

TEACHER STRATEGIES IN MANAGING STUDENTS' LEARNING INTEREST IN THE INDEPENDENT CURRICULUM

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Abstract

This research examines the strategies used by teachers in managing students' learning interest in the context of the Independent Curriculum through a review of relevant literature. The Merdeka Curriculum, which emphasizes flexibility and freedom of learning, requires teachers to apply innovative and adaptive approaches in order to motivate and optimize students' potential. Through analysis of various literature sources, this research identified three main effective strategies: (1) Differentiated Learning, which adapts learning activities to each student's abilities and learning style to ensure full engagement; (2) Professional Development, where teachers actively improve skills and knowledge through ongoing training and involvement in professional communities; and (3) Inclusive Learning Environments, which create classrooms that support diversity and facilitate the development of students' social and emotional skills. The conclusion of this research shows that the application of these strategies by teachers can significantly increase students' interest in learning, create a more dynamic learning environment, and support the achievement of better learning outcomes within the Independent Curriculum framework. These findings provide important insights for educational practitioners and policy makers in efforts to improve the quality of learning in an era of more independent and inclusive education.

Keywords: Teacher Strategy, Interest in Learning, Independent Curriculum

INTRODUCTION

Education is one of the main pillars in developing quality human resources. In Indonesia, changing the curriculum is one of the efforts to reform the education system so that it can accommodate the demands of the times. The Merdeka Curriculum implemented by the Indonesian government aims to provide students with the freedom to learn according to their individual interests and potential. In order to achieve this goal, the teacher's role is very crucial in managing and increasing students' interest in learning (Erdamar, 2023).

The Independent Curriculum provides freedom for students to explore various fields of knowledge and skills. In contrast to the previous curriculum which was rigid, the Merdeka Curriculum is more flexible and emphasizes student-centred learning. The main challenge in implementing this curriculum is how teachers are able to design effective strategies so that students' interest in learning remains high and sustainable (Jumanto & Mustofa, 2023).

Student interest in learning is an important factor that influences the success of the learning process. Students who have a high interest in learning tend to be more active, enthusiastic, and have strong intrinsic motivation to learn. However, not all students have a high interest in learning (Saputri et al., 2023). Therefore, teachers need to understand the appropriate techniques and methods to arouse students' interest in learning, especially in the context of the Independent Curriculum.

One strategy that teachers can use is to use innovative and interactive learning methods. The use of technology in learning, such as educational applications, learning videos, and e-learning platforms, can be an effective tool to attract student interest (Porta & Todd, 2022). Apart from that, the use of project-based learning and collaborative learning methods can increase active student participation in the learning process.

Teachers also need to build positive relationships with students. Good communication between teachers and students can create a comfortable and enjoyable learning atmosphere. Teachers who are able to recognize the character and needs of each student will find it easier to determine the appropriate approach to increase their interest in learning (Aisah et al., 2024). Apart from that, awards and recognition for students' efforts and achievements, both academic and non-academic, can be additional motivation for students to continue studying diligently.

Preparing learning materials that are relevant to everyday life is also an important strategy in attracting students' interest in learning. Students will be

more interested and motivated to learn if the material presented has a direct connection to their experiences and environment. Teachers can integrate theoretical knowledge with case studies, field practice, or applicable activities (Putri & Riastini, 2024).

Continuous evaluation of the learning process is also very important. Teachers need to identify the extent to which the strategies implemented are effective in increasing students' interest in learning. Through continuous reflection and feedback, teachers can make improvements and adjustments to learning strategies so that they are more appropriate to the development of students' interests and abilities (Sihotang et al., 2023).

Thus, the teacher's strategy in managing students' interest in learning in the Independent Curriculum is not just about applying varied teaching methods, but also includes humanist aspects that bring teachers closer to students. The success of this curriculum really depends on the teacher's ability to create meaningful, relevant and enjoyable learning for students. With high interest in learning, it is hoped that students can develop their potential to the maximum and become a generation that is ready to face future challenges (Nurainiah et al., 2023).

