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DEVELOPMENT OF INDEPENDENT CURRICULUM BASED ON FAITH GROWTH AND SOFT SKILLS IN CHRISTIAN PRESCHOOLS IN MALANG RAYA

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ABSTRACT

The consequences of every curriculum change are always followed by the complexity of the problem. Educational units must re-adapt and fulfill their supporting facilities. Therefore, the theme of curriculum development is important to study. Likewise, the problems faced by Christian PAUD institutions in the Malang Raya area. Based on the results of the PAUD Teacher Working Group (MKKG) Deliberation throughout Malang Raya (August 8, 2023), it is necessary to develop a special curriculum for PAUD. The purpose of research and development is to produce a product in the form of an empirically tested Independent Curriculum Based on Faith Growth and Life Skills (soft skills) for PAUD. This study uses a procedural Research & Development (R&D) design by adapting the 10 steps of Borg & Gall. The results of the study showed that the assessment by design experts, the percentage of validity was 87.50% (Very Valid) with the test decision that it can be used. The percentage of content experts' validity was 81.25% (Very Valid) with the test decision that it can be used. User validation was 83.33%, the test decision was interesting and in accordance with the learning environment. The percentage of observation data is 90%, based on the level of observation success, the level of success is very good.

Keywords: *Merdeka curriculum, faith growth, life skills*

BACKGROUND

The curriculum always develops along with the advancement of science and technology. According to the old view, the curriculum is a collection of subjects that must be delivered by teachers and must be learned by students, "a racecourse of subject matters to be mastered", is the most traditional description of the curriculum to describe the curriculum as a material to form a framework for the material taught (A., 2023). This means that the curriculum is an absolute requirement for education in achieving its goals, as well as a guideline in implementing learning at all types and levels of education. In the context of education in Indonesia, Law No. 20 of 2003, defines the curriculum as a set of plans and regulations regarding the objectives, content, and learning materials as well as procedures used as guidelines for organizing learning activities to achieve certain educational goals.

Since the beginning of independence until 1975, the curriculum in Indonesia has often changed. In 1984 and 1994 it was called the Active Student Learning Method (CBSA) curriculum, in 2004 it changed to the Competency-Based Curriculum (KBK), then in 2006 the Education Unit Level Curriculum (KTSP) was implemented, in 2013 it changed to K-13 or Curriculum 2013. The latest change is the Merdeka Curriculum which is still in the transition stage, this is an effort by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Kemdikbudristek) to overcome the learning crisis that occurred after the COVID-19 pandemic (Laksono & Izzulka, 2022).

The Independent Curriculum is a curriculum with diverse intra curricular learning where the content will be more optimal so that students have enough time to explore concepts and strengthen competencies. Teachers have the freedom to choose various teaching tools so that learning can be adjusted to the learning needs and interests of students (Cholilah, Tatuwo, Komariah, & Rosdiana, 2023). The project to strengthen the achievement of the Pancasila student profile is developed based on

a specific theme set by the government. The project is not directed to achieve a specific learning achievement target so it is not tied to subject content (Widyastuti, 2022). Meanwhile, in K-13, the use of scientific approaches and authentic assessments is more emphasized, referring to student-centered learning activities, while the teacher's task is only to be a facilitator who directs and guides students to find the concepts that must be mastered, while authentic assessments lead to empowering students' diverse abilities, in addition to assessing attitudes and behavior in everyday life. Meanwhile, strengthening Character Education, literacy, 21st century skills (Creative, Critical thinking, Communicative, and Collaborative), and (4) HOTS (Higher Order Thinking Skill), are integrated into learning themes (Revision of the 2013 Curriculum in 2017) (Surya, 2017).

The consequences of every curriculum change are always followed by the complexity of problems in the field. Educational units must re-adapt and fulfill their supporting facilities. Therefore, curriculum development themes are very interesting and important to study because during the transition period there will definitely be many obstacles in their implementation. Likewise, the problems faced by PAUD institutions in the Malang Raya area. Based on the results of the PAUD Teacher Working Group (MKKG) Deliberation throughout Malang Raya (August 8, 2023), it is necessary to develop a special curriculum for PAUD as a response to the change in the new learning paradigm known as the "Independent Learning" era (Wardhani & Rahardjo, 2022).

