

# Efforts to Improve The Quality of Learning Through Kurikulum Merdeka at SMA N 11 Surabaya

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## Abstract

In order to improve the quality of learning and educational equality in Indonesia, the government has made improvements to the curriculum structure, one of which is the independent curriculum as part of efforts to improve the decline in the quality of learning due to the Covid 19 pandemic. The type of research used is descriptive qualitative method, data collection methods, namely observation and interviews, research data obtained through curriculum representatives. The research was conducted at SMA Negeri 11 Surabaya with the aim of improving learning quality efforts through the implementation of an independent curriculum. The result of the research is that the successful implementation of the independent curriculum is influenced by communication, the organizational structure of the school, and the availability of resources. Supporting factors in the implementation of the independent curriculum are teacher competence, the role of the learning committee and curriculum flexibility, while the inhibiting factors are that some teachers still experience limitations in understanding the concept of a flexible independent curriculum and focus on developing students' character in improving critical thinking skills..

## 1. Introduction

Throughout the history of education in Indonesia, the government has made changes to the curriculum to improve the quality of education, with the curriculum becoming an integrated tool in education. Education cannot function without a valid curriculum, as the curriculum serves as a guideline for learning (Angga et al., 2022). Similarly, Zumrotun et al. (2024) argue that the curriculum plays a crucial role as a guide to achieving educational objectives. The curriculum is a living component of the education system, and its relevance must be regularly evaluated to align with contemporary developments, enabling education to address the challenges of the times.

The independent curriculum has been implemented since 2022 as the national curriculum, bringing various positive impacts on learning. The independent curriculum gives schools the freedom to conduct learning according to the needs and culture of the school environment, thereby providing a new perspective on improving the quality of learning (Zumrotun et al., 2024). Although the independent curriculum has advantages in learning, its implementation is still hindered by some teachers who still need to adapt to the curriculum changes, including insufficient socialization and training, limited access to learning resources, and the geographical location of schools affecting the implementation of the independent curriculum (Wantiana & Mellisa, 2023).

In addition to these challenges, teachers, as educators in the learning process, are still not proficient in using technology to improve the quality of learning (Maulida et al., 2023), according to Fifani et al. (2023). The challenges faced in the Merdeka Curriculum stem from differing perceptions among teachers in implementing projects to strengthen the Pancasila student profile. Therefore, no matter how well-designed the curriculum policy may be, it will not succeed without the competence of teachers. Thus, collaboration among educational institutions, the government, and stakeholders is necessary to maximize the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum (Sapitri, 2022). The Merdeka Curriculum has a positive impact on improving the quality of education in the 21st century (Nurlaili & Aji, 2022).

Globalization in the field of education requires character development that goes beyond cognitive aspects. The implementation of the independent learning curriculum addresses the

challenges of the 4.0 industrial revolution for the welfare of society. Independent learning provides a new paradigm regarding the integration of cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects in learning. In an era of rapidly advancing technology, education plays a crucial role as a regulator of behavior, an agent of change, a social agent, and a guardian of values and morality within society (Rahmansyah, 2021). The Merdeka Curriculum plays a significant role in granting schools the freedom to implement learning tailored to students' needs in line with the times (Zumrotun et al., 2024). In this context, the independent curriculum has a positive impact on improving the quality of education in the 21st century (Nurlaili & Aji, 2022), reinforced by (Riyan Rizaldi & Fatimah, 2022) who state that the independent curriculum has advantages in improving the quality of education.

SMA N 11 Surabaya is one of the schools that has implemented the independent curriculum for approximately three years. Teachers and students strive to collaborate in applying the curriculum in learning and conduct evaluations to ensure that the implementation of the independent curriculum contributes positively to the quality of learning. In contrast to previous studies that primarily focused on conceptual aspects, this research specifically examines the implementation process of the Merdeka Curriculum at SMA Negeri 11 Surabaya, which has been ongoing for approximately three years. The uniqueness of this school lies in the strong collaboration between teacher leaders (Guru Penggerak), the learning committee, and the adaptive strategies employed to address local challenges, such as limited infrastructure and digital competence among teachers. The implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum at this school is further supported by the adoption of deep learning approaches, which emphasize critical thinking, deep understanding, and analytical skills. Additionally, contextual learning models such as project-based learning and problem-based learning are integrated to actively engage students in solving real-world problems, fostering collaboration and creativity.

