

Research Article

# Evaluating the Planning and Implementation of the Independent Curriculum in Senior High Schools: A CIPP-Based Case Study in Semarang, Indonesia

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**Abstract:** Educational planning plays a strategic role in guiding the success of policy implementation at the school level. This study aims to evaluate the planning and implementation of the Independent Curriculum in Senior High Schools in Semarang City using the CIPP evaluation model (Context, Input, Process, Product). A descriptive qualitative approach was employed, with data collected through interviews, observations, and document analysis. The findings show that in the context aspect, schools demonstrate strong support for the new curriculum, although challenges remain in terms of understanding and infrastructure. In the input aspect, teachers were actively involved in curriculum development, yet training and technical assistance remain suboptimal. The process aspect reveals collaborative efforts among teachers, but the implementation of the Pancasila Student Profile projects and authentic assessment still face several obstacles. Meanwhile, in terms of product, teacher creativity and student participation have improved, although a comprehensive evaluation instrument for holistic learning outcomes is still lacking. These findings underscore the need to strengthen teacher training, reduce administrative burdens, and develop adaptive evaluation tools for future curriculum implementation.

**Keywords:** CIPP evaluation; educational planning; Independent Curriculum; policy implementation; senior high school.

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## 1. Introduction

Education serves as a strategic investment in shaping a high-quality, adaptive, and competitive human capital. In pursuit of national education goals, planning plays a fundamental role in guiding policy direction and the implementation of educational programs across all levels [1]. However, the success of any educational plan is highly dependent on effective implementation and a comprehensive, ongoing evaluation mechanism [2].

The Independent Curriculum (Kurikulum Merdeka) has emerged as the latest policy innovation in Indonesia's education system, offering schools the flexibility to design contextualized, student-centered learning that aligns with local needs and global challenges [3]. While the curriculum provides a promising framework for transformative learning, its implementation faces various challenges—including disparities in teacher understanding, school resource readiness, and infrastructure limitations [4].

Evaluating the planning and implementation of the Independent Curriculum is thus essential to determine how well the policy is being executed and to assess its impact on both learning processes and outcomes. Robust evaluation demands a systematic, collaborative, and

context-sensitive approach to generate concrete insights for the development of relevant and responsive educational policies and practices in the 21st century [5][6].

Unfortunately, many previous studies have focused narrowly on either the implementation process or teacher perceptions, without examining the continuum from planning to execution in a holistic manner. This study, therefore, aims to evaluate the planning and implementation of the Independent Curriculum at the senior high school level in Semarang, Indonesia, using the CIPP evaluation model (Context, Input, Process, Product), as originally developed by Stufflebeam and later refined by Zhang et al. [7]. Through this framework, the study seeks to provide a comprehensive overview of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges faced by schools in executing this educational policy.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Concept of Educational Planning Evaluation**

Educational planning evaluation is a systematic process used to assess the quality, relevance, and effectiveness of education-related plans. According to Arikunto and Jabar, evaluation in education serves to determine the extent to which educational goals have been achieved through planned programs [1]. Within this context, planning evaluation involves the review of assumptions, supporting data, and strategies to ensure they align with the actual needs and conditions of local educational contexts.

### **2.2 Functions and Objectives of Planning Evaluation**

Ornstein and Hunkins [6] emphasize that the main functions of educational planning evaluation include formative functions—to refine plans prior to implementation; summative functions—to assess the success of implemented plans; and policy feedback—to inform future policy decisions. UNESCO further stresses that modern educational planning should be data-driven and grounded in rigorous evaluation to respond to global challenges such as access inequality, disparities in quality, and shifting competency demands in the 21st century [3].

### **2.3 CIPP Evaluation Model**

One of the most widely used and enduring models in program evaluation is the CIPP model—Context, Input, Process, and Product—originally developed by Stufflebeam (1983). The model has since been refined by researchers such as Zhang et al. [7] particularly to address contemporary contexts like digital transformation and competency-based education.

- 1) Context evaluation identifies needs and challenges that justify a program.
- 2) Input evaluation assesses strategies, resources, and feasibility.
- 3) Process evaluation monitors implementation activities and adherence to plans.
- 4) Product evaluation measures outcomes and overall impact.

