



Independent Curriculum And The Challenges Of Its Implementation In The World Of Education In Indonesia

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ABSTRAK

Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka merupakan salah satu upaya pemerintah dalam meningkatkan kualitas pendidikan melalui pembelajaran yang berpusat pada peserta didik, fleksibel, dan adaptif terhadap perkembangan zaman. Namun, dalam pelaksanaannya masih ditemukan berbagai tantangan yang berkaitan dengan kesiapan guru, ketersediaan infrastruktur, serta dukungan kebijakan dan teknologi di lingkungan sekolah. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka dan mengidentifikasi berbagai tantangan yang dihadapi dalam penerapannya pada dunia pendidikan Indonesia. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode deskriptif. Partisipan penelitian berjumlah 80 orang yang terdiri atas 65 guru, 10 kepala sekolah, dan 5 pengawas sekolah. Pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui studi literatur, kuesioner terbuka, wawancara semi-terstruktur, dan observasi. Instrumen penelitian meliputi pedoman wawancara, lembar observasi, dan kuesioner penelitian. Data dianalisis menggunakan teknik analisis tematik melalui tahapan reduksi data, pengkodean, klasifikasi, interpretasi, dan penarikan simpulan dengan didukung teknik triangulasi untuk menjamin validitas data. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa 65,0% partisipan memiliki tingkat pemahaman tinggi hingga sangat tinggi terhadap Kurikulum Merdeka, sedangkan tantangan utama yang dihadapi meliputi keterbatasan kompetensi guru (30,0%), infrastruktur digital (25,0%), dan adaptasi perangkat pembelajaran (20,0%). Selain itu, 75,0% partisipan menilai bahwa implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka memberikan dampak positif terhadap proses

pembelajaran. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa Kurikulum Merdeka memiliki potensi besar dalam meningkatkan kualitas pembelajaran, namun keberhasilannya memerlukan dukungan kompetensi pendidik, sarana pendidikan, dan kebijakan yang berkelanjutan. Implikasi penelitian ini adalah pentingnya penguatan kapasitas guru dan pemerataan dukungan infrastruktur pendidikan untuk meningkatkan efektivitas implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka di Indonesia.

ABSTRACT

The implementation of the Independent Curriculum is one of the government's efforts to improve the quality of education through student-centered, flexible, and adaptive learning. However, its implementation still faces various challenges related to teacher readiness, infrastructure availability, and policy and technology support in schools. This study aims to analyze the implementation of the Independent Curriculum and identify the various challenges faced in its application in Indonesian education. This study uses a qualitative approach with descriptive methods. The study involved 80 participants, consisting of 65 teachers, 10 principals, and 5 school supervisors. Data collection was conducted through literature review, open-ended questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and observations. The research instruments included interview guidelines, observation sheets, and research questionnaires. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis techniques through the stages of data reduction, coding, classification, interpretation, and drawing conclusions, supported by triangulation techniques to ensure data validity. The results showed that 65.0% of participants had a high to very high level of understanding of the Independent Curriculum. While the main challenges faced included limited teacher competency (30.0%), digital infrastructure (25.0%), and adaptation of learning tools (20.0%). In addition, 75.0% of participants assessed that the implementation of the Independent Curriculum had a positive impact on the learning process. This study concluded that the Independent Curriculum has great potential to improve the

quality of learning, but its success requires the support of educator competency, educational facilities, and sustainable policies. The implications of this study are the importance of strengthening teacher capacity and equitable distribution of educational infrastructure support to increase the effectiveness of the Independent Curriculum implementation in Indonesia.



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1. INTRODUCTION

The Independent Curriculum is an educational policy developed as part of the transformation of Indonesia's education system through the Merdeka Belajar program. This curriculum is designed to provide flexibility to educational units and teachers in designing student-centered learning according to the needs, potential, and characteristics of the learning environment. The implementation of the Independent Curriculum emphasizes project-based learning, strengthening the Pancasila Student Profile, learning differentiation, and the holistic development of student competencies and character. From a constructivist perspective, the Independent Curriculum encourages students to construct knowledge through meaningful learning experiences, while teachers act as facilitators, supporting active and independent learning processes. Therefore, the successful implementation of the Independent Curriculum is determined not only by government policy but also by the readiness of teachers and schools, as well as the support of adequate educational facilities and infrastructure (Ndari, et al., 2023).

