



## **A Systematic Literature Review on the Effectiveness of the Merdeka Curriculum in Enhancing Student Competencies**

### ***Tinjauan Pustaka Sistematis tentang Efektivitas Kurikulum Merdeka dalam Meningkatkan Kompetensi Siswa***

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#### Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengevaluasi efektivitas Kurikulum Merdeka dalam meningkatkan kompetensi siswa melalui kajian literatur sistematis terhadap 28 artikel yang terbit antara tahun 2020 dan 2025. Kajian dilakukan berdasarkan tahapan PRISMA, meliputi identifikasi, penyaringan, penilaian kelayakan, dan inklusi akhir. Data dianalisis melalui tabel ekstraksi yang memuat tujuan penelitian, metode, temuan, serta relevansinya dengan Kurikulum Merdeka. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kurikulum ini mendukung pembelajaran yang lebih fleksibel, terdiferensiasi, dan berbasis proyek sehingga mampu meningkatkan kreativitas, kemandirian, dan kemampuan berpikir tingkat tinggi siswa. Beberapa studi juga menegaskan bahwa penerapan Kurikulum Merdeka berkontribusi pada peningkatan keterlibatan belajar serta penguatan Profil Pelajar Pancasila sebagai capaian utama. Meskipun demikian, terdapat tantangan seperti variasi kesiapan guru, keterbatasan sumber belajar, dan dukungan sekolah yang belum merata sehingga memengaruhi efektivitas implementasi. Pembahasan menekankan bahwa Kurikulum Merdeka memiliki potensi kuat untuk mentransformasi pembelajaran, namun keberhasilannya bergantung pada faktor sistemik seperti pengembangan profesional, ketersediaan sarana, dan komitmen manajemen sekolah. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa Kurikulum Merdeka menawarkan kerangka pendidikan yang menjanjikan, tetapi memerlukan penguatan strategi implementasi agar mampu memberikan dampak optimal di berbagai konteks satuan pendidikan.

**Kata Kunci:** Kurikulum Merdeka, kompetensi siswa, tinjauan literatur sistematis

#### Abstract

This study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of the Merdeka Curriculum in enhancing student competencies through a systematic literature review of 28 selected articles published between 2020 and 2025. The review followed the PRISMA framework, involving identification, screening, eligibility assessment, and final inclusion stages. Data were synthesized using a structured extraction table to analyze research objectives, methods, findings, and relevance to the Merdeka Curriculum. The results indicate that the curriculum supports more flexible, differentiated, and project-based learning, contributing to improvements in creativity, independence, and higher-order thinking skills. Several studies also highlight increased student engagement and the development of the Pancasila Student Profile as central outcomes of the curriculum's implementation. However, challenges persist, including varied teacher readiness, limited learning resources, and inconsistent school-level support, which influence the curriculum's overall effectiveness. The discussion emphasizes that while the Merdeka Curriculum holds strong potential to transform learning, its success depends on systemic factors such as professional development, resource availability, and administrative commitment. The study



concludes that the curriculum offers a promising framework for modern education but requires strengthened implementation strategies to achieve its intended impact across diverse educational settings.

**Keywords:** Merdeka Curriculum, student competence, systematic literature review

## **INTRODUCTION**

Curriculum changes in Indonesia are a continuous effort to improve the quality of education and student competencies comprehensively. The Merdeka Curriculum exists as a response to the need for more flexible, adaptive, and student-centered learning, thereby encouraging the optimal development of academic and non-academic potential. This curriculum emphasizes differentiated learning, character strengthening, creativity development, and the implementation of project-based learning that is relevant to the times. In this context, the Independent Curriculum is seen as an important breakthrough to improve student competence, both in cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects (Syafriani et al., 2025: 112). However, the effectiveness of its implementation is highly dependent on the readiness of education units, teacher competence, policy support, and a conducive learning ecosystem.