The 21st century learning skills are often referred to as the 4 C's: critical thinking, creative thinking, communication, and collaboration. These skills will help students in their lifelong learning, and they are essential to teach children at an early age, so that they have success in school and in their future. Overall, the 4 C's of Learning skills can be considered as a foundation that supports the development of soft skills. Soft skills enable someone to innovate and have the ability to adapt, soft skills are also closely related to creative skills (Kuncoro, Handayani, & Suprihatin, 2022). One of the components of 4C is creativity, a person's ability to be creative, will involve the ability to think so that they are able to think outside the box, produce new solutions, and have innovative views.

In this Merdeka Belajar era, if teachers instill soft skill learning since early childhood, this learning will encourage children to have the ability to communicate, have career adaptability, have a leadership attitude, have an innovative spirit and be able to collaborate. The soft skill culture if instilled by teachers and started early will help children face their future better (Olugbenga & Oluwatosin, 2022).

In the context of existing limitations, PAUD under the auspices of the Malang Raya Christian Education Foundation considers it necessary to develop an Independent Curriculum that is filled with Christian Religious Education values in addition to life skills (soft skills) that have become an integral part of the goals of early childhood education. This was sparked in a discussion of Christian PAUD teachers throughout Malang Raya (September 4, 2023) which was held at the OASIS Playgroup in Malang City. The results of the discussion concluded the importance of instilling Christian faith values from an early age such as the messages in the Bible.

"Educate a young person according to the path that is appropriate for him, so that when he is old he will not deviate from that path." A great task is delegated specifically to parents and teachers who teach children, to teach them wisdom, so that wisdom does not die with them. Educate young people while they are still inexperienced, to protect them from sin and the trap of sin. A good reason to educate children during their youth is the extraordinary benefits that will be obtained after taking the trouble to raise children.

Based on the problem of changing learning paradigms in the Independent Curriculum era and the needs of Christian PAUD throughout Malang Raya, research and development are needed to produce a product in the form of an Independent Curriculum Based on Faith Growth and Soft Skills in Christian preschools in Malang Raya that has been empirically tested.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a procedural Research & Development (R&D) design. According to Hamzah, the procedural development model is very relevant for use in educational development projects, namely the research process used to develop and validate products in the form of material objects, such as textbooks, educational films, etc., including preparing procedures and processes, such as teaching methods and methods of organizing learning (Hamzah, 2021).

Next, Hamzah adapted Borg & Gall's 10 steps, namely (1) research and information collecting, consisting of needs analysis, library research, small-scale literature, and various reports needed to

support the implementation of development research, (2) planning, compiling a research plan, covering various things needed in research. (3) develop preliminary from of product, activities to determine the design of the product to be developed, determine the facilities and infrastructure, the design testing stage in the field, and determine the job descriptions of the parties involved, (4) preliminary field testing, testing the product on a limited basis while conducting interviews, observations, and distributing questionnaires to determine the level of product suitability, (5) main product revision, implementation of product revision and improvement, (6) main field testing, product improvement test so that the product becomes more perfect, (7) operational product revision, product improvement based on the results of the main field test, the second improvement after a wider field test (8) operational field testing, conducting extensive trials covering the effectiveness and adaptability of the product and design, (9) Final product revision, final improvement of the product being developed based on the results of large-scale trials, 10) Dissemination and implementation, publication and implementation of the product (Hamzah, 2019).

The research was conducted in Christian Preschool throughout Malang Raya, including Malang City (14 PAUD), Malang Regency (8 PAUD) and Batu City (1 PAUD). The reason for choosing the research location was based on the needs of Christian PAUDs throughout Malang Raya which emerged in the MKKG meeting, that Christian PAUDs throughout Malang Raya do not yet have Independent Curriculum guidelines. It is hoped that the results of the development can meet the needs and be the answer to the problems of PAUD teachers throughout Malang Raya. In addition, Malang Raya is an area that is one of the references for the development of the national education world.

