



The Roles of Teacher in Implementing Independent Learning at BBC Vocational High School Medan

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the roles of teachers in implementing independent learning at BBC Vocational High School Medan. The research addresses two core questions: how teachers conceptualize their roles in fostering independent learning and how these roles are implemented in classroom practice. Using a qualitative descriptive case study approach, data were collected through classroom observations, interviews, and document analysis. Findings indicate that teachers predominantly fulfill roles as educators, motivators, planners, organizers, and evaluators. However, roles such as facilitator, mentor, and initiator are only

partially implemented. The study underscores the importance of expanding teacher capacities to foster autonomy in vocational education and suggests areas for professional development to enhance independent learning practices.

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INTRODUCTION

In recent years, education has experienced a significant transformation globally, largely influenced by rapid technological advancements and evolving societal demands. Traditional, teacher-centered approaches, where the teacher is the main source of

knowledge are gradually being replaced by more student-centered models that emphasize active learning and autonomy. One of the most critical developments in this shift is the promotion of independent learning, a concept that supports students in taking responsibility for their own education and equips them with the skills necessary for lifelong learning in a fast-changing world.

Existing research highlights the growing importance of independent learning across educational contexts. Scholars such as Anderson (2007) and Boud (2012) emphasize that independent learning involves learners setting their own goals, using appropriate strategies, and evaluating their progress. These skills are especially important in vocational education, where students must not only master technical skills but also adapt to constantly evolving industry demands. Theoretical frameworks rooted in constructivist and self-regulated learning perspectives (Vygotsky, 1978; Zimmerman, 2002) support the idea that learners become more effective when they are actively engaged in directing their own learning process.

In Indonesia, this educational shift is reflected in the national policies introduced under the Merdeka Belajar (Freedom to Learn) initiative and the Independent Curriculum (Kurikulum Merdeka). These reforms encourage teachers to move beyond the role of information providers and instead act as facilitators, mentors, and guides, roles designed to foster student independence, creativity, and critical thinking. Senduk (2024) outlines nine key teacher roles under this curriculum, including educator, facilitator, planner, and evaluator, each contributing to an inclusive, adaptive, and student-centered learning environment.

However, while the policy framework is well-established, there remains a significant gap in empirical research, particularly regarding how vocational school teachers in regions like Medan interpret and enact these roles in practice. Most studies on independent learning and teacher roles have focused on general education or urban settings, leaving vocational schools in less-central areas underrepresented. These schools face unique challenges, including limited resources and differing socio-cultural dynamics, which may affect the implementation of student-centered learning.

This study aims to address these gaps by examining two central research questions: (1) How do teachers understand their roles in promoting independent learning? (2) How do they implement these roles in their daily teaching practices? By

exploring these questions, the study will contribute to a clearer understanding of how national education reforms are experienced on the ground. It also aims to clarify how the theoretical frameworks of teacher roles and independent learning are applied in practice within the vocational school context. This research not only builds on existing literature but also identifies uncertainties, such as the effectiveness of role transformation and the readiness of teachers for pedagogical shifts, thus offering insights for policymakers, educators, and future researchers seeking to strengthen independent learning in vocational education.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative research design to explore how an English teacher at BBC Vocational High School Medan understands and implements her role in promoting independent learning. A descriptive case study approach, as outlined by Yin (2018), was chosen to gain in-depth insight into the natural teaching context without researcher interference. Data were collected through a combination of semi-structured interviews and classroom observations. The interview was conducted before the observation to understand the teacher's perceptions and strategies regarding independent learning, particularly in the context of English reading instruction. The classroom observation, lasting 90 minutes, was video-recorded and supported by an observation worksheet and field notes to capture both verbal and non-verbal teaching behaviors.

The data analysis followed the framework proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), involving data condensation, display, and conclusion drawing. Interview and observation transcripts were analyzed thematically (Braun & Clarke, 2006), with repeated readings, coding, and theme development. Visual tools such as tables and thematic maps helped display the findings, while teacher narratives illustrated key classroom moments. Document analysis of lesson plans and instructional materials complemented the observational data and provided further insight into how independent learning strategies were embedded in planning. Triangulation of interviews, observations, and documents ensured a comprehensive understanding of the teacher's role, while member checking and peer feedback enhanced the credibility and accuracy of the findings.

RESULTS

Concept of The Teacher's Roles

To explore the concept of the teacher's role in independent learning, an interview was conducted with the English teacher at BBC Vocational High School Medan. The interview focused on the following three questions:

1. *How would you define independent learning in the context of English reading?*

The teacher responded that independent learning is a process in which students take responsibility for their own learning, especially in choosing reading materials, setting goals, and using strategies independently. The teacher described their role as a facilitator who provides resources, motivation, and guidance:

"My role as a teacher is to facilitate and guide them by providing the necessary tools, resources, and encouragement so they can gradually become more autonomous readers."

2. *What strategies do you use to develop students' independent reading skills?*

In response, the teacher mentioned several strategies, including encouraging students to read graded readers and short stories, maintaining reading logs, teaching reading techniques (skimming, scanning, summarizing), and conducting reflection discussions after silent reading sessions.

