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Evaluating the Implementation of the Independent Curriculum Policy in Indonesia: Sentiment Analysis

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ABSTRACT

Problems still occur in the implementation of the curriculum that changed to the Independent Curriculum, which aims to give freedom to schools, teachers and students. However, in its implementation there are still problems experienced by schools. This study aims to evaluate the implementation of the Indonesian Independent Curriculum. The data used in this study came from community responses on social media and were analyzed using sentiment analysis. This research method is an ex-post evaluation of policies that have been implemented and the analysis in this study uses sentiment analysis. The results of the evaluation of the implementation of the Independent Curriculum are based on community responses. Training and mentoring options are not only carried out online but also offline to overcome the problem of proficiency in using technology. The supporting book should detail the tactical steps to implement the Independent Curriculum including the P5 project. There should be capacity building and assessment of curriculum implementation. Based on the evaluation results, there is a need for improvement in curriculum implementation, especially the communication aspect in the form of training and mentoring conducted by policy makers and the provision of guidebooks for curriculum implementation.

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INTRODUCTION

For the umpteenth time, the education curriculum in Indonesia has changed. The new curriculum would gradually change the 2013 curriculum. Even though the name is Curriculum 2013, in fact, it was only in 2018 that the curriculum was implemented in all schools. This means that there are some schools that have only used it in full for about three years (Firdaus et al., 2022). In 2024, all schools will implement the Independent Curriculum. However, since 2021, several schools have implemented it. According to Purba (2022), there are several differences between the K13 curriculum and the Independent Curriculum. According to him, one of the differences is curriculum socialization. In the 2013 curriculum, teachers are facilitated with tiered training and assistance by the government, but not in the Independent Curriculum. There is no such training, but teachers are required to learn it independently through the *Merdeka Mengajar* platform that has been provided by the government. Based on the latest data released by the Ministry of Education and Culture, 60% of teachers are limited in their mastery of technology, meaning that only about 40% of teachers can learn without experiencing problems.

According to Upsher et al. (2022), the curriculum is an instrument that connects students and educational units. The curriculum articulates the educational priorities, policies, and techniques

that shape the educational system. It specifies the objectives that pupils are expected to understand at its most granular level. The ideals, objectives, and goals that serve to support the educational system program or institution, as well as all of the teaching and learning activities that take place inside it, are described in a more comprehensive understanding of the curriculum. (Williamson, 2013; Erstad & Voogt, 2018). According to Remillard (2005), the written curriculum that is included in the context of state regulations and package materials is what is known as the formal curriculum. Claim Gadais et al. (2023), The curriculum, in its capacity as a political document, establishes educational paradigms and practices.

According to Atuharra and Kaffenberger (2022), an excellent curriculum helps and supports students' learning. An important goal is to establish conformity with these standards across all instructional components because they are such high-quality standards. Classroom teaching, learning assessment, teaching materials, and teacher professional development are all expected to be closely linked to well-designed curriculum standards. However, the creation of a state-based curriculum determines what the entire academic community must, can, and will do with curriculum documentation (Bernard, 2017). Troyer (2019) explains how the interaction between the teacher and the formal curriculum produces a curriculum that is enforced through its adaptation. However, this sequence has been reversed by using learning studies in reported interventions (Selin & Olander, 2015). Voogt & Roblin (2012) explained that because of the importance of the curriculum, it becomes a concern for not only the government but also for schools and teachers.

The curriculum must be made as flexible as possible to accommodate the needs of students and help them achieve the expected competencies. Research by Li et al. (2021), found that evaluation of learning during a pandemic provides many recommendations for the curriculum should be flexible enough to circumstances that occur and not place a burden on students in providing learning. The results of several evaluations and studies indicated that the Indonesian curriculum needs improvement and conditioning to meet current needs, which will boost student learning outcomes. The Independent Curriculum design refers to several principles, namely: 1) disciplinary achievement standards pay attention to the principles of focus, steadiness, and coherence; 2) the ability to transfer interdisciplinary competencies and options; 3) originality, flexibility, and alignment; and 4) involvement, empowerment, or independence of students and teachers. The concept of independent curriculum, which also informs other educational policies mentioned in the Strategic Plan of the Ministry of Education and Culture for 2020–2024, serves as the primary foundation for the Independent Curriculum.

