

The Role of Teacher Working Groups in Supporting the Implementation of the Independent Curriculum in Teacher Professional Development

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Abstract

This study focuses on developing teacher professionalism through improving teaching skills to support the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum. The objectives are to describe the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in elementary schools, the role of Teacher Working Groups (KKG) in supporting it, and the factors influencing the effectiveness of teacher training. The research employed a descriptive qualitative method involving 59 elementary school teachers. Data were collected through interviews, observations, and documentation, and analyzed using the Miles and Huberman model with data triangulation for validity. The results indicate that active teacher participation in KKG significantly enhances understanding and teaching skills aligned with the Merdeka Curriculum. Training combined with technical guidance and collaborative discussions accelerates teachers' competence improvement. However, limited training methods remain a challenge, requiring more innovative and practice-based approaches. The study concludes that KKG plays an essential role in fostering positive collaboration to support the successful implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in elementary schools.

Keywords: Teacher Working Group, Implementation, Independent Curriculum, Teacher Professional Development

Abstrak

Penelitian ini berfokus pada pengembangan profesionalisme guru melalui peningkatan keterampilan mengajar untuk mendukung implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka. Tujuannya adalah mendeskripsikan implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka di sekolah dasar, peran Kelompok Kerja Guru (KKG) dalam mendukungnya, serta faktor-faktor yang memengaruhi efektivitas pelatihan guru. Metode yang digunakan adalah kualitatif deskriptif dengan 59 guru sebagai sampel. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara, observasi, dan dokumentasi, serta dianalisis menggunakan model Miles dan Huberman dengan triangulasi untuk keabsahan data. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa keterlibatan aktif guru dalam KKG meningkatkan pemahaman dan keterampilan mengajar sesuai Kurikulum Merdeka. Pelatihan yang dikombinasikan dengan bimbingan teknis dan diskusi kolaboratif mempercepat peningkatan kompetensi guru. Namun, keterbatasan metode pelatihan masih menjadi tantangan, sehingga diperlukan inovasi dan diversifikasi pendekatan berbasis praktik. KKG berperan penting dalam menciptakan kolaborasi positif untuk implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka di sekolah dasar.

Kata kunci: Kelompok Kerja Guru, Implementasi, Kurikulum Merdeka, Pembinaan Profesional Guru



INTRODUCTION

The curriculum is a key factor in the successful implementation of education in schools. The existence of a curriculum is dynamic and changes in line with developments and the characteristics of students at any given time (Indriawati et al., 2023). The implementation of a curriculum cannot be separated from the role of teachers who must continually learn as a form of professional development in response to changes (Nyoman, 2022). The curriculum currently in effect is the Independent Curriculum (Kurikulum Merdeka) with all its adaptive characteristics tailored to students' unique needs and changes in the times. Teacher professional development is the main foundation for driving the Independent Curriculum, through understanding the design of teaching modules, selection of methods, delivery of material, assessment planning, and all aspects necessary for optimal learning (Indriawati et al., 2023). Law Number 14 of 2005 concerning Teachers and Lecturers emphasizes that teachers have the right and obligation to participate in continuous professional development in order to meet the standards of competence and professional performance. This regulation provides a legal basis stating that every educational institution implementing the Independent Curriculum must prepare programs for improving teacher competence through structured training, learning communities, and reflection on teaching practices so that the transformation of learning according to the curriculum can truly be realized in classrooms.

In reality, especially in the Gugus Nakula area based on in-depth interviews, many teachers still do not fully understand the components of the Independent Curriculum. The availability of downloadable teaching modules has reduced teachers' understanding of the function and essence of using such modules according to classroom characteristics. Teachers' understanding of teaching methods, media, and assessment also tends to remain low. Although training is offered through the Merdeka Mengajar platform covering various instructional components needed in the Independent Curriculum, this platform can only be accessed by teachers who have a belajar.id account, meaning not all teachers have the same opportunities. Centralized training has also been conducted during the period from 2022 to 2024 in Wonogiri Regency, but only briefly each year. Research by Indriawati et al. (2023) synthesized that teachers who received training on the implementation of the Independent Curriculum achieved a good level of understanding. To support the implementation of the Independent Curriculum, teachers need to strengthen their professional competence so that educational goals can align with the direction of the curriculum (Alfath et al., 2022). This situation further emphasizes that changes and the implementation of the Independent Curriculum become complex when there is a lack of teacher understanding of the prevailing curriculum, limited training provided for adaptation, and insufficient comprehension of curriculum principles and concepts.

