



Evaluation of Early Childhood Learning Using the Independent Curriculum

Korlina Makulua ¹, Claudia Monique Pattiruhu ², Ivon Mukaddamah ³, Yohana S. Touwe ⁴, Lilik Huriah ⁵

¹ Institut Agama Kristen Negeri Ambon, Indonesia

² Institut Agama Kristen Negeri Ambon, Indonesia

³ Sekolah Tinggi Keguruan dan Ilmu Pendidikan, Indonesia

⁴ Sekolah Tinggi Keguruan dan Ilmu Pendidikan Kusuma Negara Jakarta, Indonesia

⁵ Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Ampel Surabaya, Indonesia

Corresponding Author: Korlina Makulua, E-mail: kakomakulua@gmail.com

Received: Dec 19, 2023

Revised: Dec 22, 2023

Accepted: Dec 25, 2023

Online: Dec 27, 2023

ABSTRACT

In this era, education is needed to support children in continuing the next generation of the nation. In education today, an update in education is needed, in order to change education in Indonesia to be more advanced. To achieve the goal of more advanced education, there must be a curriculum update in Indonesia. In February 2022 last year, the Ministry of Education and Culture launched an independent curriculum where the independent curriculum method refers more to the talents and interests of children. This independent curriculum allows students to choose the lessons they like or are most interested in. The purpose of this study is to evaluate early childhood learning on the use of the independent curriculum. This research method uses quantitative methods, this data is obtained from interviews to kindergartens. The results showed that the independent curriculum is very good in supporting students' learning in improving skills, character, by using flexible learning. From this research it can be concluded that the use of an independent curriculum for early childhood is very effective and efficient. The independent curriculum leads to the development of skills and character, focuses on essential material, and uses flexible learning. The limitation of this research is that researchers only conducted research in one kindergarten in 50 cities in West Sumatra Province, researchers hope that future researchers can conduct research with a wider range so that they can continue this research. This study also recommends to future researchers as a reference in conducting research on the use of Merdeka Curriculum in Early Childhood.

Keywords: *Early Childhood, Learning Evaluation, Merdeka Curriculum*

Journal Homepage <https://ejournal.staialhikmahpariangan.ac.id/Journal/index.php/alhjr/>

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How to cite: Makulua, K., Pattiruhu, M. C., Mukaddamah, K., Touwe, S. Y., Huriah, L. (2023). Evaluation of Early Childhood Learning Using the Independent Curriculum. *Al-Hijr: Journal of Adulearn World*, 2(4), 350-365. <https://doi.org/10.55849/alhijr.v2i4.550>

Published by: Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam Al-Hikmah Pariangan Batusangkar

INTRODUCTION

At the time of the development of education at this time made many changes that were so rapid in improving the quality of education (Mayer, 2019). The changes that occur require educators to innovate and become updated in developing education. Especially in the renewal of education for early childhood, which is when children

experience the golden age (Galloway, 2022). At this golden age, children will experience a process of growth and development (Langheinrich, 2018). Early childhood also experiences fast and rapid development for future life (Hickel & Kallis, 2020). Therefore, a curriculum update is needed to support education (Potter et al., 2018). As in the 2022 school year there is a curriculum change where education units choose and determine an independent curriculum, the independent curriculum refers more to the talents and interests of children (Begum & Saini, 2019). The independent curriculum makes it easier for educators to implement learning according to the interests and needs of early childhood and focus on improving the skills, character of children (Bhawnani, 2022). The Merdeka Curriculum provides breadth for educators in delivering learning for early childhood.

The Merdeka Curriculum is a newly created curriculum which in the process of creation and preparation is not easy for education units (Priestley & Philippou, 2019). Curriculum is the lifeblood of education (Looney & Greenberg, 2008). Curriculum changes cannot be avoided and bypassed, but must always be lived and adapted to the needs of the community (Melini & Melini, 2019). In the national education system, it is required to make a planned, structured and sustainable reform so as to be able to carry out equitable education, improve quality for educational relevance and efficiency of education management to prepare students to face challenges in accordance with the demands of local, national and global life changes (Kondratyev et al., 2004). In the preparation of the curriculum for early childhood education units, it does not only refer to concepts and competencies but also compiles standards for the level of achievement of child development (Addyman, 1980). The concept of an independent curriculum is very influential in the world of education (Gottlieb, 2012). The concept of an independent curriculum which further improves the quality of education which is very useful, especially for Early Childhood (Felder & Brent, 1999). In implementing the Independent Curriculum, not only students are ready but educators must also be ready to use the concept of an independent curriculum.

