

# Exploring Pedagogical Approaches in the Implementation of the Independent Curriculum: A Case Study from Baubau, Indonesia

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## ABSTRACT

The Independent Curriculum introduced in Indonesia aims to provide greater flexibility for teachers and students by promoting student-centered, contextual, and competency-based learning. However, its successful implementation depends significantly on teacher readiness and instructional strategies. This study explores the pedagogical approaches used by Economics teachers in implementing the Independent Curriculum at a senior high school in Baubau, Indonesia. A qualitative case study approach was employed, involving one Economics teacher, the principal, a curriculum supervisor, and 26 tenth-grade students. Data were collected through interviews, classroom observations, documentation, and questionnaires. Analysis followed Miles and Huberman's interactive model, involving data reduction, display, and conclusion drawing, supported by triangulation for validity. Findings reveal that the teacher implemented several strategies aligned with curriculum goals, including participation in In-House Training (IHT), development of learning modules (ATP, TP, ACP), and the use of multimedia and project-based instruction to support student engagement. Assessment strategies ranged from authentic and portfolio-based assessments to traditional exams. Students responded positively to the flexibility of the curriculum, though challenges such as limited teacher experience and time management were noted. The study concludes that while pedagogical implementation shows promise, further support in the form of training, collaboration, and structured guidance is essential for optimizing curriculum outcomes. These findings underscore the importance of institutional support in scaling curriculum reform.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The implementation of the 2013 curriculum emphasizes more on attitude, skills and knowledge-based competencies that can produce a productive, creative, innovative, affective Indonesian nation through strengthening attitudes, but in the course of time the Indonesian nation faced challenges and

obstacles with the emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic which greatly affected the National Education system, so the Ministry of Education and Culture issued a policy to simplify the 2013 curriculum, where in 2022 schools and teachers are given three curriculum options that can be used: 1) using the 2013 curriculum in full; 2) using the emergency curriculum, namely the simplified 2013 curriculum; and 3) using the independent learning curriculum. The independent learning curriculum is one of the 3 curriculum options that can be implemented and chosen by schools and teachers. Schools and teachers are given the freedom to determine the form of curriculum to be used, by adjusting the conditions of each school (Minsih et al., 2025)

According to the regulation of the Minister of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology Number 56 of 2022 concerning the implementation of the independent learning curriculum, considering: a) that the implementation of the curriculum by education units must pay attention to the achievement of learner competencies in education units in special conditions. b) that the implementation of the curriculum during special conditions, as stipulated in the decision of the Minister of Education and Culture Number 719/P/2020 concerning Guidelines for Implementing the Curriculum in Education Units in special conditions, has not been able to overcome learning loss, so it needs to be refined. c) that based on the considerations referred to in letters a and b, it is necessary to implement the decision of the Minister of Education, Culture, Research and Technology regarding the implementation of the 2013 curriculum and the independent learning curriculum. Along with the objectives of the independent curriculum, the independent learning curriculum restores the authority of schools and local governments to manage their own education in accordance with the conditions in their regions, accelerates the achievement of national education goals, and prepares for global challenges in the era of the industrial revolution 4.0.

The reform of the independent curriculum represents a significant shift aimed at enhancing educational quality through flexibility, teacher readiness, and innovation. The curriculum aims to elevate educational standards by aligning learning processes with contemporary societal needs and technological advancements (Permatasari et al., 2023). It provides teachers and students with the freedom to explore diverse teaching methods, such as project-based and collaborative learning (Mulia, 2024). Teacher readiness is crucial for the successful implementation of the independent curriculum, as it directly influences educational outcomes. Research indicates that while many teachers exhibit a foundational understanding of the curriculum, gaps in specific areas such as lesson planning and assessment methods remain. In terms of understanding the curriculum, teachers generally possess a good grasp of the independent curriculum's objectives and structure, yet many express a need for further training, particularly in developing teaching modules and assessments (Puspitasari & Utami, 2023). While in Gorontalo City, for instance, teachers reported difficulties in understanding the curriculum's structure, indicating a need for targeted professional development (Abdullah & Hendrayanto, 2024). Related to planning and implementation skills, studies show that teachers' readiness in planning lessons is rated as fairly good, with average scores around 73% across various schools (Viona & Gistituati, 2024). Implementation of the curriculum is also rated positively, but teachers still face challenges in executing project-based learning and differentiated instruction effectively (Fitri et al., 2023). Furthermore, institutional factors play a significant role in enhancing teacher readiness. Support systems, including access to resources and training, are essential for effective curriculum implementation. In rural areas, gaps in technology and curriculum knowledge highlight the need for stronger institutional backing to facilitate teacher development (Huliyah et al., 2024). Besides, innovative methods, such as project-based learning and the use of visual media, have been adopted to enhance engagement and skill development (Zebua et al., 2025)

