

Policy Analysis of the Competency-Based Curriculum (KBK), the 2013 Curriculum, and the Independent Curriculum

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Abstract

Curriculum changes in Indonesia reflect the government's efforts to improve the quality of education so that it remains relevant to the times and societal needs. This article aims to analyze the differences, strengths, and weaknesses of the three major curricula implemented in Indonesia, namely the Competency-Based Curriculum (KBK), the 2013 Curriculum, and the Independent Curriculum. This study employed a literature review method by examining official documents, academic books, and research findings related to the implementation of these three curricula. The analysis shows that KBK focused on mastering students' basic competencies, the 2013 Curriculum emphasized character formation and 21st-century competencies through scientific approaches, while the Independent Curriculum highlights flexibility and student-centered learning through project-based and differentiated instruction. These developments demonstrate a progressive direction toward a more adaptive, contextual, and future-oriented education system. However, the successful implementation of the Independent Curriculum depends on teacher readiness, infrastructure availability, and consistent policy support.

Keywords: Competency-Based Curriculum, 2013 Curriculum, Independent Curriculum, education, curriculum analysis.

Introduction

Education in Indonesia has undergone continuous changes and improvements in response to the development of the times, the demands of globalization, and shifting societal needs. These changes are reflected in the evolution of the national curriculum, starting from the Competency-Based Curriculum (KBK) in 2004, the 2013 Curriculum, and most recently the Independent Curriculum, which has been gradually implemented since 2022. Each curriculum carries distinct philosophies, approaches, and instructional strategies to achieve

the national education goals as stated in the Indonesian Law No. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System.

Such curriculum reforms not only show adaptation to scientific and technological developments but also represent strategic efforts by the government to prepare students with competencies relevant to the demands of the 21st century. The pedagogical paradigm shift from content-oriented to character formation, creativity, and independence forms the foundation of educational transformation in Indonesia. Moreover, curriculum updates are expected to address the challenges of educational disparity across regions, foster lifelong learning culture, and strengthen national values based on Pancasila. Thus, curriculum development in Indonesia is not merely administrative in nature but is instead a continuous effort to build a more adaptive, inclusive, and globally competitive education system.

Therefore, this article aims to comprehensively analyze the Competency-Based Curriculum (KBK), the 2013 Curriculum, and the Independent Curriculum in terms of their concepts, implementation, advantages, and challenges. This analysis is expected to provide a clearer understanding of the direction of national curriculum development and its implications for improving the quality of education in Indonesia.

1. Competency-Based Curriculum (KBK)

The KBK was introduced in 2004 as a response to global demands and the need to improve the quality of human resources. The main focus of KBK is the mastery of student competencies rather than merely learning subject content.

KBK emphasizes three core competency domains:

1. Knowledge
2. Skills
3. Attitudes

The learning approach in KBK is student-centered, placing students as active participants in the learning process. However, in practice, many teachers faced difficulties due to limited training and lack of practical guidelines, resulting in inconsistent implementation across schools.

2. The 2013 Curriculum

The 2013 Curriculum was developed as a refinement of KBK, with the aim of strengthening 21st-century competencies, especially reasoning, creativity, collaboration, and character. It emphasizes the balance between spiritual, social, knowledge, and skill domains.

Key characteristics of the 2013 Curriculum include:

- **Scientific approach** (observing, questioning, experimenting, reasoning, communicating)
- **Authentic assessment**, evaluating both learning processes and outcomes
- **Integration of character education** across all subjects
- **Thematic learning**, especially at the elementary level

Despite its strengths, the 2013 Curriculum faced several challenges, including complex administrative demands, extensive competency requirements, and teachers' lack of readiness in applying the scientific approach effectively.

3. The Independent Curriculum

The Independent Curriculum was officially launched in 2022 as part of the Merdeka Belajar (Freedom to Learn) policy by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology. It serves as a simplified and improved version of the 2013 Curriculum.

Its core principle is granting autonomy to schools and teachers to adapt instruction to student characteristics and local contexts.

Key features include:

- Focus on essential content and core competencies
- Project-Based Learning through the **Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Projects (P5)**
- Differentiated instruction tailored to students' needs and potential
- Flexible curriculum structure allowing schools to adjust learning loads

Its advantages include contextual relevance, reduced administrative burden, and increased space for innovation. However, successful implementation depends on teacher training, infrastructure readiness, and equitable understanding across regions.

4. Comparison of the Three Curricula

Aspect	KBK (2004)	2013 Curriculum	Independent Curriculum
Main Focus	Competency mastery	Character building & 21st-century skills	Independent & differentiated learning
Teacher Role	Facilitator	Facilitator & character guide	Learning designer

Aspect	KBK (2004)	2013 Curriculum	Independent Curriculum
Student Role	Active learner	Active, creative, collaborative	Independent, reflective
Learning Approach	Student-centered	Scientific approach	Differentiated & project-based
Assessment	Competency-based	Authentic assessment	Flexible & contextual
Strengths	Competency-oriented	Character-integrated	Flexible & contextual
Weaknesses	Uneven implementation	Administrative complexity	Requires resource readiness

Conclusion

Curriculum transformation in Indonesia reflects the government's continuous attempts to align education with contemporary challenges. The KBK marked the beginning of competency-oriented education, the 2013 Curriculum reinforced character and 21st-century skills, and the Independent Curriculum emphasizes learner autonomy and contextual flexibility. For the Independent Curriculum to be effectively implemented, it requires strong teacher training, adequate facilities, and collaboration among government, schools, and society.

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