

The Influence of Autonomy on Teachers' Performance in The Independent Learning Curriculum

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ABSTRACT: Implementing an independent learning curriculum, which started in 2022, mitigates learning lag or loss due to the pandemic. Through the independent learning curriculum, it is hoped that teachers can have autonomy in designing and determining learning to improve performance. This study aims to see the effect of autonomy on performance. The research method uses a quantitative method. The population in this study consisted of high school teachers who implemented the independent learning curriculum in Bandung City using a sampling technique, namely proportional random sampling. Data analysis used descriptive and verification methods using simple regression tests. The study showed that the t_{count} value of autonomy was 6.154 with a significant value of 0.000, which is smaller than 0.05, so autonomy can directly affect the performance of high school teachers. Unlike previous studies that broadly explored curriculum challenges or teacher roles, this study examines the direct relationship between autonomy and performance in the specific framework of Indonesia's educational reforms. The findings aim to provide practical insights for policymakers and school leaders to optimize teacher autonomy, thereby supporting the successful implementation of the Independent Learning Curriculum.

Keywords: Autonomy, Performance, Teachers



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INTRODUCTION

In this era of globalization, the education sector faces increasing demands to produce human resources that are competitive, innovative, and adaptive to rapid changes. However, Indonesia's education system continues to encounter challenges, such as low teacher performance and a lack of alignment between curriculum implementation and real-world demands. To address these challenges, educational reforms have been introduced, including the implementation of the Independent Learning Curriculum. This curriculum, launched in the 2021/2022 academic year, focuses on project-based learning to develop students' conceptual understanding and practical

skills. According to the West Java Central Statistics Agency, approximately 2,500 schools in the province have joined the School Mover Program (PGP), including several senior high schools in Bandung City, to adopt this new paradigm. The independent learning curriculum is oriented towards project-based learning, where students are encouraged to deepen their understanding of concepts while strengthening relevant practical skills. This approach places students at the centre of learning while teachers act as facilitators who support the process of student exploration and development. In this case, teachers can choose different learning tools, decide on procedures, and implement them.

As the main pillar in the education sector, the role of teachers is significant to improve the standard of education in a country (Johari et al., 2018a). Teachers are tasked with delivering subject matter and act as the main driver in creating a dynamic, innovative, and inclusive learning environment. Balkar (2024) emphasized that teachers play one of the most crucial roles in creating and maintaining effective schools (Balkar, 2024). An effective school is not only characterized by high learning outcomes but also by a healthy and sustainable learning culture, which largely depends on the role and contribution of teachers.

To improve the standard of education in this country, the role of teachers needs to be improved because teachers are the central pillar of the education sector (Johari et al., 2018b). Teachers play one of the most crucial roles in creating and maintaining effective schools (Balkar, 2024). The success or failure of educational activities depends heavily on teacher performance (Comighud & Arevalo, 2021). To carry out their duties, teachers must be given greater autonomy to help them make the right decisions for their students, especially in determining teaching strategies, curriculum, and academic support (Pearson & Hall, n.d.).

According to Breugh (1985 in Fisher, 2014), *autonomy* is defined as individual control over aspects of work, including work methods, work activity planning, and work performance assessment criteria (Breugh, n.d.; Fisher, 2014, 2019). Furthermore, Hackman and Oldham (1975) define *work autonomy* as the level of work that provides freedom, independence, and flexibility to employees in arranging work schedules, making decisions, and determining the work methods to be used. Breugh and Becker (Dude, 2012) developed the concept of Hackman and Oldham's (1975) work autonomy into three dimensions 1) Method autonomy is the freedom to choose each individual regarding how employees work; 2) Scheduling autonomy, namely the level at which individuals feel they can control the scheduling, stages, or activities of their work. 3) Criteria autonomy, namely the level of an individual's ability to modify the criteria used to evaluate their performance (Hackman & Oldham, n.d.). From these three dimensions, work autonomy covers a broader aspect than just physical freedom in working. This autonomy touches on various cognitive, emotional, and professional aspects contributing to productivity, job satisfaction, and self-development.

Job autonomy is one of the crucial factors that play a role in building trust and increasing employee enthusiasm. With autonomy, employees feel responsible and directly involved in efforts to achieve the results expected by the organization (Terason, 2018). Freedom to make decisions and manage their tasks provides a sense of appreciation, which ultimately drives motivation to contribute better to organizational goals. This statement is supported by the findings of a study conducted by Fisher (2019), which found that teacher job autonomy can positively impact intrinsic motivation, performance, and student learning. The study also found negative impacts of excessive job

autonomy, including increased stress and burnout, lack of support and supervision from superiors, and unclear tasks.

