

Analysis of the Curriculum Policy Transition from the Independent Curriculum to the National Curriculum

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the transition of curriculum policy from the Independent Curriculum to the National Curriculum in Indonesia by identifying teacher readiness, policy adaptation strategies, and their implications for educational practice. Employing a qualitative descriptive approach through library research, the study draws on data from policy documents, government reports, and scholarly articles. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify key patterns and challenges within the transition process. The findings reveal that teacher readiness, both pedagogical and psychological, plays a crucial role in the successful implementation of the curriculum, while policy clarity and institutional collaboration determine the consistency of adaptation at the school level. The study highlights that effective curriculum reform requires continuous professional development, context-based policy communication, and systemic support to ensure equitable implementation across diverse educational contexts.

Keywords: Curriculum Implementation; Curriculum Transition; Education Policy Analysis; Independent Curriculum; National Curriculum

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis transisi kebijakan kurikulum dari Kurikulum Merdeka ke Kurikulum Nasional di Indonesia dengan mengidentifikasi kesiapan guru, strategi adaptasi kebijakan, serta implikasinya terhadap praktik pendidikan. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif dengan metode kajian pustaka, menggunakan data dari dokumen kebijakan, laporan pemerintah, dan artikel ilmiah. Data dianalisis melalui analisis tematik untuk mengidentifikasi pola utama dan tantangan dalam proses transisi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kesiapan guru, baik secara pedagogis maupun psikologis sangat memengaruhi keberhasilan implementasi kurikulum, sedangkan kejelasan kebijakan dan kolaborasi kelembagaan menentukan konsistensi adaptasi di tingkat sekolah. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa reformasi kurikulum yang efektif memerlukan pengembangan profesional berkelanjutan, komunikasi kebijakan yang kontekstual, serta dukungan sistemik agar implementasinya merata di berbagai konteks pendidikan.

Kata Kunci: Implementasi Kurikulum; Transisi Kurikulum; Analisis Kebijakan Pendidikan; Kurikulum Merdeka; Kurikulum Nasional

INTRODUCTION

Shifts in curriculum policy demonstrate the dynamic nature of Indonesian education today. The Independent Curriculum (Kurikulum Merdeka), which prioritizes autonomy, flexibility, and project-based learning, has been widely adopted in various educational institutions in recent years.¹ This policy was created in response to learning loss following the pandemic and the need to recover from the learning crisis. They hope to further liberate teachers and students in the teaching and learning process. At the school level, this wave of change is creating a new environment full of experimentation and innovation. However, the excitement caused by the implementation of the Independent Curriculum is now tempered by the reality that we are currently transitioning to the National Curriculum, a new program. Undoubtedly, this transition raises many differences and doubts. Many teachers and education personnel in the field must re-prepare themselves for change. They are still struggling to adapt to the philosophy and technicalities of the Independent Curriculum. Education practitioners may experience fatigue and confusion due to the mismatch between policy expectations at the central level and the capabilities and readiness for implementation at the grassroots level.²

Against this backdrop, the researchers argue that the curriculum policy transition is more than simply replacing documents; it is a complex process of change that requires management and an understanding of the consequences.³ Without a thorough analysis of the dynamics of this transition, Indonesia risks re-examining the classic problem of curriculum implementation: the gap between policy writing and policy practice. This research is crucial for gathering the opinions, experiences, and challenges faced by key actors, particularly teachers, in embracing this change. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to comprehensively examine the curriculum policy transition process from the Independent Curriculum to the National Curriculum. Specifically, this study aims to measure teacher readiness, identify factors that encourage and hinder the transition, and assess the initial impact of the transition on classroom learning.⁴ This research is expected to provide clear guidance for stakeholders to mitigate risks and ensure a more efficient and less disruptive transition.