Despite its progressive goals, the implementation of the Independent Curriculum faces various challenges at the educational unit level. Research by (Ndari, et al., 2023) shows that most teachers still struggle to understand the concept of differentiated learning and develop learning modules tailored to student characteristics. These findings align with research by (Darussalam & Indah, 2024) which revealed that teachers require a considerable amount of adaptation time to understand the paradigm shift from teacher-centered to student-centered learning. Furthermore, research by (Hasballah, 2024) shows that limited training and mentoring have prevented the implementation of the Independent Curriculum in various schools from running optimally. This situation indicates that the readiness of human resources, particularly teachers as the primary implementers of the curriculum, remains a challenge that requires serious attention.

In addition to teacher competency, infrastructure and technological readiness are also crucial factors in the successful implementation of the Independent Curriculum. Research by (Fauziyah, et al., 2025) shows that some schools still experience limited internet access and digital devices, hindering the optimal utilization of the Independent Teaching Platform. These findings are supported by (Adi, 2025), who identified the disparity in educational facilities between urban and rural areas as a major obstacle to the implementation of the Independent Curriculum. On the other hand, (Hasballah, & Zulfatmi, 2024) explain that the use of technology in learning requires adequate support for effective learning. Therefore, technological readiness and educational infrastructure are crucial prerequisites for the successful implementation of the Independent Curriculum in various regions.

Another challenge arises in implementing differentiated learning, a key characteristic of the Independent Curriculum. Research by (Mujiburrahman, et al., 2024) found that many teachers still experience difficulty in identifying the diverse learning needs of students, resulting in the differentiation process being less than optimally implemented. Research by (Fatmariza & Anisa, 2026) indicates that teachers' adaptation to new learning approaches requires improved pedagogical competence and diagnostic assessment skills. Meanwhile, (Ndari, et al., 2023) emphasized that planning differentiated learning requires more time and complex skills than conventional learning approaches. Therefore, the implementation of differentiated learning

requires ongoing training support so that teachers can apply learning strategies tailored to students' needs.

Amidst these challenges, several studies have shown that the implementation of the Independent Curriculum has a positive impact on the learning process and student development. (Hasballah, & Zulfahmi, 2024) found that the implementation of more flexible learning can increase active student participation in learning activities. This finding is supported by (Darussalam & Indah, 2024), who stated that the Independent Curriculum provides more space for students to develop creativity, critical thinking skills, and collaborative skills. Furthermore, (Mujiburrahman, et al., 2024) concluded through their literature review that the implementation of the Independent Curriculum contributes to improving the quality of students' learning experiences through contextual and project-based learning. These research results indicate that despite facing various obstacles, the Independent Curriculum still has great potential to improve the quality of national education.

Furthermore, the challenges of implementing the Independent Curriculum are also related to policy aspects and the transition process from the previous curriculum. Research by (Amnita & Murniarti, 2024) shows that changes in curriculum policy require a challenging adaptation process for schools, particularly in developing learning materials and adjusting assessment systems. Research by (Ndari, et al., 2023) shows that differences in school readiness levels cause the implementation of the Independent Curriculum to proceed at varying speeds. Similar findings were presented by (Hasballah, & Zulfami, 2024) who stated that the success of curriculum implementation is greatly influenced by the support of school management, the leadership of the principal, and government policies in providing ongoing mentoring. Therefore, synchronization between government policies and school readiness is a crucial factor in supporting the successful implementation of the Independent Curriculum.

On a broader level, the implementation of the Independent Curriculum still faces challenges in the form of disparities in educational quality across regions in Indonesia. (Adi, 2025) revealed that differences in access to educational resources cause uneven implementation of the curriculum between urban and remote areas. The results of a study by (Mujiburrahman, et al., 2024) also showed that limited teacher competency, educational facilities, and technological support were the most frequently encountered obstacles in various studies of the implementation of the Independent Curriculum. Furthermore, (Fatmariza & Anisa, 2026) emphasized that the success of the curriculum implementation depends heavily on the ability of all stakeholders to adapt to changes occurring in the education system. These conditions indicate that the challenges of implementing the Independent Curriculum are not only technical, but also related to structural aspects and the equitable distribution of national education quality.

