

X-Day Curriculum as an Independent Learning Curriculum Model at SMA Plus Muthahhari Bandung

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Abstract

Traditional curriculum in Indonesia often need more flexibility in accommodating students' interests and talents, resulting in limited opportunities for students to explore their skills and creativity. SMA Plus Muthahhari Bandung implements the X-Day Curriculum to create an independent and interest-based learning model, where students can choose areas of interest such as art, language, or sports. This study aims to analyze the implementation of the X-Day Curriculum as a curriculum model that supports independent learning and the development of students' interests and talents. Data was collected through a qualitative approach through in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation analysis. The research was conducted through several technical stages, including data collection, validation, analysis, and interpretation of results. The results showed that the X-Day Curriculum gives students the freedom to choose areas of interest consisting of arts, languages, and sports, facilitating the development of independence, creativity, and life skills relevant to the needs of the 21st century. The program also encourages motivation to learn with a more flexible approach to fun learning, including annual activities such as AKBARI, which appreciates students' work. The study concluded that the X-Day Curriculum effectively shapes students who are independent, innovative, and ready to face future educational challenges.

Keywords

X-Day Curriculum; "Freedom to Learn" Curriculum Model; Non-Academic; SMA Plus Muthahhari

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1. INTRODUCTION

National education in Indonesia plays a strategic role in creating competent and competitive human resources while facing the challenges of globalization and digital transformation (Pramana et al., 2021); (Indrawati & Kuncoro, 2021). One significant step in the reform of the education system is the implementation of the Merdeka Belajar policy, which is designed to provide flexibility in the learning process and empower students according to their potential, interests, and talents (Zaini & Wahib, 2022); (Wulandari et al., 2024). The policy emphasizes the importance of curriculum innovation that is oriented towards local, national, and global needs and supports educational autonomy at the school level (Hunaepi & Suharta, 2024); (Simarmata & Mayuni, 2023).

Merdeka Belajar Curriculum is the latest curriculum endorsed by the Indonesian Minister of



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Education as an educational reform step to answer 21st-century skills needs (Muthrofin & Fathurrahman, 2024); (Syahrir et al., 2024). This curriculum aims to give students the freedom to choose a learning path that suits their interests and abilities so that the learning process becomes more meaningful, personalized, and relevant to their needs (Darmawan et al., 2024); (Nugraha et al., 2023). Under the Merdeka Curriculum, students are encouraged to develop creativity, independence, and critical thinking skills through project-based learning and interest exploration (Basri et al., 2024); (Meisuri et al., 2025); (Saputra, 2024). However, not all schools in Indonesia can immediately implement the Merdeka Curriculum due to limitations in facilities and infrastructure, such as access to technology, adequate learning space, and educators who are ready for this new approach (Patandung & Panggua, 2022); (Lembong et al., 2023). However, not all schools in Indonesia can immediately implement the Merdeka Curriculum due to limitations in facilities and infrastructure, such as access to technology and adequate learning space, and educators are not ready for this new approach.

Schools in Indonesia that still apply conventional learning methods face various challenges in preparing students for the demands of 21st-century education (Malik, 2018); (R. Mulyono, 2022). One of the main challenges is students' dependence on teacher instruction, which inhibits their ability to take initiative and learn independently (Moore, 2020); (Shihab, 2017). Conventional learning models that rely too much on lectures and closed assignments limit students' opportunities to develop critical thinking skills, creativity, and problem-solving abilities (Sasson et al., 2018); (H. Mulyono & Wekke, 2018). In addition, the lack of space for independent exploration deprives students of the opportunity to explore their interests and talents freely, which potentially limits the development of their unique potential (Jufri et al., 2023).

The conventional curriculum faces various challenges in meeting education needs in the modern era. A uniform, results-orientated approach often ignores each student's unique potential, making it difficult to encourage the development of 21st-century skills such as critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication. In addition, teaching methods that emphasize memorization over conceptual understanding also limit students' ability to adapt to dynamic challenges in the world of work and real-life (Pare & Sihotang, 2023; Putri et al., 2023; Sabil & Pujiastuti, 2023).

SMA Plus Muthahhari Bandung has a vision and mission that focuses on building the character of independent, creative, and highly competitive students. As a school emphasizing holistic educational values, SMA Plus Muthahhari sees the importance of producing students who excel academically, have independence, and can think critically and innovate. This vision encourages the development of a learning environment that supports student autonomy in exploring their interests and talents, building a sense of responsibility for the learning process, and training the ability to solve problems independently (Suhifatullah & Wangsih, 2024). With this foundation, the school actively seeks and develops learning models that enable students to become more active and engaged in learning experiences relevant to real life.

