

CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT OF EDUCATIONAL UNITS (KSP) AT THE ELEMENTARY/MI LEVEL IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE INDEPENDENT CURRICULUM: LITERATURE STUDY

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Abstract

This article aims to systematically examine the development of the Education Unit Curriculum (KSP) at the elementary/middle school level in the context of the implementation of the Independent Curriculum. This research uses a literature study method by examining various relevant national and international sources, especially reputable scientific publications in the last ten years. The results of the study show that the Curriculum of the Education Unit has a strategic role as an instrument that bridges national curriculum policies with contextual learning practices at the level of educational units. The effective development and implementation of the Education Unit Curriculum is influenced by several key factors, including the competence of teachers as learning designers, the leadership of school principals as learning leaders, collaborative culture in the school environment, and sustainable curriculum reflection and evaluation mechanisms. In addition, the Curriculum of the Education Unit provides a space of autonomy for schools to integrate student characteristics, local potential, and character and religious values into learning. However, this study also identified a number of challenges, such as the limitation of teacher capacity and the tendency of the Curriculum of the Education Unit to become an administrative document if it is not supported by systematic mentoring and evaluation. The findings of this literature study are expected to make a conceptual contribution to strengthening school-based curriculum development practices and become a reference for policy makers and basic education practitioners in optimizing the implementation of KSP in elementary and secondary schools.

Keywords: Curriculum of the Education Unit, Independent Curriculum, Ibtidaiyah Elementary School/Madrasah



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INTRODUCTION

Changes in education policy in Indonesia in the last decade require educational units to be more adaptive to the needs of students and the times, one of which is through the implementation of the Independent Curriculum which emphasizes flexibility, contextuality, and student-centered learning.¹ The implementation of the Independent Curriculum provides greater autonomy to schools to develop the curriculum in accordance with the characteristics, potentials, and needs of the learning environment of each educational unit.

Within the framework of the Independent Curriculum, the Curriculum of the Education Unit (KSP) is a strategic document that serves as the main guideline in planning, implementing, and evaluating learning at the school level.² The curriculum of the Education Unit not only contains the curriculum structure and teaching tools, but also reflects the vision, mission, and values that the educational unit wants to develop in a sustainable manner.³ In addition, the international literature emphasizes that locally contextualized curriculum documents can improve the relevance of student learning and learning outcomes more effectively, particularly when they are equipped with clear monitoring and feedback mechanisms.⁴ Cross-country research also shows that curriculum autonomy at the school level must be balanced with increasing the professional capacity of educators and consistent policy support so that curriculum innovation does not cause quality disparities between schools.⁵

At the Elementary School (SD) and Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI) levels, the development of the Curriculum of the Education Unit has a very important role because basic education is the main foundation in the formation of students' character, attitudes, and learning skills.⁶ The curriculum of the Education Unit in Elementary / MI is expected to be able to integrate learning outcomes, strengthening the Pancasila Student Profile, local content, and religious values in a holistic and contextual manner.⁷ The international literature adds that a contextual and competency-oriented curriculum approach can improve the relevance of children's learning and learning outcomes in the

¹ Kemendikbudristek, *Panduan Pelaksanaan Asesmen Diagnostik Pada Kurikulum Merdeka* (Jakarta: Direktorat Jenderal Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini, Pendidikan Dasar, dan Menengah, 2022).

² Joko Widodo, Indrianto Setyo Basori, and Erwin Hari Kurniawan, *Penyusunan Kurikulum Operasional Sekolah (KOS) Di Sekolah Penggerak* (Malang: Ahli Media Press, 2022).

³ Hasanuddin et al., *Perencanaan Pembelajaran: Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar* (Sada Kurnia Pustaka, 2022).

⁴ OECD, "Curriculum Flexibility and Autonomy: Promoting a Thriving Learning Environment," OECD, OECD Publishing, August 18, 2024, <https://doi.org/10.1787/eccbbac2-en>.

⁵ World Bank, *Education Reform and School-Based Curriculum Development* (World Bank Publications, 2022).

⁶ Miftahul Jannah, Indah Mutia, and Luthfia Hikmah, "Pengembangan Kurikulum Berbasis Pendidikan Karakter Pada Madrasah Ibtidaiyah," *Al-Furqan: Jurnal Agama, Sosial, Dan Budaya* 3, no. 3 (2024).

