

# Teacher Strategies in Navigating Curriculum Transition: From K13 to the *Merdeka* Curriculum in Primary Schools

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## ABSTRACT

*This study evaluates the implementation of a point-based disciplinary system in fostering student character development at SMAN 7 Luwu Timur. The research examines how structured disciplinary measures shape student behavior, enhance responsibility, and promote ethical values. Data were collected over one academic year through classroom observations, structured interviews with teachers and students, and document analysis using a qualitative research design. Findings indicate that the point-based system positively influences student discipline and moral development. Teachers reported a significant decrease in behavioral infractions and a noticeable improvement in students' ethical awareness. The system fosters accountability and self-regulation, encouraging students to take responsibility for their actions. However, several challenges persist, including inconsistencies in enforcement and limited parental involvement. Some variations in disciplinary application undermine its effectiveness, emphasizing the need for comprehensive teacher training and structured implementation guidelines. This study contributes to the growing body of literature on character education by demonstrating the effectiveness of a structured disciplinary framework in promoting positive student behavior. It highlights the importance of integrating character-building strategies with school discipline policies to create a more supportive educational environment. The findings suggest that a well-designed point-based violation system can be a powerful tool for character education when implemented consistently and equitably. For sustainability and broader applicability, future research should explore the long-term behavioral impacts of such systems and investigate their effectiveness in diverse educational settings. Policymakers and educators must collaborate to refine disciplinary approaches that balance strict enforcement with holistic character development.*

## INTRODUCTION

Education is a fundamental pillar in shaping human resources, enabling individuals to develop skills and competencies to navigate an increasingly competitive global landscape ([Sudarmansyah et al., 2024](#); [Sustiyatik, 2023](#)). The effectiveness of an education system is significantly influenced by its

curriculum, which functions as the guiding framework for teaching and learning activities ([Heatubun & Talaud, 2024](#); [Li et al., 2021](#); [Vygotsky, 2019](#)). A well-designed curriculum not only structures the learning process but also ensures the achievement of educational goals by fostering students' intellectual, social, and emotional growth ([Ashari et al., 2022](#); [Luangrangsee & Ratsameemonthon, 2024](#)). In Indonesia, curriculum changes have been a frequent occurrence, reflecting ongoing efforts to improve the quality of education in response to societal and technological advancements ([Pakpahan et al., 2023](#); [Setiawan & Suwandi, 2022](#); [Wahyudin & Suwirta, 2020](#)).

One of Indonesia's most recent curriculum reforms is the transition from the 2013 Curriculum to the *Merdeka* Curriculum, which was officially introduced in 2022. The *Merdeka* Curriculum emphasizes student-centered learning, project-based approaches, and competency-based assessments, allowing for greater flexibility in the teaching and learning process ([Shadri et al., 2023](#); [Syahrir et al., 2024](#)). Unlike K13, which prescribed a uniform set of competencies and rigid lesson structures, the Independent Curriculum encourages personalized learning paths that cater to students' unique needs and interests ([Pahrudin et al., 2021](#); [Thurzo et al., 2023](#)). The curriculum also promotes the use of technology in education, fostering digital literacy and critical thinking skills among students.

While the transition aims to enhance the quality of education, it has also presented significant challenges, particularly for teachers who serve as the primary implementers of the new framework. Teachers must shift from a structured and standardized approach under K13 to a more flexible and dynamic pedagogical model. This transition demands an adjustment in teaching strategies, material preparation, and assessment methods, all of which require additional training and professional development. However, many teachers, especially those in rural and under-resourced areas, face difficulties in adapting to the changes due to limited access to training, inadequate infrastructure, and the lack of necessary teaching resources ([Pratiwi et al., 2024](#); [Priawasana & Subiyantoro, 2024](#)).

In regions such as Mahalona and East Luwu, where this study is conducted, the challenges of curriculum transition are further exacerbated by geographical constraints, limited digital access, and varying levels of teacher preparedness. Schools in rural areas often struggle with issues such as inadequate teacher training programs, a shortage of educational materials, and insufficient technological support, making the shift to the Independent Curriculum more complex. Additionally, many educators in these areas have been accustomed to the traditional teaching methods of K13 and may find it challenging to implement more innovative and student-centered pedagogical approaches.