Based on these various research findings, it is clear that the implementation of the Independent Curriculum presents both opportunities and challenges for Indonesian education. Previous studies have generally focused on specific aspects, such as teacher readiness, technology use, differentiated learning, and the impact of curriculum implementation on students. However, there is still limited research that comprehensively examines the challenges of implementing the Independent Curriculum in the context of Indonesian education as a whole, integrating aspects of policy, human resources, infrastructure, and the learning process. Therefore, this study offers a novel approach in analyzing the implementation of the Independent Curriculum more holistically and identifying the challenges that influence its success. The purpose of this study is to analyze the implementation of the Independent Curriculum and identify the challenges faced in its application in Indonesian education.

2. METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with descriptive methods to analyze the implementation of the Independent Curriculum and the various challenges faced in its application in Indonesian education. A qualitative approach was chosen because it can provide a deep

understanding of social and educational phenomena based on the experiences and perspectives of educational practitioners (Creswell, & Creswell, 2018). Data sources in this study consist of primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained through the distribution of open-ended questionnaires and semi-structured interviews with teachers and education personnel involved in the implementation of the Independent Curriculum. Meanwhile, secondary data were obtained from education policy documents, guidelines for the implementation of the Independent Curriculum, scientific articles, books, and relevant research reports. The research subjects consisted of 80 participants, including 65 teachers, 10 principals, and 5 school supervisors from various levels of education that have implemented the Independent Curriculum.

The research procedure began with data collection through literature studies, field observations, questionnaire distribution, and interviews with research participants. The literature study was conducted to identify concepts, theories, and previous research findings related to the implementation of the Independent Curriculum. Next, field data was collected to obtain information on the experiences, obstacles, and strategies employed by schools in implementing the curriculum. All data obtained was then classified based on key themes related to teacher readiness, availability of facilities and infrastructure, policy support, and the effectiveness of the learning process.

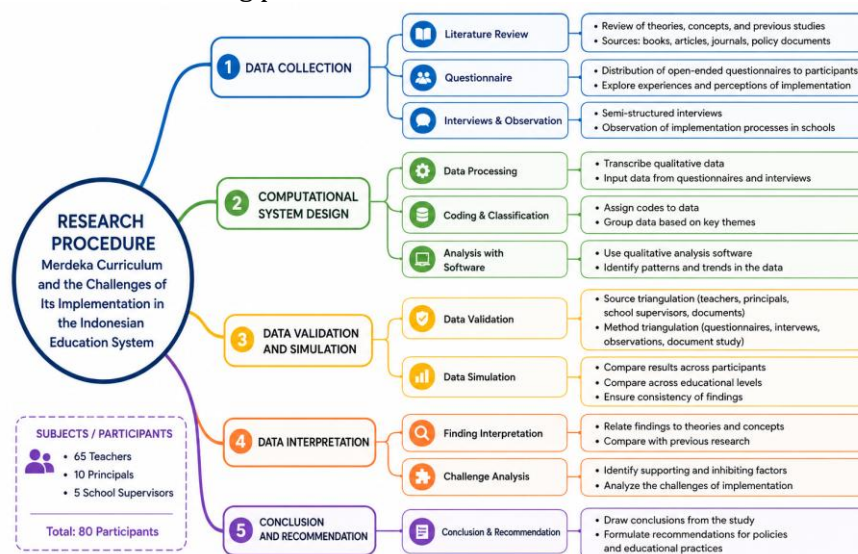


Figure 1. Research Procedure

The next stage was the design of the computing system and data processing. At this stage, data from the questionnaires and interviews were transcribed, coded, and analyzed using thematic analysis techniques assisted by qualitative data processing software. The computing system was used to group data into specific categories, facilitating the identification of patterns, trends, and relationships between themes that emerged in the research. Data validation was then carried out using source and method triangulation techniques by comparing the results of interviews, observations, and documentation to increase the credibility and validity of the research findings (Miles, et al., 2014). Data simulations were conducted by comparing the analysis results between participants and between educational levels to obtain a more comprehensive picture of the implementation of the Independent Curriculum.

The final stage of the research is data interpretation and drawing conclusions. Interpretation is carried out by linking field findings with relevant theories, concepts, and previous research findings to gain a deeper understanding of the challenges of implementing the Independent Curriculum in Indonesian education. The interpretation results are then used to identify factors that support and hinder curriculum implementation and formulate recommendations that can be used by policymakers and education practitioners. Based on the

overall analysis process, this study produces conclusions regarding the state of the Independent Curriculum implementation and the various challenges that require attention in efforts to improve the quality of national education.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

RESULTS

Table 1. Characteristics of Research Participants

Character	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Teacher	65	81.25
Headmaster	10	12.5
School Supervisor	5	6.25
Total	80	100

Based on Table 1, the study participants were dominated by teachers (65 people) (81.25%), followed by 10 principals (12.50%), and 5 school supervisors (6.25%). This participant composition indicates that this study obtained fairly representative information from the main actors implementing the Independent Curriculum in educational institutions. The predominance of teachers as respondents provided a more in-depth picture of the state of curriculum implementation at the classroom level. Furthermore, the involvement of principals and supervisors allowed for a broader perspective on managerial aspects and educational policy.