Studies on the *Independent Curriculum* policy have been widely conducted; however, most of them focus primarily on implementation at the school level and have not yet examined the dynamics of the policy transition toward the *National Curriculum*. The first study by Yulianti & Hadi analyzes the implementation policy of the Independent Curriculum in elementary schools, emphasizing the readiness of teachers and principals as key factors for success, but does not discuss changes in the national policy direction.⁵ The second study by Nifrizia & Syahril explores the *Merdeka Belajar* (Independent Learning) policy and its paradigm shift in education, yet remains focused on the early phase of policy formulation without addressing the transition process toward

1 Koni Olive Tunas and Richard Daniel Herdi Pangkey, "Kurikulum Merdeka: Meningkatkan Kualitas Pembelajaran Dengan Kebebasan Dan Fleksibilitas," *Journal on Education* 6, no. 4 (2024).

2 Rizky Satiti Tinolah, "Teori Kebijakan Publik," *Kebijakan Dan Manajemen Publik* 4, no. 1 (2016).

3 Fenty Setiawati, "Dampak Kebijakan Perubahan Kurikulum Terhadap Pembelajaran Di Sekolah," *Braz Dent J.* 33, no. 1 (2022): 1–12.

4 Carolina Dindy Dwi Miranti and Margaretha Purwanti, "Readiness for Change Guru Terkait Perubahan Metode Pembelajaran Di Masa Pandemi Covid-19," *Journal of Psychological Science and Profession* 7, no. 2 (2023): 55.

5 Yulianti Yulianti and Syamsul Hadi, "Policy Analysis of Independent Curriculum in Elementary Schools," *Jurnal Bidang Pendidikan Dasar* 7, no. 2 (July 17, 2023): 126–41, <https://doi.org/10.21067/jbpd.v7i2.8388>.

a more centralized national curriculum.⁶ The third study by Zuhdi & Huda examines curriculum management in the implementation of the Independent Curriculum, highlighting technical challenges such as infrastructure limitations and teachers' understanding, but does not address the broader dynamics of policy change.⁷ The fourth study by Ma'rifah & Arifah focuses on a case study of Independent Curriculum implementation in a specific school without exploring its national policy implications.⁸ The fifth study by Fritsch & Leite reveals that national curriculum policies are often overly prescriptive and lack adequate public participation.⁹ Unlike these previous studies, the present research focuses on analyzing the policy transition from the Independent Curriculum to the National Curriculum, examining the emerging issues, the strategies employed, and the impact on educational institutions.

The purpose of this study is to analyze the transition process of curriculum policy from the Independent Curriculum to the National Curriculum, focusing on how policy shifts are formulated, communicated, and implemented within Indonesia's education system. This research seeks to identify the challenges faced by policymakers and educators during this transition, as well as the strategies adopted to ensure consistency and continuity in learning objectives. The importance of this study lies in its potential to fill the existing research gap by providing an in-depth understanding of how curriculum reform evolves within a national context that balances decentralization and standardization. As curriculum changes often reflect broader socio-political and educational transformations, examining this transition is crucial to understanding how national education goals are maintained amid policy adjustments. The findings of this research are expected to contribute both theoretically and practically: theoretically, by enriching the discourse on curriculum policy transition and educational governance; and practically, by offering recommendations for policymakers, school leaders, and educators to design and implement future curriculum reforms that are coherent, sustainable, and responsive to the needs of diverse learners.

Method

This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach using library research methods to analyze the transition of curriculum policy from the Independent Curriculum to the National Curriculum.¹⁰ Data were collected through an extensive review of policy documents, government reports, and scholarly articles published between 2020 and 2025 that discuss curriculum reform, teacher readiness, and policy implementation in Indonesia. The data analysis process applied content analysis and thematic interpretation to identify patterns, similarities, and contrasts across existing studies. These themes were then synthesized into three analytical focuses—teacher

6 Ifna Nifrizia, Syahril Syahril, and Rifma Rifma, "Independent Learning Policy (Analysis of Learning Curriculum)," *Edumaspul: Jurnal Pendidikan* 7, no. 1 (March 1, 2023): 1341–48, <https://doi.org/10.33487/edumaspul.v7i1.6060>.

