

***Merdeka* Curriculum: Educational Communication for Learning Recovery**

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to describe the Merdeka curriculum as a form of educational communication for the learning recovery period after the COVID-19 pandemic. This research is qualitative. The type of approach in this research is descriptive qualitative. The data in this research is secondary data in the form of scientific articles, documents related to research, and data from the internet. The technique used in this research is qualitative research with documentation study techniques / historical research or documentary study, namely searching for information related to the development of the research topic through news, official government documents, etc., which is then continued by compiling a bibliography of references related to the research. Research reviewed. This research indicates that the Merdeka curriculum is a form of educational communication for learning recovery. It is due to the gradual implementation of the Merdeka curriculum and the involvement of the social environment as a "learning space" by the nature of communication in general and educational communication in particular. It is a process with comprehensive interaction between the communication components involved.

Key words: *Merdeka* Curriculum; Learning Recovery

INTRODUCTION

Communication is an integral part of human life and cannot be separated from daily human activities as individuals and as social beings. Individually, communication is carried out by humans to interact with themselves in carrying out self-introspection or self-evaluation. There is no human being who does not communicate to fulfill his life's needs because, in reality, it is impossible for every human being not to communicate. It can be seen when a human being's silence can also transmit meaning to the people around him. Communication can be carried out directly face to face or indirectly by using specific media devices, both print and electronic media. So, communication is the lifeblood of the human life system as a social creature. The function of communication in social relations is that communication can be a medium for humans to interact with others, share information, and convey desires, feelings, thoughts, opinions, advice, and experiences to other people.

One of the necessities of human life is education. According to the Big Indonesian Dictionary (KBBI), education comes from the word "didik" (to educate). According to Prof. Brodjonegoro in Swarno, several educational terms, namely paedagogiek (the science of guiding children), opvoeding (raising), hipsawentah (changing),

Educare (training or teaching), and erzhicung (awakening or activating). Education is a guide to human development from birth until maturity is achieved physically and spiritually so that they can fulfill their needs (Hendra & Saputri, 2020). Every Indonesian citizen has the same right to education because it is regulated by law. Therefore, the guarantee of education for the Indonesian people is absolute.

In educational activities, communication has a vital and strategic role, namely to build interaction and convey educational messages in the form of learning material from educators to students so that the learning material can be received and digested well so that it can influence students' understanding and changes in behavior. The success of realizing educational goals depends on the effectiveness of the educational communication process that takes place in educational institutions between educators and students in learning activities. To create effective communication in the learning process, teaching staff must understand the basic concepts of communication science, the goals and functions of communication, communication components, effective communication, and no less critical educational communication (Mahadi, 2021).

Currently, educational communication is a study that is more like practical skills/practice skills used to support and facilitate the implementation of education and learning. Apart from educational communication, other studies, such as educational psychology and sociology, are already known to the public (Nofrion, 2018). The educational curriculum is the media that can be used to make educational communication take place effectively. According to Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System, it is stated that the curriculum is a set of plans and arrangements regarding objectives, content, and learning materials, as well as methods used as guidelines for implementing learning activities to achieve specific educational goals.

In the education system in Indonesia, the curriculum has changed eleven times, starting in 1947 with an elementary curriculum and then finally the 2013 curriculum. Even though the curriculum has changed, the aim remains the same: improving the previous curriculum. Renewing the education curriculum is a demand that must be carried out to improve the quality of Human Resources (HR) in a nation. On February 1, 2021, the Minister of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, Nadiem Makarim, launched a new curriculum called Merdeka Belajar, which will be implemented in the 2021/2022 academic year in 2,500 schools spread across 34 provinces and 111 districts/cities in Indonesia. (Rahayu et al., 2021).

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic at the end of December 2019 became one of the points where the continuity of education, especially in Indonesia, experienced changes. The learning crisis that has occurred previously, coupled with the emergency conditions of the COVID-19 pandemic, has significantly impacted changes in education in Indonesia. Education must also change and develop the following policies due to the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak so that education can continue to achieve real learning goals (Nafrin & Hudaidah, 2021). One of them is

in the learning process, which has shifted to distance learning due to restrictions on gathering and studying in class, which, in the end, inevitably have to be complied with by schools and universities due to emergencies (Churiyah et al., 2020).

