RESEARCH ARTICLE

Challenges and Strategies for Implementing the Activator School Program

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ABSTRACT

The implementation of school drive programs still needs to be improved. This study discusses the challenges and strategies involved in implementing the Activator School Program. In this study, mixed-methods research was used. The study included six principals and thirty elementary school teachers from Surakarta, Indonesia. To collect data for this study, questionnaires, interviews, observations, and documentation were used. The data analysis techniques used were descriptive statistics for quantitative analysis. Meanwhile, for qualitative analysis, the research used the Miles and Huberman method, that is, data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings of this study include the challenges and obstacles to the implementation of the activator school program, educators' inability to control teachers' level of digital technology mastery, a lack of socialization related to the curriculum of the activator school program, and an lack of educational facilities that support the activator school program. Strategies to ensure that the implementation of the activator school program runs smoothly include socialization and assistance to teachers and principals regarding the programs, curriculum, improvement and mentoring of teachers in mastering digital technology, particularly information and technology mastery, provision of adequate facilities for schools serving as the activator school program, and enhancement of educational quality.

Keywords: activator, school program, challenges, strategies

1. INTRODUCTION

The quality of a nation's education, such as a strong education system, can serve as evidence of its educational advancement. Graduates and human resources capable of competing on the international stage or in the current global era can be expected to emerge from a good and structured education system. (Mahendra et al., 2019). In addition, the quality of education in Indonesia can be gauged by the availability of facilities to support its implementation (Good,

2013). Several policies to improve the quality of education in order to establish quality schools in different regions, including *Rintisan Sekolah Bertaraf Internasional* (International Standard School Pilot), Referral Schools, and Model Schools, have not been able to have a more comprehensive and equitable impact on other schools in different regions. The Ministry of Education and Culture has therefore initiated the Activator School Program in order to develop a quality policy for more equitable education. Prior to launching the Activator School program, the Minister of Education and Culture rolled out the independent learning program outlined in Circular No. 1 of 2020 on the Policy of Independent Learning (Patilima, 2022). The concept of Independent-Learning liberates educational institutions and encourages students to be innovative and creative. Considering the future vision and the mission of Indonesian education to produce quality individuals who can compete in a variety of fields of life, this notion was subsequently accepted (Sibagariang et al., 2021).

The Activator School Program is used to assist each school in producing a generation of lifelong learners with a *Pancasila* student profile personality (Satriawan et al., 2021). *Pancasila* is an Indonesian state, with five guiding principles, which include faith in one and only God, a just and civilized humanity, the unity of Indonesia, a democracy guided by the wisdom of the people's representatives, and social justice for all Indonesians. The activator school program aims to realize the vision of Indonesian education, which is to create an advanced, sovereign, independent, and distinct Indonesia, through the development of *Pancasila* students. The Activator School Program emphasizes the development of holistic student learning outcomes, including competencies and character, beginning with excellent principals and teachers (Syafi'i, 2021). In addition, this the Activator School is popular with students because it cultivates intelligent individuals who are able to compete and collaborate globally (Kristiawan, 2013). Moreover, the concept of a directed teacher program means that teachers in the Activator School can become leaders, teachers, and motivators for their colleagues by providing training content in the form of activities that encourage positive things in the community and not only provide current information but also provide problem-solving experiences (Safrizal et al., 2022).

The Activator School program focuses on students as a whole by emphasizing the *Pancasila* Students' Profile characteristics, beginning with the superior and strong human resources of principals and teachers (Kemendikbud, 2021). This program is intended for principals and teachers in Kindergarten, Elementary School, Junior High School, Senior High School, and Special School units in 34 provinces, as well as regional education stakeholders, school supervisors, and education offices in these regions. To realize the *Pancasila* Student Profile, the Activator School Program aims to encourage academic units to transform in order to improve the holistic learning outcomes of students in terms of cognitive and noncognitive (character) competencies. In order for change to be widespread and institutionalized, it is hoped that the transformation will not be limited to education units alone, but will also trigger the creation of a supportive environment for change and mutual cooperation at the regional and national levels. The objectives are consistent with efforts to develop high-competence, professional, and ethical human resources to promote sustainable development (Zamjani et al., 2020). The Activator School Program encompasses five components: learning, school administration, the use of digital technology, self-evaluation, evidence-based planning, and partnerships between the central and local governments. This program's implementation cannot be used to motivate and implement the program in all schools. Each school that can implement the program must meet the requirements of the Ministry of Education and Culture. Aside from that, a number of schools that have implemented the program have encountered a number of obstacles or difficulties. These issues may stem from the school's administration, teachers, facilities, and infrastructure.