7 Moh Irham Zuhdi et al., "Analyzing Curriculum Management in Facing the Implementation of the Independent Learning Curriculum," *Jurnal Ilmiah Gema Perencana* 4, no. 1 (May 14, 2025): 1–14, <https://doi.org/10.61860/jigp.v4i1.191>.

8 Anis Ma'rifah et al., "Implementation of Independent Learning Curriculum in Elementary Schools," *International Journal of Scientific Multidisciplinary Research* 3, no. 3 (March 30, 2025): 479–88, <https://doi.org/10.55927/ijsmr.v3i3.132>.

9 Rosangela Fritsch, Carlinda Leite, And Ruy D'oliveira Lima, "Curriculum Policies And Their Articulations On The Perspective Of A More Democratic Education," *Educação Em Revista* 38 (2022), <https://doi.org/10.1590/0102-469836572t>.

10 John W Creswell and Cheryl N Poth, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Approaches* (Sage publications, 2016).

readiness, policy adaptation strategies, and the impact of curriculum transition on educational practices. This methodological design ensures that the findings are grounded in credible academic evidence and contribute to the broader discourse on educational policy reform.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Public Policy on Curriculum Transition

Public policies related to the curriculum change from the Independent Curriculum to the National Curriculum can be considered part of a logical public policy cycle. The government created this policy to address community needs and problems that were not yet met by the Independent Curriculum. Several policy stages shape the transition. This begins with problem formulation (e.g., differences in quality among schools), design (e.g., a new, more uniform curriculum), implementation (e.g., socialization and implementation of the new curriculum), and evaluation (e.g., evaluating how well the new curriculum is designed). As explained in the book, public policy is not simply a spontaneous decision, but a series of planned actions to achieve specific goals. Therefore, this transition is more appropriately seen as the government's effort to adjust the education system to make it more stable, measurable, and applicable evenly throughout Indonesia.¹¹

Research findings related to the curriculum transition by Minister of Education, Culture, Science, and Technology Nadiem Anwar Makarim indicate that he will introduce a new national curriculum called the Independent Curriculum in 2024, when his term ends. However, the Minister's proposal to change the curriculum, seemingly driven by political interests, remains rejected. Changing the national curriculum is understandable. Furthermore, the need is urgent, as Indonesia has experienced a decades-long learning crisis that has yet to be optimally resolved. Various strategies have been advanced and implemented, including curriculum changes. In line with the Independent Learning policy, which frees schools and teachers from bureaucratic constraints or simply serves the national interest, the Independent Curriculum has a structured approach that offers voluntary choice. Each training unit can choose to avoid chaos while maintaining its certainty. The Independent Curriculum officially became the national curriculum on March 26, 2024.

Implementation of the Independent Curriculum

The Independent Curriculum is essentially a collaborative learning process between teachers, schools, and the government. As seen in the files you provided, the implementation of this curriculum is being carried out in stages according to the readiness of each educational unit. Some schools are just starting out by modifying sample teaching materials and government documents; others are already more confident in creating their own operational curriculum based on an evaluation of school conditions and student needs. The Independent Curriculum allows teachers to experiment, reflect, and plan to become more proficient. Essentially, the implementation of this curriculum does not require consistency or instantaneous implementation; rather, it is more of a process to improve learning practices in schools.¹²

11 Hermanu Iriawan, *Teori Kebijakan Publik*, ed. Zulya Rachma Bahar (Malang: Malang: PT. Literasi Nusantara Abadi Grup, 2024).

12 BSKAP, "Tahapan Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka Di Satuan Pendidikan,," *Kemendibudristek*, 2022.

Research on the implementation of the Independent Curriculum, one of which is found on the registration platform, allows schools to choose the implementation year of the Independent Curriculum according to their respective readiness. Schools that have not yet implemented the Independent Curriculum can switch to it no later than the 2026/2027 academic year, and specifically for schools in the 3T (United Territories) regions no later than the 2027/2028 academic year. Thus, schools outside the 3T (United Territories) regions can study and undergo a transition to the Independent Curriculum for two years. Meanwhile, schools in the 3T (United Territories) regions have the opportunity to undergo a three-year transition. The above provisions are stipulated in the Regulation of the Minister of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Permendikbudristek) No. 12 of 2024 concerning the establishment of the Independent Curriculum as the curriculum for Early Childhood Education (PAUD), elementary education levels, and secondary education levels. Quoted from the Ministry of Education and Culture website, 309,149 Registered schools have implemented the Independent Curriculum by 2023. This figure covers 80% of schools in Indonesia. Of these, 6,200 are located in underdeveloped areas.