This study is grounded in two main theoretical frameworks: the Policy Implementation Theory proposed by Mazmanian & Sabatier (1983) and the Educational Change Theory developed by Fullan (2007). The policy implementation theory posits that the success of public policy— including educational policies such as the Merdeka Curriculum—depends on factors such as the clarity of policy goals, effective communication among implementers, supportive organizational structures, and adequate resources. Meanwhile, Fullan's theory highlights that successful change within educational institutions requires transformational leadership, teacher collaboration, and sustained professional development. In alignment with these perspectives, this study also refers to the Regulation of the Minister of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia (Permendikbudristek) No. 12 of 2024 (Menteri Pendidikan, Kebudayaan, 2024), which mandates that the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum be contextual, adaptive to student needs, and aligned with the development of the Pancasila Student Profile. Accordingly, these two theoretical frameworks are employed to analyze how national policy is concretely translated into sustainable and participatory classroom practices at the school level.

This study aims to examine efforts to improve the quality of learning at SMA N 11 Surabaya through the implementation of the independent curriculum and to identify what needs to be evaluated in each implementation of the curriculum.

## **2. Method**

The research was conducted at SMAN 11 Surabaya in November 2024. The type of research used is descriptive qualitative research. Qualitative descriptive research aims to provide an explanation of individuals, groups, or certain events (Riyan Rizaldi & Fatimah, 2022). The sampling technique uses purposive sampling according to the author's needs, namely the deputy for the curriculum as the coordinator in charge of implementing the independent curriculum. The data collection technique was carried out by interviewing the deputy for the curriculum regarding the implementation of the independent curriculum, the challenges faced and the supporting and inhibiting factors in supporting learning effectiveness, the observation technique was carried out by observing the condition of the school and student learning to provide in-depth information related to learning effectiveness, relevant articles regarding the effectiveness of implementing the independent curriculum to help provide reinforcement for the implementation of the independent curriculum in the school.

### 3. Results and Discussion

#### 3.1. Result

No	Researcher and Year	Location	Title	Research Results
1	(Nurfida et al., 2025)	Lampung	Designing Innovative Learning: Solutions for Creating Curriculum-Based Fun Learning Merdeka	teachers find new ideas in reflecting on independent curriculum learning
2	(Mujianto & Setiawan, 2024)	Malang	Improving Learning Quality through Training and Mentoring Implementation of Merdeka Curriculum at SMA Muhammadiyah 2 Sumber Pucung	training and mentoring provide teachers with the ability to implement the independent curriculum more effectively
3	(Midiaty et al., 2024)	Samarinda	Analysis of the implementation of Merdeka Curriculum management in improving the quality of Education SMK Center of Excellence	the implementation of the independent curriculum is going well starting from planning, implementation and evaluation activities. although there are obstacles to monitoring costs for students in industrial work practices.
	(Bagea, 2025)	Kendari	Improving Learning Quality through Optimizing Human Resources in Implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum	There are obstacles in implementing the independent curriculum such as time constraints, limited infrastructure, gaps in technology use skills and excessive administration.
	(Yusran & Markani, 2024)	Makassar	Study of the effectiveness of Implementing Merdeka Belajar Curriculum at SMA Islam Athirah 1 Makassar	The implementation of the curriculum at SMAN 1 Makassar provides motivation for students to learn

Source : Research 2025

#### 3.2. Discussion

##### Relevant Research

Research conducted by (Nurfida et al., 2025) related to the independent curriculum as one of the innovative learning, the implementation of the independent curriculum encourages teachers to innovate learning through teaching strategies such as problem-based learning, using the Jigsaw method, and literacy-based learning so as to create fun, active and collaborative learning. Research by (Mujianto & Setiawan, 2024) related to improving the quality of learning through training and mentoring as a form of implementing an independent curriculum, mentoring and training provide readiness for teachers in implementing an independent curriculum, although resource limitations remain, continuous training can minimize teacher gaps related to this new curriculum.

