

Navigating the Curriculum Landscape: The Impact of Curriculum 2013 and Merdeka Curriculum on Teachers' and Students' Learning Outcomes in Indonesia

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Abstract

This study explores the impact of implementing the 2013 Curriculum and the Independent Curriculum on teachers and student learning outcomes in Indonesia. The 2013 curriculum is designed to improve the competencies of 21st century students through a scientific approach and project-based learning. However, its implementation is limited, including the lack of teacher readiness and adequate infrastructure. On the other hand, the Independent Curriculum offers a more flexible and student-centered approach, focusing on character development and life skills. This study uses a mixed approach, involving surveys and in-depth interviews to analyze the perceptions of teachers and students from different regions. The study results show that the Independent Curriculum significantly increases student motivation and engagement, especially through a project-based learning approach. And more than 50% of teachers agree that the integration in independent curriculum is more effective in helping teachers to design more effective in learning.. However, the main challenge in implementing this curriculum is the resource gap, especially in remote areas. Many teachers also have difficulty adjusting to more innovative teaching methods, although they welcome the flexibility offered by this curriculum. The study concludes that while the Independent Curriculum has the potential to improve the quality of learning, its success is highly dependent on the support of more intensive teacher training and the improvement of educational infrastructure. The main recommendation is the need for more focused efforts to ensure equal access to education and increase teacher capacity throughout Indonesia.

Keywords: 2013 Curriculum, Independent Curriculum, Student Motivation, Teacher Readiness, Educational Infrastructure, Vocational School.

Introduction

Education is one of the main pillars in the development of a nation (Masdul et al., 2024). In Indonesia, education reforms continue to be carried out to improve the quality of learning and student learning outcomes. One of the significant steps in this reform is the introduction of the 2013 Curriculum and the Independent Curriculum (Susilo & Kartowagiran, 2023). These two curricula not only aim to improve student competence, but also to change the paradigm of teaching and learning in the classroom. Therefore, it is important to explore the impact of these two curricula on teachers and student learning outcomes. The 2013 curriculum was introduced in response to the educational challenges facing Indonesia, with a focus on developing 21st century competencies (Amaruddin et al., 2024). The curriculum emphasizes an integrative thematic approach and project-based learning, which is expected to facilitate students in developing critical thinking, creativity, and collaboration skills (Suyadi et al., 2022). However, the implementation of this curriculum faces various challenges, including teacher readiness, inadequate training, and inadequate infrastructure.

On the other hand, the Independent Curriculum, which was launched as an alternative, provides more freedom to schools and teachers in designing learning that suits the needs of students (Amaruddin et al., 2024). This curriculum aims to create a more flexible and student-oriented learning environment. With a more adaptive approach, it is hoped that the Independent Curriculum can increase student motivation and involvement in the learning process (Halim et al., 2024). As the education landscape in Indonesia continues to evolve, the government has introduced the Merdeka Curriculum, a competency-based curriculum that aims to support learning recovery in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic (Hairunisyah & Sunaryanto, 2020). The Merdeka Curriculum prioritizes student-centered learning, with a focus on project-based learning and

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the development of the Pancasila Student Profile, a framework for character education aligned with the nation's founding principles (Munir et al., 2024).

Meanwhile, It is important to understand how these two curricula impact teachers as teachers and learning facilitators (Rismanto et al., 2024). Teachers play a key role in curriculum implementation, and their attitudes and skills greatly influence the effectiveness of teaching. Therefore, this study will explore how the 2013 Curriculum and the Independent Curriculum affect teachers' teaching practices and how this contributes to student learning outcomes (Chaerunisaa et al., 2023). Student learning outcomes are the main indicator of the success of a curriculum. Proper assessment of student learning outcomes includes not only academic aspects, but also character development and social skills (Mahmud et al., 2023). Thus, this study will also analyze how the two curricula contribute to the holistic development of students in Indonesia. Furthermore, this study will use qualitative and quantitative approaches to get a more comprehensive picture of the impact of the two curricula. Data will be collected through surveys, interviews, and document analysis to provide a deeper understanding of teacher and student experiences in the context of learning.

Based on the background of the research that has been explained above, the writers come up with the research questions as follow:

Research Questions

Based on the objectives of the research that have been explained earlier, the following are three research questions that will be the focus in exploring the impact of the 2013 Curriculum and the Independent Curriculum on teachers and student learning outcomes in Indonesia:

1. What is the teacher's perception of the effectiveness of the 2013 Curriculum and the Independent Curriculum in improving the quality of learning in the classroom?
2. What impact do students have on their learning outcomes after the implementation of the 2013 Curriculum and the Independent Curriculum?
3. How do the differences in the implementation of the 2013 Curriculum and the Independent Curriculum affect student motivation and involvement in learning?

Finally, this exploration of the curriculum landscape is expected to provide constructive recommendations for education policymakers in Indonesia. By understanding the impact of the 2013 Curriculum and the Independent Curriculum, it is hoped that more effective strategies can be found in improving the quality of education and student learning outcomes in the country. These reforms aim to improve the quality of education and enhance student learning outcomes. This article provides a comprehensive examination of the impacts of these curricula on teachers and student learning outcomes in Indonesia, drawing from recent research studies.