In implementing an independent learning curriculum, the teacher component is the tip of the wave in implementing the curriculum, because no matter how good the curriculum is if the teacher who runs it does not have good competence, the curriculum will not run well. The teacher is the inspirer and

motivator figure for students in carving out their future. If teachers are able to be a source of inspiration and motivation for their students, then this will be the strength of students in pursuing their goals in the future (Asmani, 2014). So that teachers in the context of education have a very large and strategic role. This is because it is the teacher who is at the forefront in carrying out educational and teaching activities. It is the teacher who is directly dealing with students to transfer knowledge and technology as well as educate with positive values through guidance and exemplary (Sinomi et al., 2021).

Competency is also one aspect that must be mastered by teachers to run their duties and responsibilities. Competence is closely related to the capacity to perform duties that correspond to certain situations (Arisman et al., 2017). The government regulation Number 19 of 2005 explained that the four competencies that must be possessed by a professional teacher are pedagogical competence, personality competence, social competence and professional competence. By implementing the independent learning curriculum, it requires teacher readiness as a quality supporting factor, a teacher must be able to provide learning to students that is challenging, fun, motivating, inspiring, and provide space to perform process skills, namely observing, asking, finding out, reflecting, and communicating in accordance with the independent learning curriculum. The initial experience of researchers at SMA Negeri 4 Baubau school, the researchers met with the curriculum supervisor, the curriculum supervisor directed me to the class X economics teacher named Mr. Z. With him, the researchers asked about the implementation of the independent learning curriculum at SMA Negeri 4 Baubau, he replied that the implementation of the independent learning curriculum at SMA Negeri 4 Baubau was not optimal because teachers still found difficulties in implementing active learning, this is because many teachers are still not accustomed to utilizing technological tools and inadequate teacher resources, because they are used to teaching with a conventional approach (lectures and assignments). The students are also placed as objects of knowledge transfer from the teacher, which is expected that the teacher can change the mindset of the students. To achieve the goals and functions of education related to the implementation that has been taken by students includes economic education subjects.

Implementation of the independent learning curriculum at the senior high school level, Economics subject matter with the scope of social science learning focuses on the teacher's ability to provide understanding for students, especially in examining economic events. Through Economics learning, students are expected to be able to understand the facts that occur about economic events that occur in their environment and knowledge and ways of thinking by assessing excellence in economic activities. The implementation of the independent learning curriculum is a renewal of the learning system based on increasingly advanced technology where its implementation began on November 14, 2021 with an approach so that students can choose their own subjects of interest. Referring to the thought, this study is conducted to expound on the strategies utilised by teachers in implementing the independent curriculum in Economics learning for senior high school learners. The outcomes of this study are expected to provide insight to fellow teachers on how to implement the independent curriculum, so as to foster innovative and student-centred learning.

## 2. METHODS

This research employed a case study of qualitative research. The qualitative study method investigated natural conditions rather than experimental settings. Researchers serve as primary instruments, employing triangulated data collection techniques. The analysis is inductive and qualitative, with results prioritizing meaning over generalization (Sugiyono, 2013). Meanwhile, the case study was chosen since it provided valuable insights into specific cases, contributing to the broader knowledge base and informing practice in various fields (Kumar & Giri, 2023). Therefore, this research was conducted to provide insight about the teacher's strategies in implementing the independent curriculum in senior high school setting.

