

## **Academic Supervision by School Supervisors in the Merdeka Belajar Paradigm to Achieve High School Students' Learning Achievements in East Manggarai Regency, NTT**

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### **Keywords**

Academic Supervision; Merdeka Belajar; Learning Achievement; School Supervisors; East Manggarai Regency.

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study explores the role of academic supervision conducted by school supervisors within the Merdeka Belajar paradigm and its contribution to improving high school students' learning achievement in East Manggarai Regency, Nusa Tenggara Timur. Using a mixed-method approach with the CIPP evaluation model, this research combines quantitative and qualitative data to obtain comprehensive insights regarding the implementation, impact, and challenges of academic supervision. The findings reveal that academic supervision has been carried out systematically and contextually, beginning with needs analysis, collaborative planning, and implementation through coaching, mentoring, observation, and reflective dialogue. Supervision contributes to improving the quality of teaching practices, classroom management, teacher professionalism, student engagement, and the tendency of improved learning outcomes. Teachers also perceive academic supervision positively, acknowledging its role in strengthening planning, instructional strategies, and formative assessment. However, the study also identifies several constraints, including varied teacher understanding of Merdeka Belajar, limited facilities, administrative burden, uneven implementation, and insufficient follow-up support, resulting in learning achievements that have not yet been evenly improved across schools. Overall, academic supervision remains a strategic instrument to support the implementation of Merdeka Belajar and enhance student learning achievement, but it requires more consistent, contextual, and sustainable strengthening through improved mentoring, capacity building, and policy support.

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### **INTRODUCTION**

In today's world, the progress of a country's education system is indispensable to its overall development. Education is an essential sector that must continuously be developed by every country. Indonesia, as a developing country with a relatively large population, certainly faces many challenges in the field of education.

Education is one of the main factors in improving the quality of human resources. In an effort to achieve optimal educational goals, the role of teachers as educators is crucial. Teachers are not only responsible for transferring knowledge to students but also for shaping their character, morals, and ethics. Therefore, teachers' performance in carrying out their duties must always receive attention and supervision so that they continue to develop in accordance with applicable educational standards.

One of the factors that contributes to improving teacher performance is academic supervision. Academic supervision is a coaching effort carried out by school principals or supervisors to enhance teachers' professionalism in the learning process. Academic supervision

not only aims to assess teacher performance but also provides guidance and advice so that teachers can carry out their duties more effectively and efficiently.

Academic supervision is one of the strategies used by schools, especially by principals and education supervisors, to improve the quality of learning. It aims not only to enhance teachers' pedagogical competence and professionalism but also to provide support and direction in carrying out their duties and responsibilities as educators.

Basically, this concept is similar to supervision in general. Merdeka Belajar (Freedom of Learning) is a guiding principle that encourages independent learning, both for teachers and students. Teachers independently design learning scenarios, conduct classroom instruction, and assess student learning outcomes. Students, on the other hand, are free to learn from various sources, according to their interests and learning styles; they are also encouraged to express ideas, ask questions, and respond to teachers' explanations (Idris Apandi, 2021).

Supervision is an activity carried out by a supervisor to observe and assess the implementation of activities, which is then used as a basis for providing considerations, suggestions, or recommendations for quality improvement. With effective academic supervision, teachers are expected to improve their performance, thereby positively influencing student learning achievement. Thus, the essence of academic supervision is not merely to assess teachers' performance in managing the learning process but to assist teachers in developing their professional abilities (Hs, 2019).

In practice, academic supervision plays a role in providing feedback to teachers about their strengths and weaknesses in teaching. With effective supervision, teachers will feel more valued and supported in their work, which can ultimately improve student learning achievement. The purpose of academic supervision is to help teachers develop their ability to achieve the learning objectives set for their students. Through academic supervision, it is expected that the quality of instruction delivered by teachers will improve, along with student learning achievement as one of its key goals (Jafar, 2021a).

However, in reality, many schools have not implemented academic supervision optimally. Some teachers perceive supervision as merely a formality that does not contribute to improving their competence. In addition, the lack of effective communication between supervisors and teachers is also an obstacle to implementing quality academic supervision. If supervision is not carried out properly, teacher performance may decline, ultimately affecting the effectiveness of classroom learning.