The challenges expressed by teachers in implementing the Independent Curriculum include the lack of contextual training that incorporates simulation and practical methods. Training provided through the Merdeka Mengajar platform does not offer space for two-way discussions, mentoring, or classroom simulations that enable teachers to directly practice designing teaching modules, authentic assessments, as well as strategies, models, and methods suitable for students' characteristics in their classes. As a result, the training materials feel theoretical and generic, disconnected from each school's context, and fail to address real challenges such as limitations in infrastructure or diverse student characteristics. This situation makes teachers struggle to translate the concept of the Independent Curriculum into concrete learning activities. Teachers tend to revert to downloading ready-to-use modules without adaptation, rely on lecture methods, and choose standard summative assessments because they lack confidence in implementing the independent learning approach. This gap is further exacerbated by the limited number of facilitators and insufficient training time

allocations, so follow-up activities such as reflection and personal feedback do not occur. Thus, the lack of contextual, interactive, and practice-based training becomes the dominant cause of the slow internalization of the Independent Curriculum in the field.

This phenomenon is both interesting and crucial to explore further, because the lack of contextual training and low teacher understanding of the Independent Curriculum's implementation can threaten the effectiveness of classroom learning. There is a need for a training community that can facilitate sustainable professional development, connect theory with practice, and tailor training materials to the actual needs of schools. One such form is the Teacher Working Group, which provides space for discussions, simulations, and peer mentoring (Risdiyani, 2021). Through this forum, teachers can learn from more experienced colleagues, gain support from superiors, and utilize external resource persons to strengthen their understanding of the curriculum, expand their zone of proximal development, and close gaps in knowledge (Fifani et al., 2023). Structured and adaptive professional development like this is expected to produce differentiated teaching practices that align with students' characteristics, ensuring the true achievement of the Independent Curriculum's transformative goals.

The most realistic solution to close the training gap is to optimize the role of the Teacher Working Group as a community-based center for professional development. Various training methods have been studied and analyzed in meetings held on January 15, 2025, aiming to select the right training to address the disparity in teachers' understanding of curriculum implementation. One flexible and structured training method is technical guidance (*bimbingan teknis*) combined with various techniques such as case studies, simulations, lectures, and discussions (Jusuf & Sobari, 2022). Technical guidance can be conducted either online or in person (Kasih & Triyono, 2022). Technical guidance implemented by the Teacher Working Group Gugus Nakula is a response to the gap arising from the need for training as a form of teacher adaptation to improve teaching skills aligned with the Independent Curriculum.

The Teacher Working Group is a professional organization at the cluster level formed to support teachers' professional development through collaboration and knowledge sharing. It serves as a platform for teachers to share experiences, best practices, and solve various problems arising in classroom teaching (Sartika Dewi, 2022). Technical guidance (*Bimbingan Teknis*) is an integral part of teacher professional development, aiming to improve understanding and skills in implementing educational policies, including the Independent Curriculum. In the context of the Teacher Working Group, technical guidance provides teachers with opportunities for collaborative learning, sharing experiences, and conducting practical simulations necessary to face challenges in the field (Nurin et al., 2023). Technical guidance often involves relevant materials and proven effective learning models and is supported by direct mentoring from experts or senior educators in the field (Mustofa & Mariati, 2022). Through participation in technical guidance, teachers can strengthen their pedagogical competencies, including applying differentiated learning principles and formative assessments suitable to their students' contexts. Therefore, technical guidance organized within the Teacher Working Group functions as a strategic solution for improving the quality of teaching and learning in schools (Asalihin, 2021).

