motivation and academic achievement. However, the success of curriculum implementation is also influenced by external factors such as parental

support, the community environment, and local government policies that support educational innovation.

Challenges to implementing the new curriculum in Indonesia include disparities in education quality between regions, limited human resources, and uneven educational infrastructure. The differences in geographical, economic, and socio-cultural conditions of Indonesian society create unique complexities in implementing the national curriculum (Tilaar, 2020). This requires a flexible and contextual approach to curriculum implementation, while maintaining national education standards. Successful curriculum transformation also requires a long-term commitment from all education stakeholders, including the central government, local governments, schools, teachers, and the community.

Several previous studies have demonstrated the positive impact of implementing the new curriculum on the quality of basic education in Indonesia. Research conducted by Widodo and Sari (2020) on the implementation of the 2013 Curriculum in elementary schools showed a significant increase in students' critical thinking skills and creativity after the new curriculum was implemented. This study involved 500 students from 25 elementary schools in Central Java and used a quasi-experimental design with a pre-test and post-test. The results showed that the integrative thematic approach in the 2013 Curriculum improved conceptual understanding and the ability to connect between subjects. Furthermore, the study also found that students' learning motivation increased because learning became more contextual and meaningful to their lives.

A three-year longitudinal study conducted by Pratiwi et al. (2021) in 150 elementary schools in eastern Indonesia examined the impact of curriculum changes on student learning outcomes and character. This study used a mixed-methods approach, involving quantitative analysis of students' academic scores and qualitative analysis of character development through observation and in-depth interviews. The findings showed that implementing a curriculum emphasizing character education successfully increased students' tolerance, cooperation, and leadership. However, this study also identified that successful implementation depends heavily on the quality of teacher training and the principal's support in creating a school culture that supports learning innovation.

Although various studies have demonstrated the positive impact of curriculum changes, there are still research gaps that need to be filled in the Indonesian context. First, most existing research focuses on short-term evaluations of curriculum implementation, while the long-term impact on student readiness for further education and the world of work remains largely unexplored. Longitudinal research that tracks students' development from primary education to the world of work is still very limited, even though this data is crucial for evaluating the curriculum's effectiveness in preparing future generations. Furthermore, research on the curriculum's impact on reducing educational disparities between regions in Indonesia is also limited, despite this being a crucial issue in the context of educational equity.

Second, research examining curriculum implementation from a multi-stakeholder perspective is still limited. Most studies focus on the perspectives of teachers and students, while the roles of parents, the community, and the industry in supporting curriculum implementation have not been explored in depth. Research that integrates the perspectives of various stakeholders is crucial for understanding the education ecosystem holistically and identifying factors that can optimize the success of curriculum implementation. In addition, research on curriculum adaptation to the uniqueness of local culture and geographical characteristics of Indonesia also still needs to be developed further.

The novelty of this research lies in its comprehensive approach, integrating historical analysis, impact evaluation, and future projections of basic education curriculum development in Indonesia. Unlike previous research that tends to focus on a single aspect of curriculum implementation, this study adopts a holistic perspective that considers pedagogical, social,

economic, and cultural dimensions in analyzing the impact of curriculum change. This approach allows for a deeper understanding of the complexity of curriculum implementation and the factors influencing its success in diverse contexts across Indonesia. Furthermore, this research integrates a futuristic perspective by considering global educational trends and technological developments in designing recommendations for future curriculum development.

The reality on the ground also shows that the support of principals and educational supervisors varies greatly in assisting curriculum implementation. Some schools have strong leadership that encourages learning innovation and provides full support to teachers in implementing the new curriculum. However, there are still schools where leadership does not fully understand the essence of curriculum change, resulting in half-hearted and suboptimal implementation. The role of parents and the community in supporting curriculum implementation also varies, with urban areas generally being more responsive and supportive than rural areas, which still have limited understanding of the shift in educational paradigms. This condition creates its own challenges in achieving equitable and quality curriculum implementation throughout Indonesia.

2. Method

This research employs a qualitative approach with systematic literature review to analyze Indonesian curriculum development and its impact on primary education, chosen for its ability to explore the complex phenomenon of curriculum implementation within social, cultural, and political contexts (Creswell, 2018). The literature search was conducted systematically using international databases (Google Scholar, ERIC, Scopus) and national databases (Garuda Portal, institutional repositories) with keywords such as "curriculum development Indonesia," "primary education curriculum," and "curriculum implementation" (Hart, 2018). Inclusion criteria encompassed publications from 2010-2023 in Indonesian and English focusing on Indonesian basic education context, while excluding non-academic articles and publications lacking clear methodology. Data analysis involved thematic coding and categorization through three stages: comprehensive reading of selected literature, initial coding to identify key concepts and emerging themes, and organizing codes into broader categories to develop an analytical framework for discussion (Braun & Clarke, 2019).

