

Implementation Independent Curriculum in Increase Competence Professionalism School Teachers at SMAN 3 Sungai lilin

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka sebagai upaya untuk meningkatkan kompetensi profesional guru di SMAN 3 Sungai Lilin. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan deskriptif kualitatif, dengan teknik pengumpulan data melalui wawancara, observasi, dan dokumentasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka mendorong guru untuk menciptakan strategi pembelajaran yang inovatif, memperkuat literasi penilaian, serta menerapkan pembelajaran berdiferensiasi yang disesuaikan dengan karakteristik peserta didik yang beragam. Kurikulum ini juga mendorong praktik reflektif, pengembangan diri, dan kolaborasi antar guru melalui komunitas belajar. Kegiatan-kegiatan tersebut berkontribusi terhadap peningkatan yang signifikan pada kompetensi pedagogik, profesional, dan sosial guru. Namun demikian, masih terdapat beberapa tantangan, seperti keterbatasan pemahaman guru terhadap model pembelajaran berbasis proyek, ketergantungan pada modul ajar yang tersedia di Platform Merdeka Mengajar (PMM), serta kesulitan dalam integrasi teknologi. Untuk mengatasi permasalahan tersebut, pihak sekolah menyediakan pendampingan sejawat (peer tutoring), menyederhanakan prosedur administrasi, serta memanfaatkan sumber daya lokal sebagai bahan pembelajaran. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa Kurikulum Merdeka memberikan kontribusi yang signifikan dalam meningkatkan profesionalisme guru melalui penguatan kreativitas, refleksi, dan kolaborasi. Pelatihan profesional yang berkelanjutan serta dukungan kelembagaan sangat diperlukan guna memastikan keberhasilan dan keberlanjutan implementasi kurikulum dalam mencapai tujuan Merdeka Belajar.

Kata kunci: Kurikulum Merdeka, kompetensi profesional, pengembangan guru.

Abstract

This study aims to analyze the implementation of the Independent (Merdeka) Curriculum as an effort to enhance the professional competence of teachers at SMAN 3 Sungai Lilin. The research employs a qualitative descriptive approach, with data collected through interviews, observation, and documentation. Findings reveal that the implementation of the Independent Curriculum encourages teachers to create innovative learning strategies, strengthen assessment literacy, and apply differentiated instruction tailored to students' diverse characteristics. The curriculum also promotes reflective practices, self-development, and collaboration among teachers through learning communities. These activities contribute to significant improvements in pedagogical, professional, and social competencies. However, several challenges persist, such as teachers' limited understanding of project-based learning models, reliance on existing teaching modules from the Merdeka Teaching Platform (PMM), and difficulties in technology integration. To address these issues, schools provide peer tutoring, simplify administrative procedures, and utilize local resources as learning materials. The study concludes that the Independent Curriculum significantly contributes to improving teacher professionalism by fostering creativity, reflection, and collaboration. Sustainable professional training and institutional support are essential to ensure successful and continuous curriculum implementation in achieving the goals of Merdeka Belajar.

Keywords: Merdeka Curriculum, professional competence, teacher development

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1. INTRODUCTION

Education constitutes a fundamental pillar in national development, as the advancement of a country is inseparable from the quality of its human resources. High-caliber education fosters competent, adaptive, and globally competitive individuals. Within this framework, the curriculum serves as the central blueprint guiding the entire learning process and therefore holds a highly strategic position. As articulated by (Bhwana, 2023), the curriculum represents a comprehensive plan encompassing all learning experiences encountered by students under the school's direction. A curriculum that remains relevant, dynamic, and responsive to contemporary developments will generate graduates equipped to navigate complex global challenges. Equally crucial is teacher competence. Professional and capable educators are instrumental in translating curricular design into meaningful and transformative learning experiences (Namaziandost et al., 2019).

In pursuit of enhancing educational quality in Indonesia, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Kemendikbudristek) introduced the Independent Curriculum (Kurikulum Merdeka), an educational reform designed to grant greater autonomy to schools in tailoring curricula to students' needs and contextual realities. According to Kemendikbudristek (2022), this curriculum prioritizes student-centered learning, project-based approaches, and the integration of technology into instruction. Consequently, it aspires to cultivate holistic competencies encompassing cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains.

Philosophically, the Independent Curriculum draws inspiration from Ki Hajar Dewantara's educational ideals, emphasizing freedom in learning and prioritization of students' developmental needs. This paradigm repositions teachers as adaptive facilitators who are responsive to diverse learning characteristics (Meylani et al., 2025). The curriculum embodies an innovative policy framework that enables both educators and learners to optimize their potential. Its overarching objective is to establish contextual, flexible, and competency-oriented learning environments. Particularly at the elementary and secondary levels, successful implementation is closely tied to teacher professionalism, especially their capacity to design, execute, and evaluate student-centered instruction (Hosnan, 2021).