The advantage of the Teacher Working Group in addressing the implementation of the Independent Curriculum lies in its ability to provide a community-based professional development space that is contextual, interactive, and sustainable. The Teacher Working Group enables teachers to engage in direct discussions, share best practices, conduct learning simulations, and receive technical guidance tailored to the specific characteristics of their schools (Palettei & Sulfemi, 2019). Additionally, the Teacher Working Group program offers teachers the opportunity to integrate theory

with actual practice, enabling them to deeply understand the preparation of teaching modules, the design of formative assessments, and the implementation of differentiated instruction (Hamarto, 2022). Through technical guidance mechanisms within the KKG, teachers can practice designing teaching tools, simulate instructional methods, discuss real classroom challenges, and receive feedback from expert resource persons or peers (Farida Halalutu, 2023). The Teacher Working Group also plays an important role in bridging gaps in training access, expanding teachers' zones of proximal development, and strengthening their confidence in implementing the Independent Curriculum. Therefore, optimizing the Teacher Working Group as a center for professional development is a strategic solution to ensure the effective and adaptive implementation of the Independent Curriculum (Purba et al., 2022).

Previous research by Warsihna et al. (2023) indicated that the implementation of the Independent Curriculum still faces various challenges, such as teachers' lack of understanding, insufficient facilities and infrastructure, diversity among students, and inter-institutional coordination. Sumarmi (2023) emphasizes that implementing the Independent Curriculum cannot be separated from the challenges of teacher readiness. The training method in that study involved school principals as tutors and independent teacher practice. The most important strategy is cross-stakeholder collaboration. There is a need to strengthen ongoing evaluation to refine the nationwide implementation of the Independent Curriculum. The involvement of Teacher Working Group and training activities is a crucial key to overcoming these issues and ensuring that the implementation of the Independent Curriculum becomes more effective in educational institutions. However, that research is still focused on preparing teaching modules within the implementation of the Independent Curriculum.

Based on a review of previous studies, research on the challenges of implementing the Independent Curriculum remains too broad and has not yet been narrowed to specific problems experienced by teachers, connected to the current state of training. Other research still focuses on a single Teacher Working Group training with one resource person and a method limited to preparing teaching modules for implementing the Independent Curriculum. This study offers novelty by more comprehensively highlighting the dynamics of the problems faced by teachers in implementing the Independent Curriculum, linked to the effectiveness of the training received, in terms of content, training methods, participant engagement, and post-training mentoring support. Thus, this research contributes to directly examining the relationship between curriculum implementation challenges at the teacher level and the quality and design of training organized as an effort to strengthen teacher professionalism in supporting the optimal achievement of the Independent Curriculum in primary schools.

This research focuses on strengthening the implementation of the Independent Curriculum in primary schools through the role of the Teacher Working Group in supporting teacher professional development. The main focus of this research is to describe the implementation of the Independent Curriculum, the role of the Teacher Working Group in supporting teacher professional development, and the factors influencing the effectiveness of training in curriculum implementation. The aim of this research is to analyze the relationship between Teacher Working Group support, training effectiveness, and the implementation of the Independent Curriculum in primary schools. Based on these objectives, three research questions were formulated, namely: (1) How is the implementation of the Independent Curriculum and the efforts of the Teacher Working Group in supporting teacher professional development in primary schools? (2) How can the role of the Teacher Working Group improve the effectiveness of implementing the Independent Curriculum through sustainable teacher professional development? and (3) What are the factors influencing the effectiveness of training and teacher professional development?

METHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach, aiming to describe and understand phenomena in depth within their natural context without researcher intervention (Sugiyono, 2022:9, Riyanti & Setiawan, 2022). This approach was chosen to explore the experiences and perspectives of teachers and stakeholders related to the implementation of the Independent Curriculum in elementary schools, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of the meaning and dynamics involved (Waruwu, 2024). The research was conducted in Gugus Nakula, Selogiri District, which consists of 10 elementary schools, selected because it is an active learning community that adapts well to educational innovations. The research subjects were 59 classroom teachers who are members of the Teacher Working Group (Kelompok Kerja Guru/KKG) of Gugus Nakula. The sampling technique used was purposive sampling, in which participants were deliberately selected based on specific criteria, namely those with experience and direct involvement in the implementation of the Independent Curriculum (Subedi, 2023, Yoon dkk., 2022). Key informants included four training facilitators, the KKG chairperson, and ten representative teachers from various elementary schools. Data collection was carried out from December 2024 to April 2025 using three main techniques: document content analysis (training materials, KKG activity reports, and teaching materials developed by teachers), observation (directly observing teaching practices and KKG activities), and in-depth interviews (gathering contextual information from informants). Data analysis followed the Miles and Huberman model, which consists of three stages: data reduction (sorting and simplifying data according to the research focus), data display (organizing data in narrative or visual form), and drawing conclusions (formulating findings and meanings from the analyzed data). To ensure data validity, this study applied source triangulation and method triangulation by comparing information obtained from various sources and data collection techniques, ensuring that the research findings were valid and reliable (Abdussamad, 2022:189-190). Through this research process, it is expected to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of the Teacher Working Group (KKG) in enhancing teacher professionalism and supporting the successful implementation of the Independent Curriculum in primary schools. The results of this study are also expected to serve as input for formulating strategies to improve teacher competence and develop sustainable professional development programs.

RESULT

Interview Results

Table 1. Interview Instrument

No	Indicator	Main Question	Purpose of Information to be Gathered
1	Training Planning	How is the KKG training planning process carried out? Who is involved?	To explore how the training is designed, the stakeholders involved, and the focus of the selected materials.
2	Teacher Involvement	To what extent are teachers involved in the training process and group discussions?	To understand the level of teacher participation in the training and KKG forum.
3	Quality of Training Material	In your opinion, are the training materials aligned with the needs of implementing the <i>Merdeka Curriculum</i> ? Why?	To identify the relevance of training content to teachers' needs.

4	Training Methods	What training methods are used? Does it involve hands-on practice?	To determine the variety of training methods used (lectures, discussions, practice).
5	Post-Training Mentoring	Is there any mentoring after the training? What form does it take?	To explore the sustainability of training through ongoing support in schools.
6	Challenges Faced	What challenges do teachers face in implementing the <i>Merdeka Curriculum</i> in class?	To identify barriers to implementation in the field.
7	Training Impact	What changes have you experienced after participating in KKG technical guidance?	To identify the effects of training on teacher competence and confidence.
8	Expectations and Recommendations	What are your expectations for future KKG training programs?	To gather suggestions for improving future training programs.

An interview with the Head of the Nakula Group in Selogiri Sub-district, conducted on December 15, 2024, revealed that :

“Teacher training within the Nakula Group is relatively limited in terms of duration, content, and mentoring. The training facilitated at the district level generally takes place only three days per academic year and primarily focuses on general topics, such as school leadership policies, the transition from early childhood education to primary school, and creating a positive learning environment. Meanwhile, teachers’ needs for a deeper technical understanding of implementing the Merdeka Curriculum—such as developing teaching modules, differentiated learning, and authentic assessment—have not been fully addressed through formal training.”

Therefore, the Teacher Working Group (KKG) of the Nakula Group has taken the initiative to conduct internal technical guidance sessions by inviting resource persons, including university lecturers, school supervisors, and Guru Penggerak (teacher leaders). Through these sessions, teachers are not only given opportunities to participate in material presentations but are also actively engaged in hands-on practice, discussions, and learning tasks relevant to implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in their classrooms.

An interview with Prof. Dr. Winarno, S.Pd., M.Si., a lecturer at the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Sebelas Maret (UNS), conducted on February 15, 2025, revealed that:

“Through practical technical guidance, teachers are provided with systematic training in developing teaching modules, starting from understanding learning outcomes to designing formative assessments. A varied training model that emphasizes practice and assignments is far more effective because teachers actively learn, engage in discussions, and directly work on developing teaching materials tailored to their respective classroom conditions.”

This statement highlights that a practice-based and collaborative training model encourages teachers to become more actively involved in the learning development process. Teachers do not merely receive materials passively but also participate actively through discussions and simulations, making the training outcomes more contextual and aligned with classroom needs.