Literature Review

Education in Indonesia has undergone various curriculum changes to answer the challenges of the times and the needs of society (Yoto et al., 2024). One of the significant changes is the implementation of the 2013 Curriculum, which is designed to improve the quality of education through a competency-based approach. This curriculum emphasizes the importance of developing students' attitudes, knowledge, and skills. Research shows that although the 2013 Curriculum has the potential to improve student learning outcomes, its implementation is often hampered by various challenges, including teacher readiness and inadequate educational infrastructure (Astuti et al., 2024).

One of the important aspects of the 2013 Curriculum is the scientific approach adopted in the learning process (Ridha et al., 2022). This approach involves steps such as observation, testing, and communication, which aim to encourage students to discover concepts of knowledge independently. However, research shows that many teachers have difficulty in implementing this approach effectively, which has an impact

on student involvement in the learning process as stated by (Juanda & Afandi, 2024). This shows the need for better training for teachers to understand and implement the curriculum appropriately.

After the implementation of the 2013 Curriculum, the merdeka curriculum (Independent Curriculum) emerged as an alternative that provides more flexibility to schools and teachers in designing learning (Wardani et al., 2023). This curriculum aims to create a learning environment that is more adaptive and responsive to student needs. Research shows that the Independent Curriculum has the potential to increase student motivation and create more creative and innovative learning (Daga et al., 2023). However, an in-depth evaluation of the impact of this curriculum on student learning outcomes and teacher experience is still needed.

One of the main challenges in the implementation of these two curricula is the assessment of learning outcomes (Rafinda, 2022). The 2013 curriculum emphasizes holistic assessment, including cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects. However, many teachers find it difficult to conduct comprehensive assessments, especially in affective aspects that are considered more subjective and difficult to measure (Munir et al., 2024). Therefore, this study will explore the assessment techniques used by teachers in the context of both curricula and how they affect student learning outcomes (Prasetyono et al., 2021). In the context of education in Indonesia, student literacy and character are the main focus in curriculum development. The Independent Curriculum, for example, is designed to accommodate the need for better literacy and the strengthening of character values. Research shows that students who engage in learning that focuses on character development tend to have better learning outcomes and stronger social skills as explored by (Zaim et al., 2020). This shows the importance of integrating character values in the learning process.

In addition, previous research has also shown that differences in the quality of education in various regions in Indonesia are a challenge in the implementation of the curriculum. Factors such as economic conditions, educational infrastructure, and students' social backgrounds can affect the effectiveness of the curriculum implemented (Wardani et al., 2023). Therefore, it is important to conduct a more in-depth analysis of the local context in the application of both curricula (Hairunisya & Sunaryanto, 2020).

Finally, this literature review underscores the importance of further research to understand the impact of the 2013 Curriculum and the Independent Curriculum on teacher and student learning outcomes. By exploring the challenges and successes in the implementation of the two curricula, it is hoped that constructive recommendations can be found for education policymakers in Indonesia to improve the quality of education as a whole.

Curriculum 2013 VS Curriculum Merdeka

The 2013 Curriculum and the Independent Curriculum are two educational approaches implemented in Indonesia to improve the quality of learning and student learning outcomes (Musdi et al., 2024). The 2013 curriculum, which was introduced in 2013, is a competency-based curriculum that emphasizes the development of students' attitudes, knowledge, and skills as a whole. The curriculum integrates various disciplines and uses a scientific approach in the learning process. In its implementation, the 2013 Curriculum has a fragmented structure between subjects and regulates lesson hours on a weekly basis. The assessment in this curriculum includes aspects of knowledge, skills, and attitudes, with the aim of creating competent and characterful graduates (Sahertian & Effendi, 2023).

On the other hand, the Independent Curriculum was introduced to provide more flexibility in the learning process (Vhalery et al., 2024). This curriculum is designed so that students can learn in a more enjoyable atmosphere and not be burdened by rigid learning achievement values. In the Independent Curriculum, lesson hours are regulated annually and give schools the freedom to determine the allocation of learning time. The approach used is holistic, integrating different aspects of learning and connecting them to the real life of students. This curriculum also emphasizes more on character development and soft skills of students (Fatimah et al., 2024).

The main difference between the 2013 Curriculum and the Independent Curriculum lies in its structure and learning approach. While the 2013 Curriculum has a more fragmented structure and is tied to weekly lesson hours, the Independent Curriculum offers flexibility in timing and a more holistic approach. In addition, the Independent Curriculum focuses more on students' self-development and provides opportunities for wider exploration in the learning process, while the 2013 Curriculum is more focused on achieving academic competence (Suyadi et al., 2022). These two curricula have their own advantages and disadvantages. The 2013 curriculum, despite its systematic approach, often faces challenges in its implementation, such as a lack of teacher understanding and inadequate infrastructure. On the other hand, the Independent Curriculum is expected to overcome these shortcomings by providing a more adaptive and responsive approach to student needs (Aliyyah et al., 2023).

By understanding the characteristics and differences between these two curricula, it is hoped that more effective strategies can be found in improving the quality of education in Indonesia (Rohmah et al., 2024). Further research on the impact of both curricula on teachers and student learning outcomes is essential to provide constructive recommendations for education policymakers (Sholeh et al., 2023).

