



## TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES IN IMPLEMENTING THE INDEPENDENT CURRICULUM FOR STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS AT MALIKA CENTER SPECIAL SCHOOL, WEST JAKARTA

Marselina Muda Bota<sup>1\*</sup>, Joned Ceilendra Saksana<sup>2</sup>, Muhammad Ramdhan<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1,2,3</sup>Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Ekonomi Ganesha

Email: <sup>1</sup>[arlinarlin713@gmail.com](mailto:arlinarlin713@gmail.com), <sup>2</sup>[saksana64@gmail.com](mailto:saksana64@gmail.com), <sup>3</sup>[ramdhan\\_lustig@yahoo.com](mailto:ramdhan_lustig@yahoo.com)

\*) Corresponding Author

---

### **Abstract**

This study aims to understand teachers' experiences in implementing the Independent Curriculum (Kurikulum Merdeka) at Malika Center Special School (SLB) in West Jakarta, which serves students with various special needs. The originality of this research lies in its focus on the context of inclusive education with a new and flexible curriculum approach. A qualitative method was employed, with data collection techniques consisting of in-depth interviews and classroom observations. Empirical results show that teachers welcomed the Independent Curriculum due to its flexibility in adapting learning to individual student needs. This curriculum allows for a more personal and relevant approach; however, its implementation faces challenges such as limited adaptive resources, high teacher workload, and the need for intensive communication with parents. Strategies implemented include comprehensive assessment, collaboration with experts, and the development of adaptive materials based on students' actual needs. The implications of this study indicate the need for further support from schools and the government in the form of ongoing training, inclusive policies, and the provision of adequate resources to support the successful implementation of the Independent Curriculum in special schools. This research provides an important contribution to the development of inclusive education based on the national curriculum.

### **Keywords:**

Independent Curriculum, Inclusive Education, Special Needs School, Teacher Experience, Special Needs, Curriculum Adaptation.

---

*Received: 1 May 2025*

*Revised: 15 May 2025*

*Accepted: 27 May 2025*

*Published online:*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Education is a crucial foundation in preparing quality future generations to face increasingly complex global challenges. Therefore, the Indonesian government continuously makes various updates to the national education system, including initiating the implementation of the Independent Curriculum (Kurikulum Merdeka). This curriculum was designed to provide greater freedom as a guide for educators in preparing and managing teaching and learning activities, allowing them to adapt to the needs and abilities of each student.

The Independent Curriculum (Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar) emerged as a solution to the demands of the education system in the era of the industrial revolution 4.0. Nadiem Makarim emphasized that freedom to learn means the freedom to think without limits in carrying out the scientific process. He explained that learning based on the concept of Merdeka Belajar can be an effective way to integrate technology into the world of education in Indonesia. This freedom of thought should start with teachers. This view aligns with (Sine, 2022) who states that education is a teaching and learning process that creates a pleasant atmosphere for both teachers and students. This opinion affirms that in implementing freedom to learn, both teachers and students play active roles as complementary actors who share experiences during the learning process (Nafi'ah et al., 2023). The implementation of Merdeka Belajar became very important, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic (Nisa & Dumiyati, 2023). Especially in today's digital era, all educational elements are required to collaborate in building a system that supports the teaching and learning process. The Independent Curriculum integrates literacy skills, mastery of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and technology in an integrated manner. With this approach, students are given the freedom to optimize their potential in understanding and mastering the material being studied (Mali, 2016). According to (Arviansyah & Shagena, 2022) Merdeka Belajar is a new government program aimed at making learning activities enjoyable.

In welcoming the Society 5.0 era, teachers are required to equip students with 21st-century competencies, such as critical thinking, problem-solving, creativity, collaboration, and effective communication skills. Teachers also need to create a learning atmosphere that sparks students' curiosity and encourages them to ask questions, experiment, and develop innovative solutions to real-world problems. Teachers play an important role in building students' self-confidence through constructive feedback and providing opportunities to achieve success in learning (Azhar & Wahyudi, 2024).

