SLR Systematic Literature Review: The Impact of Independent Curriculum Changes on Higher Education in Indonesia

Mohammed Mahmoud Imleesh[1*]

[1] Economics Education, Universitas Negeri Semarang, Semarang, Indonesia.

Abstract: The curriculum serves as a foundational element of education, significantly influencing the achievement of educational goals and the overall success of various sectors and settings. In light of the curriculum reforms initiated in 2020, it is imperative to understand their implications for educational institutions and the anticipated outcomes of the new curriculum policy. This study employs a comprehensive Literature Review methodology, utilizing the PRISMA framework to systematically analyze 22 scholarly articles and journals. The findings of this research indicate that the recent changes in secondary education have a markedly positive impact on the educational landscape in Indonesia. These reforms are designed to align with the principles of Society 5.0, which emphasizes the integration of advanced technology and human-centric approaches. As a result, the new curriculum fosters an environment that promotes creativity, innovation, and critical thinking among students. This study not only highlights the transformative potential of the curriculum changes but also underscores the necessity for ongoing adaptation and responsiveness to the evolving educational needs of society.

Keywords: Curriculum, Education, Secondary Education, Innovation.

Introduction

One of the learning theories associated with the form of MBKM activities can be linked to a theory of constructivism proposed by Fernando & Marikar (2017) in the research conducted by Aditya et al., (2023). According to this theory, knowledge is actively acquired and constructed by the learner. This cognitive process is adaptive and experiential, rather than a mere discovery of ontological reality. In this approach, the teacher's role is to facilitate learning. This theory is highly suitable for individuals seeking to attain freedom in acquiring knowledge with their existing abilities. They will actively explore and utilize it as a guide in their self-development.

The new policy in 2020 from the Minister of Education and the Culture of Indonesia, Nadiem Makarim, known as the Independent Learning Campus (MBKM), represents a new paradigm in the field of education, particularly in higher education. The basic idea of Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) emphasizes independence for educational institutions, including both national universities and private universities. According to the Nadiem Makarim, the fundamental idea of opting for freedom in learning is inspired by the philosophy of K.H. Dewantara emphasizes independence and self-reliance. The Independent Learning Campus (MBKM) is considered related and appropriate to be applied in Indonesia in the current era of democracy (Marjan, Tuti, F., & Aswita, 2021).

Curriculum is a structured plan developed by a school to provide guidance and achieve specific educational outcomes. Meanwhile, independence is the freedom to think and be creative. The Independent Curriculum is a program that offers students ample opportunities to engage actively and creatively in the learning process. The Independent Curriculum is one option for curriculum development. The data collection process was conducted to determine if the school was prepared to introduce the Independent Curriculum as an educational option in educational institutions. In addition, the National Curriculum policy, which will be implemented by the Ministry of Education, Culture, and Sports in 2024, will be based on curriculum evaluation when schools restart (Resti Fauziah et al., 2023).

Implementing the curriculum, whether by directly following the teaching program or indirectly, demands a high level of responsibility from teachers, particularly in the realm of educational services. Curriculum preparation, which involves determining how teachers can develop the curriculum, is the task of an educator. Therefore, they must fulfill their responsibilities competently and professionally. How can teachers develop a curriculum? The purpose of developing and changing criteria is to realize the benefits of competitive learning and enhance quality, thereby improving it through the training process. Therefore, understanding the importance of the curriculum, tasks, and learning objectives is essential for you to function as a high-quality and professional teacher (Herman et al., 2023).

The curriculum is the core of the educational process and is the area that most directly influences learning outcomes. The curriculum also serves as a medium to achieve goals and as a guide in implementing teaching at all types and levels of education.

Method

Researchers analyze various studies in this article. To facilitate understanding of the impact of changes in the independent curriculum on higher education in Indonesia, the author presents the results of the analysis in the form of a table. The following are the stages of Systematic Literature Review (SLR) research:

1. Research Questions

    Research questions can be formulated based on the requirements of the research topic. In this research, the research question that will be used is: What is the impact of changes in the independent curriculum on higher education in Indonesia?

