

## STUDENT PERCEPTION OF THE NEW PARADIGM INDEPENDENT CURRICULUM AT PIAUD

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### **Abstract**

This research aims to determine the perceptions of PIAUD undergraduate students regarding the new paradigm of an independent curriculum at the Early Childhood Education level. Data collection used an open questionnaire using purposive sampling techniques. The Method uses a descriptive qualitative with a case study. The location used is in the Early Childhood Islamic Education Study Program (PIAUD) Muhammadiyah Probolinggo Islamic College. The research subjects were all students of the 4th semester Islamic Early Childhood Education study program, totaling 19 people who took the Early Childhood Learning Design course. The result shows that the content and structure of the independent curriculum are substantively more simple and deeper, because it is focuses on the self-development of students, students have diverse opinions regarding the independent curriculum where in learning the Independent curriculum students are trained to express opinions with more critical, creative, and motivated in solving every learning challenge they face, and teachers are required to be more creative in determining and designing learning activities by adjusting the conditions and needs of each class.

**Keywords: perception, new paradigm, the merdeka curriculum**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Education is one of the necessities of life that is expected to develop human skills through material mastery. This learning process combines the journey of life, human cooperation, and paying attention to environmental conditions to develop all potentials according to the stage of development, so that it runs well (Laida & Sari, 2023). Education is the key to the progress of a country. If education is carried out well, then the direct impact felt by the country is to improve the quality of human resources. Quality education will produce quality human resources as well (Mahfuziah & Metroyadi, 2023).

Education has a very important role in the development of individuals and society as a whole. Education is an indispensable process to obtain balance and perfection in the development of individuals and society (Nurkholis, 25:

2013). According to the National Education System Law No.20 of 2003, education is Conscious and planned efforts to create a learning atmosphere and learning process so that students actively develop their potential to have religious spiritual strength, self-control, personality, intelligence, noble character, and skills needed by themselves, society, nation, and State (Astuti, 2023).

Early childhood education (PAUD) is very important and aims to develop all children's potential and interests (Nurhayati & Nurfidanova, 2023). PAUD is included in the national strategy as one of the main reasons for developing children's abilities and potential (Nufus, 2023). In preschool, children are introduced to a wide variety of knowledge and a variety of games. Everything is systematically designed to help them grow optimally. These activities are carried out so that children are ready to continue their



education to the next level (Amelia, 2023). The purpose of early childhood education is to prepare children to face life from an early age, develop their various potentials, and equip them with the ability to adapt to their surroundings. Through aids in thinking and learning, children become sensitive to differences in tone and voice and appreciate creativity (Susanti & Faqihatuddiniyah, 2023).

Early childhood school is a planned system to arouse interest, guide, nurture, and provide learning that will grow children's capacity and ability (Ulpah & Sunarno, 2023). The implementation of education refers to the learning and teaching process that involves the transfer of knowledge, skills and values that require planning in it (Armeth Daud Al Kahar & Anjani Putri, 2023). The plans used through the learning process are organized into the curriculum. According to Jeflin (2020), curriculum is the main component in the implementation of education. Because through the curriculum new learning activities can be active, and if an education system does not have a curriculum, it will certainly run badly.

In Indonesia itself the education curriculum has changed several times, and basically the curriculum changes are made to improve the existing education system in Indonesia (Syifaузakia, 2023). Although it is undeniable that each revamped curriculum has its own advantages and disadvantages that need to be evaluated properly so that educational goals can be achieved optimally (Elok Endang Rasmani et al., 2023). Education has Indonesian objectives as stated in the National Education System Law No. 20 of 2003, namely the development of superior human resources, where education is directed to produce superior human resources, so as to support the development and progress of the country.

Therefore, the Independent Curriculum was prepared to achieve educational goals, which was previously

referred to as the prototype curriculum (Jannah & Rashid, 2023). The independent curriculum itself was released by the Ministry of Education and Culture so that through the concept of independent learning, education in our country can continue to increase.

The PAUD level, the concept of independent learning refers to an educational approach that provides freedom and activeness to children in the learning process (Jannah & Rashid, 2023). Quality learning is expected to improve students' knowledge, skills, and attitudes (Hernayati & Fauziah, 2022).

Children are more free to learn as fun as possible and feel comfortable to learn without the need to think about anything, cheerful, and happy without any pressure or stress without neglecting the slightest innate talent they have (Widyastuti, 2: 2022). Being free in this case does not mean that learning is given leeway and is not serious in learning activities, not disciplined in completing the tasks given and has no rules. However, freedom is meant that in achieving learning goals, children are given freedom in the process but still within the rules and procedures that have been set. This is in line with the idea of play in the Early Childhood level unit, where children are given the opportunity to develop their imagination and creativity during play (Murtiningsih, 2013). There are several children active in learning activities, namely children are unique individuals, children like to imitate, children like to play, children are spontaneous in doing things, children actively move, children prioritize their own desires, children have high curiosity, children like to imagine it, and children are easily frustrated (Hairunnisa & Cinantya, 2022).