Thus, the Teacher Working Group (KKG) forum plays a crucial role in enhancing teacher competencies while strengthening their understanding of the core elements of the Merdeka Curriculum.

The interview with Mr. Ekwan Nugroho, a Guru Penggerak (teacher leader) who served as a resource person in the session on opening lesson skills on February 18, 2025, revealed that:

“In the session on lesson-opening skills, teachers were trained to create a conducive atmosphere and motivate students. Previously, some teachers tended to start lessons in a monotonous way, but after receiving practical training and participating in group discussions, they began to introduce more variety in their opening techniques.”

The Head Supervisor observed that the coaching process through KKG technical guidance has been highly beneficial in helping teachers develop their teaching skills, particularly in preparing students for active learning from the very beginning of the lesson to the closing phase of the learning process.

An interview with Heri Hartanto, S.Pd., M.Pd., the Head Supervisor of Selogiri District, conducted on February 22, 2025, revealed that:

“Teachers have shown progress in managing student-centered learning processes. Through discussions, hands-on practice, and assignments, teachers have begun to understand the importance of differentiated learning, organizing collaborative learning activities, and strengthening assessment during the learning process. According to lead teachers, the classroom-based practice assignments have been very helpful in enabling teachers to apply the training outcomes in real practice, although some teachers still need further support in adapting learning materials to meet the needs of individual students.”

Based on an interview with Dr. Kartika Chrysti, M.Si., conducted on February 25, 2025, it was revealed that:

“In the session on closing lesson skills, teachers were trained on the importance of having a systematic closure. Up until now, some teachers tended to simply end the lesson or conclude activities without any reinforcement.”

During this technical guidance, teachers were trained to carry out authentic assessments that integrate formative, affective, and psychomotor evaluations into a comprehensive and systematic process. Participants were also trained to summarize key learning points, reinforce core concepts, and provide effective feedback. Furthermore, teachers were guided to conduct simple reflections with students to evaluate learning achievements at the end of each session.

Through hands-on practice and group discussions, teachers began to develop more structured closing strategies. The resource person emphasized that this type of coaching is essential to ensure that all stages of the learning process, including the opening, main activities, and closing are fully implemented in alignment with the principles of the Merdeka Curriculum.

The results of interviews conducted with 10 teachers from the Nakula cluster, selected through purposive sampling, are presented as follows:

Table 2. Result of interview with teachers from Nakula cluster

No	Indicator	Interview Findings
1	Training Planning	Training planning in the Nakula cluster is carried out by the KKG management team, involving the KKG head, school supervisors, principals, and resource persons such as university lecturers and PPG facilitators. District-level training is held only three days per academic year, focusing on general topics without much depth. Therefore, the KKG

No	Indicator	Interview Findings
		initiated internal technical guidance sessions.
2	Teacher Involvement	Teachers demonstrated high enthusiasm during the technical guidance. They were actively involved in small group discussions, teaching simulations, and hands-on practice. Participation increased because the training methods were interactive and allowed teachers to try out techniques and receive feedback.
3	Quality of Training Materials	The training materials provided by the KKG are relevant to the needs of curriculum implementation, covering lesson module development, differentiated learning, and formative assessment. Prior to the KKG program, district-level training tended to be theoretical and general. The KKG program is more contextual and practical, tailored to the teachers' classroom conditions.
4	Training Methods	Various training methods are used, including lectures, Q&A sessions, small group discussions, simulations, hands-on practice, and assignments. Teachers found the hands-on practice and simulations most beneficial as they could directly apply the material within their classroom learning context.
5	Post-Training Mentoring	After the training, teachers were assigned independent tasks to be implemented in their classrooms and were observed by supervisors. Mentoring was provided through observation and feedback. However, teachers expressed the need for more intensive and continuous mentoring, including direct visits and reflection sessions after classroom practice.
6	Challenges Faced	Main challenges include: 1) Limited school facilities, 2) Differences in student abilities, 3) Limited time for teachers to prepare lesson modules, 4) Before training, teachers tended to download modules without adaptation, rely on lecture-based methods, and use only standard summative assessments.
7	Impact of Training	Teachers reported significant improvements, such as: greater confidence in teaching, ability to design lesson modules based on students' needs, implementation of active and differentiated learning, and development of formative assessments suited to the classroom context.
8	Expectations and Recommendations	Teachers hope for: 1) More frequent and continuous training, 2) Enhanced post-training mentoring, 3) Provision of resources and learning media.