Since the launch of the Merdeka Belajar policy by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, the emphasis on teacher autonomy, outcome-based learning approaches, and strengthening the Pancasila student profile has positioned academic supervision as a strategic instrument to ensure effective curriculum implementation. Academic supervision is no longer limited to administrative oversight but has become a mechanism for teacher development aimed at improving instructional quality and teachers' understanding of learning outcomes, authentic assessment, and creative pedagogical approaches.

In the context of East Manggarai Regency, which is classified as a 3T (Terdepan, Terluar, Tertinggal—Frontier, Outermost, and Disadvantaged) area, the role of academic supervision is critical. A study (Ismail, 2014) conducted in Elar and Borong Districts revealed that centralized supervision planning does not adequately consider topography and local needs. Supervision is not conducted regularly in several sub-districts; supervisors tend to have a directive orientation

and limited technical competence, and they face difficulties in coverage due to geographical conditions and limited transportation facilities. As a result, teachers do not receive adequate support, and the quality of learning, as well as teachers' readiness to implement the new curriculum, remains suboptimal.

Data from the East Manggarai Regency Profile up to 2020 show high school participation rates: the Net Enrollment Rate (APM) for elementary school reached 99.38%, and for junior high school also 99.38%, while graduation rates for both levels in the 2020/2021 academic year reached 100% (Informatics, 2021). Nevertheless, the dropout rate remains concerning: 343 elementary students, 799 junior high students, and 1,423 high school students dropped out in 2023—the highest in NTT (KPAI, 2024). This indicates that although access to education is relatively high, retention and learning quality remain serious challenges.

The implementation of the Merdeka Belajar policy requires a paradigm shift in academic supervision practices, especially in resource-limited areas such as East Manggarai Regency, East Nusa Tenggara (NTT). Academic supervision should not be treated as an administrative formality but as an essential process for improving instructional quality and teacher professionalism. In East Manggarai, geographical challenges, limited access to quality training, and inadequate educational facilities remain significant issues affecting supervision quality. According to data from DaftarSekolah.net (2025), there are 46 high schools in the region, consisting of 42 public schools and 4 private schools.

On the other hand, East Manggarai has the highest number of Sekolah Penggerak (Driving Schools) and the highest utilization rate of the Platform Merdeka Mengajar (PMM) (82.86%) in NTT (KPAI, 2024). This indicates strong potential for rapid implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, provided it is supported by effective and adaptive academic supervision.

Given this background, the relevance of academic supervision in the context of Merdeka Belajar is highly significant, particularly in areas such as East Manggarai that face topographical challenges, transportation limitations, and the need to improve supervisory competence. Contextually designed supervision that considers geographical characteristics, UPTD needs, and provides intensive training for supervisors and school principals is expected to improve learning quality and reduce dropout rates, while enhancing the effectiveness of Sekolah Penggerak and the Merdeka Curriculum platform.

In the educational context, academic supervision functions to support teachers in implementing innovative and effective learning strategies. It also aims to identify obstacles in the learning process and provide solutions to improve student learning outcomes. Systematic and continuous academic supervision can enhance teacher competence, ultimately impacting student learning achievement.

Student learning achievement is one of the key indicators of the success of the educational process in schools. It is influenced by various factors, including the quality of instruction delivered by teachers. When teachers demonstrate high performance and are supported by effective academic supervision, learning becomes more engaging and effective for students. This positively impacts student outcomes across cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains.

However, several challenges remain in implementing academic supervision in schools. Some teachers still perceive it as a formality without tangible benefits for improving teaching quality. Additionally, constraints such as limited time, insufficient teacher understanding of

supervision's importance, and inadequate facilities and infrastructure hinder effective implementation. Improvements in the academic supervision system are necessary to ensure it operates more effectively and significantly enhances student learning achievement. Furthermore, the lack of constructive feedback and ineffective communication between supervisors and teachers also pose challenges. Therefore, more innovative and needs-based supervision strategies are required to ensure meaningful improvements in teacher performance and student outcomes.

Based on previous studies, a research gap exists regarding the application of academic supervision within the Merdeka Belajar framework in geographically challenging areas such as East Manggarai. Most prior studies (Vina Febiani Musyadad, 2022; Sukamto, 2023) focus on general supervision or urban contexts, without exploring contextual dynamics such as limited access, resource availability, and curriculum implementation challenges in 3T areas. Therefore, this research is important to examine the extent to which academic supervision can function as an effective teacher development strategy within the Merdeka Belajar policy, particularly in East Manggarai.