Transitioning from learning to distance learning requires teachers, educators, and students to adapt quickly. On the teacher's side, where the teacher is the curriculum, teachers must be more creative in utilizing everything that can be used to stimulate thoughts, feelings, attention, and abilities or skills. (Yanti & Fernandes, 2021). Meanwhile, on the student side, it is tough to create effective learning if students cannot learn independently without help from teachers because they cannot master the technology to carry out the distance learning process (Onyema et al., 2020). The Covid 19 pandemic has resulted in learning loss and learning gaps (Engzell et al., 2021). Students experience learning loss when studying from home. It is also influenced by several other factors: geographical conditions, demographics, strategies, policies, and the state of the school itself before the pandemic (Donnelly & Patrinos, 2022). Apart from that, the pandemic has also caused a learning gap where the condition of students, family conditions, and economic conditions are other factors causing the learning gap during the COVID-19 pandemic (Bonal & González, 2020).

Based on the explanations above, it can be seen that various problems are the impact of the pandemic, one of which is how the independent curriculum as a government education unit policy can become educational communication to catch up with students in terms of learning, as well as reduce the gap in educational achievement and overall can comprehensively restore the learning system after the Covid 19 pandemic. This research examines the independent curriculum as educational communication for educators and students during recovery after the COVID-19 pandemic. Because teachers as educators are the curriculum itself, with research, it is hoped that there will be an ideal picture of the independent curriculum as educational communication in Indonesia so that it can help restore the learning process after the COVID-19 pandemic in Indonesia.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Based on previous research conducted by Tono Supriatna Nugraha (2022) with the title Independent Curriculum for Learning Crisis Recovery, it was found that the implementation of the Independent Curriculum focuses on the use of technology and learning communities to share good practices between teachers, students, and academics. Various strategies and platforms have been developed to implement the Independent Curriculum, so all stakeholders can use it optimally to restore learning after the COVID-19 pandemic. The research conducted by Ujang Mahadi (2021) with the title Educational Communication (The Urgency of Effective Communication in the Learning Process) showed that communication is a vital part, a basic need, and a medium for interacting with others to convey feelings, opinions, thoughts, information, advice, and share experiences with others. Effective communication is also an essential part of educational communication to convey

educational messages in the learning process. Educational communication is effective if the lesson material delivered by teaching staff can be received and understood well and gives rise to positive student feedback. Next is research conducted by Tomi Hendra and Siti Saputri (2020), whose research results state that communication as a means of improving the quality of education is an effort or one way to improve quality in the world of education, and good communication will form good relationships. Be it teachers with their students or students with their teachers. Teachers must play an active role in teaching and learning, especially face-to-face teaching and learning. Teachers are required to be learning designers (designers of instruction), teachers as learning managers (managers of instruction), teachers as learning directors, teachers as counselors, and so on. In implementing the various duties of a teacher, effective communication is needed in the teaching and learning process between students and teachers. And teachers as counselors and so on. In implementing the various duties of a teacher, effective communication is needed in the teaching and learning process between students and teachers. And teachers as counselors and so on. In implementing the various duties of a teacher, effective communication is needed in the teaching and learning process between students and teachers.

METHOD

Design and Sample

This research is descriptive qualitative because the data studied is in words and not numbers. Descriptive qualitative research is research that is conducted solely based on existing facts or phenomena that are empirically alive to the speaker so that what is produced or recorded is language that is usually said to be like a portrait or presentation as it is. (Kusumastuti & Khoiron, 2019). Meanwhile, qualitative research, according to Moleong (2019), aims to understand what the research subjects feel.

Instrument and Procedure

The technique used in this research is qualitative research with documentation study techniques / historical research or documentary study, namely searching for information related to the development of the research topic through news, official government documents, etc., which is then continued by compiling a bibliography of references related to the research. Research reviewed (Connaway & Radford, 2017).

