

## **Implementation of the *Merdeka* Curriculum in Differentiated Learning Processes through a Humanistic Approach as Innovation in Primary Education**

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### **Abstract**

Students' learning challenges are highly diverse, necessitating unique solutions tailored to each specific hurdle, including addressing student behavior issues and introducing innovative teaching methods. This research aims to elucidate the practical application of the Independent Curriculum in customized education, utilizing a Humanistic approach. The research methodology adopted involves an extensive review of existing literature, encompassing data collection through a comprehensive analysis and synthesis of theories from various pertinent sources. The analytical methods employed encompass content analysis and descriptive evaluation. A meticulous critical assessment of literature materials gathered from a wide array of references is undertaken to underpin this concept. The research findings unveil that the execution of the Independent Curriculum involves a threefold approach: planning, execution, and assessment. During the planning phase, the framework is established by defining the vision, mission, and objectives of madrasa education, coupled with the development of the Project for Strengthening the Pancasila Student Profile and Rahmatil Lil Aalamiin Student Profile (P5P2RA). This is aimed at providing guidance to students in shaping their P5 and P2RA attributes and enhancing their learning competencies through a humanistic approach. This approach significantly impacts the Independent Curriculum, particularly in the differentiation of the learning process, a defining characteristic of the Independent Curriculum. By innovatively tailoring the learning process, students can engage in education aligned with their unique developmental needs, rather than conforming to predetermined benchmarks, such as the Minimum Competency Criteria (KKM) in Curriculum 13. The Merdeka Curriculum is structured into distinct phases, offering students opportunities to cultivate their abilities at various stages, including the Madrasah Ibtidaiyah level (Stage A for grades 1 and 2), (Stage B for grades 3 and 4), and Stage C for grades 5 and 6.

**Keywords** : *Independent Curriculum, Differentiated Learning, Humanistic Approach, Innovation*

### **INTRODUCTION**

The curriculum, often underestimated, holds a pivotal role in education, encapsulating the educational vision, mission, and goals of an institution. It serves as the core vessel for imparting values to students, aligning them with educational objectives. This is particularly crucial given that every student has distinct characteristics, encompassing physical attributes, psychological traits, interests, and talents (Khoirurrijal, 2018). As each student faces different challenges, unique solutions are essential to address their diverse needs, fostering improved student behavior and innovative learning techniques. Differentiated learning, a practice in which instruction adapts to each student's abilities,

facilitates a more effective understanding of lessons (Ningrum, 2023).

In the 21st century, the differentiation-based independent learning curriculum encourages students to harness technology during their educational journey. Traditional textbooks are being replaced by digital resources such as e-books and instructional videos. Teachers are granted autonomy to adapt the curriculum, allowing them to cater to each student's unique learning requirements. This freedom extends to various facets of learning, including objectives, methods, materials, and assessment. Consequently, the independent curriculum shifts the learning process from a teacher-centered to a student-centered approach (Ningrum, 2023). Humanistic learning theory seeks to humanize education, with teachers and students as the primary beneficiaries. It grants students the freedom to choose what and how they want to learn based on their individual needs, emphasizing personal responsibility in the educational process. By engaging in meaningful learning, students cultivate critical thinking and innovative skills, allowing them to develop their creativity and critical thinking abilities (Herawati Aisyah, 2023).

The implementation of an independent curriculum, differentiated through a humanistic approach, represents an innovation in elementary education. This research explores the concept of independent learning, emphasizing that the curriculum should serve as an educational tool that accommodates the diversity of students, encompassing their physical attributes, psychological aspects, interests, and talents. Differentiated learning aids in gauging student understanding, helping teachers tailor instruction to individual needs. By providing these student-centric services, teachers can better identify learning difficulties and character traits, thus promoting the development of students, especially those facing challenges in their education. This innovation in differentiated learning within the independent curriculum allows teachers to employ a group-based system, such as Group A for high-achievers, Group B for those with average abilities, and Group C for students needing extra attention. Through this grouping, teachers can effectively evaluate and adapt to students' learning capabilities to attain educational goals.

## **METHOD**

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach, characterized by the depiction of the subject variable without comparisons or dependencies. The chosen research methodology is library research, which involves the systematic exploration of various sources such as books, scientific reports, essays, and electronic documents to gather relevant information, both in print and electronic form (Purwono). The primary sources of data and information in this research encompass books, journal articles, and conference proceedings as outlined in the bibliography. This approach maximizes the utilization of data and information sources to generate pertinent research ideas. Regarding data analysis techniques, the study involves formulating objectives, elucidating essential concepts, specifying the units under scrutiny, collecting pertinent data, and establishing logical or conceptual connections within the collected data to

present the findings. The research findings are presented in a descriptive manner aligned with the research problem and objectives (Anggraini, 2022).

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Independent Curriculum**

The Independent Curriculum represents a novel educational framework that has been sanctioned as an enhancement to the 2013 curriculum and the Emergency curriculum. This curriculum is slated for full implementation in 2024 following an evaluation of the K-13 curriculum. The Merdeka curriculum introduces a diversified intracurricular approach, aiming to optimize content depth and competency reinforcement. Teachers are afforded the flexibility to select various instructional tools, allowing them to tailor their teaching to the individual learning needs and interests of students. Projects designed to bolster the embodiment of the Pancasila student profile have been formulated based on government-determined themes. These projects do not have specific learning achievement targets, freeing them from content-related constraints (Mubarak, A. Z. 2022).

The curriculum serves as a blueprint for conducting educational activities, facilitating interactions between educators or teachers and students. It plays a central role in the educational process within schools, empowering students to unleash their potential (Maulana, 2020).

