Evaluation of the Independent Curriculum in Special Schools to Enhance Participation of Children with Special Needs

*Sulaiman Abdul Rasid¹, M. Mukhibat², Rihab Wit Daryono³
¹,²,³Institut Agama Islam Negeri (IAIN) Ponorogo, Jl. Pramuka No.156, Ponorogo, East Java, Indonesia
*sulaiman.abdul.rasid@iainponorogo.ac.id

ABSTRACT: The independent curriculum aims to create an inclusive learning environment in special schools, where children with special needs are fully integrated into the learning process with their friends without barriers or discrimination. This research aims to evaluate the achievements of the independent curriculum in particular schools in increasing the participation of children with special needs in learning. This research uses an evaluation method using the CIPPO model developed by Stufflebeam and Shinkfield. The research instrument was shown to school principals, vice principals, and teachers as a questionnaire. Using random sampling techniques, 32 respondents were chosen, consisting of 3 principals, 7 vice principals, and 25 teachers. The findings of this research identify the lowest measurement of evaluation results, namely in the input aspect, namely the involvement of parents in decision making, support for facilities and infrastructure, and social support from friends need to be improved. So, the recommendation that needs to be improved is that schools and teachers must develop partnerships with community organizations and government institutions to support inclusion efforts, including providing additional services and social support for children with special needs. In addition, particular schools must prioritize providing information and training to parents, teachers, students, and the community about the importance of inclusion, the rights of children with special needs, and the best ways to support their participation in the learning process.

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I. INTRODUCTION

An independent curriculum is one means of creating a better learning process. This is similar to what happens in all educational institutions, which certainly apply the curriculum to learning and teaching activities to develop more effective and efficient learning, learning that can be said to be effective and efficient (Erifal et al., 2023). The design of the independent curriculum provides freedom, courage, independence, cleverness in socializing, civilization, politeness, and competence and gives students the freedom to develop their talents. This is similar to the aim of the independent curriculum, namely providing freedom in developing appropriate and soft skills. The character of a Pancasila student who focuses on developing literacy and numeracy (Afifatimah & Muthali’in, 2023; Aqiila & Tirtoni, 2023).

The independent curriculum also improves human resources through the teaching and learning process and human resource development (Mahardhani & Asrori, 2023). Development of the teaching and learning process through all stages of the curriculum system, from the process of planning, implementation, assessment and evaluation of the curriculum. The implications of the curriculum for students in the learning process are the results obtained by students from the independent curriculum, which makes students participate better in the learning process, improves and fulfils special needs in learning in the academic and non-academic fields, and provides children's satisfaction with the learning process.

The independent curriculum has been implemented at all levels of education, especially in general and state education up to universities. However, the independent curriculum is not only given to children who receive education from public schools or state schools but the independent curriculum is also applied to all levels of education, especially in special schools (Chairunnisa & Rismita, 2022; Efendi et al., 2022). The independent curriculum aims to be implemented in special schools so that children with special needs in their respective versions can experience proper learning like normal children in general. Furthermore, you cannot differentiate between regular and special school education (Mutini & Bakar, 2023). With the independent curriculum in special schools, children with special needs can express their interests and talents better, creating excellent and quality human resources (Chairunnisa & Rismita, 2022; Ibnu & Tahar, 2021).
In one of the districts in East Java, Ponorogo, the implementation of the independent curriculum has not been evenly distributed across all special schools. Out of the 6 special schools in Ponorogo, only three have implemented the independent curriculum, including SLBN Jenangan, SLB A-Aisyiyah Ponorogo, and SLB B-Pertiwi Ponorogo. This uneven distribution is a cause for concern, and it's clear that more support is needed from parents, the community, and the government to ensure that all schools and students can benefit from the independent curriculum.

Implementation of the independent curriculum in special schools to increase the interest and abilities of children with special needs to socialize better with their peers (Mutini & Bakar, 2023). Furthermore, it can increase the participation of children with special needs in learning so that it is better. The emergence of the independent curriculum from 2020 to 2024 provides freedom to every educational institution and teacher in learning processes and methods according to student needs. However, some schools must implement an independent curriculum with special school educators. The implementation of the independent curriculum needs to be reviewed and evaluated.

The CIPPO (Context, Input, Process, Product, Outcome) evaluation is a crucial tool in ensuring the successful implementation of the independent curriculum in special schools. This emphasis on evaluation should reassure educators, policymakers, and researchers about the effectiveness of the process. As highlighted by Widayanto et al. (2021), the context evaluation is particularly important. It helps us understand the specific context in which the independent curriculum is implemented in special schools (Codina & Robinson, 2024; Lynch, 2017). This includes understanding the needs and characteristics of children with special needs, as well as the unique challenges faced by special schools in providing inclusive education. As point out, context evaluation is instrumental in assessing whether independent curriculum policies and programs are aligned with the needs and conditions that exist in special schools.