The implementation of the Independent Curriculum is anticipated to strengthen teacher professionalism significantly. Professional competence encompasses the ability to systematically plan, implement, and assess innovative and effective learning. Law Number 14 of 2005 concerning Teachers and Lecturers stipulates that teacher competence comprises pedagogical, personal, social, and professional dimensions (Rohmawati et al., 2019). Educators are expected to demonstrate a deep understanding of student characteristics, mastery of diverse instructional strategies, and proficiency in leveraging technology for educational purposes. Moreover, continuous professional development through training and reflective practice remains essential to sustaining instructional excellence.

Sudjana (2021) underscores that professional competence entails the ability to comprehend learners comprehensively, master subject matter, employ innovative methodologies, and conduct constructive evaluations. Within the Independent Curriculum framework, these competencies manifest in project-based learning, formative assessment practices, and reflective professional activities (Budiani, Prasetyo, & Wulandari, 2022). Teacher professionalism extends beyond content mastery to include reflective capacity, collaborative engagement, and adaptive innovation (Sari & Rahmadani, 2022; Putri Siregar, 2023). Nevertheless, empirical findings reveal discrepancies between the conceptual framework of

the Independent Curriculum and its practical application, particularly regarding teacher readiness and institutional managerial support (Thomas, 2020).

SMAN 3 Sungai Lilin stands among the educational institutions actively implementing the Independent Curriculum. The school demonstrates a firm commitment to elevating educational standards through systematic curriculum development and teacher competency enhancement. Implementation efforts involve comprehensive engagement of all school stakeholders, including the principal, teachers, administrative staff, students, and parents. Preparatory initiatives encompass teacher training programs, provision of instructional resources, and the development of curriculum-aligned learning instruments (Rahayu et al., 2024).

This study aims to analyze the extent to which the implementation of the Independent Curriculum contributes to the enhancement of teacher professional competence at SMAN 3 Sungai Lilin. Specifically, it examines transformations in teacher competence following the adoption of the curriculum, alongside identifying supporting and inhibiting factors influencing its effectiveness. The research focuses on lesson planning, instructional implementation, evaluation practices, and teachers' professional self-development. Additionally, it explores teachers' perceptions of the Independent Curriculum and its implications for their professional growth (Holmes et al., 2019).

The findings are expected to provide a comprehensive evaluation of the effectiveness of the Independent Curriculum in fostering teacher professionalism. The outcomes may serve as strategic input for schools, local authorities, and Kemendikbudristek in advancing educational quality through curriculum reform and competency development initiatives. Furthermore, this research aspires to inspire other educational institutions to implement the Independent Curriculum in a sustainable and impactful manner, thereby continuously strengthening teacher professionalism and improving learning outcomes nationwide (Rosadi et al., 2020).

Supporting studies reinforce this perspective Dewi (2023) demonstrates that the Independent Curriculum enhances teacher professionalism by fostering reflective habits and collaborative learning communities. Similarly, Rahman and Ningsih (2023) affirm that the Merdeka Learning initiative cultivates a culture of innovation and lifelong learning among educators, underscoring its transformative potential within Indonesia's educational landscape.

2. METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach, utilizing interviews, observations, and documentation as primary data collection techniques. In-depth interviews were conducted with the principal, teachers, and educational staff to obtain comprehensive insights into the implementation of the Independent Curriculum and its implications for teacher competence. Classroom observations were carried out to examine how educators translated the principles of the Independent Curriculum into actual instructional practices. In addition, documentation analysis encompassed the review of curriculum-related materials, including lesson plans, instructional modules, and reports on teachers' professional development activities (EF-EPI, 2024)

The research adopted a descriptive qualitative design. The participants consisted of elementary school teachers who had implemented the Independent Curriculum for a

minimum of one academic year, ensuring sufficient experience in applying its principles. Data were gathered through intensive interviews, direct observation of teaching and learning processes, and systematic examination of relevant documents (Cahyono & Perdhani, 2023)

Data analysis was conducted using an interactive model as proposed by (Buhary et al., 2024) involving three concurrent stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. To ensure data credibility and trustworthiness, source and methodological triangulation techniques were applied. The focus of the study was directed toward analyzing changes in teachers' professional behavior and identifying the strategies employed in operationalizing the core principles of the Independent Curriculum within classroom practice.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Implementation Stages of the Independent Curriculum

The findings indicate that SMAN 3 Sungai Lilin has implemented the Independent Curriculum systematically, following stages that include planning, intracurricular learning, project-based initiatives (P5), and learning assessment practices. The development of the *Kurikulum Operasional Satuan Pendidikan (KOSP)* illustrates the school's formal readiness, yet practical implementation reveals gaps in teachers' competence in independently designing instructional components (Su'udah, 2021). This aligns with the findings of Cahyono (2024), who emphasized that transitioning from a traditional teacher-centered paradigm to deep learning-oriented, student-centered practices often requires ongoing adaptation and professional support.