⁷ Akhmad Zaeni et al., *Kurikulum Merdeka Pada Pembelajaran Di Madrasah* (Pekalongan: Penerbit NEM, 2023).

early stages of education.⁸ In addition, international guidance on curriculum transformation emphasizes the importance of local adjustments and capacity support for teachers and principals in order for curriculum changes to result in meaningful learning practices.⁹

However, various studies show that the implementation of the Education Unit Curriculum in the field still faces a number of challenges, such as limited teachers' understanding in compiling Learning Objectives and teaching modules, inequality in infrastructure facilities, and low stakeholder participation in curriculum development. This condition has the potential to cause the Education Unit Curriculum to only function as an administrative document without having a significant impact on improving the quality of learning. Cross-country findings suggest that curriculum autonomy at the school level needs to be balanced by focused teacher professional development programs, clear monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, and consistent policy support to prevent widening gaps between schools. In addition, studies on school-based curriculum development highlight the need for active collaboration between schools, parents, and local stakeholders to ensure local content and religious values are implemented in a relevant and inclusive manner.¹⁰

In addition, the variation in school characteristics between elementary and secondary schools also affects the quality of the development and implementation of the Education Unit Curriculum, especially in the integration of religious values and local wisdom that is characteristic of madrasah-based basic education.¹¹ Therefore, a comprehensive understanding of the concepts, principles, components, and strategies for the development of the Education Unit Curriculum is needed so that it can be implemented effectively and in accordance with the context of the educational unit.

Based on these conditions, the main problems that arise are how the concepts and principles of the development of the Education Unit Curriculum are understood in the context of elementary and secondary education, how the components of the Education Unit Curriculum are designed and implemented within the framework of the Independent Curriculum, and what factors affect the success and obstacles to its implementation at the education unit level. The formulation of this problem is important to be studied in depth so that the development of the Education Unit

⁸ OECD, "Curriculum Flexibility and Autonomy."

⁹ "Transforming the Curriculum | International Bureau of Education," UNESCO, accessed June 25, 2026, <https://www.ibe.unesco.org/en/node/196>.

¹⁰ Der-Thanq Chen, Li-Yi Wang, and Wei-Leng Neo, "School-Based Curriculum Development Towards a Culture of Learning: Nonlinearity in Practice," *British Journal of Educational Studies* 63, no. 2 (April 2015), <https://doi.org/10.1080/00071005.2015.1034236>.

¹¹ Dede Abdul Hakim, "Internalisasi Nilai-Nilai Pendidikan Agama Islam Melalui Metode Pembiasaan Siswa Madrasah Ibtidaiyah," *COMSERVA: Jurnal Penelitian Dan Pengabdian Masyarakat* 1, no. 12 (April 2022), <https://doi.org/10.59141/comserva.v1i12.197>.

Curriculum is not only normative, but is able to answer the real needs of schools and students in a contextual and sustainable manner.¹²

In line with the formulation of the problem, this article aims to systematically examine the development of the Curriculum of Education Units (KSP) at the elementary/middle school level in the implementation of the Independent Curriculum through the literature study method. This study is focused on the analysis of concepts, principles, components, challenges, and strategies for the development of the Education Unit Curriculum based on the findings of relevant research, both national and international, so that it is expected to provide a conceptual and practical picture that can be a reference for educators, school principals, and policy makers in improving the quality of basic education in a sustainable manner.¹³

RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses a qualitative approach with a literature *review method* which aims to systematically and comprehensively examine various scientific sources that are relevant to the development of the Curriculum of Educational Units (KSP) at the elementary/MI level in the implementation of the Independent Curriculum. The literature study method was chosen because it allows researchers to identify, analyze, and synthesize previous research findings in order to gain an in-depth conceptual understanding of the phenomenon of curriculum development in primary education without involving direct field data collection.¹⁴

The data sources in this study are in the form of secondary data obtained from various reputable scientific publications, including articles from SINTA-accredited national journals, reputable international journals, academic books, scientific proceedings, and official reports of national and international institutions relevant to the curriculum and basic education. The literature analyzed is limited to publications of the last ten years for national sources and the last five years for international sources to ensure the novelty, relevance, and validity of the studies conducted.

Data collection was carried out through systematic literature search using keywords such as Education Unit Curriculum, Independent Curriculum, school-based curriculum, and primary education. The search was carried out through online databases such as Google Scholar, SINTA, national journal portals, and the official website of international institutions. Each source obtained is then selected based on the criteria of topic relevance, publisher reputation, year of publication,

¹² OECD, *Curriculum Flexibility and Student Learning Outcomes* (OECD Publishing, 2021).