The author quotes Ki Hadjar Dewantara's opinion that education is for children to carry out their nature so that they as humans and as members of society can achieve the highest possible safety and happiness (Sherwood et al., 1970). Education, which is the ideal of Ki Hadjar Dewantara, is to make students become human beings who are independent physically and mentally (Abraham & Komattil, 2017). Students also become noble in mind and healthy in body to become members of society who are responsible for the welfare of the nation, homeland and humanity in general (Kuhn, 2001). The real education in the context, as believed by Ki Hadjar Dewantara, involves efforts to understand and provide the needs of students as the subject of education (Rock, 1979). In that case, the task of educators is to develop the potential interests and talents of students, provide knowledge to students in a conversation (Jackiw, 1974). Children who are the next generation of the Indonesian nation need the best education (Pendergast, 2009). To be a good society Education for children starts from birth so as to advance the Nation (Lind, 1981). From that it takes the latest education that follows the

development of technology as well as education for children.

The curriculum is a process, weather, conditions, learning culture that humanizes humans (White, 1959). As an educator, you must pay attention to the curriculum that is currently being used (Thompson & Zerbinos, 1997). Understanding the curriculum must pay attention to a good mapping system so that the teaching and learning process takes place effectively and efficiently (Leppink, 2020). In the independent curriculum, educators are given the freedom to determine the fundamental materials that are useful for creating contextualized learning conditions (Beyer & Holtzblatt, 1999). Especially for students who are still in the concrete operational stage (Mosley et al., 1999). Students should be given visual or hands-on learning (Daw, 2014). So that the material presented can be well understood by students (Omenetto & Kaplan, 2010). In the learning method, the independent curriculum uses a direct approach, namely having objects so that children understand the material provided by the teacher.

The Independent Curriculum is a learning program that is broader in basic competencies and gives freedom in developing students' abilities and developing the character of students (Pool, 1983). The independent curriculum is a new curriculum used in schools with project-based learning (MacWhinney, 2007). With the implementation of the new curriculum, educators, principals and students must adapt to the updates (Kasseroller, 1998). In implementing the independent curriculum, teachers relearn the new curriculum (Delpit, 2006). This new curriculum is not only teachers who learn and understand it, but students will also learn again. The new curriculum method with the old curriculum is very different so that teachers must really understand before practicing on students (Bliss, 1934). The existence of an independent curriculum shows the existence of renewal in the world of education. The occurrence of renewal then there is an opportunity in changing the generation of the Indonesian nation.

Humans are the subject of education, as well as the object of education (Pérez-González et al., 2005). Humans as the subject of education, especially adults, are responsible for organizing education (Baets, 2022). Morally obliged for the personal development of children or the next generation. Adult humans who function as educators are responsible for carrying out educational missions that are in accordance with the goals and values desired in the educational process (Furlong et al., 1994). As the object of education, humans (especially children) are the target of guidance in carrying out the educational process, which basically has the same personality as adult humans, but because of their undeveloped nature (Castree, 2003). The existence of an education system is useful and beneficial in providing direction and goals for society in general in carrying out education. The curriculum is an important part of the direction and purpose of education. The curriculum is also a system in schools to obtain the expected results in external situations and situations within the school.

The Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology (kemendikbudristek) issued an independent curriculum known previously as the prototype curriculum which has been implemented in nearly 2,500 schools included in the driving school program (PGP) as part of the new paradigm learning process

(Prikhodko & Polyakova, 2021). The independent curriculum is an option or choice for schools that already have the readiness of each school in its implementation. This means that there is no coercion in implementing an independent curriculum for schools to implement an independent curriculum in their education units that have not yet joined the driving school. In the process of running and achieving a curriculum, educators have an important and central role in the success of the curriculum so that it runs well. Educators are required to have the ability to implement and succeed the teaching and learning process with the curriculum that applies in schools. The ability of educators to implement the curriculum is a benchmark in the success of the curriculum that runs. Running or not a curriculum in educational institutions depends on the ability of an educator to understand the applicable curriculum. Minister Nadiem stated that the essence of freedom of thought must be preceded by educators before they teach it to students. Nadiem said that learning occurs because of the translation process of basic competencies and the existing curriculum with the competence of educators at any level.

The independent curriculum developed or implemented in kindergarten is very helpful for early childhood in its growth process. Based on the results obtained by researchers, the curriculum is very helpful for children in developing skills (Eynon & Geniets, 2016). Developing these skills is needed by children for the future, not only that the independent curriculum also develops children's character to be better than before and also this independent curriculum program also develops children's interests and talents, where teachers have begun to see and encourage children in honing children's talents and interests so that children are not hesitant or confused in the future when determining their talents and interests because when children are in kindergarten their talents and interests have been developed (Kuhn & Pease, 2008). The independent curriculum is also a curriculum where learning is flexible and can make children's learning efficient and effective.

Based on the Implementation of the Independent Curriculum above, teachers have many problems or obstacles in implementing the independent curriculum such as, teachers lack understanding of the independent curriculum, teachers have difficulty in switching the old curriculum to the new curriculum, and teachers have not fully implemented the independent curriculum in kindergarten (Pace et al., 2012). In the process of implementing the new curriculum teachers need time to understand it where teachers start from scratch. Teachers also have difficulty because in Indonesia the curriculum often changes, such as the 2013 Curriculum and others (Liu et al., 2015). In this case, teachers are demanded by the government in implementing this independent curriculum. Teachers face many challenges in educating children especially with the change in curriculum (Davis et al., 2006). The government has so many demands but teachers in Indonesia are less prosperous, especially early childhood education teachers. At this time teachers must be smart in facing the challenges that exist for the sake of the survival of the next generation of the nation.

Based on previous research, there is still not much that discusses the independent curriculum at large. Like Rosyidah Nurul Anwar's research which discusses teacher

perceptions of new paradigm learning through an independent curriculum where the results of his research are, Teachers have different perceptions of the independent curriculum or have different views where the independent curriculum prioritizes the needs and interests of students. In using the independent curriculum, it seeks to foster lifelong learner learners who are part of an important component in the Pancasila learner profile. Through the independent curriculum, it also contains intracurricular programs, and projects to strengthen the profile of Pancasila learners. His perception also states that the independent curriculum is a dynamic curriculum. Therefore, the researcher hopes that this research is useful and useful for further researchers.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Quantitative methods are also called traditional methods, because this method has been used long enough that it has been traditionalized as a positivistic method because it is based on the philosophy of positivism (Felsenstein, 1988). This method is a scientific/scientific method because it has fulfilled scientific principles, namely concrete/empirical, objective, measurable, national, and systematic. This quantitative method is also called the discovery method, because this method can be found and developed various new science and technology (Du & Kamakura, 2012). This method is called a quantitative method because the research data is in the form of numbers and analysis using statistics (Bish & Post, 1989). The positivism philosophy views reality/symptoms/phenomena as classifiable, cause and effect. Research is generally conducted on certain representative populations or samples. The research process is deductive, namely to answer the formulation of the problem used concepts or theories so that hypotheses can be formulated.

The hypothesis is then tested through field data collection. In collecting data, research instruments are used. The data that has been collected is then analyzed quantitatively using descriptive or inferential statistics so that it can be concluded that the hypothesis formulated is proven or not. This quantitative research is generally carried out on samples taken randomly, so that the conclusions of the research results can be generalized to the population from which the sample is taken (Kepp, 2016). In quantitative research, the truth is outside of itself, so the relationship between the researcher and the researched must be kept at a distance so that it is idenpendent. (Kaplan & Garrick, 1981). By using the questionnaire as a data collection technique, quantitative researchers hardly recognize who is being studied or the respondents who provide the data.