The main hope is to develop students' personalities, skills, and creativity in line with the ever-changing times (Ramadan & Tabroni, 2020). The reality of learning or education at SLB Malika Center reflects a diversity of disabilities, including autism, intellectual disability, and even multiple disabilities. Each student has unique characteristics, both intellectually and physically, which affect their way of learning and socializing with others. In this context, students are not merely objects of learning; they also have skills that must be developed by adapting the learning process to each student's unique capacity. The Independent Curriculum plays a role in facilitating students to be at the center of the learning process and requires a more personal and flexible approach. At Malika Center Special School, there are 5 teachers educating students with various special needs, presenting unique challenges in implementing the Independent Curriculum. There are 13 students who must be educated with a personal and optimal approach, making it very important to understand and create development and inclusion for students in general. Teachers play a crucial role in building students' self-confidence through constructive feedback and providing opportunities to achieve success in learning (Khoerunnisa, 2024). Teacher training is

necessary to create a supportive learning environment that can enhance student self-confidence (Febrianti & Fitriatin, 2024).

The knowledge gained by students at Malika Center Special School through relevant learning experiences, as the Independent Curriculum applies competency-based learning, makes the student learning process more active and engaged. Additionally, competency-based learning processes, skills activities, extracurriculars, and technology use aid student understanding. In this regard, the experience and understanding of teachers at Malika Center Special School become a strong resource in the process of implementing the Independent Curriculum. This research aims to discover how teachers implement the Independent Curriculum and how it can affect student learning development in both academic and skills aspects. The teachers' perspective on understanding how to implement the curriculum can provide deeper and broader insights into the challenges and successes of implementing this Independent Curriculum. (Utia et al., 2024) also outlines how the implementation of the Independent Curriculum successfully increased student learning independence through three main aspects: first, teacher strategy plays an important role by implementing project-based learning (PjBL) methods and utilizing Wordwall. (Putikadyanto et al., 2024), discuss the implementation of positive discipline in realizing child-friendly schools in the era of the Independent Curriculum.

The value that can be taken from the implementation of the Independent Curriculum at Malika Center Special School illustrates the crucial value of inclusion. Despite their disabilities, students are also given opportunities in learning through the implementation of the Independent Curriculum. At Malika Center Special School, the focus is not only on academic teaching but also emphasized on skills and communication, which are important for students in community life. The teachers at Malika Center Special School strive to implement various learning methods that can support the process and development of student skills and character. Implementing this curriculum presents challenges for teachers in managing the diverse abilities of students (Purhanudin et al., 2023), state that the Independent Curriculum offers significant differences compared to previous curricula. It is simpler in core material, gives students freedom to explore their talents, and is flexible for schools to adapt the curriculum to local needs (RYAN, 2024). states that the Independent Curriculum arrives as a breath of fresh air in the Indonesian education world, offering freedom for students to explore their interests and talents.

The implementation of learning at Malika Center Special School focuses not only on methods and learning materials but also on creating an inclusive learning environment that can support the development of all students. The research to be conducted will provide deep insights and a better understanding of the challenges and successes. Implementing this curriculum by understanding its existence, science or theory, and nature will support educational development towards a more superior condition in the future.

**Table of Data Sources from Malika Center Special School, West Jakarta**

No	Sumber Data	Deskripsi
1.	Number of Students	13 students with special conditions, including autism, delays, etc.

**Marselina Muda Bota. Pengalaman Guru Dalam Mengimplementasikan Kurikulum Merdeka Untuk Siswa Berkebutuhan Khusus Di Sekolah Luar Biasa Malika Center Jakarta Barat**

2.	Number of Teachers	4 teachers providing personalized and attentive education.
3.	Learning Methods	Project-based learning, hands-on activities, and technology use
4.	Skills	Taught Motor, social, and communication skills
5.	Teacher-Student Ratio	1 teacher for every 3.5 students, supporting more individual attention

Although the Independent Curriculum has been widely studied in the context of general education, very few studies specifically explore its implementation in Special Schools (SLB), particularly those handling students with diverse special needs such as autism, intellectual disability, and multiple disabilities. Available literature more often highlights the challenges of this curriculum in mainstream schools, without providing sufficient space for the unique dynamics of inclusive learning in SLBs. This gap is reinforced by the minimal focus on teachers' experiences in designing personally adaptive learning and its influence on students' skills and non-academic development. Research delving into the direct experiences of teachers in the SLB context is greatly needed to understand how the Independent Curriculum is truly implemented and what the obstacles and potential successes are in addressing the challenges of inclusive education.

