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Transformation of Primary Education: Curriculum Implementation to Improve The Quality Of Learning

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Abstract

The quality of elementary education in Indonesia remains uneven, with many schools struggling to implement innovative curricula due to limited resources, high administrative burdens, and insufficient teacher training. This study investigates how curriculum implementation influences learning quality in elementary schools and explores the role of teachers in overcoming barriers to innovation. Using a qualitative case study method, the research involved 60 participants from 20 elementary schools in Serang City, including classroom teachers, subject teachers, and principals. Data collection was conducted through in-depth interviews, participatory observations, and document analysis. The findings showed that most schools have begun implementing innovative methods such as project-based learning, thematic approaches, and technology integration. Teachers served as facilitators, innovators, and agents of change, although their effectiveness varied depending on institutional support and training. This study recommends enhanced infrastructure, reduced administrative loads, and continuous professional development to ensure successful curriculum transformation. The results offer insights for policymakers and educational institutions seeking to improve the learning outcomes in primary education.

Keywords: *Educational Transformation, Curriculum Implementation, Elementary Schools, Learning Quality.*

INTRODUCTION

Elementary education plays a very important role in shaping students' character, intelligence, and basic skills (Adnyana et al., 2023). The quality of learning at the elementary education level will greatly affect the development of students' education at the next level (Alam et al., 2021). One of the factors that contributes greatly to the quality of learning is the curriculum (Ou et al., 2023). The right curriculum, if implemented properly, can have a significant positive impact on student learning outcomes. This requires a transformation in learning carried out at elementary schools, especially in Serang City, Banten Province, which has its own social and economic characteristics.

Along with the development of globalization and technology, education is expected to be able to adapt to meet the needs of the times. Basic education is the mainstay in forming a generation that is ready to face future challenges (Klemenc-Ketiš & Zafošnik, 2024). The curriculum as the main guideline in the education process must be able to answer these challenges by offering innovative and relevant learning strategies. However, the reality in the field shows that many elementary schools still have difficulty in implementing the curriculum optimally (Çubukçu, 2012).

In Indonesia, curriculum changes have been carried out gradually with the aim of improving the quality of education (Hidayah et al., 2022). The Merdeka Curriculum, for example, the latest, encourages a more student-centered learning approach, encourages creativity, and involves more contextual learning experiences (Marlina et al., 2023). However, the implementation of this curriculum is not without challenges, especially in elementary schools that have limited resources. Therefore, this study focuses on how the implementation of the curriculum at elementary schools can improve the quality of learning and what challenges are dealt and solutions are implemented by schools.

In addition, the importance of parental involvement in the learning process is also a factor that cannot be ignored. At many elementary schools in Serang City, parental participation in supporting children's learning is still relatively low. In fact, research shows that parental involvement in children's education can increase student motivation and learning outcomes (Yang et al., 2023). Therefore, building synergy between teachers, schools, and parents is an important strategy in supporting innovative learning transformation (Nuriyadi et al., 2024).

Various studies have shown that the implementation of innovative curricula can improve the quality of learning. For example, the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics)-based approach has been shown to be effective in improving students' critical thinking skills (Catacutan et al., 2023; Fitriana et al., 2024; Rofik, 2022). Likewise, the project-based learning model (PBL) is able to encourage students to learn more deeply and applicatively (Shemer-Elkayam, 2024). However, the implementation of these methods at elementary schools in Serang City still faces various obstacles, including lack of teacher training, limited infrastructure, and schools' unpreparedness in adopting curriculum changes

METHODS

This study used a qualitative approach with a case study method to explore the role of teachers in creating an innovative elementary education curriculum in Serang

City, Banten Province. This method was chosen because it allows for an in-depth understanding of complex phenomena in a real context.

