



# Implementation of Independent Curriculum for Elementary Schools in Indonesian Schools Abroad

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Received: May 01, 2024

Revised: July 05, 2024

Accepted: October 25, 2024

Published: October 31, 2024

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DOI: [10.29303/jppipa.v10i10.8398](https://doi.org/10.29303/jppipa.v10i10.8398)

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**Abstract:** The curriculum is an important guideline in the learning process, especially the Independent Curriculum is a curriculum designed to recover post-pandemic learning. This study aims to determine the implementation of the independent curriculum in elementary schools in Indonesia and Indonesian schools abroad which includes planning, implementation, and constraints and strategies. This study uses a descriptive qualitative method with a comparative approach. Data were collected using interviews, observations, document analysis, and literature studies. The data were analyzed using an interactive model of Miles & Huberman. The results of the study show that planning the implementation of the independent curriculum involves the preparation of learning tools such as learning outcomes (CP), learning objectives (TP), learning objectives (ATP), and teaching modules, as well as holding training, workshops, and In House Training (IHT) to improve teacher competence. The implementation of the curriculum in Indonesia has been running comprehensively since the 2023/2024 school year, while abroad it will start in 2022. The main obstacles include lack of teacher knowledge and training, teacher readiness, school support, and student diversity, as well as the lack of human resources and access to information abroad. To overcome these obstacles, ongoing training for teachers and adequate facilities and infrastructure are needed, along with innovative strategies such as the use of technology in learning.

**Keywords:** Implementation; Independent curriculum; Indonesian school; Indonesia school abroad

## Introduction

The curriculum is an important guideline in the learning process, especially the Independent Curriculum is a curriculum designed to recover post-pandemic learning. The Independent Curriculum has a legal basis in the Decree of the Minister of Education and Culture Number 262/M/2022 concerning Amendments to the Ministry of Education and Culture Number 56/M/2022 concerning Guidelines for the Implementation of the Curriculum in the Context of Learning Recovery. The implementation of the independent curriculum focuses on character

assessment based on Pancasila to form superior human resources so that they are effectively implemented in elementary schools (Veronica & Hayat, 2024). The policy direction of the independent curriculum in elementary schools is divided into three, namely, independent learning, independent innovation, independent learning, and creativity to facilitate students get a pleasant learning experience (Sahnan & Wibowo, 2023). The concept of an independent curriculum was designed by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology, this curriculum is related to humanistic theories that have been pioneered by Abraham Maslow.

### How to Cite:

Sukarno, Marmoah, S., Purwanti, J. I. S., Supianto, Istiyati, S., & Mahfud, H. (2024). Implementation of Independent Curriculum for Elementary Schools in Indonesian Schools Abroad. *Jurnal Penelitian Pendidikan IPA*, 10(10), 7228–7235. <https://doi.org/10.29303/jppipa.v10i10.8398>

The relationship between the independent curriculum and humanistic theory is to liberate teachers and students to humanize humans and provide a place for critical thinking, innovation, and creativity (Juita et al., 2021). The implementation of the independent curriculum policy in Indonesian Schools Abroad needs to be implemented to continue to carry out character strengthening and projects to strengthen the profile of Pancasila students. The implementation of the Independent Curriculum is expected to restore post-pandemic learning and improve the quality of learning (Irmayanti et al., 2023). The Independent Curriculum in Indonesia aims to create a student-centered learning process that allows schools to develop the curriculum independently based on their competencies (Warsihna et al., 2023). The independent curriculum emphasizes the importance of student development, promoting characteristics such as faith, good morals, cooperation, creativity, critical thinking, and global awareness (Hidayat et al., 2023). The Independent Curriculum is designed to be holistic, relevant, and sustainable, with a focus on the lifelong learning process (Jamila, 2023).

Indonesian Schools Abroad plays an important role in promoting Indonesian culture and values internationally. The establishment of Indonesian Schools Abroad is part of Indonesia's efforts to maintain its cultural identity and raise educational standards globally (Lestari et al., 2022; Matin et al., 2020). This Indonesian Abroad School focuses on internalizing moral values, including social, religious, and national values, while ensuring that students retain their roots and traditions regardless of their location (Abbott, 2017). Indonesian Schools Abroad also contributes to cultural diplomacy by providing quality education and fostering a sense of nationalism among students living abroad. (Partono et al., 2021). In addition, Indonesian Schools Abroad serves as a platform for inclusive education, offering tailored services for students with special needs and leveraging digital marketing strategies to enhance their educational experience (Saputra & Fauzi, 2022). Indonesian Schools Abroad Indonesian Schools Abroad are spread across various countries to meet the educational needs of children of Indonesian citizens living abroad (Suwartiningsih, 2022).