According to Safitri in (Jannah & Rashid, 2023) The independent curriculum is a curriculum that is applied by developing student profiles so that they have souls and values that are in



accordance with the content of the Pancasila precepts (stuti, 2022) as well as equipping students with the fundamentals of life. The five precepts of Pancasila are described, including religious values and ethics, identity, and the basics of literacy, mathematics, science, technology, engineering and art which are included in the development achievements of Early Childhood education, (Eka Retnaningsih et al., 2022). In their activities, the learning experienced by each child varies depending on the environment and with whom he learns. There are various ways of learning activities used by children such as listening, seeing, touching, writing, and so on (Sa'dijah et al., 2021).

Not only students are involved in the independent curriculum, but also teachers who play a role in it. Teachers play an important role in efforts to achieve educational goals, namely by developing a curriculum contained in the activities of guiding, designing, and implementing learning in accordance with the needs of early childhood development (Jannah & Rashid, 2023). The rapid development of society requires teachers to continue to change and adapt so as not to be left behind by changing times. These changes must be made on an ongoing basis (Faudina & Novitawati, 2022).

The success of learning at an early age is very influential on the further education of children. A positive and stimulating environment will encourage children to develop optimally. Conversely, an unsupportive environment can hinder a child's innate potential and make it difficult to reach his or her potential (Nursyafitri & Rizalie, 2023). The key to successful learning in PAUD lies in the design and implementation of lessons that are organized and managed effectively by teachers in the classroom (Rehny & Permatasari, 2023). The development of children into the main person and beneficial to the surrounding environment is greatly influenced by quality education

in early childhood (Fakhruddin, 2019). Education is A series of interrelated ones, and the quality of education at each stage can shape an individual's learning experience. According to Nisa & Jamain (2022) The learning process in education allows individuals to develop and master the knowledge, experience, and skills needed in life. Therefore, investment in the quality of PAUD education has a positive long-term impact on children's development at the next level of education (Cape, 2020).

Although the new curriculum has great potential to improve the quality of learning, it does not escape the various perceptions that arise afterwards (Jannah & Rashid, 2023). Both at the Early Childhood Education teacher level itself and among students who are taking the Strata 1 (S1) Early Childhood Education level in Higher Education, one of which is at the Islamic College of Muhammadiyah Probolinggo. The independent curriculum as a new paradigm in the world of education, has several problems in its application, including teacher and staff readiness, quality and consistency, resources and accessibility, monitoring, uncertainty of results, mentoring, inequality, technology, and resistance to change from parents (Rambung et al., 2023).

Based on these problems, many perceptions have emerged among students regarding the Independent Curriculum. Their perceptions also vary. Some view this negatively and some are positive. Among the students have different perceptions because there are also some who have become teachers at the early childhood education level. For researchers, they want to examine how the new paradigm of the Merdeka curriculum and how PIAUD students perceive the new paradigm of the Merdeka curriculum and what are the obstacles and challenges of PIAUD students to the new paradigm of the Merdeka curriculum.



## **METHOD**

This research is included in the type of field research (Field Research) included in the case review (Jannah & Rashid, 2023) students who have different perspectives in understanding the paradigm of the Merdeka curriculum. The research approach uses qualitative descriptive (Siyoto & Sodik, 2018) which in it tries to describe the views of students in designing learning by implementing the Independent Curriculum. The research subjects here are students of the 5th semester PIAUD study program at the Islamic College of Muhammadiyah Probolinggo.

The method of collecting data through purposive sampling techniques. Data was obtained by direct interviews and observations. Observations were made using interview guidelines conducted by filling in the questionnaire link. Data sources contain primary and secondary data. Primary data was obtained directly from selected respondents, namely PIAUD semester 5 students. Secondary data are of course obtained from literacy studies that are relevant to the research. After the primary and secondary data are collected and accumulated, then analyze and find relevance to the research theme. Then after all that the researcher will draw conclusions.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Perception of the New Paradigm of the Independent Curriculum**

In the world of education, curriculum is fundamental and fundamental. When viewed from the point of view of educational standards on a national scale, the curriculum is part of the content standards. This is the main point that becomes the foundation and foothold in making learning models in schools. If there is no curriculum, then the school will be confused in determining educational goals. This is related to the direction of

learning and the goals to be achieved in the learning process. So every educational unit starting from early childhood, elementary school, junior high school, and high school should have a curriculum not only universities that must have a curriculum (Jannah & Rashid, 2023).