The CIPPO evaluation will help identify the resources needed for the implementation of the independent curriculum in special schools, including the need for teacher training, resource support, and learning materials that suit the needs of children with special needs (Dabi & Golga, 2024; Listyaningrum et al., 2024). Through this evaluation, it will be seen whether the curriculum has been adapted to the special needs of children in special schools, as well as the extent to which support from the government and related institutions, such as funding for resources and training programs, has been provided. Al-Shanawani (2019) states that the CIPPO evaluation evaluates the implementation process of the independent curriculum in special schools, including teaching strategies, learning approaches, and the effectiveness of the methods used. By evaluating the process, it will be seen whether there are obstacles in the implementation process that hinder the participation of children with special needs, as well as whether there are changes or adjustments that need to be made in the learning process (Mokmin & Rassy, 2024).

Product evaluation will assess the results of implementing the independent curriculum in a particular school, including academic achievement and social-emotional development of children with special needs (Carter et al., 2023; Roșu et al., 2024). Through this evaluation, the implementation of the independent curriculum has succeeded in increasing the participation and involvement of children with special needs in the learning process at particular schools. The outcome evaluation will assess the long-term impact of implementing the independent curriculum, including changes in...
participation, increased independence, and social integration of children with special needs inside and outside the school environment (Amka & Dalle, 2022). Rashid et al. (2024) emphasize that it is essential to ensure that inclusive learning efforts in special schools are academically successful and positively impact the daily lives of children with special needs.

Based on the description above, it is necessary to evaluate the curriculum in special schools to find out whether the programs that have been implemented are good or not. Evaluation research on the implementation of the independent curriculum in special schools is needed and carried out to determine how well the independent curriculum is implemented in the education of children with special needs (Hewett et al., 2023; Rendoth et al., 2024). The evaluation results will provide clear considerations and contributions regarding decision-making and provide input for the independent curriculum implementation program for special schools that wish to implement the independent curriculum.

II. METHOD

This program evaluation research aims to evaluate the implementation of the independent curriculum in special schools in the Ponorogo district, which aims to determine the performance of children with special needs in the learning process. This research uses the CIPPO evaluation model developed by Stufflebeam and Shinkfield (Burke & Hennessy, 2021). This comprehensive evaluation approach consists of five steps: Context, Input, Process, Product, and Outcome. This model is designed to provide systematic guidance in evaluating programs or policies in various contexts, including education. The CIPPO model of this research is intended to assess independent programs or curricula in special schools to increase the participation of children with special needs. Independent curriculum evaluation in special schools is to be used as a framework for understanding, analyzing, and evaluating various aspects of the curriculum. Table 1 presents the CIPPO evaluation instrument for special schools to increase the participation of children with special needs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1. CIPPO evaluation instruments</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Aspects</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Input</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In this research, research results were obtained regarding the participation of teachers and vice principals who were the objects of research. Respondents consisting of vice principals, principals, and teachers totaling 32 people were selected using random sampling techniques. This evaluation research data collection technique uses a questionnaire instrument via Google Forms. Quantitative data collection in this research evaluation program used a questionnaire with a Likert scale and had four points (1=disagree to 4=strongly agree) obtained from the respondents' assessments (Daryono et al., 2020; Widyastuti et al., 2023). Table 2 shows the number of research samples based on respondent characteristics.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educational Institutions</th>
<th>Principals</th>
<th>Vice Principals</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sekolah Luar Biasa Negeri Jenangan</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SLB A-Aisyiyah Ponorogo</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Quantitative data analysis in this research uses descriptive statistics and presents data interpretation using radar charts (Widayanto et al., 2021). Radar charts are used to visualize achievements in evaluating the implementation of the independent curriculum for students with special needs in each aspect of the evaluation. The criteria for determining the success of an assessment are based on the expected average value (Xi) and the desired standard deviation (SBi). Meanwhile, the ideal value (X) reflects the average value obtained from the calculation results in the questionnaire filled out by the respondents. Table 3 shows the criteria for the success of CIPPO evaluation measurements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Score Range</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>$X \geq (\bar{X} + 1.8 \text{ SBi})$</td>
<td>$&gt; 80% - 100%$</td>
<td>Very good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>$(\bar{X} + 1.8 \text{ SBi}) &gt; X \geq (\bar{X} + 0.6 \text{ SBi})$</td>
<td>$&gt; 60% - 80%$</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>$(\bar{X} + 0.6 \text{ SBi}) &gt; X \geq (\bar{X} - 0.6 \text{ SBi})$</td>
<td>$&gt; 40% - 60%$</td>
<td>Enough</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>$(\bar{X} - 0.6 \text{ SBi}) &gt; X \geq (\bar{X} - 1.8 \text{ SBi})$</td>
<td>$&gt; 20% - 40%$</td>
<td>Not good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>$(\bar{X} - 1.8 \text{ SBi}) &gt; X$</td>
<td>$0% - 20%$</td>
<td>Very Not good</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Comprehensive Evaluation Approach

