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Integrated learning management in the implementation of the independent curriculum at sdn kagok 01 tegal regency

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Abstract

The objective of this study was to analyze the planning, implementation, and assessment of integrated learning conducted by teachers at SDN Kagok 01, Tegal Regency, during the 2022/2023 academic year. **Methods:** This study used a qualitative approach. The subjects or respondents in this study were first-grade teachers and all first-grade students. Data collection techniques used included interviews, observation, and document analysis. The data analysis method applied in this study follows the model proposed by Miles and Huberman, which consists of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing (verification). **The findings** indicate that the learning planning process carried out by class teachers has been carried out effectively. In preparing for learning, teachers develop lesson plans using "Teaching Modules" (Modul Ajar or MA) as required by the Independent Curriculum. In addition, teachers prepare learning media or teaching aids for use in the classroom. Teaching materials are contextualized using real-world examples, in accordance with the principles of contextual learning. The implementation of the integrated learning program by class teachers has been effective. Integrated learning activities include introductory, core, and closing activities, all carried out systematically. In terms of assessment, teacher evaluation practices align with the lesson plan. These assessments include cognitive (knowledge-based) evaluations and skills-based or performance-based evaluations of student actions.

Keywords: Integrated Learning, Merdeka Curriculum, Integrated Learning Management, Elementary Education.

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INTRODUCTION

Currently, every educational institution in Indonesia is required to implement a systematic management of educational delivery in accordance with Government Regulation of the Republic of Indonesia Number 19 of 2005 concerning National Education Standards (SNP). SNP serves as the minimum criteria that educational institutions must fulfill in managing learning processes to ensure the quality of national education. The eight standards include: (a) content standards; (b) process standards; (c) graduate competency standards; (d) educator and education personnel standards; (e) facilities and infrastructure standards; (f) management standards; (g) funding standards; and (h) educational assessment standards (Andani et al., 2024; Arjanto et al., 2023; Suryana & Sarah, 2020).

The implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, as part of national education reform, fundamentally emphasizes the importance of integrative thematic learning, particularly at the elementary school level. This approach requires teachers to integrate multiple subjects under a unified, contextual, and meaningful theme for students. In reality, however, many teachers still adhere to traditional instructional methods that separate subjects without considering inter-content integration. This traditional method—where instructors primarily transmit content to students passively—is still prevalent in many educational institutions (Benson, 2011; Mdunyelwa et al., 2025; Xiong et al., 2023). This approach does not align with the cognitive characteristics of elementary school students, who are in the concrete operational stage of development (Piaget, 2009), and tend to perceive the world in a holistic and integrated manner.

According to the constructivist perspective (Vygotsky, 1978), children learn actively through interaction and meaningful experiences. Thus, fragmented learning has the potential to hinder the development of cognitive, affective, and psychomotor connections. In contrast, integrated learning promotes the development of 21st-century skills—critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity (the 4Cs) (Trilling & Fadel, 2009)

Unfortunately, studies indicate that many elementary school teachers in Indonesia still struggle to effectively design and implement integrative thematic learning, especially in the classroom setting (Susilo, 2019; Tampubolon et al., 2024; Utami & Ramadan, 2024). This issue is also evident from the researcher's interviews with first-grade teachers at SDN Kagok 01 in Tegal Regency. It was found that classroom space limitations, large class sizes, and inadequate facilities and infrastructure present significant challenges to the implementation of integrative learning. Teachers have not yet fully grasped the concept of subject integration within the Merdeka Curriculum. The lesson plans or teaching modules used are often downloaded or copied from other teachers without local contextual adaptation. Instructional media are minimal and lack variety, and assessment processes face technical challenges, such as unfamiliarity with using the e-Rapor application. As a result, learning management processes have not been optimized, teacher creativity and innovation remain low, and student achievement frequently falls below the minimum competency standards.

This situation reveals a gap between the ideal concepts outlined in the Merdeka Curriculum and the realities of classroom implementation. Effective learning management—which includes integrated planning, implementation, and evaluation—has not yet been fully executed by first-grade teachers at SDN Kagok 01.

Yet, integrative thematic learning is a vital tool to support the implementation of Content Standards within the SNP framework and to create enjoyable, relevant, and meaningful

learning experiences for young learners. This approach supports the development of cognitive, socio-emotional, and physical skills by connecting various subject areas under a unified theme (Björklund & Ahlskog-Björkman, 2017; Muknia, 2020; Zaqiah et al., 2021). Moreover, it makes learning more relevant and enjoyable for children, increasing their motivation and engagement in the learning process (Alali & Al-Barakat, 2024; Syamsuddin et al., 2021; Wadiyo et al., 2024). Therefore, it is essential to conduct an in-depth examination of the current management of integrative thematic learning, the challenges teachers face, and possible strategies for its further development.