The background to adopting the X-Day Curriculum at Muthahhari Plus High School is based on the need to provide a more adaptive curriculum that accommodates students' diverse interests. The curriculum is designed so students can choose areas that suit their interests, such as arts, languages, or sports, through a special program implemented on Wednesdays. With this approach, the school seeks to create a more personalized and relevant learning environment where students can explore their interests in a focused manner, develop creativity, and strengthen essential life skills for the future. SMA Plus Muthahhari ensures that every student has a rich and empowering learning experience.

Past research shows that a curriculum that allows students to explore their interests and talents independently positively impacts the development of 21st-century skills, such as independence, creativity, and responsibility. For example, research by (Malone & Lepper, 2021) It is found that autonomous learning environments increase students' intrinsic motivation, making them more excited and engaged in the learning process. Another study (Yavich & Rotnitsky, 2020) The Multiple

Intelligences theory from Garnard supports this approach by showing that students who learn through methods that match their dominant intelligence show better progress in learning.

This research is driven by the increasing importance of developing a curriculum that is not only academic but also non-academic and tailored to the interests and talents of students. This can make students enthusiastic about learning because what they learn is their choice. This study aims to analyze the effectiveness of the X-Day Curriculum at SMA Plus Muthahhari Bandung as a curriculum model that supports independent learning and accommodates students' interests and talents more flexibly. By examining this model, the research is expected to provide insights into implementing an interest-based curriculum relevant to student's skill development in the modern era and a reference for other schools adopting a similar approach.

2. METHODS

The research method used was qualitative research with a case study approach. This method was chosen to gain an in-depth understanding of implementing the X-Day curriculum as an independent learning model in the school environment. The data sources for this research design include qualitative data collected from various informants, including the principal, vice principal, teachers, and students, through interviews, observations, and documentation review. This multi-source approach provided a comprehensive understanding of the implementation of the X-Day curriculum and its implications within the school.

The interviews conducted to collect this data were semi-structured. The interviews conducted in this study focused on gathering in-depth insights related to implementing the X-Day curriculum as an independent non-academic learning model at SMA Plus Muthahhari Bandung. Specifically, the interviews aimed to explore the perspectives, experiences, and suggestions of the principal, vice principal, teachers, and students regarding the effectiveness and challenges of this curriculum.

There are differences in the interview instruments used for each type of informant. Questions for principals and vice-principals might focus on administrative and curriculum management perspectives, while questions for teachers will focus more on pedagogical approaches and classroom experiences. Questions will likely address students' learning experiences and perceptions of the curriculum's impact on their education.

Data analysis in this study was conducted through several stages, including data collection, triangulation, reduction, and presentation. Data was collected through in-depth interviews, direct observation, and documentation review related to implementing the X-Day Curriculum at SMA Plus Muthahhari Bandung. Interviews were conducted with various informants, including teachers, students, and the X-Day program coordinator, at different times to gain a comprehensive understanding. Data triangulation was used to ensure the validity of information by comparing interview results, observation findings, and documents collected. Data collection was conducted at multiple points to see the consistency of responses and reduce potential bias. Data reduction was applied to filter out irrelevant or insignificant data so that the analysis could focus more on information directly related to the research objectives and questions. At the data presentation stage, the interview results (emic data) reflecting the informants' views were interpreted into ethical data to provide a broader context for the analysis and preparation of the final research conclusions.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

X-Day Curriculum is a model designed to support independent learning and focuses on developing students' interests and talents. Dr Jalaluddin Rakhmat, M.Sc., introduced the idea as the chairman of the foundation, who was inspired by the education system in some schools in America. In

developed countries, students have more freedom to choose fields of study that suit their interests, which differs from Indonesia's compulsory curriculum approach. Through X-Day, students are expected to explore their multiple intelligences, which may need to be fully accommodated in the conventional curriculum. The program allows students to take responsibility for their learning choices and reinforces independence and creativity in the educational process.

The main principle of the X-Day Curriculum is the freedom of students to determine their learning activities to develop their talents and interests more deeply. On the designated day, every Wednesday, students are not bound by the usual school rules, such as the use of uniforms, and are allowed to wear free clothes but still within the limits of the applicable norms. This creates a 'fun-learning' atmosphere where students fully own their activities. In addition, the principle of responsibility is also prioritized, where each student must be responsible for the programs and activities they choose. As such, it promotes independence, creativity, and personalization in learning.