The number of Indonesian Schools Abroad spread across eight countries currently reaches 13 schools. SILN is found in the Netherlands (Den Haag), Egypt (Cairo), Saudi Arabia (Riyadh, Jeddah, Mecca), Malaysia (Kuala Lumpur, Johor Bahru, Kinabalu), Singapore (Singapore), Myanmar (Yangon), Japan (Tokyo), the Philippines (Davao) and Thailand (Bangkok). The independent curriculum has had an impact on changing Indonesian education for the better. By looking at this impact, Indonesian Schools Abroad has also implemented an independent curriculum gradually since 2022. The

implementation of the Independent Curriculum by the Indonesian government in Indonesian Schools Abroad presents opportunities as well as challenges for educators and policymakers (Ndari et al., 2023). The Independent Curriculum is a curriculum with a flexible, competency-based approach that aims to develop students' character and soft skills, as well as accommodate global needs (Hadi et al., 2023). One of the main advantages of the Independent Curriculum curriculum emphasizes interactive, essential, and in-depth learning, in contrast to the previous curriculum approach that focused on essential materials.

Teachers are given the flexibility to adjust the learning process to the needs and interests of students, fostering creativity and innovation in the classroom (Aji, 2023). The independent curriculum is expected to be applied as a curriculum with a learning process that focuses on students' abilities so that they can develop according to their potential, be precise in applying them, be of high quality, be able to describe the right feelings, hearts, and emotions, and have the motivation to move forward according to the demands of the times (Purwanti & Nurwati, 2023). However, the reality on the ground presents challenges such as teacher readiness, school support, and student diversity, thus hindering the proper implementation of the independent curriculum (Tsuraya et al., 2022).

This research is important because the Independent Curriculum has become a national curriculum that was initially gradual so it must be implemented both in schools in Indonesia and Indonesian schools abroad. This research was conducted to determine the application of the independent curriculum at the elementary school level both in Indonesia and Indonesian schools abroad. Good adaptation of the independent curriculum under standards can determine the sustainability of relevant and effective education that leads to an increase in the quality of education. Research related to the implementation of the independent curriculum has been carried out a lot, some of which was carried out by Aliyyah et al. (2023) research related to the implementation of the Independent Curriculum is based on the perspective of teachers during the pandemic with the success of the curriculum determined by the readiness of technology and support as well as the collaboration of all stakeholders, parents, and the community.

The implementation of the Independent Curriculum in driving schools with the results of the implementation of the Independent Curriculum has been carried out optimally with school principals and teachers playing an important role in making changes in the context of implementing the Independent Curriculum. Furthermore, there is a study conducted by Efendi et al. (2023) with the results of the

implementation of the Independent Curriculum in elementary schools carried out in stages, starting with grade 1 and grade 4 as a trial and teachers were given training through socialization and workshops. Based on previous research that has been conducted, researchers are interested in research related to the implementation of the independent curriculum in elementary schools in Indonesian Schools Abroad. This study aims to determine the implementation of the independent curriculum at the elementary school level in Indonesian schools abroad and to find out the obstacles and strategies that can be used in implementing the independent curriculum. So it is hoped that this research can contribute to the development of the quality of the independent curriculum.

## Method

This study uses a descriptive qualitative method with a comparative approach. Data were collected through interviews, observations, document analysis, and literature studies. Interviews, observations, and document analysis were used to collect data on schools in Indonesia while literature studies were used to collect data from the implementation of the independent curriculum of elementary schools in Indonesian schools abroad. The data was analyzed using triangulation techniques, the research procedure began with the stages of data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing (Dash et al., 2019). So that the data produced can be systematic and reach a clear conclusion.

## Result and Discussion

### *Planning for the Implementation of the Independent Curriculum*

Based on the results of the research obtained through observations and interviews with elementary school teachers in Indonesia, the learning planning for the implementation of the independent curriculum is characterized by teachers being able to develop learning tools such as learning outcomes (CP), learning objectives (TP), learning objectives (ATP), and teaching modules. Learning tools are important in the learning process so the planning of teaching tools starts from analyzing learning outcomes to determining the beginning of the next step, namely determining learning objectives (TP), creating a flow of learning objectives (ATP), to compiling teaching modules. In addition, planning the implementation of the independent curriculum requires planning from the school which includes activities that are useful for strengthening the implementation of the independent curriculum in schools such as the holding

of workshops, technical guidance, House Training (IHT) which aims to strengthen the commitment of all school residents, both educators and educators.