A paradigm shift aimed at strengthening teacher independence as the holder of control in the learning process, releasing binding standard controls, and demanding a homogeneous learning process in all Indonesian education units The implementation of this Independent Curriculum will later allow students to realize their rights and abilities to determine their own learning process through setting learning goals, reflecting on their abilities, and taking proactive and responsible steps for their own success. The implication is that the teacher himself is also required to be able to prepare the learning process effectively so that the effectiveness and learning objectives that have been designed can be achieved. In addition to the four principles that have been written for in order to implement the Independent Curriculum, the curriculum design process is guided by the following principles: simplicity, clarity, ease of understanding and implementation, emphasis on student competence and character, adaptability, alignment, teamwork, and consideration of study and feedback findings. The curriculum used today is known as the Independent Curriculum or the concept of independent learning.

According to Ainia (2020), the curriculum of independent learning accommodates the ideals of Ki Hajar Dewantara as a national figure in Indonesian education. It focuses on the freedom to learn independently and creatively, which will have an impact on creating the character of independent students. Several Independent Curriculum policies have also been made, such as changing the USBN to a competency assessment, changing the national exam to a minimum competency assessment and character survey, and shortening the lesson plan from usually 20

pages to one page consisting of three components: learning objectives, learning activities, and assessment (Wijaya et al., 2020).

Curriculum evaluation, according to Anderson (2017), is a process that involves estimating or assessing the curriculum's content, implementation, and impact. In addition, policy evaluation is viewed as a useful task. This indicates that the examination of policies is done throughout the entire process, not just at the end. According to Brown et al. (2017), the principle of evaluation is measuring a policy's substance, execution, or effects, which in the context of education refers to the curriculum. Rist (2020) defines "evaluation" as a process in which we get to comprehend the advantages, worth, and utility of a policy. Evaluation in education can be interpreted as a process to collect information that can be used as material for consideration in making decisions about whether or not to improve the learning system in accordance with the objectives to be set (Yonglin & Zhanjun, 2016). According to Guirdy & Zhang Hill (2022), Curriculum and evaluation are two fields that are causally related. Additionally, the progression of the process and the organic interaction between curriculum and evaluation. According to Zhao et al. (2017), curriculum evaluation is crucial for making judgments about both the curriculum and overall educational policy. Educational policymakers and curriculum developers can choose and set policies for developing the educational system and the curriculum model using the findings of the curriculum evaluation.

Based on the foregoing context, this study's main objective is to assess Indonesia's implementation of the Independent Curriculum policy. It attempts to determine the outcomes of evaluating the Independent Curriculum policy's implementation in Indonesia based on the public's reaction to the Independent Curriculum's implementation. Therefore, it is anticipated that the study's findings will be used as a guide when establishing policies for the Independent Curriculum.

RESEARCH METHOD

This This research is a policy evaluation to assess the implementation of the Independent Curriculum. The evaluation model used in this research is Willian Dunn's policy evaluation using a retrospective evaluation approach (ex-post). According to Blome and Augustin (2015), retrospective evaluation is an evaluation consisting of monitoring and evaluation after a policy has been implemented for a certain period of time. This evaluation does not intervene or manipulate directly the inputs and policy processes. It is only based on existing information about the ongoing policy. It involved the data on public response related to the policy of implementing the Independent Curriculum. Community response is a response or reaction, both positively and negatively, that comes from the nature of society, directly or indirectly (Egan & Mullin, 2017). Public response was chosen to evaluate curriculum implementation due to the results of research conducted by Burstein (2012), which found that public response always determines public policy. Furthermore, according to that principle, democracy gives citizens full control over their government. The public response used in this study was obtained from social media by analyzing 10,000 public responses related to the implementation of the Independent Curriculum.