Impact on Teachers

The implementation of the Curriculum 2013 and the Merdeka Curriculum has significantly impacted the role and responsibilities of teachers in Indonesia. The shift towards more student-centered approaches has required teachers to adapt their teaching methods, moving away from traditional lecture-based instruction to facilitating collaborative learning, project-based activities, and the integration of technology in the classroom. Teachers have had to undergo extensive training to effectively implement the new curricular frameworks, which has presented both challenges and opportunities for professional growth. Successful implementation of the Curriculum 2013 and the Merdeka Curriculum has been contingent on the ability of teachers to embrace the pedagogical changes, develop relevant lesson plans, and utilize appropriate assessment strategies (Supriyoko et al., 2022).

Impact on Student Learning Outcomes

The implementation of the Curriculum 2013 and the Merdeka Curriculum has aimed to improve student learning outcomes by fostering critical thinking, problem-solving, and character development (Sumarmi et al., 2022). Studies have shown that the Curriculum 2013, with its emphasis on active learning and student-centered approaches, has led to improvements in student engagement, creativity, and problem-solving skills. Similarly, the Merdeka Curriculum's focus on project-based learning and the Pancasila Student Profile has been associated with enhanced student motivation, self-directed learning, and the development of crucial 21st-century skills (Purnomo et al., 2023). However, the impact on student learning outcomes has been uneven, as the successful implementation of these curricular changes has been dependent on the adequate support and resources provided to schools and teachers.

Methodology

Research Design

This study aims to explore the impact of the 2013 Curriculum and the Independent Curriculum on teachers and student learning outcomes in Indonesia. To achieve this goal, this study will use a quantitative approach. This approach was chosen to provide a more comprehensive picture of the teacher and student experience in the context of both curricula. The survey will be conducted to collect quantitative data on teachers' and students' perceptions of the two curricula, as well as their impact on learning outcomes and to gain a deeper understanding of their experiences in implementing and experiencing both curricula.

Population and Sample

The population in this study is teachers and students of vocational schools of various levels of education in Central Java, Indonesia who have implemented the 2013 Curriculum and the Independent Curriculum.

The sample will be taken purposively, taking into account the diversity of curriculum use, types of schools (public and private), and education levels. The researcher selected 26 teachers and 73 students from various schools in Central Java province to ensure the representativeness of the data.

Research Instruments

The research instruments that will be used consist of questionnaires. The questionnaire will be designed to measure teacher and student perceptions of the effectiveness of both curricula, as well as their impact on learning outcomes. This questionnaire will include closed-ended and open-ended questions to get richer data.

Data Collection

Data collection will be carried out in two stages. First, the questionnaire will be distributed to teachers and students online. The researcher will ensure that all respondents understand the instruments used.

Data Analysis

The quantitative data obtained from the questionnaire will be analyzed using descriptive analysis to get an overview of the perception of teachers and students. Descriptive analysis is needed to get an idea of what the role of the 2013 curriculum and the independent curriculum is and its impact on students. To analyze data from instruments using the Likert scale, the results are usually presented in the form of percentages of each category of answers. The steps used to calculate and describe the percentages of the Likert scale are as follows:

Clustering of Answers: On the Likert scale, respondents typically provide answers in categories such as "Strongly Agree", "Agree", "Neutral", "Disagree", and "Strongly Disagree". Each answer will be assigned a numerical value, as follows:

- Strongly Agree = 5
- Agree = 4
- Neutral = 3
- Disagree = 2
- Strongly disagree = 1

Frequency and Percentage Calculation: Each answer choice is calculated by frequency, and the percentage is calculated from the total number of respondents. Interpretation: Once the percentages are calculated, the interpretation is done by inferring the general trend of the respondents' answers. For example, if the majority of respondents (80%) answered "Agree" or "Strongly agree", it can be concluded that most respondents have a positive view of the statement submitted.

Research Ethics

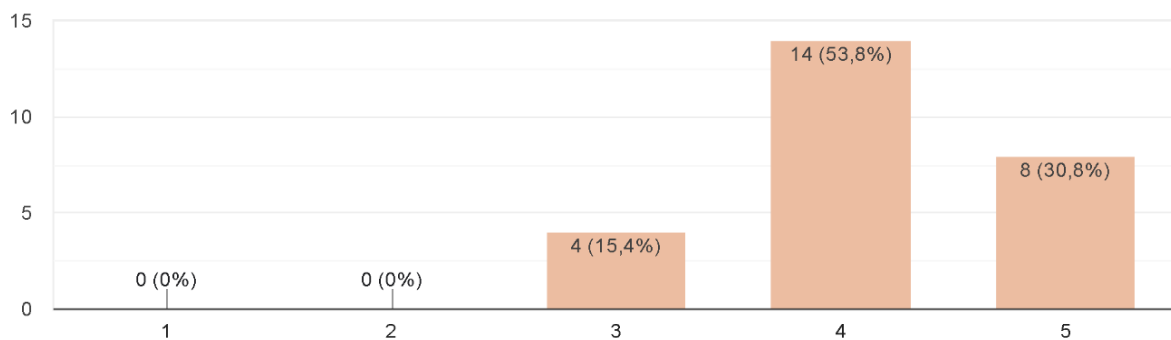
The research will adhere to the principles of research ethics, including obtaining consent from respondents prior to data collection, maintaining the confidentiality of personal information, and giving respondents the freedom to withdraw from the research at any time without consequences. The researcher will also explain the purpose of the research and how to use the data to all respondents. With this methodology, it is hoped that the research can provide in-depth insights into the impact of the 2013 Curriculum and the Independent Curriculum on teachers and student learning outcomes in Indonesia, as well as recommendations that are useful for the development of education policies in the future.