The CIPP model is highly relevant in educational policy evaluation due to its comprehensive nature and adaptability across diverse institutional settings.

### **2.4 Recent Approaches in Evaluating Educational Planning**

Fullan proposes that planning evaluation should be collaborative and adaptive, involving various stakeholders—teachers, principals, policymakers, and communities—in assessing the relevance and effectiveness of educational programs [8]. Evaluation, therefore, should not be limited to quantitative metrics but must also consider narrative data and local context, reflecting a mixed-methods approach.

Hargreaves and Shirley argue that in a rapidly changing and digitally driven educational landscape, planning must integrate continuous reflection and formative evaluation rather than be treated as an annual administrative exercise [4].

### **2.5 Relevance to Educational Quality Improvement**

Sahlberg points out that countries with high-performing education systems—such as Finland and South Korea—tend to incorporate deep, transparent, and sustained evaluation mechanisms at every stage of educational planning [5]. Evaluation, in this sense, directly contributes to improving the overall quality of education, not merely by identifying shortcomings but by guiding systemic transformation based on evidence and feedback.

### 3. Proposed Method

#### 3.1 Research Approach and Design

This study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive-analytical design. Such an approach allows the researcher to explore in depth the planning and implementation processes of the Independent Curriculum within the actual school context. The evaluation model used in this study is the CIPP model (Context, Input, Process, Product), developed by Stufflebeam and further refined by Zhang [7] as it provides a systematic framework for evaluating educational policies comprehensively.

The novelty of this research lies in the holistic application of the CIPP model within the context of senior high schools in Indonesia that are currently implementing the Independent Curriculum. In contrast to previous studies that focused solely on teacher perceptions or implementation outcomes, this study integrates the planning process, stakeholder involvement, and analysis of supporting and inhibiting factors through the CIPP framework. This approach is highly relevant in addressing the need for context-based policy evaluation rooted in local empirical data [9].

#### 2.2 Research Site and Participants

The study was conducted in three public senior high schools located in Semarang City, Central Java. The research sites were selected purposively based on the following criteria:

- 1) The school has implemented the Independent Curriculum for at least two years;
- 2) The school possesses planning documents such as the School Work Plan (Rencana Kerja Sekolah or RKS) and the School-Based Curriculum (Kurikulum Operasional Satuan Pendidikan or KOSP);
- 3) The school is open to providing access to relevant data and processes.

Participants in the study included:

- 1) School principals;
- 2) Vice principals in charge of curriculum affairs;
- 3) Curriculum/KOSP development team members;
- 4) Teachers responsible for implementing the program;
- 5) Representatives from the school committee.

#### 2.3 Data Collection Techniques

Data were collected using three main techniques:

- 1) In-depth interviews with principals and curriculum team members to explore the planning processes and implementation challenges;
- 2) Participant observation during internal evaluations, teacher training sessions, and the implementation of the Pancasila Student Profile (P5) projects;
- 3) Document analysis, including review of planning documents, evaluation reports, meeting minutes of the curriculum team, and training materials.

#### 2.4 Data Analysis Technique

Data were analyzed thematically following the procedure outlined by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), comprising the following stages:

- 1) Data reduction, where information was selected and focused based on the CIPP indicators;
- 2) Data categorization, where information was grouped into four key components: context, input, process, and product;
- 3) Conclusion drawing, through the development of interpretations aligned with the research objectives.

#### 2.5 Data Trustworthiness

To ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the data, the study utilized triangulation of sources (involving teachers, principals, and documents) and triangulation of methods (interviews, observations, and document analysis). In addition, member checking was conducted to validate the researchers' interpretations with the key participants. The data validation strategies adopted in this study are summarized in the following table:

**Table 1.** Data Validation Strategies Used in This Study

Validation Technique	Description of Application in the Study	Example of Implementation
Source Triangulation	Comparison of information obtained from various informants	Data from school principals were cross-checked with teacher interviews and RKS/KOSP documents
Method Triangulation	Comparison across different data collection methods	Interview results were validated through observation of P5 activities and evaluation reports
Member Checking	Confirming the researchers' interpretations with key informants	Summarized findings were sent back to school principals and teachers for accuracy verification

By applying these validation strategies, this study aims to ensure a high level of credibility and academic accountability. These techniques also help prevent interpretive bias and ensure that the meaning extracted from the data truly reflects the experiences and perspectives of the participants [9][10].