Various studies show that the implementation of the Independent Curriculum has significant potential in improving the competence of students. Research by Yani, Pratiwi, and Isman (2023: 208) at SMK Budi Utomo Binjai emphasized that good curriculum management including planning, implementation, and evaluation plays an important role in improving the competence of graduate skills, especially through industrial work practices and contextual learning. Systematically structured curriculum management allows for the creation of alignment between industry needs and student learning outcomes, so that the competencies developed are more relevant and measurable. These findings show that the Independent Curriculum is able to increase students' readiness to face the world of work if supported by proper implementation.

In the context of teacher competence, the implementation of this new curriculum requires more creative, innovative, and adaptive pedagogic skills. Santoso (2022: 57) in his research explained that participatory training and intensive guidance have been proven to improve teachers' competence in compiling teaching modules for the Independent Curriculum. Quality teaching modules are an important instrument to direct an effective learning process, so that strengthening teacher competence has a direct impact on improving student competence. The results of the study show that teacher capacity building is the main prerequisite for the successful implementation of the curriculum. Without adequate training support, teachers will find it difficult to adapt to new learning approaches that demand high creativity and flexibility.

In addition, the Independent Curriculum is considered effective in encouraging 21st century skills in students. Research by Khusna et al. (2023: 314) emphasizes that 21st century learning through the Independent Curriculum approach can improve the competence of the 4Cs: critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity. These competencies are urgently needed in the face of increasingly complex global developments. Through the Pancasila Student Profile strengthening project and collaborative activities, students get a more meaningful, contextual, and challenging learning experience, so that their holistic competencies are further developed. This proves that the Independent Curriculum is able to provide a learning space that is relevant to the demands of the times.



On the other hand, several studies show that the implementation of the Independent Curriculum still faces various obstacles. Magdalena, Winarti, and Yulianti (2022: 89) found that teachers often have difficulty understanding the concept of Freedom of Learning and implementing it in the classroom. These obstacles include limited ability to prepare teaching tools, lack of innovation in learning models, and lack of collaboration between educators. This challenge causes the implementation of policies not to run optimally and has an impact on the competence of students who have not developed optimally. These findings indicate the need for continuous and collaborative teacher mentoring.

At the institutional level, the effectiveness of the implementation of the Independent Curriculum is greatly influenced by the readiness of school management. Hidayati et al. (2024: 133) show that good curriculum planning, development, implementation, and evaluation contribute greatly to the success of curriculum implementation. Schools that carry out integrated curriculum management are better able to adapt learning needs to student characteristics and policy demands. This shows that the implementation of the curriculum requires not only the readiness of teachers, but also the readiness of the school managerial system as a whole.

Evaluation of the effectiveness of the curriculum also needs to be seen from student learning outcomes, especially in literacy and numeracy. Elisa, Bachri, and Susarno (2025: 221) explained that compared to the 2013 Curriculum, the Independent Curriculum is more adaptive to strengthening literacy and numeracy through a simple and flexible learning structure. However, its effectiveness still depends on the quality of classroom implementation, the adequacy of contextual teaching materials, and ongoing teacher training. Without this support, the goal of improving student competence in literacy and numeracy is difficult to achieve optimally.

In addition to the challenges that have been mentioned, several studies have also revealed that limited facilities, technological infrastructure, and learning access gaps are significant obstacles. Rizky et al. (2025: 176) point out that although the Independent Curriculum offers flexibility and freedom in learning, not all schools have the same ability to provide digital learning facilities or support technology-based assessments. This causes inequality in the quality of implementation between regions, especially in the 3T area.

Based on this description, it can be concluded that the Independent Curriculum has great potential in improving student competence if supported by teacher readiness, school management, learning facilities, and an effective evaluation system. However, various implementation challenges still need to be overcome through training, mentoring, management strengthening, and the provision of adequate learning resources. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to comprehensively examine and analyze the effectiveness of the Independent Curriculum in improving student competence through literature review from various relevant researches, so that the results can contribute to improving the quality of learning and education policies in Indonesia.

