

The Politics of Independent Curriculum Policy and the Challenge of Equal Education in Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the political dynamics of the independent curriculum policy and examine the challenges of education equity in Indonesia. The research uses a qualitative approach with the library research method. Data was obtained from various secondary sources in the form of scientific journal articles, books, government policy documents, and regulations related to the independent curriculum, education politics, and educational equity. The data collection technique is carried out through documentation studies, while data analysis uses content analysis with a qualitative descriptive approach through the stages of data reduction, categorization, interpretation, and literature synthesis. The results of the study show that the independent curriculum is a form of education policy reform that is oriented towards learning flexibility, strengthening competencies, and developing students' character. Its implementation provides a wider space for schools and teachers to develop learning according to the needs of students and the local context. However, the implementation of the policy still faces various challenges, including inequality in the quality of human resources, limited facilities and infrastructure, gaps in access to technology, and differences in local government capacity which have an impact on the uneven quality of education in Indonesia. Therefore, the success of the implementation of the independent curriculum is not only determined by the quality of the policies formulated, but also requires sustainable political commitment, equitable distribution of educational resources, strengthening teacher competence, and synergy between stakeholders to realize inclusive, quality, and equitable education.

I. INTRODUCTION

Education is the main pillar in encouraging the progress of the nation through improving the quality of human resources who are able to face the development of science, technology, and global competition. Therefore, the government continues to update education policies, including through Independent Learning and the Independent Curriculum, to expand access, improve the quality of learning, and encourage the equitable distribution of education in Indonesia. (Tilaar, H. A. R., 2012). Changes in education policy in Indonesia are also directed to strengthen the competence of students in facing the challenges of the 21st century and the Society 5.0 era. Curriculum reform is seen as a strategic step to improve the quality of learning, creativity, collaboration, and critical thinking skills of students (Indarta et al., 2022). Law Number 20 of 2003 emphasizes that the curriculum is a strategic guideline in the implementation of education to develop the potential of students according to the goals of national education. In line with that, the independent curriculum provides flexibility to teachers in designing learning according to the needs of students to improve the effectiveness and quality of education in a sustainable manner (Fitriyah & Wardani, 2022). The independent curriculum is developed with the principle of flexibility through Learning Outcomes (CP), the

Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5), and formative assessments oriented towards student-centered learning. (Siregar, 2026). The concept of Independent Learning emphasizes learning that provides space for students to develop potential, creativity, independence, thinking skills, and character in a balanced manner. (Faiz & Kurniawaty, 2020). The development of the curriculum in Indonesia shows an effort to adapt to the changing times, but the implementation of the 2013 Curriculum still faces obstacles in terms of teacher readiness, infrastructure, and equitable distribution of educational resources (Sabrifha, 2026). The implementation of the independent curriculum provides an opportunity for education units to develop learning plans that are more contextual and in accordance with the conditions of the learning environment. This flexibility is one of the strategies in improving the quality of the learning process at the school level (Ardianti & Amalia, 2022).

The implementation of the independent curriculum still faces challenges in the form of inequality in teacher competence, capacity of educational units, institutional support, and equitable distribution of resources, so that its success depends heavily on the readiness of all stakeholders in adapting policy changes (Ramadhan & Warneri, 2023). Research on the independent curriculum is still dominated by the aspect of learning implementation, while studies on policy politics and its implications for education equity are still limited, so it is an important research gap to be researched. Based on the identification of these problems, this study aims to: (1) analyze political dynamics in the formulation and implementation of independent curriculum policies in Indonesia; and (2) analyze the political implications of the independent curriculum policy on educational equity efforts in Indonesia. Thus, this research not only focuses attention on the implementation aspect of the curriculum, but also on the political dimension of policies that affect the equitable distribution of access and quality of education. This research is expected to enrich the study of education politics and become a consideration for the government and education units in formulating an implementation strategy for the independent curriculum that is more effective, inclusive, and oriented towards equitable distribution of the quality of education.

II. METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach with the library research method to critically analyze and synthesize various literature on the politics of independent curriculum policies and education equity in Indonesia. According to (Hermawan, 2019), literature research is a research method that uses various scientific references as the main source in acquiring and developing knowledge. A similar approach is also used by (Ridlwan & Suparto, 2025) and (Sabrifha & Adel, 2026) in reviewing education policy through the analysis of various literature sources. The literature research method was chosen because it was able to provide a comprehensive analysis through the interpretation and synthesis of various literature on the political dynamics of independent curriculum policies and the challenges of education equity in Indonesia (Ridlwan & Suparto, 2025; Sabrifha & Adel, 2026). This research uses secondary data sourced from scientific journals, academic books, research results, policy documents, and regulations related to the independent curriculum, education politics, and education equity to produce an objective, critical, and comprehensive analysis (Hermawan, 2019). The data collection technique is carried out through documentation studies by searching, selecting, grouping, and analyzing various literature from journals, books, Google Scholar, as well as official government documents relevant to the independent curriculum and education policy in Indonesia (Sabrifha & Adel, 2026). Data were analyzed using content analysis with a qualitative descriptive approach through reduction, categorization, interpretation, and literature synthesis to build a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between the independent curriculum policy and the equitable distribution of education in Indonesia (Ridlwan & Suparto, 2025). The credibility of the research is maintained through triangulation of sources by

comparing and evaluating various scientific references based on relevance, credibility, publication quality, and consistency of findings to produce an objective, systematic, and comprehensive analysis (Sabrifha & Adel, 2026).

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Political Dynamics of Independent Curriculum Policy in Indonesia.

The independent curriculum is part of the political dynamics of education policy in Indonesia which is designed as a response to global challenges through a more flexible, student-centered, and character-oriented learning system (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2022). The implementation of the independent curriculum is part of the transformation of education whose success depends on the readiness of teachers, government policy support, and the equitable distribution of educational facilities and infrastructure in various regions, (Azzahra & Al-farel, 2025). These findings show that the successful implementation of the Independent Curriculum is highly dependent on the synergy of the quality of human resources, equitable distribution of educational infrastructure, and the commitment of all stakeholders. The independent curriculum is an education policy reform designed to overcome the weaknesses of the previous curriculum through learning that is more adaptive, innovative, and able to respond to technological developments and the needs of students (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2022; Faiz et al., 2022). The independent curriculum provides greater autonomy to teachers and schools to develop contextual and student-centered learning, but its implementation still faces inequality in teacher competence, infrastructure, and capacity between regions (Riswanto, 2025). The independent curriculum is a strategic policy whose success depends on the government's political commitment, equitable distribution of educational resources, and the synergy of all stakeholders in realizing inclusive, adaptive, and equitable education (Sabatier & Mazmanian, 1980; Tilaar, 2012). Based on some of the opinions above, it can be concluded that the independent curriculum is an educational political transformation whose success depends on the readiness of teachers, equitable distribution of resources, institutional support, and the synergy of all stakeholders to realize the quality and equitable distribution of education.

Implementation of the Independent Curriculum and the Challenge of Equitable Education

The implementation of the Independent Curriculum has changed the learning paradigm in Indonesia through curriculum flexibility, differentiated learning, adaptive assessment, and strengthening the character of students through P5 so that learning becomes more innovative, contextual, and student-centered. The implementation of the Independent Curriculum is greatly influenced by the pedagogic competence of teachers because the ability to implement differentiated learning and appropriate assessments is a strategic factor in improving the quality of learning and reducing the gap in the quality of education between regions. (Dewi, Rahmawati 2025). Thus, it can be concluded that strengthening teachers' pedagogic competence is an important prerequisite for the successful implementation of the independent curriculum evenly. The implementation of the independent curriculum not only represents changes in curriculum documents, but is also part of the transformation of a learning culture that is more adaptive to the development of science and the needs of modern society (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2022). The implementation of the Independent Curriculum still faces challenges in the form of gaps in teacher competence, infrastructure, access to technology, and regional capacity, so it is necessary to strengthen collaboration and equitable distribution of educational resources to realize the quality and justice of education (Ridlwan & Suparto, 2025). The author argues that the implementation of the Independent Curriculum is a progressive step in improving the quality of learning because it provides a wider space for innovation

for teachers and schools. However, the success of this policy is highly dependent on the equitable distribution of teacher competencies, educational infrastructure, and institutional support in each region. Therefore, strengthening the capacity of educators and distributing resources fairly is the main key so that the goal of equitable distribution of education can be achieved optimally.