This research offers novelty by placing teachers' experiences at the center of the study on the implementation of the Independent Curriculum in a special education environment, namely at SLB Malika Center West Jakarta. The uniqueness of this study lies in its contextual approach based on direct experience in handling students with heterogeneous special needs. Furthermore, the focus on teachers' adaptive strategies, utilization of limited resources, and integration of technology and competency-based learning makes this study relevant and contributive in expanding academic understanding of curriculum implementation outside the mainstream school framework. Another differentiating aspect is its attention to non-academic aspects such as social skills, communication, and character building, which are often marginalized in analyses of the national curriculum..

## **METHODS**

The researcher is interested in conducting this study due to an interesting phenomenon related to the implementation of the Independent Curriculum in an effort to improve the quality of student learning at SLB Malika Center, which can enhance credibility in the eyes of the general public and all those within the scope of SLB Malika Center in improving the quality of learning for students with special needs through the experiences of the SLB Malika Center teachers. SLB Malika Center also promotes education to attract attention from the community, especially parents of children with special needs, to join and continue their education at SLB Malika, hoping that students can obtain their right to education like children in general. This research was conducted at SLB Malika Center, an educational institution focused on students with special needs. This

location was chosen due to its commitment to implementing the Independent Curriculum, which aims to provide more inclusive and adaptive education. The research period lasted from January to May 2025, covering 5 months to provide sufficient time for observation and analysis.

The data collection technique in this study used a qualitative approach with three main data collection techniques: observation, interviews, and documentation. Observation was carried out directly by the researcher to understand the learning situation and implementation of the Independent Curriculum at SLB Malika Center, including the environmental conditions and activities of teachers and students. Interviews were used as the main technique to dig for in-depth information from the school principal and teachers. The researcher used open and closed interviews to suit the characteristics of the respondents and to gain a rich understanding of the challenges and strategies of curriculum implementation. Meanwhile, documentation techniques were used to collect written data such as official documents, photos, videos, and recordings relevant to the learning process. This documentation data strengthened the observation and interview results and helped the researcher interpret and verify the research findings. These three techniques complement each other to obtain accurate and comprehensive data.

According to (Saksana, 2024), qualitative research aims to understand phenomena experienced by participants holistically in a descriptive form. Examples of phenomena are behavior, perception, motivation, action, etc. (Wahyudi et al., 2023) This approach was chosen to understand how teachers implement the Independent Curriculum and its impact on student learning. This research aims to explore the subjective experiences of teachers in a rich context where the interaction between teacher and student is very important.

A research informant is a subject who provides information about the phenomenon of the relevant social situation in the field. In other words, a research informant is a competent and relevant source of information for the research (Ramdhan, 2021).

The informants for this research are all teachers at Malika Center Special School, West Jakarta, whose input is expected to be evaluation material for Malika Center Special School, West Jakarta.

The author obtained the needed data, which certainly involved the role of the school principal and staff at Malika Center Special School, West Jakarta. In this research, the researcher will interview five informants who will provide important information. The main informants are the principal of Malika Center Special School, West Jakarta, Mrs. Sri Dalita S.E., S.Pd, and the teachers at Malika Center Special School, West Jakarta. The following is the list of informants for this research:

Luar Biasa Malika Center Jakarta Barat. Berikut adalah daftar informan untuk penelitian ini:

**Table of Informant Identity Based on Position**

No	Nama	Jabatan
1	Sri Dalita S.E.,S.Pd	School Principal
2	Evarista Seno S.Ag	Class Teacher
3	Anggi Lorentemo S.Pd	Class Teacher / Operator
4	Riska Amelia	Teacher / Treasurer
5	Jelli Anzani Harefa	Class Teacher

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

Research on teachers' experiences in implementing the Independent Curriculum at SLB Malika Center West Jakarta shows that teachers feel greater freedom in designing learning according to the needs of each student, which has a positive impact on teacher creativity and student engagement. The flexible approach allows students to be more active, brave to ask questions, and able to express themselves in the learning process, especially through concrete media such as abacuses and pictures for deaf students. However, the main challenges faced include limited resources, a lack of adaptive learning tools, and the need for ongoing training. Teachers are required to prepare individual materials and Individual Learning Programs (Program Pembelajaran Individual/PPI), which adds to their workload. Observation results show a positive and inclusive classroom atmosphere, with social interactions among students supporting their emotional and social development. Interviews with the principal and teachers reinforce the finding that the Independent Curriculum provides space for exploring student talents and interests but still requires support from school management, teacher training, and parental involvement for optimal curriculum implementation.

Overview of Teacher Experiences at SLB Malika Center Based on field research findings, the learning conditions at SLB Malika Center Jakarta are not entirely optimal because the teachers have different educational backgrounds and varying experiences; these differences lead to dissimilar application and delivery methods. Besides the role of teachers and students in supporting learning for students, the school also plays an important role. Of the 100% total number of teachers at SLB Malika Center, about 90% of the teachers already have good experience, evident from their way of delivering material during classroom learning, the implementation of the Independent Curriculum, and the use of learning media for classroom learning that has been established by the Ministry of Education and the school is quite good, for example, arriving on time every day, preparing themselves for the day's learning, conducting learning both in the classroom and outside the classroom such as in extracurricular activities.

The condition of teachers' experiences in implementing the Independent Curriculum in the classroom learning at SLB Malika Center that the researcher found in the field shows that they have implemented learning well, guided by the regulations set by the Ministry of Education and Culture, evident from the way they deliver learning, the use of learning media, and according to experience that is flexible and orderly. This research examines teachers' experiences in implementing the Independent Curriculum for students with special needs at SLB Malika Center. SLB Malika Center is located in West Jakarta and has a long history of providing inclusive education for children with diverse special needs. The school's vision is "Shaping an inclusive future where every child with special needs can develop academically, socially, emotionally, gain independent living skills that will guide them towards an independent and impactful life," and the Independent Curriculum is seen as a means to realize this vision. The implementation of the Independent Curriculum at SLB Malika Center involves a dedicated team, including the school principal, class teachers, special teaching assistants, and experts, who collaborate to ensure the successful adaptation of the curriculum.

At SLB Malika Center, teachers' experiences in implementing learning show interesting dynamics. Field research reveals that learning conditions are not fully optimal. This is caused by the varied educational backgrounds and experiences of the teachers, resulting in differences in

methods of delivering material. Nevertheless, about 90% of teachers at this school have demonstrated good teaching quality, with high commitment to their duties.

The role of teachers is crucial in creating a supportive learning environment for students with special needs. The teachers arrive on time and prepare well for each learning session. They not only focus on classroom teaching but are also involved in extracurricular activities, which contributes to the social and emotional development of students. This shows that teachers are very concerned with the holistic development of the children they teach.

The implementation of the Independent Curriculum at SLB Malika Center is one of the highlights of this research. Teachers have adapted the curriculum well, following guidelines set by the Ministry of Education and Culture. They use relevant learning media and flexible approaches that adapt to student needs. Thus, learning can take place more effectively and enjoyably for children.

Collaboration among various parties at SLB Malika Center, including the school principal, class teachers, special teaching assistants, and experts, is key to the successful implementation of the Independent Curriculum. This collaboration ensures that every aspect of the curriculum can be implemented comprehensively and inclusively. The school's vision of creating an inclusive future for children with special needs is closer to realization, thanks to the commitment and dedication of all involved parties.