Meanwhile, in Indonesian schools abroad, the planning for the implementation of the independent curriculum based on the literature analysis that has been carried out found that the implementation of the independent curriculum in Indonesian schools abroad, especially in Thailand, began in 2022 which was marked by the holding of socialization activities for the independent curriculum with the aim that its implementation could run as expected (Aini & Adiyono, 2023). Furthermore, the researcher found that after the implementation of the socialization of the independent curriculum, a workshop on the implementation of the independent curriculum was held which had a series of events including the Dissemination of Special Supervisors (GPK), the Preparation of KOSP (*Kurikulum Operasional Satuan Pendidikan*), the Socialization of Report Cards for the implementation of the independent curriculum and the Preparation of the P5 Module, the Five Actions Program and the Preparation of Teaching Modules (SI Bangkok, 2023).

The same thing was found in the Indonesian school Kuala Lumpur which held an Independent Learning Curriculum Workshop to strengthen preparations for the implementation of the Independent Learning curriculum in the 2022/2023 school year (Marthawati & Setyo, 2024). Furthermore, in the 2022/2023 school year, Sekolah Indonesia Kuala Lumpur held another workshop on the implementation of the independent curriculum to improve teacher competence in implementing the independent curriculum. Teachers are expected to increase students' competitiveness in discussing and debating so that students' skills in conveying opinions and brilliant ideas can be facilitated properly (Rozy & Sukardi, 2023). In Indonesian schools in Kuala Lumpur, in-house training is also carried out which aims to strengthen teachers in implementing the independent curriculum. The IHT event was held for five days with topics including school policies, the implementation of the independent curriculum, and the diagnostic mechanism for the implementation of the independent curriculum (Puspitasari & Utami, 2023).

Furthermore, the independent curriculum is seen as a frame of character in daily life so character strengthening needs to be instilled in students (Sakban & Sundawa, 2023). From the data that has been obtained, the planning for the implementation of the independent curriculum both in elementary schools in Indonesia and Indonesian schools abroad is not much different. Planning begins by holding various trainings, workshops, and in-house training that are useful to strengthen the competence of school human resources in preparing for the maximum implementation of the

independent curriculum. In addition, in planning, what needs to be planned starts with analyzing learning outcomes so that teachers can formulate learning objectives, compile the flow of learning objectives, and compile teaching modules.

The Independent Curriculum is designed to provide freedom and flexibility in learning while ensuring the achievement of the set competency standards. The Independent Curriculum aims to give students the freedom to choose their learning path while adhering to competency standards (Alfiyanti & Erita, 2023; Sanjaya et al., 2022). The curriculum focuses on encouraging students to develop expertise in a variety of subjects based on their interests and abilities, fostering global competitiveness (Usanto, 2022). In addition, the curriculum framework prioritizes character development as a key subject, which aims to form students' behavioral habits toward moral character and resilience to contemporary challenges (Marsaulina et al., 2023).

The independent curriculum also empowers educators to modernize traditional teaching methods through innovative technology-based approaches, encouraging lifelong learning and meeting the demands of the modern era (Surul, 2023). Furthermore, the curriculum emphasizes the importance of assessment, with a focus on formative and summative evaluations to measure student learning outcomes and facilitate continuous improvement (Fransiska et al., 2023). It is appropriate Alenezi (2023) which states that independent curriculum planning can start from planning learning tools under the guidelines for making independent curriculum learning tools, namely analyzing learning outcomes (CP) to develop learning objectives and learning goal flows, planning diagnostic assessments, developing teaching modules that adjust learning to the stages of achievement and characteristics of students and planning formative and summative assessments. In addition, according to research conducted by Chaerunisa et al. (2023) Good curriculum planning with good infrastructure management will create effective learning and make it easier to achieve educational goals.

#### *Implementation of the Independent Curriculum*

The implementation of the independent curriculum at the elementary school level in Indonesian schools has resulted in the implementation of the independent curriculum being implemented comprehensively at every grade level, namely from grade I to grade VI. The implementation of independent curriculum in Indonesian schools began to be implemented gradually in the 2021/2022 school year which began in driving schools in grades I and IV, then in the 2022/2023 school year began to be implemented in classes I, II, IV, and V

until in the 2023/2024 school year the independent curriculum has been implemented comprehensively at all grade levels. Meanwhile, in Indonesian schools abroad, the implementation of the independent curriculum will only be carried out in 2022. One of them is the implementation of learning in Indonesian schools abroad that carry out learning using new teaching tools, namely teaching modules that produce students who are active and show interest in learning with enthusiasm when participating in learning.