The researcher's interest in this topic stems from the declining quality of education in East Manggarai Regency. Education Report Data in 2024 indicate a significant decline in several quality indicators, placing some education units in the "red category." Despite nearly 100% graduation rates, a Kompas report (2024) reveals that some students are still not proficient in reading and writing. Relatively low National Assessment results further highlight a gap between administrative graduation and actual student competencies. This condition reflects fundamental issues in instructional quality and educational governance. Therefore, this study seeks to explore the root causes of these problems, particularly in relation to instructional quality, school management, and the role of academic supervision within the Merdeka Belajar framework.

The urgency of this research is driven by the declining quality of education in East Manggarai Regency. Education Report Data in 2024 show significant decreases in several quality indicators. Although graduation rates are nearly 100%, Kompas (2024) reports that some students still lack basic literacy skills. Low National Assessment results further indicate a discrepancy between formal graduation and actual competency achievement. This study is therefore crucial to investigate these issues, particularly regarding instructional quality, school management, and the role of academic supervision within the Merdeka Belajar context. Its novelty lies in focusing on academic supervision in a 3T area under the Merdeka Belajar paradigm, using a mixed-method CIPP evaluation model, and addressing contextual challenges such as geography, limited facilities, and varying teacher readiness.

This research focuses on the influence of academic supervision conducted by school supervisors within the Merdeka Belajar framework on high school student learning achievement. It evaluates the strategies, frequency, and quality of supervision, as well as the extent to which implementation aligns with key principles such as autonomy, innovation, collaboration, and reflective learning. Additionally, it examines factors influencing student achievement, including both direct and indirect effects of academic supervision. The findings are expected to provide strategic recommendations for supervisors to implement more effective, contextual, and relevant supervision practices that support optimal student learning outcomes within the Merdeka Belajar paradigm.

## **METHOD**

This study aimed to explore the relationship between academic supervision by school supervisors in the context of the Merdeka Belajar paradigm and the learning achievement of high school students in East Manggarai Regency. The focus of the research was directed at the extent to which an academic supervision approach aligned with the principles of Merdeka Belajar was able to encourage improvements in the quality of learning and student learning outcomes. In addition, this study positioned school supervisors as mediators who played a strategic role in strengthening the learning process, thereby impacting student learning achievement.

This study used a mixed-method approach with the CIPP evaluation model, combining qualitative and quantitative methods to obtain a more comprehensive and in-depth understanding. The use of a mixed-method approach allowed the researcher to triangulate data, improve the validity of the findings, and address complex research questions more robustly and objectively. This approach provided advantages in terms of methodological flexibility and a broader analytical perspective, thereby enhancing the scientific rigor of the research results.

The research was conducted at a high school in East Manggarai Regency, East Nusa Tenggara Province, taking into account ease of access, time efficiency, and the researcher's proximity to the field context as a school supervisor. This enabled the researcher to develop a deep understanding of the actual conditions of the target school and the dynamics of academic supervision taking place. The research timeline was planned through stages including preparation, data collection, analysis, seminar presentation of results, and the preparation of the final research report in accordance with the established schedule.

Contextually, this research was motivated by the implementation of the Merdeka Belajar paradigm, which requires academic supervision that is not only administrative but also focused on teachers' professional development to improve the quality of learning. Although efforts had been made to improve the quality of education, challenges in enhancing the learning achievement of high school students in East Manggarai Regency persisted, especially in areas with 3T (Terdepan, Terluar, Tertinggal) characteristics. Therefore, a study was needed to describe in depth how academic supervision could have a tangible impact on student learning achievement.

This research had high relevance because it sought to fill a gap in the literature related to Merdeka Belajar-based academic supervision practices and their influence on student learning achievement in 3T areas. Through a mixed-method approach, this study was expected to present a comprehensive, holistic, and contextual picture of the implementation of academic supervision in the field. In addition, it aimed to provide strategic recommendations for school supervisors in designing effective, contextual, and sustainable academic supervision to support the optimal improvement of student learning achievement.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **1. The form and implementation of academic supervision implemented by school supervisors in East Manggarai Regency in supporting the implementation of the Independent Learning paradigm**

The Independent Learning Curriculum is one of the new policies of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia (Kemendikbud

Ristek RI) which is aimed at realizing an innovative learning process and following the needs of students (student-centered) (Maesaroh and Martiyono, 2023). The Merdeka Curriculum is a curriculum with diverse intracurricular learning where the content will be more optimal so that students have enough time to explore concepts and strengthen competencies. Teachers have the flexibility to choose various teaching tools so that learning can be adjusted to the learning needs and interests of students. Projects to strengthen the achievement of Pancasila student profiles are developed based on certain themes set by the government. The project is not directed to achieve certain learning achievement targets, so it is not tied to the content of the subject (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2022).