Indonesia in 2022 has three curriculum options which can be used as a focus at the AUD unit level in the plan to implement the independent play program issued by the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia. Each school level is given the freedom to determine according to their situation and expertise in implementing K-13, simplified K-2013 or independent play. This is expected to achieve the ideals of national education, namely educating the nation's children (Munawar, 2022)

Curriculum Merdeka began to be issued shortly after the Covid-19 pandemic began to subside. The 2013 curriculum is a tool based on Permendikbud 146 of 2014, and emergency guidelines, namely K-13 which have been simplified according to pandemic conditions that plague the range of 2020 to 2023.

The Minister of Education and Culture interprets the concept of independent learning, namely the application of the curriculum to learning activities carried out with fun methods, developing a creative mindset from a teacher as the main reason for learning success, because it can foster a positive attitude towards students in responding to every learning activity (Merta sari et al., 2022). This freedom of learning aims to be able to produce educational achievements that not only make children smart in memorization, but also expected to foster analytical acumen, logical thinking and have a broad and comprehensive concept of understanding, and can help students to develop their potential in all fields (Elok Endang Rasmani et al., 2023).

The concept of Merdeka Belajar is a value-increasing strategy to add value to



education in Indonesia. Students through the independent learning curriculum will be trained and familiarized to have communication skills, creativity, collaboration, and critical thinking. Through this skill improvement, students will not only become people who memorize material, but will be able to make breakthroughs in various fields of skills, have good character and good social skills (Prameswari, 2020)

Freedom to learn at the PAUD level is also known as freedom to play. This is related to the concept of learning in early childhood, namely "Learning Through Play" The concept of independent learning at the Early Childhood (PAUD) level is very suitable for its application and development so that students get pleasure in learning at school, not only doing learning activities through drilling system namely remembering the material, doing LKA, or CALISTUNG (Reading, Writing and Numeracy) activities that are often applied in class and this seems to curb children in the process of development because in essence the child's world is in fact still in the world of play. (Hardiyanti, 2021).

There are advantages of the independent curriculum itself compared to the previous curriculum where the content and structure in it substantively become simpler and deeper, more free, and more in accordance with the characteristics of children. The content is simpler and more intensive, meaning that the selected lesson is focused on the basic and main material. In addition, it concentrates on developing children's skills that are indeed at the stage of development. Learning activities in class are arranged comprehensively, have meaning, are not too hasty and the main thing is that the learning activities are arranged and applied encouragingly. (Prameswari, 2020).

### **PIAUD Students' Perception of the New Paradigm of the Independent Curriculum**

The existence of an independent curriculum has the view that Merdeka Belajar does prioritize the needs and interests of students in line with the meaning of Merdeka itself. The new paradigm of the Merdeka curriculum is an effort to teach students to become educated people throughout life. Lifelong learners are one of the main components in the Pancasila student profile (Widyastuti, 2022). Learning activities using a new paradigm at the Early Childhood level are based on the Merdeka curriculum in which there are intracurricular activities, as well as Pancasila student profiles. And at other levels of education besides PAUD there are extracurricular programs. This learning characteristic is certainly in line with Early Childhood Education which indeed each student has a uniqueness and also has the potential advantages and advantages of each. (Kurniyawan et al., 2020)

Students who are also students of course also have each different perception in viewing the Merdeka curriculum in early school education. For those who are a student but also a PAUD teacher have different perceptions in terms of insight and experience. For those who are PAUD students and teachers, of course, they already know what the Merdeka curriculum is. Of the 19 students who took the learning design course, 12 of them were familiar with the independent curriculum because their institutions had started learning and implementing the curriculum. However, unlike the other 7 students, 2 of them have never taught, and the other 5 students teach in institutions located in areas that still lack information about education or are still not affected by the implementation of the Merdeka curriculum at the PAUD level. The percentage of students in knowing the Merdeka curriculum can be seen in the table Figure 1. under.