He, Zhang, and Wang (2021) found that high job autonomy can improve teacher performance in carrying out teaching and managerial functions in China (He et al., 2021). Teachers with high levels of autonomy can better navigate the complexity of their tasks and adapt to job demands, both in the classroom and in school management. Thus, providing balanced job autonomy, accompanied by support from leaders and a conducive work environment, is vital to improving motivation, performance, and overall educational quality.

Performance is defined by Mathis and Jackson (2009) as the work results achieved by an employee or work team when carrying out the tasks and responsibilities given. According to Mathis and Jackson (2011), performance includes five elements, namely 1) Quantity of results, including how much work the employee produces in a certain period. 2) Quality of results, including how well the employee produces work in terms of quality. 3) Timeliness of results, including how quickly or on time the employee produces work. 4) Presence, including how often the employee is present in a certain period. 5) Ability to work, including how well the employee can work with team members or coworkers (Mathis & Jackson, 2009). In the context of the teaching profession, these five elements are very relevant because they reflect the dimensions of performance that must be mastered to achieve learning success.

Teachers are generally motivated agents, so teachers tend to act based on information that can improve their performance (Taylor & Tyler, 2012). Teachers who perform well will succeed in their duties (Rosmawati et al., 2020). Some performance standards that teachers must meet include mastery of teaching materials, ability to manage learning, and commitment to tasks. Work autonomy allows teachers to be more personally responsible for their efforts while working. Because autonomy concerns the implementation of work and a sense of responsibility for the results achieved, teachers feel that the work depends primarily on their initiative and decisions. *Autonomy* is a job resource that is very situational and depends on specific tasks (Bakker, 2015). This study seeks to bridge this gap by Research on work autonomy and its impact on performance has been a key focus in various studies. For instance, He, Zhang, and Wang (2021) found that high job autonomy enhances teachers' abilities to perform both teaching and managerial tasks in China. Fisher (2019) also demonstrated that teacher autonomy positively influences intrinsic motivation, performance, and student learning. However, this study highlighted potential negative impacts of excessive autonomy, including job-related stress and burnout. Additionally, Johari et al. (2018) identified that autonomy, when coupled with leadership support, plays a significant role in fostering a conducive working environment for teachers.

This study seeks to bridge this gap by examining the effect of teacher autonomy on performance in the implementation of the Independent Learning Curriculum. Unlike previous studies that focus broadly on curriculum challenges or teacher roles, this research specifically investigates how autonomy as a job resource influences key performance indicators, such as teaching quality, timeliness, and student engagement. By analyzing these relationships, the study aims to contribute to the development of strategies that balance autonomy with adequate support, thereby improving teaching outcomes and the overall success of curriculum implementation. The findings of this research are expected to offer practical insights for policymakers, school leaders, and educators. By understanding how autonomy impacts performance, stakeholders can design more effective

professional development programs and create supportive environments that enable teachers to thrive in the era of globalized education.

METHOD

The research method is quantitative research, and the sampling technique is proportional random sampling. This research will be conducted on several high schools in Bandung City that implement the independent learning curriculum, namely SMAN 12 Bandung and SMAN 2 Bandung. The sampling technique used is proportional random sampling. The research subjects obtained were 100 respondents, and Table 1 provides details of the respondents' demographics.

Table 1 Respondent demographics

	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Female	62	62%
	Male	38	38%
School	SMAN 12 Bandung	48	48%
	SMAN 2 Bandung	52	52%
Length of work	1 – 5 Year	19	19%
	6 – 10 Year	46	46%
	10 – 15 Year	30	30%
	> 15 Year	5	5%
Total		100	100%

Based on Table 1, respondents in this study were dominated by women, at 62%, who came from SMAN 12 Bandung, at 48%, and had worked for 6-10 years. Data collection in this study through a research questionnaire consisting of three scales, namely: 1) Work autonomy instrument based on Breugh (1985), which was adapted as many as nine items with a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.890; 2) Performance instruments compiled by researchers based on the theory of Mathis and Jackson (2011) as many as 18 items with a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.951. Data analysis uses descriptive analysis with a mean test to get a picture of each variable, and verification uses multiple regression analysis with the SPSS version 26 application.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The description of autonomy and performance in respondents is classified into three categories which can be seen in table 2.

Table 2 Categorization of Variables

Variables	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Autonomy	Low	14	14%
	Medium	52	52%
	High	34	34%
Total		100	100%
Performance	Low	18	18%
	Medium	50	50%
	High	32	32%
Total		100	100%

Based on the results, the autonomy variable is dominated by respondents in the medium category, 52% (52 respondents). The performance variable is dominated by respondents in the medium category, 50% (50 respondents).

Hypothesis testing is conducted to prove the influence of autonomy variables (X) on performance (Y) in teachers implementing the independent learning curriculum. The results of the hypothesis testing are shown in Table 3.