Result and Discussion

Based on the results of the questionnaires that have been collected, data and the results are obtained from each teacher and student, and then the categories and percentages will be grouped. The data on the results of each variable are as follows:

Teacher Perceptions

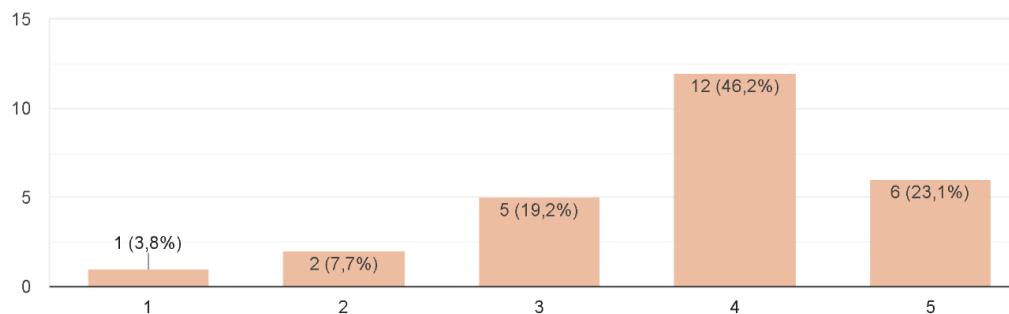
Curriculum 2013 effectiveness



Graphic 1 Illustrate the effective of curriculum 2013

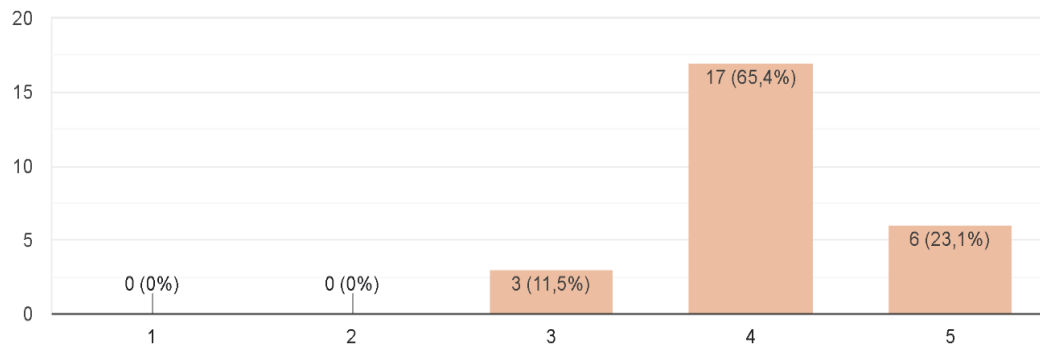
Based on the graphic 1, the result shows that as many as 30,8 % Strongly Agreed it means that the last curriculum in this context is 2013 is more effective in helping teachers to design more effective in learning. Then as many as 53,8% of teacher agree in the same ideas.

Learning Integrated with the independent curriculum



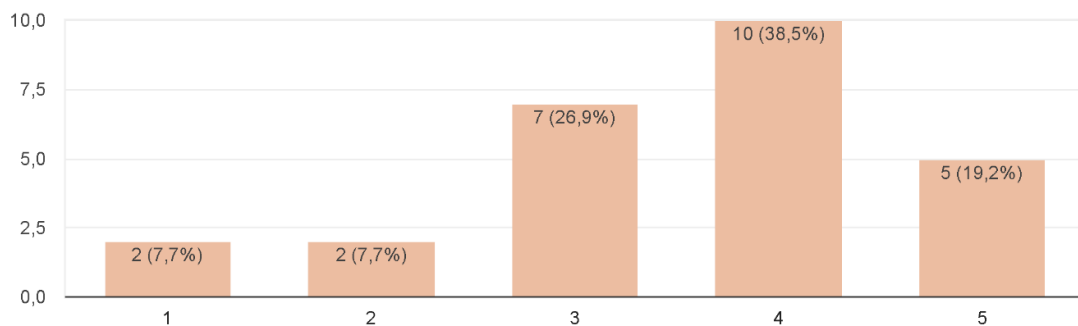
Graphic 2 Illustrates the Independent curriculum integration curriculum

Based on the graphic 2, the result shows that as many as 23,1 % Strongly Agreed, Then as many as 46,8% of teacher agree. It means that the integration in independent curriculum is more effective in helping teachers to design more effective in learning.