Context Evaluation

The context aspect refers to two main components: the participation of children with special needs in learning and meeting the needs of children with special needs as learners at school. The results of this assessment consist of vice principals from various fields including curriculum representatives, student affairs representatives, community relations representatives, and school principals and teachers involved in independent curriculum-based learning. Based on Figure 1, the average score for aspects of the context of assessing the participation of children with needs in learning is 4,258 in the excellent category. Overall, the indicator aspect of involvement in the learning process in the academic and non-academic fields is 87.50% in the outstanding category. Regarding results, the aspect of fulfilling special needs in learning is 85.00%, which is included in the exceptional category. Regarding the indicators of suitability of learning materials for children with special needs, supporting equipment and technology is at 84.06%.

Input Evaluation

There are five components in input evaluation: parental support, learning environment, peers, and health workers. The research results consisted of vice principals and teachers. Based on the data in Figure 2, the average score for the aspect of parental support for overall aspect results was 42.91% and the score was 85.83%, included in the excellent category. Overall, the input data results for parental participation in decision-making providing information and communication were 91.11%, including in the exceptional category. The average learning environment is 41.56, included in the excellent category. The average score for supporting facilities, learning materials, and tools preparedness was 84.44% in the outstanding category. The average score for availability in interacting...
with peers is 42.38% in the exceptional category. The peer support score data is 88.989% in the outstanding category.

**Figure 1. Radar chart in context evaluation**

**Figure 2. Radar chart in input evaluation**

**Process Evaluation**

There are three components to the evaluation process: independent curriculum planning, implementation of the independent curriculum, and results and assessment. Based on data collection using documentation, learning planning is planned to educate children with special needs in special schools (Figure 3). Data from the questionnaire completed by the instructor explains that the assessment criteria for the PKM1 component are understanding and familiarity with the principles and objectives of the curriculum in the outstanding category. The PKM2 indicator identifies schools planning to learn for inclusive students by considering the diversity of their needs in the exceptional category. The PKM3 indicator identifies the school principal as planning the independent curriculum by the success indicators of the educational goals for children with special needs in the outstanding category. The school's PKM4 indicator provides adequate support to provide support and care services for students with special needs in the

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exceptional category. PKM5 identifies planning with collaboration between teachers and educational support staff in planning and providing learning for children with special needs in the outstanding category. PKM6 indicator holds regular meetings or discussion forums to discuss curriculum planning and evaluation for children with special needs, which is very good.

The results of data from the implementation of the independent curriculum in the education of children with special needs IMKM1 identified that children with special needs received additional support and necessary adaptations by the principles of the independent curriculum with results of 86.87% in the outstanding category. The IMKM2 indicator identifies that the independent curriculum is implemented by the fundamental principles it promotes for children with special needs at 83.12% in the exceptional category. The IMKM3 indicator specifies that the resources provided to support the implementation of the independent curriculum for children with special needs are adequate.

Figure 3. Radar chart in process evaluation

Product Evaluation

The product process aspect of implementing the independent curriculum is improving academic and non-academic abilities, developing social and emotional capabilities, communication skills, and independence. Based on the assessment results of school staff and teachers regarding aspects of the product, it is included in the outstanding category. The results (Development of Participation and Leadership for Children with Special Needs. PMKA1) show that children with special needs experienced increased communication skills through the Merdeka Curriculum. The overall result was 86.87 in the outstanding category (Development of Participation and Villages for Children with Special Needs. PMKA2). The Merdeka Curriculum focuses on developing the social and emotional skills of children with special needs. The results for all items are 87.50. they are included in the outstanding category. The results of the teacher's assessment of the vice principal's product were 87.77 in the exceptional category. The teacher's research results on the product were 86.95. they are included in the outstanding category.
category. The research results for all deputy principals, with an average of 83.59, are included in the exceptional category. The overall teacher assessment results were 87.18%. Included in the outstanding category.

