TEACHERS' DIFFICULTIES IN IMPLEMENTING INDEPENDENT CURRICULUM AT SMA WAHYU MAKASSAR

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Abstract: This study aims to identify the difficulties faced by teachers in implementing the Independent Curriculum at SMA Wahyu Makassar. The research employed a descriptive qualitative study method. Qualitative data were collected through interviews, observations, and checklists involving second grade teachers as participants. The findings indicate that while the flexibility of the Independent Curriculum is appreciated for allowing adjustments to teaching methods and materials to meet student needs, several significant challenges were identified. Key difficulties include inadequate communication from the government regarding the curriculum, insufficient teacher preparation, and an overreliance on existing textbooks and guides. The lack of a clear vision and inconsistent support from various stakeholders further complicates the implementation process. Teachers expressed the need for a more defined vision and robust support systems, including ongoing professional development and improved infrastructure. Despite resistance to change and limited understanding of the curriculum's principles, stakeholder support and teacher commitment suggest that with appropriate adjustments, the Independent Curriculum can achieve its intended outcomes.

Keywords: Teachers' Difficulties, Independent Curriculum, SMA Wahyu Makassar

1. INTRODUCTION

Education plays a crucial role in a nation's progress, as an educated community fosters an intelligent and independent society. In Indonesia, however, the quality of education remains a significant challenge at various levels and institutions. Efforts have been made, including the development of national and local curricula, enhancing teacher competencies through training, providing educational resources, upgrading facilities, and improving school management. However, indicators of educational quality have not shown significant improvement. According to Fasli Jalal and Dedi Supriadi, the quality of education is influenced by several factors: the qualifications of teachers and educational staff, curriculum, teaching methods, educational materials, teaching aids, and school management. These six elements are interconnected and essential for improving the quality of teaching and learning, thereby contributing to the overall enhancement of education (Jalal & Supriadi, 2001).

The Independent Curriculum emerged in response to the diminishing focus on education itself. This curriculum aims to encourage independent thinking, foster enthusiasm for learning, and promote optimism and freedom of thought (Daga, 2020). Curriculum reform is a key aspect of educational improvement, influenced by changes in political, socio-cultural, economic, and technological contexts. However, implementing a new curriculum often reveals

discrepancies in perceptions between policymakers and stakeholders. Policymakers may not fully grasp the practical challenges faced by teachers, while teachers feel that policymakers lack understanding of the realities encountered during the learning process. The English curriculum in Indonesia has undergone several changes since independence, starting with the grammar translation-based curriculum of 1945, followed by the audiolingual-based curriculum of 1958, the revised audiolingual-based curriculum of 1975, the structure-based communicative curriculum of 1984, the meaning-based communicative curriculum of 1994, the competency-based curriculum of 2004, and most recently, the 2013 curriculum which uses information and communication technology or ICT (Pajarwati et al., 2021).

Previous research has examined various aspects of implementing the Independent Curriculum. Investigated its application in Islamic Education and Character Subjects at MIN 1 Palembang. Assessed the effectiveness of independent learning policies in Indonesian education. Conducted an analysis of the curriculum by reviewing relevant documents, including educational laws, Ministry of Education and Culture regulations, articles, and journals. Despite these studies, there has been a lack of research specifically addressing the challenges faced by English teachers in implementing the Independent Curriculum, particularly at the senior high school level. This gap presents an opportunity for further investigation, which the researcher aims to explore in this study. The researcher is interested in conducting research on teachers' difficulties in Implementing the Independent Curriculum at SMA Wahyu Makassar.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. The Concept of Curriculum

Several writers come up with the definition of curriculum. According to (Null, 2023) curriculum is the process of taking a subject, preparing it for classroom usage, and carrying it into the classroom so that it has a long-term impact on students. Curriculum is a complicated and contentious topic of study, with educators attempting to determine suitable programmes of study for schools based on diverse teaching and learning (Pugach et al., 2020) Besides that, curriculum refers to all the chances teachers have arranged for their students (Modebelu, 2015)

According to Law No. 20/2003 on the National Education System National curriculum is a set of plans and arrangements regarding the objectives, content, and subject matter as well as the method used as a guide for organizing activities that used as a guideline for organizing learning activities to achieve specific educational goals. It can be concluded that the learning plan regarding the objectives and content as a guide for teaching and learning activities to achieve goals that have a long-term impact on students is the curriculum.

