



The Role of Guidance and Counseling Teachers in the Independent Learning Curriculum for the Formation of Student Character

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Abstract

The Independent Learning Curriculum aims to improve the quality of education and produce graduates who are qualified, innovative, and able to compete globally. Guidance and counseling services can be used as a means to achieve the educational goals of the Independent Learning Curriculum. The role of guidance and counseling teachers in developing good character dimensions in the concept of the independent curriculum is something new. This research aims to examine the role of guidance and counseling teachers in shaping student character through the Independent Learning Curriculum at SMA N 2 Tebing Tinggi. The research method used is descriptive qualitative with data collection techniques through interviews and observations. The results of the study show that Guidance and Counseling (BK) Teachers at SMA Negeri 2 Tebing Tinggi play a crucial role in shaping student character in accordance with the principles of the Independent Learning Curriculum. This role includes the preparation of programs that not only focus on academic achievement, but also on developing student character such as responsibility, honesty, and independence. The guidance and counseling teacher at SMA Negeri 2 Tebing Tinggi applies various innovative and adaptive strategies in forming student character in accordance with the principles of the Independent Learning Curriculum.

Keywords: *Independent Learning Curriculum, Role of Guidance and Guidance Teachers, Character Formation*

Introduction

Optimizing the role of guidance and counseling teachers continues to experience challenges in the era of the 4.0 revolution towards society 5.0 (Ninoersy, T., Tabrani ZA, & Wathan, 2019). The existence of BK teachers is one of the important elements in schools to assist students in changing the character of students for the better (Rahmad Mulyadi, 2024). As an implementer of guidance and counseling services, it provides personal, social, learning, and career guidance services. This can be associated with supporting the independent learning program as a form of success in the latest curriculum that can produce graduate students who have a better, adaptive, flexible, and altruistic character in order to compete in the global job market.

Education units in Indonesia have started implementing the Independent Learning Curriculum since 2020, after a revision to the National Education System Law (Sisdiknas

Law). The main goal of the implementation of the Independent Learning Curriculum is to improve the quality of education and produce graduates who are qualified, innovative, and able to compete at the global level (Umi Kalsum, 2024).

Guidance and counseling services can be used as a means to achieve educational goals as contained in Law No. 20 of 2003 CHAPTER II Article 3 which reads "National Education functions to develop abilities and shape the character and civilization of a dignified nation in order to educate the life of the nation, aiming to develop the potential of students to become human beings who believe in and devote themselves to God Almighty, have noble character, be healthy, knowledgeable, capable, creative, independent and become democratic and responsible citizens" (Hendri Yahya Sahputra, 2024). The purpose of education shows the character of students who are expected to be formed through education.

Guidance and counseling in schools will

be more effective if teachers in the field of study collaborate with guidance and counseling teachers in the process of building students' character (Notanubun, 2020). However, this guidance and counseling teacher has limitations in terms of the lack of time to meet face-to-face with students, this is because counseling guidance personnel are still limited so that to provide services to a large number of students cannot be carried out intensively, so it is impossible to provide a form of service such as providing teaching for certain fields of study.

The implementation of the Independent Learning Curriculum also requires the participation of all parties involved in the world of education, such as teachers, principals, parents, and the community (Sarnoto, 2019). Teachers must be able to facilitate students in determining their own learning paths, provide effective guidance and learning, and encourage students to continue to improve their abilities (Dadan, 2019). Meanwhile, school principals must ensure that the teaching and learning process runs effectively and efficiently, as well as provide support to teachers and students in implementing the Independent Learning Curriculum (Elwijaya et al., 2021). In addition, parents and the community must provide support and motivation to students to continue learning and developing their character. With the implementation of the Independent Learning Curriculum in educational units, it is hoped that a more inclusive, innovative, and oriented education system can be realized as a result of student character formation (Iskandar, 2022). Students are expected to be able to develop holistically, have a strong character, and be able to compete at the global level.