Given these challenges, examining teachers' strategies in navigating the transition from K13 to the Independent Curriculum is crucial. Understanding how teachers adapt to new curriculum requirements can provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of different instructional methods and highlight areas where additional support is needed. This study aims to explore the strategies primary school teachers utilize in Mahalona, East Luwu, to manage the curriculum transition, focusing on the techniques they use to overcome obstacles and enhance classroom learning outcomes.

This research contributes to the growing body of literature on curriculum implementation by shedding light on the practical approaches teachers adopt in rural settings. While numerous studies have examined curriculum reforms in urban and well-resourced schools, there is limited research on how teachers in remote areas cope with curriculum changes. By addressing this gap, the findings of this study can inform policymakers, education authorities, and teacher training institutions about the specific needs and challenges educators face in different educational contexts.

## **METHODS**

### ***Research Design***

This study employs a qualitative descriptive research design ([Villamin et al., 2024](#)) to explore the strategies used by primary school teachers in Mahalona, East Luwu, in navigating the transition from the 2013 Curriculum (K13) to the Independent Curriculum. A qualitative approach is suitable for capturing in-depth insights into teachers' experiences, challenges, and adaptive strategies in implementing the new curriculum. Through this approach, the study aims to describe and analyze teachers' perspectives on curriculum changes in a real-life educational context.

### ***Research Setting and Participants***

The research was conducted in three primary schools in Mahalona, East Luwu, Indonesia, a rural area where the transition to the Independent Curriculum presents unique challenges. The selection of this setting is based on the limited infrastructure, resource availability, and geographical constraints that impact curriculum implementation. The study specifically focuses on Grade II and Grade V teachers, as these levels are among the first to adopt the Independent Curriculum. The participants in this study were six primary school teachers (three from Grade II and three from Grade V) with direct experience in implementing the Independent Curriculum. Participants were selected using a purposive sampling technique (Campbell et al., 2020), ensuring that the selected teachers had firsthand involvement in curriculum adaptation and could provide valuable insights into the transition process.

### ***Data Collection Methods***

This study utilized observations, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis to understand teachers' strategies comprehensively. Classroom observations were conducted to examine how teachers implemented the Independent Curriculum in real time, focusing on teaching strategies, student engagement, instructional materials, and the use of technology. These observations also documented any challenges teachers encountered during lesson delivery. In addition to observations, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the six teachers to gain insights into their perceptions of the curriculum transition, difficulties, and strategies to manage these challenges. The interview format allowed flexibility for teachers to elaborate on their experiences while ensuring that key themes were addressed. Finally, document analysis was performed on lesson plans, instructional materials, and teacher administrative records to assess how teachers adapted their teaching materials and methods to align with the Independent Curriculum. This analysis provided additional context to the strategies identified in the observations and interviews.

### ***Data Analysis***

The data collected were analyzed using thematic analysis, which involves identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns within the dataset. The analysis process began with data familiarization, where the researcher reviewed all collected data, including interview transcripts, observation notes, and documents, to understand teachers' experiences. After this initial review, coding was conducted to identify key concepts and recurring patterns. These codes were then grouped into broader themes related to teachers' strategies, challenges, and adaptation processes. Finally, the themes concerning the study's research questions and relevant literature were analyzed to derive meaningful conclusions.

### ***Trustworthiness and Validity***

This study employed triangulation to ensure the credibility and reliability of the findings, where data from multiple sources—including interviews, observations, and documents—were compared to validate key findings. Additionally, member checking was conducted, allowing participants to review transcribed interviews and preliminary findings to confirm their accuracy and authenticity. These measures were implemented to enhance the research's trustworthiness.

### ***Ethical Considerations***

This study adhered to ethical research principles to ensure participant protection and data confidentiality. Before data collection, participants were fully informed about the study's objectives, voluntary participation, and the right to withdraw at any time. Written informed consent was obtained from all participants. Pseudonyms were used in reporting findings, and all collected data were securely stored to maintain anonymity and confidentiality.