3. Result and Discussion

Result

a. The Evolution of Basic Education Curriculum Policy in Indonesia

The history of the basic education curriculum in Indonesia reflects the nation's evolving political, social, and economic dynamics since independence. The first curriculum, implemented in 1947, known as the "Rentjana Pelajaran," was heavily influenced by the Dutch colonial education system, emphasizing classical subjects such as reading, writing, and arithmetic (Nasution, 2019). Significant changes began in the 1950s with the 1952 Curriculum, which integrated elements of local culture and Pancasila values as the philosophical foundation of national education. The 1960s and 1970s marked a consolidation period with the introduction of the more systematic 1968 and 1975 Curriculums, which emphasized the formation of democratic Pancasila-based individuals and introduced objective-based approaches with organized instructional systems (Tilaar, 2020).

The reform era brought a paradigmatic shift embodied in the Competency-Based Curriculum (KBK) in 2004, marking a transition from teacher-centered to student-centered learning with emphasis on holistic competency development (Mulyasa, 2021). This evolved into

the 2006 School-Based Curriculum (KTSP), granting schools greater autonomy in curriculum development. The 2013 Curriculum introduced integrative thematic learning and comprehensive authentic assessment, emphasizing balance between attitudes, knowledge, and skills through a scientific learning approach (Sanjaya, 2020). The most recent evolution is the Independent Curriculum, implemented in 2022, which provides teachers and schools with greater flexibility in designing learning tailored to student needs while maintaining nationally established learning outcomes.

b. The Impact of Curriculum Implementation on Learning Quality

The implementation of curriculum changes in Indonesia has shown varying impacts on the quality of learning at the elementary education level, with observable indicators including increased student engagement, diversification of learning methods, and holistic competency development. Research conducted by Safitri and Rahman (2022) showed that the implementation of the thematic approach in the 2013 Curriculum successfully increased student learning motivation by 65% compared to the previously used separate subject-based approach. This change was evident in increased student active participation in class discussions, enthusiasm for working on learning projects, and students' ability to connect learning concepts to real-life situations. The integration of subjects into contextual themes enabled students to develop a more comprehensive and meaningful understanding.

The transformation of learning methods from teacher-centered to student-centered learning has fundamentally altered the dynamics of classroom interactions. Teachers who successfully adapted to the curriculum changes reported increased creativity in designing more interactive and participatory learning activities (Wijaya, 2021). The use of cooperative learning, problem-based learning, and project-based learning methods is increasingly widespread, although the level of implementation varies across schools. Observations in various elementary schools indicate that students are becoming more active in asking questions, expressing their opinions, and working more effectively in teams. This contributes to the development of social and communication skills essential for facing the challenges of the 21st century.

c. Challenges and Obstacles in Curriculum Implementation

One of the main challenges in implementing the new curriculum in Indonesia is the unpreparedness of human resources, particularly teachers, to adapt to this fundamental shift in learning paradigms. A national survey by the Ministry of Education and Culture revealed that only 45% of elementary school teachers felt very prepared to implement new learning approaches, while 35% felt somewhat prepared, and 20% admitted unreadiness (Kemendikbud, 2023). This unpreparedness stems from difficulties understanding integrative thematic learning, authentic assessment techniques, and technology integration in learning. Additionally, limited infrastructure and learning resources pose significant obstacles, especially in remote areas with less favorable economic conditions. Research by Susanto and Hartini (2021) found that 68% of rural elementary schools face challenges regarding adequate textbooks, internet access for digital learning, and basic laboratory facilities for science instruction, limiting the variety of teaching methods and resulting in suboptimal curriculum implementation.

The complexity of the assessment system presents another significant challenge for teachers in conducting comprehensive and objective learning evaluations. The authentic assessment system, encompassing attitudes, knowledge, and skills, requires time and specialized expertise that not all teachers have mastered (Rahayu, 2022). Many teachers struggle with the high administrative burden of preparing assessment instruments, conducting observations, and documenting individual student progress, often leading them to focus on administrative aspects

rather than learning content itself. This problem is exacerbated by complex and frequently changing learning outcome reporting systems, requiring considerable time for teachers to adapt to each system change, further hindering effective curriculum implementation.