Facing the technological and policy transformation of the independent learning program above, guidance and counseling teachers need to have various innovations, especially in the implementation of counseling services (Suradi & Ag, 2022). In the context of the Independent Curriculum which is flexible according to (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2020) in implementation in schools at each level, guidance and counseling services by guidance and counseling teachers, homeroom teachers, or other teachers who provide guidance and counseling services are expected to follow professional and ethical standards, such as confidentiality, voluntariness, openness, responsiveness, activeness, dynamism,

independence, integration, normative, and fairness.

In the concept of implementing the independent curriculum, according to (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2020), guidance and counseling teachers are those who recognize and understand the situation of students, and continue to develop the capacity to make the best decisions according to their role (professional judgement) in a committed, independent, and reflective manner (Rizki Inayah Putri, 2023). The implementation of comprehensive guidance and counseling services shows alignment with the interests of students through the provision of integrated services. This is in line with the principle of the Independent Curriculum, which is student-centered. Thus, the implementation of guidance and counseling services will be more complete because each component of the service has been accompanied by a plan and implementation that is integrated with the achievement of the Pancasila student profile.

Based on the results of the initial observations conducted on May 27, 2024 at SMA N 2 Tebing Tinggi, the researcher obtained data and by conducting interviews with counseling guidance teachers, it was found that there are still many problems found in schools, there are students and students who do not reflect their attitude as students, such as violating the rules and values instilled in the school. Resisting, dress discipline This can be seen from some students who are still not disciplined with school hours, forming a character and there are still many students who are reluctant to do counseling guidance.

The existence of guidance and counseling teachers is one of the important elements in schools to assist students in achieving their development (Safei, 2020). As an implementer, guidance and counseling services provide personal, social, learning, and career guidance services. Guidance and counseling teachers always provide a professional service to students, namely educating, guiding, training and developing and alleviating student problems is part of the performance of guidance and counseling teachers that will help students optimize their potential optimally. The Independent Learning Curriculum is a new breakthrough that brings several changes in terms of learning starting from planning, implementation and reflection and evaluation.

Guidance and counseling teachers at SMA Negeri 2 Tebing Tinggi have a great responsibility in supporting students not only in the academic aspect, but also in character development. Within the framework of the Independent Learning Curriculum, guidance and counseling teachers are expected to be able to direct and guide students to develop positive character values, such as responsibility, honesty, cooperation, and discipline. However, while this curriculum provides more freedom in learning approaches, challenges remain. Many guidance and counseling teachers face various obstacles, such as the lack of specialized training on the Independent Learning Curriculum, limited resources, and challenges in adapting guidance methods that are in accordance with the principles of the new curriculum. In addition, their role in shaping students' character often does not receive adequate attention compared to other academic aspects. It is important to evaluate and understand how guidance and counseling teachers at SMA Negeri 2 Tebing Tinggi implement the Independent Learning Curriculum in the process of building student character. This evaluation aims to identify effective strategies, obstacles faced, and the need for additional training or support needed so that they can contribute optimally to the development of students' character.

Therefore, to support the independent learning program as a form of success in the latest curriculum that can develop the potential of students to become human beings who believe in and devote themselves to God Almighty, have noble character, are healthy, knowledgeable, capable, creative, independent and become democratic and responsible citizens, the implementation of guidance and counseling services requires transformation and policies for the independent learning program. That is, changes in the implementation strategy of guidance and counseling need to be designed comprehensively to answer the needs of students by optimizing all resources owned by the education unit. The design of this strategy can be in the form of a new program, strengthening an existing program, or changing an existing program with goals that are tailored to the needs of students.

To realize the independent learning curriculum program above, in the implementation process, guidance and

counseling teachers have a role as adapted from The Texas Model for Comprehensive School Counseling (Kemendikbudristek, 2020), regarding Guidelines for the Implementation of Guidance and Counseling for Primary and Secondary Education levels, namely 1) guidance and counseling teachers as program managers; 2) as a supervisor; 3) as an Appraiser; 4) Counselor; 5) as a Consultant; 6) coordination by carrying out the stages of the implementation of the independent curriculum such as planning, implementation, reflection and evaluation.