A Clear Guidance of Curriculum 2013 in Assessing Student Learning Outcomes

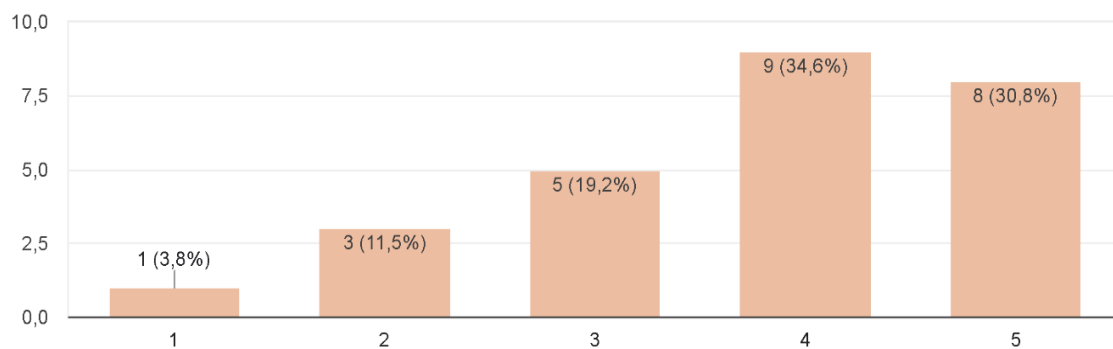
Graphic 3 Illustrates the guidance of curriculum 2013

Based on the graphic 3, the result shows that as many as 23,1 % Strongly Agreed, Then as many as 65,4% of teacher agree. It means that the curriculum 2013 give more insight in guiding the student learning assesment.

Motivation in Independent Curriculum Implementation

Graphic 4 Illustrates the teachers' motivation of independent curriculum

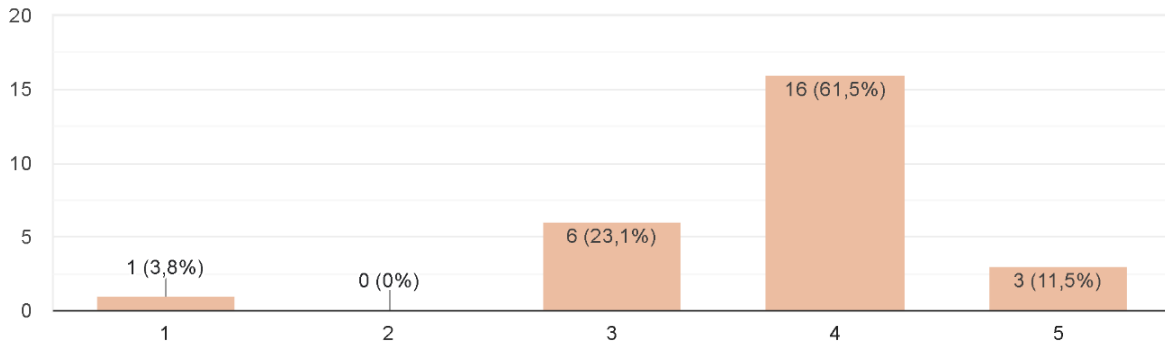
Based on the graphic4, the result shows that as many as 19,2 % Strongly Agreed, Then as many as 38,5% of teacher agree, and 26,9% of teacher said neutral. It means most teachers are motivated to implement the curriculum Merdeka or independent curriculum.

Innovation in Teaching Method in Independent Curriculum

Graphic 5 illustrates the innovation in teaching method of independent curriculum

Based on the graphic 5, the result shows that as many as 30,8 % teacher Strongly Agreed, Then as many as 34,6% of teacher agree, and 19,2% of teacher said neutral. It means mostly teachers are motivated to be innovative in teaching by implementing the independent curriculum.

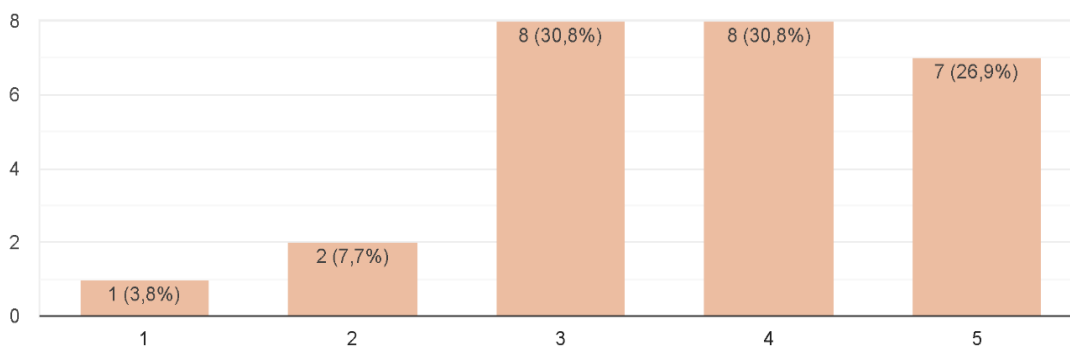
Student Learning Outcome Improvement



Graphic 6 illustrate the students learning outcome improvement

Based on the graphic 6, the result shows that as many as 30,8 % teacher Strongly Agreed, Then as many as 34,6% of teacher agree, and 19,2% of teacher said neutral. It means mostly teachers are motivated to be innovative in teaching by implementing the independent curriculum.