In the learning aspect, the implementation of the independent curriculum in Indonesian schools has focused on essential materials on literacy and numeracy and teachers have paid attention to and successfully accommodated the needs of students. However, in the implementation of learning, teachers have not fully implemented differentiated learning. This is due to the limited ability of teachers and the many characteristics of students in one class so teachers in conducting deferred learning are carried out by grouping students according to their abilities. The Independent Curriculum emphasizes the learning process of meeting the needs and characteristics of students, which of course will give them the flexibility to continue to develop according to their potential, interests, and talents. In its implementation, the Independent Curriculum requires teachers to carry out differentiated learning. Differentiated learning is an approach that teachers can use to meet the needs of each student who has various characteristics (Wijaya et al., 2022).

Therefore, in differentiated learning, it is important to distinguish the abilities of students and provide learning that suits the needs of each individual (Herwina, 2021). To support this, in extracurricular learning there is a diagnostic assessment, which is an assessment that aims to understand the readiness, characteristics, learning styles, and interests of students, which can be done orally or in writing.

#### *Obstacles and Strategies for the Implementation of the Independent Curriculum*

In implementing the independent curriculum both in Indonesian schools and Indonesian schools abroad, in its implementation, there are still several obstacles. These obstacles are easily presented in the following table 1.

Based on the table 1 derived from interview data of principals and teachers in Indonesian schools and literature studies for Indonesian schools abroad, the obstacles from the two are not much different. The implementation of the independent curriculum in schools in Indonesia faces various obstacles. One of the main challenges is the lack of knowledge and training of teachers, which makes it difficult for them to analyze basic competencies (CP), formulate learning objectives

(TP), compile learning objectives (ATP), and compile teaching modules as the final teaching tool in learning. In the previous curriculum, CP (Learning Outcomes) was KI (Core Competencies) and KD (Basic Competencies), ATP (Learning Objectives Flow) was the

syllabus, the teaching module was the lesson plan of subject learning, and the project module was the lesson plan of P5 (Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project) activities.

**Table 1.** Obstacles to the Implementation of the Independent Curriculum

Obstacles to School in Indonesia	Obstacles to Indonesian Schools Abroad
Lack of teacher knowledge and training	Lack of human resources
Difficulties include analyzing CP, formulating TP, and compiling ATP	Teachers do not have adequate knowledge about independent curriculum learning
Teacher readiness, school support, student diversity	Difficulties in analyzing, formulating, and compiling teaching plans and modules
Lack of facilities and infrastructure	Lack of information
Still having difficulties in evaluating learning.	Multicultural

The teaching module of the Independent Curriculum contains the objectives, steps, learning media, and evaluations needed for a unit or topic based on the flow of learning objectives. The project module contains the objectives, steps, learning media, and evaluations needed to carry out the project to strengthen the Pancasila student profile (Rahmadayanti & Hartoyo, 2022). Furthermore, teacher readiness, school support, and student diversity are obstacles to implementing the independent curriculum, especially in elementary schools. Inadequate expertise in practicing independent learning determines the ability or competence of teachers. This level of proficiency is what prevents teachers from facilitating independent learning effectively. In overcoming obstacles, the cooperation of related parties is needed, such as the education office, schools, teachers, students, and the community. The education office needs to provide support and guidance to schools in the preparation of an independent curriculum and improving teacher competence. Further training is needed in the technical implementation of the independent curriculum in schools.

A thorough understanding of the independent curriculum and classroom management skills based on the independent curriculum can be ideal if the training is developed and scheduled in such a way that it does not interfere with the implementation of classroom learning. In addition, inadequate facilities and infrastructure are also an obstacle in the implementation of the independent curriculum. Inadequate facilities can hinder the implementation of the Independent Learning Curriculum which directs teachers to traditional teaching methods. Adequate facilities are needed for the effective implementation of the Independent Curriculum (Kamila et al., 2023). ICT advances in the world of education have a positive impact and have a great opportunity to optimize the improvement of the quality of education in the implementation of the independent curriculum. The approach that combines

various electronic platforms is designed to improve efficiency, increase creativity, and increase flexibility.