In the process of development, the curriculum also needs to be evaluated. Due to the times, technological advancements, and diverse student needs, it is necessary to evaluate the implementation of the curriculum to find out the obstacles experienced by teachers in implementing the curriculum. This evaluation is the final stage of the curriculum development process to determine how much the level of absorption and success of the curriculum developed achieves the educational goals that have been set. To evaluate the curriculum, it is necessary to have supervision activities carried out by the principal, supervisor, or teacher. Supervision is very important in the educational process because the development of the curriculum is a symptom of educational progress that often causes changes in the structure and function of the curriculum, teachers and school principals who implement education policies need special assistance in overcoming obstacles that arise when meeting the demands of curriculum development (Hassanah, et al., 2024).

The implementation of academic supervision assistance by school principals in East Manggarai Regency is in principle directed to support the improvement of learning quality in line with the Independent Learning paradigm. Supervision is no longer understood as a mere administrative activity, but as a process of professional development that is sustainable, collaborative, and oriented to the real needs of teachers.

At the planning stage, academic supervision generally begins with an analysis of teacher needs. This analysis is the main foundation in developing a supervision program so that the coaching carried out is contextual and relevant to learning problems in the classroom. Teachers' needs can be identified through the study of learning tools, reflection on the results of previous supervision, and initial observation of learning practices.

Based on the results of interviews with school supervisors and high school principals in East Manggarai Regency, it is known that the analysis of teacher needs is the first step that is always carried out consistently in the preparation of academic supervision plans. Almost all informants stated that supervision always begins with mapping teachers' needs, both in general and directly related to the readiness of learning administration, such as ensuring the availability of learning documents and preparing supervision schedules. This analysis is carried out periodically, some at the end of the year or almost every semester, and is carried out based on data and systems through AKG, ANJAB, ABK, as well as analysis of teaching load and additional teacher duties. Thus, the analysis of teacher needs is an important and structured stage in the implementation of academic supervision in these schools.

These findings show that teacher needs analysis is positioned as the main foundation in academic supervision planning, both to ensure teacher readiness, equal distribution of workload, and as a basis for preparing supervision schedules. This process does not only

depend on the role of the principal as a learning leader, but also requires the involvement of various parties who have responsibility and competence in curriculum management and teacher professional development. Therefore, mapping the parties involved in academic supervision planning is important to understand the extent to which supervision is designed collaboratively and participatively at the level of educational units. The results of the interviews showed that academic supervision planning generally involves the principal and curriculum elements, although there are variations in the involvement of other parties according to the context of each school.

Various parties are involved in the planning of academic supervision, ranging from the principal, vice principal for curriculum, public relations, driving teachers, to school supervisors. Some schools even involve committees, parents, and student representatives as a form of broader collaboration. This involvement shows that supervision planning is not only the responsibility of one party, but is a joint work to ensure that the implementation of supervision runs effectively. However, under certain conditions, supervision can also be carried out flexibly and situationally, adjusted to the needs of coaching in each school.

In addition to being collaborative and flexible, academic supervision planning is also structured contextually according to the real conditions of the school. Adjustments are made through initial observation, preparation of adjusted schedules, and considering infrastructure, student characteristics, and school environment. In its implementation, the supervision strategy uses many coaching and mentoring approaches as a personal and dialogical coaching effort. Feedback is provided through individual guidance, discussion, evaluation, and reflection, so that supervision is not only administrative, but also encourages continuous improvement of teacher professionalism and learning quality.

Based on these findings, it can be concluded that the provision of feedback in academic supervision is carried out in a dialogical and reflective manner, by placing teachers as the subject of coaching. This pattern shows that supervision is directed to build teachers' awareness and commitment to making sustainable learning changes. According to Kavung, et al. (2024) one of the main functions of academic supervision is to ensure that teaching practices are in accordance with the planned and standards set by the school

Assessment of the impact of supervision is an important aspect to find out the extent to which supervision activities contribute to improving teachers' learning practices and improving student learning outcomes. The impact assessment is carried out through various indicators, both related to the learning process in the classroom and student learning outcomes, as reflected in the views of supervisors and school principals.