¹³ Nana Syaodih Sukmadinata, *Pengembangan Kurikulum: Teori Dan Praktik*, 1st ed. (Bandung: Remaja Rosdakarya, 2019).

¹⁴ John W. Creswell and Cheryl N. Poth, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches* (SAGE Publications, 2018); H. Snyder, *Literature Review as a Research Methodology: An Overview and Guidelines*, in *Journal of Business Research*, vol. 104 (2019), <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2019.07.039>.

and suitability with the research objectives so that the data used really supports the focus of the study.¹⁵

Data analysis is carried out through content *analysis* with the stages of identifying and classifying the literature according to the focus of the study, reducing data by selecting relevant information, and synthesizing research findings to find patterns, similarities, and differences between studies. The results of the analysis are then presented in the form of a structured conceptual narrative to provide a complete picture of the concepts, principles, components, challenges, and strategies for the development and implementation of KSP in SD/MI.¹⁶

The validity of the data in this study is maintained through triangulation of sources, which is comparing findings from various types of literature and different authors' perspectives. In addition, the researcher conducts a critical review of each source used and ensures that the literature comes from credible and reputable sources to minimize interpretation bias and increase confidence in the results of the study.¹⁷

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the results of a review of various relevant national and international literature, the development of the Curriculum of Education Units (KSP) at the elementary/middle school level in the implementation of the Independent Curriculum shows a number of key findings related to conceptual, implementive, and impact aspects on learning practices in basic education units. The results of the literature review show that the Education Unit Curriculum is understood by most schools as a strategic instrument that functions to bridge national curriculum policies with learning practices at the education unit level, so as to allow for contextual curriculum adjustments in accordance with the characteristics of students, socio-cultural conditions, and the potential of the school environment. The curriculum of the Education Unit plays an important role in strengthening school autonomy while encouraging the creation of learning that is more relevant and responsive to the needs of students in basic education.

From a conceptual perspective, the Curriculum of the Education Unit is positioned as a dynamic and reflective curriculum document, not just as an administrative completeness, but as a pedagogical foundation for teachers in designing, implementing, and evaluating learning.

¹⁵ Barbara A. Kitchenham, David Budgen, and O. Pearl Brereton, "Using Mapping Studies as the Basis for Further Research – A Participant-Observer Case Study," *Information and Software Technology*, Special Section: Best papers from the APSEC, vol. 53, no. 6 (June 2011), <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.infsof.2010.12.011>.

¹⁶ Matthew B. Miles, A. Michael Huberman, and Johnny Saldana, *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook* (USA: SAGE Publications, 2013).

¹⁷ Sugiyono, *Metode Penelitian Kuantitatif, Kualitatif, Dan R&D*, Edisi 2, Cetakan 29 (Bandung: Alfabeta, 2022).

Elementary schools that prepare the Curriculum of the Education Unit collaboratively between principals, teachers, and stakeholders have clarity in the direction of learning and stronger consistency between curriculum planning and implementation. The level of teachers' understanding of the structure and components of the Education Unit Curriculum has a significant effect on the quality of the teaching modules, the flow of learning objectives, and the suitability of the learning strategy with the set learning outcomes. In addition, the Education Unit Curriculum that is developed in a participatory manner is able to increase teachers' sense of ownership of the curriculum, which ultimately has a positive impact on commitment and innovation in learning in the classroom.

In terms of implementation, the results of national research show that there is a variation in the success rate of the implementation of KSP in elementary / MI which is influenced by differences in school readiness, teacher capacity, and managerial support of school principals. Schools that receive intensive assistance and continuous training tend to be better able to translate the Education Unit Curriculum documents into real learning practices than schools that only rely on initial socialization. The success of the implementation of the Education Unit Curriculum is not only determined by the quality of the curriculum documents, but also by the process of strengthening teacher competence in an ongoing manner. The active involvement of school principals as instructional leaders plays a strategic role in building a culture of reflection, collaboration, and learning innovation based on the Education Unit Curriculum, so that teachers are more encouraged to implement differentiated learning according to the needs of students.