This study seeks to identify the obstacles and strategies involved in implementing The Activator School Program. This research topic discusses the implementation of the Activator School, the challenges, strategies, and motivational factors experienced and faced by the Activator School. This research is necessary because it can anticipate problems in the field and provide a review of the next program's implementation so that it can serve as a solution for resolving problems in the implementation of the Activator School program. This study has the potential to benefit educators and school administrators.

2.   MATERIALS AND METHODS

2.1.   *Research Design*

This study employs a mix of methods. In mixed methods research, quantitative and qualitative data are collected or analyzed concurrently or sequentially, and data integration occurs (Creswell, 2018). Through data integration, mixed methods can provide more meaningful answers to research questions. The mixed method was chosen because it is anticipated that this research will yield information regarding the implementation of *The Activator School Program* in elementary schools. This study aims to explore the perspectives of participants (qualitatively) and then analyze them (quantitative). This study intends to obtain quantitative statistics from the sample and then conduct interviews and observations with a number of individuals in order to explain the results in detail (O'Cathain et al., 2007).

2.2.   *Participant*

This study involved six head principals and thirty classroom teachers from elementary schools in Surakarta including Al-Firdaus Elementary School, Innovative Islamic Ta'mirul Elementary School, Muhammadiyah IV Elementary School, Bibis Luhur II Elementary School, Rejosari Elementary School, Bayan Elementary School. This study employs a technique of purposive sampling. This sampling method is also known as the judgment sampling method, which refers to the selection of study samples based on sample quality (Etikan et al., 2016). Using the technique of purposive sampling, this study focused on elementary schools in the Sragen area as its population. This region was selected because a number of schools in the area served as pilot schools for the implementation of the motivating school. This study analyzes the necessary data prior to locating individuals who are deemed knowledgeable, experienced, and open-minded until the data is deemed complete, exhaustive, and reliable (Tongco, 2007).

2.3.   *Data Collection Techniques*

This study utilized questionnaires, interviews, and observations to collect its data. The questionnaire instrument contains 30 statement items. Three indicators of the implementation of *The Activator School Program* are included in the questionnaire: (i) Stage of designing a school operational curriculum (8 items), (ii) The implementation phase of the curriculum (10 items), and (iii) Principal's Leadership Effectiveness (12 items) from Ministry of Education and Culture in 2022. Very positive (5), positive (4), neutral (3), negative (2), and very negative (1) were used on a five-point Likert scale to develop the questionnaire for this study. The questionnaire was determined by taking the category of the questionnaire assessment interval into account below is the questionnaire instrument grid (Table 1). Interviews were conducted in order to obtain in-depth information about the inspiring school program. Interviews were carried out focus-group interview using indicators of design, stage, management, organizing, implementing, and supervision. In this study, in-depth interviews were conducted. It is up to

the interviewer to ask in-depth interview questions that reveal more about the implementation of the motivating school's problems and solutions in order to understand the obstacles, strategies, and support of the motivating school which consists of planning, organizing, actuating, and evaluating program indicators (Terry, 1976). Observations were conducted through direct observation of the classroom teacher's actions during the learning process. During learning, researchers collect data in the form of observation activities. This reasoning is consistent with Guba & Lincoln (2005), who assert that documents are always readily available, serve as reliable evidence of the situation, and can be reanalyzed without modification. Observations were made by paying attention to the design stages of the school's operational curriculum, the stages of curriculum implementation, and the effectiveness of the principal's leadership.