The document review was conducted to obtain an overview of the implementation of previous training programs at the Nakula Cluster, both those organized at the district level and those independently initiated by the Teacher Working Group (KKG).

Table 3. Document Review Results on Previous Training Activities in the Nakula Cluster

No.	Type of Activity	Time of Implementation	Organizer	Notes
1	General District-Every	academic Wonogiri	Regency Training	time is very

No.	Type of Activity	Time of Implementation	Organizer	Notes
	Level Training, year (3 days per phase) Wonogiri Regency		Education Office	limited; the technical substance for classroom implementation is not yet in-depth.
2	Dissemination of the <i>Sekolah Penggerak</i> (Driving School) Program	3 meetings	Presenters: principals and <i>guru penggerak</i> (teacher leaders) in the Nakula Cluster	Provides an initial understanding but does not extend to practical mentoring.
3	Transition from PAUD (Pre-primary) to Primary School	3 meetings	Presenters: principals and <i>guru penggerak</i> in the Nakula Cluster	Offers a general overview but does not yet address the development of adaptive learning.
4	Positive Learning Environment	3 meetings	Presenters: principals and <i>guru penggerak</i> in the Nakula Cluster	Remains at a conceptual level; there is no accompanying effort to strengthen teachers' classroom competencies.
5	School Resource Management	3 meetings	Presenters: principals and <i>guru penggerak</i> in the Nakula Cluster	Focuses more on school management than on improving teachers' instructional skills.

Based on last year's review of training activities in the Nakula Cluster, previous programmes have not yet focused on the paradigm of implementing the Merdeka Curriculum particularly on strengthening classroom practice such as preparing lesson modules and delivering learning activities aligned with that curriculum. District-level training in Wonogiri remains limited, lasting only three days per academic year. Moreover, the methods used are still largely one-way communication with no practical mentoring component.

Table 2. Review of Nakula Cluster KKG Programmes on Technical Guidance for Implementing the Merdeka Curriculum

Activity	Training Methods	Mode (In/On)	Resource Person	Duration
Designing Lesson Modules Based on the <i>Merdeka</i> Curriculum	Lecture, small-group discussion, on assignments	Q&A, hands-practice, Face-to-face (In)	FKIP UNS lecturer (Prof. Dr. Winarno, S.Pd., M.Si)	2 lesson hours (JH)
Teaching Skills: Opening a Lesson	Lecture, small-group discussion, on assignments	Q&A, hands-practice, Face-to-face (In)	Selogiri Sub-district School Supervisor. Mr.Hery Hartanto S.Pd., M.Pd.)	(2 JH
Teaching Skills: Conducting the	Lecture, small-group	Q&A, Virtual (Zoom) (In)	<i>Guru</i> Teacher Mr. Ekwan Nugroho,	2 JH

Activity	Training Methods	Mode (In/On)	Resource Person	Duration
Core Lesson Activities	discussion, hands-on practice, assignments		S.Pd.I.	
Teaching Skills: Closing a Lesson	Lecture, Q&A, small-group discussion, hands-on practice, assignments	Virtual (Zoom) (In)	FKIP UNS lecturer (Dr. Kartika Chrysti, M.Si)	2 JH
Independent Assignment	Delivering a lesson aligned with the teacher's <i>Merdeka</i> Curriculum	At each school (On)	Observer	22 JH
Evaluation of Technical Guidance	Online questionnaire on the training	Online (In)	—	2 JH
Total Duration				32 JH

Based on the review of the technical guidance program conducted by the Nakula Group Working Group (KKG), it focuses more on strengthening the technical and practical implementation of the Independent Curriculum. The material provided includes the development of teaching modules and skills in managing learning from the introduction, core, and closing stages, followed by direct classroom practice through independent assignments. The training methods are more varied and interactive, including a combination of lectures, small group discussions, questions and answers, hands-on practice, and assignments supervised by observers. The KKG technical guidance includes expert lecturers from the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education (FKIP) at the State Islamic University (UNS), sub-district supervisors, leading teachers, and PPG facilitators, thus providing more comprehensive reinforcement of the material. Furthermore, training evaluation is also conducted systematically through questionnaires and observations of teaching practices in the classroom. Thus, the Nakula Group Teacher Working Group technical guidance is considered more effective in strengthening teachers' understanding and skills in implementing the Independent Curriculum effectively in their respective classrooms.