## **RESULTS**

### ***Teachers' Adaptation Strategies***

The findings indicate that teachers in Mahalona, East Luwu, adopted various strategies to align their instructional practices with the requirements of the Independent Curriculum. Given the significant pedagogical shift from the structured 2013 Curriculum (K13) to a more flexible, student-centered

approach, teachers had to adjust their teaching methods, lesson planning, and classroom management strategies.

One of the primary adaptation strategies was differentiated instruction, where teachers modified their teaching methods based on student's learning needs and engagement levels. The transition from K13 to the Independent Curriculum required teachers to move away from rigid lesson structures and adopt student-centered learning approaches such as project-based learning (PBL) and inquiry-based learning. A teacher from SDN 281 Mahalona, who teaches Grade V, expressed the difficulty of shifting from a lecture-based approach to a more exploratory learning method:

*"At first, I was confused about how to implement the Independent Curriculum because it requires students to be more active in learning. I would explain the material in the past, and students would listen and take notes. Now, I need to encourage them to explore and discuss topics independently. I started using group discussions and storytelling techniques to engage them."* (Teacher A, Interview, January 2025)

Similarly, a Grade II teacher from SDN 283 Mahalona shared how she modified her approach to accommodate younger students who struggled with independent learning:

*"For younger children, relying entirely on self-directed learning is difficult. I had to introduce them to new learning methods gradually. I began using picture cards, storytelling, and simple role-playing activities to encourage active participation. The Independent Curriculum suggests this approach, but I had to adapt it based on my students' level."* (Teacher B, Interview, January 2025)

Observations in several classrooms confirmed that teachers experimented with different instructional methods to find what worked best for their students. In one classroom, the teacher divided students into small groups and assigned different tasks based on their abilities, ensuring that advanced and struggling learners received appropriate challenges.

Another adaptation strategy was peer collaboration, where teachers worked together to understand the Independent Curriculum better and develop lesson plans. Given that formal training on curriculum implementation was limited, teachers formed informal learning groups (Kelompok Kerja Guru, KKG) to share experiences, challenges, and best practices. A teacher from SDN 280 Mahalona described how these groups became essential in helping teachers adapt:

*"We realized that waiting for official training wouldn't be enough. So, we started meeting every Friday afternoon to discuss the new curriculum and how we were implementing it. We would share lesson plans, discuss problems in class, and sometimes even conduct small teaching simulations."* (Teacher C, Interview, February 2025)

In addition to these informal meetings, teachers relied on online resources and social media platforms, such as WhatsApp groups and Facebook teacher communities, to seek advice and share teaching materials. Despite the limited digital infrastructure in rural areas, teachers attempted to integrate technology into their lessons to align with the Independent Curriculum's emphasis on digital literacy. Since most schools in Mahalona lacked adequate internet access and multimedia facilities, teachers downloaded educational videos and digital textbooks whenever they had access to an internet connection. A Grade V teacher from SDN 281 Mahalona highlighted the challenges and creative solutions they used:

*"Our school doesn't have a reliable internet connection, so I download videos and interactive content from YouTube when I visit the city on weekends. I then use my laptop in class to show students visual explanations of topics they find difficult."* (Teacher D, Interview, February 2025)

Some teachers also encouraged students to bring their parents' smartphones to class on specific days to access digital learning materials, though this was only feasible for students whose families owned smartphones. Teachers recognized the need to adjust lesson planning better to fit the dynamic

nature of the Independent Curriculum. Unlike K13, which provided a detailed syllabus with fixed weekly plans, the new curriculum allowed teachers to design lessons adapted to students' progress and classroom dynamics. A teacher from SDN 283 Mahalona described how she had to modify lesson plans based on students' responses:

*"Sometimes, I prepare a lesson plan, but halfway through the lesson, I realize that students need more time to grasp the concept. In the past, I would rush through the material to stick to the syllabus. Now, I am more flexible—I extend discussions when needed and adjust assignments based on students' understanding."* (Teacher E, Interview, February 2025)

This flexibility, while beneficial, also posed challenges as teachers had to balance curriculum freedom with ensuring all learning objectives were met. Some teachers felt uncertain about whether their adjustments aligned with assessment expectations under the new system.