3. *What challenges do you face when applying independent learning approaches?*

The teacher identified several challenges, such as students' lack of motivation and self-discipline, limited access to appropriate reading materials, and comprehension difficulties. To overcome these, the teacher provides easier texts and consistent support to build student confidence.

Based on these responses, the role of the teacher is not just delivering knowledge, but acting as a facilitator, motivator, and learning guide, which aligns with the principles of student-centered learning.

Implementation of Teacher's Roles

To answer the second research question, "How is the implementation of the teacher's role in independent learning at BBC Vocational High School Medan?", data were collected through classroom observation using an observation sheet.

Table 1 Result of Observation Sheet

Teacher's Roles	Total Criteria	Criteria Observed	Criteria Not Observed	Percentage %
Teacher as Educator	4	4	0	100 %
Teacher as Teacher	4	3	1	75%
Teacher as Facilitator	4	2	2	50%
Teacher as Mentor	4	3	1	75%
Teacher as Motivator	4	4	0	100%
Teacher as Planner	4	4	0	100%
Teacher as Organizer	4	4	0	100%
Teacher as Initiator	4	2	2	50%
Teacher as Evaluator	4	4	0	100%

The observation data revealed a strong alignment between the teacher's claimed understanding of her role and the actual classroom practices observed. As shown in *Table 1*, the teacher successfully demonstrated most of the roles defined in the Kurikulum Merdeka framework, with several roles fully observed during the 90-minute English reading session.

The roles with 100% implementation included Educator, Motivator, Planner, Organizer, and Evaluator. As an Educator, the teacher was observed modeling discipline, punctuality, and clear communication, setting a professional example for students. As a Motivator, the teacher consistently praised students' efforts and created a supportive learning environment, which encouraged reluctant readers to participate. As a Planner, the lesson was well-structured with clear objectives and appropriate reading materials. The Organizer role was evident through smooth transitions, clearly assigned group tasks, and effective time management. The Evaluator role was fulfilled through the use of formative assessment, as students were given feedback on their reading logs and summary tasks during the session.

Meanwhile, some roles such as Facilitator and Initiator were only partially observed (50%). As a Facilitator, the teacher allowed students to choose reading materials and encouraged peer discussion, but opportunities for student-led learning and independent inquiry were limited. The role of Initiator was only partially evident, as no new digital tools or innovative activities were introduced during the session, though the teacher did initiate reflective dialogue on the reading topic. The Mentor and Teacher roles reached 75% implementation, with evidence of personalized feedback and differentiated instruction, although some students remained passive or dependent on teacher direction

DISCUSSIONS

The findings from this study underscore the relevance of Meiny Senduk's (2024) framework for teacher roles within the context of implementing an independent curriculum, particularly in vocational education. This research reaffirms the importance of a multifaceted teaching approach, where educators are not only conveyors of knowledge but also moral guides, planners, motivators, and evaluators. The alignment between theory and classroom practice in several of these core roles suggests that vocational school teachers are increasingly competent in establishing a structured and supportive learning environment that fosters student responsibility and character development.

However, the study also reveals a critical gap in the more dynamic and student-centered aspects of teaching namely the roles of facilitator, mentor, and initiator. This partial implementation indicates a systemic challenge in translating innovative pedagogical theories into practice. The absence of personalized mentorship, limited use of digital tools, and lack of collaborative or project-based learning experiences points to deeper structural issues, such as insufficient professional development, limited school resources, and a prevailing teacher-centered culture.

These findings resonate with existing literature (e.g., Sari, 2021; Yuliana, 2020; Ramdhan, 2022; Putri & Hasan, 2023; Andika, 2025), suggesting that the challenges identified at BBC Vocational High School Medan are not isolated incidents but part of broader patterns in the Indonesian vocational education system. Collectively, this body

of evidence challenges educational stakeholders to reconsider how teacher roles are supported and enacted in everyday practice.

The significance of these findings lies in their implications for policy and teacher training. While the foundational roles are being effectively carried out, the limited realization of more progressive, student-driven roles could hinder the development of key 21st-century skills such as creativity, collaboration, and problem-solving. Therefore, to ensure a holistic and impactful implementation of independent learning, there is an urgent need for systemic reforms that empower teachers through access to training, innovation-friendly policies, and technological integration. Only by addressing these limitations can the vision of a fully independent, learner-centered educational environment as articulated by Meiny Senduk be achieved.

CONCLUSIONS

This study reveals that the teacher at BBC Vocational High School Medan plays a significant role in supporting independent learning, particularly through the effective implementation of roles such as educator, motivator, planner, and evaluator. These roles contribute to creating a learning environment that encourages student responsibility and engagement. However, the partial implementation of the facilitator, mentor, and initiator roles indicates that the development of student autonomy is not yet fully optimized. This gap suggests a need for a more holistic approach to independent learning, especially in areas requiring personalized support, technological integration, and innovative teaching methods. While the foundation for promoting learner independence is clearly established, the study acknowledges its limitation in scope and encourages further investigation to deepen understanding of how teacher roles influence the success of independent learning in vocational education.

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