The participant in this research was an Economics subject teacher, the principal, curriculum supervisor, and 26 students of the tenth-grade at SMA Negeri 4 Baubau selected purposively. The tenth-grade students were selected as respondents due to the implementation of the independent curriculum exclusively in that grade. Currently, grades eleven and twelve continued to utilize the previous curriculum, namely the 2013 curriculum. The researchers requested the principal's attention of the teachers and pupils designated as respondents. The researchers clarified the study's goal and objectives to the teachers and students, soliciting their consent to participate as subjects in the research. This study was conducted in five months, starting from October 2022 to March 2023. The instruments used in collecting the data regarding teacher readiness in implementing the independent learning curriculum are questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, classroom observation, and document analysis.

To make it easier to analyze the data in this study, researchers used the interactive model of Miles et al. (2014). The interactive model in question is one that manages the components, namely: data reduction, data presentation and conclusion drawing. The data reduction stage commenced with the collection of all relevant data utilizing research instruments concerning teachers' readiness to execute the independent curriculum in Economics subjects. Subsequently, the data were curated by eliminating material irrelevant to the research objectives. The data presentation phase involved categorizing the data according to the independent curriculum indicators and subsequently displaying it based on those criteria. In drawing conclusions stage, researchers analyzed the condensed data and discern the strategies employed by teachers in the implementation of the independent curriculum based on this information. These conclusions were perpetually revised and validated during the study process. The researcher juxtaposed the data derived from teacher's explanations with classroom learning processes and performed triangulation with informants, including the school principal, the curriculum supervisor, and the students, to validate the credibility and validity of the conclusions.

### 3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the results of field research to determine teacher performance in implementing the independent learning curriculum at school. Observation through direct observation carried out in the field regarding teacher readiness in implementing the independent learning curriculum in economics subjects at SMA Negeri 4 Baubau, the researchers presents the data descriptively, the results of observations made of teachers in implementing the independent learning curriculum are as follows.

#### 3.1. *Teacher readiness*

Based on the results of interviews with the respondent on January 26, 2023, at 09.15 WITA in the library room with a grade X Economics teacher (ZRN) states:

*“There are three stages in preparing learning tools for the independent curriculum, namely, conducting IHT (In-House Training) meetings, conducting MGMP (Subject Teachers Meeting), and continuing with teaching each teacher”.*

IHT is a routine agenda item every new school year. IHT is an internal school training to improve the competence of educators and teaching staff. The IHT material this time is the implementation of an independent curriculum in the form of a Pancasila student profile as freedom to learn, freedom to teach. MGMP is an event that enables the assembly of educators in the same discipline to cultivate professional collaboration.

Teacher readiness is a critical factor in the effectiveness of educational processes, influencing both curriculum implementation and student outcomes. Research indicates that various elements, such as self-efficacy, technical skills, and support training, significantly contribute to a teacher's preparedness to adapt to new teaching methodologies and curricula. This readiness is essential for fostering an engaging learning environment and achieving educational goals. The teacher readiness also affects the curriculum implementation. Teachers' comprehension of curriculum objectives and mechanisms is vital

for successful implementation, as seen in studies on independent learning curricula (Fitri et al., 2023). In role as change agents, teachers must be equipped as agents of change, necessitating an integrated model that addresses pedagogical needs and competencies (Talib et al., 2024).

### 3.2. Instructional Planning

Regarding to the instructional planning, the interview was administered to the respondents. In the development of teaching modules for the independent learning curriculum at SMA Negeri 4 Baubau, preparations were indeed undertaken, as indicated in the interview conducted on January 26, 2023, at 9:15 a.m. WITA with the tenth grade Economics instructor for Grade X (ZRN), who stated:

*“Concerning the preparation of teaching modules for the independent learning curriculum, subject teachers devise ATP (Learning Objective Flow), TP (Learning Objectives), and ACP (Analysis of Learning Outcomes)”.*

The school principal issued a statement during an interview on February 22, 2023, at 10:00 AM WITA in his office concerning the independent learning curriculum teaching modules. His declaration was as follows:

*“In preparing the learning module, the teacher first identifies what material will be taught, determines the learning objectives to be achieved, prepares learning materials, interpretation methods and evaluation techniques that are systematically arranged to achieve the expected level of success”.*

From the information above, it can be asserted that the learning tools for the independent learning curriculum the teachers must prepare in managing the teaching and learning process can be in the form of modules or teaching materials. Modules or teaching materials are the same as lesson plans. The information obtained from curriculum supervisor (AB) regarding the independent curriculum learning tools, namely that the learning tools for the independent learning curriculum have been prepared such as modules, books and online learning resources such as powerpoint presentation.

