

## CHALLENGES OF MULTI-CURRICULUM MANAGEMENT AT UPT SPF SMP NEGERI 8 PERCUT SEI TUAN

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### **Abstract**

*This study aims to describe the management of multiple curricula and identify the challenges faced by teachers in planning and implementing learning at UPT SPF SMP Negeri 8 Percut Sei Tuan. The school concurrently applies three curricula: the 2013 Curriculum (Kurikulum 2013) for Grade IX, the Merdeka Curriculum (Kurikulum Merdeka) for Grade VIII, and a deep learning-based approach for Grade VII. The research uses a qualitative approach with a phenomenological method. The data collection technique was carried out through in-depth interviews with the vice principal for curriculum affairs and four subject teachers, selected purposively based on their direct involvement in curriculum implementation. The results of the study show that multi-curriculum management is carried out through planning, organizing, implementing, and adjusting to curriculum changes. Challenges in learning planning include the complexity of the preparation of learning tools, time constraints, and differences in teacher competencies. Meanwhile, challenges in the implementation of learning include variations in teaching methods, heterogeneous classroom management, and differences in assessment systems between curricula. This research shows that multi-curriculum management requires high adaptability and coordination so that the learning process continues to run effectively.*

**Keywords:** *Multi-Curriculum; Curriculum Management; Learning Planning; Learning Implementation*

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### **A. Introduction**

The curriculum is the main instrument in the implementation of education that functions as a guideline in directing the objectives, content, process, and evaluation of learning. From the perspective of the education system, the curriculum is not only understood as a formal document, but also as a practice that is implemented in classroom learning activities. Therefore, the effectiveness of the curriculum is largely determined by how the curriculum is managed and implemented by the educational unit. Under ideal conditions, education units implement one curriculum consistently so that the learning process can take place in a structured and directed manner. However, the dynamics of education policy in Indonesia show that there are relatively rapid changes in the curriculum, such as the transition from the 2013 Curriculum to the Independent Curriculum, as well as the strengthening of the deep learning-based learning approach. This condition causes not all schools to be able to make simultaneous transitions, resulting in the phenomenon of implementing multi-curricular in one educational unit.

The multi-curriculum phenomenon shows that in one school more than one curriculum can be applied at the same time, which is adjusted to the grade level or readiness of implementation. For the purposes of this study, multi-curriculum management is defined as the process of planning, organizing, implementing, and supervising the simultaneous application of two or more distinct curriculum frameworks within a single educational unit, requiring teachers and school leaders to adapt learning approaches, instructional tools, and assessment systems to the specific demands of each curriculum. This condition poses complex managerial consequences, because each curriculum has different characteristics, both in terms of structure, learning approach, and assessment system.

UPT SPF SMP Negeri 8 Percut Sei Tuan is one of the schools that implements multiple curricula simultaneously, namely the 2013 Curriculum (Kurikulum 2013) in Grade IX, the Merdeka Curriculum (Kurikulum Merdeka) in Grade VIII, and the *deep learning approach* in Grade VII. Prior to this study, several issues had already emerged at the school level: teachers reported confusion over different lesson plan formats required by each curriculum, inconsistency in assessment rubrics across grade levels, and a lack of coordination mechanisms to facilitate knowledge-sharing among teachers handling different curricula. These conditions formed the basis for the present research and highlight the urgency of examining how the school manages such curricular complexity. The difference in characteristics between the curricula requires teachers to be able to adjust the planning and implementation of learning simultaneously.

Previous research has generally focused on the implementation of one particular curriculum. Therefore, studies on the management of multi-curricular in education units are still limited. This research aims to fill this gap by describing the management of multi-curricular and analyzing the challenges faced by teachers in planning and implementing learning.