This quantitative method is a method that is widely used in research in both the sciences and the humanities (Bayley, 2013). This approach method is also used as a way for researchers to examine various aspects of the world of education (Griffin & Care, 2015). Competence in research methods is being able to understand various kinds of research and methodologies and researchers understand several research concepts in conducting scientific research (Brauers et al., 2008). Research is an activity to search, record, analyze and compile reports. Research methodology is a set of rules, activities,

and a procedure used by actors in the discipline and this methodology also uses theoretical analysis in terms of a method or method.

The place and time of this research was conducted at the Islamic Kindergarten of Regency 50 cities. The object of this research is the evaluation of early childhood learning in using the independent curriculum. The method used in this research is quantitative method. This research site is usually carried out at a school institution which aims to test and see the application of the independent curriculum in early childhood learning. The data collection used in this research is observation of educators whose schools use the independent curriculum, determine the object to be observed, determine the secondary data needed, observe and record the results of observations. For example, such as researchers conducting research at the Islamic Kindergarten of Regency 50 cities.

The technique used by researchers when collecting data containing numbers is by collecting information that is measured for authenticity, calculated and compared on a statistical scale. The process of collecting data collected by researchers, namely from observation respondents, is a technique of quantitative research data analysis. For example, the process of managing data based on the type of respondent, thus forming the object and calculating the hypothesis test comes from the data obtained. Quantitative research is equipped with statistical tests, namely in the form of inferential statistical tests used when the data collection technique is random and when the required sample is clear, and there is descriptive, which is used in making data analysis by describing and describing the data that has been collected without changing the origin of the data obtained. Inferential statistics have two important parts, namely this parametric statistic which has strong power in research if it takes from data that has been fulfilled, and there are also non-parametric used in ordinary statistics found. In addition, the identification of conclusions from the results of the analysis and its relationship using and researcher questions.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Based on the above results, researchers use quantitative methods in examining the evaluation of early childhood learning in the use of an independent curriculum. The quantitative method uses data collection techniques used by research instruments. The data that has been collected is then analyzed quantitatively using descriptive or inferential statistics so that it can be concluded that the hypothesis formulated is proven or not. This quantitative method also uses data collection techniques in the form of numbers that can be measured for authenticity. collecting data used research instruments. Quantitative research is equipped with statistical tests, namely in the form of inferential statistical tests used when the data collection technique is random and when the required sample is clear, and there is descriptive, which is used in making data analysis by describing and describing the data that has been collected without changing the origin of the data obtained.

Table

No	Question	Jawaban		
		Strongly agree	agree	Disagree
1	In the implementation of the independent curriculum, can children practice their skills?	23,5%	76,5%	-
2	Using the independent curriculum, can children cultivate their character?	17,6%	74,5%	7,8%
3	Is learning using an independent curriculum flexible?	23,5%	68,6%	7,8%
4	Is the use of an independent curriculum effective learning?	23,5%	66,7%	9,8%
5	In using the independent curriculum, is children's learning efficient?	19,6%	68,6%	11,8%
6	The use of the previous curriculum is more effective for children?	13,7%	60,8%	23,5%
7	Using the previous curriculum, can it develop children's skills?	17,6%	60,8%	21,6%
8	The use of the previous curriculum, is it more efficient?	13,7%	62,7%	21,6%
9	In the use of an independent curriculum can you cultivate children's character?	70,6%	11,8%	15,7%
10	Can the use of an independent curriculum develop children's interests and talents?	64,7%	33,3%	-