Data Analysis

This research focuses on the independent curriculum implemented in schools during the learning recovery period of the COVID-19 pandemic. So, data analysis using quantitative method. Moreover, the data for this research is based on literature sources related to educational communication and the implementation of the independent curriculum in schools during the learning recovery process.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Implementation of the Independent Curriculum

Before the Covid 19 pandemic occurred, the condition of education in Indonesia was already at an alarming level; this can be seen from the results of the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), which showed that 70% of students aged 15 years were below minimum competency in understanding simple reading or applying basic mathematical concepts. This PISA score has not experienced a significant increase in the last ten to fifteen years. The study shows significant gaps between regions and socio-economic groups in terms of the quality of learning. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated it. To overcome this, the Ministry of Education and Culture has simplified the curriculum in special conditions (emergency curriculum) to mitigate learning loss during the pandemic. (<https://tengahinformation.guru.kemdikbud.go.id/hc/en-us/articles/6824331505561-Latar-Belakang-Kurikulum-Merdeka>)

In the early days of the pandemic, from 2020 to 2021, the Ministry of Education and Culture issued a policy for implementing the 2013 Emergency Curriculum (simplified 2013 Curriculum). Simplification of the 2013 Curriculum into an emergency curriculum is expected to provide convenience for educational units in managing the implementation of the learning process with essential material substances (Nugraha, 2022). This emergency curriculum (in special conditions) is by the Decree of the Minister of Education and Culture Number 719/P/2020 concerning Guidelines for Implementing Curriculum in Education Units in Special Conditions, simplifying the national curriculum. In the emergency curriculum, essential competencies are reduced for each subject lesson so that teachers and students can focus on essential and prerequisite competencies for continued learning at the next level. The emergency curriculum has high flexibility by providing space for educational units to design curriculum structures, learning activities, and learning media (Munajim et al., 2020).

The Emergency or special conditions curriculum is a curriculum design that simplifies the 2013 National Curriculum, which is expected to meet educational services in the COVID-19 pandemic. This simplification lies in reducing the essential competencies for each subject. To support the effectiveness of the curriculum, the government government has prepared modules and assessments to become a reference for learning at certain levels. It is done to achieve learning effectiveness without teachers having to feel rushed to pursue the National Curriculum targets so that students are expected to understand and use this as an insight and a requirement to continue their education to a higher level. The results of the implementation of the emergency curriculum by the government government were that 31.5% of schools that used the emergency curriculum showed <https://tengahinformation.guru.kemdikbud.go.id/hc/en-us/articles/6824331505561-Latar-Belakang-Kurikulum-Merdeka>).

The Ministry of Education and Culture issued a policy for using the 2013 Curriculum and simplifying the 2013 Curriculum into an emergency curriculum, which is expected to make it easier for educational units to manage the implementation of the learning process with essential material substances. The Emergency Curriculum can still be used by educational units as long as the schools cannot implement the independent curriculum. While implementing the Independent Curriculum as an option for educational units in the learning process, data was collected to determine which educational units were ready to implement the Independent Curriculum. After that, in 2024, the National Curriculum policy will be determined by the Ministry of Education and Culture based on an evaluation of the curriculum during the learning recovery period. The results of this evaluation will later become a reference for the Ministry of Education and Culture in making further policies after recovering from the learning crisis.

Learning in the Independent Curriculum includes three types of learning activities as follows:

1. **Extracurricular learning** is done differently so students have enough time to deepen concepts and strengthen competencies. It also provides flexibility for teachers to choose teaching tools that suit the needs and characteristics of their students.
2. **Co-curricular learning** is a project to strengthen the Pancasila Student Profile, with the principle of interdisciplinary learning oriented towards character development and general competence.
3. Student interests and educational unit resources carry out extracurricular learning.

(<https://tengahinformation.guru.kemdikbud.go.id/hc/en-us/articles/6824331505561-Latar-Belakang-Kurikulum-Merdeka>).

Furthermore, in implementing the Independent Curriculum, the Kemdikbudristek policy provides policies for schools that are not ready to use the Independent Curriculum. These schools can still use the 2013 Curriculum. There are at least two main objectives underlying this policy. First, the government, in this case, the Ministry of Education and Culture, wants to emphasize that schools have the authority and responsibility to develop a curriculum that suits the needs and context of each school. Second, with this curriculum option policy, it is hoped that the process of changing the national curriculum can occur smoothly and gradually.