Research by (Midiaty et al., 2024) independent curriculum management at SMK Pusat Unggulan provides competence for graduates, needs to provide facilities and collaboration with industry to improve school quality on an ongoing basis. Research by (Bagea, 2025) the implementation of an independent curriculum still faces challenges such as limited time for teachers to attend training, inadequate infrastructure, uneven mastery of teacher technology and quite a lot of administration, so continuous digitization training is needed, and collaboration between teachers to strengthen the implementation of an independent curriculum. As well as research by (Yusran & Markani, 2024) the implementation of an independent curriculum at SMAN 1 Athirah Makassar provides learning motivation, increases learning independence, and student creativity.

##### Effectiveness of independent curriculum implementation at SMAN 11 Surabaya

The implementation of the independent curriculum at SMA N 11 Surabaya has the aim of improving the quality of learning by using learning methods tailored to the needs of students and the dynamics of the times, it is hoped that it will perfect the previous curriculum (Salim Salabi, 2022).

During the implementation of the independent curriculum at SMA N 11 Surabaya, it was influenced by the following factors:

a. Communication

The element of communication is an important factor in an institution, so in implementing an independent curriculum, continuous communication is needed between teachers, students, parents, and students, with structured communication making the implementation of an independent curriculum achievable as planned. The principal has a role in bridging to provide socialization for teachers, facilitators in providing understanding related to the independent curriculum. With structured communication, the independent curriculum implementation program can run successfully and open up opportunities for criticism and suggestions from all school members.

b. Resources

Human and financial resource factors contribute to supporting the implementation of the independent curriculum. The human resources are teachers, principals, learning committee facilitators, and involve community leaders, family environment. So resources such as money, people, materials, methods, machines and markets are a source of success in implementing the independent curriculum at SMAN 11 Surabaya (Novita et al., 2024). The mobilizing teacher program that has received special training related to the independent curriculum is expected to be the initiator in implementing this curriculum so that differentiated learning runs well. Financial resources assist in providing more adequate learning infrastructure such as teaching aids, laboratories, technology in learning, and interactive learning materials. So human and financial resources are needed to support the successful implementation of the independent curriculum.

c. Organizational structure

The effectiveness of implementing an independent curriculum is also inseparable from a well-planned school organizational structure. The principal has a role as coordinator of learning policies and supervision, the deputy curriculum field reviews the implementation of the curriculum well and becomes a liaison between the principal, teachers and learning committees. Learning committees have a role as implementers and facilitators of projects ranging from project planning activities to project work titles (Budiono, 2023). The driving teacher has a responsible role to make students the main focus in learning, so that driving teachers need to be given training and workshops in order to improve the quality of teachers in Indonesia and support the implementation of the independent curriculum, with the integration of the independent curriculum and driving teachers is one of the ways to achieve quality education, driving teachers are also one of the platforms for creating quality school leaders (Ningrum & Suryani, 2022). A planned organizational structure contributes to managing the administration of resources needed for learning activities. Thus, the continuous coordination between the school, curriculum deputy, learning committee, lead teacher and administration team provides a smooth implementation of the independent curriculum program at SMAN 11 Surabaya.

### 3.3. Conclusion

Based on the results of the above research, it shows that the successful implementation of an independent curriculum depends on communication between all parties, the support of the school's organizational structure, the availability of resources both financial and human resources. Although there is teacher training, curriculum flexibility, schools still need to conduct ongoing training to optimize the implementation of this independent curriculum. Therefore, a strategy is needed to strengthen the implementation of the independent curriculum comprehensively so that the potential and resources can be utilized optimally. SMAN 11 Surabaya needs synergy between the principal, teachers, education personnel including workshops to provide an understanding of the independent curriculum, conducting continuous evaluation of the independent curriculum.

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All authors have equal contributions to the paper. All the authors have read and approved the final manuscript.

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