Table 1. Questionnaire instrument

No.	Indicator	Sub-indikator	VP	P	NI	N	EN
1.	Stages of designing a school operational curriculum	Designing a school operational curriculum					
		Designing the flow of educational goals					
		Learning design and assessment					
		Use and development of teaching devices					
		Planning a project to strengthen the profile of Pancasila students					
2.	The implementation phase of the curriculum	Implementation of the project to strengthen the profile of Pancasila students					
		Application of learner-centered learning					
		Integration of assessment in learning					
		Learning according to the learning stage of students					
		Collaboration between teachers for curriculum and learning purposes					
		Collaboration with parents / family in learning					
		Collaboration with society/community/industry					
		Reflection, evaluation, and improvement of curriculum quality					
3.	Principal's Leadership Effectiveness	The principal leads the reflection and improvement of the quality of the learner-centered learning process					
		The principal involves parents/guardians of students as companions and learning resources at school					
		Principals participate actively in networks and organizations that are relevant to school leadership to develop careers					
		The principal shows spiritual, moral, and emotional maturity to behave in accordance with the code of ethics					
		The principal shows spiritual, moral, and emotional maturity to behave in accordance with the code of ethics					
		The principal develops a community of practitioners					
		human resources (HR)					
		Budget					
		Technology					
		Learning Activities					
		Activities Local Government Support					

2.4. Data Validity Techniques

Test validity of the content in this study using instruments displaying the contents of the required data. Instruments used in this research included observation instruments, interviews, and questionnaires previously validated by an expert. During data collection, the validity of the data was evaluated in this study. The instrument was validated using content validation. The purpose of content validity is to determine whether the contents of a measuring instrument are representative. Content validity is a matter of opinion, both your own and that of others. Testing the inter-rater reliability by calculating the coefficient of agreement between observers (panels), also known as the concordance coefficient, is one of the steps involved in establishing the empirical validity of the instrument. The validity of the instrument is determined empirically

by evaluating the validity of the total items using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation. The results of the expert evaluator's data validity test revealed several areas for improvement in this study. Then, the results of the questionnaire instrument's test for validity were reanalyzed to determine its dependability.

2.5. *Data Analysis Techniques*

This study employs both quantitative and qualitative data analysis techniques. Descriptive statistics were used for quantitative analysis. This type of analysis is essential because it provides a comprehensive visual representation of this research. The average responses to questionnaires from respondents provide descriptive statistics. The results are then averaged to determine the proportion of participants who responded very positively, positively, neutrally, negatively, and negatively to statements on the questionnaire. In this study, qualitative data analysis followed the interactive model of Miles and Huberman, beginning with data reduction and culminating in conclusion and drawings (Miles et al., 2019). First, data reduction is the selection, concentration, simplification, grouping, and transformation of raw data extracted from field reports. Second, the data display presents data in the form of narrative text, graphs, or diagrams in a systematic and simple manner, and then leads to conclusions. Miles et al. (2019) restrict the presentation of data to organized information/data that can lead to a conclusion. Data views can take the form of images, tables, or narratives. After displaying and describing the data, this research obtains a solution to the issue. The study can then draw general conclusions and generalize its findings based on these responses. The credibility test using technical triangulation is carried out by checking the data on the source using different techniques (observation, interview, and questionnaire).