RESEARCH METHOD

The study in this research is qualitative with literature. The literature study research method is a research approach that involves the analysis and synthesis of information from various literature sources that are relevant to a particular research topic. Documents taken from literature research are journals, books and references related to the discussion you want to research (Earley, M.A. 2014; Snyder, H. 2019).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Learning Motivation Theory

Learning motivation theory is an important aspect of education, which aims to understand and increase students' desire and learning efforts. There are several theories that explain this phenomenon, one of which is Abraham Maslow's needs theory which states that motivation is driven by basic human needs which are ordered in a hierarchical form. These needs start from the most basic such as physical, security, affection, appreciation, to self-actualization (Oga-Baldwin, 2022). For example, a student will be more motivated to learn if their basic needs are met, such as feeling safe and loving from the surrounding environment.

Apart from Maslow's needs theory, Victor Vroom's expectancy theory also provides an important perspective on learning motivation. Vroom argues that a person's motivation to perform a task is determined by their expectations of the results they will obtain. In an educational context, students will be more motivated to learn if they believe that their learning efforts will produce desired outcomes such as good grades or deep understanding. This theory emphasizes the important role of individual perceptions and beliefs regarding the effectiveness of their efforts in determining the level of motivation (Kato, 2022).

Another theory that is also relevant is self-control theory or self-determination theory (SDT) from Deci and Ryan. According to SDT, learning motivation can be intrinsic or extrinsic. Intrinsic motivation comes from within the individual, such as curiosity and personal satisfaction, while extrinsic motivation comes from external factors such as rewards or pressure from the environment. To increase sustainable learning motivation, educational environments are suggested to support students' needs for autonomy, competence, and engagement, so that they feel more empowered in pursuing their learning goals (Wang, 2022). Thus, understanding these various motivation theories can help educators design more effective strategies to increase student learning motivation.

Continuing the explanation of learning motivation theories, it is also important to highlight some practical applications of these theories in the educational environment. For example, to meet basic needs as in Maslow's theory, schools can create a safe and emotionally supportive environment for students. Comfortable classrooms, support from teachers and school staff, and the existence of student welfare programs are some ways to ensure that students' basic needs are met (Barrero, 2023). Thus, students will be more focused and motivated to learn.

In applying Vroom's expectancy theory, teachers can help students understand how their effort correlates with academic achievement. One way is to provide constructive feedback, build realistic expectations, and show concrete examples of how consistent effort can produce significant achievements. Through this guidance and support, students can increase their confidence that hard work and effective learning strategies will produce satisfactory results, so that their learning motivation will increase (Haryani et al., 2024).

Meanwhile, the principles of self-determination theory (SDT) can be applied by giving students more choice and control over their learning

process. This approach can include a flexible curriculum, providing autonomy in choosing projects or topics of interest, and encouraging students to set personal learning goals (Zhuang, 2023). Furthermore, teachers can create meaningful and challenging learning activities, which not only increase competence but also provide a sense of social connectedness among students. By providing appropriate support for autonomy, competence, and engagement needs, educators can encourage stronger and more sustained intrinsic motivation in students.

Teacher Strategies in the Context of the Independent Curriculum

In the context of the Independent Curriculum, teachers have implemented various innovative strategies to increase students' interest in learning. One of the main strategies is giving more autonomy to students in the teaching and learning process. Teachers provide opportunities for students to choose project topics or learning methods that suit their interests and talents. By reducing the role of the teacher as the center, and providing space for students to explore, students feel more involved and motivated to learn. These more flexible curriculum options allow students to feel responsible for their own learning, creating a greater sense of ownership and interest (Abdullah & Hendrayanto, 2024).

Apart from that, teachers also adopt a more collaborative and interactive learning approach. Methods such as project-based learning and problem-based learning have been implemented to facilitate group discussions and team work. This strategy not only improves students' social and communication skills but also makes the learning process more interesting and relevant to real life. Students are given challenges to solve real problems or develop projects that have an impact on their environment, so that they feel the practical value of what they learn (Rahmah et al., 2024).

Furthermore, teachers in the Merdeka Curriculum focus on continuous feedback and formative evaluation to monitor student progress. They use a variety of assessment tools to provide fast and constructive feedback. This feedback not only helps students understand their strengths and areas for improvement but also makes them more aware of their own development. Teachers also often reflect with students, helping them set personal learning goals and strategies to achieve them (Prihantini, 2024). This encourages students to remain motivated in pursuing new knowledge and skills, as well as internalizing the values of lifelong learning.