Table 2. Participants' Level of Understanding of the Independent Curriculum

Level of Understanding	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Very high	18	22.5	22.5	22.5
Tall	34	42.5	42.5	65
Currently	20	25	25	90
low	8	10	10	100
Total	80	100	100	

The analysis results show that the majority of participants have a high level of understanding of the Independent Curriculum. A total of 34 respondents (42.5%) were in the high category and 18 respondents (22.5%) were in the very high category. However, there were still 20 respondents (25.0%) with a moderate level of understanding and 8 respondents (10.0%) with a low level of understanding. These findings indicate that although the Independent Curriculum socialization and training program has been implemented, there is still a need to increase the capacity of teachers and education personnel so that understanding of the concepts of differentiated learning, diagnostic assessment, and the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project can be implemented optimally.

Tabel 3. Tantangan Utama Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka

Challenge	Frequency	Percent
Limited Teacher Competency	24	30
Limitations of Digital Infrastructure	20	25
Adaptation of Learning Devices	16	20
Administrative Burden	12	15
Policy Support and Mentoring	8	10
Total	80	100

Based on Table 3, the biggest challenge faced in implementing the Independent Curriculum is limited teacher competency, as expressed by 24 participants (30.0%). The next challenge is limited digital infrastructure, cited by 20 participants (25.0%), followed by difficulties in adapting learning tools, cited by 16 participants (20.0%). Furthermore, administrative burdens and a lack of policy support also remain obstacles to curriculum implementation. These findings indicate that the successful implementation of the Independent Curriculum is not solely determined by policy changes but also requires human resource readiness and adequate infrastructure support.

Table 4. Participant Perceptions of the Impact of the Independent Curriculum

Impact of Implementation	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Very Positive	22	27.5	27.5
Positive	38	47.5	47.5
Enough Positive	15	18.75	18.75
Not Enough Positiv	5	6.25	6.25
Total	80	100	100

The research results show that the implementation of the Independent Curriculum has a relatively positive impact on the learning process. Thirty-eight participants (47.5%) stated that the Independent Curriculum had a positive impact, while 22 participants (27.5%) considered it very positive. The most frequently mentioned impacts included increased student engagement, the development of critical thinking skills, and increased creativity in the learning process. However, a small number of participants still considered the impact less positive due to limited facilities and human resource readiness in their respective schools.

Table 5. Recommendations for Strengthening the Implementation of the Independent Curriculum

Rekomendasi	Frequency	Percent
Ongoing Training for Teachers	30	37.5
Peningkatan Infrastruktur Digital	22	27.5
Administrative Simplification	15	18.75
School Mentoring	13	16.25
Total	80	100

Overall, the research results indicate that the implementation of the Independent Curriculum has made a positive contribution to improving the quality of learning in schools. However, various challenges remain, particularly in the areas of teacher competency, digital infrastructure, and adaptation of learning tools. Therefore, the majority of participants recommended the need for ongoing training for teachers (37.5%) and improvements to digital infrastructure (27.5%) as key strategies to increase the effectiveness of the Independent Curriculum implementation. These findings reinforce that successful curriculum reform requires synergy between the government, schools, and all education stakeholders to optimally achieve national education goals.

DISCUSSION

The research findings indicate that the implementation of the Independent Curriculum in Indonesian education has generally been quite successful, as evidenced by the participants' high level of understanding of the basic concepts and principles of the Independent Curriculum and their positive perceptions of its impact on the learning process. These findings indicate that the educational transformation oriented toward student-centered learning is beginning to show positive results. From a constructivist perspective, students have broader opportunities to

construct knowledge through active and contextual learning experiences, while teachers act as learning facilitators. Furthermore, the Independent Learning philosophy emphasizes the importance of flexible learning that can accommodate diverse student characteristics. Therefore, the findings of this study reinforce the view that the Independent Curriculum can be a strategic instrument in improving the quality of education if supported by teacher readiness and an adequate learning environment (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Ndari et al., 2023; (Hasballah, Zulfahmi, 2024).

