

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE INDEPENDENT CURRICULUM POLICY TO IMPROVE IN-DEPTH LEARNING AT SMPN 12 SINGKAWANG

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ABSTRACT

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This research examines the implementation of the Independent Curriculum policy in enhancing in-depth learning at SMPN 12 Singkawang. A qualitative descriptive approach was employed, with data collected through observations, in-depth interviews, and documentation. The findings indicate that the implementation has achieved a high level of effectiveness. Teacher readiness and institutional support are relatively strong, yet challenges such as administrative workload and limited school facilities persist. Internal facilitators are ineffective due to time constraints. The study concludes that while the implementation of the Independent Curriculum is positive, it requires a simplified administrative structure and technical support from an internal facilitator team to realize in-depth learning across all subjects.

1. INTRODUCTION

Curriculum policy in Indonesia has undergone continuous transformation (Septaria & Sirozi, 2025). Prior to the current reform, the national education system operated under the 2013 Curriculum, which employed an integrated learning approach. Although structured, the 2013 Curriculum was often criticized as being overly dense, rigid, and leaving little room for teacher-student interaction. Administrative burdens remained high, and assessment was centralized through the National Examination.

In 2019, the Minister of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, Nadiem Makarim, introduced the "Merdeka Belajar" (Freedom to Learn) initiative a strategic policy aimed at restoring school autonomy, reducing teachers' administrative burdens, and holistically developing students' character and competencies (Tintingon et al., 2023). Subsequently, the Merdeka Curriculum was officially launched in 2021, characterized by project-based learning, flexible time management, and a focus on core material (Lubis & Kinanti, 2025).

In 2025, the Minister of Primary and Secondary Education, Abdul Mu'ti, issued Regulation No. 13 of 2025, which refines existing policies to enhance learning processes through a "Deep Learning" approach. Deep learning encompasses four aspects: knowledge acquisition, social skills development, life skills strengthening, and character formation.

To analyze the gap between policy and practice, this study applies George C. Edward III's (1980) policy implementation theory (Anirwan, 2025; Susanto et al., 2025). According to Edward III, successful implementation

depends on four factors: Communication, Resources, Disposition, and Bureaucratic Structure.

Initial observations at SMPN 12 Singkawang revealed that teachers' understanding of in-depth learning remains limited. In-House Training (IHT) has been conducted but remains ineffective due to its general nature. The administrative burden consumes considerable time outside teaching hours, leaving little time for developing project-based in-depth learning. This study aims to: (1) describe the implementation process of the Independent Curriculum policy to improve in-depth learning at SMPN 12 Singkawang; (2) identify obstacles based on Edward III's variables; (3) analyze the effectiveness of IHT and the role of internal facilitators.

2. METHODS

A qualitative descriptive method was employed at SMPN 12 Singkawang, located in North Singkawang District (Yunita et al., 2023). The school was selected purposively due to its experience in implementing in-depth learning.

Participants. Informants were selected using purposive sampling: primary informants (principal, vice principal of curriculum, facilitator teacher, implementing teachers) and supporting informants (vice principal of student affairs, administrative staff, subject teacher representatives).

Data Collection. Triangulation techniques were used: (1) direct observation; (2) in-depth interviews with curriculum staff, teachers, and facilitators; (3) documentation studies, including teaching modules and IHT reports (Pebriani et al., 2025). A direct quotation was obtained from an interview

with a teacher named Kuspita (curriculum section, 16 years of experience, interviewed on November 3, 2025).

Data Analysis. Data were analyzed through reduction, presentation, and conclusion drawing. Member checking and prolonged engagement (two months) ensured credibility.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Implementation Process of the Independent Curriculum at SMPN 12 Singkawang. Policy implementation is a critical phase in governance. At SMPN 12 Singkawang, the Independent Curriculum implementation represents a concrete effort to translate government policy into classroom practice. Based on observations, interviews, and documentation, the implementation achieved a high level of effectiveness, although several obstacles remain.