Instructional planning is a critical component of effective teaching, serving as a bridge between curriculum and classroom instruction. It enhances the quality of education by enabling teachers to set clear learning objectives, develop engaging strategies, and assess student progress effectively. This planning process not only boosts teacher confidence but also aligns instruction with educational standards, ultimately improving student outcomes. Meyen & Greer (2009) argue that instructional planning helps teachers translate curriculum standards into actionable lessons, ensuring that educational goals are met. Meanwhile, effective planning enhances teaching quality by allowing teachers to develop active learning strategies, thereby increasing student engagement and participation (Nadlir et al., 2024). It also enables teachers to organize learning sequences logically, prioritize essential topics, and maximize instructional time, which is crucial for comprehensive coverage of the curriculum (Nisa et al., 2024).

### 3.3. Learning Media

It is important for economics teachers to prepare learning modules for self-study to ensure that the material delivered is appropriate and meets the needs of students. Economics teachers must master creative, flexible learning methods and understand the concept of self-paced curriculum to be able to design effective teaching modules (Shulman, 1987). The vice principal of the curriculum (AB) also gave his information in an interview on February 22, 2023, at 08.15 WITA in the school yard regarding the independent curriculum teaching module, namely:

*“Preparing an independent learning curriculum teaching module is almost the same as when preparing lesson plans, namely by implementing the flow of learning objectives developed from learning outcomes with the Pancasila learning profile as a target”.*

In preparing the project module for strengthening the profile of Pancasila at SMA Negeri 4 Baubau, of course, there are preparations made, such as the results of an interview on January 26, 2023, at 09.15 WITA in the library room with class X economics teacher (ZRN) said:

*Some of the things we do before learning in the first class are preparing the independent learning curriculum teaching module which includes general school information, initial competencies, Pancasila student profiles, and facilities and infrastructure. Second, core competencies which include learning objectives, meaningful understanding, and triggering questions related to the material being taught. Third, learning readiness, and fourth, learning activities”.*

The principal also gave his information in an interview on February 22, 2023, at 10.00 WITA in the principal's room regarding the learning process of the independent curriculum, his information was as follows:

*“Before carrying out learning activities in the classroom, there are several things that must be prepared by the teachers, namely preparing teaching materials in accordance with the lesson plan / module, preparing teaching aids needed in the learning process, preparing questions or directions to stimulate student activeness and preparing evaluation materials.*

The deputy head of curriculum (AB) also gave his information in an interview on February 22, 2023, at 08.15 WITA in the school yard regarding the learning process of the independent curriculum, his information is as follows:

*In the classroom learning process, we as teachers are required to be creative and innovative in providing learning media or modules so that students are more active in the learning process because in this independent curriculum the learning center is 60% in students so we are obliged to make students active in the learning process. With the media used in general such as video media, pictures etc. “.*

From the information above, it can be assumed that learning module is a learning media that must be prepared by the teacher before teaching, in which the module must facilitate the profile of Pancasila learners. The importance of learning modules in teaching is underscored by their ability to facilitate structured, independent learning while enhancing student engagement and achievement. Learning modules serve as comprehensive instructional resources that guide students through complex topics, allowing for a more focused and interactive educational experience. This approach not only supports diverse learning styles but also fosters learner autonomy, enabling students to take responsibility for their own learning process. Muafah et al. (2024) affirm that learning modules provide a systematic framework for delivering content, ensuring that students grasp essential concepts in a logical sequence. They are designed to address specific learning objectives, which helps in maintaining clarity and focus during the educational process (Yuswandi et al., 2024). Modules incorporate various activities that stimulate interest and challenge students, promoting active participation and critical thinking (Nardo, 2017).