Nevertheless, this study found that limited teacher competency remains a major challenge in implementing the Independent Curriculum. These findings indicate that some teachers still experience difficulties in implementing differentiated learning, diagnostic assessments, and developing teaching materials appropriate to student characteristics. This condition can be explained through the theory of educational change, which states that the successful implementation of an educational innovation is highly dependent on the readiness of the human resources implementing it. The results of this study align with those of (Ndari, et al., 2023), who found that teacher adaptation to new learning paradigms requires a lengthy process. Similar findings were also reported by (Darussalam & Indah, 2024) and (Fauziyah, et al., 2025), who indicated that the lack of ongoing training and mentoring was a major inhibiting factor in the implementation of the Independent Curriculum. Therefore, improving teacher competency is an aspect that must be prioritized to ensure the successful and sustainable implementation of the curriculum.

In addition to teacher competency, this study also revealed that limited digital infrastructure remains a significant obstacle. These findings indicate that implementing the Independent Curriculum requires not only pedagogical readiness but also adequate technological readiness. In the theory of educational technology integration, the effectiveness of technology use in learning is influenced by the availability of facilities, accessibility, and the user's ability to optimally utilize the technology. The results of this study align with the findings of (Adi, 2025) who stated that the disparity in educational facilities between urban and remote areas causes the implementation of the Independent Curriculum to be uneven. These findings are also supported by (Hasballah, & Zulfahmi, 2024) and (Fauziyah, et al., 2025) who stated that limited internet access and digital devices are the main obstacles in utilizing the Independent Teaching Platform. However, this study found that schools with better infrastructure support tend to show a higher level of implementation success than schools with limited facilities.

On the other hand, the research results show that the majority of participants gave a positive assessment of the impact of the Independent Curriculum implementation on the learning process. Increased active student participation, creativity, critical thinking skills, and learning independence were the benefits most perceived by respondents. This finding aligns with research by (Mujiburrahman, et al., 2024), which concluded that the Independent Curriculum is able to create a more contextual and meaningful learning experience for students. Similar results were also found by (Darussalam & Indah, 2024) and (Fatmariza & Anisa, 2026), who showed that a flexible learning approach provides greater space for students to develop 21st-century competencies. Thus, although various implementation challenges remain, the resulting benefits indicate that the Independent Curriculum has great potential in supporting the achievement of national education goals oriented towards the holistic development of student character and competency.

This study has several strengths, including its ability to integrate analysis of teacher competency, digital infrastructure, policy support, and the impact of the implementation of the Independent Curriculum into one comprehensive study. The primary contribution of this study is providing an empirical overview of the current state of the Independent Curriculum implementation and the various challenges still faced by educational institutions in Indonesia. The findings have practical implications for the government, schools, and education stakeholders to improve the quality of teacher training, strengthen digital infrastructure, and expand curriculum implementation mentoring programs. However, this study has limitations due to the relatively

limited number of participants and the study area coverage, which does not represent the entire educational landscape in Indonesia. Therefore, it is recommended that future research involve a larger number of respondents, cover a wider area, and utilize a mixed methods approach to gain a deeper understanding of the factors influencing the successful implementation of the Independent Curriculum in various educational contexts (Miles et al., 2014; Creswell & Creswell, 2018; [\(Mujiburrahman, et al., 2024\)](#)).

4. CONCLUSION

The implementation of the Independent Curriculum in Indonesian education demonstrates that the transformation of student-centered learning has had a positive impact on the educational process. The Independent Curriculum is able to encourage the creation of learning that is more flexible, contextual, and adaptive to student needs, thus supporting optimal competency and character development. Furthermore, the success of curriculum implementation is determined not only by the substance of the policies implemented but also by the readiness of human resources, the support of facilities and infrastructure, and the ability of educational units to adapt to changing learning paradigms.

This study concludes that the implementation of the Independent Curriculum still faces various challenges that require ongoing attention and efforts from all education stakeholders. Strengthening educator competencies, enhancing technological and infrastructure support, and optimizing curriculum implementation support are crucial factors in realizing the effective and sustainable implementation of the Independent Curriculum. Therefore, synergy between the government, schools, teachers, and the community needs to be continuously strengthened so that the goals of educational transformation through the Independent Curriculum can be achieved more equitably and sustainably across Indonesia.

5. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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