11	Is it more efficient to use the independent curriculum than the previous curriculum in learning?	29,4%	66,7%	-
12	Is the independent curriculum more flexible than the previous curriculum in learning?	29,4%	66,7%	-
13	Is the use of the previous curriculum more flexible?	29,4%	64,7%	-
14	Does the use of the independent curriculum train children's skills more than the previous curriculum?	13,7%	62,7%	23,5%
15	Does the use of the independent curriculum train children's character more than the previous curriculum?	23,5%	74,5%	-
16	Is the independent curriculum better at developing children's interests and talents than the previous curriculum?	19,6%	74,5%	-
17	In the application of the material is the curriculum better than the previous curriculum?	21,6%	76,5%	-
18	Is it better to use the independent curriculum than the previous curriculum in supporting learning?	21,6%	66,7%	11,8%
19	In the use of themes, is the independent curriculum better than the previous curriculum?	21,6%	70,6%	7,8%
20	Is the independent curriculum better than the previous	19,6%	74,5%	-

	curriculum?			
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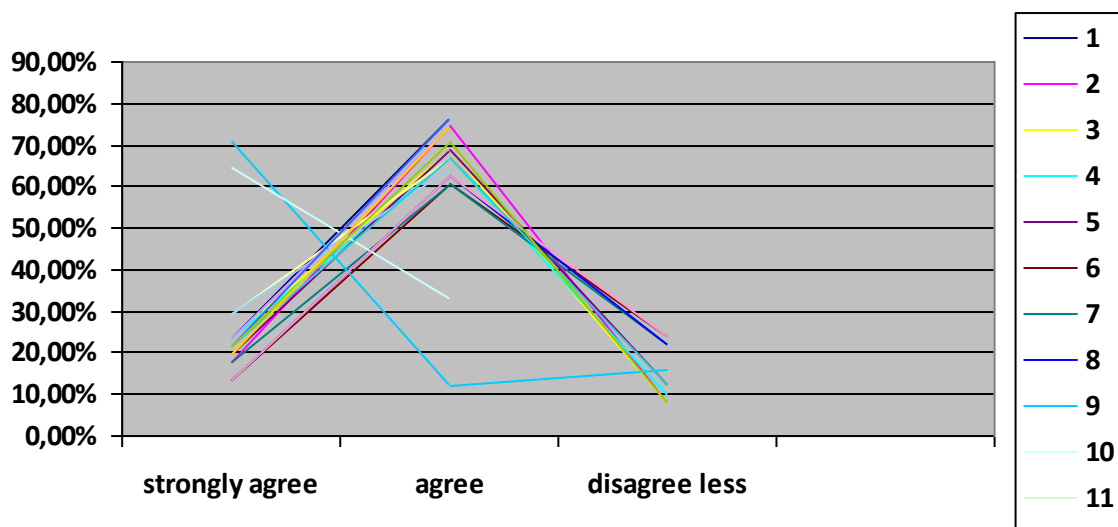
In the table above there are statements from several questions in the questionnaire about the use of an independent curriculum in early childhood learning studied by researchers at school. The statements generated from several questions in the questionnaire are very helpful for researchers in researching the use of an independent curriculum in learning for early childhood. The questions tested in this study were 20 questions containing statements about the independent curriculum regarding the benefits, objectives, and functions of using the independent curriculum for children. Statements covering the application of the independent curriculum in early childhood can train children's self-skills obtained a percentage of 76.5% in the agree category. As for the percentage of 23% in the strongly agree category. The statement that the use of an independent curriculum in early childhood can cultivate children's character obtained a percentage of 74.5% in the agree category. There was a percentage of 17.6% in the strongly agree category and a percentage of 7.8% in the disagree category. The statement that learning using the independent curriculum is flexible for children obtained a percentage of 68.6% in the agree category.

There was a percentage of 23.5% in the strongly agree category and a percentage of 7.8% in the disagree category. The statement that the use of an independent curriculum can make children's learning effective obtained a percentage of 66.7% in the agree category. The percentage of 23.5% strongly agreed and the percentage of 9.8% disagreed. The statement that the use of an independent curriculum can make children's learning efficient obtained a percentage of 68.6% in the agree category. The percentage of 19.6% strongly agreed and the percentage of 11.8% disagreed. The statement that the use of the curriculum is more effective for early childhood obtained a percentage of 60.8% in the agree category. There was a percentage of 13.7% in the strongly agree category and a percentage of 23.5% in the disagree category. The statement that the use of the previous curriculum can develop children's skills obtained a percentage of 60.8% in the agree category. The percentage of 17.6% in the category strongly agree. As for the percentage of 21.6% in the category of less agree. The statement that the use of the previous curriculum in children is more efficient obtained a percentage of 62.7% in the agree category. The percentage of 13.7% with the category strongly agree. The percentage of 21.6% disagreed.