## 4. Results and Discussion

### 4.1 Context Evaluation

Interview findings revealed that principals and teachers demonstrated a high level of awareness regarding the importance of implementing the Independent Curriculum. Generally, schools welcomed this flexible, student-centered approach. One principal stated: “We view the Independent Curriculum as an opportunity to strengthen students’ character and provide space for teacher innovation, although many technical adjustments are still required.”

However, variations in teacher understanding and limited infrastructure created disparities in schools’ readiness for implementation. The summary of context evaluation findings is presented in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Context Evaluation Findings

Context Indicator	Positive Findings	Challenges
School Commitment	Strong support from school leadership and teaching staff	
Philosophical Understanding	Some teachers understood the Pancasila Student Profile (P5)	Others lacked full comprehension
Supporting Facilities	Availability of laboratories in some schools	Limited internet access and collaborative spaces

As seen in Table 2, leadership commitment and teacher participation are major strengths in supporting curriculum implementation. However, inconsistent understanding and infrastructure gaps remain critical barriers at the school level.

### 4.2 Input Evaluation

The initial planning phase involved forming curriculum development teams and preparing the School-Based Curriculum Plan (KOSP). The official curriculum guidelines and teaching modules provided the main references. However, teachers reported that training sessions were mostly theoretical and lacked practical applicability. “We’ve attended online training, but we haven’t had many opportunities to practice it in the classroom,” said one teacher.

Human resource support and the quality of training materials were identified as areas needing significant improvement. These findings are summarized in Table 3.

**Table 3.** Input Evaluation Findings

Input Aspect	Positive Findings	Challenges
KOSP Development	Collaboratively developed by lead teachers	Required ongoing technical mentoring
Teacher Training	Participated in training provided by the Ministry	Training content remained general and lacked practical focus

As shown in Table 3, teacher involvement in curriculum development is a key achievement. However, the limitations in training quality highlight the need for more contextualized technical support and capacity-building programs.

#### 4.3 Process Evaluation

Overall, the implementation process exhibited a strong spirit of collaboration, particularly in designing teaching modules and applying differentiated instruction. However, the Pancasila Student Profile (P5) projects were limited to certain grade levels and were not implemented comprehensively.

Teachers also experienced increased administrative workload, particularly in documenting authentic assessments. Assessment practices were still dominated by quantitative approaches and had not fully embraced formative assessment principles. “There’s just so much paperwork. Sometimes we feel more focused on documentation than on the actual learning process,” said one subject teacher. The findings from this stage are summarized in Table 4.

**Table 4.** Process Evaluation Findings

Process Aspect	Positive Findings	Challenges
Teacher Collaboration	KOSP and modules were developed collaboratively	Not all teachers were actively engaged
P5 Implementation	Projects based on local wisdom were initiated	Not yet evenly implemented across all grades or classes
Assessment Practices	Efforts made toward differentiation and reflection	Assessment remains mostly quantitative and administratively heavy

Table 4 demonstrates that internal collaboration has led to innovative pedagogical practices. However, uneven implementation of P5 and burdensome assessments suggest the need for administrative simplification and more intensive training on formative assessment.

#### 4.4 Product Evaluation

The implementation of the Independent Curriculum led to increased teacher creativity and student engagement, especially through project-based and thematic learning. However, the impact on student competencies has yet to be measured holistically due to the lack of comprehensive assessment tools. “Students seem more active when learning through projects. But we’re not sure if all the learning targets are actually being met,” said a teacher from Grade XI. A summary of the findings is presented in Table 5.