The implementation of the Independent Curriculum offered by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Kemendikburistek) provides freedom for education units to make choices based on the IKM Readiness Questionnaire, which measures the readiness of teachers and education staff in carrying out the implementation of the independent curriculum. Filling out the data collection questionnaire by teachers and education staff in the education unit will ultimately affect the readiness of the education unit to implement the Independent

Curriculum. The paths that schools can choose to implement the independent curriculum are:

1. Independent Learning

In Mandiri Belajar, educational units use the 2013 Curriculum structure in developing their educational unit curriculum and apply several principles of curriculum in carrying out learning and assessments. Schools that choose Mandiri Belajar are still using the 2013 Curriculum but have started to apply the principles in the Merdeka Curriculum, especially in the context of increasing literacy and numeracy competencies, strengthening character education, and others in the Merdeka Curriculum. The Mandiri Belajar choice gives freedom to current educational units. They are implementing the Independent Curriculum several parts and principles of the Independent Curriculum, namely without changing the education unit curriculum that is being applied to PAUD education units, grades 1, 4, 7, and 10.

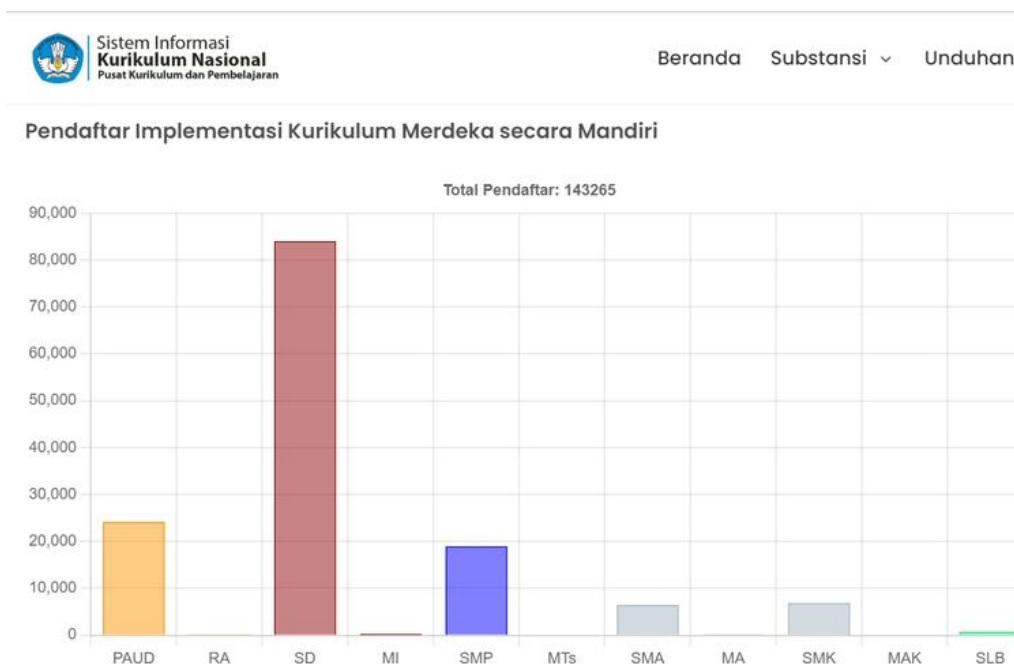
2. Independent Change

In the Mandiri Berubah option, the Education Unit uses the Merdeka curriculum structure in developing its education unit curriculum. It applies the Independent Curriculum principles in carrying out learning and assessment. Mandiri Berubah means it has fully used the Merdeka Mengajar platform prepared by the Ministry of Education and Culture. Education units can choose CP, TP, ATP, teaching tools, and assessments in the Merdeka Mengajar platform, which contains everything the school needs to implement the curriculum. Mandiri Berubah provides flexibility to educational units when implementing the Merdeka Curriculum by using teaching tools already available in PAUD educational units, grades 1, 4, 7, and 10.

3. Mandiri Sharing

In Mandiri Sharing, the Education Unit uses the Merdeka curriculum structure to develop its education unit curriculum. It applies the Independent Curriculum principles in implementing learning and assessment, committed to sharing good practices with other education units. The Mandiri Sharing option will provide flexibility to educational units in implementing the Independent Curriculum by developing various teaching tools for PAUD educational units, grades 1, 4, 7 and 10 (<https://www.amongguru.com/mengenal-mandiri-belajar-mandiri-berubah-dan-mandiri-berbagi-pada-kurikulum-merdeka/>).

From data on the curriculum.kemdikbud.go.id page, by 2022, there will be 143,265 educational units using the Independent Curriculum. The data is from all provinces and districts/cities in Indonesia. The following is a diagram of educational units that have used the Independent Curriculum.