The role of guidance and counseling teachers in educational units in developing good character dimensions in the concept of the independent curriculum is new, therefore the researcher is interested in conducting a research entitled "The Role of Guidance and Counseling Teachers in the Independent Learning Curriculum to Change Student Character (Case Study of SMA N 2 Tebing Tinggi)"

Method

This research was conducted at SMA N 2 Tebing Tinggi, Tebing Tinggi City, North Sumatra. This research uses a qualitative method. The researcher uses a descriptive qualitative method because this study uses documentation study data and interviews. Descriptive is a qualitative depiction of facts, data, or material objects in the form of a series of numbers, language, or discourse (whatever form it takes) through precise and systematic interpretation (Creswell, 2020). In this study, the researcher wants to examine how the role of guidance and counseling teachers in the independent learning curriculum to change the character of students (case study of SMA N 2 Tebing Tinggi).

In this study, the author uses primary data and secondary data. In this primary data, the author will directly obtain data that will answer the researcher's questions, where the data is in the form of opinions submitted by the research subject (Ramdhan, 2021). In this study, the data obtained directly is data from the results of interviews with practitioners of SMA N 2 Tebing Tinggi, namely the results of questions related to the problem being researched. Secondary data is basically in the form of evidence, notes, or historical reports that have been compiled in archives (document data) that have been published. In this study, the data needed is in the form of literature such as books, articles,

newspapers, the internet, financial reports of financing distribution at SMA N 2 Tebing Tinggi, other sources related to this thesis writing material.

The data collection techniques used in this study are interviews and observations. Interviews were conducted with counseling guidance teachers of SMA N 2 Tebing Tinggi. Observations were made on the school atmosphere, school environment, students, teachers, and teaching and learning activities carried out at SMA N 2 Tebing Tinggi.

The data analysis technique used is qualitative data analysis consisting of data reduction, data presentation and verification. Data reduction, is the process of selecting a concentration of attention (Sugiyono, 2022). Data presentation is a collection of all information that is organized and provides the possibility to draw conclusions and take actions, other forms of presentation are in the form of narrative text, matrices, graphs, networks. Drawing conclusions or verification, drawing conclusions is carried out as an activity of a complete configuration.

Result and Discussion

Result

The Role of Counseling Guidance Teachers in the Independent Learning Curriculum for Student Character Formation

In the Independent Learning Curriculum, Guidance and Counseling (BK) teachers play an important role in shaping students' character. BK teachers at SMA N2 Tebing Tinggi not only act as supervisors, but also as collectors of important information through test and non-test assessments to understand the needs, conditions, and problems faced by students. This information is used to develop appropriate tutoring programs, which focus on strengthening students' character and developing critical thinking skills.

BK teachers also play an important role in supporting the Pancasila student profile strengthening project, which aims to ensure that students not only excel academically but also have strong characters such as responsibility, honesty, and independence. As in an interview with Mrs. Erma Putri S. Pd as a BK teacher at SMA N2 Tebing Tinggi explained that; (Ibu Erma Putri, 2024)

“We are involved in developing character building programs, and helping students develop the skills needed to face future challenges. In addition, we also emphasize the importance of character education which is the focus of the Independent Learning Curriculum, with the aim that students not only excel academically but also have strong characters such as responsibility, honesty, and independence.” Based on the interview results above, the researcher concluded that the role of guidance and counseling teachers in the independent learning curriculum for the formation of student character is that guidance and counseling teachers play an important role in developing character building programs that help students develop skills to face various challenges in the future. Their main focus is not only on academic achievement, but also on character education which includes responsibility, honesty, and independence. Through this approach, students are expected to be able to grow into individuals who excel academically and have strong characters, in accordance with the objectives of the Independent Learning Curriculum.