Independent learning emphasizes liberty and creative thinking. The advent of the Merdeka curriculum represents a reformation of Indonesia's national education system, enabling it to adapt to societal changes and technological advancements. This aligns with the broader vision and mission of Indonesian education, focusing on cultivating high-quality human resources capable of competing effectively across diverse fields. An independent curriculum should empower students to nurture their potential and skill sets (Fadhli, 2022).

### **Differentiated Learning**

Differentiated learning strategies in primary schools are implemented based on the diverse learning needs of students, encompassing three fundamental aspects: learning readiness, learning interests, and student profiles. Learning readiness refers to the initial capacity or readiness of students to grasp new concepts and materials. Learning interests pertain to engaging students with subject matter they find appealing and interesting, thereby fostering meaningful learning experiences. Student learning profiles encompass various facets such as cultural background, language, learning styles, and family circumstances that impact their learning preferences.

Santos, as cited by Herwina, suggests that differentiated learning strategies serve as an approach to the educational process aimed at enhancing students' creative behaviors. These strategies have been widely applied in the context of motor skill learning. Based

on research findings, it can be deduced that differentiated learning approaches offer several advantages, including: 1) Facilitating the development of various components of students' creativity. 2) Significantly reducing academic failures. 3) Promoting adaptive learning that accommodates students' diverse skill sets. 4) Fostering consistency in individual student behaviors within the classroom setting (Farid, 2022).

A differentiated teaching and learning process is one that allows students ample time and space to cultivate their creative potential. Through this process, student creativity is nurtured, encouraging them to pose questions, explore, and create. To unlock students' creative potential, teachers must conduct teaching and learning activities with consideration for several factors:

- a. Understanding student character
- b. Identifying student learning needs
- c. Develop individual and collaborative learning strategies
- d. Give confidence to students
- e. Develop the potential to think and the potential to solve problems

Each individual student has his or her own uniqueness in learning. Teachers in the teaching and learning process must be able to accommodate the various unique qualities possessed by individual students, so that the learning carried out can achieve the goal of learning, namely changes in human behavior. Differentiated learning must aim to meet needs. what students need when studying and what teachers do to meet students' learning needs (Aminuriyh, 2022) .

### **Humanistic Approach**

The humanistic approach represents an educational philosophy that stems from Humanism and contends that learning is not solely the enhancement of cognitive abilities; rather, it encompasses a holistic process involving all aspects of an individual—cognitive, affective, and psychomotor. Within the learning process, it focuses on nurturing the human values inherent in students for their development (Rotanga, 2023).

Rogers identified key components integral to a humanistic learning process. These components comprise a desire to learn, characterized by a profound curiosity that fuels the urge to learn; the meaningfulness of learning activities, where individuals evaluate whether an activity holds personal significance; the freedom to learn without fear of punishment; learning driven by personal initiative, involving choices between what is beneficial and what isn't; and the adaptability of learning and change, recognizing the evolving circumstances in which students must adjust and confront ongoing transformations (Maula, AR 2021).

The humanistic approach underscores students' capacity to enhance self-awareness, alleviate feelings of estrangement, and overcome detachment from their surroundings. It offers a solution to the growing detachment of education from social realities. Consequently, humanist education endeavors to restore education's connection with social realities by instilling social values into the educational process (Taufik, 2023). According to the humanistic psychology, teachers must acknowledge students as individuals replete with potential, interests, needs, aspirations, and the capability for comprehensive and meaningful self-development. This theory also underscores the idea that students can be valuable sources of their own learning, placing significant emphasis on active student participation in the learning process (Rosidah, 2023).

### **Innovation**

Innovation is often linked with change, and to attain desired educational objectives, it is imperative to regularly introduce updates or innovations that align with the demands of the contemporary era. Innovation typically progresses in harmony with human advancement, with the understanding that these changes will enhance the quality of education. An essential element within the realm of education is the curriculum. The curriculum must exhibit adaptability and dynamism, responding to shifts taking place in society, encompassing domains such as the business world and the employment sector (Kurniati, P. 2022).

Throughout the process of transformation, the scope of the curriculum extends beyond mere subject matter or academic disciplines. It now encompasses elements like learning activities, knowledge, educational experiences, and competencies (Mohammad, 2017). The essence of innovation in learning revolves around making sure that children find learning enjoyable, engaging, profound, and exciting. Researchers contend that a persistent issue in education is the lack of emphasis on children as active participants. While the world of children revolves around play, education has traditionally overlooked the integration of games into the learning process. Children represent the most creative stage in human life, yet the educational landscape has not sufficiently fostered opportunities for their creative development (Mutiara, 2020).

### **CONCLUSION**

Differentiated learning represents one of the strategies or approaches that educators can employ during the instructional process to foster students' talents, pique their interests, and promote their learning progression. Within the framework of the Merdeka curriculum, this approach significantly contributes to students' academic and character development, albeit under the guidance of teachers who align the educational process with predefined learning objectives. Notably, parental involvement in students' learning and character development is an essential aspect, as it facilitates communication and enables teachers to gain insights into students' personalities and educational advancement. The humanistic approach employed here simplifies mutual acquaintance

and effective communication among students and their surroundings.

Effective communication, involving students, teachers, and the learning environment, significantly enhances a student's learning progression. Before the introduction of differentiated learning, educators primarily concentrated on ensuring that students achieved the Minimum Competency Criteria (KKM). This approach often presented challenges in addressing the learning difficulties faced by some students, despite the dedicated efforts of teachers. In such cases, students' progress remained limited. However, the independent curriculum streamlines the teaching process by employing distinct phases, such as Phase A, Phase B, and Phase C. Consequently, students are provided with the opportunity to develop according to their individual capabilities. Furthermore, differentiated learning allows students to advance at a pace commensurate with their abilities, rendering the teaching process more accessible for educators.

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