**Outcomes Evaluation**

Organizing an independent curriculum at a particular school is likely successful if students and teachers feel satisfaction with the learning process that has been carried out. Based on the data collection and documentation, the satisfaction aspect of children with special needs is that they are satisfied with their experience in following the independent curriculum. With a percentage per indicator of 91.11%. In the per-aspect assessment, the rate was 87.50%. Table 4 shows the results of the vice principal’s measurement of the satisfaction of children with special needs of 90.00% in the outstanding category in the outcome aspect. The results of the teacher's assessment of the satisfaction of children with special needs at a percentage of 85.65% are included in the outstanding category. The overall results of the principal's evaluation of the satisfaction of children with special needs, with an average of 83.44%, are in the outstanding category. The overall results of the teacher's assessment of the satisfaction of children with special needs, with a percentage of 86.87%, are included in the outstanding category.

**Figure 4. Product evaluation indicators**

**Table 4. Evaluation of achievement in overall aspects of research respondents**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Vice Principals</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
<th>Overall Evaluation</th>
<th>Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Context</td>
<td>87.222%</td>
<td>83.587%</td>
<td>4.230</td>
<td>84.609%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Input</td>
<td>87.901%</td>
<td>84.831%</td>
<td>4.285</td>
<td>85.694%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Process</td>
<td>87.704%</td>
<td>85.855%</td>
<td>4.319</td>
<td>86.375%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Product</td>
<td>87.778%</td>
<td>86.957%</td>
<td>4.359</td>
<td>87.188%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Outcomes</td>
<td>90.000%</td>
<td>85.652%</td>
<td>4.344</td>
<td>86.875%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The overall result in the context aspect is 87.50%. The overall value of the vice principal's assessment was 87.22%. The results of the context aspect research were
83.58%. Included in the outstanding category. The results for all context aspects with an average of 4.230 are included in the excellent category. The overall data content results with a percentage of 84.61%. For the teacher aspect assessors, the average of the related input aspects was 87.90% and was included in the outstanding category. The assessment of the vice principal's data was 84.83%, and the overall data on the teacher and principal assessment input aspect was 4.285, which is in the outstanding category. The overall teacher research input data results were 85.69 in the exceptional category.

**Evaluation of the Merdeka Curriculum to Increase Participation of Children with Special Needs**

The participation of children with special needs in learning, both in academic and non-academic areas, shows that it is essential to ensure meaningful learning experiences for them (Andriana & Evans, 2021; Efendi et al., 2022). The first thing is to adjust the curriculum and learning materials to meet the individual needs of each special needs student so that they can be effectively involved in the learning process. In addition, it uses a differential learning approach to ensure that learning material is delivered in a way that suits students' learning styles and special needs. This research is in line with who explain that assistance from special education assistants, tutors, or particular education specialists will help children with special needs understand learning material and achieve academic success. The results of research on evaluations in the input aspect reveal that providing various extracurricular activities and activities outside the classroom allows children with special needs to explore their interests and talents outside the academic environment. The results of this research are in line with Nwosu et al. (2024) that the importance of social activities is activities that encourage the participation of children with special needs in social and community activities, such as clubs or student organizations, to help them build social skills and expand their social networks.

Meeting the unique needs of children with special needs through appropriate learning materials, equipment, and supporting technology is the key to providing an effective and efficient learning experience (Africa et al., 2023; Lynch, 2017). This research reveals strategies that can be used, namely adapting learning materials and using supporting equipment and technology. Adaptation of learning materials aims to adapt to the needs and abilities of each child with special needs (Efendi et al., 2022). This may include simplifying the text, using attractive images or graphics, or providing alternative materials appropriate to their interests and level of understanding. Next, use learning aids such as interactive whiteboards, visual aids, or mathematical manipulatives to help convey learning concepts concretely and interestingly. Andriana & Evans (2021) revealed that assistive technology such as screen reader software, voice recording devices, or customized keyboards will help children with special needs access learning materials and express themselves.

Parental participation in children's education, including children with special needs, significantly impacts their learning progress and success (Batz & Yadav, 2023; Widyawati et al., 2022). This research reveals how parents can effectively support decision-making, providing information and communication related to children's education, namely attending meetings and conferences, participating in decision-making processes, and providing information (Widyawati et al., 2022). This research revealed that it is essential for parents to attend meetings and conferences with teachers and school staff to discuss their child's academic progress, special needs, and
educational planning. Furthermore, the second aspect of this research is in line with Listyaningrum et al. (2024) that schools are crucial in parental participation and decisions. So, parents can be invited to participate in the decision-making process regarding their child's individualized or unique education service plan. This research is also in line with Batz & Yadav (2023), who explain that parents can provide relevant information about their child's needs, interests, and abilities to teachers and school staff to assist in personalized learning planning.