This is in line with what was expressed by Mr. Muhammad War Gunawan, S. Pd as a BK teacher at SMA N2 Tebing Tinggi explained that; (Bapak Muhammad War Gunawan, 2024)

“In the Independent Learning Curriculum, the role of guidance and counseling teachers is increasingly important in helping students develop strong characters. According to him, BK does not only focus on solving problems faced by students, but also plays an active role in compiling programs that aim to shape students' characters, such as responsibility, independence, and honesty for students of SMP Negeri 2 Tebing Tinggi. We, as BK teachers, also added that the approach used in the Independent Learning Curriculum provides BK teachers with the freedom to be more creative in integrating character values into the guidance provided. Thus, students are not only guided to achieve good academic achievement, but are also encouraged to develop characters that will be useful for their lives in the future. This is in line with the objectives of the Independent Learning Curriculum which not only focus on academics, but also on comprehensive character formation.”

Based on the interview results above, the researcher concluded that the role of guidance and counseling teachers at SMA N2 Tebing Tinggi is very important in shaping students'

characters. BK teachers not only focus on solving problems faced by students, but are also active in designing programs that aim to instill character values such as responsibility, independence, and honesty. The approach used in this curriculum gives BK teachers the freedom to be more creative in integrating these values into their guidance. Thus, students are not only encouraged to achieve academic achievement, but also to develop character that is beneficial for their future. This is in line with the objectives of the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum which emphasizes the importance of character building, in addition to academic achievement.

Guidance and Counseling Teacher Strategies in Shaping Student Character in Accordance with the Principles of the Independent Learning Curriculum

BK teachers apply various strategies in shaping students' character in accordance with the principles of the Independent Learning Curriculum. Some of these strategies include individual and group counseling services, as well as classical guidance in the classroom to convey important information related to education and character development. BK teachers also prepare BK Service Implementation Plans (RPL) in a simple but effective form, which allows flexibility in designing services that suit the needs of students.

In addition, BK teachers develop a simpler and more flexible BK Service Implementation Plan (RPL), allowing them to design services that suit the needs of students. They also utilize information and communication technology (ICT) in the implementation of guidance, including online counseling services or cybercounseling. As Mrs. Asni Roosalina Purba S. Pd as a BK teacher at SMA Negeri 2 Tebing Tinggi explained that; (Ibu Asni Roosalina Purba, 2024)

“We often hold group counseling sessions to discuss common issues such as stress management, career planning, and self-development. In addition, character development programs through active activities such as group discussions, simulations, and outdoor activities are also used to build cooperation and empathy among students.

In line with what was expressed by Mrs. Erna Putri S. Pd as a BK teacher explaining the

strategies carried out by guidance and counseling teachers in forming student character in accordance with the principles of the independent learning curriculum, she said that;

“The strategies carried out in forming student character in accordance with the principles of the Independent Learning Curriculum involve a more personal approach and are relevant to the needs of each student. According to her, BK teachers act as facilitators who help students discover their potential while instilling character values such as discipline, responsibility, and integrity. This process is carried out through various interactive guidance activities and focuses on real experiences faced by students every day. The Independent Learning Curriculum allows BK teachers to be more innovative in designing guidance programs. For example, through group discussion activities, collaborative projects, and real-life simulations, students are encouraged to apply character values in concrete situations. Thus, character building is not only a theory, but also an integral part of an active and continuous learning process. One of the strategies implemented is individual mentoring activities, where each student gets a personal guidance session to discuss the problems they face and how values such as responsibility and independence can be applied in their daily lives. In addition, collaborative projects are also often used, where students work in groups to complete certain tasks that require good cooperation and communication. In this project, students are encouraged to develop an attitude of mutual respect and responsibility for the tasks given. Mrs. Erna emphasized that through these activities, students not only learn academically, but also understand and apply character values in real contexts.