**Table 5.** Product Evaluation Findings

Product Aspect	Positive Outcomes	Limitations
Teacher Creativity	More varied instructional strategies were developed	Requires further support in instructional design and media
Student Participation	Increased through P5 project activities	Not all students reported meaningful learning gains
Learning Assessment	Use of alternative assessments (e.g., portfolios, observation)	No standardized tools for comprehensive learning evaluation

Table 5 confirms that the Independent Curriculum has positively influenced classroom dynamics. However, more robust assessment instruments and sustained teacher training are needed to evaluate student outcomes holistically.

#### 4.5 Discussion

Overall, the findings indicate that the planning and implementation of the Independent Curriculum require systemic support, including adequate resources, enhanced teacher capacity, and continuous evaluation mechanisms. The CIPP model has proven effective in systematically identifying the strengths and challenges associated with educational policy implementation at the secondary school level. These findings align with Hargreaves and Shirley [4], who emphasize the importance of reflective evaluation in transformative education, and Fullan, who highlights the central role of school leadership in orchestrating curriculum reform [8].

In particular, the context and input components reveal that leadership commitment alone is not sufficient; successful implementation is strongly influenced by the quality of training and the relevance of support materials. Schools that were better equipped—both in infrastructure and pedagogical readiness—showed more consistent adoption of curriculum principles. This reinforces Sahlberg's [5] assertion that educational equity cannot be achieved without resource equity. The study further suggests that decentralized training models that allow for contextual adaptation may be more effective than top-down, one-size-fits-all workshops.

From the process and product perspectives, the curriculum's emphasis on student-centered learning and the development of the Pancasila Student Profile (P5) has stimulated innovation in teaching practices. However, gaps in authentic assessment and limited cross-grade project continuity indicate the need for stronger instructional leadership and a clearer roadmap for assessing competencies beyond cognitive achievement. This confirms Ornstein and Hunkins' [6] view that curriculum reform must be accompanied by robust evaluation tools and reflective teacher practices. Thus, fostering a culture of continuous school-based evaluation may serve as a practical entry point to institutionalize long-term improvements.

#### 5. Conclusions

This study concludes that the planning and implementation of the Independent Curriculum at the senior high school level in Semarang City have demonstrated several strengths, while also facing a range of challenges that require immediate attention. Using the CIPP evaluation model, the study revealed the following key points: In the context aspect, strong leadership support and teacher enthusiasm served as primary enablers, although variations in understanding and infrastructure limitations were evident. In the input aspect, active teacher involvement in preparing the School-Based Curriculum (KOSP) was a positive factor; however, the quality of training and technical support remained insufficient. In the process aspect, teacher collaboration was well-established, yet the implementation of Pancasila Student Profile (P5) projects and authentic assessments had not yet reached optimal levels. In the product aspect, the curriculum encouraged creativity among teachers and student engagement, though comprehensive tools to measure holistic outcomes were still lacking.

Accordingly, the implementation of the Independent Curriculum must continue in an adaptive manner, supported by sustained evaluation efforts and strengthened resources at the school level.

#### 6. Recommendations

Based on the findings derived from the CIPP evaluation model, recommendations in this study are directed toward three main stakeholder groups: the government/Ministry of Education, educational institutions, and future researchers. Each recommendation is designed to address specific findings related to the context, input, process, and product components of the curriculum. A summary of the recommendations is provided in Table 6.

**Table 6.** Strategic Recommendations Based on the Evaluation of the Independent Curriculum

Stakeholder	Recommendation	Intended Outcome
Government / Ministry of Education	Provide contextual and practical training programs for teachers.	Enhance teacher competence in implementing the curriculum.
	Offer financial and technical support to schools.	Minimize infrastructure disparities across institutions.
	Streamline administrative burdens through digital tools.	Allow teachers to focus more on instructional quality.
Educational Institutions	Strengthen internal curriculum development teams.	Promote innovation and collaborative learning culture.
	Conduct regular internal evaluations.	Identify challenges and design relevant improvement strategies.
	Utilize platforms such as <i>Merdeka Mengajar</i> to share best practices.	Support teacher professional development and school networking.
Future Researchers	Conduct quantitative studies on the curriculum's impact.	Measure effectiveness of curriculum implementation objectively.
	Develop evaluation instruments for P5 and non-cognitive learning.	Improve validity in assessing student competencies holistically.

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