Qualitative and quantitative data types are used in this research and development. Quantitative data is used to obtain expert validation data, product appeal/attraction response data to teachers and product effectiveness obtained through small-scale trials and large-scale trials, while qualitative data is used to obtain data in the form of responses and suggestions from design experts, content experts, and curriculum experts.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

This research and development uses quantitative and quantitative data analysis. Quantitative data analysis is obtained from expert and teacher validation questionnaires and children's performance results. While qualitative data analysis is obtained through expert responses and interview results, and field observations.

Data in the form of numbers obtained through the distribution of Likert scale questionnaires to design experts, content experts, and curriculum experts. Measurement of data presented in a Likert scale for expert validation is presented in the following Table

Table 1: Likert Scale

Score	Assessment
4	Strongly Agree (SS)
3	Agree (S)
2	Disagree (KS)
1	Disagree (TS)

Source: (Sugiyono, 2019)

The data obtained from design experts, content experts, and curriculum experts are then presented in percentages as shown in the validation results percentage formula figure.

$$Yes=\frac{TSp}{TSm}\times 100\%$$

Likert Scale Percentage Formula

Source: Akbar in (Rizki, Mastuang, & M, 2022)

Information:

Yes =Validity percentage by expert
Tsm = Total maximum expected score
TSp = total validation result score

To determine the level of validity of design experts, content experts, and curriculum experts, the following table criteria are used.

Table 2: Likert Scale Validity Criteria

No	Validity Criteria	Validity Level
1.	01.00% - 50.00%	Invalid and unusable.
2.	50.01% – 70.00%	Less valid and needs major improvement.
3.	70.01% - 85.00%	Quite valid and usable but needs improvement.
4.	85.01% - 100.0-%	Very valid and can be used without any improvements.

Adapted from Akbar in (Rizki et al., 2022)

Meanwhile, for user validation, namely to teachers to find out the level of product attractiveness and suitability with the environment, which is obtained through the distribution of Guttman scale questionnaires. Measurement of data presented in the Guttman scale for user validation is presented in the following table.

Table 3: Guttman Scale Table

Answer	Score of the question	
	Positive	Negative
Yes	1	0
No	0	1

Source: (Martina Pakpahan, Aminuddin, 2022)

Respondents' answers to each positive statement, for a yes answer, the answer score is 1, and for a no answer, the answer score is 0. While for each negative statement, for a yes answer, the answer score is 0 and for a no answer, the answer score is 1. The data obtained from users is then presented as a percentage as shown in the validation result percentage formula image.

$$P=\frac{\sum f}{N}\times 100\%$$

Guttman Scale Percentage Formula

Source: (Sugiyono, 2019)

Information:

P = Percentage
$\sum f$ = Frequency of selected answer
N = Total score
100% = Constants

The technique used to analyze data from children's activities using descriptive statistics to determine the average development and abilities of children. Activities are considered successful if the child reaches the minimum completion criteria (KKM), while classically it is considered complete if 80% of students succeed. To calculate the data using the formula in the following Figure.

$$Complete\ Learning = \frac{banyak\ siswa\ yang\ tuntas}{banyak\ siswa\ seluruhnya}\times 100\%$$

Classical Learning Completion Formula

Source: (Hamzah, 2019)

Table 4: Observed Score

Score	Assessment
4	All students demonstrated the observed aspects
3	Most of the students showed the observed aspects
2	Half of the students showed the observed aspects
1	A small number or no students demonstrated the observed aspects.

Source: adapted from (Ngalim Purwanto, 2014)

The obtained observation data is then presented using the formula:

$$Percentage\ of\ Average\ Value\ (NR) = \frac{jumlah\ skor}{skor\ maksimal}\times 100\%$$

Criticism and suggestions from design experts, content experts, and model experts, interview results, and field observation results are qualitative data processed using qualitative analysis that can be used as a reference for improving the products being researched and developed.