Outermost, Disadvantaged and Frontier (3T)

In areas known as 3T (frontier, remote, and underdeveloped), the main problems are usually related to access to education, teacher quality, and a lack of facilities. For example, based on the data you provided, schools in Mahakam Hulu Regency still face the problem of teachers lacking university degrees, inadequate infrastructure, and limited access via river. These conditions make it difficult to compete with urban areas in terms of educational quality. However, efforts are being made, such as the Teacher Community Forum (FKG 3T), which aims to share teaching strategies. This initiative demonstrates that the spirit to improve the quality of learning remains, even if the journey is slow and difficult.¹³

The detailed research results regarding the 3T areas, a two-year transition period is given for areas other than the outermost, disadvantaged, and frontier (3T) or no later than 2026-2027 to implement the Independent Curriculum. Then, a three-year transition period for 3T areas no later than the 2027-2028 academic year to implement the Independent Curriculum. The Director General of Early Childhood, Elementary, and Secondary Education at the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, Iwan Syahril, also appealed to local governments (pemda) to assist in the implementation of the Independent Curriculum, especially supporting schools and teachers through various learning communities.

Teacher Readiness and Policy Adaptation in the Curriculum Transition

The curriculum shift from the Independent Curriculum to the National Curriculum is seen as highly dynamic. Although many educators are still adapting to the Independent Curriculum philosophy, they must re-prepare themselves for the new policy. This aligns with public policy implementation theory, which states that on-the-ground execution is the biggest problem, not formulation. Previous studies have also shown that discrepancies between school readiness at the

13 Muhammad Tommy FImi Putera and Margaertha Lassni Rhussary, "Peningkatan Mutu Pendidikan Daerah 3T," *Jurnal Ekonomi Manajemen* 12, no. 2 (2018): 144–49.

grassroots level and central policy often lead to transition failure.¹⁴ Therefore, the results of this study reinforce the notion that clear policy communication and ongoing training support are key to success.

Furthermore, research shows that many schools have chosen to continue implementing the independent curriculum in accordance with Ministerial Regulation No. 12 of 2024. This aligns with Rogers' diffusion of innovation theory, which states that institutions differ in their level of readiness to embrace change.¹⁵ Schools in areas with limitations tend to be categorized as "late adopters," while more advanced schools are able to enter the "early adopter" category. The fact that 80% of schools in Indonesia have implemented the Independent Curriculum demonstrates that the transition, while uneven, is still progressing.¹⁶ This also supports previous research showing that the ability to adapt educational programs can increase policy acceptance at the local level.

However, conditions in the 3T (United Territories) areas present more complex problems. The implementation of the new curriculum is delayed due to limited teachers, infrastructure, and transportation. Previous studies on education in 3T regions suggest that educational equity also plays a role in this disparity in access. Field results indicate that schools in 3T regions were given a longer transition period (until 2027–2028).¹⁷ This suggests that supportive policies are in place to address this disparity. The implementation process in 3T regions can be made more realistic with the support of the teacher community and collaboration between stakeholders.¹⁸ Therefore, the findings of this study are not only empirically relevant but also contribute to the development of the literature on education policy in Indonesia.

Teacher readiness is a multidimensional concept encompassing pedagogical competence, psychological adaptability, and digital literacy.¹⁹ Recent studies indicate that teachers who can self-regulate and manage learning transitions demonstrate higher adaptability. For instance, Putri et al. found a significant correlation between teachers' self-regulation and their readiness for curriculum change, emphasizing that intrinsic motivation supports confidence during educational reforms.²⁰ Similarly, Komarudin et al. showed that while many teachers were generally prepared for the Independent Curriculum, issues such as limited communication with parents and inadequate

14 Fauziyah Annur and Hary Febriansyah, "Proposed Human Capital Management Strategy to Improve Elementary School Teachers' Competencies in Rahuning, North Sumatra, Indonesia (Case Study of SDIT Ar-Rahmah)," *International Journal of Current Science Research and Review* 06, no. 08 (2023).