The results of the study also show that the implementation of the Education Unit Curriculum has a positive impact on learning practices in the classroom, especially in increasing the flexibility of learning strategies, the use of local contexts, and the active participation of students in the learning process. KSP in elementary schools encourages teachers to be more creative in integrating the surrounding environment and students' real experiences as learning resources, so that learning becomes more meaningful and contextual. These findings are reinforced by other national research showing that the Education Unit Curriculum encourages the use of active learning approaches and problem-based projects that are able to improve the critical and collaborative thinking skills of primary school students. Internationally, school-based curriculum that provides adaptation space for teachers contributes positively to student engagement, the quality of learning interactions, and the improvement of learning outcomes in basic education.

However, various literature also identifies a number of challenges in the development and implementation of the Curriculum of Education Units in Elementary and Secondary Education that are structural and cultural in nature. The limitation of teachers' competence in curriculum planning is still a major obstacle, especially in compiling assessments that are in line with learning outcomes

and student characteristics. The challenge of using the results of curriculum evaluation as the basis for continuous improvement of the Education Unit Curriculum is so that curriculum development tends to be stagnant and not fully based on empirical reflection. In addition, the high administrative burden of teachers also affects the limited time and energy of teachers in developing the Education Unit Curriculum in a deep and innovative manner.

In addition to competency and administrative factors, the aspect of school culture also has a significant effect on the success of the implementation of the Education Unit Curriculum. Schools with weak collaborative cultures tend to have difficulty aligning curriculum vision with classroom learning practices. On the other hand, schools that are able to build a professional learning community show a more adaptive and sustainable process of developing the Education Unit Curriculum. Collaboration between teachers, joint reflection, and participatory leadership support are key factors in maintaining the sustainability of the school-based curriculum implementation.

Thus, the results of this study show that the success of the development and implementation of the Education Unit Curriculum cannot be separated from the readiness of human resources, school leadership support, collaborative culture, and continuous evaluation mechanisms within the education unit. International studies confirm that curriculum autonomy at the school level will be effective if it is accompanied by strengthening the professional capacity of teachers, a continuous mentoring system, and consistent supporting policies.¹⁸ In this context, the development of the Curriculum of Education Units in Elementary / MI needs to be understood as a dynamic process that continues to develop through cycles of planning, implementation, reflection, and continuous improvement, so as to be able to answer the real challenges of basic education and improve the quality of learning contextually and continuously.¹⁹

Based on the results of the literature synthesis that has been presented previously, the development and implementation of the Education Unit Curriculum (KSP) at the elementary/middle school level also shows important implications for strengthening the role of teachers as curriculum designers at the education unit level. A number of national studies reveal that the Curriculum of the Education Unit encourages teachers to no longer rely entirely on central curriculum documents, but to actively adapt the curriculum according to the learning needs of students and the context of their respective schools. This change in role requires increasing the professional capacity of teachers, especially in learning planning, developing teaching modules, and implementing authentic assessments that are in line with learning outcomes.

¹⁸ Andy Hargreaves and Michael T. O'Connor, *Collaborative Professionalism: When Teaching Together Means Learning for All*, 1st ed. (Thousand Oaks, California: Corwin Press, 2018).

¹⁹ Linda Darling-Hammond, Lisa Flook, and Channa M. Cook-Harvey, *Preparing Teachers for Deeper Learning* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press, 2021); Andreas Schleicher, *World Class: How to Build a 21st-Century School System*, Revised Edition (Paris: OECD Publishing, 2023).

In addition, the development of the Education Unit Curriculum also has implications for strengthening the integration of character values, local content, and religious values in learning in elementary / MI. The Education Unit Curriculum provides a wider space for elementary schools and madrasah ibtidaiyah to integrate local wisdom and religious values into the learning process systematically. The integration of character values and local content through the Education Unit Curriculum contributes positively to the formation of social attitudes, independence, and responsibility of students in primary education.

From the perspective of education management, the Education Unit Curriculum also functions as a strategic instrument in strengthening curriculum governance at the school level, especially in integrating academic planning, learning implementation, and curriculum evaluation in an integrated manner. Schools that use the Curriculum of the Education Unit as the basis for academic decision-making tend to have more targeted learning planning, a clear division of roles between educators, and a more systematic and sustainable curriculum evaluation system. Furthermore, other national research shows that the Curriculum of the Education Unit can be a reference in the preparation of academic supervision programs and professional development of teachers, so that the management of the curriculum does not run partially, but is coordinated in one school framework. This is in line with international studies that emphasize that school-based curriculum management is able to increase coherence between school policies, learning practices, and student learning outcomes when supported by visionary, participatory leadership, and data-driven decision-making systems.²⁰

Furthermore, the results of the study show that the sustainability of the implementation of the Education Unit Curriculum is greatly influenced by the existence of a mechanism for reflection and evaluation of the curriculum that is carried out systematically and continuously at the level of the educational unit. Evaluation of the Education Unit Curriculum which is carried out periodically and based on data is able to help schools identify implementation weaknesses, gaps between learning planning and practice, and formulate improvement strategies that are more targeted. Collective reflection on the curriculum through teacher forums and school academic meetings contributes positively to improving the consistency of curriculum implementation.