Data Collection Instruments

Data collection using validation sheets where validation data is used as a guideline for improving the developed product. The following is a grid of validation instruments for content experts, design experts and curriculum experts, field observation instruments, and teacher validation instruments.

a. Grid of needs analysis instrument

Table 5: School Needs Analysis Instrument

No	Aspect	Indicator
	Curriculum	1. The curriculum commonly used in PAUD. 2. The appeal of the faith growth curriculum. 3. The appeal of life skills curriculum 4. The need for innovation in the Independent Curriculum
	Constraint	1. Obstacles in implementing activities in PAUD

b. Expert validation instrument grid

Table 6: Expert Design Validation Questionnaire Instrument

No.	Aspect	Indicator
1.	Curriculum Design	1. Suitability of the needs of PAUD-age children 2. Conformity to the realm of faith growth 3. Compliance with children's life skills. 4. Have an easy assessment system in the learning process.

Table 7: Expert Validation Questionnaire Instrument Grid Content

No.	Aspect	Indicator
1.	Teaching materials	1. conformity to the growth of faith and life skills 2. can achieve the expected rainfall. 3. completeness of curriculum components 4. sequence of children's learning activities
2.	Competence	1. conformity to the expected objectives. 2. accuracy with the stages of faith growth 3. accuracy with children's life skills 4. contains learning experiences that are appropriate to the objectives.
3.	Efficiency	1. learning activities are easy to implement 2. make it easierstudents do a demonstration 3. conformity to the characteristics of PAUD children 4. attract children's interest in learning

Table 8: Curriculum expert validation questionnaire instrument grid

No.	Aspect	Indicator
1.	Curriculum Standards	1. Have systematic work steps. 2. Relevant to the needs of PAUD-aged children. 3. Bringing forth growing faith 4. Bringing out life skills attitudes 5. Evaluation is easy to do.
2.	Curriculum Effectiveness	1. Enhance children's faith growth. 2. Bringing out a soft skill attitude 3. Bringing up a sense of tolerance. 4. Flexible implementation.

c. User validation instrument grid

Table 9: Teacher Validation Questionnaire Instrument Grid

No.	Aspect	Indicator
1.	Convenience and suitability	1. Easy to implement in learning. 2. Meeting the needs of children's faith development

		3. Fulfilling children's life skills. 4. Meet the standards of the Independent Curriculum concept
2.	School environment	1. Compliance with the facilities and infrastructure owned by the school 2. Conformity to the social system at school 3. Suitability to school conditions.
3.	Character	1. Train children's activity 2. Practice cooperation. 3. Increase interest in studying Christianity. 4. Increase the attitude of tolerance. 5. Developing self-confidence.

DISCUSSION

Initial field studies

Based on the results of an open-ended questionnaire distributed to Christian PAUD teachers in three places in the Malang Raya area, information was obtained regarding the implementation of learning, that teachers felt there were many obstacles in implementing the Independent Curriculum because the existing instructions were still very abstract. Furthermore, all teachers agreed to the development of the Independent Curriculum.

Planning

Product development draft

The product development draft contains the development of the Independent Curriculum based on faith growth and life skills, which consists of a discussion of the product background, problem formulation, specifications, the importance of the product, the scope and limitations of product development, operational definitions, along with an attachment of the learning implementation plan in the form of RPP. The product development draft will be used as a consideration for expert validation and teachers as users.

Initial product development is carried out based on the planning stage for the product to be developed, the next step is product development. In the initial section there are curriculum components which contain: (1) objectives, (2) teaching materials, (3) learning process, and (4) evaluation and assessment.

Initial Field Trials

Initial field trials were conducted by validating the product to three experts, namely design experts, content experts, and curriculum experts to determine the level of validity of the product being developed. After the product was declared feasible, a small-scale test was conducted at PAUD OASIS Malang Jalan Bukit Dieng Permai MH 1 Kelurahan Pisang Candi Kecamatan Sukun Kota Malang. Then continued to the teacher as user validation to determine the level of product attractiveness.