Based on the interview results above, the researcher concluded that the strategy of guidance and counseling teachers in shaping student character in accordance with the principles of the independent learning curriculum shows that guidance and counseling teachers at SMA Negeri 2 Tebing Tinggi apply various innovative and adaptive strategies to shape student character. Guidance and counseling teachers not only prepare a simpler and more flexible Service Implementation Plan (RPL), but also utilize information technology in guidance, such as online counseling services. In addition,

the approach used is personal and relevant to students' needs, allowing them to effectively develop character values such as responsibility, independence, and integrity. Through activities such as group counseling, interactive discussions, collaborative projects, and real-life situation simulations, guidance and counseling teachers help students apply these values in their daily lives. This approach makes character building an integral part of the learning process that is not only theoretical but also practical, in accordance with the principles of the Independent Learning Curriculum. As a result, students not only achieve good academic achievements, but also develop into individuals with strong characters, ready to face challenges in the future. Implementation of the Independent Learning curriculum requires policies and strategies that aim to hone high-level thinking skills or High Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) (Akhmadi, 2023). In this context, guidance and counseling (BK) teachers have an important role in adjusting the curriculum so that the learning process becomes more enjoyable, creative, and innovative. The following is an explanation of several policy strategies that intersect with the role of BK teachers in implementing the Merdeka Belajar curriculum. (Salam, 2023):

a. Guidance and Counseling Service Strategy in Minimum Competency Assessment (AKM)

BK teachers have a role in assessing student competencies, both through tests and non-tests, to identify the needs, conditions, and problems faced by counselees (students). Data obtained from this assessment are used as a basis for compiling guidance and counseling programs and providing appropriate intervention services.

b. Character Education Strengthening Strategy

BK teachers can use various service formats such as classical, group, individual, field, or distance to support the strengthening of students' characters. This service focuses on the development of emotional, social, and moral aspects, which are important parts of character education in the modern era.

c. Strategy for Preparing a One-Page BK Service Implementation Plan (RPL)

Unlike the Learning Implementation Plan (RPP) made by subject teachers, the RPL BK can be arranged in a simpler form, namely one sheet according to the needs and creativity of the BK teacher. This provides flexibility for BK teachers in designing effective and efficient services.

d. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Competency Improvement Strategy

Guidance and counseling teachers need to continue to develop technology-based skills to support the implementation of guidance and counseling, including online counseling services or cybercounseling. With this service, teachers and students can interact without having to meet in person, thus providing flexibility in providing services, especially in conditions that do not allow for face-to-face meetings. The Merdeka Belajar curriculum is in line with the concept of life long education, which emphasizes that education must adapt to the times. This concept, which was promoted by the Minister of Education Nadiem Makarim, aims to ensure that education in Indonesia does not lag behind other countries (Fakih Khusni et al., 2022). In addition to the intellectual aspect, character building is also a major focus in the Merdeka Belajar curriculum, because moral and character education is needed to balance a person's intellectual abilities. The Merdeka Campus program is also designed to prepare prospective counselors to be theoretically and practically ready to meet the dynamic needs in the world of education (Azwar, 2023).

Obstacles of Guidance and Counseling Teachers in the Independent Learning Curriculum in Character Building of Students at SMA Negeri 2 Tebing Tinggi

The main obstacles faced by guidance and counseling teachers in implementing the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum for character building of students include limited time to conduct in-depth counseling, as well as challenges in terms of technology and resources. Not all students have adequate access to technological devices, which sometimes limits the effectiveness of innovative and technology-based guidance and counseling programs. In addition, some students have difficulty adjusting or coping with pressure, which can lead to deviant behavior such as truancy, being late to class, or disobedience to school rules. Guidance and counseling teachers overcome these obstacles by maximizing the time available, finding creative solutions such as implementing online counseling sessions outside of school hours, and continuing to develop skills in technology to ensure that the services provided remain relevant and effective. Based on the results of an interview with Mrs. Agnes Retania

Marpaung as a guidance and counseling teacher, she explained that; (Ibu Agnes Retania Marpaung, 2024).

"One of the obstacles is limited time due to busy schedules, as well as challenges in accessing adequate technology. To overcome this problem, we maximize the available time and seek creative solutions such as implementing online counseling sessions outside of school hours for students who have difficulty attending in person. We also continue to develop technology skills to ensure that counseling services remain relevant and effective."