The objective of this study is to conduct an in-depth analysis of the management of integrative thematic learning implemented by first-grade teachers at SDN Kagok 01, Tegal Regency, within the context of Merdeka Curriculum implementation. Additionally, the study aims to identify inhibiting factors and potential avenues for improvement

METHODS

This study employs a qualitative approach. The use of this approach is intended to support the achievement of the research objectives, namely to gain an in-depth understanding of: a) instructional planning, b) instructional organization, c) instructional mobilization, and d) instructional supervision. The subjects or respondents in this study are the first-grade teacher and all first-grade students. The research participants, referred to as informants, are those who are directly related to the variables under investigation or who can provide relevant respondent data. Primary data were obtained through direct interviews with the principal of SD Kagok and the first-grade teacher at SDN 01. The interviews included questions aimed at gaining a general overview of integrated learning management at the elementary school level. The data collection techniques utilized in this study include interviews, observations, and document analysis.

To ensure data validity, this study employed the member check technique. The data analysis method used follows the model proposed by Miles and Huberman, which consists of three steps: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification.

Data reduction involves selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and transforming the raw data collected during the study. This step is crucial because it helps condense the data into a more manageable form without losing its essential meaning. Researchers often apply coding techniques to categorize and summarize data, facilitating the identification of emerging patterns and themes (Efriani et al., 2024; Hall et al., 2010; Lee, 2006; Netta & Safura, 2019; Sánchez-García et al., 2013; Williamson & Long, 2005; Wulandari et al., 2017).

Data display refers to the organization and arrangement of the reduced data into formats that facilitate interpretation and understanding. These formats may include matrices, charts, diagrams, and other visual aids that help present the data systematically. The goal is to make the data accessible and to highlight key findings and relationships (Hall et al., 2010; Lee, 2006; Netta & Safura, 2019; Sánchez-García et al., 2013; Williamson & Long, 2005; Wulandari et al., 2017).

Verification is the final stage, in which researchers interpret the presented data to draw conclusions. This step involves validating findings by checking the consistency and credibility of the data. Researchers seek patterns, explanations, and causal relationships to ensure that conclusions are well-supported by the data. This process often includes revisiting the data to

confirm the accuracy of interpretations (Efriani et al., 2024; Lee, 2006; Netta & Safura, 2019; Sánchez-García et al., 2013; Wulandari et al., 2017).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The observational data collected by the researcher involved classroom observations of teaching and learning activities. The observation instrument used focused on the teacher's implementation of integrated learning. The results of the observations are presented as follows:

Table 1. Preliminary Activities in Integrated Learning

No.	Observed Aspect	Score		
		1	2	3
1.	The teacher greets the students			V
2.	The teacher checks students' attendance			V
3.	The teacher guides students in prayer			V
4.	The teacher conducts apperception by asking students questions about the previous lesson and stimulating their prior knowledge for the upcoming lesson			V
5.	The teacher provides motivation to all students			V
6.	The teacher explains the learning objectives	V		

In the preliminary learning activities conducted by the classroom teacher, several key components were consistently observed. These included greeting the students, checking attendance, conducting apperception, and providing motivation to all students. However, the first-grade teacher was not observed explicitly communicating the learning objectives during the preliminary stage. Clearly articulating the learning objectives—what is expected from students in terms of measurable or observable performance by the end of the lesson or course—helps students understand what they need to focus on and achieve (Carpenter, 2005; Orr et al., 2022). When students are aware of the intended learning goals, they are more likely to engage with the course material and activities. Such awareness can lead to improved performance in assessments and a more meaningful learning experience (Bart et al., 2018; Orr et al., 2022).

Table 2. Core Activities in Integrated Learning

No.	Observed Aspects	Skor		
		1	2	3
a. Observing				
1.	The teacher instructs students to observe the relevant media.	V		
2.	The teacher instructs students to look at books/student worksheets (LKS) related to the learning material.			V
b. Questioning				

3.	The teacher provides motivation so that students are encouraged to ask questions related to the material being studied.			V
c. Gathering Information				
4.	The teacher explains by connecting or contextualizing the material with real-life examples.			V
d. Associating				
5.	The teacher gives students the opportunity to think critically about the learning material.	V		
6.	The teacher instructs students to match material with information from the books/student worksheets in group work.			V
e. Communicating				
7.	Students present the results of their group discussions to the class.			V
8.	The teacher clarifies or corrects the content of the students' discussion presentations.			V

Core activities in learning play a critical role in achieving learning objectives as well as in developing the abilities of students as set out. These core activities are greatly influenced by the lesson plan prepared by the teacher. The process of core learning activities reflects the strategies and learning approaches employed by the teacher during the teaching process. Essentially, the core activities represent the implementation of the strategies and approaches to learning.