## **B. Method**

This study uses a qualitative approach with a phenomenological method. Phenomenology in this context refers to the exploration of how teachers and school leaders directly experience and perceive the challenges of managing multiple curricula in their daily professional practice, focusing on the meaning they assign to those experiences. This phenomenological approach is appropriate because the study foregrounds the subjective experiences of participants; if the focus were solely on describing institutional management practices, a case study design would be more suitable. The research subjects consist of five informants selected through purposive sampling: one deputy principal for curriculum affairs and four subject teachers from Grades VII, VIII, and IX, chosen based on their direct involvement in curriculum planning and instruction, a minimum of three years of teaching experience at the school, and active participation in curriculum coordination meetings. The data collection technique was carried out through semi-structured in-depth interviews

lasting approximately 45 to 60 minutes each. Documentation analysis was also conducted using school curriculum documents, lesson plans (RPP/Modul Ajar), and assessment rubrics to triangulate and strengthen the interview data. The data obtained was then analyzed using Miles and Huberman's interactive model, including data reduction, data display, coding, theme development, and conclusion drawing. Data validity was ensured through source triangulation and member checking with key informants.

## C. Findings and Discussion

### 1. Findings

The results of the study show that the main challenges in learning planning include the complexity of the preparation of learning tools, time constraints, and differences in teacher competencies. To provide a systematic account of these challenges, the findings are organized into five key themes: (1) curriculum planning and preparation of learning tools, (2) curriculum implementation and teaching methods, (3) assessment systems across curricula, (4) teacher competence and professional readiness, and (5) school coordination and institutional support.

According to Fadhilah Rahmafritri (2024), learning planning is a systematic process that includes objectives, materials, methods, and assessments that are tailored to the characteristics of students. In the context of multi-curriculars, this process becomes more complex because teachers have to prepare different plans for each curriculum.

Field data shows that teachers have difficulties in compiling learning tools because they have to adjust to the characteristics of the 2013 Curriculum which is structured, the flexible Independent Curriculum, and the *deep learning approach* that emphasizes deep understanding. This condition strengthens the findings of research by Suryani et al. (2021) which stated that the implementation of the new curriculum increases the complexity of lesson planning for teachers.

Husna and Rosyid (2022) explained that difficulties in learning planning are influenced by time constraints and workload. In this study, teachers had to divide their time between teaching, assessment, and administrative activities, so that planning was often done outside of working hours. This condition is also in line with research by Putri et al. (2023) which shows that administrative burden is one of the main obstacles in curriculum implementation. In addition, student readiness also affects learning planning. Not all students are ready to participate in active learning, so teachers must adjust strategies gradually. This is in accordance with the theory of learning differentiation put forward by Tomlinson (2017), which emphasizes the importance of adjusting learning based on student needs. In terms of competence, even though teachers have participated in training, the understanding gained still requires adjustment to classroom conditions. Research by Rahman (2022) shows that teacher training is often theoretical and not fully applicable in learning practice.

In addition to the factors described earlier, challenges in learning planning are also related to the inconsistency of the format of learning tools between curricula. The 2013 Curriculum requires the preparation of a systematic and structured lesson plan, while the Independent Curriculum uses more flexible teaching modules. This difference causes teachers to understand and master different formats at the same time. According to research by Fitriani et al. (2022), differences in the format of learning tools between curricula can increase the cognitive burden of teachers in the planning process. This condition is also seen in this study, where teachers must adjust the format, content, and learning approach according to the demands of each curriculum. In addition, the learning planning process in the context of multi-curricular requires reflective skills from teachers. Teachers should not only develop learning tools, but also evaluate the effectiveness of such planning based on classroom teaching experience. This is in line with the opinion of Schön (2017) who emphasizes the importance of *reflective practice* in improving the quality of learning. Another factor that is a challenge is the limited learning resources that support the implementation of the latest curriculum, especially in the *deep learning* approach. Teachers still depend on available learning resources and often have to develop the material independently. This shows that learning planning is not only influenced by teacher competence, but also by the availability of educational resources.