3.   RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the results of the questionnaire above, the stage of designing a school operational curriculum indicator obtained the lowest score, namely, 3.16. Indicator implementation phase of the curriculum gain score 3.33 and indicator principal's Leadership Effectiveness gain score 3.30 (Tables 2 and 3).   Based on this, in planning the implementation of the curriculum, it is necessary to carry out a training program for preparing teaching modules for guidelines in carrying out independent curriculum learning in activator schools. In addition to the results of the above questionnaire, based on the results of interviews and observations, the implementation of *The Activator School Program* program faces the following challenges:
a)   Outstandingly, in the field of technology, there is still a lack of teachers' ability to implement *The Activator School Program* Program.
b)   Suburban schools have low achievement, and private schools with a C-accreditation or no accreditation have little chance of becoming motivational.
a)   In many schools, the infrastructure is inadequate for implementing the motivational school program.
b)   There are still insufficient digital resources to support learning in the engaging school program.
c)   Implementation of the self-directed or selected *Activator School Program* program. On their initiative, the majority of positions are filled by schools with very good or good A accreditation, excellent digital access, and numerous accomplishments (policies, regulations, regulation of the Minister of Education and culture, and transparency)
d)   The *Pancasila* profile reflected in the instructional module has failed to raise the affective level of students.
e)   The lack of socialization is a barrier to implementing *The Activator School Program* because it is related to the process of creating modules and online classes for teaching materials.

f) The emergence of negative consequences of accelerating school digitization. In fact, social disparities have emerged between rural and urban schools, as well as between economically disadvantaged students and those who have access to digital technology-based learning.

Table 2. Results of the questionnaire

No.	Indicator	Result	Category
1.	Stages of designing a school operational curriculum	3,16	Positive
2.	The implementation phase of the curriculum.	3,33	Positive
3.	Principal's Leadership Effectiveness	3,30	Positive
Amount Average		3,26	Positive

Table 3. Results of interviews and observation

No.	Indicator	Sub-indicator	Desription	Answer
1	Planning	Name of program implemented	What program will be implemented by the school as a driving school?	Preparation of teaching modules
		Program objectives	What are the program objectives?	To produce a clear and measurable lesson plan
		Program achievement strategy	What strategy is used to achieve the program objectives?	The strategy is carried out by conducting teaching module preparation workshops
		Schedule of program implementation plans	Has a structured and systematic schedule been prepared for each activity in the program?	There is a schedule for preparing and implementing the program.
		Fund budget plan	Has a budget budget been used?	The funds used were from BOS funds (School Operational Assistance). However, the problem is that the budget has not been able to meet all the facilities and infrastructure needed.
2	Organizing	Resources involved	Who is involved in the program?	The participants involved were teachers, principals, and school supervisors.
		Division of tasks	Is there a division of jobdesk (work) in the program to be implemented?	There is a division of job desks, but because the teacher's duties are quite a lot, sometimes there are overlapping problems in their implementation.
		The facilities and infrastructure used	Do the facilities and infrastructure support the implementation of the program?	There are some facilities that are lacking, such as a computer and LCD.
3	Actuating	Implementation of the program (effective or not and achieved its objectives or not)	How is the implementation of the program? Is it running optimally and effectively and in accordance with the program objectives that have been prepared previously?	The implementation of the program is quite effective in providing teacher knowledge and skills in making teaching modules.
		Problems that occur	Were there any obstacles or problems that occurred during the program implementation process?	The problem that occurs is that there is a need for further training so that the teacher does not forget and innovates the teaching modules that are made.
4	Controlling	Evaluation	How to evaluate the implementation of the program?	Evaluation is carried out by question and answer and program focus group discussion.
		Solutions to overcome problems	How to overcome the problems that occur in the programs that have been implemented?	The solution to this problem is further assistance.
		Follow-up	What is the follow-up to the solution that is in	The follow-up is to hold meetings every week to determine the teacher's progress.

Meanwhile, the following are alternative solutions to the various problems described previously.

a) *Attempting to study information and technology more and advance one's knowledge independently and in collaboration with other teachers.*