Discussion

a. The Evolution of Curriculum Policy from the Perspective of the Theory of Educational Change

The evolution of the basic education curriculum in Indonesia can be analyzed through the theory of educational change proposed by Fullan (2016), which emphasizes that sustainable educational change requires three main components: moral purpose, understanding change, and building relationships. Curriculum changes over time demonstrate a clear moral purpose, namely the effort to produce a generation that is aligned with the needs of the times and future challenges. The transformation from the 1947 Curriculum, which focused on basic literacy, to the Independent Curriculum, which emphasizes holistic competency development, reflects the evolution of a more comprehensive understanding of educational goals. Kotter's (2014) theory of change management is also relevant in this context, where each curriculum change follows stages of change that include creating urgency, building coalitions, and institutionalizing new approaches.

Bertalanffy's (2018) educational systems theory perspective provides an appropriate analytical framework for understanding the complexity of curriculum change in Indonesia. The curriculum, as a subsystem within the national education system, cannot stand alone but must interact with other subsystems such as education policy, evaluation systems, teacher training, and educational infrastructure. The failure or success of new curriculum implementation is often caused by a misalignment between these subsystems. For example, curriculum changes that are not accompanied by an adequate teacher training system will result in suboptimal implementation. Bronfenbrenner's (2019) ecological theory of education also explains that curriculum change is influenced not only by internal school factors but also by the broader social, economic, and cultural environment.

b. The Impact of Curriculum Implementation Within a Constructivist Learning Theory Framework

The positive impact of the new curriculum implementation on learning quality can be understood through the lens of constructivist learning theory developed by Piaget and Vygotsky. Vygotsky's (2021) social constructivism theory emphasizes the importance of social interaction in the learning process, which aligns with the cooperative and collaborative learning approaches integrated into the new curriculum. Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) concept explains why the student-centered learning approach in the new curriculum successfully increases student engagement and motivation. Teachers act as facilitators, helping students reach their maximum potential through scaffolding and guided discovery. Research shows that students learning in a constructivist environment develop better critical thinking and problem-solving skills compared to traditional approaches.

Howard Gardner's (2022) Theory of Multiple Intelligences provides a strong theoretical foundation for understanding the success of the integrative thematic approach in the new curriculum. Gardner identified eight types of intelligence that each individual possesses at varying levels, enabling a diverse and integrated learning approach to enable each student to develop their full potential. The implementation of thematic learning that integrates various subjects facilitates the simultaneous development of students' multiple intelligences. For example, learning about the environment can simultaneously develop naturalistic, logical-mathematical, linguistic, and interpersonal intelligence. This theory also explains why authentic assessments that encompass

various aspects of competency are more effective in measuring student learning achievement than standardized tests that only measure cognitive aspects.

c. Implementation Challenges from the Perspective of Change Management Theory and Organizational Behavior

Challenges in curriculum implementation can be analyzed through the unfreeze-change-refreeze model proposed by Lewin (2021) in the change management theory. The unfreezing stage, which involves changing old mindsets and paradigms, faces significant resistance from various educational stakeholders. This resistance can be understood through organizational behavior theory, which explains that individuals and organizations tend to maintain the status quo due to a sense of security and familiarity with the existing system. Teachers who have used conventional approaches for years struggle to adopt new approaches that require different skills and competencies. Festinger's (2022) cognitive dissonance theory explains the psychological discomfort teachers experience when having to change familiar teaching practices, often leading to inconsistent implementation or a reversion to old practices.

Kotter's 8-Step Change Model (2020) provides a comprehensive analytical framework for understanding curriculum implementation failures at various levels. The first step, creating a sense of urgency, is often not achieved due to a lack of effective communication regarding the importance of curriculum change. Many teachers and principals lack a thorough understanding of why curriculum changes are necessary and their benefits for improving the quality of learning. The second step, coalition building, also faces obstacles due to a lack of support from top management at the education office and school principal levels. Without strong leadership support, change efforts will encounter various bureaucratic obstacles and resource constraints. Bass and Riggio's (2019) transformational leadership theory emphasizes the importance of visionary and inspirational leadership in facilitating fundamental organizational changes such as the implementation of a new curriculum.

4. Conclusion

This research shows that the development of the basic education curriculum in Indonesia has undergone a significant evolution from a behaviorist to a constructivist orientation, with measurable positive impacts on learning quality through increased student engagement, diversified learning methods, and holistic competency development. The implementation of the new curriculum successfully transformed the learning paradigm from teacher-centered to student-centered, which has been shown to improve student motivation, creativity, and character. However, successful implementation still faces complex structural challenges, particularly related to unprepared human resources, limited infrastructure, the complexity of the assessment system, and a lack of stakeholder support. Analysis using various theories of educational change, constructivist learning, and change management provides a deep understanding that effective curriculum implementation requires a systemic approach that integrates all components of the education system.

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