Thus, the challenges of learning planning in the context of multi-curriculum management are multidimensional, including technical, cognitive, and resource aspects. From the perspective of curriculum management theory, Fullan (2016) emphasizes that curriculum change requires not only policy implementation but also deep institutional and individual capacity building. The findings of this study align with change management theory, which holds that rapid curriculum transitions create resistance and adaptation challenges among teachers (Hallinger, 2018). From the perspective of teacher professional development, Darling-Hammond et al. (2020) argue that sustainable professional learning must be embedded in daily practice, not limited to one-time training sessions. These theoretical lenses collectively suggest that the challenges faced by teachers in multi-curriculum management are systemic issues requiring structural solutions at the school and policy levels.

### **Teachers' Challenges in the Implementation of Multi-Curriculum Learning**

The results of the study show that challenges in the implementation of learning include variations in teaching methods, classroom management, and assessment systems. According to Lestarina (2019), the implementation of the curriculum is the process of implementing lesson plans in real activities in the classroom. In the context of multi-curriculars, the implementation of learning becomes more complex because teachers have to adapt methods to different curriculum characteristics. Field data showed that teachers used varied learning methods, such as discussions, questions and answers, and group work. This is in line with research by Hidayat et al. (2022) which states that active learning is the main approach in the Independent Curriculum.

Guliyev and Gawrich (2021) explained that the implementation of learning is a form of instructional interaction between teachers and students. In this study, the interaction was not optimal because there were still passive students. This shows that changing learning approaches requires time to adapt. In the aspect of classroom management, the difference in student characteristics is the main challenge. This is in line with research by Santoso (2020) who states that learning success is influenced by teachers' ability to manage heterogeneous classrooms. In the assessment aspect, the difference in the assessment system between curricula is a challenge in itself. The 2013 curriculum uses structured assessment, the Independent Curriculum is more flexible, while *deep learning* emphasizes students' thinking processes. This is in line with the concept of authentic assessment put forward by Mueller (2018), which emphasizes process-based assessment and student performance.

In addition, time constraints are an obstacle in the implementation of assessments. Teachers must make thorough observations of student activities, which require precision and sufficient time. Thus, the implementation of multi-curricular learning shows that there are high professional demands on teachers in managing the learning process effectively.

## E. Conclusion

Based on the results of the research and discussion, it can be concluded that the management of multi-curricular at UPT SPF SMP Negeri 8 Percut Sei Tuan is carried out through a management function that includes planning, organizing, implementing, and adjusting to curriculum changes. Planning is carried out collectively through meetings at the beginning of the school year by considering teacher readiness, student characteristics, and facilities and infrastructure. Organizing is carried out through the division of teachers' duties according to the field of study with the demands of flexibility in the application of learning. The implementation of the curriculum shows that there is an adaptation in the learning strategy in accordance with the characteristics of each curriculum, while adjustments to curriculum changes are carried out gradually through training, discussion, and hands-on experience in the classroom. Challenges in learning planning include the complexity of preparing learning tools that must be adapted to several curricula at once, time constraints due to high workloads, and differences in teachers' competencies in understanding and developing learning tools. In addition, the readiness of diverse students also affects the effectiveness of the planning that has been prepared.

Meanwhile, challenges in the implementation of learning include the demands of using varied learning methods, heterogeneous classroom management, and differences in assessment systems between curricula. Teachers are required to be able to adjust learning strategies and assessments simultaneously in different classroom conditions. Thus, multi-curriculum management requires high adaptability, effective coordination, and continuous support in the form of teacher training and professional development so that the implementation of learning can run optimally. The most critical challenges identified in this study are: (1) the inconsistency of learning tool formats between the 2013 Curriculum and

the Merdeka Curriculum, which increases cognitive burden on teachers; (2) the absence of a structured coordination mechanism for teachers handling different curricula; and (3) limited access to curriculum-specific learning resources, particularly for the deep learning approach. In response to these challenges, it is recommended that school management take the following actions: establish a regular inter-curriculum coordination forum led by the vice principal for curriculum; provide in-school mentoring by teachers experienced in the Merdeka Curriculum for those still transitioning from the 2013 Curriculum; develop a school-based repository of learning tools and assessment formats aligned to each applicable curriculum; and advocate to the education office for targeted, school-based professional development rather than generic district-level training.

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