Source: kemendikbud.go.id

The data above shows that 24,159 educational units use the Independent Curriculum at the PAUD level. Meanwhile, 84,034 educational units use the Independent Curriculum at the elementary school level. For the junior high school, 18,938 educational units use the Independent Curriculum. Moreover, SMA: 6,448 educational units use the Independent Curriculum. Meanwhile, at the SLB level, 709 educational units use the Independent Curriculum. Then, at the vocational school level, 6,863 educational units use the Independent Curriculum. RA level: 62 educational units use the Independent Curriculum. MI: 215 educational units use the Independent Curriculum. MTs: 108 educational units use the Independent Curriculum. MA: 64 educational units use the Independent Curriculum. MAK: There are no educational units that use the Independent Curriculum. (<https://www.kompas.com/edu/read/2022/12/08/125417171/kemendikbud-143000-satuan-pendidikan-tercepat-kurikulum-merdeka?page=all>).

Data above shows that schools have accepted the significance of the independent curriculum, and the ability to adapt to learning during the learning recovery period can continue to be improved.

Independent Curriculum: Educational Communication for Learning Recovery

Implementation of the independent curriculum by educational units must pay attention to the achievement of student competencies in educational units under particular conditions. The COVID-19 pandemic period is a unique condition that causes learning delays that vary in students' competency achievement. To overcome learning loss, a learning recovery policy is needed within a certain period related to

implementing the independent curriculum by educational units. Implementation of the independent curriculum by education units can use a curriculum appropriate to the learning needs of students. It must pay attention to the achievement of student competencies in the education unit in the context of learning recovery.

The government gives Education Units options to implement a curriculum that suits the learning needs of students. The three curriculum options are the 2013 Curriculum, the Emergency Curriculum (the 2013 Curriculum simplified by the Ministry of Education and Culture), and the Merdeka Curriculum (curriculum pocketbook Merdeka.kemendikbud.go.id). The policy of providing three curriculum options to the government for learning recovery after the COVID-19 pandemic is based on at least two policies. First, the government, in this case the Ministry of Education and Culture, wants to emphasize that schools have the authority and responsibility to develop curricula that suit their respective needs and context. School. Second, with this curriculum option policy, changing the national curriculum is expected to occur smoothly and gradually.

The government has the task of compiling a national curriculum framework that can be used as a frame of reference in compiling curricula for education units because, operationally, how the curriculum is implemented is the school's responsibility and autonomy for teachers. Teachers are professional workers with the authority to work autonomously based on educational science. What happens then is that the curriculum between schools can and should be different because it is adjusted to the student's characteristics and the school's conditions but still refers to the same national curriculum framework.

Changes in the curriculum framework certainly require adaptation by all elements of the education system. This process requires careful management to produce the desired impact, namely improving the quality of learning and education in Indonesia. Therefore, the Ministry of Education and Culture provides curriculum options as a change management effort, and teachers, as the main actors in the world of education, must always be ready for changes for the better. Implementing educational policy changes, including the curriculum, is a communication process in learning. As stated above, Educational Communication is more of a practical skill/practice skill used to support and facilitate the implementation of education and learning by providing implementation stages for schools to choose which curriculum suits their school's needs and offering the option of an independent implementation route. In implementing the independent curriculum, the government and schools have communicated effectively.

Educational communication is a significant contribution to explaining and understanding the learning material provided to students. The teaching and learning process cannot be separated from educational communication. Therefore, it is essential for teaching staff to be skilled at communicating and understand the science and principles of effective communication in education. The gradual adoption provided by the government government confirms that the implementation

stages of the independent curriculum are not a regulation or standard set by the government. This stage is designed to help educators and educational units set targets for implementing the Independent Curriculum. With the awareness that now is a transition period for learning recovery the readiness of educators and educational units is undoubtedly different; therefore, this implementation stage is designed so that every educator can confidently try to implement the Independent Curriculum.

Self-confidence is the belief that educators can continue to learn and develop their abilities to do their best to implement the curriculum and, more importantly, educate. The ability to continue learning is an essential asset for educators, especially during this learning recovery period, so steps to make changes to learning and assessment practices using the Merdeka Curriculum will create comprehensive communication because, technically, educators can implement the Merdeka Curriculum at different stages. However, philosophically, each stage is designed so that educators continue to refer to learning and assessment principles. In the author's opinion, the facts related to the Independent Curriculum as educational communication during the learning recovery period are based on several things: first, the independent curriculum is implemented in stages by the government to wait for schools to be ready for its implementation. It is a communication process in education because an independent curriculum with diverse extracurricular learning where the content will be more optimal if educators and students have enough time to explore concepts and strengthen competencies. By proceeding through gradual adoption, educators can choose various teaching tools to tailor learning to students' learning needs and interests. Even the interactions built into the learning process will be more dynamic by involving all individuals. Communication in education plays a significant role in determining success and the goals to be achieved.