Observation Results

Based on initial observations prior to the technical guidance, it was found that most teachers still experienced difficulties in understanding the technical substance of the Independent Curriculum. Teachers did not fully understand how to develop learning outcomes and objectives, as well as how to design differentiated learning and formative assessments. Furthermore, most teachers still relied on teaching modules downloaded from available platforms, without adapting them to the characteristics of the students in their respective classes. Classroom learning generally remained teacher-centered, dominated by lecture methods and the use of standardized summative assessments. Teachers' readiness to implement active, student-centered learning was also limited. Teachers generally expressed confusion in translating the concepts of the Independent Curriculum into daily learning practices.

During the technical guidance, teachers demonstrated high enthusiasm and engagement in each training session. Activities were carried out systematically through various active methods such as lectures, Q&A sessions, small group discussions, hands-on practice, simulations, and assignments. Teachers began to systematically understand the steps involved in developing teaching modules based on the

Independent Curriculum, from formulating learning outcomes, developing learning objectives (ATP), to developing formative assessments. In the teaching skills sessions, teachers actively participated in simulations of opening lessons, managing core activities, and closing lessons by providing reinforcement and feedback. Small group discussions allowed teachers to share their experiences and challenges, while resource persons provided guidance and clarification as needed. Overall, throughout the training, teachers began to connect the theories they learned with the learning needs of their respective classes.

After the training, teachers were given independent assignments to directly apply the technical guidance findings in their respective classrooms. Observations showed that teachers had begun to apply the principles of differentiated learning, conduct formative assessments, and strive to develop more contextual teaching modules tailored to student needs. Although implementation in the field still encountered several obstacles, such as limited facilities, differences in student abilities, and adjustments to learning time, overall, teachers demonstrated improved skills in planning and implementing learning based on the Independent Curriculum. Teachers also appeared more confident in developing teaching materials and managing the classroom learning process. Independent practice assignments, supplemented by observations and feedback from observers, significantly contributed to improving teacher competency after the training.

DISCUSS

The data analysis in this study followed the stages proposed by Miles and Huberman, namely data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. During the data reduction stage, researchers focused on data related to the implementation of the Independent Curriculum, the role of the Teacher Working Group (KKG), and the effectiveness of the training. The results of interviews, document reviews, and observations revealed that, prior to the technical guidance, most teachers faced challenges in fully understanding the substance of the Independent Curriculum. Teachers were not yet able to independently develop learning outcomes, design learning objectives, implement differentiated learning, or optimally develop formative assessments. The training previously conducted at the district level tended to be limited to general theoretical materials, delivered in a one-way manner, and lacked sufficient opportunities for hands-on practice.

During the data presentation stage, the analysis showed that the technical guidance program organized by the Nakula Cluster KKG was designed to be more applicable, combining theory and direct practice. The activities included the development of teaching modules, practice sessions covering the introduction, core, and closing stages of lessons, and independent assignments implemented by teachers in their respective classrooms. Various teaching methods were employed, such as lectures, group discussions, question-and-answer sessions, hands-on practice, and feedback from observers. These activities fostered greater teacher engagement and improved their ability to apply the principles of the Independent Curriculum contextually in their classrooms.

In the conclusion stage, the analysis indicated that the technical guidance provided through the Nakula Cluster KKG played a pivotal role in enhancing teacher professionalism. This was achieved by strengthening teachers' understanding and practical skills in implementing the Independent Curriculum. The program not only emphasized theoretical knowledge but also focused on practical training in developing teaching modules, applying differentiated instruction, and designing formative assessments. By accommodating varied learning methods, promoting active participation, and providing constructive feedback, this program successfully aligned with the core principles of the Independent Curriculum. Consequently, it is expected

that teachers will be better equipped to manage student-centered learning in elementary schools within the Nakula Cluster, Selogiri District.