As the results of an interview with Mr. Muhammad War Gunawan as a BK teacher at SMA Negeri 2 Tebing Tinggi explained that; (Bapak Muhammad War Gunawan, 2024)

"One of the biggest challenges is the limited time available to conduct in-depth guidance. The Merdeka Belajar Curriculum provides teachers with greater freedom in designing and implementing guidance programs, but tight schedules often become obstacles in providing sufficient attention to each student. In addition, Mrs. Asni also revealed that not all students have adequate access to information and communication technology (ICT), which is an obstacle in implementing online counseling services or cybercounseling, especially for students who live in areas with limited infrastructure. Another obstacle expressed was the resistance of some students and parents to a more flexible and personal approach to guidance. Some students are more accustomed to conventional approaches, so they feel less comfortable with the new methods applied. In addition, the lack of awareness from parents regarding the importance of character guidance is also a challenge, where they tend to focus more on academic achievement than character development. This results in a gap in efforts to form strong student character in accordance with the objectives of the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum."

Based on the interview results above, the researcher concluded that the obstacles faced by guidance and counseling teachers in implementing the Independent Learning Curriculum at SMA Negeri 2 Tebing Tinggi showed that limited time and access to technology were the main challenges. A busy schedule makes it difficult for guidance and

counseling teachers to provide in-depth guidance to each student, while not all students have adequate access to technology, especially for online counseling services. Guidance and counseling teachers overcome these obstacles by finding creative solutions, such as utilizing online counseling sessions outside of school hours, and continuing to develop skills in technology to ensure services remain relevant and effective. In addition, another obstacle that emerged was resistance from some students and parents to a more flexible and personal guidance approach. Some students feel uncomfortable with the new method, and parents tend to focus more on academic achievement than character development. The lack of parental awareness of the importance of character guidance causes a gap in efforts to form strong student character in accordance with the objectives of the Independent Learning Curriculum. Nevertheless, guidance and counseling teachers continue to make maximum efforts by utilizing the time and resources available to achieve optimal results in forming student character.

Discussion

The implementation of the Independent Learning Curriculum requires policies and strategies that focus on the development of high-level thinking skills or High Order Thinking Skills (HOTS). In this context, Guidance and Counseling (BK) teachers have an important role in adjusting the curriculum in order to create a fun, creative, and innovative learning environment. BK teachers not only act as guides, but also as collectors of essential information to optimize student potential through comprehensive assessments.

Research (Huda, 2024) emphasizes the crucial role of BK teachers in supporting optimal student development. As providers of guidance services, BK teachers help students to understand and find themselves, and develop their potential comprehensively, covering personal, social, learning, and career aspects. In this case, BK teachers apply various strategies and techniques so that guidance services continue to run effectively, even in distance learning conditions. Merdeka Belajar, with the Merdeka Campus Program policy, provides a strong foundation for BK teachers to adapt to the dynamics of modern education, preparing them theoretically and practically to face challenges in the world of education (Putri Syahri, 2024).

One of the strategies implemented by BK teachers in the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum is the minimum competency assessment (AKM) service. BK teachers conduct assessments through various methods, both tests and non-tests, to identify competencies, needs, and problems faced by students. The data obtained from this assessment becomes the basis for compiling appropriate guidance and counseling programs, as well as providing effective intervention services according to student needs.

Previous research (Harwisaputra et al., 2024) regarding the implementation of the Independent Curriculum at SMAN 2 Ponorogo reinforces the importance of the role of teachers in the implementation of this curriculum. The study shows that the success of the Independent Curriculum is highly dependent on improving the quality of teachers, especially in terms of understanding and implementing the curriculum through the DIKLAT (Education and Training) program. This program is designed to improve teacher competence in carrying out assessments, learning, and developing operational curricula in schools. Thus, the assessment carried out by the BK teacher is in line with the main focus of the Independent Curriculum, which is to provide students with freedom of thought through structured teaching based on accurate data. The assessment strategy carried out by the BK teacher is not only important for understanding the needs of students individually, but also plays a role in ensuring that the learning carried out is in accordance with the principles of the Independent Curriculum, which emphasizes independence of thought. As shown in the study at SMAN 2 Ponorogo, ongoing training and periodic evaluation are key to facing challenges in implementing the Independent Curriculum. Therefore, the assessment strategy carried out by the BK teacher can be considered an integral part of a larger effort to ensure that the curriculum is implemented effectively and in accordance with the development of students. In addition to assessment, strengthening character education is also one of the main focuses in the role of the BK teacher. They use various service formats, such as individual, group, and classical counseling in class, to support the formation of student character. BK teachers help develop the emotional, social, and moral aspects of students which are important parts of character education in this modern era. This approach aims to ensure that students not only excel in academic aspects, but also have strong characters, such as