The pandemic has also accelerated the adoption of virtual technology because the majority of learning now occurs remotely; consequently, teachers and students are encouraged to employ technological tools in the teaching and learning process. This should not be viewed as an obstacle that is difficult to overcome, but rather as a challenge that we must strive to achieve. We can learn and grow through workshops and seminars, joining online teacher communities by moving from one group to another, reading more articles, and watching educational YouTube channels. *The Activator School Program* realizes *Pancasila* Student Profile (*Pancasila* is the five Indonesian Principles) by applying local wisdom dimensions to find a solution. A person can acquire knowledge, insight, values, and character through education, although some are inherited from culture. The new educational model is delivered through the implementation structure of the school program, specifically, the program to promote the transition of educational units to improve the learning outcomes of students who participate in good education in terms of cognitive (literacy and computing) and non-cognitive (character) competencies in order to attain the *Pancasila* Student Profile (Mutiara et al., 2022). According to respondents, the implementation of *The Activator School Program* management, particularly in the direction of school resources to improve school quality and increase the competence of school principals and teachers, has been proceeding well and positively but has not yet reached a very high level. The results of this study differ from previous research (Rahayu et al., 2021). In this study, the greatest barrier to implementing the *The Activator School Program* program was the independent curriculum, as the *The Activator School Program* curriculum lacked socialization and its public test was not yet optimal. On the other hand, the *The Activator School Program* program will eventually serve as a gateway to a curriculum tailored to student needs, taking into account student personality and the school environment in Indonesia (Triati et al., 2022).

In addition to the problems mentioned previously, it turns out that when schools are about to begin implementing the *The Activator School Program* program, they encounter numerous obstacles. Principals' inability to comprehend curriculum concepts and policies hinders their ability to implement *The Activator School Program* programs in terms of curriculum goals to be achieved, content standards, process standards, and assessment standards. The principal's mastery of the *The Activator School Program* program's concept must be emphasized and properly mastered in relation to the program. This is due to the fact that the achievement of educational goals depends heavily on the leadership skills and the sagacity of the principal, who is one of the educational leaders. The principal is a professional office within the school that manages all organizational resources and collaborates with teachers to educate students to achieve educational objectives (Harapan, 2017). The next barrier is the capacity of teachers to master technological advancements, particularly digital technology. Through the use of interactive digital teaching materials, mastery of digital technology can be applied (Siregar & Mansyur, 2021). This necessitates both expertise in the subject area and the ability to create innovative digital learning materials. In schools, interactive digital instructional materials are used to increase student interest and motivation. In addition, with interactive digital books or instructional materials, students can learn both in groups and independently by actively studying the material, completing activity sheets, and practicing questions. This will undoubtedly have a positive effect on academic performance.

Insufficient socialization with teachers regarding the curriculum of *The Activator School Program* program results in a lack of knowledge and insight regarding the teachers' ability to implement the program. As stated in the Decree of the Ministry of Research, Technology and Higher Education No. 162 of 2021, one of the scopes of the implementation of *The Activator School Program* program is the socialization of the program (Syafi'i, 2021), teachers must be

socialized in accordance with the scope of the program's implementation. The socialization was intended to facilitate teachers' and principals' comprehension of the concept of implementing *The Activator School Program* program. The results of this study differ from those of other studies in that they indicate that the implementation of an independent curriculum in the city of Padang, Indonesia, of *The Activator School Program* is in accordance with the needs of students, learning objectives, and time, and that the teachers' and principals' understanding of the curriculum of *The Activator School Program* is also evident. Moreover, the teachers have no difficulty implementing the curriculum of *The Activator School Program*, which has a positive effect on students' motivation to learn, and the curriculum of *The Activator School Program* has been disseminated to stakeholders (Muji et al., 2021).

b)   *Comprehend the independent curriculum in depth by attending independent curriculum workshops and training.*

In the curriculum prototype, the habituation process is prioritized from childhood to adulthood. The curriculum prototype is a continuation of the previous curriculum development strategy, which was holistically oriented, competency-based, contextualized, and individualized. Currently, the prototype curriculum is one of the educational delivery options available to schools. As we all know, the COVID-19 pandemic has caused students to lose educational ground. In other words, students' academic progress has suffered a setback. According to Fetra Bonita Sari and Risda Amini (2020), elementary and secondary school subjects consist of two lessons. Regular learning (intra-curricular) is added to the *Pancasila* students' Project Profile (extracurricular). In an independent curriculum based on the global pluralism model, the value of indigenous knowledge in Indonesia derives from manners and customs that cannot be separated from *Pancasila's* values. In Indonesia, teachers are required to work on a variety of projects. The values of local wisdom in hidden programs or programs attract the majority of education participants to know and appreciate the culture in a simple manner. The *Pancasila* Student Profile Strengthening Project (PSPSP) has created a new nuance in education in Indonesia, where a separate time allocation enables teachers to be more innovative in project planning according to the dimensions and characteristics of students (Ellya et al., 2021). Nonetheless, it is undeniable that this new curriculum modification necessitates cooperation, strong commitment, seriousness, and actual implementation from all parties so that the *Pancasila* profile can be ingrained in students.