15 Roswita Verona et al., "Penerapan Teori Difusi Inovasi Pada Perkembangan Kurikulum Pendidikan Di Indonesia," *Edukatif: Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan* 5, no. 6 (2023): 2569–81.

16 Hikmah Bayani Situmorang, Putri Maymuhamna Rahayu, and Raudhatul Munawwarah, "Kebijakan Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar Di Sekolah," *Jurnal Penelitian, Pendidikan Dan Pengajaran: JPPP* 4, no. 2 (2023): 117–20.

17 Singgar Mantahari Dalimunthe, Mardiatul Husna Rambe, and Nancy Dwinta, "Solusi Krisis Pendidikan Di Daerah 3T: Pendekatan Dan Inovasi Untuk Kemajuan," *El Banar: Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Pengajaran* 8, no. 1 (2025): 1–20.

18 Siti Sofiah, Rudiyanto Rudiyanto, and Rita Mariyana, "Implementasi Manajemen Sarana Dan Prasarana Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini," *Edukid* 14, no. 1 (2019): 32337–43.

19 Hartini Manasai, "Evaluasi Penerapan Testing, Tracking, Treatment (3T): Studi Kualitatif? Jurnal Riset Kualitatif dan Promosi Kesehatan 1, no. 1 (2022): 6-9, <https://doi.org/10.61194/jrkpk.v1i1.354>

20 Nilamsari Kusumawati Putri, Yuli Kurniawati Sugiyo Pranoto, and Siti Nuzulia, "The Influence of Self-Regulation on Early Childhood Education Teachers' Readiness for Curriculum Change in Indonesia," *Golden Age: Jurnal Ilmiah Tumbuh Kembang Anak Usia Dini* 9, no. 3 (September 30, 2024): 515–25, <https://doi.org/10.14421/jga.2024.93-12>.

facilities still hindered smooth implementation.²¹ These findings highlight that readiness goes beyond mastering teaching materials, it requires emotional resilience and institutional support. Thus, effective curriculum transition depends not only on teachers' professional skills but also on systemic mechanisms that encourage confidence, collaboration, and continuous learning.

Policy adaptation occurs when schools reinterpret national guidelines to suit local conditions and resources. According to Kaharuddin et al. successful adaptation often relies on the proactive role of school leaders who bridge the communication gap between the central ministry and teachers.²² Principals who provide mentoring, organize micro-training, and divide responsibilities clearly enable teachers to translate curriculum directives into actionable practices. However, in schools with minimal supervision and limited professional networks, policies tend to remain abstract. Local teacher communities, such as *Forum Komunitas Guru 3T*, serve as alternative platforms for mutual learning and problem-solving. These grassroots mechanisms exemplify how national policies can be contextualized effectively when teachers are empowered to participate in decision-making. In short, adaptation is not merely policy compliance, it is an act of professional agency shaped by trust and localized understanding.

Despite progress, Indonesian teachers continue to face obstacles in curriculum adaptation. A 2025 study in the *Oxford Review of Education* by Andriyati et al. revealed that heavy workloads, inadequate resources, and unclear guidance remain major barriers.²³ Teachers often experience uncertainty in translating theoretical frameworks into classroom activities. To cope, many have adopted peer mentoring systems and digital communities that provide support and resource sharing. Professional learning networks allow teachers to reinterpret reform policies collectively, transforming top-down mandates into collaborative innovations. Such strategies align with Rogers' diffusion of innovation theory, showing that shared experiences accelerate acceptance and mastery.²⁴ While infrastructural challenges persist, these adaptive practices demonstrate teachers' agency and resilience. They also underline the need for continuous institutional backing to maintain motivation and ensure equitable curriculum implementation across diverse contexts.