Sentiment analysis is the method of analysis employed in this study. Natural language processing, text mining, and computational linguistics are all closely connected to (or can be included in) sentiment analysis (Taboada, 2016). Furthermore, according to Kuckartz (2019), The technique of sentiment analysis involves employing text analytics to collect different data sources from the internet and different social media sites. The goal is to obtain opinions from users on these platforms. Giatsoglou et al. (2017), The researchers employed The field of sentiment analysis, which is a subfield of text mining, natural language processing, and computer linguistics (Taboada, 2016). According to Kuckartz (2019), sentiment analysis is the method of obtaining multiple data sources from the internet and other social media platforms using text analytics. The objective is to get viewpoints from platform users. "Sentiment analysis is a field of Natural Language Processing (NLP) that builds a system to recognize and extract opinions in text," claim Giatsoglou et al. (2017). The information can be used to interpret public perceptions of goods,

services, political issues, and other matters. Data from businesses, governments, and other sectors can be used to conduct analysis. (Mäntylä et al., 2018).

In this study, the research steps in evaluating the independent curriculum using sentiment analysis are as shown in Figure 1.

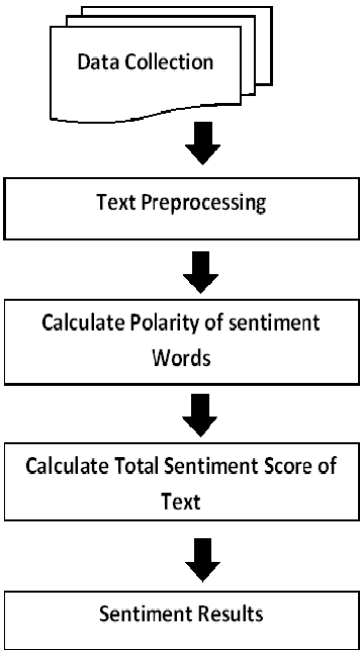


Figure 1. Research flowchart

Based on Figure 1, the research steps begin with data collection. The data set used in this study is the public's response to the independent curriculum. Then after the data is obtained, the dataset is analyzed with 4 steps starting from text prepocessing, calculating polarity of sentiment words, calculating total sentiment score, and sentiment results.

Data Collection

Public response data is obtained from grabbing response data about the independent curriculum. the data used in this study are 10000 public response data from the internet.

Text Preprocessing

After the data is obtained, the next step is text prepocessing. the prepocessing step is needed for the data cleaning process and to reduce data inconsistencies so that the data obtained is clean and the data is more effective to use.

Calculate Polarity Sentiment Words

After the prepocessing step, the next step is Calculate Polarity of Sentiment words in this step the statistical technique used is Term Frequency-Inverse Document Frequency (TF-IDF). This technique is used to label words that often appear in documents as important and given weight.

Calculate Total Sentiment Score

This step involves finding the polarity of each word or sentence to predict the polarity of the entire document. In this research, it has been calculated by combining the polarity of each word or sentence.

Sentiment Result

In this final step, each sentence is classified and then calculated as a total sentiment score. The classification results in this step are then used as the result of the independent curriculum evaluation.

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RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The evaluation technique in this study used public responses on social media. It collected 10,000 public comments related to the implementation of the Independent Curriculum policy. All comments collected in this study were analyzed using software based on text sentiments conveyed on social media. The next step after the data collection is to classify it into categories based on the discussion in the comments. The result of the classification is explained in Figure 2.

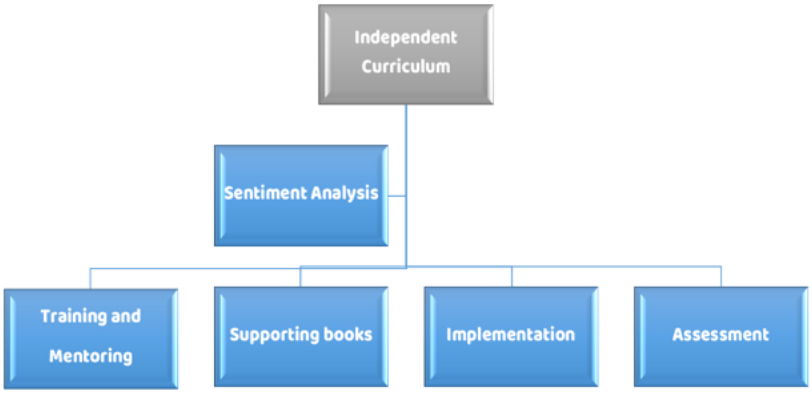


Figure 2. Results of the category analysis of public response

Based on Figure 2, it can be seen that the results of the category analysis of public response on social media related to the Independent Curriculum found that topics that often arise are 1) related to training and mentoring, 2) learning support books, 3) implementation, and 4) assessment. The results of this category would then be analyzed based on the content and comments of each category as material for evaluating the implementation of the Independent Curriculum. The distribution of topics or themes in this study is in table 1.