Table 3 Hypothesis Test Results

Coefficients ^a					
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients			T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	20.612	3.742		5.508	0.000
Autonomy	1.010	0.164	0.528	6.154	0.000
a. Dependent Variable: Performance					

Table 3 shows that the tcount value of autonomy is 6.154 with a significance value of 0.000, which is smaller than 0.05. Thus, the hypothesis (H1) states that autonomy (X) has a positive and significant effect on performance (Y). It can be interpreted that the higher the autonomy, the higher the performance. Based on these results, the hypothesis (H1) that autonomy affects teachers' performance when implementing the independent learning curriculum is accepted.

The Effect of Autonomy on Teacher Performance: A Comprehensive Analysis

The results of the hypothesis analysis in this study indicate an effect of autonomy (X) on performance (Y), which highlights that teachers with higher autonomy show increased performance. As Johari et al. (2018) stated, autonomy plays an essential role in improving teacher performance. In particular, the findings emphasize that autonomy significantly impacts teachers who implement self-directed learning curricula, allowing them to work effectively in both teaching and managerial capacities.

This correlation is supported by He, Zhang, and Wang (2021), who showed that high job autonomy increases teachers' ability to carry out their professional responsibilities with greater efficiency and adaptability. According to Cerasoli et al. (2016), the autonomy perceived by individuals should be able to predict performance outcomes because, with increased performance, the environment is under the person's control. In this case, individuals will only exert effort when they believe their efforts are practical and, therefore, likely to fail. Many academics emphasize job autonomy as a contributing factor to improving employee performance (Khoshnaw & Alavi, 2020).

Autonomy in the Teaching Profession

This study found that teacher autonomy falls into the moderate category, indicating that although teachers have some degree of independence, there is still room for improvement. As defined by Maxwell (2016), teacher autonomy reflects teacher professionalism by allowing flexibility in the delivery of classroom material and providing discretionary decision-making authority to benefit students. This aligns with Tahirsylaj's (2019) observation that teachers in countries implementing structured curricula often enjoy greater autonomy and accountability (Tahirsylaj, 2019).

Autonomy encompasses more than just flexibility in teaching; it also involves independence in scheduling and work procedures and the ability to adapt educational approaches to meet the needs of a particular classroom (Giebels et al., 2016; Jin & Kim, 2015). Gavriluk et al. (2013) further underscore that teacher autonomy includes self-regulation and the capacity for ongoing professional development without external constraints (Gavriluk et al., 2013). Teacher autonomy is a level of teacher professionalism that reflects flexibility in delivering classroom content and discretionary authority in making decisions on behalf of students (Maxwell, 2016). Job autonomy is related to independence, substantial discretion, and freedom in determining work procedures and schedules and involves discretion in determining schedules and differences in the workplace.

Teacher autonomy includes self-regulation and the capacity for independent professional development. *Teacher Autonomy Support* is an active process that involves teachers accepting students' perspectives, such as showing a willingness to listen to students' opinions and allowing students to choose and make decisions regarding classroom activities. With autonomy, teachers must manage their responsibilities effectively, develop new competencies, and adapt teaching methods to students' needs.

An essential component of autonomy is autonomy support, defined by Tomasouw and van Delzen (2022) as an active process in which teachers consider students' perspectives, listen to their opinions, and allow them to make decisions about the classroom (Tomasouw & Delzen, 2022). This support is evident when teachers rationally explain students' interests, clarify learning goals, or establish rules encouraging student engagement. Such practices empower teachers to create more inclusive and dynamic learning environments that foster mutual respect and understanding.

Teachers with high levels of autonomy can better carry out optimal self-regulation, which positively impacts their professional development. Autonomy allows employees to experiment with various work approaches and methods (Mutadayyinah & Mulyana, 2022). Individuals are considered autonomous when behaviour provides subjective freedom and has no imposed constraints. Meanwhile, individual behaviour is not considered autonomous when its initiation and

regulation are forced (Cerasoli et al., 2016). However, when job autonomy is excessive, it will result in undesirable actions and can be detrimental to organizational goals (Lu et al., 2017).

Based on research by Kara and Bozkurt (2021), teachers who are not given freedom in decision-making are at risk of feeling isolated (Kara & Bozkurt, 2022). This condition can arise because they tend to avoid collaborating with colleagues, feel they have no control over their work, or resist changes that can improve the learning process. This shows that a lack of autonomy hinders teacher self-development and affects interpersonal relationships and the work environment. The autonomy support provided by superiors to their employees is significant in advancing their organization because employees can have freedom and flexibility in carrying out their duties and work (Handayani & Budiani, 2021).