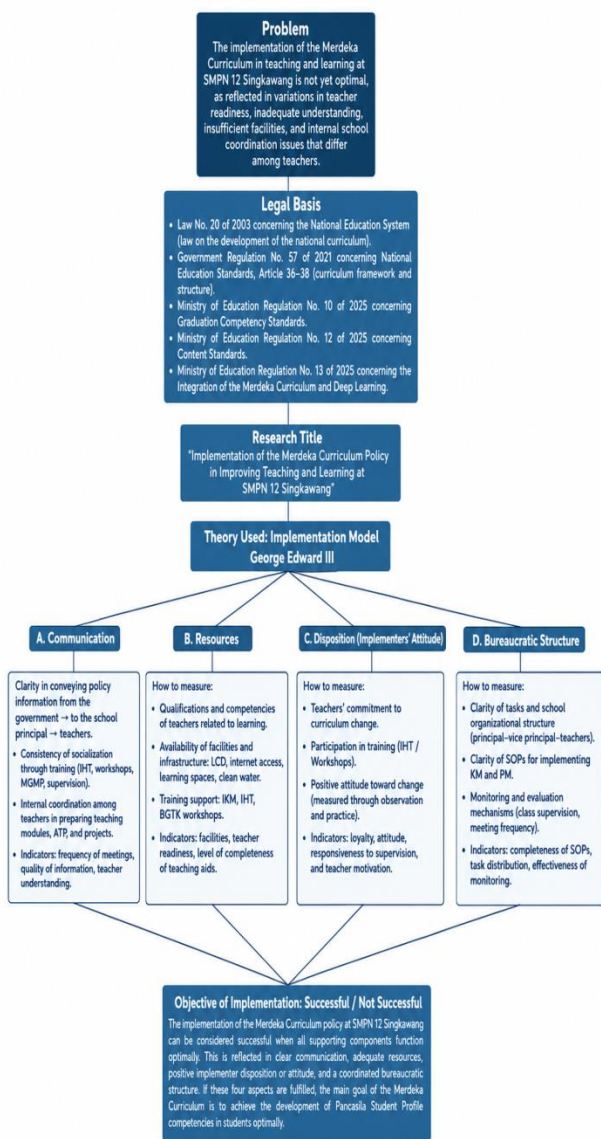


Figure 1 Work matrix

Below, we analyze the four Edward III variables.

a. Communication

The Singkawang City Education Office disseminated policy guidelines effectively. Interviews with the Vice Principal of Curriculum revealed that information was delivered clearly. However, internal communication at SMPN 12 Singkawang showed weaknesses in technical

and subject-specific aspects. Teachers reported that there was limited follow-up discussion on how to adapt the policy to specific subjects, and teaching modules were still developed inconsistently across subjects. Most teachers felt that vertical communication functioned well, but horizontal communication among colleagues needed improvement.

b. Resources

Technological facilities at SMPN 12 Singkawang were reported to be adequate for digital learning. However, the main resource constraint was time. Based on interviews, teachers spent considerable time on administrative tasks outside teaching hours—estimated at 8 to 10 hours per week by several informants. The internal facilitator (a senior science teacher with 19 years of experience) explained during interviews that her teaching schedule left no free time for mentoring colleagues. This finding aligns with Lestari et al. (2025), who identified time poverty as a major barrier to curriculum innovation. Several teachers also noted that internet connectivity in North Singkawang was sometimes unreliable.

c. Disposition

Most teachers demonstrated positive attitudes toward the Independent Curriculum. Interviews indicated that they believed the curriculum was better for students, even though the paperwork was heavier. However, psychological pressure was evident; several teachers admitted feeling stressed because the reporting system kept changing. In an interview, one teacher, Kuspita (curriculum section, 16 years of teaching experience), stated: "One of the challenges in implementing this learning is changing the mindset of teachers, students, and parents. Knowledge is not only in my head but has deeper meaning."