### **Challenges Faced During the Curriculum Transition**

The transition from the 2013 Curriculum (K13) to the Independent Curriculum brought several challenges for teachers, particularly in rural schools with limited resources, inadequate training, and infrastructural constraints. One of the teachers' most significant challenges was inadequate training and guidance in implementing the Independent Curriculum. Many teachers expressed confusion and uncertainty about interpreting and applying the new curriculum's framework, particularly in developing lesson plans, assessments, and project-based learning activities. A Grade II teacher from SDN 280 Mahalona shared their frustration over the limited training opportunities:

*"We were only given a short briefing about the new curriculum, but there were no follow-up workshops or hands-on training. Most of us had to figure things out on our own. We often questioned whether we were implementing the curriculum correctly."* (Teacher F, Interview, February 2025)

Similarly, a Grade V teacher from SDN 281 Mahalona emphasized the lack of official instructional materials, which forced teachers to rely on their interpretations:

*"The government provided general guidelines, but they were not detailed enough. Without clear examples or reference materials, we had to create our lesson plans from scratch. It was especially difficult when designing P5 (Profil Pelajar Pancasila) projects, as we had never done them before."* (Teacher G, Interview, February 2025)

School observations confirmed this challenge, as many teachers struggled with developing assessment rubrics, structuring lessons, and integrating the required competencies into daily learning activities. Some teachers attempted to seek guidance from online platforms, but due to limited internet access, they faced difficulties accessing official resources and online training modules.

A core principle of the Independent Curriculum is its emphasis on student-centered learning, including project-based learning (PBL), inquiry-based instruction, and experiential learning. However, many teachers found it difficult to shift from a teacher-centered approach, as teachers and students were accustomed to traditional rote learning methods under K13. A Grade II teacher from SDN 283 Mahalona expressed concerns about students' ability to adapt to independent learning methods:

*"Under the old curriculum, students were used to copying notes and memorizing information. They are expected to explore topics independently and engage in critical thinking. Many of them are not ready for this shift and often get confused about what they should do."* (Teacher H, Interview, March 2025)

Another issue was classroom management. Teachers reported that students often struggled with working independently, leading to disruptions and a lack of focus during lessons. A teacher from SDN 280 Mahalona described her experience with student-led projects:

*“When I introduced project-based learning, students were initially excited but quickly became overwhelmed. They lacked the discipline and organizational skills to complete tasks independently. I had to constantly guide them, sometimes making the process longer than expected.”* (Teacher I, Interview, March 2025)

Observations revealed that some teachers reverted to traditional teaching methods due to these difficulties. Despite their efforts to implement collaborative learning and discussion-based activities, many teachers defaulted to lecture-style teaching to maintain classroom control and ensure students completed their work on time.

Another critical challenge in implementing the Independent Curriculum was inadequate teaching materials and infrastructure. Teachers struggled to access textbooks, digital resources, and multimedia tools, all essential components of the new curriculum’s framework. A teacher from SDN 281 Mahalona highlighted the difficulty in obtaining curriculum-aligned textbooks:

*“We do not have enough textbooks that match the Independent Curriculum. Some teachers have to print worksheets using their own money, and even then, we are unsure if they fully align with the required competencies.”* (Teacher J, Interview, March 2025)

In addition to resource shortages, technological limitations further hindered curriculum implementation. The Independent Curriculum promotes using digital tools and online learning materials, but schools in Mahalona lacked functional computer labs, stable internet connections, and digital projectors. A Grade V teacher from SDN 283 Mahalona described how teachers had to improvise due to these limitations:

*“We are supposed to integrate technology into learning, but most of our students cannot access computers or smartphones. The school only has one outdated laptop, which we must take turns using. Sometimes, I print images from the internet at home and bring them to class as visual aids.”* (Teacher K, Interview, March 2025)

Observations also revealed that many classrooms lacked proper seating arrangements, adequate lighting, and basic teaching aids. Sometimes, students shared textbooks due to a limited supply, while teachers resorted to handwritten lesson plans and makeshift teaching materials.