These results align with constructivist learning theory, which emphasizes the importance of student-centered learning tailored to individual needs, as explained by Vygotsky and Piaget. The Independent Curriculum, with its flexible and adaptive approach, also reflects the principles of differentiated learning theory (Tomlinson, 2001). These findings are in line with previous studies stating that teacher freedom in designing learning increases teaching motivation and the quality of learning interactions, as found in research by Suyatno (2022) on the implementation of the Independent Curriculum in inclusive schools. However, these results also strengthen findings from other research indicating that the main challenge in implementing the Independent Curriculum lies in resource readiness and teacher training, as revealed in a study by Rahmawati & Nugroho (2021). Thus, this research not only strengthens existing theory but also provides a real picture of curriculum implementation in the context of special education.

## **CONCLUSION**

This research aims to describe teachers' experiences in implementing the Independent Curriculum at SLB Malika Center West Jakarta. The results show that most teachers have been able to implement the Independent Curriculum quite well, although not yet fully optimal. This is influenced by differences in the teachers' educational backgrounds, as not all teachers have a background in Special Education, as well as a lack of ongoing training regarding the curriculum. Varied work experience also affects the teachers' ability to design and deliver learning appropriate to the needs of students with special needs. On the other hand, there is a strong commitment from the school to prioritize academic education, skills, independence, and student character building. Curriculum implementation also follows guidelines from the Ministry of Education but is still constrained by limited available facilities and resources. These findings indicate the need for systematic improvement to optimize the implementation of the Independent Curriculum in the context of inclusive education.

**Suggestions and Policy Recommendations** To support the optimal implementation of the Independent Curriculum in SLBs and other inclusive schools, policy support from the government and schools is needed. The government is advised to increase investment in the training and

**Marselina Muda Bota. Pengalaman Guru Dalam Mengimplementasikan Kurikulum Merdeka Untuk Siswa Berkebutuhan Khusus Di Sekolah Luar Biasa Malika Center Jakarta Barat**

certification of Special Education teachers so that educators have competencies that match the needs of students with special needs. Furthermore, the provision of adaptive learning facilities, development of a flexible curriculum, and an effective monitoring and evaluation system must be policy priorities. Schools also need to strengthen internal strategies by providing ongoing training, encouraging learning method innovation, building an inclusive environment, and increasing collaboration with parents and the community. Optimizing information technology as a learning medium is also important to support individual approaches in education. With synergy between government policies and school efforts, the Independent Curriculum can truly become an instrument of educational transformation that is inclusive, participatory, and responsive to the needs of every student, especially those with special needs.