The Political Implications of Independent Curriculum Policy on Equal Education in Indonesia

The implementation of the Independent Curriculum has important implications for the equitable distribution of education through learning flexibility and school innovation, but the impact is not even because it is still influenced by social, economic, geographical, and educational capacity gaps between regions. (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2022; Ridlwan & Suparto, 2025). The political implications of the Independent Curriculum show that school autonomy can encourage learning innovation, but the equitable distribution of the quality of education still depends on the equality of teacher competence, access to technology, school leadership, and the distribution of educational resources between regions. (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2022; Ridlwan & Suparto, 2025). The politics of the Independent Curriculum policy is a new direction for education reform that requires political commitment, equitable distribution of resources, strengthening the quality of teachers, and cross-stakeholder collaboration to realize quality and equitable education, (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2022; Ridlwan & Suparto, 2025). The author argues that the independent curriculum has great potential to improve the quality of learning and encourage equal distribution of education through the flexibility given to schools. However, the benefits of the policy cannot be felt equally because there is still a gap in teacher competence, infrastructure, and access to educational resources in various regions. Therefore, equitable education requires consistent policy commitments and strengthening support for schools and educators throughout Indonesia.

Discussion

Analysis of the Political Dynamics of Independent Curriculum Policy in Indonesia

The independent curriculum is a form of political reform of education policy aimed at strengthening the quality of the national education system through more flexible and student-oriented learning. These results are in line with the view (Tilaar, 2012), which emphasizes that every education policy is a political product that is prepared to support national development goals in accordance with social, economic, and cultural dynamics. In its implementation, the independent curriculum provides a wider space for schools and teachers to innovate, but its success is greatly influenced by the effectiveness of policy communication, the availability of resources, the readiness of implementers, and the support of the bureaucracy as explained by (Edwards III, 1980). Although this policy is able to encourage a more adaptive and contextual learning transformation, its effectiveness is still influenced by gaps in the quality of human resources, institutional capacity, and equitable distribution of educational infrastructure. Thus, the success of the independent curriculum requires continuous commitment from the central government, local governments, schools, and all stakeholders so that the goal of improving the quality of national education can be realized equally and sustainably (Edwards III, 1980; Ridlwan & Suparto, 2025; Tilaar, 2012). The political dynamics of the independent curriculum policy show that changes in the curriculum in Indonesia cannot be separated from political, social, and national education needs. The study of Akbar, Putri, Amatullah, and Nadjmaisayah explained that every curriculum reform is the government's response to the changing times as well as an effort to improve the quality of education through more adaptive policies. However, the success of the policy is still influenced by the consistency of implementation, the readiness of teachers, and the support of various stakeholders in translating the policy into learning practices. These findings reinforce the previous discussion that the political dynamics of education not only determine the direction of curriculum change, but also affect the effectiveness of

its implementation in educational units. (Akbar & Putri 2025). Thus, it can be concluded that the political dynamics of the independent curriculum policy reflect the process of adjusting the education system to social changes that require consistent and collaborative implementation.