The use of differentiated learning strategies demonstrates early steps toward personalized instruction, as teachers adapt content and learning processes to students' diverse needs (Fitri et al., 2022). Moreover, incorporating local context and cultural wisdom from the Serasan area indicates an effort to create meaningful and contextually relevant learning experiences, consistent with Wilson (2021), who highlights the importance of contextualization for effective deep learning in 21st-century classrooms.

3.2 Contribution to Teacher Professional Competence

The Independent Curriculum significantly contributes to the enhancement of teacher professionalism across multiple dimensions. Pedagogically, teachers have gained flexibility and innovation in lesson design, particularly in project-based learning activities within P5. These changes reflect increased self-efficacy in planning and delivering differentiated instruction (Haug & Mork, 2021). This finding is reinforced by Musfidah et al. (2023), who observed that teachers engaging with independent curriculum platforms improve their ability to design competency-based and contextually adapted lessons.

Personality competence has also improved, with teachers developing routines of self-reflection through formative assessments and PMM usage, fostering openness to feedback and continuous improvement. Social competence has been strengthened through collaborative learning communities (*Komunitas Belajar* or KomBel), where interdisciplinary teamwork and discussion forums cultivate a professional culture of shared practice and collegiality (Pricilia Tupalessy, 2025).

In addition, the integration of technology, particularly the use of PMM for accessing teaching modules and performing assessments, has indirectly enhanced teachers' digital literacy skills, which aligns with Hidayat (2023) who found that engagement in school-based professional communities drives technological competence among teachers.

3.3 Challenges and Institutional Solutions

Despite these positive developments, several challenges persist. Teachers face difficulties translating learning outcomes (CP) into specific instructional objectives (ATP and TP), and many rely heavily on PMM resources rather than creating independent modules (Su'udah, 2021). Furthermore, administrative burdens, especially the preparation of KKTP documentation and P5 project reports, remain time-consuming and challenging.

The school has responded with pragmatic solutions, including utilizing local assets as teaching materials, establishing peer tutoring programs to bridge technology skill gaps among senior teachers, and simplifying administrative documentation without compromising learning objectives. These initiatives resonate with Bhwana (2023) and Kemdikbud (2023), which emphasize that effective implementation of the Independent Curriculum requires both administrative support and local innovation to overcome resource and skill limitations.

3.4 Paradigm Shift in Instructional Practices

The research findings clearly indicate a paradigm shift from teacher-centered instruction to student-centered learning. Teachers increasingly act as facilitators guiding students toward autonomy, creativity, and active participation (Gustiningsi et al., 2024). This aligns with global trends emphasizing learner-centered education and 21st-century competencies (Johnson & Adams, 2020; OECD, 2019).

Furthermore, the adoption of Independent Curriculum principles has fostered innovation in lesson planning and delivery. Teachers have become adept at contextualizing content, applying formative assessment strategies, and differentiating instruction to accommodate varied learner characteristics. This demonstrates a direct link between curriculum reform and professional competence, highlighting the role of policy as a catalyst for instructional and institutional improvement (Sari & Rahmadani, 2022; Musfidah et al., 2023).

3.5 Implications for Sustainable Professional Development

The findings suggest that the Independent Curriculum functions not only as a policy instrument but also as a mechanism for sustainable professional growth. Government initiatives, such as teacher training programs, mentoring, and collaborative professional learning communities, have provided essential support structures for ongoing teacher development (Kemdikbud, 2023; Price, 2023). As teachers engage in reflective practice, innovation, and collaboration, their professional identity evolves, positioning them as central agents in educational transformation.

Overall, the study reinforces previous research that emphasizes the importance of integrated support for teacher competence, highlighting that meaningful curriculum reform requires attention to pedagogical skills, personality development, social collaboration, and technological proficiency (Haug & Mork, 2021; Cappello et al., 2025).

4. CONCLUSION

The implementation of the Independent Curriculum at SMAN 3 Sungai Lilin has positively influenced teacher professional competence, fostering a shift from teacher-centered to student-centered learning. Teachers have demonstrated improved pedagogical skills through differentiated and contextualized instruction, formative and project-based assessment, and greater collaboration in professional learning communities. Despite challenges such as limited learning resources, technology skills gaps, and administrative workload, school initiatives like peer tutoring, utilization of local assets, and simplified

assessment reporting have helped mitigate these obstacles. These findings imply that sustained professional development, digital literacy support, and collaborative practices are essential to maximize curriculum effectiveness. Future research could examine long-term impacts on student learning, comparative studies across diverse school contexts, and the role of technology and community engagement in supporting deep, autonomous learning.

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