The statement that the use of the previous curriculum can cultivate children's character obtained a percentage of 70.6% in the agree category. The percentage of 11.8% in the category strongly agree. The percentage of 15.7% in the category of less agree. The statement that the use of an independent curriculum can develop children's interests and talents obtained a percentage of 64.7% in the agree category. The percentage of 33.3% strongly agreed. The statement that the use of an independent curriculum is more efficient than the previous curriculum in learning obtained a

percentage of 66.7% in the agree category. The percentage of 29.4% strongly agreed. The statement that the independent curriculum is more flexible than the previous curriculum in learning obtained a percentage of 64.7% in the agree category. The percentage of 29.4% strongly agreed. The statement that the use of the previous curriculum was more flexible for early childhood obtained a percentage of 62.7% in the agree category. The percentage of 13.7% in the strongly agree category. As for the 23.5% category with the category of less agree. The statement that the use of an independent curriculum trains children's skills more than the previous curriculum obtained a percentage of 74.5% in the agree category. As for the percentage of 23.5% with the category strongly agree.

The statement that the use of the independent curriculum trains children's character more than the previous curriculum obtained a percentage of 74.5% in the agree category. The percentage of 19.6% strongly agreed. The statement that the use of an independent curriculum is better in developing children's interests and talents than the previous curriculum obtained a percentage of 76.5% in the agree category. The percentage of 21.6% strongly agreed. The statement that the independent curriculum is better than the previous curriculum in the application of material obtained a percentage of 66.7% in the agree category. The percentage of 21.6% strongly agreed. The percentage of 11.8% in the category of less agree. The statement that the use of an independent curriculum is better than the previous curriculum in supporting learning obtained a percentage of 70.6% in the agree category. The percentage of 21.6% strongly agreed. As for the percentage of 7.8% in the category of less agree. The statement that the independent curriculum is better than the previous curriculum in using themes obtained 74.5% in the agree category. The percentage of 19.6% strongly agreed. The statement that the independent curriculum is better than the previous curriculum obtained a percentage of 72.5% in the agree category. There is a percentage of 15.7% in the strongly agree category. There is a percentage of 7.8% in the category of less agree.



In the picture above there is a graph of the independent curriculum. The data on the results of testing questions on this independent curriculum are as follows: there are

10 teachers who are the objects of this research. In the research process, researchers used 20 questions to test the teacher's ability to use the independent curriculum in early childhood learning by answering questions about the independent curriculum. The highest research results on teachers obtained a percentage of 76.5%, based on the research results, the category was agreed (S). The second highest research percentage result obtained a percentage of 74.5%, with the category agreeing (S). In the third highest research result, a percentage of 70.6% was obtained, with the category agreeing (S). The results of research on the use of the highest independent curriculum in teachers obtained a percentage of 70.6% with the category strongly agree (SS). The second highest research percentage result obtained a percentage of 64.7%. with the category strongly agree (SS). In the third highest research result, a percentage of 29.4% was obtained, with the category strongly agreeing (SS). The results of research on the use of the highest independent curriculum in teachers obtained a percentage of 29.5% in the category of less agree. The second highest research percentage result obtained a percentage of 21.6%. with the category less agree. In the third highest research result, a percentage of 11.8% was obtained, with the category disagreeing less. The results of research on the use of an independent curriculum obtained in the category strongly disagree with a percentage of 0%. This shows that the category agrees as the highest category.