Furthermore, the difficulty in evaluating learning adds complexity to the implementation of the independent curriculum. In the independent curriculum, there are obstacles related to formative and summative assessments that do not meet standards due to the problem of teachers not being able to design assessments that are suitable for students (Tika et al., 2022). Lack of references and incomplete books can also hinder the evaluation process. Meanwhile, in Indonesian schools abroad, the obstacles faced include a lack of competent human resources (HR). Lack of human resources in teaching every existing subject. So Indonesian schools abroad must be able to utilize existing human resources for all subjects taught at all levels. Therefore, every teacher in Indonesian schools abroad is required to be able to teach multiple subjects at multiple levels of education. Furthermore, there are obstacles for teachers who do not have adequate knowledge about the independent curriculum.

The Independent Curriculum emphasizes learning that is more flexible, and student-centered, and prioritizes independence in learning. This lack of knowledge leads to several problems, such as the inability to plan lessons that are by curriculum goals, limitations in innovating teaching methods, and ineffective learning evaluation. Teachers who do not understand the basic concepts and philosophy of the Independent Curriculum may continue to use traditional teaching methods that are less relevant to the new approach, hindering innovation in technology integration, project-based activities, or expected contextual learning. Teachers abroad also experience difficulties in analyzing, formulating, and compiling teaching plans and modules, coupled with a lack of access to information (Nurhafidhah et al., 2024). The differences in education systems in each country affect how teachers adapt to this curriculum. Teachers must

understand and integrate the Independent Curriculum into existing systems, which may be very different from the Indonesian context. Additionally, access to the necessary training and resources is often limited, so teachers may not receive enough support from the local government or educational institutions. These challenges are compounded by the need to adapt teaching methods to the local environment and culture, which requires in-depth analysis and complex adaptation.

In addition, the more complex multicultural environment abroad is one of the obstacles to the implementation of the independent curriculum in Indonesian schools abroad. Students often come from a variety of cultural backgrounds, and different values, so teachers must be able to adapt teaching materials and methods to be relevant and inclusive for all students. Cultural sensitivity is key, as teachers must ensure that the curriculum and teaching are not only academically relevant but also value and reflect the cultural diversity of students. In addition, the effectiveness of curriculum implementation also depends on teachers' ability to communicate and collaborate with diverse students, parents, and communities, requiring strong interpersonal and intercultural skills and a deep understanding of social and cultural dynamics.

## Conclusion

The implementation of the Independent Curriculum in elementary schools in Indonesia and Indonesian schools abroad requires careful planning and faces various significant obstacles. Planning begins by compiling learning tools such as learning outcomes (CP), learning objectives (TP), learning objectives (ATP), and teaching modules, as well as holding various trainings, workshops, and House Training (IHT) to improve teacher competence and strengthen the commitment of all school residents. The implementation of this curriculum in Indonesia has been running comprehensively in every classroom since the 2023/2024 school year, while abroad, such as in Thailand and Kuala Lumpur, the implementation began in 2022 with socialization activities and workshops. The main obstacles faced include lack of knowledge and teacher training, teacher readiness, school support, student diversity, and the lack of competent human resources and access to information abroad. Teachers often have difficulty in compiling teaching tools and conducting differentiated learning due to the limited abilities and many characteristics of students in one class. To overcome this obstacle, support from the education office, continuous training for teachers, and adequate facilities and infrastructure are needed. Teachers must also be able to adapt teaching methods to a multicultural

environment, communicate and collaborate with diverse communities, and understand social and cultural dynamics. In addition, there is a need for innovative strategies, such as the use of technology in learning, to increase the effectiveness and flexibility of teaching, ensure that the curriculum can be implemented effectively and inclusively, and be able to create active and engaging learning for students. The implementation of the Independent Curriculum has significant implications for the quality of education, requiring an increase in teacher competence and the adaptation of teaching methods to accommodate the diverse needs of students. Providing continuous intensive training for teachers and ensuring the availability of adequate facilities and access to information, can support the effective implementation of the Independent Curriculum.

## Acknowledgments

Thanks to all parties who have supported the implementation of this research. I hope this research can be useful.

## Author Contributions

Conceptualization, S.; methodology, S. M.; validation, J. I. S. P.; formal analysis, S.; investigation, S. I.; resources, H. M.; data curation, S.; writing—original draft preparation, S. M.; writing—review and editing, J. I. S. P.; visualization, S. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

## Funding

Researchers independently funded this research.

## Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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