Based on data from the Ministry of Education and Culture's Data Portal, Serang City has a total number of 263 elementary schools (SD) spread across eight sub-districts (data.kemdikbud.go.id). For this study, a sample of 10% from the total SD were selected, which was around 20 schools. The sample selection was considered by the school status variations (public or private), accreditation, and geographic location to ensure representativeness. From each selected school, three main respondents were taken: one class teacher, one subject teacher, and the principal. Thus, the total respondents in this study were 60 people. The following is the number distribution of elementary schools in Serang City based on sub-districts:

Table 1. The Number Distribution of Elementary Schools in Serang City

Subdistrict	**Number of elementary schools**
Curug	22
Walantaka	35
Copocok jaya	40
Serang	88
taktakan	38
kasemen	40
Total	**263**

Source: Ministry of Education and Culture Data Portal

Data collection was conducted through the following methods: (1) In-depth Interviews: Conducted with teachers and school principals to understand their roles in curriculum development and implementation, as well as the challenges they have. (2) Participant Observation: Directly observing classroom learning processes to examine the implementation of innovative curricula and teacher-student interactions. (3) Document Analysis: Reviewing relevant documents such as lesson plans (RPP), syllabi, and teaching materials to assess innovation in lesson planning.

The collected data was analyzed using thematic analysis through the following steps: (1) Transcription: Converting interview and observation data into text format. (2) Coding: Identifying and labeling emerging themes or patterns from the data. (3) Categorization: Grouping similar codes into broader categories. (4) Conclusion Drawing: Summarizing key findings based on the defined categories and linking them to the research objectives.

To ensure the validity and reliability of the data, source and method

triangulation were conducted by comparing data from different sources (teachers, principals, and documents) and various data collection methods (interviews, observations, and documentation). Additionally, member was carried out by asking respondents to verify the interview results.

This study involved 20 elementary schools in Serang City, which were selected purposively to represent the status variations (public or private), accreditation, and geographic location. From each school, three main respondents were interviewed: one class teacher, one subject teacher, and the principal, so that the total respondents were 60 people.

Table 2. Distribution of Schools by District and Status

Subdistrict	Public	Private	Total
Curug	2	1	3
Walantaka	1	1	2
Copocok jaya	2	1	3
Serang	3	2	5
taktakan	1	1	2
kasemen	3	2	5
Total	**12**	**8**	**20**

Source: Research Data

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study aimed to explore the role of teachers in creating innovative elementary education curriculum and learning transformation at elementary schools (SD) in Serang City, Banten Province. Through a qualitative approach with a case study method, data were obtained through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation studies. The following are the results and discussions of the study.

1. Implementation of Innovative Curriculum

The results of the study showed that teachers play an important role in creating innovative curricula in elementary education. Some of the innovations found in this study include:

a. Teachers' Understanding of the Curriculum

Most teachers understand the importance of innovation in the curriculum to improve the quality of learning. However, their level of readiness to implement innovation varies, depending on experience, training, and support from educational institutions. Teachers who have received training tend to be

more prepared to implement innovative methods compared to those who have not received training.

The results of this study indicated that 70% of teachers who have received training are able to implement innovative curriculum effectively, while only 40% of teachers who have not received training can do the same. This indicates that training and professional development play a significant role in increasing teacher readiness to adopt learning innovations.

In addition, it was found that teachers who have more than 10 years of experience tend to be more open to innovation compared to teachers who have less than 5 years of experience. This experience factor also influences teachers' understanding to manage the classes innovatively. Therefore, ongoing training programs are needed so that all teachers have the same understanding in implementing the innovative curriculum, and readiness to adopt the innovation.

b. Learning Methods Applied

Teachers apply various innovative methods to improve the effectiveness of learning at elementary schools. The most commonly used methods include project-based learning, the use of information technology, thematic approaches, and collaborative learning. However, this study found that the application of these methods is not evenly distributed across all schools.

Schools with adequate facilities and strong management support are better able to implement innovative learning methods optimally. Conversely, schools that have limited resources experience some obstacles in implementing learning innovations. Factors such as the availability of technology, student readiness, and support from parents also play a role in determining the success of innovative methods applied by the teachers. The following is data about the innovative learning methods applied at elementary schools, which is as the subject of this study:

Table 3. Innovative Learning Methods Applied

Learning methods	Number of Schools Implementing
Project Based Learning	12
Use of Technology	15
Thematic Approach	18
Collaborative Learning	10

From the table above, it can be seen that the thematic approach is the method most widely applied by elementary schools in Serang City, Banten Province, with 18 schools using it. This shows that this method is easier to adapt because it is relevant to the existing curriculum and flexible to be applied in various subjects.

On the other hand, project-based learning and collaborative learning are still applied in less than 50% of the total schools studied. This can be caused by time constraints in completing projects and teachers' lack of understanding of effective implementation strategies. Therefore, intensive training on this method needs to be increased so that more schools can adopt it.