### 3.4. Assessment Strategies

In preparing the evaluation techniques for independent learning at SMA Negeri 4 Baubau, of course there are preparations made by the teacher, such as the results of an interview on January 26, 2023, at 09.15 WITA in the library room with class X economics teacher (ZRN) said:

*“The preparations made by teachers in learning evaluation include: designing, preparing, collecting information, analyzing, making conclusions, making recommendations, and utilizing evaluation results. To achieve learning objectives, it is assessed from individuals and groups”.*

The principal also gave his information in an interview on February 22, 2023, at 10.00 WITA regarding learning evaluation techniques, that is to always monitor learning activities every day guided by the flow of learning objectives (ATP) to find out whether it is appropriate or not, if not then an evaluation will be carried out. This is in line with research which states that the leadership role of the principal as a learning leader is very central. The application of a democratical-monarchical leadership style that is often applied by school principals (Minsih et al., 2019).

The deputy head of curriculum (AB) also gave his information in an interview on February 22, 2023, at 08.15 WITA related to learning evaluation techniques, that is by preparing evaluation materials such as making test questions which will later be given to students and from the results of the test the teacher gets the extent of students' understanding of the material that has been learned.

In preparing for the assessment of independent learning at SMA Negeri 4 Baubau, of course, there are preparations made by the teacher, such as the results of an interview on January 26, 2023, at 09.15 WITA in the library room with class X economics teacher (ZRN) said:

*“The forms of assessment of student learning outcomes are authentic assessment, self-assessment, portfolio-based assessment, exams, daily exams, midterm exams, semester final exams, proficiency level quality exams, national exams and school/madrasah exams. The assessment includes attitude assessment and knowledge assessment”.*

The principal also gave his information in an interview on February 22, 2023, at 10.00 WITA in the principal's room regarding the learning assessment of the independent curriculum, namely in assessing student learning outcomes in this independent curriculum in accordance with the objectives of fair, objective and educational assessment. This aims to be able to create a quality generation. The deputy head of curriculum (AB) also gave his information in an interview on February 22, 2023, at 08.15 WITA in the school yard regarding the learning assessment of the independent curriculum. The information is that the assessment of the independent curriculum is not particularly difficult, since the assessment process is more or less the same as the previous curriculum.

Learning evaluation is a critical component of the educational process, serving as a mechanism to assess the effectiveness of teaching and learning strategies. It enables educators to make informed decisions that enhance both student learning and institutional development. Magdalena et al. (2023) emphasizes that learning evaluations provide educators with valid data on student performance, helping to identify learning difficulties and areas for improvement. Continuous evaluation throughout the learning process allows teachers to adapt their methods and materials, ensuring they meet the diverse needs of students.

### 3.5. Challenges

The results of the interview on Friday, February 17, 2023, with several students regarding the term “independent curriculum” obtain information: “Yes, I have heard of it.” (AAAS); “Yes, I have heard of the independent curriculum.” (DR); and “Yes, I have heard of it.” (DN). From the above statements, it can be concluded that the term “independent curriculum” is no longer unfamiliar to students at SMA Negeri 4 Baubau.

As the result of the interview on Friday, February 17, 2023, with students, their responses regarding the independent curriculum are as follows: The answer of a student named (AA) said that in my opinion the independent curriculum is an important learning change to deal with post-pandemic education and to deal with world situations that continue to change according to the times. Student responses to the independent learning program were generally positive, with many students feeling more motivated and interested in the learning process. Some students also appreciated the more flexible and student-centred approach, while others felt additional adjustments were needed to understand the new approach (Change, 2016). Another opinion expressed by a student named (FS) said that I think the independent curriculum is an important learning change to deal with post-pandemic education to deal with the changing world situation. Another opinion expressed by a student named (LH) said that in my opinion the independent curriculum can facilitate all children who have different potentials. In addition, the independent curriculum can encourage schools and teachers.

As a result of the interview on February 17, 2023 with students, their responses regarding the convenience in the learning process of the independent curriculum are as follows: The answer of a student named (NRAN) said that the convenience in the learning process of independent learning is that one of them makes it easier for students to find answers to questions given by the teacher by searching the internet. Another response from a student named (WRI) said that I, as a student, was not forced or rushed to master a subject, and the learning process was fun because it was adjusted to my competence as a learner. Another response was also expressed by a student named (RF), who said that students are free to choose subjects according to their interests, talents, and aspirations. The simplicity of the independent curriculum's learning process implies flexibility in time and learning methods that can be tailored to student needs. Wider access to a variety of digital learning materials makes it easier for students to find additional material and deepen their understanding (Reigeluth, 1999).