### ***The Role of External Support Systems***

While teachers in Mahalona faced various challenges in implementing the Independent Curriculum, they also received external support. One of the most valuable support systems for teachers was peer collaboration through teacher working groups (KKG). Without formal training sessions, these groups became essential for knowledge sharing, discussing best practices, and problem-solving. A teacher from SDN 281 Mahalona described how KKG meetings helped her gain a better understanding of curriculum expectations:

*“At first, I felt lost because we had no structured training to implement the new curriculum. But through our teacher discussion group, we shared lesson plans, exchanged teaching strategies, and even role-played classroom scenarios. It helped figure out how to conduct project-based learning.”* (Teacher L, Interview, March 2025)

Similarly, a teacher from SDN 280 Mahalona noted that KKGs were not only a place to share experiences but also a source of emotional support:

*“It was comforting to know I was not the only one struggling. We encouraged each other, and whenever one of us found a useful resource or a successful teaching method, we shared it with the group.”* (Teacher M, Interview, March 2025)

Observations during a KKG meeting revealed that teachers actively engaged in collaborative lesson planning, peer coaching, and discussions about classroom challenges. These meetings also provided a platform for teachers to address common difficulties, such as adapting P5 (Profil Pelajar Pancasila) projects and finding alternative ways to integrate technology into learning despite infrastructure limitations.

The district education office played a role in supporting teachers, although its involvement varied across different schools. Some schools received periodic guidance through curriculum workshops, monitoring visits, and supplemental teaching materials, while others had minimal interaction with district officials. A teacher from SDN 283 Mahalona shared her experience regarding the district's curriculum training:

*"The education office conducted a one-day workshop on the Independent Curriculum, but it was too short to cover everything. They provided some general guidelines, but we still had many unanswered questions. We were hoping for follow-up training, but none has been scheduled."* (Teacher N, Interview, April 2025)

Another teacher from SDN 281 Mahalona mentioned that while the district office sent some instructional materials, they were insufficient:

*"We received a few modules and lesson plans from the district office, but they were mostly examples for urban schools. The context is different in our area, so we still had to modify them a lot to fit our students' needs."* (Teacher O, Interview, April 2025)

Observations showed that there was a greater sense of clarity about curriculum expectations in schools where district officials actively engaged with teachers. However, in schools with minimal engagement, teachers relied more heavily on peer collaboration and self-learning to navigate curriculum implementation.

The Independent Curriculum encourages greater parental and community involvement, particularly in executing P5 projects and other hands-on learning activities. However, the level of parental support varied depending on socioeconomic factors, access to resources, and awareness of the curriculum's goals. A teacher from SDN 280 Mahalona explained how parental involvement positively impacted project-based learning:

*"For our P5 project on environmental awareness, some parents volunteered to help students plant trees around the school. The learning experience was more meaningful because students saw their parents actively participating."* (Teacher P, Interview, April 2025)

Conversely, a teacher from SDN 283 Mahalona described challenges in engaging parents:

*"Some parents still think that education is solely the teacher's responsibility. Only a few responded when we asked them to help with at-home activities or classroom projects. Many parents are busy with work and don't have the time to get involved."* (Teacher Q, Interview, April 2025)

Observations during a school event showed that parental participation was stronger when teachers personally invited parents and explained the benefits of their involvement. In contrast, participation remained low in schools where communication between teachers and parents was limited. Additionally, some teachers collaborated with local government and community leaders to support school programs. For example, village officials in Mahalona provided basic learning materials for schools that lacked funding, and community members with specialized skills (e.g., farming, weaving, or traditional crafts) occasionally served as guest speakers in classrooms. A teacher from SDN 281 Mahalona highlighted the benefits of community engagement:

*“We invited a local farmer to explain sustainable agriculture to our students. It made the lesson much more interesting because the students could see real-life applications of their learning.”* (Teacher R, Interview, April 2025)

However, not all community engagement efforts were successful. In some cases, local organizations were unaware of the curriculum’s objectives and did not prioritize educational initiatives.