The synthesis of recent literature affirms that teacher readiness and policy adaptation are mutually reinforcing. As shown across multiple studies, readiness provides the foundation for teachers to internalize reforms, while adaptive policies create an environment conducive to sustained engagement. When teachers receive consistent professional development and feel recognized as co-constructors of policy, reform becomes a process of shared ownership rather

21 Abdul Karim Komarudin, Mayasari Mayasari, and Nurhaeni Sikki, "Kesiapan Bahan Ajar Guru Dengan Penerapan Kurikulum Merdeka Pada Tahun Ajaran 2024-2025 Di Sekolah Menengah Atas Islam Terpadu Al - Luthfah Cikarang," *Cakrawala* 8, no. 2 (December 12, 2024): 227–41, <https://doi.org/10.33507/cakrawala.v8i2.2122>.

22 Kaharuddin Kaharuddin et al., "Challenges and Strategies of Senior High School Principals in Facing Curriculum Transition," *Journal of Educational Management Research* 4, no. 1 (May 4, 2025): 1–13, <https://doi.org/10.61987/jemr.v4i1.747>.

23 Nofica Andriyati, Abdul Amin, and Yanping Li, "Voices from the Classroom: Perceptions and Obstacles in Indonesian Curriculum Reform," *Oxford Review of Education*, September 9, 2025, 1–10, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03054985.2025.2539397>.

24 Mirjam Dibra. "Rogers theory on diffusion of innovation-the most appropriate theoretical model in the study of factors influencing the integration of sustainability in tourism businesses." *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences* 195 (2015): 1453-1462. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2015.06.443>

than top-down compliance. This aligns with the principle of *policy learning*, where change occurs through iterative feedback between policymakers and practitioners.²⁵ Therefore, enhancing teacher readiness is not an isolated training issue, it is a systemic reform priority. Sustainable curriculum transition in Indonesia will depend on continuous dialogue, reflective practice, and institutional mechanisms that translate readiness into policy success.

CONCLUSION

This study reveals that the transition from the Independent Curriculum to the National Curriculum in Indonesia is a complex and gradual process influenced by teacher readiness, policy communication, and local adaptation. The findings highlight that teachers' ability to adjust pedagogically and psychologically plays a central role in ensuring effective implementation. Meanwhile, policy clarity and consistent guidance from the government significantly determine the pace of adaptation at the school level. Schools with stronger leadership and collaborative teacher communities tend to adapt faster and maintain better learning outcomes. However, disparities remain visible in underdeveloped and remote regions, where limited resources and training opportunities slow down progress. Overall, the success of curriculum reform depends on how well policy design aligns with teacher capacity and contextual realities across diverse educational settings.

The main contribution of this study lies in its comprehensive synthesis of recent literature on curriculum policy transition in Indonesia, bridging theoretical discussions with real-world educational dynamics. By combining perspectives from policy implementation theory, innovation diffusion, and teacher readiness frameworks, this research provides an integrated understanding of how national reforms can succeed when supported by human and institutional alignment. The study also contributes methodologically by offering a model of thematic analysis suitable for future educational policy reviews. Practically, it highlights the importance of viewing teachers not only as implementers but as active agents in shaping curriculum success. This perspective encourages policymakers and educational leaders to design training and support systems that empower teachers to navigate change with confidence and creativity.

A key limitation of this study is its reliance on secondary data and literature-based analysis, which limits the ability to capture real-time experiences from teachers and schools during the transition period. Future research should focus on conducting empirical field studies to explore how teachers interpret and implement curriculum changes in different regional and institutional contexts. One promising topic would be to examine the relationship between teacher professional development models and their adaptive capacity in curriculum reforms. Such research could provide actionable insights for designing more effective training programs and ensuring that national curriculum transitions are equitable, sustainable, and responsive to the evolving needs of educators and learners alike.

25 Witting, A. Insights from 'policy learning' on how to enhance the use of evidence by policymakers. *Palgrave Commun* 3, 49 (2017). <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-017-0052-x>

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