Meanwhile, the use of technology in learning has also increased, with 15 schools have implemented it. However, the implementation of technology is still constrained by limited access to devices and internet networks, especially in areas with limited infrastructure. Therefore, improving digital infrastructure is one of the main recommendations so that technology-based learning transformation can run more optimally (Mohamed Hashim et al., 2022). Overall, this study showed that innovation in learning at elementary schools is highly dependent on teacher readiness, support from the school, and the availability of facilities that support the implementation of more effective learning methods

2. The Role of Teachers in Learning Transformation

a. As a Facilitator

Teachers act as facilitators by encouraging students to be active in the learning process (Ly, 2024). They create a conducive learning environment and motivate students to think critically, creatively, and independently (Hidayat et al., 2023). Teachers who are successful as facilitators are able to design more student-centered learning, where students not only receive information passively but also actively participate in exploring concepts and solving problems. However, some teachers still face difficulties in changing their roles from traditional teachers to facilitators. Factors that influence this include habits in conventional teaching systems, limitations in technological skills, and lack of support from the curriculum whish is still oriented towards exam results. Therefore, ongoing training and mentoring are needed so that teachers

can be more effective in carrying out this role.

b. As a Innovator

Teachers are required to be creative in designing teaching materials and learning strategies that are in accordance with current developments (Wu & Chen, 2021). Some teachers have succeeded in developing interactive learning media, such as learning videos, digital simulations, and the use of educational applications. In addition, they also create creative modules that can be adjusted to students' learning needs. However, this study found that limited time and resources are often obstacles to this innovation process.

Teachers who have high administrative burden often find it difficult to allocate time to develop innovative learning methods. In addition, limited school infrastructure, such as lack of access to technological devices, also hinders the implementation of digital-based learning innovations. Therefore, support is needed from schools in the form of more flexible time allocation for teachers and the provision of adequate facilities so that learning innovations can run more optimally.

c. As an Agent of Change

Teachers not only play a role in the learning process in the classroom but also have a broader role as agents of change in the world of education (So & Park, 2022). They play a role in initiating positive changes at schools by inviting colleagues to apply new methods, participating in learning communities, and being involved in formulating education policies at the school and regional levels (Nurwanci et al., 2025).

Teachers play an important role in the success of curriculum implementation. Innovative and adaptive teachers are able to provide a fun and meaningful learning experience for students (Nageen et al., 2023). Teachers who are proactive in seeking new and creative methods in teaching tend to be more successful in improving the quality of learning (Ingtias et al., 2022).

Several schools as the objects of the study showed that teachers who are active in learning communities tend to be faster in adopting curriculum innovations. They share experiences, learning strategies, and challenges faced in

implementing new methods. This creates a school culture that is more adaptive to changes and developments in education.

Several teachers interviewed in this study explained that they use project-based learning methods to engage students more actively in the learning process. They also use different approach to accommodate different learning needs of students, the use of technology, thematic approaches and collaborative learning in accordance with the principles of the Independent Curriculum.

However, not all teachers have the same opportunity to act as agents of change. High workload factors and lack of appreciation for innovative efforts are often the main obstacles. Therefore, there needs to be a support from the government and schools in providing incentives and awards for teachers who are active in developing and transforming learning.

By playing a role as a facilitator, innovator, and agent of change, teachers have a major contribution in creating a basic education curriculum which should more innovative and adaptive to the times. Support from various parties, including the government, schools, and the community, is a key factor in realizing sustainable educational transformation.

3. Challenges in Implementing Innovative Curriculum

a. Limited Resources

Some schools face limited facilities, such as lack of technological devices and internet access. This hampers the implementation of technology-based learning, which should be an important part of educational transformation. In addition, the lack of teaching materials that support innovation is also a major obstacle in implementing innovative curricula.