Expert validation assessment result data

a. Design expert assessment

learning is carried out with the aim of assessing the design of the Independent Curriculum Based on Faith Growth and Life Skills as an innovation of the Independent Curriculum for PAUD. The design expert who assessed was Mrs. Dr. Eva Hndriyantini, S.Kom, M. MT. (4th Week of September 2023). The results of the expert validation analysis of the number of validation scores on the learning design aspect by the design expert were 15 with 4 indicators, so the validity percentage was 87.50%. Referring to the validity criteria table, the level of validity from the design expert is "Very Valid" with the test decision can be used, with the note that it is necessary to add a curriculum development theory study in the background section.

b. Content expert assessment

Content validation was carried out to determine the level of validity of the learning content using the Independent Curriculum Based on Faith Growth and Life Skills as an innovation of the Independent Curriculum for PAUD. The Content Expert who assessed was Mr. Dr. Made Duananda Kartika Degeng, S. Pd., M. Pd. (Week 1 of October 2023). The number of validation scores on the learning content aspect by the content expert was 39 with 12 indicators, so that the percentage of validity was 81.25%. referring to the validity criteria table, the level of validity from the content expert is "Very Valid" with the test decision can be used, with notes for improvements including, (1) focus on adjusting the objectives to be achieved with the learning content, (2) the competencies measured add psychomotor and affective domains, and (3) the stages of children's performance are more detailed and specific.

c. Curriculum expert assessment

Validation was carried out to determine the level of validity of the product developed as an innovation of the Independent Learning Curriculum for Christian PAUD. The Curriculum Expert who assessed it was Mr. Dr. Yonathan Mujianto, M.Pd.K (2nd Week of October 2023). The results of the validation analysis of the number of validation scores on the aspects of the curriculum developed were 33 with 9 indicators, so that the percentage of validity was 91.66%. referring to the validity criteria table, the level of validity from the learning model expert is "Very Valid" with the decision that the test can be used, with the note that there needs to be consideration in the aspects of the material being studied, evaluation, and the characteristics of children in each region may be very different so that special characteristics are needed.

d. User validation data

User validation was conducted to determine the level of product attractiveness to PAUD OASIS Malang teachers (3rd Week of September 2023). Data acquisition was carried out by distributing a Guttman scale questionnaire with alternative answers of 1 and 0. Validation of teachers as users was carried out on Mrs. Fransisca Kurniajaya, S.Pd.K, a PAUD OASIS teacher in Malang City to determine the level of product attractiveness as an innovation of the Merdeka Curriculum for PAUD. Validation was carried out through a product development draft and its application in learning. Teachers gave their assessments with 12 types of positive questions that were worth one if the respondent answered "Yes" and worth zero if the respondent answered "No" it can be seen that the number of teacher validation scores as users obtained a score of 10, so that the percentage of validity was 83.33%. Referring to the validity criteria table, the level of validity is mostly valid or with an interesting test decision and in accordance with the learning environment.

Revision of Trial Results

1) Product revision based on validation by design experts/ Suggestions and comments from design experts focus on adding measurable competencies in addition to cognitive competencies, but also affective and psychomotor domains.
2) Product revision based on content expert validation. Comments and suggestions from content experts at the product revision stage in the development draft are contained in the learning steps that are emphasized to activate children's curiosity about Christian faith and life skills according to religious norms. Before the revision, the learning steps were still dominated by teachers while children only did what they were told. The independent curriculum emphasizes children's freedom to express and explore their desire to learn.
3) Product revision based on validation by curriculum experts. Comments and suggestions from curriculum experts are on the learning steps to emphasize more on children's freedom to be creative. Improvements were made to the product development draft based on validation by curriculum experts. Improvements were made to the learning steps that had been revised at the content expert validation stage, improvements were made again based

on input from curriculum experts where the components of the steps must emphasize more on children's freedom to learn according to their wishes,but still consider the number of students in each class varies so that children can still be controlled properly.

Based on the average data, the attractiveness aspect of the curriculum developed after the revision is 90.3%. Referring to the validity criteria table, the level of validity is mostly valid or with the decision of the test is interesting and in accordance with the learning environment. In questions no. 1, 2, 4, 5, 9, 11, 12, 13, and 15 obtained a percentage of 100%, then several statements have negative values, namely question no. 3 all teachers expressed their disagreement by giving the answer "No" so that it gives a percentage of 100%. The statement of too much material received a score of 77.7%, meaning that a small part still feels that the material is too much so that it is difficult to understand it. A small part feels that there are too many indicators so that I am not sure I can make a good assessment. 66.6%. and, as many as 77.7% or more than half feel like they want to return to implementing learning with the curriculum while those who do not want to are 22.2%.