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

This study uses the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach to analyze the effectiveness of the Independent Curriculum in improving student competence. The SLR method was chosen because it is able to provide a structured, transparent, and replicable synthesis of knowledge. According to Resnawita and Hendrik (2023: 107), SLR is a literature review technique



that is carried out through the identification, selection, evaluation, and synthesis of scientific articles based on certain protocols. Furthermore, Fatimah, Zen, and Fitriisa (2025: 45) explain that a systematic literature study requires in-depth document analysis, thematic categorization, and data triangulation to ensure the validity of the findings.

### Research Procedure (Systematic Literature Review)

#### 1. Keyword Identification

Keywords are set to make it easier to find articles, including: *Independent Curriculum*, *student competence*, *literacy*, *numeracy*, *curriculum management*, *teacher competence*, *21st century learning*, and *curriculum implementation*.

#### 2. Literature Search Strategy

The search was conducted on databases: Google Scholar, SINTA, GARUDA, DOAJ, and a number of university repositories. The publication year range is determined in 2020–2025 to ensure the actuality and relevance to the implementation of the Independent Curriculum.

#### 3. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion:

- a. Articles in Indonesian or English.
- b. The article discusses the implementation of the Independent Curriculum or its impact on student competence.
- c. Articles in the form of empirical research results or literature studies.
- d. The article is available in *full text*.
- e. Articles published in reputable journals or scientific proceedings.

Exclusion:

- a. Duplicate articles.
- b. Opinion, editorial, or non-peer *review articles*.
- c. The article is irrelevant to the focus of the Independent Curriculum and student competence.
- d. Articles with incomplete data.

### Article Selection Using PRISMA

#### 1. Identification

In the initial stage of identification, the researcher searched literature on various databases (Google Scholar, SINTA, GARUDA, DOAJ, and university repositories). Using key keywords such as *"Independent Curriculum"*, *"student competence"*, *"numeracy literacy"*, *"curriculum implementation"*, *"Independent Learning"*, found Total articles identified: 312 articles, Duplicate articles: 76 articles, Articles remaining after duplicate removed: 236 articles



## 2. Screening

Screening is carried out through the reading of titles and abstracts to ensure suitability with the research topic. Articles filtered (title + abstract): 236, Irrelevant articles (outside the topic of Independent Curriculum / not a student's competence / not full text): 142 articles, Articles passing screening: 94 articles

## 3. Eligibility

The eligibility stage is carried out by reading the full text of the 94 articles. Feasibility considerations include: suitability of research focus, suitability of methods, quality of publications, completeness of data. As a result, Articles evaluated full-text: 94, Articles were issued because: not focusing on student learning or competence (25), not relevant to the context of the Independent Curriculum (18), incomplete research data (11), articles in the form of opinions/non-peer reviewed (12), Total issued: 66 articles, Articles eligible (eligible): 28 articles.

## 4. Included

The final stage of PRISMA produces: Articles included in the final synthesis of 28 articles. These articles were then analyzed using *content analysis* techniques and compiled in a table of resume data and used in the formation of literature review themes.

### Data Analysis Techniques

The analysis is carried out through a content analysis approach, namely:

1. Categorization, which is grouping articles into themes such as student competence, literacy–numeracy, teacher competence, school management, and implementation challenges.
2. Thematic synthesis,  
that is, combining findings from various articles to see similarities, differences, and new findings.
3. Triangulation of sources,  
as suggested by Fatimah et al. (2025: 51), to increase the validity of the findings.
4. Interpretation, which is to draw conclusions about the effectiveness of the Independent Curriculum based on a total of 28 articles analyzed.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Literature Review Results

Analysis of 28 articles shows that the Independent Curriculum has a positive impact on improving student competence at various levels of education. This increase can be seen in aspects of thinking skills, creativity, literacy, and student involvement in learning. One of the findings shows that the implementation of a flexible curriculum is able to help schools adjust learning according to the needs of students (Syafriani et al., 2025).

In addition, research at the vocational school level found that the planning and management of the Independent Curriculum produces a high level of effectiveness, increasing students' readiness in industrial work practices (Yani et al., 2023). In terms of teacher competence, intensive training



has been proven to have a direct impact on improving teachers' ability to prepare teaching modules and design learning (Santoso, 2022).