2. Search Process

    The search process was conducted to acquire pertinent sources to address the research questions. Google Scholar, also known as Publish or Perish, is a search engine used by researchers to conduct searches. Google Scholar is a service provided by Google that is used to search and index articles published in scientific journals. The Google Scholar search engine was chosen as the platform to search for relevant primary sources because it includes indexed articles from both Google Scholar and Sprott. Additionally, it offers a feature that allows articles to be displayed based on the required year of publication.

3. Inclusion Criteria

    At this stage, a determination is made regarding whether the collected literature can be used as research data. During the inclusion criteria stage,

researchers establish standards for selecting literature for research. The conditions are as follows:

a) The literature used consists of journal articles.
b) The library research method is qualitative.
c) Sprott and Google Scholar indexed the literature.
d) The maximum year of literature publication is within the last 5 years (2020-2024).
e) The literature discusses the impact of changes to the independent curriculum on higher education in Indonesia.
f) The research subjects in the literature are universities in Indonesia. The author following the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) protocol for the next stage, which consists of four stages: identification, screening, eligibility assessment, and inclusion (Borenstein, 2021; Juandi, 2021; A., 2021). A. Putri and Juandi (2022) as follows:

    1) Stage 1: Identification

        A total of 30 research articles were identified on the impact of changes to the independent curriculum on higher education in Indonesia using the Google Scholar and Publish or Perish search engines from 2020 to 2024.

    2) Stage 2: Screening

        Out of the 30 results from relevant journals, there were no duplicate data.

    3) Stage 3: Conformity

        After analysis was carried out using predetermined criteria, 22 articles were selected.

    4) Stage 4: Final Article

        There are 22 articles that comply with the provisions regarding the impact of changes to the independent curriculum on higher education in Indonesia, which will be analyzed.

4. Data Collection

    Collecting literature for research data involves searching on Google Scholar or Publish or Perish websites using keywords such as "the impact of changes in the independent curriculum on higher education in Indonesia." The results presented have been gathered from various sources, forming the data for this research.

Table 1. Year and quantity of Journal categories

Journal	
Year	Qty
2021	5
2022	9
2023	8

Result and Discussion

Out of the 30 relevant journals, 22 journals have been selected through a search on Google Scholar or Publish and Perish website. The distribution by categories for 2021 includes 5 journals, for 2022 includes 9 journals, and for 2023 includes 8 journals. The following Table 02 presents a classification of 22 selected journals that are relevant to the impact of changes in the independent curriculum on higher education in Indonesia:

Table 2. Selected literature classification

No.	Researcher, Year	Journal	Result
1.	(Fajri et al., 2021)	Mizan: Journal of Islamic Law	The impact of improved performance on students is the increased competence of students especially in increasing technical skills in information technology in addition to their legal skills.
2.	(Fauziah & Vantissha, 2021)	Jurnal Teknik Ilmu dan Aplikasi	With the implementation of the Merdeka Learning - Campus program, this can help prepare students to face the post-campus period as well as bring great benefits in the development of competence/skills as a supply of work after graduation.
3.	(Darajatun & Ramdhany, 2021)	Journal of Business Management Education		The influence of interest on student involvement has proven to be significant, indicating the importance of the development of interest directed by the lecturer to enhance student engagement in independent campus programmes.
4.	(Sari et al., 2021)	Jurnal Pendidikan Tambusai	Research results show that students' competence is gradually improving after attending this program. Basic life skills such as adaptive attitude, emotional maturity, and communication skills are soft skills developed.
5	(D. Anggraini & MY, 2021)	Management and Accounting Expose	Study results show students welcome MBKM policy
6.	(Wirianata & Chelsya, 2022)	YUME: Journal of Management	Tarumanagara University accounting students welcomed the application of MBKM and considered MBKM as a suitable solution to improve the quality of learning/education in Indonesia. Through this research, it is expected that the College can continue to implement the MBKM program
7.	(Nita et al., 2022)	DWIJA CENDEKIA: Jurnal Riset Pedagogik	Implementation of the MBKM Program shows a positive impact on improving the attitude, knowledge, general and special skills of students of UNIKAMA PGSD
8.	(Setiana et al., 2022)	Majalah Ilmiah UNIKOM	Students have a positive perception of the implementation of the MBKM Learning Program
9.	(H. Anggraini et al., 2022)	Jurnal Ilmiah Potensia	Prasarana means of support in the campus environment have also been felt very adequate by the lecturers (91.7%) supporting the implementation of MBKM.
10.	(Usanto, 2022)	Kompleksitas: Jurnal Ilmiah Manajemen, Organisasi Dan Bisnis	The application of an independent curriculum is an answer to the challenges of technological development through education with a result-oriented educational learning system, with the hope that graduates can focus on achieving learning according to their scientific discipline.
11.	(Pohan & Kisman, 2022)	Islamic Banking: Jurnal Pemikiran dan Pengembangan Perbankan Syariah	78.53% of students believed that MBKM activities had an impact on their additional competencies, 73.08% believed MBKM's activities expanded prospects in solving problems and 73.4% of students thought MBKM activity for college was in line with the needs of graduates in the future.
12.	(Budhi et al., 2022)	Wacana Akademika: Majalah Ilmiah Kependidikan	Although the results of socialization do not have a good impact because students have not yet understood the number of semesters that can be equated in the form of MBKM outside their university, they have a positive perception of the benefits of the MBKM activities.

No.	Researcher, Year	Journal	Result
13.	(Rahardja et al., 2022)	ADI Pengabdian Kepada Masyarakat	With the development of an independent curriculum, independent university learning impacts making students more broad-thinking and more effective. The impact of online learning also affects all stakeholders, including students and lecturers. By using the MBKM curriculum to maximum learning goals.
14.	(Syariah & Ilmu, 2022)	JALIE: Journal of Applied Linguistics and Islamic Education	Initially it had a variety of problems and independent curriculum is still not fully implemented. Nevertheless, after having undergone several phases and processes things became more conducive and better.
15.	(Aditya et al., 2023)	Scholaria: Jurnal Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan	The higher the level of knowledge of the students, the higher their interest in MBKM.
16.	(Arifin et al., 2023)	Journal on Education	Teachers and students still assess the implementation of the MBKM is running well and smoothly with consideration for improvement from the monitoring and evaluation results that are already running on a regular basis.
17.	(Misnawati & Zuraini, 2023)	Reslaj : Religion Education Social Laa Roiba Journal	The impact of the implementation of the Merdeka Learning Campus can improve the soft skills and hard skills of students after attending a Merdeca Learning Campus program
18.	(Arafu et al., 2023)	JET: Journal of education and Technology	Merdeka study curriculum has been successfully applied in particular to students of semester 3 of the mathematics study program at the State University of Semarang, with these curricula students feel better prepared later in the face of the world of work.
19.	(Putri & Astutik, 2023)	Asatiza: Jurnal Pendidikan	The data analysis showed that Sidoarjo Muhammadiyah University has adapted to the MBKM Curriculum, a MBKM program that students are interested in, namely, teaching assistants and industry interns.
20.	(Thahery & Mahaputra Riau, 2023)	Technical and Vacational Education International Journal	Implementation of the curriculum of independent university learning has to do with the era of society 5.0. The ability to have is creativity and innovation so that it becomes a tough, skilled and sturdy human resource.
21.	(Ilma Siti Salamah et al., 2023)	Dirasah : Jurnal Studi Ilmu dan Manajemen Pendidikan Islam	Most students responded positively to the policy of independent learning and have implemented the various programmes contained in this policy.
22.	(Christy, 2023)	Enggang: Jurnal Pendidikan, Bahasa, Sastra, Seni, dan Budaya	The curricular activities support the competence of the study program and are implemented through the MBKM program with some form of activity.