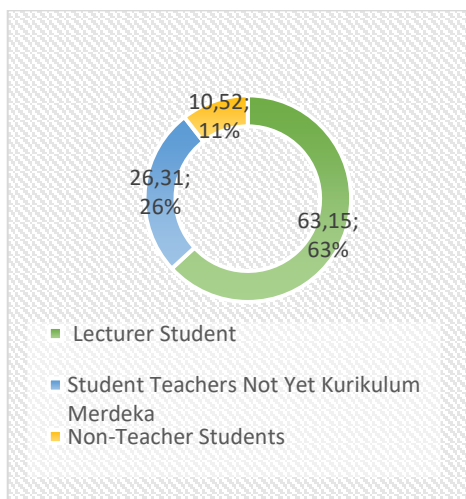


Figure 1.1 Percentage of Students in Knowing the Independent Curriculum

For students who have never taught at an educational institution, they know that the Independent Curriculum at the AUD level is often referred to as Freedom to Play Because the learning process aims to make children have the view that learning is joyful, not a burden (Alfaiz et al., 2023). Because actually playing is learning, the context of early childhood education itself, Merdeka Belajar is Freedom to Play. They found out about it after studying in the Learning Design course. Meanwhile, those who have taught in educational institutions are able to give a more substantive assessment where they assess that the Merdeka curriculum is a curriculum with various kinds of intracurricular where learning activities are more optimal so that students have enough time to understand comprehensively and are able to strengthen skills. And also some have the view that children are free to choose learning activities and teachers only facilitate. And another view from them is that in learning in the Merdeka curriculum students become trained to express their opinions more critically, creatively, and motivated in solving every learning challenge they face. Motivation should focus on factors that cause or encourage individual activity, including needs, motives, and drives. Motivation is

process-oriented and relates to the performers, direction, goals, and reciprocity of accepted behavior over performance (Sari & Anik, 2022).

Another perception of students towards the Merdeka curriculum is about the frequent changes in the education curriculum in Indonesia. For those who are students and teachers are of the view that they do not agree to continue changing the curriculum because they do not really understand the previous curriculum but have changed the new curriculum. So this in their opinion is less efficient. Meanwhile, according to those who have not taught or who have taught but have not used the Merdeka curriculum, they consider this normal because Indonesia has always been a developing country, so it has become a natural thing because the curriculum is still often changed. If it has become a demand, it will inevitably have to be implemented. This is of course in accordance with the expectations of our education that with the existence of the Merdeka curriculum, it is hoped that education will be more efficient (Aisha et al., 2023).

### **Student Obstacles and Challenges to the New Paradigm of the Independent Curriculum**

Student perceptions in the new paradigm of the independent curriculum hold the view that the independent curriculum does have positive sides such as, among others, making it easier for teachers to compile teaching materials, which means that the independent curriculum can be said to be substantively simpler in making the arrangement of learning designs (Amilda, 2017). But on the other hand, it is also a big challenge for a teacher in the future. This can be seen in the lesson plan, which is related to the objectives of learning activities which are interpreted as a way for an educator to strive for the implementation and achievement of learning objectives that are



in line with the needs and interests of students in the classroom. Teachers of course can also choose, and compile lesson plans every day or once a week by adjusting the conditions and needs in the classroom.

For independent curriculum student teachers when it comes to the 2013 curriculum, they may understand that Learning Outcomes have a position like Core Competencies and Basic Competencies. Because in summary, Learning Outcomes converge into holistic attitudes, knowledge, and competencies. And another important thing that characterizes that CP is the final achievement at the foundation stage (TK B) or when students have completed learning at the PAUD level (Rahardjo, Melita Maria, 2021).

For students who have not taught or student teachers who have not used the Merdeka curriculum, this is a challenge in the future where on the one hand they are future teacher candidates who must be able to contribute they must also continue to upgrade themselves by continuing to learn the development of national education. On the other hand, they have just learned the Merdeka curriculum, it is not impossible When government regulations change, the curriculum also changes. Because they also have hope that first, they hope that there will be regulations that can specifically be a reference for the implementation of an independent curriculum in each educational unit. second, there is a National Assessment (AN) in all education level units and third, strong public support so that curriculum implementation can continue to be developed rather than replaced.

## CONCLUSION

From the presentation of the results of the study above and from the results of the researchers' observations, conclusions were found, namely (1) the perception of the new paradigm of the Merdeka

curriculum that the independent curriculum itself is compared to the previous curriculum where the content and structure in it are substantively simpler and more intensive, because it focuses on the self-development of students; (2) students' perceptions of the Merdeka curriculum paradigm have negative and positive sides. The Merdeka Curriculum is a curriculum in which there are many kinds of intracurricular education where the content of learning can be maximized and also so that students have adequate time to understand concepts and strengthen their abilities. And also they are of the view that in learning in the Merdeka Curriculum students become trained to express their opinions more critically, creatively, and motivated in solving every learning challenge they face (3) Student obstacles and challenges to the new paradigm of the Merdeka curriculum, namely in the Merdeka curriculum a teacher should be able to choose to compile a learning plan every day or once a week by adjusting conditions and needs class. This shows that the challenge of teacher creativity is becoming greater. Because when they have begun to master the Merdeka curriculum, it is not impossible that with the new government regulations, there may be the possibility of changing the curriculum which eventually teachers who should concentrate on self-development of students instead have to learn again about the new curriculum.

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