Table 1. Analysis result of theme distribution

Topic/Theme	Percentage
Training and Mentoring	43%
Supporting books	31%
Implementation	16%
Assessment	10%

Based on the results of the distribution analysis in the study, comments on the topic or theme of training and mentoring were 43%, topics on supporting books were 31%, implementation was 16%, and the last assessment was 10%. Furthermore, they would be discussed based on topics, starting with the ones that appear most often.

Training and Mentoring

Themes related to training and mentoring are the most common and frequently occurring categories. This theme is divided into two discussions: those who have received training and assistance and those who have not received training and mentoring.

The groups that have received training and assistance stated that assistance and training are always carried out by the Independent Curriculum will be successfully implemented, according to the Ministry of Education and Culture. However, what is interesting is that most of the training and mentoring have occurred online. Massive online training and mentoring to ensure the success of the Independent Curriculum according to the community is good, but for them, it adds to their workload. No dispensation is given from their place of work because the training is conducted online. There were also responses revealing that they objected if the training and mentoring were carried out online because they had to spend funds independently to facilitate both hardware and data package usage.

Meanwhile, after analyzing the group without any training or assistance, the results indicated that they had not really received any training at all. According to them, the training and assistance provided were not optimal. There are too many institutions or individuals participating in the delivery of the Independent Curriculum, thereby creating confusion in terms of understanding the Independent Curriculum. It is in line with the research of Saiz and Susinos (2020), who found that curriculum implementation training conducted by people who are not curriculum development experts will have a less optimal impact. Consequently, there were responses conveying that the Independent Curriculum is a curriculum that has multiple interpretations.

Training and mentoring are part of policy communication. Moeljono and Kusumo (2020) stated that training and mentoring are part of policy communication, which will later encourage and strengthen policy implementation. Furthermore, according to Dąbrowski et al. (2021), the most important tool in disseminating and successfully implementing policies is policy communication, one of which is training. According to him, the important part of ensuring that public policy communication runs smoothly is not explaining what the policy is about but rather how it will be implemented and what impact it will have if it is implemented. In addition, according to Priestley and Sinnema (2014), in the process of implementing a policy, individual and environmental capacities and support must be considered. Badullovich (2022) explains that for a country that has a decentralized state structure, policy making must facilitate the activities of policy communication in the local area. Training and mentoring for teachers regarding policies is an important part of the successful implementation of policies. Saiz and Susinos (2020) support the finding by mentioning the benefits of teacher training and assistance in helping to 1) reduce misconceptions, 2) foster morale, 3) foster an open attitude, and 4) become an alternative problem-solving strategy.

Supporting Books for Learning

The second most common and most frequently appearing theme is related to supporting books. The Ministry of Education and Culture has published guidelines for an Independent Curriculum since the Independent Curriculum idea calls for freedom in implementation have confused teachers. Firdaus et al. (2022) argued that even though the concept of "freedom to learn" has been socialized and introduced directly or through several online media, many educators and parents are still confused about the concept of an Independent Curriculum. Furthermore, Jannah et al. (2022) mentioned that the implementation challenge for teachers is that Independent Curriculum requires greater creativity in delivering classroom instruction. However, this creativity will later give rise to various versions of the translation. Therefore, it is necessary to keep the main reference books as the main support for teachers. Martin & Maton (2017) wrote that teachers would be able to implement the curriculum if they were accompanied by integrated books or modules. Furthermore, the research by Saiz and Susinos (2020) found that the companion book would make curriculum's implementation went smoothly. According to them, books that are made in a hurry and are confusing will make teachers less than optimal at implementing the curriculum.