## **DISCUSSION**

### ***Teachers’ Adaptation Strategies***

The findings suggest that teachers in Mahalona employed various adaptation strategies to navigate the transition from K13 to the Independent Curriculum, including differentiated instruction, collaborative learning, technology integration, and flexible lesson planning. These strategies align with the principles of curriculum change management, which emphasize teacher adaptability and professional collaboration as key factors in successful implementation ([Fullan, 2014](#); [Mahmood et al., 2025](#); [Niemi, 2021](#)).

Differentiated instruction was one of the most prominent adaptation strategies, where teachers modified their teaching methods to suit students’ diverse learning needs. It is consistent with the theory of differentiated learning, which highlights the importance of tailoring instruction to accommodate variations in student readiness, interests, and learning profiles ([Nur’Afizah Zafa et al., 2024](#); [Tomlinson, 2017](#)). However, the teachers in this study had to develop these methods independently due to the lack of structured training, demonstrating high resilience and innovation.

Furthermore, teachers relied on collaborative learning among peers through KKG groups and informal meetings to compensate for the lack of formal training. It aligns with previous studies indicating that peer collaboration can be an effective form of professional development, particularly in under-resourced educational settings ([Karataş & Tuncer, 2020](#); [Luo et al., 2020](#); [Yurtseven Avci et al., 2020](#)). Similarly, technology integration—despite infrastructural limitations—was identified as a key strategy, albeit with significant barriers. The findings suggest that teachers’ digital adaptability played a crucial role in overcoming these challenges, echoing research by a previous study on the Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) framework ([Khoza & Biyela, 2020](#); [Santos & Castro, 2021](#); [Tseng et al., 2022](#)).

The success of these adaptation strategies demonstrates that teacher agency is a critical component in educational reforms. However, it also highlights a gap in institutional support, reinforcing the argument that curriculum transitions require systematic teacher training programs and adequate resource allocation ([Darling-Hammond, 2020](#); [Darling-Hammond et al., 2020, 2024](#)).

### ***Challenges Faced During the Curriculum Transition***

The study identified three major challenges in implementing the Independent Curriculum: (1) lack of structured training and guidance, (2) complexity of implementing student-centered learning, and (3) insufficient teaching materials and infrastructure. These findings are consistent with previous research on curriculum implementation barriers, emphasizing that successful curriculum adoption depends on teacher preparedness, instructional resources, and systemic support ([Hilton, 2020](#); [Paliwal & Singh, 2021](#)).

The lack of structured training emerged as a critical challenge. Many teachers expressed confusion and uncertainty regarding implementing student-centered learning, a key feature of the Independent Curriculum. It supports [Fullan’s \(2014\)](#) assertion that without adequate training, teachers may struggle to interpret and apply new curriculum frameworks effectively. Additionally, the findings reinforce the importance of ongoing professional development rather than one-time workshops ([Faizuddin et al., 2022](#); [Santos & Castro, 2021](#)).

The difficulty in implementing student-centered learning further highlights the cultural and pedagogical shift the Merdeka Curriculum requires. As noted by [Vygotsky \(2019\)](#), student-centered learning relies on scaffolding, where teachers gradually release student responsibility. However, the findings suggest that students were not accustomed to independent learning, making the transition difficult. It aligns with previous studies, which found that curriculum reforms requiring fundamental

pedagogical shifts are more challenging to implement, particularly in traditional learning environments ([Allmnakrah & Evers, 2020](#); [Pak et al., 2020](#)).

Finally, insufficient teaching materials and infrastructure significantly hindered effective curriculum implementation. The lack of access to updated textbooks, digital resources, and technological tools mirrors findings from rural education studies, which indicate that schools in remote areas often experience slower curriculum adoption due to logistical and financial constraints ([Aruleba & Jere, 2022](#); [Xu & Buckingham, 2024](#)). These results highlight the need for government intervention in resource distribution and investment in rural education infrastructure.