A learning environment supported by adequate facilities, available material resources, and appropriate learning tools is critical to creating a practical and inclusive learning experience. This research provides contributions related to things that need to be considered in making a supportive learning environment, such as comfortable, clean, and well-organized classrooms to support student focus and concentration, availability of diverse learning material sources, including textbooks, online materials, journals, and other sources of information relevant to the curriculum and student needs. In addition, research by Mutini & Bakar (2023); Rendoth et al. (2024) states that the use of learning materials tailored to students' needs, such as textbooks with easy-to-read fonts, clear images, and appropriate language will increase students' level of understanding. In addition, this research provides recommendations for ways to improve the willingness to interact with groups, including peers, for children with special needs (Amka & Dalle, 2022; Codina & Robinson, 2024). Regular social skills exercises can help children with special needs understand basic concepts of social interaction, such as how to start a conversation, listen well, or work together in a group.

Learning planning for children with special needs requires a holistic and integrated approach to ensure that each child receives an education that suits their needs and potential (Nwosu et al., 2024; Roşu et al., 2024). This research shows that learning planning for children with special needs can be done by setting learning goals and parental involvement. This research reveals that setting specific and measurable learning goals is based on each child's individual needs and abilities. These goals should include relevant academic, social, and life skills aspects (Chairunnisa & Rismita, 2022; Ibnu & Tahar, 2021). In addition, this research provides the view that involving parents in planning and implementing children's learning and providing additional support and resources at home can help complement learning at school.

This research aligns who state that the measurement and evaluation of children with special needs needs to consider individual assessment. This holistic individual assessment of children with special needs includes evaluation of cognitive, social, and emotional development, academic skills, daily living skills, and physical health. Furthermore, Hewett et al. (2023) revealed another thing related to conformity with the curriculum. This evaluation is to measure the extent to which children can access and master a curriculum tailored to their needs and whether any adjustments need to be made to facilitate effective learning (Carter et al., 2023; Mutini & Bakar, 2023; Ookeditse & Molemane, 2024; Youssif et al., 2024).

Developing the abilities of children with special needs to improve their academic and non-academic skills requires a holistic and integrated approach that considers the child's individual needs and potential (Listyaningrum et al., 2024). Adjusting the curriculum and teaching methods can facilitate understanding and mastery of subject matter by children with special needs. This research contributes that providing additional support, such as guidance, tutors, or remedial programs, can help children understand complex
academic concepts. Furthermore, Mokmin & Rassy (2024) suggest that using an experience-based learning approach to help children relate learning to real situations can strengthen their understanding. In addition, it can provide opportunities for children to learn through practical experiences, such as project activities, field exploration, or live demonstrations (Andriana & Evans, 2021; Batz & Yadav, 2023).

IV. CONCLUSION

The implementation of the independent curriculum in special schools has a significant impact on increasing the participation of children with special needs in learning at school. Implementing an independent curriculum for special schools can strengthen the inclusive approach to educating children with special needs by enabling them to actively participate in the learning process. A curriculum that is adapted and supports children’s individual needs provides more significant opportunities for children with special needs to participate in various learning activities. The independent curriculum allows flexibility and adaptation in designing learning that suits the needs, interests, and potential of each child with special needs. This will enable schools to provide a supportive and inclusive learning environment for children with various special needs.

Implementation of the independent curriculum requires increased support and resources to ensure a smooth, customized learning process. This includes teacher training, development of appropriate teaching materials, provision of learning aids, and counselling and therapy support needed by children with special needs. Apart from that, the independent curriculum encourages the involvement of parents and the community in the education of children with special needs. Schools can create a more inclusive and supportive environment for children with special needs by involving parents and the community in the learning process. Furthermore, special schools emphasize the importance of developing life skills for children with special needs. Apart from academic skills, this curriculum also focuses on developing social, emotional, communication, and independence skills, which are crucial for the holistic development of children with special needs. Thus, implementing the independent curriculum in special schools can effectively increase the participation of children with special needs learning by providing an inclusive, supportive, and appropriate learning environment. With the proper support from all relevant parties, the independent curriculum has excellent potential to bring positive changes in the education of children with special needs and create better opportunities for them to develop optimally.

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