Independent Curriculum is More Suited to the Needs of Students of Vocational High School

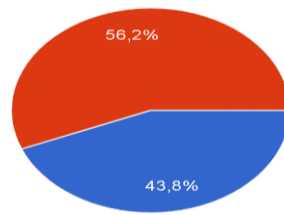


Graphic 7 illustrates the independent curriculum to the needs of students of vocational high school

Based on the graphic 7, the result shows that as many as 26,9 % teacher strongly agree, Then as many as 30,8% of teacher agree, and 30,8% of teacher said neutral, and as many as 7,7% Disagree, and 3,8% Strongly disagree. It means mostly teachers feel that independent curriculum is more appropriate to students need in learning at vocational high school.

Student Perseptions

The writer elaborates the students gender of vocational high school in the picture one below:

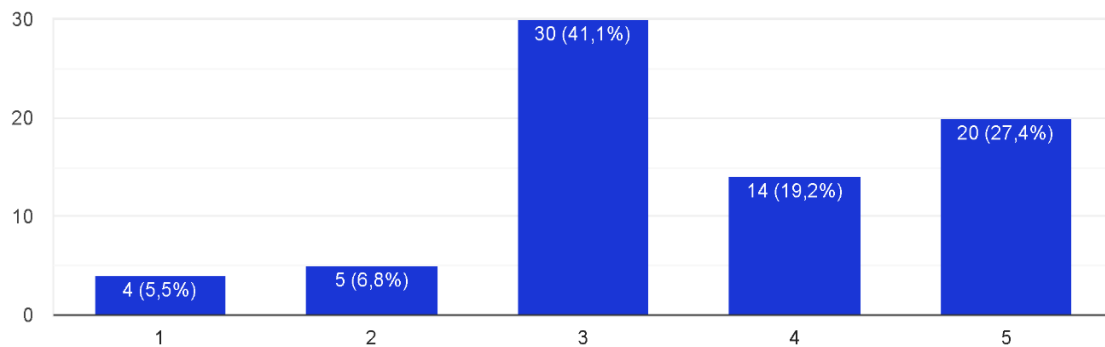


Picture 1 Illustrate the Students Gender

Based on the pie chart above, the red color is the female, there are 56% of Female and 43,8% of male in blue color who involve in this sample of research.

The questionnaire result by students based on their perspective, each questions explore the insight of curriculum 2013 and the independent curriculum.

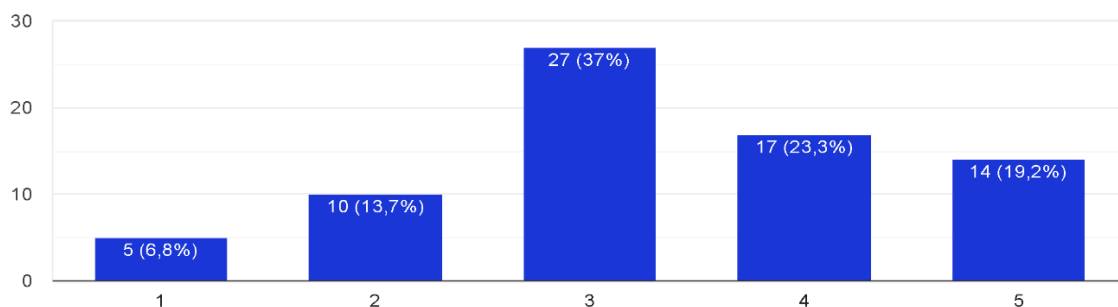
Understanding of Curriculum 2013



Graphic 8. illustrates students understanding of curriculum 2013

Based on the graphic 8, the result shows that as many as 27,4 % students strongly agree, Then as many as 19,2% of student agree, and 41,1% of student said neutral, and as many as 6,8% Disagree, and 5,5% Strongly disagree. It means mostly student feel more understand in subject matter than independent curriculum.

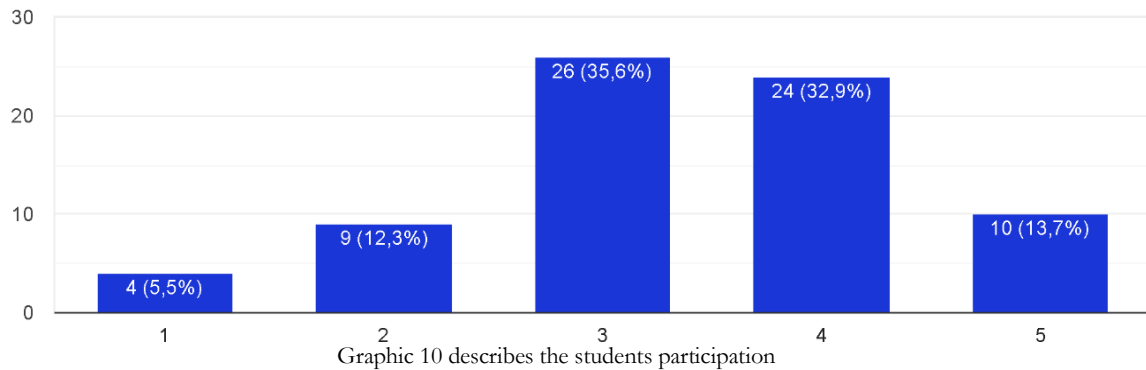
The Freedom Of Using Independent Curriculum