The results of the interviews showed that the impact of academic supervision on the quality of learning was generally assessed through changes in teachers' teaching practices, the results of classroom observations, and the involvement of students during the learning process. Supervision is seen as successful if there is a positive change compared to the initial condition, as evidenced by observation instruments, variations in learning methods relevant to the material, and increased student enthusiasm. The assessment is carried out not only on the learning process, but also on the learning outcomes of students through academic achievements, the suitability between learning planning and implementation, pre-test and post-test, follow-up monitoring, education report cards, and school evaluation data that show an increase in results after supervision follow-up. In addition, the assessment also considers the

level of student involvement and feedback from students, although in some conditions the impact of supervision cannot be ascertained directly because it requires an ongoing evaluation process.

Based on the results of the research, academic supervision implemented by school supervisors in East Manggarai Regency is carried out as a systematic, contextual, and sustainable process of teacher professional development in supporting the implementation of the Independent Learning paradigm. Supervision begins with an analysis of teacher needs as the basis for planning and scheduling, involving the principal, curriculum elements, core teachers, and supervisors. The implementation of supervision uses a coaching and mentoring approach through learning observation, individual guidance, and reflection and evaluation with teachers. Supervision is adjusted to the conditions and characteristics of the target school, both in terms of infrastructure, learning environment, and student needs. The impact of supervision is assessed through changes in teacher teaching practices, improving the quality of the learning process, student involvement, and the tendency to improve student learning outcomes, so that academic supervision functions as a strategic instrument in supporting the implementation of Independent Learning.

## **2. Teachers' perceptions of the role of academic supervision based on student learning achievement achievements in East Manggarai Regency**

Educational supervision plays an important role in improving the quality of teacher learning which ultimately results in high student learning achievement. Improving the quality of learning needs to be carried out continuously in line with the development of science, technology, and socio-economic and cultural communities (Maesaroh and Martiyono, 2023). In line with this, Utomo, et al. (2022) stated that the Government needs to pay attention to improving the quality of education that is sought through supervision. Educational supervision functions to restore and optimize the education system in Indonesia. Education in Indonesia is expected to produce the next generation of the nation who are productive, creative, innovative and affective and excel in the academic and non-academic fields so that they can compete in the national and international arena. For this reason, educational supervision is needed to improve student learning achievement and shape student character so that it can improve the quality of learning and achieve educational goals nationally.

Based on the results of the descriptive analysis, teachers' perceptions of the role of academic supervision on the learning achievement of high school students in East Manggarai Regency are in the good to very good category, which is shown by the mean value of academic supervision of 4.47 (very good category) and the mean value of teacher perception of student learning achievement of 4.13 (good category). These findings indicate that teachers view academic supervision as having an important and positive role in supporting the improvement of the quality of student learning processes and outcomes, especially through strengthening learning planning, learning implementation, and providing constructive feedback. This positive perception of teachers is reinforced by qualitative findings through interviews, which show that academic supervision has a real impact on learning practices, especially in improving classroom management so that student engagement and focus on learning become better. Thus, it can be concluded that academic supervision is perceived to be effective and contributes significantly to improving student learning achievement in East Manggarai Regency. These findings show that academic supervision helps teachers in managing the classroom more

systematically and conducively, so that the learning process runs more effectively. According to Hamini, et al. (2025) class visits accompanied by joint reflective sessions can strengthen the meaning of supervision and encourage changes in learning practices. Based on the average achievement of SNP in East Manggarai Regency of 67.74, this shows that this achievement is still below the national standard of 75, especially in schools with not optimal learning management.