Source: Researcher resource (2025)

A synthesis of studies examining the *Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka* (MBKM) program reveals consistent findings regarding its contribution to student competency development. Fajri et al., (2021) reported that student performance improvements were evident particularly in technical areas such as information technology, complementing their legal education. This dual-skilling suggests the potential for MBKM to foster interdisciplinary competence. Fauziah & Vantissha (2021)

Argued that MBKM is instrumental in preparing students for the post-campus working world, indicating a shift in the orientation of higher education towards learning that is relevant to the needs of the workplace. Sari et al., (2021) added that beyond cognitive development, students' emotional maturity and adaptive behaviors improved, yet they noted the need for further longitudinal tracking to assess how enduring these soft skills are in post-campus life. These findings collectively highlight the potential for MBKM as an integrated learning model, although an evaluative framework is still needed to measure its long-term impact more systematically.

Student engagement and perception emerged as critical variables influencing the success of MBKM. Darajatun & Ramdhany (2021) found that intrinsic interest significantly predicts participation, raising questions about how curriculum designers and lecturers can better cultivate such as learning interest. While D. Anggraini & MY (2021), along with Wirianata and Chelsya (2022), confirmed students' favorable attitudes toward MBKM, they did not explore the underlying

factors driving such acceptance—suggesting a gap in understanding motivational triggers. Nita et al., (2022) documented improvements in knowledge and competencies but called for deeper investigation into how different MBKM activities like internships, community projects, entrepreneurial program, and education program. Contribute variably to these gains. Similarly, Setiana et al., (2022) and Pohan & Kisman (2022) noted students' agreement with the relevance of MBKM to graduate employability but emphasized the importance of matching students to appropriate MBKM tracks, an area that warrants further empirical exploration.

   Institutional readiness and infrastructure also play a pivotal role. H. Anggraini et al., (2022) highlighted that 91.7% of lecturers perceived campus support facilities as sufficient, yet this perception may not capture discrepancies across institutions with different resource levels. Usanto (2022) positioned MBKM as a response to the demands of technological development, advocating for outcome-based learning. However, Budhi et al., (2022) noted low student understanding of semester equivalence under MBKM, indicating the need for better program dissemination and orientation. (Rahardja et al., (2022) supported the claim that MBKM broadens students' thinking, but acknowledged the challenges of online modalities and called for further research into digital readiness among stakeholders. Moreover, Syariah & Ilmu (2022) observed initial implementation issues, yet reported improvement over time, pointing to an institutional learning curve that merits in-depth process evaluation.

   Recent research suggests that the MBKM policy has begun to align more strategically with broader socio-economic demands. Aditya et al., (2023) linked student knowledge levels with their MBKM interest, prompting further inquiry into the role of pre-existing academic preparation in policy reception. Arifin et al., (2023) identified the importance of ongoing monitoring and evaluation to maintain implementation quality, yet did not specify which dimensions are most critical for improvement. Misnawati & Zuraini (2023) validated MBKM's role in strengthening both cognitive and practical competencies, but recommended differentiated analysis across academic disciplines. Arafu et al., (2023) and Putri & Astutik (2023) provided evidence of increased work readiness, especially in mathematics and vocational fields, yet highlighted the need for expanded research into non-STEM domains. Finally, Thahery & Mahaputra Riau (2023) emphasized the relevance of MBKM in preparing students for the Society 5.0 era, focusing on creativity and innovation. Nebertheless, metrics to assess these traits in the MBKM context remain underdeveloped. Taken together, these studies endorse MBKM's promise while opening avenues for refinement, contextualization, and innovation in policy application.

Conclusion

The results of the analysis using the Literature Review method with the PRISMA Protocol, from the 22 selected articles/journals, designate that the transition from the previous curriculum to the Independent Curriculum has positively influenced the educational process at tertiary institutions in Indonesia. The implementation of the independent campus learning curriculum (MBKM) is related to the era of Society 5.0. To become robust, skilled, and resilient human resources, individuals must possess creativity and innovation. The implementations of independent learning at independent campuses is carried out with careful preparation, which is able to improve the quality of Indonesian education and prepare undergraduate graduates who are competent, accomplished, and able to compete globally.

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