c)   *In accordance with The Activator School Program's curriculum, adjust and continue to seek, learn, and explore learning needs.*

In this case, for instance, a teacher must also be capable of adapting to the requirements of a stimulating school curriculum. The Reinforcement Strategy and the Role of the Teachers of *The Activator School Program* are one of them. The procedure is as follows: (1) The teacher consults with the principal, fostered supervisors, and colleagues to develop this real action program. (2) Conduct socialization with the fostered supervisors, school principals, and colleagues regarding the real action and development programs that will be implemented if these parties are very supportive of the planned program. (3) Utilize various virtual meeting applications such as zoom, g-meet, etc., after the socialization has been completed. Various activities, including distance learning, practical exams, and virtual Teacher Group Work, utilize virtual meeting applications. Then, positive communication will be established with colleagues and best practices will be shared. (4) an open forum for dialogue with all stakeholders. (5) They must improve themselves, increase their discipline, and serve as an example. (6) Reflection activities should be incorporated into each activity. (7) Collaborating with all relevant parties. (8) Learn and track IT advancements. After the activity has been completed, it is permissible to request recommendations from the school principal and other colleagues.

d)   Enhancing Educational Quality

Essentially, the quality of schools must be continuously enhanced so that they continue to improve and maintain their accreditation. Increasing the professionalism of educators is one of the possible measures. Law No. 14 of 2005 about Teachers and Lecturers in Indonesia regarding Teachers and Lecturers stipulates that teachers must possess academic qualifications, competencies, and educator certification, as well as be physically and mentally healthy and able to achieve national education goals. In addition, to improve the quality of education in Indonesia, it is possible to improve the teacher recruitment strategy. The primary objective of the recruitment process, according to Goe et al. (2018), is not to recruit and retain effective teachers, but rather to improve student learning and expand educational opportunities. The first factor to consider is the compatibility between the individual and the organization. Generally, the teacher will be more effective if he has taught at multiple schools. The third is the accuracy of the results between teachers and students. According to Goldhaber & Hansen (2010), cited by goe, black teachers have a higher rate of success with minority students than white teachers. The final component is the distinction between qualification and context. Teachers will be more successful if their knowledge, skills, and behavior correspond to the requirements of their field. It is necessary to collaborate with organizations that prepare or produce new teachers in order to recruit the best educators. The next solution, namely, the provision of infrastructure for schools, can be accomplished by soliciting donations from parents of students, education personnel, and influential regional figures. This is due to the fact that the learning environment and school administration can impact student achievement ratings (Jaekel et al., 2022). Budget funds provided by educational institutions must be combined and allocated to schools as a whole in order to improve school infrastructure.

4.   CONCLUSION

In the implementation of the school program, it was discovered that a number of challenges and obstacles were encountered in the field, according to data from the field, including the inability of educators to master the level of digital technology mastery for teachers who are still low, the lack of socialization related to the program curriculum, and the lack of educational facilities that support the program's motivational school. From these issues, an implementation strategy for the *The Activator School Program* program can be derived: (1) providing socialization and assistance to teachers and school principals regarding the *The Activator School Program* program curriculum; (2) improving and assisting teachers in mastering digital technology, particularly IT mastery; (3) providing adequate facilities for schools that serve as *The Activator School Program*; and (4) enhancing the quality of education. The existence of problems and the proposed solutions must still be implemented. There is still a need for additional research on the concept and implementation of *The Activator School Program*.

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