NO	NAMA SEKOLAH	RATA SNP	NO	NAMA SEKOLAH	RATA SNP
1	SMAN 1 BORONG	66	24	SMAN 4 SAMBI RAMPAS	62
2	SMAN 1 ELAR	75	25	SMAN 5 BORONG	69
3	SMAN 1 KOTA KOMBA	66	26	SMAN 5 ELAR	59
4	SMAN 1 LAMBA LEDA	63	27	SMAN 5 KOTA KOMBA	67
5	SMAN 1 POCO RANAKA	75	28	SMAN 5 LAMBA LEDA	70
6	SMAN 1 SAMBI RAMPAS	73	29	SMAN 5 POCO RANAKA	64
7	SMAN 2 BORONG	68	30	SMAN 6 BORONG	63
8	SMAN 2 ELAR	67	31	SMAN 6 ELAR	63
9	SMAN 2 KOTA KOMBA	66	32	SMAN 6 KOTA KOMBA	70
10	SMAN 2 LAMBA LEDA	66	33	SMAN 6 POCO RANAKA	63
11	SMAN 2 POCO RANAKA	67	34	SMAN 7 BORONG	73
12	SMAN 2 SAMBI RAMPAS	61	35	SMAN 7 ELAR	66
13	SMAN 3 BORONG	68	36	SMAN 7 KOTA KOMBA	67
14	SMAN 3 ELAR	68	37	SMAN 7 POCO RANAKA	62
15	SMAN 3 KOTA KOMBA	66	38	SMAN 8 BORONG	74
16	SMAN 3 LAMBA LEDA	63	39	SMAN 8 KOTA KOMBA	76
17	SMAN 3 POCO RANAKA	68	40	SMAN 8 POCO RANAKA	67
18	SMAN 3 SAMBI RAMPAS	64	41	SMAN 9 BORONG	64
19	SMAN 4 BORONG	70	42	SMAN 10 BORONG	63
20	SMAN 4 ELAR	64	43	SMAS K ST. ARNOLDUS MUKUN	73
21	SMAN 4 KOTA KOMBA	65	44	SMAS K ST. MAXIMILIANUS WKOR	76
22	SMAN 4 LAMBA LEDA	75	45	SMAS PANCASILA BORONG	74
23	SMAN 4 POCO RANAKA	63	46	SMAS SEMINARI PIUS XII KISOL	80
				<b>RATA-RATA</b>	<b>67,74</b>

CATATAN: STANDAR CAPAIAN SNP 75  
 Sumber Data BPMP NTT  
 Peta Mutu Pendidikan NTT  
 Peneliti: Leonardus Jafar

**Figure 1.** Recap of the Achievements of 8 SNP of East Manggarai Regency High School in 2025

In addition to classroom management, learning strategies are the aspect of supervision that teachers feel the most benefited by. The results of the interviews showed that supervision encouraged teachers to change their teaching approach to be more innovative, varied, and student-centered. Teachers feel encouraged to prepare for learning more carefully and apply a learning model that provides space for students' creativity. This change in strategy also has an impact on increased motivation and student engagement in learning, although it has not been fully followed by a significant increase in academic grades in all schools. This condition shows that supervision has succeeded in improving the learning process, but the impact on learning outcomes is still in process and requires continuous strengthening.

The findings are relevant to the data on the achievement of high school graduation standards in East Manggarai Regency which is still below the national standard. This means that although academic supervision has encouraged the innovation of learning strategies and increased student enthusiasm, its contribution to academic output has not been evenly distributed across educational units. This emphasizes that supervision needs to continue to be strengthened, not only in the aspect of the learning process, but also in achieving more optimal learning outcomes according to the expected standards. Thus, academic supervision still requires consistency, more intensive mentoring, and systematic follow-up in order to be able to have a more real impact on the quality of student learning outcomes.

In addition to learning strategies, some teachers also emphasized that supervision influences the assessment aspect, especially formative assessments and learning follow-up. Supervision encourages teachers to pay more attention to the assessment process as part of learning, not just a tool for measuring learning outcomes. However, there are still teachers who view assessment as limited to determining the level of student understanding, so its use as an instrument for reflection and learning improvement is not optimal. This condition shows that academic supervision in the future needs to be more directed towards strengthening effective and sustainable formative assessment practices, in order to be able to support the improvement of learning quality while contributing to the achievement of better graduation standards, resulting in an increase in learning achievement that is evenly distributed between schools.

Thus, academic supervision in East Manggarai Regency has contributed to improving the quality of the learning process, especially in the aspects of classroom management and learning strategies. However, it is necessary to strengthen supervision that is more structured, sustainable, and follow-up oriented so that its impact on student learning achievement, both academic and non-academic, can be felt more optimally and evenly throughout high schools.

### **3. Strategies used by teachers in East Manggarai Regency to improve student learning achievement in the context of the implementation of the Independent Learning paradigm**

The application of the Freedom of Learning paradigm in the Indonesian education system is a curriculum transformation that places teachers as central actors in the learning process, while encouraging the provision of space for teachers and students to innovate, create, and develop their respective potentials more flexibly. The concept of Independent Learning initiated by the Ministry of Education and Culture emphasizes the principles of student-centered learning, differentiated learning, and adaptation of strategies that are in accordance with the characteristics of students and the local context of the school.