This quotation highlights the cognitive and psychological barriers that teachers face. According to Edward III, disposition is crucial for success when communication and resources are adequate. School leadership support through motivation and appreciation helps sustain teachers' innovative spirit despite heavy workloads.

d. Bureaucratic Structure

The school's bureaucratic structure, particularly the role of internal facilitators, was not optimally utilized. Interviews with the principal and vice principal confirmed that a senior science teacher served as an internal facilitator, but schedule conflicts prevented effective mentoring. The vice principal acknowledged that capable senior teachers had no dedicated time for facilitation. Most teachers expressed a need for a structured internal facilitation team. A more streamlined structure, focusing on clinical classroom mentoring rather than document checking, is needed.

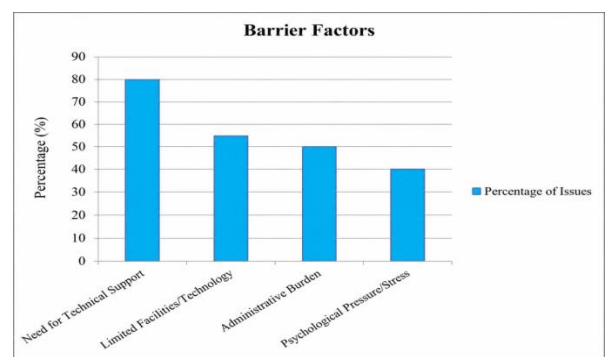


Table 1 Barle Factors

Summary of Key Obstacles

Based on qualitative findings, key obstacles include:

- a) Difficulty changing the mindset of teachers, students, and parents (as quoted by Kuspita)
- b) Limited internet connectivity in North Singkawang
- c) Heavy administrative workload (8–10 hours per week outside teaching)
- d) Lack of dedicated time for internal facilitators to mentor colleagues
- e) Inconsistent development of teaching modules across subjects

Comparison with Previous Studies. Previous Indonesian studies (Widyastuti, 2022; Hasballah & Zulfatmi, 2024) found similar obstacles: teacher readiness gaps, limited infrastructure, and communication breakdowns. This study contributes new insights by focusing specifically on deep learning as an outcome and applying Edward III's framework systematically. Emphasizes that successful implementation requires coherence between policy communication, resource allocation, and teacher buy in findings that are consistent with the Indonesian context.

Strategies to Improve Implementation

Based on field findings, three approaches can bridge the gap between policy vision and classroom reality:

- a) **Optimizing Internal Facilitators** – Schools should allocate dedicated time for facilitators to observe and provide feedback without disrupting their primary teaching duties (Tuerah & Tuerah, 2023).
- b) **Reducing Administrative Burden** – Schools can simplify internal reporting so teachers focus on designing deep-thinking questions and project-based activities (Pebriani et al., 2025).
- c) **Subject-Based Training** – General IHT is ineffective. Coordination with the Subject Teachers' Conference (MGMP) ensures that deep learning implementation aligns with each subject's characteristics (Widyastuti, 2022).

4. CONCLUSION

The implementation of the Independent Curriculum at SMPN 12 Singkawang achieved satisfactory results, but technical aspects and resource availability require improvement. Teacher readiness and leadership support were strong. However, a heavy administrative workload limits teaching time. The deep learning concept is sound, but its implementation needs more technical assistance and dedicated facilitator time. As one teacher noted, changing the mindset of all stakeholders remains a fundamental challenge.

Recommendations:

- a) For schools: Allocate dedicated time for facilitators without disrupting their primary teaching duties; simplify administrative workload management.
- b) For teachers: Increase collaboration within study groups to share subject-specific understanding.
- c) For the Education Office: Provide technological support and offer training by subject groups to ensure focused assistance (Gamar, 2026).

Limitations: This study is limited to one school in Singkawang. Future research should involve multiple schools across different regions and include longitudinal analysis.

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