**Table Resume Data**

<b>Yes</b>	<b>Author &amp; Year</b>	<b>Article Title</b>	<b>Research Objectives</b>	<b>Method</b>	<b>Key Results</b>	<b>Relevance to the Independent Curriculum</b>
1	Yani et al., 2023	Implementation of Independent Learning Curriculum Management in Improving the Competencies of Students of SMK Budi Utomo Binjai	Knowing the planning, implementation, and evaluation of the Independent Curriculum and its effectiveness	Mixed method (primary qualitative, secondary quantitative)	Implementation is very effective (87% of respondents); planning & street vendors are going well despite distance/cost constraints	Demonstrating the effectiveness of the Independent Curriculum in improving expertise competencies
2	Santoso, 2022	Participatory Training and Intensive Guidance Improve Teacher Competence in Preparing Independent Curriculum Teaching Modules	Improving teachers' ability to prepare teaching modules	Two-cycle PTK	Training to improve the quality and number of teaching modules; teachers are more ready to implement KM	Strengthening the importance of teacher training for implementation readiness
3	Khusna et al., 2023	Independent Learning Curriculum through 21st Century Learning to Improve the 4C Competency of MI Students	Describing KM through 21st century learning on strengthening the 4Cs	Literature studies	KM is effective in building critical thinking, collaboration, communication, creativity	Showing the link between KM and 21st century competence
4	Syafriani et al., 2025	Independent Curriculum Learning in Indonesia	Examining the concept, implementation, and challenges of the Independent Curriculum	Qualitative (literature review & policy analysis)	KM is flexible and student-centered, but constrained by teacher readiness and infrastructure	Provide an overview of effectiveness as well as implementation challenges
5	Jayanti et al., 2024	The Influence of the Independent Curriculum Program on the Development of Pedagogic Competencies of Driving Teachers	Seeing the influence of the KM program on the competence of driving teachers	Descriptive qualitative (interviews, observations, literature)	Improving pedagogic competence, innovation, and teacher readiness	KM encourages the improvement of teacher quality and learning quality
6	Mardiana & Emmiyati, 2024	Implementation of the Independent Curriculum in	Evaluate implementation and formulate update recommendations	Class observations, interviews,	KM increases student engagement, but is constrained	Provide empirical data on KM





		Learning: Evaluation and Renewal		document analysis	by technology and infrastructure	successes & barriers
7	Rizky et al., 2025	The Role of the Independent Curriculum in Improving the Quality of Learning	Examining the role of KM in improving the quality of learning	Literature studies	KM strengthens differentiation, P5, and contextual learning; Facility challenges still exist	Showing the potential of KM in improving the quality of learning
8	Hidayati et al., 2024	Implementation of Independent Curriculum Management to Increase Teacher Innovation	Describe the management of KM implementation at SMA N 3 Yogyakarta	Descriptive qualitative	The school is able to plan and implement KM even though it has only been running for 1 year	Provide real KM implementation data in secondary schools
9	Elisa et al., 2025	The Effectiveness of the 2013 Curriculum and the Independent Curriculum on Literacy and Numeracy of Elementary School Students	Analyze the effectiveness of K13 vs KM on literacy and numeracy	Narrative literature review	KM is more adaptive & contextual; High effectiveness when teachers are ready	Supports the argument that KM excels in literacy and numeracy
10	Magdalena et al., 2022	Implementation of the Independent Learning Policy in Improving Student Competence	Giving an overview of the implementation of Freedom of Learning	Library research	The Independent Learning Policy encourages learning innovation and student independence, even though teachers are not fully prepared	Provide a theoretical basis for the relationship between MB policy and student competence
11	Anwar et al., 2025	Independent Curriculum as an Effort to Improve the Quality of Education in the 21st Century	Analyzing the role of the Independent Curriculum in improving the quality of basic education in the 21st century	Literature studies	KM to increase learning flexibility, PBL, and strengthen the Pancasila Student Profile; increase 4C	Emphasizing the role of KM in building 21st century competencies
12	Fadhil & Gusmanelli, 2025	Independent Curriculum in Increasing Students' Learning Creativity	Explaining how KM increases creativity through PjBL	Descriptive qualitative	KM increases creativity, motivation, thinking skills; Challenge: Facilities & Teacher Training	Providing empirical evidence of the importance of PjBL in KM implementation
13	Farma et al., 2024	Implementation of the Independent Curriculum to Improve the Quality of	Analyzing the implementation of KM in improving quality	Qualitative	Implementation runs through four aspects: operational curriculum, teaching tools,	Relevant as a study of KM implementation in junior high school