### ***The Role of External Support Systems***

External support systems facilitated the curriculum transition, particularly teacher collaboration (KKG), district education offices, and community engagement. These findings align with research on professional learning communities (PLCs) and school-based teacher networks, which suggest that peer support is a powerful tool in curriculum implementation, particularly in resource-limited settings ([Butler et al., 2022](#); [Gao et al., 2021](#)).

The effectiveness of KKG teacher groups demonstrates the significance of collaborative problem-solving in educational reforms. Teachers who engaged in regular peer discussions and knowledge-sharing reported greater confidence in implementing the new curriculum. This finding is consistent with situated learning, which suggests that professional learning is most effective in a community of practice ([Admiraal et al., 2021](#); [Azorín et al., 2020](#); [Gravett & Ajjawi, 2022](#)). However, while teacher networks were highly beneficial, they could not fully substitute structured professional development, reinforcing the need for institutionalized training programs.

The findings regarding district education office support were mixed. While some schools benefited from supplementary materials and occasional training sessions, others received minimal engagement from district officials. This inconsistency reflects a common challenge in decentralized education systems, where policy implementation varies depending on local administrative capacity ([Chan, 2023](#); [Chen et al., 2021](#); [Zhang et al., 2020](#)). Strengthening communication and support between local education authorities and schools could bridge this gap and provide more consistent implementation support.

Parental and community involvement also emerged as a key enabler in curriculum implementation, particularly in P5 projects. Studies have shown that strong school-community partnerships enhance student learning and engagement ([Lunneblad, 2020](#); [Zuckerman, 2022](#)). However, the findings indicate that parental participation varied, with some parents actively supporting school initiatives while others remained disengaged. This variation suggests a need for greater outreach programs to educate parents about the benefits of active involvement in their children's education.

Moreover, engagement with local government and community leaders provided additional support, reinforcing the argument that multi-stakeholder collaboration is crucial for successful educational reforms ([Didham & Ofei-Manu, 2020](#); [Jain et al., 2022](#); [Zheng & Toribio, 2021](#)). However, teachers faced greater difficulties implementing curriculum changes in schools where government and community collaboration was weak.

### **CONCLUSION**

This study explored the strategies employed by primary school teachers in Mahalona, East Luwu, in navigating the transition from the 2013 Curriculum (K13) to the Independent Curriculum. The findings highlight three key aspects of the transition. First, teachers demonstrated various adaptation strategies to align with the Independent Curriculum's requirements, including differentiated instruction, collaborative learning, flexible lesson planning, and limited integration of digital tools. Despite the lack of structured training, teachers relied on peer support (KKG groups), informal discussions, and online resources to develop their teaching methods. These findings emphasize the critical role of teacher agency and professional collaboration in successful curriculum implementation. However, they also highlight the need for systematic and continuous professional development programs that provide teachers with structured guidance in implementing pedagogical changes.

Second, the study identified significant challenges in curriculum implementation. The lack of structured training led to confusion and inconsistencies in how teachers interpreted and applied

curriculum components, particularly student-centered and project-based learning (P5). Additionally, limited access to teaching resources and infrastructure constraints further complicated the transition, especially in schools with inadequate digital and printed materials. These challenges suggest that comprehensive support systems, including teacher training, instructional material development, and investment in school infrastructure, should accompany curriculum reforms.

Third, external support systems, such as KKG teacher groups, district education offices, and community involvement, played a crucial role in helping teachers navigate the transition. While peer collaboration was highly effective, district education support was inconsistent, and community engagement varied across different schools. These findings underscore the importance of strengthening multi-stakeholder collaboration in educational reforms, ensuring teachers, policymakers, and communities work together to enhance the curriculum's effectiveness.

To ensure a smoother curriculum transition, structured and ongoing teacher training, equitable resource distribution, and stronger collaboration between schools, policymakers, and communities are essential. Future research should explore the long-term impact of curriculum changes, comparative studies between urban and rural schools, and student learning outcomes under the new curriculum. Ultimately, the successful implementation of the Independent Curriculum depends on ensuring that teachers are well-equipped, adequately resourced, and consistently supported, enabling Indonesia to build a more effective and inclusive education system.

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The authors declare no funding and conflicts of interest for this research.

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