Schools that integrate the results of the evaluation of the Education Unit Curriculum into the annual school program planning tend to be more adaptive in responding to policy changes and students' learning needs. The evaluation of the Education Unit Curriculum not only functions as an administrative control tool, but also as a means of organizational learning for schools in developing

²⁰ OECD, *Curriculum Flexibility and Student Learning Outcomes*; Tony Bush, "Instructional Leadership and Leadership for Learning," *Educational Management Administration & Leadership* 48, no. 4 (2020), <https://doi.org/10.1177/1741143219866431>.

more effective learning practices. On the other hand, without a continuous and reflective evaluation, the Curriculum of the Education Unit has the potential to become a static document that is formalistic and has little real impact on improving the quality of learning in elementary / MI.

Therefore, the development and implementation of the Curriculum of the Education Unit (KSP) at the elementary/middle school level is a complex process that involves pedagogical, managerial, and cultural dimensions at the level of educational units. The curriculum of the Education Unit has proven to have great potential in encouraging contextual, flexible, and student-oriented learning when supported by adequate teacher competence, effective school leadership, collaborative culture, and a sustainable curriculum evaluation system. The results of this study also show that the Education Unit Curriculum acts as a link between the national curriculum policy and classroom learning practices, so its existence is crucial in ensuring that the implementation of the Independent Curriculum runs contextually and adaptively in elementary / MI.

Furthermore, the findings of this study indicate that the success of the Education Unit Curriculum is highly determined by the school's ability to build synergy between educators, optimize the role of the principal as a learning leader, and utilize the results of curriculum reflection and evaluation as the basis for academic decision-making. Without collective commitment and a sustainable capacity building mechanism, the Education Unit Curriculum has the potential to become just an administrative document that has little impact on improving the quality of learning. Therefore, the development and implementation of the Education Unit Curriculum needs to be seen as a dynamic and sustainable process that requires the active involvement of all education stakeholders in order to make a real contribution to improving the quality of basic education in elementary and secondary schools within the framework of the Independent Curriculum.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the literature review that has been carried out, it can be concluded that the development and implementation of the Education Unit Curriculum (KSP) at the elementary/middle school level is a key element in the successful implementation of the Independent Curriculum at the education unit level. The curriculum of the Education Unit functions not only as a curriculum planning document, but also as a strategic instrument that bridges national curriculum policies with contextual learning practices in the classroom. Through the Education Unit Curriculum, schools have autonomy to adjust learning objectives, learning strategies, and assessments to the characteristics of students, environmental potential, and the vision of the educational unit. The results of the study show that the success of the development and implementation of the Education Unit Curriculum is greatly influenced by the readiness and competence of teachers in designing learning, the leadership of the principal as a learning leader,

and the collaborative culture built in the school environment. Teachers play an important role as curriculum designers who are able to translate the Education Unit Curriculum into meaningful learning, while the principal plays a strategic role in coordinating, accompanying, and ensuring the sustainability of the implementation of the Education Unit Curriculum. In addition, collaboration between educators through professional learning communities has been proven to strengthen the consistency and quality of curriculum implementation in elementary and secondary schools.

This study also emphasizes the importance of a mechanism for continuous reflection and evaluation of the curriculum as an integral part of the development of the Education Unit Curriculum. Systematic and data-driven evaluations allow schools to identify gaps between learning planning and implementation and formulate sustainable improvements. Without a reflective evaluation, the Curriculum of the Education Unit has the potential to become an administrative document that has little impact on improving the quality of learning. Thus, the development and implementation of the Education Unit Curriculum at the elementary/middle school level needs to be understood as a dynamic and sustainable process that involves all education stakeholders. The findings of this literature review make a conceptual contribution to strengthening school-based curriculum development practices and become the basis for further research to examine the implementation of the Education Unit Curriculum empirically in various contexts of basic education units and Madrasah Ibtidaiyah.

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