responsibility, honesty, and independence. However, in carrying out their duties, BK teachers face various obstacles. One of the main challenges is the limited time to conduct in-depth counseling, due to a busy schedule. In addition, challenges in terms of technology and resources are also obstacles, especially in implementing technology-based learning and counseling methods. Not all students have adequate access to technological devices, which sometimes limits the effectiveness of some innovative guidance and counseling programs.

The obstacles faced by BK teachers are in line with previous research findings (Nisa et al., 2023) which identified various challenges in the implementation of the Independent Curriculum. The study shows that the main obstacles in the implementation of the Independent Curriculum come from four main aspects: facilities or infrastructure, human resource conditions, conditions and support from students and the school and family environment, and government policies. In particular, obstacles related to human resource conditions, including limited time and technological resources, are very dominant.

The study also underlines the importance of sustainable solutions to overcome these obstacles. For example, in the context of technology, proposed solutions include maximizing the use of government funding assistance and collaborating with parents and local agencies to increase access to technology. For BK teachers, this could mean finding creative ways to utilize limited time and resources, such as through training or workshops on the implementation of the Independent Curriculum and the use of technology in counseling.

By linking the obstacles faced by BK teachers in implementing the Independent Curriculum with the findings of previous studies, it is clear that to overcome these challenges, greater efforts are needed to improve the quality of human resources and technological support. These efforts are important to ensure that BK teachers can carry out their roles effectively in supporting the goals of the Merdeka Curriculum, namely preparing students to think independently and adaptively in facing future challenges. To overcome these obstacles, BK teachers seek creative solutions, such as maximizing the available time and holding online counseling sessions outside of school hours for students who have difficulty attending in person. They also continue to develop technological skills and

learning methods to ensure that the counseling services provided remain relevant and effective. With a consistent and innovative approach, BK teachers play an important role in supporting the implementation of the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum, especially in forming the character of students who are resilient and ready to face future challenges.

Conclusion

Guidance and Counseling (BK) teachers at SMA Negeri 2 Tebing Tinggi play a crucial role in shaping students' character in accordance with the principles of the Independent Learning Curriculum. This role includes developing programs that not only focus on academic achievement, but also on developing students' character such as responsibility, honesty, and independence. BK teachers also use test and non-test assessments to understand students' needs and problems, which are then used as the basis for designing effective guidance programs. Through a creative and innovative approach, BK teachers help students grow into individuals who excel academically and have strong character, in line with the objectives of the Independent Learning Curriculum. BK teachers at SMA Negeri 2 Tebing Tinggi apply various innovative and adaptive strategies in shaping students' character in accordance with the principles of the

Independent Learning Curriculum. These strategies include individual, group, and classical guidance counseling services, as well as the use of information technology in implementing guidance such as online counseling. BK teachers also prepare flexible and personal Service Implementation Plans (RPL), so that they can meet the unique needs of each student. Through interactive activities such as group discussions, collaborative projects, and real-life simulations, students are encouraged to apply character values in their daily lives, making character building an integral part of a practical and ongoing learning process. The implementation of the Independent Learning Curriculum at SMA Negeri 2 Tebing Tinggi faces several obstacles, including limited time to conduct in-depth counseling and challenges in access to technology. A busy schedule is often an obstacle in providing full attention to each student, while limited access to information technology limits the effectiveness of online counseling services. To overcome these obstacles, BK teachers try to maximize the available time and find creative solutions such as online counseling sessions outside of school hours. However, these obstacles remain a challenge in achieving the goal of building student character in accordance with the principles of the Independent Learning Curriculum.

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