The role of the KKG in strengthening teacher professionalism is evident in its efforts to develop teachers as adaptive learning facilitators. Through a systematic technical guidance program, teachers were guided to understand the essence of differentiated learning by adapting content, processes, products, and learning environments to the diverse characteristics of students. Moreover, the KKG served as a collaborative learning community, enabling teachers to share experiences, engage in reflective discussions, and receive mentoring from experts. This collaborative process encouraged teachers to plan lessons that promote the optimal development of students' potential in terms of knowledge, skills, and character. As a result, a more active, comfortable, and participatory learning environment emerged, supporting the realization of the Independent Curriculum's principles in practice. This aligns with the concept of Professional Learning Communities (PLC) proposed by Vescio et al. (2022), which emphasize that collaboration among teachers can significantly enhance pedagogical skills. In this context, KKG serves not only as a technical training forum but also as a space for reflection and peer learning, consistent with Rahmawati's (2023) findings that highlight the importance of continuous mentoring to ensure effective curriculum implementation (Sari & Zuhri, 2023).

However, challenges remain in fully optimizing these efforts. Setiawan's (2022) research in Sleman Regency demonstrates that practice-based training is more effective than theoretical training in improving teachers' skills, which is relevant to the professional development initiatives of the Nakula Cluster KKG. Despite this, limitations such as inadequate facilities and time constraints continue to hinder the implementation of student-centered learning. To address these barriers, it is crucial to strengthen post-training mentoring through regular reflection sessions and peer review (Firmadani, 2022; Eliza et al., 2022). Additionally, support from local government is essential, including the provision of adequate digital learning facilities and dedicated time allocations for professional development (Ruhita et al., 2023; Borman & Rudin, 2022). Such support will help ensure that teachers have the necessary capacity to adapt to ongoing curriculum changes (Sari et al., 2024).

From a philosophical and practical perspective, Syawalia (2023) argues that professional teachers must possess deep subject knowledge, the ability to transmit knowledge effectively, and innovation in teaching methods. The findings of this study underscore the importance of integrating effective learning with the support of KKG and broader systemic structures. Improving the quality of education requires not only individual teacher dedication but also a collective commitment from all stakeholders within the education system. Through this collaborative effort, the implementation of the Independent Curriculum can become more effective, sustainable, and transformative.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that teachers' active involvement in Teacher Working Group (KKG) activities significantly improves their understanding of the Independent Curriculum concept and their teaching skills, in line with the curriculum's demands. Through active participation in technical guidance and discussion forums organized by the KKG, teachers not only gain conceptual understanding but also develop the ability to apply differentiated learning, develop teaching modules, and conduct formative assessments in a more contextual manner. The combination of material delivery, technical guidance, collaborative discussions, hands-on practice, and independent assignments has been shown to accelerate the improvement of teachers' competency in implementing the Independent Curriculum in their respective classrooms. This study contributes theoretically by providing a deeper understanding of how Teacher Working Groups function as a strategic platform for

professional teacher development, while practically offering a framework for schools and education authorities to design teacher training programs that are contextual, practice-oriented, and sustainable. The implications of this research emphasize the need for integrating technical guidance with mentoring and follow-up activities, as well as ensuring equitable access to professional development platforms to strengthen the quality of curriculum implementation.

Future research is recommended to conduct comparative studies across different regions to identify best practices and challenges, employ mixed-methods or quantitative approaches to measure the direct impact of KKG training on student learning outcomes, and undertake longitudinal studies to observe the long-term effects of continuous teacher participation in KKG activities. In addition, further studies should explore the integration of digital platforms to enhance the reach and effectiveness of Teacher Working Group activities, especially in remote or underserved areas. By pursuing these directions, future research can expand on the current findings and provide stronger support for sustainable teacher development and the effective implementation of the Independent Curriculum at the primary school level.

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