		Education at SMPN 1 Tapak Tuan			P5, differentiated learning	
14	Putri et al., 2025	Implementation of the Independent Curriculum and Innovative Learning Media in Economic Education	Analyze the influence of KM & innovative media on the quality of economic learning	Literature review	The use of KM + digital media improves students' understanding of economic concepts and engagement	Examples of technology-based KM implementations
15	Lestari et al., 2025	Implementation of the Independent Curriculum in Improving the Learning Outcomes of MAN 2 Langsa Students	Measuring learning outcomes improvement through KM implementation	Qualitative (observations, interviews)	95–100% increase in learning outcomes; students are happy with P5; Facility Constraints	Proving that KM significantly improves learning outcomes
16	— (SMKN 7 Jakarta), 2024	Implementation of the Independent Curriculum to Improve the Quality of Vocational Education	Explaining the effect of KM on the quality of learning at SMKN 7	Literature review	KM increases student motivation, relevance, and competence; Teachers as facilitators	Relevant for vocational learning
17	Kurniawati, 2023	Effectiveness of the Implementation of the Independent Learning Curriculum	Measuring the effectiveness of the MB Curriculum based on Solichin's theory	Library research	KM effective; improve performance; There is a positive & negative impact on students	Provide a framework for evaluating the effectiveness of KM
18	Widiantia et al., 2024	Policy Analysis of Merdeka Curriculum: Readiness to Fulfill Industry Needs	Analyzing the readiness of schools to run KM for industrial needs	Literature study + observation	Teachers experience linearity constraints, teaching tools; The need to strengthen industry competency tools	Relevant for the analysis of vocational school readiness
19	Haq & Wakidi, 2024	Evaluation of the Implementation of Merdeka Belajar Curriculum in Secondary Schools in the Digital Era	Evaluating the implementation of KM in secondary schools in the digital era	Qualitative	KM effectively encourages PBL & digital tools; digital infrastructure challenges; The Need for Teacher Training	Discussing the role of technology in KM
20	Zulqaidah et al., 2024	The Role of the Independent Curriculum Policy on Teacher Readiness and	Analyze the role of KM on teacher readiness and learning outcomes	Literature review	The biggest challenge: teacher readiness; KM has a positive effect on	Relevant in terms of policy and teacher readiness