Graphic 9 Describe the freedom of independent curriculum

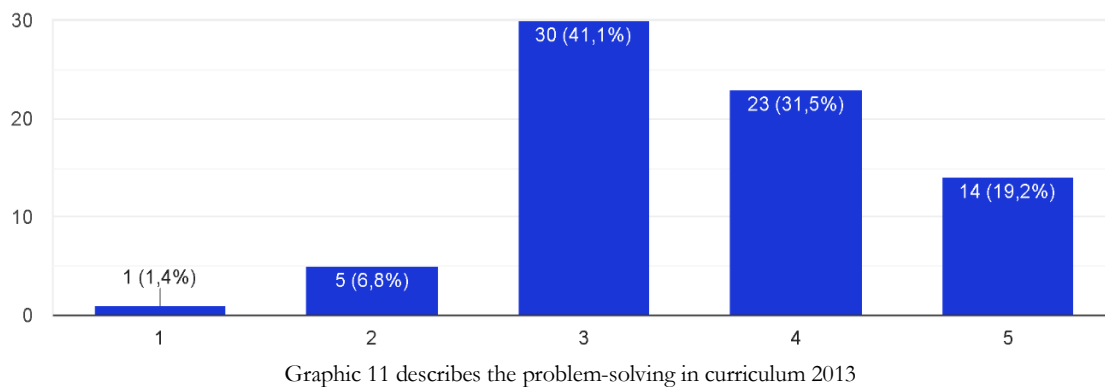
Based on the graphic 9, the result shows that as many as 19,2 % students strongly agree, Then as many as 23,2% of student agree, and 37% of student said neutral, and as many as 13,7% Disagree, and 6,8% Strongly disagree. It means mostly student have freedomness in conducting independent curriculum.

Independent Curriculum Participation Actively

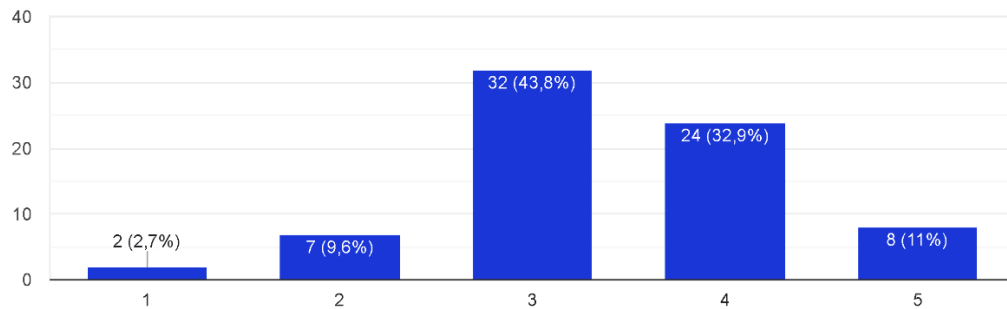


Based on the graphic 10, the result shows that as many as 13,7 % students strongly agree, Then as many as 32,9% of student agree, and 35,6% of student said neutral, and as many as 12,3% Disagree, and 5,5% Strongly disagree. It means mostly student feeling more active in implementing the independent curriculum in learning activities.

Solving problems in curriculum 2013

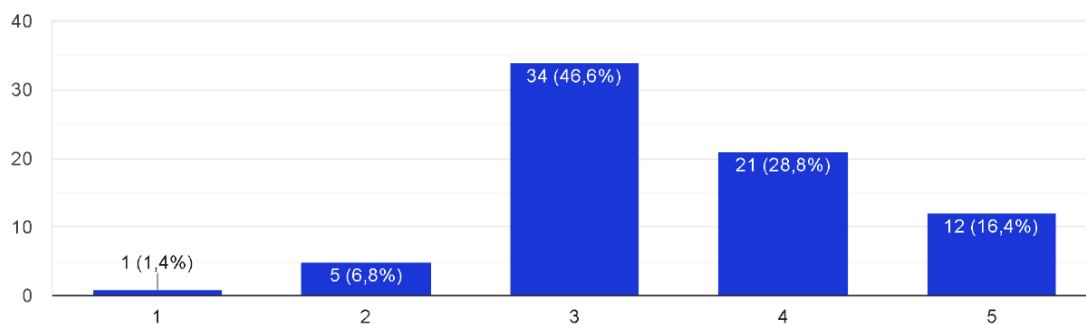


Based on the graphic11, the result shows that as many as 19,2% students strongly agree, Then as many as 31,5% of student agree, and 41,1% of student said neutral, and as many as 6,8% Disagree, and 1,4% Strongly disagree. It means that almost 50% mostly student feeling more active in critical thinking to solve their problems.