In a further effort to increase students' interest in learning, teachers also make optimal use of technology as part of their teaching strategy. The use of digital learning platforms, interactive applications and online resources allows for more varied and engaging learning. With technology, students can access learning materials anytime and anywhere, and participate in more flexible online learning. In addition, technology also facilitates differentiated learning to meet students' individual needs, which further strengthens their involvement in the teaching and learning process (Wardaya & Pambudi, 2024).

Another strategy implemented by teachers is integrating arts and culture-based approaches in the curriculum. Teachers involve aspects of the arts, such as music, dance and theater, and relate lessons to local and global cultural contexts (Rachmawati et al., 2024). For example, in history lessons, students not only learn historical facts but also analyze works of art from the period or replicate artistic styles as part of a project. This approach makes learning more contextual and enjoyable for students, and encourages a sense of pride and appreciation for their cultural heritage, which in turn increases their overall interest in learning.

Finally, teachers also increase students' interest in learning by developing a supportive and inclusive learning environment. They create a fun and safe classroom atmosphere where every student feels valued and supported (Dempsey, 2023). This is achieved through a learning approach that respects diversity, pays attention to individual needs, and provides the necessary emotional support and guidance. Teachers also try to establish positive relationships with students, so that they feel comfortable to participate actively and share their ideas. By creating a positive learning environment, students are more motivated to be involved in the learning process actively and continuously.

The Effectiveness of Various Teacher Strategies in Increasing Interest in Learning

The effectiveness of the strategies used by teachers in increasing students' interest in learning can be seen from the various approaches they apply. One strategy that has proven effective is the use of varied and interactive teaching methods. Teachers who combine visual, auditory and kinesthetic learning tend to be more successful in attracting students' interest because they are different in processing information. Methods such as group discussions, projects, and educational games allow students to learn more

actively and involved, which ultimately increases their interest in the subject matter (Tereshchenko, 2024).

Apart from various teaching methods, providing regular constructive feedback is also an effective strategy for increasing interest in learning. Good feedback not only leads students to improvement, but also provides recognition for the effort and progress they have made. Teachers who consistently provide positive and specific feedback tend to motivate students to study harder and feel appreciated in their learning process (Setiawati & Puspitasari, 2023). This creates a supportive learning environment where students feel motivated to continue improving and achieving their academic goals.

Finally, building a strong and positive relationship between teachers and students plays an important role in increasing interest in learning. Teachers who show empathy, understand their students' individual needs, and create an inclusive and supportive classroom environment, can increase students' self-confidence and comfort in learning. When students feel appreciated and supported by their teachers, they are more likely to show greater interest in taking lessons. Research shows that good teacher-student relationships can increase participation, attendance, and academic performance, all of which contribute to higher interest in learning (Samosir, 2022).

Apart from the factors already mentioned, the use of technology in learning is becoming an increasingly relevant and effective strategy in increasing students' interest in learning. Technology integration such as the use of computers, tablets, educational applications and online learning platforms can provide a more interesting and interactive learning experience. Technology allows students to access a variety of information sources, multimedia content, and collaborative tools that can enrich their learning process. Gamification learning platforms, for example, can make material that might be considered boring more interesting through game elements, challenges, and rewards (Mahdi, 2023).

Parental involvement is also an important factor that can influence students' interest in learning. Teachers who involve parents in the educational process often see more positive results. Through regular and transparent communication, such as parent-teacher meetings, progress reports, and use of school communication apps, parents can better understand their child's educational needs and provide appropriate support at home. When students see that both their parents and teachers work together to support their

academic success, they tend to feel more motivated and eager to learn (Mamlouk, 2024).

No less important, the strategy of implementing project-based learning (PBL) has also shown significant effectiveness in increasing interest in learning. PBL allows students to learn through developing real projects that require problem solving, research, and collaboration (Pranoto & Efendi, 2022). Through these projects, students can see the practical relevance of what they learn to real life, and they get the opportunity to use critical and creative thinking skills. This process not only makes learning more meaningful but also builds students' curiosity and enthusiasm for continuous learning.