The curriculum plays an important role in education, because the curriculum is an important factor in education, the curriculum determines the direction, content, and process of education so as to determine the success of an educational institution (Angraini et al., 2022). The independent learning curriculum is intended to carry out learning that does not have to be tied to the existing curriculum in schools (Anggreini & Priyojadmiko, 2022). The independent curriculum is a new policy in the education system, so teachers must be able to ensure that this policy is successfully implemented in learning, the effectiveness of which depends on the readiness of teachers. In this case, teachers are required to be skilled in planning approaches in developing appropriate classroom management and being able to apply the curriculum (Aulia, A et al., 2024).

Teacher professional development is an important factor in supporting the implementation of the Freedom of Learning paradigm because it has a direct influence on the way teachers design and implement learning in the classroom. Based on the results of the interviews, most of the teachers participated in the Subject Teacher Deliberation (MGMP), Independent Curriculum training, differentiated learning, Project Based Learning (PjBL), online and offline training, and various other learning approach trainings; However, the level of depth of understanding and consistency of implementation still varies, and there are even teachers who have not received any training at all. The training generally helps teachers understand the concept of Independent Learning, formative assessment, mapping of student characteristics, and learning strategies that are more student-centered, but its implementation in the classroom still tends to be partial and not fully optimal because it still depends on the initiative and creativity of each teacher. Some teachers have adapted training materials in learning practices through differentiation, strengthening learning interactions, utilizing learning platforms, implementing PSE, assessments according to students' character, and assigning relevant projects, while others have not been able to apply the training results to the maximum. This condition shows that teacher professional development has an important contribution to improving the quality of learning, but requires strengthening continuous mentoring, equitable access to training, and strengthening implementation so that the impact is more real on the quality of the process and student learning outcomes, considering that teachers are the spearhead of improving the quality of education.

Teachers' motivation in carrying out the learning process is an internal factor that has a strong influence on the quality of teaching and student learning success. In the context of the implementation of the Independent Learning paradigm, teaching motivation is not only influenced by the professional demands of educators, but also by the personal mission of teachers to contribute to the development of students and the school environment. Teacher motivation is an important determinant in the quality of learning implementation because it is directly related to the commitment, creativity, and perseverance of teachers in managing the teaching and learning process. Research shows that teachers with high intrinsic motivation tend to show learning practices that are more reflective, innovative, and oriented to the needs of students, thus having a positive impact on student learning outcomes (Han & Yin, 2016).

Based on interviews with teachers from various schools, the motivation to teach in the context of Merdeka Belajar generally comes from intrinsic motivations, such as a personal mission to bring positive change in the school environment, concern for students, a sense of comfort in interacting with students, and a desire to humanize people through education. In addition, this motivation is also strengthened by the demands of professionals as educators to improve the quality of learning and student learning culture. This shows that teachers' motivation is not only external or administrative, but rather a personal call and moral responsibility to their profession.

This motivation is then manifested in learning practice through various strategies that are relevant to the needs of students and the principles of Freedom of Learning. Teachers try to adapt the learning approach to the conditions and characteristics of students, both through contextual learning, differentiated learning, project-based approaches, group discussions, the use of technology such as barcode scanners, and learning strategies that empower students to actively think, discuss, collaborate, and practice knowledge in a real context. In addition,

teachers also try to create a learning atmosphere that does not burden students, but still encourages in-depth understanding of the material.

Thus, teachers' teaching motivation can be understood as a combination of professional calling, moral responsibility, and personal desire to be involved in improving the quality of education, which further influences the way teachers design and implement learning strategies in the classroom. This motivation is the internal foundation that supports the successful implementation of the Independent Curriculum, because teachers who have an orientation of meaning and goals in their work tend to be more involved, reflective, and committed to the holistic development of students.

Academically, these results show that teachers have fulfilled all the administrative requirements of the Independent Curriculum learning completely and according to standards. Although some documents are general or stored in digital form, substantially the learning administration is ready to support a planned and systematic learning process, so that academic supervision can be further focused on improving the quality of classroom learning implementation, rather than on fulfilling basic administrative aspects.

Academically, these results show that teachers have fulfilled all the administrative requirements of the Independent Curriculum learning completely and according to standards, so that even though some documents are still general or stored in digital form, substantially the administrative readiness is adequate to support planned and systematic learning; This condition allows academic supervision to be directed at improving the quality of the implementation of learning in the classroom, which is aligned and strengthened by various policy programs of the Education Office as a strategic instrument in supporting the Independent Learning paradigm, such as Driving Schools, Subject Teacher Meetings (MGMP) or Learning Communities (Kombel), the provision of teaching modules, and online training, which systemically aims to increase the professional capacity of teachers, improve the quality of the learning process, as well as encourage continuous improvement of student learning outcomes.