Learning Outcomes Improvement in Independent Curriculum

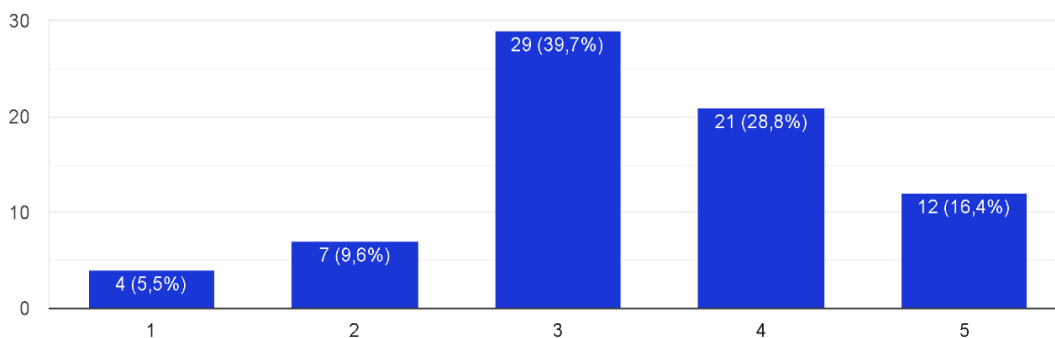
Graphic 12 Describes the students learning outcomes improvement

Based on the graphic 12, the result shows that as many as 11% students strongly agree, Then as many as 32,9% of student agree, and 43,8% of student said neutral, and as many as 9,6% Disagree, and 2,7% Strongly disagree. It means that more than 40% student feeling have some improvement in learning outcomes in independent curriculum.

Developing of Practical Skill in Curriculum 2013

Graphic 13 Describe the students development in parctical skills

Based on the graphic13, the result shows that as many as 16,4% students strongly agree, Then as many as 28,2% of student agree, and 46,6% of student said neutral, and as many as 6,8% Disagree, and 1,4% Strongly disagree. It means that more than curriculum 2013 is not really support the student practical skill in vocational school.

Independent Curriculum is Relevant to the Students Vocational needs

Graphic 14 describes the relevancies of independent curriculum to students need

Based on the graphic 14, the result shows that as many as 16,4% students strongly agree, Then as many as 28,8% of student agree, and 39,7% of student said neutral, and as many as 9,6% Disagree, and 5,5% Strongly disagree. It means that independent curriculum is relevant to the students need.

Conclusion

The 2013 curriculum is designed with a 21st century competency approach, which emphasizes the development of critical thinking skills, collaboration, and creativity through thematic and project-based learning. However, the main challenges of its implementation are the lack of teacher readiness and adequate educational infrastructure. Despite its ambitious goals, limitations in teacher training and the availability of resources make the implementation of this curriculum uneven, with many teachers finding it difficult to implement new learning methods.

The Independent Curriculum, on the other hand, provides greater flexibility to schools and teachers in designing the learning process. This is welcomed by teachers because it gives them the freedom to adapt teaching methods to the needs of students. This curriculum is designed to be more responsive to post-pandemic situations, promote more student-centered learning, and emphasize character development through the Pancasila Student Profile. The results of the study show that the Independent Curriculum is able to increase student motivation and engagement better than the 2013 Curriculum, especially through a project-based learning approach.

The implementation of these two curricula has a significant impact on the role of teachers. The 2013 curriculum requires teachers to apply a scientific approach, which requires new skills in organizing scientific observation, experimentation, and communication activities. Most teachers have difficulty adopting this approach due to the lack of adequate training. The Independent Curriculum, on the other hand, provides opportunities for teachers to be more creative in designing learning. However, this also requires teachers to be more independent and dare to try new innovations. While many teachers welcome this freedom, new challenges arise in terms of adapting to more digital technology and learning methods. For some teachers, this transition still feels difficult, especially those who are not used to technology-based learning.

However, In the context of student learning outcomes, the two curricula have different impacts. The 2013 curriculum focuses on measurable academic mastery through cognitive, affective, and psychomotor assessments. However, many teachers have difficulty assessing affective aspects, especially because they are more subjective and difficult to measure with objective standards. On the other hand, the Independent Curriculum emphasizes the development of life skills, soft skills, and character of students. This emphasis helps to increase students' motivation to learn because they feel more engaged in learning activities that are relevant to real life. Students are more active in project-based learning, which allows them to develop 21st-century skills, such as critical thinking and collaboration. However, the success of the implementation of the Independent Curriculum is highly dependent on the readiness of teachers and the availability of resources in schools.

One of the important findings in this article is the existence of gaps in the quality of education in various regions in Indonesia, especially in Central Java. Factors such as the economy, infrastructure, and social conditions affect the effectiveness of curriculum implementation. Schools in more developed or urban areas tend to be better able to adopt the Independent Curriculum compared to schools in remote areas, which still face infrastructure and access to technology issues. Based on the analysis of the results of questionnaires and interviews, it is recommended that education policies in Indonesia pay more attention to teacher training and assistance in implementing the Independent Curriculum. More intensive and continuous training is needed to improve teachers' competence in implementing more flexible and project-based learning methods. In addition, there needs to be greater support for schools in remote areas to reduce the gap in access to education. The government is also advised to increase investment in educational infrastructure, especially those related to technology, so that the implementation of this curriculum can be evenly distributed throughout Indonesia.

The 2013 Curriculum and the Independent Curriculum each have their own advantages and challenges. The 2013 curriculum, although focused on improving academic competence, faced challenges in its implementation, especially related to teacher readiness and infrastructure. The Independent Curriculum offers a solution by giving teachers and students more freedom, as well as focusing on developing 21st century skills and students' character. However, the success of this curriculum is highly dependent on the readiness of resources, especially in underdeveloped areas. For this reason, government support in terms of teacher training and infrastructure improvement is needed so that these two curricula can provide optimal results.

Declarations of conflict of interest

There is no conflict of interest in this work

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