Curriculum Implementation

The following theme is about implementing an Independent Curriculum without support and training, as well as supporting books. So, in its implementation, there are many things that have not gone well. Implementations that have not gone well are mostly projects to increase the profile of Pancasila students, or what is often called P5. From the data obtained, there are still many who convey their confusion about the implementation of P5. As a result of this confusion, students object to giving P5 assignments and become victims of the implementation of the Independent Curriculum. The teacher's ability to understand the curriculum will affect its implementation. According to Saiz and Susinos (2020), teacher readiness in terms of knowledge, attitudes, and skills will affect curriculum acceptance. Research conducted by Guirdy & Zhang (2022)

concluded that teacher readiness has an impact on curriculum outcomes and that teachers who are not ready are an obstacle to the successful implementation of the curriculum.

The strategy for developing teacher competency is beneficial for the successful implementation of the Independent Curriculum. This is in accordance with the results of research conducted by Simanullang and Masduki (2022), who explain that building teacher capacity is a strategy for improving the quality of education and has a positive role in learning. Usiono et al. (2021) conveyed that professional teachers will affect the quality of education. According to him, professional teachers are those who are capable if they are able to design, organize, and manage learning well according to curriculum directions. Based on the results of research by Sulastri et al. (2020), the teacher plays a strategic role in the success of learning. Professionalism gives teachers time to make the transition between knowledge and teaching practice. The results of this study are in line with the opinion that professional teachers can improve the quality of education, which has a direct impact on student learning outcomes (Sham & Santaria, 2020).

Assessment

The last theme in evaluating public responses to the implementation of the Independent Curriculum is assessment. Based on the results of the analysis of comments on social media, there are still many who say that assessment in the Independent Curriculum is more difficult than in the previous curriculum. This is due to the diversity of projects that must be given to students, so they have to make an assessment. Finally, authentic assessment in the Independent Curriculum will only become an arbitrary assessment. Assessment is an important part that cannot be separated from the learning process because assessment can determine the quality of a learning activity (Fletcher, 2017). With regard to curriculum implementation, assessment is an important part of the curriculum tools to measure and assess the level of competency attainment (Figa et al., 2020). Assessment can also be used to determine the strengths and weaknesses of the learning process as well as to diagnose and improve the learning process. A meaningful learning process certainly requires a good, planned, and continuous assessment system. However, the assessment will not go well if the teacher's readiness is still low. The research by Cristy (2017) found that problems related to authentic assessment arise as a result of the lack of socialization and training provided to teachers.

Then, Syaifuddin and Waluyanti, (2016) presented the difficulties in applying authentic assessments experienced by teachers. Factors causing their poor performance consisted of (1) the lack of training attendance, as some teachers had never attended any training at all; (2) the material presented did not focus on discussing authentic assessments but explained all aspects of the Free Learning Curriculum; (3) the large number of students to be assessed; and (4) the limited time available to carry out the assessment.

CONCLUSION

The implementation of an Independent Curriculum aims to strengthen teacher independence to control the learning process by releasing binding standard controls that can affect student learning outcomes. In addition, the Independent Curriculum design process is actually simple, easy to understand and implement, and focuses on the competence and character of students. It is flexible, aligned, works together, and pays attention to the results of studies and feedback. But in reality, the implementation of the Independent Curriculum needs improvements in the field.

The results of the evaluation of the implementation of the Independent Curriculum are based on the public's response. Found that in the implementation of the Independent Curriculum, there must be tiered training and assistance by policymakers. Training and mentoring options are not only carried out online but also offline to address issues of proficiency in using technology. In addition, the existence of supporting books is an important part of the successful implementation of the Independent Curriculum. The supporting book that is made must detail the tactical steps for implementing the Independent Curriculum up to and including the P5 project. Furthermore, capacity and competency updates must continue to be carried out for the successful

implementation of the curriculum. Finally, the existence of the main assessment guide in the Independent Curriculum is a must because of the many activities in the Independent Curriculum. The findings of this study need to be followed up by conducting independent curriculum evaluation research by determining the criteria of respondents such as teachers and principals. For this reason, the researcher suggests that more independent curriculum implementation policy evaluation studies take respondents directly to examine the implementation of curriculum policies based on policy communication factors, and policy implementation resource factors.

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