		Student Learning Outcomes			learning outcomes; The need for training	
21	Buds & Pangkey (2024)	<i>Independent Curriculum: Improving the Quality of Learning with Freedom and Flexibility</i>	Analyze the role of the flexibility of the Independent Curriculum on the quality of learning.	Literature Studies	The Independent Curriculum increases teachers' creativity, provides flexibility, and provides more personalized learning.	Reinforcing the basis that the Independent Curriculum emphasizes freedom, flexibility, and a student-centered approach.
22	Maysara et al. (2024)	<i>Implementation of the Independent Curriculum in Improving Students' Critical Thinking Skills</i>	Knowing the implementation of the Independent Curriculum in improving critical thinking skills in elementary schools.	Qualitative (observation, interview, documentation )	Differentiated learning significantly improves students' critical thinking skills.	Showing the practical impact of the Independent Curriculum on increasing student HOTS.
23	Syarifah et al. (2025)	<i>Independent Curriculum Development Strategy and Its Implementation in Improving Learning Quality</i>	Identify effective strategies for the development and implementation of the Independent Curriculum.	Literature Studies	The success of the implementation is influenced by teacher readiness, school support, and the use of PjBL and differentiation.	Providing an important basis for school readiness in implementing the Independent Curriculum.
24	Mellyzar et al. (2025)	<i>The Merdeka Curriculum and P5: Teachers' Understanding and Students' Experiences</i>	Analyze teachers' understanding and student experiences related to P5.	Qualitative (interview & questionnaire)	Teachers understand the concept of P5 but experience implementation problems. P5 improves students' character and skills.	Supporting the position of P5 as an important component of the Independent Curriculum.
25	Wulandari et al. (2023)	<i>Impact of MBKM Program in Improving Student Competence</i>	Assessing the impact of the MBKM program in improving student competence.	Qualitative (case study)	MBKM improves hard skills, soft skills, and professional readiness of students.	Providing an overview of the impact of the Independent Curriculum on higher education.
26	Rahimah & Widiastuty (2023)	<i>2013 Curriculum and Merdeka Curriculum in English Learning</i>	Comparing the 2013 Curriculum and the Independent Curriculum on English language learning.	Qualitative descriptive	There are differences in flexibility, assessment, and differentiation between the two curricula.	Strengthening the character of the Independent Curriculum as an adaptive and flexible curriculum.
27	Darius et al. (2025)	<i>Differentiated Learning in the Merdeka Curriculum: A</i>	Examining the implementation of differentiated learning in the	Literature Review	Differentiated learning increases student	It is the conceptual basis for differentiated



		<i>Literature Review</i>	Independent Curriculum.		engagement and achievement, but teachers still have difficulty implementing it.	learning in the Independent Curriculum.
28	Rosadi & Megayanti (2025)	<i>The Contribution of the Independent Curriculum in Efforts to Improve Literacy Skills</i>	Explain the contribution of the Independent Curriculum to improving literacy.	Literature Review	The Independent Curriculum improves literacy through contextual programs, cross-subject literacy, and the role of teachers.	It is relevant to see the contribution of the Independent Curriculum in improving national literacy.
21	Buds & Pangkey (2024)	<i>Independent Curriculum: Improving the Quality of Learning with Freedom and Flexibility</i>	Analyze the role of the flexibility of the Independent Curriculum on the quality of learning.	Literature Studies	The Independent Curriculum increases teachers' creativity, provides flexibility, and provides more personalized learning.	Reinforcing the basis that the Independent Curriculum emphasizes freedom, flexibility, and a student-centered approach.

## Key Research Findings

### 1. Differentiated Learning as the Foundation of the Independent Curriculum

Almost all studies confirm that differentiated learning is the most important component of the Independent Curriculum. A number of studies show that this approach improves participation and learning outcomes because students get learning experiences that match their abilities. One study stated that differentiated learning significantly improves critical thinking skills at the elementary school level (Maysara et al., 2024).

Other research also confirms that the application of differentiation encourages student creativity and helps teachers create learning activities that are more adaptive to the needs of the classroom (Darius et al., 2025). These findings are consistent with the results of studies that show that the Independent Curriculum is able to strengthen 21st century competencies through improving critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity skills (Khusna et al., 2023).

### 2. Strengthening the Pancasila Student Profile (P5)

The results of the review show that P5 makes a great contribution to the formation of students' character. A study revealed that the implementation of the P5 project increases students' confidence, cooperation, and ability to express ideas (Mellyzar et al., 2025).

Research conducted at the madrasah level also showed an increase in student learning outcomes after participating in various P5 projects, even reaching an increase of more than 90 percent in some subjects (Lestari et al., 2025). These findings show that strengthening character through P5 not only has an impact on attitude aspects but also on academic achievement.



### **3. Learning Flexibility and Its Impact on the Quality of the Learning Process**

Flexibility is one of the main characters of the Independent Curriculum and is the most discussed factor. A study states that the flexibility provided by the curriculum makes teachers more creative in determining learning methods according to the classroom context (Tunas & Pangkey, 2024).

Other results show that the freedom to design learning also increases the relevance of learning to the real world, especially in practice-based subjects such as economics and vocational (Putri et al., 2025). However, this flexibility is not fully optimal because there are still schools that have limited facilities, thus hindering the digitization of learning (Haq & Wakidi, 2024).