Second, in line with Indonesia's educational vision, namely "striving to expand and equalize opportunities to obtain quality education for all Indonesian people," and as part of efforts to restore learning, the Merdeka Curriculum was developed as a more flexible curriculum framework, while focusing on essential material and character development and student competency. As is known, the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic includes learning gaps and social gaps. The independent curriculum can shape every student to overcome every social problem and improve it. De Vito believes that context or environment can provide interference (noise), which can distort a message. In the independent learning curriculum, the environment or context is a "learning space" for students so that they continue to be given reinforcement regarding character education, which aims to shape the character of moral and noble students (Madhakomala et al., 2022). So, it is hoped that students can face all obstacles in the learning process from the "learning space," namely the surrounding environment.

Third, In the communication process, messages are delivered through communication channels (channels). In educational communication, the messages

or information educators convey as communicators in the learning process are teaching materials guided by the curriculum. One of the channels used in the Merdeka curriculum is the Merdeka Teaching Platform (PMM). PMM is an educational platform that is a medium for teachers in the learning process. PMM provides various references for teachers to develop appropriate teaching practices aligned with the Independent Curriculum.

In PMM, there are three features, namely, self-development features, inspiration features, and teaching features. The self-development feature in PMM provides independent training facilities that teachers can access as an opportunity for teachers and education staff to obtain quality training material independently. Apart from that, there are learning community facilities, a form of educational communication that allows teachers to interact with each other to broaden their knowledge in implementing their Merdeka curriculum. It will undoubtedly speed up adapting to the Merdeka curriculum (<https://guru.kemdikbud.go.id/>). Research by Susilawati et al. (2021) also explains that PMM is a forum teachers can use to support implementing the Independent Curriculum, especially in the post-COVID-19 pandemic period.

CONCLUSION

The learning crisis in Indonesia in the last few years, combined with the extraordinary event of the COVID-19 pandemic, has significantly impacted education changes in Indonesia. The Ministry of Education and Culture, as the bearer of the authority in the world of education in Indonesia, has attempted to handle this condition by implementing a policy for implementing the Merdeka curriculum, the implementation of which can be adjusted to the circumstances of each educational unit. One of the aims of implementing the Independent Curriculum is to restore learning after the COVID-19 pandemic; even though previous learning conditions in Indonesia were quite worrying, plus the occurrence of the COVID-19 pandemic, this resulted in educational units needing to evaluate the implementation of the 2013 Curriculum and then replace it with the Emergency Curriculum which has been implemented, during the pandemic as input for the implementation of the Independent Curriculum later. The Merdeka Curriculum is a comprehensive form of educational communication for the learning recovery period. It can be seen from its implementation, which relies heavily on the massive use of information and communication technology. The implementation, carried out in stages, is a comprehensive educational communication process between its components, both teachers as educators and message givers. There are students as message recipients, and there are teaching materials presented to educators on the Merdeka platform teaching in the Merdeka curriculum and giving educators the freedom to study independently and interact with other teacher communities in order to upgrade themselves to be ready and competent in implementing the Merdeka curriculum. It confirms the Merdeka Curriculum as educational communication in the learning recovery period because a platform has been developed that helps teachers implement the Merdeka Curriculum. Apart from that, the involvement of the context or environment, in this case, as a "learning space" to

share good practices involving teachers, students, and academics. Based on this, it is hoped that an ideal picture of the Independent Curriculum can be seen as a form of educational communication to restore learning after the COVID-19 pandemic. The context or environment is a "learning space" to share good practices involving teachers, students, and academics. Based on this, it is hoped that an ideal picture of the Independent Curriculum can be seen as a form of educational communication in efforts to restore learning after the COVID-19 pandemic. In this case, the context or environment is a "learning space" to share good practices involving teachers, students, and academics. Based on this, an ideal picture of the Independent Curriculum can be seen as a form of educational communication to restore learning after the COVID-19 pandemic.

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