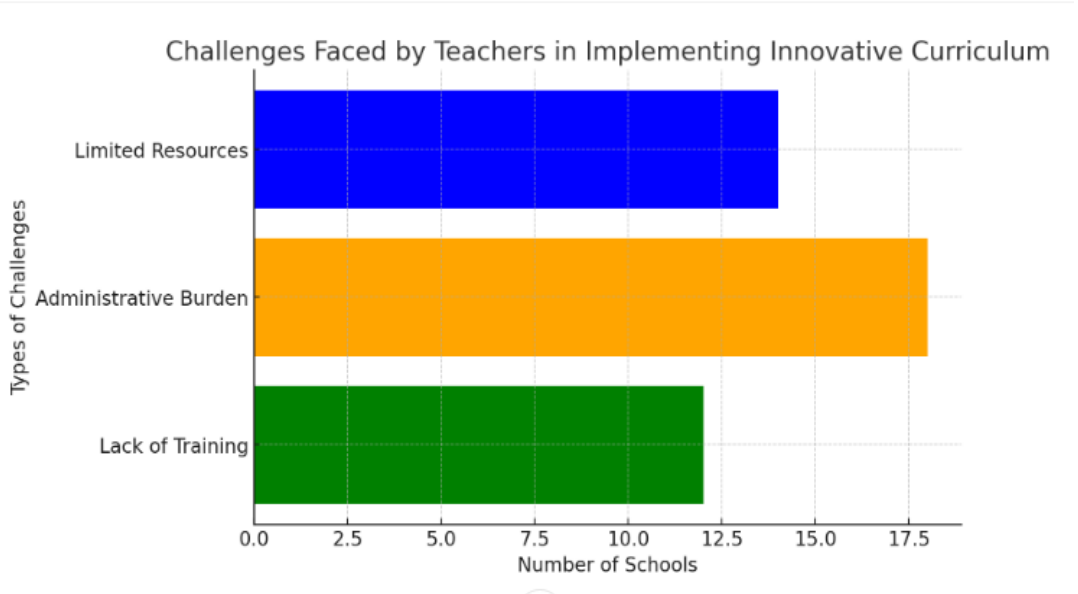
b. Administrative Burden

Teachers are often burdened with administrative tasks that reduce their focus on developing learning. The high administrative burden leaves teachers with little time to design innovative learning methods, thus hampering curriculum transformation at elementary schools.

c. Lack of Training

Not all teachers receive adequate training related to innovative learning methods. Uneven training causes gaps in the implementation of innovative curriculum, so that innovation in education cannot be optimally implemented at all schools. Therefore, continuous training programs are one of the key factors that succeed the implementation of innovative curriculum.

Chart 1. Challenges Faced by Teachers in Implementing Innovative Curriculum



Source: Research Data

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the successful implementation of innovative curriculum at elementary schools is significantly influenced by the active role of teachers as facilitators, innovators, and agents of change. Teachers' ability to adapt and apply learning strategies such as project-based learning, thematic approaches, and technology integration has proven to be a key factor in enhancing the quality of learning. These findings challenge the assumption that curriculum innovation must always be driven by top-down policy and highlight the critical importance of teacher agency at the classroom level. The study contributes scientific discourse by introducing teacher adaptability as a central variable in curriculum transformation and by reinforcing the value of context-based learning strategies. It also offers practical insights for policymakers and school administrators on the need to invest in teacher training, reduce

administrative burdens, and improve learning infrastructure. However, given the limitations in sample size and regional scope, the findings of this research should be interpreted with caution. Further studies involving more diverse populations and longitudinal data are needed to strengthen the generalizability and to uncover additional factors that may influence the success of curriculum implementation in primary education.

This study provides important insights for schools, governments, and policy makers in efforts to improve the quality of basic education through innovative curriculum. With the active role of teachers as facilitators, innovators, and agents of change, the transformation of learning at elementary schools can run more effectively and have positive impact on student development. Therefore, support from various parties is needed to create an adaptive, innovative, and sustainable education system. This study concludes that the implementation of the curriculum at elementary schools has great potential to improve the quality of learning if carried out properly. A deep understanding on curriculum, adequate infrastructure support, and the role of innovative and adaptive teachers are main factors that contribute to the success of curriculum implementation. Although there are challenges such as limited resources and lack of parental involvement, solutions such as improving teacher training, the use of technology, and collaboration between teachers, students, and parents can help overcome these challenges. Therefore, the recommendations from this study are the importance of ongoing professional training for teachers, increasing access to technology, and school programs that involve parents in the learning process. With these efforts, the basic transformation of education through effective curriculum implementation can be achieved, and ultimately can improve the quality of education in Indonesia.

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