Performance in the Teaching Profession

The results of the study indicate that teacher performance is classified as moderate. According to Mathis and Jackson (2009), performance is an indicator of employee effectiveness and efficiency in completing tasks. For teachers, this includes carrying out professional responsibilities such as lesson planning, classroom teaching, and learning evaluation. Teacher performance in learning includes preparing lesson plans, implementing learning, evaluating the learning process and outcomes, and organizing further learning programs (Kusumaningrum et al., 2019).

Teacher performance is an important metric that reflects not only individual quality but also the education system's success more broadly. Teacher performance is measured by routine and early reporting at school, participation in extracurricular activities, supervision of school activities, adequate teaching preparation (work schemes, lesson plans), grading, general punctuality, and others. Several contextual factors can influence performance, such as peer support and leadership.

Leadership that provides direction, inspiration, and support fosters an environment conducive to professional growth. Collaborative efforts among teachers, such as sharing strategies and providing feedback, further strengthen performance outcomes. Muspawi (2021) outlines the factors that influence teacher performance into two categories, namely 1) Internal Factors: These include intrinsic motivation, knowledge, and insight, which are essential for professional competence. 2) External Factors include the workplace environment, peer influence, and leadership support (Muspawi, 2021). A motivating and comfortable work environment can significantly increase teacher enthusiasm, ultimately improving performance. As vital organizational leaders, principals influence teacher motivation and performance by organizing, influencing, and inspiring their teams (Rohani & Zohir, 2017).

A school's performance is highly dependent on the efforts of teachers, so if teachers are not satisfied with their work, they will not be able to give their full attention to their teaching (Mark, 2015). Currently, teachers face several gaps in implementing their performance in public and private schools, which have become a concern of policymakers throughout developing countries. Performance can affect psychological well-being; when employee well-being is not satisfactory, performance will also decline (Devonish, 2013). When teachers experience stress, burnout, or lack of emotional support, their ability to carry out professional duties optimally can be impaired. Effective teacher performance is essential to improving the education system (Yusoff et al., 2014). Therefore, balancing job demands and teacher psychological needs is essential.

Teacher performance improves through modifying attitudes, work motivation, and good school organisational culture (Baluyos et al., 2019). Systematic evaluation is one of the most effective strategies to improve teacher performance, especially when implementing a new curriculum. Reinsch et al. (2020) highlighted that evaluation helps identify challenges in curriculum implementation and uncovers new insights to improve teaching practices (Reinsch et al., 2020). Evaluation should focus on effective teaching outcomes and processes, such as teaching strategies, classroom management, and assessment methods. In addition to evaluation, ongoing professional development is essential. Programs that can improve teacher performance in teaching are classroom management and continuous learning assessment (Bruns et al., 2018). Training programs tailored to the demands of the new curriculum equip teachers with the skills and knowledge needed to adapt to the ever-evolving educational paradigm. These programs foster confidence and competence, allowing teachers to implement innovative practices that enhance students' learning experiences.

CONCLUSION

The study, which involved 100 teachers implementing the Independent Learning Curriculum, concluded that there is a positive and significant relationship between autonomy (X) and performance (Y) among teachers. This finding indicates that higher levels of autonomy are associated with better teacher performance, as autonomy allows teachers to make more informed decisions about their teaching methods, schedules, and evaluation criteria. This contributes to creating a dynamic, innovative, and effective learning environment. The results of this study have practical implications for school administrators and policymakers. Providing greater autonomy to teachers can enhance their performance, motivation, and ability to implement innovative teaching strategies aligned with the curriculum. However, autonomy must be accompanied by adequate support, such as professional development opportunities, access to resources, and clear guidelines to prevent stress or burnout due to excessive responsibility. From a theoretical perspective, this research enriches the understanding of the relationship between job autonomy and performance in the education sector, particularly within the context of curriculum reform. It confirms previous theories that autonomy is a significant job resource that can enhance intrinsic motivation and productivity, while also providing new insights into the challenges faced by teachers when granted autonomy. This study has limitations that must be acknowledged. The research sample was limited to teachers within specific demographic parameters, such as job level, educational background, and work experience, which may not fully represent the broader population of educators. Additionally, the performance data relied on self-reported measures, which might introduce bias or subjectivity. Future studies should consider expanding the sample to include a more diverse demographic group to provide a comprehensive understanding of how autonomy influences teacher performance across various contexts. Performance evaluation should also include objective data, such as employee performance reviews conducted by schools or educational organizations. Furthermore, future research could explore the long-term effects of autonomy on teacher performance and student learning outcomes, as well as the role of organizational support in optimizing the benefits of autonomy. By addressing these limitations and broadening the scope of analysis, subsequent research can contribute to developing more effective strategies for enhancing teacher performance and advancing the quality of education (Kuriloff et al., 2019).

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