2.2. The Paradigm of Curriculum

Understanding the curriculum paradigm is essential for teachers and curriculum developers to create effective lessons and meet educational goals. The first paradigm, proposed by Ralph W. Tyler, revolves around four questions in the Tyler Rationale for curriculum creation: determining educational purposes from materials, methods, tests, and assessments; ensuring active student engagement and satisfaction; organizing the teaching and learning process; and evaluating student performance.

The second paradigm, proposed by Joseph Schwab, identifies five essential curriculum commonplaces: the teacher, the students, the subject matter, the context, and the curriculum itself. Schwab emphasized the importance of balancing these elements to create a credible curriculum that meets the needs, interests, and backgrounds of students. Both paradigms guide the creation of an efficient curriculum. Tyler's approach, developed from the 1900s to the 1990s, focuses on experiential education, assessment as evaluation, problem-solving in curriculum development, and teacher involvement. Schwab's commonplaces are effective due to their logical consistency and widespread support, making them integral to curriculum initiatives.

2.3. Stages of Curriculum Implementation

The policymaking process in education involves four stages: curriculum planning, ends/means specification, program implementation, and evaluation.

a. Curriculum Planning

This initial stage involves all decisions made before developing and implementing the program, influenced by various interest groups. It includes creating requirements, standard policies, procedures, resources, and operational plans.

b. Ends/Means Specification

This stage involves operationalizing policy into a syllabus, detailing target proficiencies. If too restrictive, it stifles creativity; if too loose, it risks mismatches.

c. Program Implementation

This involves developing teaching and learning resources and preparing teachers. Teachers' understanding and attitudes towards the curriculum are crucial, as inadequate preparation can hinder effective implementation.

d. Evaluation

This is the systematic gathering and analysis of information to improve the curriculum, assess its efficacy, and understand participants' attitudes. Evaluation should connect all program components and analyze them from multiple perspectives. Effective curriculum development requires integrating these stages, with teacher preparation and evaluation being particularly essential.

3. METHODS

In this research, the researcher employed the descriptive qualitative study method. Qualitative data were regarded as the "raw materials the researcher collected from the world they were studying, they were particulars that formed the basis of analysis" (Mutch, 2006). As described earlier, qualitative data could take many forms, such as photos, objects, patterns of choice in computer materials, videotapes of behaviors, etc. This type of research was a problem-solving procedure that investigated by describing the condition of the subject or research object. Where the data analyzed aligned with existing reality and were then connected to various theories to support the discussion, ensuring a comprehensive and clear understanding of the final conclusions (Sugiyono, 2021)

4. RESULTS

The study aimed to explore the difficulties faced by teachers in implementing the Independent Curriculum at SMA Wahyu Makassar. Through interviews, several key themes emerged related to knowledge and planning, vision, teacher attitudes, and support and resources

4.1. Frist Teacher

4.1.2. Knowledge and Planning

Teachers had positive experiences with the Independent Curriculum, appreciating its flexibility to tailor teaching methods and materials to focus on essential content and student competencies. However, challenges included insufficient information dissemination from the government and inadequate preparation for transitioning teachers. Over-reliance on textbooks also limited creativity.

4.1.3. Lack of Vision

Teachers recognized their crucial role in implementing the curriculum, emphasizing consistency with lesson schedules, adherence to syllabuses, and appropriate teaching methods like group work. They saw themselves as innovators, focusing on character development, creativity, and student independence. Support from stakeholders was beneficial but varied in effectiveness.

4.1.4. Teacher Attitudes

Support from school leaders, particularly principals, was essential for effective curriculum implementation. Teachers valued intensive training and guidance from experts to overcome challenges. A clear vision for enhancing educational practices and transforming learning outcomes was prioritized, focusing on character, creativity, and student autonomy.

4.1.5. Support and Resources

Support from facilities, infrastructure, and parental involvement was positive but needed improvement. Challenges included low teacher experience with autonomous learning, limited references, uneven resource access, and time management issues. Despite these, teachers believed with appropriate support and skill development, these challenges could be addressed. They felt empowered to make decisions and collaborate effectively, though assessing student progress within the new curriculum remained challenging.