Policies and programs of the education office such as the Driving School Program, MGMP, online training through PMM, Kombel, and various other professional trainings play an important role in supporting the improvement of teacher competence and the quality of learning in the context of the Independent Curriculum. These programs not only function as a means of increasing understanding of concepts, but also as a space to share good practices, strengthen learning leadership, and transform learning culture in schools. However, its effectiveness is still highly determined by the relevance of the material, the consistency of mentoring, the readiness of teachers and schools, and the implementation process at the classroom level.

Based on the results of interviews with teachers in various high schools in East Manggarai Regency, the majority stated that the existence of the professional development program was very helpful, both through MGMP, online training, Teacher Mobilizers, sharing communities, and learning facility support. However, the level of understanding and consistency of implementation still varies. Some teachers have felt significant benefits in improving pedagogic competence and learning quality, while others still face obstacles such as limited facilities, suboptimal understanding of concepts, and limited follow-up assistance.

Overall, the results of the study show that teachers' strategies in implementing the Independent Learning paradigm are supported by a combination of professional development,

intrinsic motivation, reflective practice, and education policy support. Synergy between teacher competence, system support, and adequate facilities are key factors in improving the quality of learning and student learning outcomes. However, to achieve a more optimal and equitable implementation, it is necessary to strengthen sustainable mentoring, equitably distribute the understanding of the concept of Freedom of Learning, and increase the support of facilities and policies that are more adaptive to the needs of schools and the context of learning in the field.

It can be concluded that contextual constraints include limited understanding of the Merdeka Learning policy, showing variations in experience and understanding at the school level. Some teachers feel that supervision is in line with the principles of learning flexibility, provides professional freedom, and contributes to increased motivation to teach. However, there are still teachers who consider that academic supervision is not optimal and does not fully reflect the substantive implementation of Freedom of Learning. The main obstacles faced include limited conceptual understanding of the Independent Curriculum, relatively high administrative pressure, limited learning facilities and resources, and inadequate supervision time for meaningful mentoring. This condition causes academic supervision to often be perceived as a normative-administrative activity, not as a reflective and sustainable professional development process, so that not all supervision recommendations can be implemented in contextual and adaptive learning practices in accordance with the spirit of Freedom of Learning. This finding is in line with the research of Yulidar, Aswad, and Badrun (2025) which confirms that academic supervision in the era of the Independent Curriculum still tends to be administratively oriented, with limitations in reflective mentoring and systematic follow-up.

In this context, the role of school supervisors and principals as learning supervisors has not fully functioned as a pedagogical dialogue space that is able to straighten out misconceptions and deepen teachers' understanding of the essence of Independent Learning. Mulyasa (2021) emphasized that principals and supervisors have a strategic role as learning leaders, while the OECD (2019) emphasized the importance of continuous teacher mentoring so that learning reforms can be implemented effectively. Therefore, academic supervision needs to be strengthened as a process of professional development that is dialogical, reflective, and oriented towards teacher capacity development, so that the implementation of Merdeka Learning is truly centered on the needs and diversity of students.

## **CONCLUSION**

Academic supervision conducted by school supervisors in East Manggarai Regency was implemented systematically and contextually to support the Merdeka Belajar paradigm, beginning with an analysis of teacher needs, involving school leadership and curriculum components, and applying dialogical, reflective coaching and mentoring approaches; this contributed to changes in teaching practices, improvements in instructional quality, and a tendency toward better student learning outcomes, although the uneven achievement of National Education Standards (SNP) and graduation benchmarks indicated that supervision had not yet fully improved learning outcomes across schools. Teachers' implementation strategies were supported by professional development, intrinsic motivation, reflective practices, and policy and facility support—such as MGMP, online training, and the Independent Curriculum—despite variations in understanding and consistency. Contextual challenges

persisted, particularly limited policy comprehension leading to differing perceptions, where some teachers viewed supervision as aligned with flexibility and professional autonomy, while others considered it suboptimal and not fully reflective of the substantive principles of Merdeka Belajar. Future research is recommended to examine longitudinal impacts of academic supervision across diverse 3T contexts and to develop more standardized yet adaptive supervision models that can ensure more equitable improvements in student learning achievement.

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