Overall, the combination of innovative teaching methods, supportive feedback, positive interpersonal relationships, technology involvement, parent participation, and project-based learning can significantly increase students' interest in learning. Teachers who are able to adapt and incorporate these strategies into their teaching practices may be more successful in creating dynamic and productive learning environments (Mahadevan, 2023).

Recommendations for Strategies Used Optimally by Teachers

To optimize teaching strategies, teachers can start by integrating technology into their curriculum. The use of digital tools such as educational software, learning applications, and online collaboration platforms can provide a more interactive and engaging learning experience. This kind of technology allows students to learn in a more varied and personalized way (Hidayat & Rindaningsih, 2023). An example is using gamification applications that turn learning into a play experience, making students more engaged and motivated to learn. In addition, educational videos, simulations and virtual reality can provide concrete illustrations of abstract concepts, making understanding easier.

The next step is to increase parental involvement in their children's education. Teachers can involve parents through routine communication such as face-to-face meetings, student progress reports, and using school communication applications. This way, parents can better understand their child's academic progress and how they can help at home. A collaborative relationship between parents and teachers creates a more supportive and empowering learning environment for students because they receive support from two fronts: school and home (Ruhl, 2024). This is very important because students who see synergy between parents and teachers are usually more motivated and show better academic performance.

Finally, teachers can apply project-based learning methods (Project-Based Learning, PBL) to make learning more meaningful and relevant for students. In PBL, students engage in real projects that require them to conduct research, data analysis, and team collaboration. These projects usually relate to real-world problems or challenges, making learning a concrete and applicable experience. PBL not only teaches academic content but also develops critical thinking skills, creative skills, and social skills (ERYILMAZ & UZUN, 2023). Thus, learning becomes a holistic process that prepares students not only for exams but also for real life challenges.

Next, teachers can utilize differentiated learning strategies to accommodate students' various learning needs. Not all students learn the same way or at the same pace. With differentiated learning, teachers can provide a variety of different tasks or activities that are tailored to students' abilities and learning styles (Mardiani, 2024). For example, some students may be better at learning through visualization so they may be given assignments that involve concept maps or diagrams, while others may prefer to learn through physical involvement and may be given practical activities or projects. This approach ensures that every student gets the opportunity to learn in the way that is most effective for them, thereby increasing engagement and learning outcomes.

In addition, it is important for teachers to continue to develop their professionalism through continuous training and development. Teachers should attend workshops, seminars, and training to stay up-to-date with the latest teaching methods and educational trends (Hapudin & Mujazi, 2024). Participating in professional communities, both online and offline, can also give teachers the opportunity to share experiences and gain new insights from colleagues. Professional development not only improves teachers' qualifications and skills, but also increases their confidence in facing the challenges of modern education. By being lifelong learners themselves, teachers provide good role models for their students.

Finally, another strategy that can be effective is building an inclusive and supportive learning environment. Teachers should create classrooms that support diversity, where every student feels valued and accepted. One way to do this is by implementing social and emotional learning (SEL) which helps students develop the skills needed to interact positively with others and overcome their emotional challenges. Providing regular recognition and praise, holding activities that promote teamwork, and allowing students to express themselves in authentic ways are some ways to build an inclusive

learning community. By creating a positive and welcoming environment, teachers can help students feel more comfortable and motivated to learn (KUMAR, 2022).

CONCLUSION

Managing students' learning interests in the Independent Curriculum requires an innovative and adaptive approach from teachers. The following are several strategies that can be implemented, namely teachers provide assignments and activities that are tailored to the abilities and learning styles of each student to ensure that all students receive learning that suits the way they learn. Teachers improve their skills and knowledge through ongoing training as well as participating in professional communities to understand and implement the latest teaching methods. Building classrooms that support diversity where every student feels welcome and heard. Implementation of social and emotional learning (SEL) helps develop students' interpersonal and intrapersonal skills. By combining these three strategies, teachers can create a learning atmosphere that supports and motivates students. These steps not only increase student engagement but also help achieve optimal learning outcomes within the Merdeka Curriculum framework. Through a caring, adaptive and professional approach, teachers can facilitate students to reach their maximum potential in an era of more independent and inclusive education.

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