4.2. Seconde Teacher

4.2.1. Knowledge and Planning

The teacher had a positive experience with the Independent Curriculum due to its flexibility in scheduling and material selection, allowing a focus on essential content and student development. However, challenges included insufficient government communication and preparation for teachers, and a reliance on textbooks necessitating the creation of additional engaging materials.

4.2.2. Lack of Vision

The teacher highlighted the critical role of educators in implementing the curriculum, emphasizing consistency with lesson schedules, syllabus adherence, and collaborative teaching methods. Creativity and use of various educational resources were essential. Support from stakeholders like the education department, school foundation, colleagues, and parents was instrumental.

4.2.3. Attitudes

Support from school leaders, particularly principals, was crucial for effective curriculum implementation. The teacher valued intensive training and expert guidance to overcome challenges, alongside ongoing support from educational authorities. The vision for implementing the Independent Curriculum at SMA Wahyu Makassar focused on character development, creativity, and student autonomy.

4.2.4. Support and Resources

While support from facilities and infrastructure was generally adequate, there was room for improvement. Parental involvement was crucial for understanding and supporting the curriculum. Challenges included limited teacher experience with autonomous learning, restricted reference materials, uneven resource access, and time management. Despite these, the teacher believed appropriate support and continued skill development could address these challenges. Specific training for the Independent Curriculum was received, though the teacher occasionally struggled to align the curriculum with school goals and adapt teaching methods to emphasize individuality.

Collaboration among colleagues was effective, but assessing student progress within the new curriculum remained challenging.

5. DISCUSSION

The implementation of the Independent Curriculum at SMA Wahyu Makassar has revealed various challenges aligning with theoretical perspectives on curriculum change. Interviews with two teachers identified key issues in knowledge and planning, vision, teacher attitudes, and support and resources, essential for effective curriculum implementation.

5.1. Knowledge and Planning

Teachers generally had a positive experience, appreciating the curriculum's flexibility in teaching methods and materials. However, challenges such as insufficient government communication and inadequate preparation hindered effectiveness. Reliance on textbooks limited the creation of engaging materials, reflecting the need for better resources and understanding.

5.2. Vision

A well-defined vision emerged as crucial. Teachers emphasized the importance of a coherent vision to guide efforts, aligning with the need for strategic planning and clear communication to prevent fragmented efforts.

5.3. Teacher Attitudes

Teacher attitudes varied, with some showing enthusiasm and others resistance. Positive attitudes facilitated successful implementation, while resistance highlighted issues like unclear expectations and insufficient support, emphasizing the need for motivation, clarity, and support.

5.4. Support and Resources

Support from stakeholders was generally positive, but there were areas for improvement. Parental involvement and adequate facilities were crucial, and challenges included limited teacher experience, uneven resource access, and time management issues. Robust support systems and continuous professional development were deemed necessary for effective implementation.

5.5. Professional Development and Collaboration

Ongoing training and expert guidance were needed for deeper understanding and application of the curriculum. Fostering a collaborative environment among educators could enhance implementation, allowing for the exchange of best practices and strategies, ultimately improving student outcomes.

6. CONCLUSION

The The investigation into the implementation of the Independent Curriculum at SMA Wahyu Makassar has shown mixed results. The Independent curriculum's flexibility has been appreciated by teachers, allowing them to tailor their teaching methods and materials to better address student needs. This adaptability has aligned with the curriculum's aim to focus on core content and foster student development. However, the study also uncovered several obstacles. Key challenges included inadequate communication from the government about the curriculum, insufficient teacher preparation, and overreliance on existing textbooks and guides.

The lack of a clear vision and inconsistent support from various stakeholders have further complicated the implementation process. Teachers expressed the need for a well-defined vision and more robust support systems, including ongoing professional development and improved infrastructure. Resistance to change and limited understanding of the curriculum's principles also pose significant challenges. However, the positive impact of stakeholder support and teacher commitment suggests that with appropriate adjustments, the Independent Curriculum can achieve its intended outcomes.

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