Analysis of the Implementation of the Independent Curriculum in Realizing Equal Education

The implementation of the Independent Curriculum reflects the transformation of the learning system in Indonesia through flexibility, autonomy of schools and teachers, as well as a more adaptive, contextual, and student-centered approach to improve the quality of national education. (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2022; Ridlwan & Suparto, 2025). The implementation of the Independent Curriculum is in line with Edwards III's (1980) theory that the success of policies is influenced by communication, resources, executive disposition, and bureaucratic structures that support the implementation of policies effectively and sustainably. (Edwards III, 1980). The findings of the study indicate that the quality of teacher competence is one of the factors that most determine the success of the implementation of the independent curriculum. As the main implementer of policies at the grade level, teachers have a strategic role in adapting curriculum objectives into an effective learning process. This is reflected in the ability of teachers to design differentiated learning, develop contextual teaching modules, carry out diagnostic assessments, and integrate the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5) into teaching and learning activities. The results of this study show that the success of curriculum reform cannot be separated from efforts to strengthen the professional capacity of educators. Therefore, improving teacher competence through training, mentoring, and sustainable professional development programs is a fundamental need so that the implementation of the independent curriculum does not only stop at administrative changes, but is also able to produce a real improvement in the quality of learning in each educational unit. The implementation of the Independent Curriculum still faces challenges in the equitable distribution of resources, teacher competence, infrastructure, and institutional capacity, so its success requires government commitment and synergy of all stakeholders to realize inclusive and equitable education. (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2022; Ridlwan & Suparto, 2025). The author argues that the implementation of the independent curriculum is a promising educational reform because it encourages more flexible and student-centered learning. However, the success of this policy is still greatly influenced by teacher competence, equitable distribution of infrastructure, and the effectiveness of coordination between educational institutions. Therefore, strengthening the capacity of educators and equitable distribution of educational resources are the main factors in realizing a fair and sustainable quality of education.

Analysis of the Political Implications of Independent Curriculum Policy on Education Equity in Indonesia

The independent curriculum shows considerable implications for educational equity efforts through the granting of wider authority to educational units to develop learning in accordance with the characteristics of students and regional conditions. This policy reflects a change in the political orientation of education that places schools as the main actors in creating learning innovations, so that it has the potential to improve the quality of education if supported by adequate resources (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2022; Ridlwan & Suparto, 2025). However, the results of the study also revealed that this flexibility has not resulted in optimal equity because there are still differences in school capacity, teacher quality, infrastructure availability, and local government support. This finding is in line with the view of Tilaar (2012) who emphasizes that the success of education policies must be measured by its ability to create justice and equal learning opportunities for all students. In addition, the policy implementation theory of Edwards III (1980) strengthens the results of research that communication, resources, executive disposition, and bureaucratic structure

are important factors in determining the effectiveness of policy implementation. Therefore, the success of the independent curriculum is not sufficiently supported by curriculum changes alone, but also requires equitable distribution of educational resources, strengthening teacher capacity, coordination between stakeholders, and sustainable government commitment so that the goals of education reform can be realized in an inclusive, equitable, and equitable manner.

The political implications of the independent curriculum policy are not only seen in the change in the learning paradigm, but also in the increasing autonomy given to schools in developing learning according to the needs of students and regional characteristics. However, the implementation of these policies is still influenced by differences in institutional capacity, the quality of human resources, and the support of local governments in translating national policies to the level of education units. This condition shows that the political effectiveness of education policies is highly determined by the ability of each region to manage resources and implement policies consistently. (Fahmi & Sari 2026). Thus, it can be concluded that the political implications of the independent curriculum on educational equity can only be realized if it is supported by effective, collaborative, and equity-oriented policy governance. Based on the results of the study, it can be concluded that the independent curriculum is part of the political reform of education policy in Indonesia which aims to improve the quality of learning through a more flexible, student-centered, and oriented approach to the development of competencies and character. This policy provides a wider space for schools and teachers to develop the learning process according to the needs of students and regional characteristics. However, its implementation still faces various challenges, especially inequality in the quality of human resources, limited facilities and infrastructure, gaps in access to technology, and differences in capacity between regions in implementing education policies. This condition shows that the equitable distribution of education has not been fully achieved even though policy directions have provided opportunities for improving the quality of learning. Therefore, the success of the independent curriculum requires consistent political commitment, equitable distribution of educational resources, strengthening the competence of educators, and sustainable collaboration between the central government, local governments, education units, and the community so that the goals of education reform can be realized in an inclusive, equitable, and equitable manner.

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