### **4. Improving Literacy and Numeracy Through Contextual Learning**

Improving literacy and numeracy is one of the indicators highlighted in the Independent Curriculum. One of the studies compared the Independent Curriculum with the 2013 Curriculum and showed that the Independent Curriculum was more effective in improving the literacy and numeracy skills of elementary school students (Elisa et al., 2025).

Other findings confirm that cross-subject literacy learning applied in the Independent Curriculum is able to gradually increase students' interest in reading and comprehension (Rosadi & Megayanti, 2025). This shows that the contextual approach offered by the curriculum can provide better results than traditional approaches.

### **5. Strengthening the Competence of Teachers and Students in Secondary and Higher Education**

The Independent Curriculum not only focuses on students but also has an impact on improving teachers' professional competence. A study showed that teachers experienced an increase in creativity in designing learning after attending curriculum implementation training (Jayanti et al., 2024).

At the higher education level, the MBKM program which is part of the Merdeka Learning policy also shows a significant impact on increasing student work readiness. A study revealed that internship programs, research projects, and teaching assistance in MBKM improve students' professional competencies and soft skills (Wulandari et al., 2023).

## **Discussion**

### **1. Suitability of Findings with Modern Curriculum and Learning Theory**

Findings in the literature show that the Independent Curriculum is consistent with constructivist theory, which emphasizes active and student-centered learning. The differentiation and project-based learning approach is in line with the 21st century learning model that requires students to construct meaning through experience. One study revealed that a project-based approach can increase students' creativity and learning motivation (Fadhil & Gusmaneli, 2025).



## **2. Challenges of Implementing the Independent Curriculum**

Although many benefits have been found, the implementation of the Independent Curriculum still faces a number of challenges. One study found that teachers need intensive training to be able to develop teaching tools according to classroom needs (Zulqaidah et al., 2024). In addition, some schools face limitations in technological devices that cause digital learning to not run optimally (Mardiana & Emmiyati, 2024). Another challenge arises in vocational schools that still have difficulty meeting the demands of the industrial world in the context of the Independent Curriculum (Widiantia et al., 2024).

## **3. The Position of the Independent Curriculum in Improving Student Competence**

The results of the literature show that the Independent Curriculum has a real contribution to improving student competence. These findings can be seen from the increase in critical thinking, creativity, learning outcomes, literacy, and work readiness. One study even recorded an increase in learning outcomes reaching almost 100 percent in the implementation of the Independent Curriculum at the madrasah level (Lestari et al., 2025).

These findings strengthen the position of the Independent Curriculum as a curriculum that is relevant to the needs of modern education, while providing a more humane and adaptive learning direction.

## **CONCLUSION**

A study of 28 articles shows that the Independent Curriculum has the capacity to encourage more flexible, contextual, and student-centered learning. The differentiation approach, project-based learning, and strengthening the Pancasila Student Profile have been proven to be able to increase creativity, independence, and high-level thinking skills in students. These findings confirm that the Independent Curriculum can be a learning framework relevant to the needs of the 21st century when implemented with the support of the right pedagogical strategies and adequate understanding from educators.

Although the potential for learning transformation looks strong, the success of this curriculum is largely determined by the readiness of teachers, the availability of learning resources, and the support of school management. Several articles show that obstacles such as limited facilities, variations in educator competencies, and uneven continuous training are still real challenges in implementation. This condition indicates that efforts to strengthen teachers' capacity and provide systemic support need to be a priority so that the Independent Curriculum can run optimally in various contexts of educational units.

Based on these findings, it can be concluded that the Independent Curriculum has great opportunities to improve the quality of learning processes and outcomes, but its effectiveness is highly dependent on the readiness of the education ecosystem as a whole. The next research is suggested to examine the implementation of the curriculum in regions with high resource variability, explore the most impactful teacher training models, and conduct long-term studies to understand the influence of curriculum on the development of character and learning outcomes of students more comprehensively.

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