From some of the descriptions above, it can be concluded that the independent learning curriculum makes it very easy for students, for example, students looking for answers to the questions given. By the teacher by searching the internet. Students are also not forced to master a subject and the learning process feels fun because it is tailored to the competence of students. Students are also free to choose subjects that match their interests, talents, and aspirations.

As the results of the interview on Friday, February 17, 2023, with students regarding the obstacles in the learning process of the independent curriculum are as follows: The answer of student named (MS) regarding the obstacles in the learning process of the independent curriculum said that the lack of teacher knowledge in teaching the independent learning curriculum. The lack of teacher knowledge in teaching in independent learning is triggered by the teacher's experience while studying in college, lack of access to learning and time management. Another response from a student named (WN) said that the lack of teacher experience in the independent learning curriculum. Another response was also expressed by a student named (W) who said that the obstacle is time management in efforts to transform the learning process, teachers may need more time to study again so that they can adapt to the expected changes. In learning the Merdeka Curriculum, teachers' and students' lack of understanding of the new methods applied is an obstacle. Limited opportunities and resources, such as internet access and learning materials, are also major obstacles to implementing an independent curriculum (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001).

From some of the descriptions above, it can be concluded that one of the obstacles in the independent learning curriculum is the lack of teacher knowledge in teaching the independent learning curriculum, and time management in efforts to transform the learning process, teachers need more time to learn again so that they can adapt to the expected changes. The role of the teacher in processing learning into innovative learning through good planning and then proceeding with its implementation and evaluation (Minsih & Galih, 2010).

As the results of the interview on February 17, 2023, with students regarding student preparation in the independent curriculum learning process are as follows: The answer of a student named (LA) regarding student preparation in the independent curriculum learning process stated that strong

thinking, focus on learning material, understand and understand well the explanation of material and learning. Another response was also raised by (YD) that student preparation must really be done well to achieve more effective learning, for example preparing books, pens and data packets. Another response was also made by (DN) who said that the preparations made were understanding the regulations or rules for implementing the independent curriculum, focusing on essential material, bringing books and following the subjects well. Cognitive and mental readiness, and the ability to think critically and concentrate, are very important in learning the independent learning curriculum. Logistical preparation and understanding of regulations such as preparing learning tools and understanding regulations are also important aspects to support the learning process (Slavin, 2016).

From some of the descriptions above, it can be concluded that student strategies in the learning process of the independent learning curriculum are very supportive, such as understanding the regulations or regulations for implementing the independent curriculum, focusing on essential material, bringing books and following the subject well. Students are also required to be strong in thinking, focus on the learning material, understand and understand well the explanation of the material and learning.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The finding of this research indicate that the Economics subject teacher has applied various strategies in implementing the independent curriculum at SMA Negeri 4 Baubau, comprising the teacher readiness, the instructional planning, the learning media, and the assessment strategies. Besides, some obstacles are also found during the implementation of the independent curriculum. The teacher readiness is done by conducting the In-House Training and joining MGMP (Subject Teacher Deliberation). The instructional planning is carried out by arranging learning objective flow, learning objectives, and analysis of learning outcomes. The learning media is prepared by providing a learning module for the learning process. The assessment strategies are done in form of authentic assessment, self-assessment, portfolio-based assessment, exams, daily exams, midterm exams, semester final exams, proficiency level quality exams, national exams and school/madrasah exams. The assessment includes attitude assessment and knowledge assessment. However, despite all the steps taken by teachers in preparing and teaching Economics subject, students still encounter several obstacles, comprising lack of teacher knowledge in teaching the independent learning curriculum, and time management in efforts to transform the learning process, teachers need more time to learn again so that they can adapt to the expected changes.

The practical implication of the implementation of the independent curriculum at SMA Negeri 4 Baubau is that the teacher creates adaptive, tailored lesson plans and modules and develops new and authentic assessment tools. To figure out those weaknesses, the school principal must facilitate the teacher with a focus group discussion or workshop concerning the subject taught by each teacher. Thus, teachers can provide mutual reinforcement to ensure that they implement the independent curriculum properly and correctly. In addition, fellow teachers can also correct mistakes made by teachers from the preparation stage to the evaluation stage. Therefore, it is hoped that teachers can implement the independent curriculum in accordance with the requirements of the law or guidelines established by the government.

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