From **the teaching and learning activities conducted by the first-grade teacher, the core activities above indicate that the teacher has applied an integrated learning strategy and approach**, covering all aspects such as observing, questioning, associating, reasoning, and communicating. However, in the observing aspect, what is missing is when the teacher asks the students to observe the available media. Similarly, the reasoning aspect has not been fully realized, particularly when the teacher provides opportunities for students to think critically about the material being studied.

The **aspect of students' critical thinking skills is crucial in the learning process**, as critical thinking can stimulate students' cognitive reasoning in acquiring knowledge. Critical thinking involves careful reasoning, evaluating, and judging statements, ideas, and theories to reach independent conclusions that are well-supported (Verma et al., 2022; Vincent-Lancrin, 2024). Critical thinking is necessary for students because, during the learning process, they can develop ideas regarding the problems presented in the integrated learning content. This skill is vital for problem-solving, decision-making, and innovation, making it an essential competency in both educational and professional contexts (Gibson, 2016; Vincent-Lancrin, 2024).

The **observation data collected by the researcher involved observing the teaching and learning activities in the classroom**. The observation instrument used was focused on the teaching activities conducted by the teacher, particularly in applying integrated learning. The

findings from the observation of the closing activities in the integrated learning process are as follows:

Table 3. Closing Activities in Integrated Thematic Learning

No.	Observed Activity	Score		
1.	The teacher summarizes the key points of the lesson.			V
2..	The teacher asks questions to evaluate students' understanding of the lesson.	V		
3.	The teacher encourages students to reflect on what they have learned.	V		
4.	The teacher gives further assignments or instructions for the next class.			V
5.	The teacher closes the lesson and ensures students understand what they need to focus on.			V

The final activities of learning should be carried out based on the planning made by the teacher. The teacher needs to plan and implement the final learning activities effectively, efficiently, flexibly, and systematically. The final activity in learning is not only interpreted as the activity to close the lesson, but also as an activity to assess students' learning outcomes and follow-up actions. The assessment should confirm whether the learning objectives have been achieved (Goel et al., 2020; Ibrahim et al., 2022; Reddy, 2012).

Follow-up activities should be based on the process and learning outcomes of the students. In general, the final and follow-up learning activities that the teacher should conduct include assessing the results of the teaching and learning process, giving tasks/exercises to be done outside of class hours. Follow-up activities are essential to reinforce learning and ensure that students can apply their knowledge in practical situations (Remmen & Frøyland, 2015; Thompson, 2006).

CONCLUSION

Based on the research conducted and the previous chapter, the researcher will present the conclusions drawn from the data analysis results. It can be concluded as follows:

The process of lesson planning has been carried out effectively. The preparation for teaching, such as the preparation of Lesson Plans (RPP) or Teaching Modules (MA), student textbooks or worksheets (LKS), and teaching aids or media, has been well organized. Another important preparation includes the assessment and its indicators.

In the integrated learning activities, the class teacher has successfully conducted the introductory activities, core activities, and the learning process stages. However, the explanation of the material, combined with real-life contexts, still requires improvement.

Meanwhile, the management of integrated learning implementation has been conducted well. This is in line with the principal's observation of the 1st-grade teacher at SD Negeri Kagok 01, Tegal District, which shows that the teacher has applied the integrated learning process,

including the ability to implement scientific approaches, although the application of discovery learning still needs further enhancement. Nonetheless, the teacher has successfully carried out the stages of integrated learning activities, such as the introduction, core activities, and closure.

The class teacher has conducted assessments effectively, as seen from the way the teacher evaluates the students. Assessment is a systematic and continuous process for gathering, analyzing, and interpreting data on the learning process and outcomes. It provides meaningful information for decision-making. The assessments conducted by the teacher cover cognitive aspects and skills. For example, the skills assessment was conducted by evaluating the students' ability to make a house using origami paper. Performance assessments, conducted by the teacher, focus on the students' actions and behaviors, reflecting their true abilities.

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