## REFERENCES

- Arviansyah, M. R., & Shagena, A. (2022). Efektivitas dan Peran Guru dalam Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar. *Lentera: Jurnal Ilmiah Kependidikan*, 17(1), 40–50. <https://doi.org/10.33654/jpl.v17i1.1803>
- Azhar, M., & Wahyudi, H. (2024). Motivasi Belajar: Kunci Pengembangan Karakter dan Keterampilan Siswa. *Uluwul Himmah Educational Research Journal*, 1(1), Article 1.
- Febrianti, M. N., & Fitriatin, N. (2024). Tari Masteka Polo Poteran Ber-Haki: Strategi Inovatif dalam Pendidikan Karakter Islami di SMPN 1 Talango Kabupaten Sumenep Madura. *Proceedings of Annual Islamic Conference for Learning and Management*, 1, 405–427.
- Khoerunnisa, M. Y., Riyanti Agustini, Nur Aini Farida, Subiyono, Solehkun Kodir, Millati Fitri Amaliya, Siti Sa'diah, Sulastri, Ade Suprihat, Tita Astria, Nurhasan, Indra Saeful Hidayat, Ahmad Dini, Zaky. (2024). *STRATEGI MEMBANGUN PERCAYA DIRI PESERTA DIDIK*. CV. Intake Pustaka.
- Mali, Y. C. G. (2016). Project-based learning in Indonesian EFL classrooms: From theory to practice. *IJEE (Indonesian Journal of English Education)*, 3(1), 89–105.
- Nafi'ah, J., Faruq, D. J., & Mutmainah, S. (2023). Karakteristik Pembelajaran pada Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar Di Madrasah Ibtidaiyah. *Auladuna: Jurnal Prodi Pendidikan Guru Madrasah Ibtidaiyah*, 5(1), 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.62097/ad.v5i1.1248>
- Nisa, A. K., & Dumiyati, D. (2023). KETERLAKSANAAN IMPLEMENTASI PROJECT BASED LEARNING PENGUATAN PROFIL PELAJAR TERHADAP PENINGKATAN MUTU PENDIDIKAN. *Jurnal Pendidikan DEWANTARA: Media Komunikasi, Kreasi Dan Inovasi Ilmiah Pendidikan*, 9(2), 115–122. <https://doi.org/10.55933/jpd.v9i2.633>
- Purhanudin, M. V., Harwanto, D. C., & Rasimin, R. (2023). Revolusi dalam Pendidikan Musik: Menganalisis Perbedaan Kurikulum 2013 dan Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar. *Tonika: Jurnal Penelitian Dan Pengkajian Seni*, 6(2), Article 2. <https://doi.org/10.37368/tonika.v6i2.569>
- Putikadyanto, A. P. A., Amin, M. B., & Wachidah, L. R. (2024). Mewujudkan Sekolah Ramah Anak: Implementasi Disiplin Positif dalam Kurikulum Merdeka. *Kiddo: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam Anak Usia Dini*, 106–116. <https://doi.org/10.19105/kiddo.v1i1.12766>
- Ramadan, F., & Tabroni, I. (2020). Implementasi kurikulum merdeka belajar. *Lebah*, 13(2), Article 2. <https://doi.org/10.35335/lebah.v13i2.63>
- Ramdhan, M. (2021). *Metode penelitian*. Cipta Media Nusantara. [https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=Ntw\\_EAAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PR1&dq=info:Zo2g1hj1\\_9wj:scholar.google.com&ots=f3qG4MQt9B&sig=K5ghswwPB9dTwZREN0bgEQHnKQ](https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=Ntw_EAAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PR1&dq=info:Zo2g1hj1_9wj:scholar.google.com&ots=f3qG4MQt9B&sig=K5ghswwPB9dTwZREN0bgEQHnKQ)
- RYAN, R. (2024). *PROBLEMATIKA PELAKSANAAN KURIKULUM MERDEKA PADA MATA PELAJARAN FIQIH KELAS X DI MAN 1 BANDAR LAMPUNG* [Diploma, UIN RADEN INTAN LAMPUNG]. <https://repository.radenintan.ac.id/36206/>

- Saksana, J. C. (2024). Analisis Pengaruh Motivasi Belajar, Kemampuan Kognitif dan Manajemen Waktu Terhadap Prestasi Belajar Mahasiswa. *Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Kebudayaan Nusantara*, 2(4), 160–169. <https://doi.org/10.38035/jpkn.v2i4.805>
- Sine, N. A. E. (2022). Pembelajaran jarak jauh yang pedagogis-spiritual: Sebuah tawaran model pembelajaran ramah anak di tengah pandemi Covid-19. *KURIOS (Jurnal Teologi Dan Pendidikan Agama Kristen)*, 8(1), 14–30.
- Utia, M., Mas, S. R., & Sukung, A. (2024). IMPLEMENTASI KURIKULUM MERDEKA DALAM MENINGKATKAN KEMANDIRIAN BELAJAR SISWA. *Equity In Education Journal*, 6(2), Article 2. <https://doi.org/10.37304/ej.v6i2.15511>
- Wahyudi, S. A., Siddik, M., & Suhartini, E. (2023). Analisis Pembelajaran IPAS dengan Penerapan Pendekatan Pembelajaran Berdiferensiasi dalam Kurikulum Merdeka. *JURNAL PENDIDIKAN MIPA*, 13(4), Article 4. <https://doi.org/10.37630/jpm.v13i4.1296>