Description of children's learning outcome data

Performance tests are conducted to determine children's learning outcomes after implementing learning using the developed curriculum. At the main product trial stage, it will then be compared with the minimum completion criteria (KKM). The following are the results of the comparative analysis of children's learning outcomes in the initial field trial. The average learning outcomes of 3 PAUDs in the main product field trial were 83.33%, so it can be concluded that they were classically complete because the percentage of classical completeness was> 80% so it can be stated that the Independent Curriculum Based on Faith Growth and Life Skills for Christian PAUD is effective.

Product Revision

Product revision at this stage was carried out based on data obtained at the main product field trial stage. Based on the data, the classical completion of 3 PAUDs in the Malang Raya area was declared classically complete because it was >80%, but the value of each individual was still quite low. Several notes and revisions to the learning implementation plan were made to improve the value of each individual.

Re-explaining Previously, there was no re-explanation of the material being discussed in each demonstration session, especially on the material on the growth of faith. So in this revision, a strategy was added where each time the child's demonstration session was completed, the teacher provided reinforcement of the material being discussed.

Large-Scale Trial

The main product field trial was conducted at 9 Christian PAUDs located throughout Malang Raya. There are two types of data collected in the main product field trial, namely product attractiveness data using a questionnaire to users (teachers) and student learning outcome data in all main product test locations.

Field trials of the main product in 9 Christian PAUDs in the Malang Raya area (4th week of November 2023-3rd week of October 2023). Distributing questionnaires to teachers to determine the level of product attractiveness and conducting performance tests to determine student learning outcomes, as well as conducting observations on the implementation of learning.

a. Description of user questionnaire data (teachers)

It is known that the average aspect of the attractiveness of the curriculum developed after the revision is 90.3%. Referring to the validity criteria table, the level of validity is mostly valid or with the decision of the test is interesting and in accordance with the learning environment. In questions no. 1, 2, 4, 5, 9, 11, 12, 13, and 15 obtained a percentage of 100%, then several statements have negative values, namely question no. 3 all teachers expressed their disagreement by giving the answer "No" so that it gives a percentage of 100%. The statement

of too much material obtained a score of 77.7% meaning that a small part still feels that the material is too much so that it is difficult to understand it. A small part feels that there are too many indicators so I am not sure I can make a good assessment. 66.6%. and, as many as 77.7% or more than half feel like they want to return to implementing learning with the curriculum while those who do not want to are 22.2%.

b. Description of children's learning outcome data

Performance tests are conducted to determine the learning outcomes of children after implementing learning using the developed curriculum. At the main product trial stage, it will then be compared with the minimum completion criteria (KKM). The following are the results of the comparative analysis of children's learning outcomes in the initial field trial, as shown in Table 4.15 below.

Based on the table of learning outcomes from 9 PAUD schools in the Malang Raya area, it is known that learning completion obtained a score of >70 and overall completion obtained a percentage score of 100%.

Final revision is needed to refine the product based on data obtained from large-scale trials. Based on large-scale trial data, it is known that student self-confidence is still low, so that in the final revision, additional components were added to the product specifications which previously only had four components, namely 1) structure, 2) social system, 3) teacher role, and 4) support system. Additional components or the fifth component at the final revision stage which aims to support student enthusiasm and self-confidence. Attention is very important in learning where students will focus their attention on learning and ignore others that are considered unimportant so that the greater the student's attention to learning, the better the understanding of the material and the better the learning outcomes.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of data analysis and discussion, it can be concluded that the development results in the form of a Merdeka Curriculum based on life skills and faith growth for Christian PAUD throughout Malang Raya have proven to be usable and successful. The advantages are as follows: 1. Effective in planning and implementing learning. 2. Efficient in the application and achievement of learning outcomes obtained by children. 3. Has high appeal in terms of design and content because it is easy to implement and is able to provide learning experiences for teachers and children.

It is recommended for Christian PAUD teachers to innovate especially on specific learning objectives according to the needs of each school. For further researchers, the weaknesses found in the study, such as: (a) efforts to maintain children's concentration to stay focused, (b) efforts to maintain children's learning motivation to remain high, and (c) overcoming problems related to the constraints of facilities in each school that are different.

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