The data from the research test results on the use of an independent curriculum in early childhood learning can be explained as follows: the highest research results on teachers obtained a percentage of 68.6%, based on the results of the study, the category was agreed (S). The second highest research percentage result obtained a percentage of 66.7%, with the category agreeing (S). In the third highest research result, a percentage of 64.7% was obtained, with the category agreeing (S). The results of research on the use of the highest independent curriculum in teachers obtained a percentage of 23.4% in the category strongly agree (SS). The second highest research percentage result obtained a percentage of 21.6% with the category strongly agree (SS). In the third highest research result, a percentage of 19.6% was obtained, with the category strongly agreeing (SS). This shows that the category agrees as the highest category. The data from the research test results on the use of an independent curriculum in early childhood learning can be explained as follows: the highest research results on teachers obtained a percentage of 62.7%, based on the research results, the category was agreed (S). The second highest research percentage result obtained a percentage of 60.8%, with the category agreeing (S). In the third highest research result, a percentage of 33.3% was obtained, with the category agreeing (S). The results of research on the use of the highest independent curriculum in teachers obtained a percentage of 17.6% in the category strongly agree (SS). The second highest research percentage result obtained a percentage of 13.7%. with the category strongly agree (SS). In the third highest research result, a percentage of 13.7% was obtained, with the category strongly agreeing (SS). This shows that the category agrees as the highest category.

The result of this research is the use of an independent curriculum in early childhood learning. The use of this independent curriculum is to facilitate children in developing children's interests and talents. The use of this independent curriculum, teachers have begun to see and encourage children in honing children's talents and interests so that children are not hesitant or confused in the future when determining their talents and interests because when children are in kindergarten their talents and interests have been developed. The independent curriculum is also a curriculum where learning is flexible and can make children's learning efficient and effective. The use of this independent curriculum is very suitable for children, especially in early childhood development. The independent curriculum leads to skill and character development, focuses on essential material, and uses flexible learning.

The research studied on the use of this independent curriculum is the number of children who like learning using the independent curriculum. The method used in this research is a quantitative method that uses numbers or numerical in a study. This quantitative research method is obtained by collecting the amount of data obtained by the researcher by going directly to the research site which aims to find research data that comes from the source and is valid. By using quantitative methods, researchers can mention in detail how many people or how much data has been studied in the field. This method also makes it easier for researchers to make scientific papers using tables, bar charts, pie charts, line charts or graphs in scientific papers using data that are clear sources and provisions based on what is found in the research site.

The purpose of this study is to evaluate early childhood learning on the use of an independent curriculum. Most schools already use this independent curriculum, but a small number of schools still use the independent curriculum because in using the independent curriculum the school is not forced to implement it. Schools that do not use this independent curriculum are usually schools whose educators are not familiar with the independent curriculum or these schools are more accustomed to using the old curriculum, while schools that have used this independent curriculum are usually schools that are up to date with the times. The use of this independent curriculum for early childhood is very good because it is more liberating for children, but the government does not force schools to implement it only for schools that want to implement it.

CONCLUSION

Based on the discussion of the research above, it can be concluded that the use of an independent curriculum in early childhood learning is very helpful for children in developing their skills, character, interests and talents. The independent curriculum is also a curriculum that is flexible and effective and efficient in its use for early childhood learning. The results of research that tested teachers in the application of an independent curriculum for early childhood with 10 teachers who became objects and were given questions in the form of a questionnaire. In the discussion there is also a graph that

explains what percentage of teachers agree, strongly agree, and disagree with the use of an independent curriculum in early childhood learning, there is a table containing statements about questions that have been tested by research to teachers. So based on the results of the study, the achievement of using the independent curriculum for early childhood learning is included in the category of very feasible to use as a guide or curriculum that can help children in the learning process.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Previously, I would like to thank God Almighty who has blessed me so that this article is ready. I would also like to thank the Islamic Kindergarten of Regency 50 cities for helping me in researching a study entitled evaluation of early childhood learning in the use of the independent curriculum. After I researched this research I was able to understand and understand more. I hope that the next researcher will continue my research into a better research. I am grateful to myself for surviving so far and willing to struggle in completing this article even though it has been revised several times. I thank my parents who always prayed for me so that this article was completed and funded my healing when I was stressed about the article. I am grateful to my boarding house friends who willingly and sincerely listened to my complaints and cries of frustration in completing this article. I am also grateful to my dear cat Sui who always entertains me.

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