SMA Plus Muthahhari Bandung adopts the X-Day Curriculum as part of its intra-curricular activities every Wednesday. In doing so, students design programs that suit their interests to develop specific and relevant skills for their future. At the end of each academic year, the results of these X-Day activities are presented through a competition called AKBARI (Ajang Kreasi Badruk Muthahhari), where students display the works they have created during the program. This competition is the culmination of evaluating the students' self-learning process and creativity, which the school will assess. Through X-Day, SMA Plus Muthahhari provides a space for students to innovate and express themselves in a more flexible and interest-orientated educational environment.

Implementing the X-Day Curriculum at SMA Plus Muthahhari Bandung is one of the innovations in the world of education that provides space for students to explore their full potential. This program helps students discover and develop their talents and interests and builds soft skills such as responsibility, independence, and cooperation. By allowing students to choose their learning activities, they are exposed to real-life experiences in designing, managing, and realizing programs relevant to their future needs and dreams. The AKBARI competition, the final evaluation, is an appreciation event and a process of reflection on their learning journey. Through this model, SMA Plus Muthahhari supports forming students who are academically smart, creative, innovative, and ready to face global challenges.

Several previous studies have highlighted the importance of a curriculum that develops students' interests to encourage independent learning. A study by (Kolb, 2014) Emphasizes that education should facilitate the development of individual interests and allow students to learn through experience. This approach focuses on learning relevant to student's needs and talents, similar to the concept of the X-Day Curriculum at SMA Plus Muthahhari Bandung. By giving students the freedom to choose their areas of interest, such as arts, languages, and sports, X-Day encourages them to take responsibility for their academic decisions. This is in line with constructivist learning theory, which argues that students construct their understanding through direct experience and engagement (Firdaus et al., 2023).

X-Day Curriculum is also based on the theory of multiple intelligences proposed by Howard Gardner (1983). This theory states that every individual has different types of intelligence, such as linguistic, logical-mathematical, musical, spatial, kinesthetic, and interpersonal intelligence (Syarifah, 2019). In the context of X-Day, students are free to explore their intelligence through diverse activities, ranging from art and music to language. This approach aligns with previous research (Ghaznavi et al., 2021), which shows that students tend to be more engaged and motivated when allowed to learn according to their dominant intelligence. This suggests that personalized learning, such as that implemented in X-Day, allows students to explore their interests, develop their creativity, and increase their motivation to learn, which can be a valuable tool.

Research by (Onah et al., 2020) Learning independence shows that students responsible for their learning tend to be more skilled in self-regulation, have greater initiative, and can manage time and

resources well. This is reflected in the X-Day Curriculum, where SMA Plus Muthahhari Bandung students design their learning program and are responsible for its implementation. With activities such as AKBARI, students can showcase their work, which assesses their skills and fosters a sense of ownership over the learning process. This curriculum teaches independence and prepares students to face real-world challenges with innovative and solution-orientated skills.

Based on the interview with the principal, the following are the objectives of the X-Day.

- a. Developing Creativity (by the school program as a PBKL Model).
- b. Developing students' Life Skills and Achievements (to become Champions).
- c. Helping students in exploring their interests and talents.
- d. Train the power of appreciation.
- e. Cultivate an entrepreneurial spirit.
- f. Applying the Multiple Intelligences Method and fun learning.
- g. Forming Clubs.

The main objective of the X-Day curriculum is to develop students' creativity through an approach that aligns with the PBKL (Education Based on Local Excellence) model. The program encourages students to innovate and create new ideas relevant to their local uniqueness. Students can explore and express their creativity in various activities, whether in art, technology, or other skills. In addition to creativity, the curriculum is also designed to develop important life skills for students, such as cooperation, communication, and problem-solving. This is expected to prepare them to become 'champions' in various aspects of life, both academic and non-academic.

One of the main objectives of X-Day is to assist students in exploring their interests and talents. Through the formation of interest-based clubs, students can delve into areas they are passionate about and develop specific skills relevant to their talents. The program also encourages the strengthening of appreciation, both of oneself and others, through appreciating the process and results of one's work. By teaching the importance of appreciating effort and achievement, students learn to build self-confidence and increase motivation to develop their interests further. This is an important part of building independent and resilient characters for the future.

The X-Day curriculum also adopts the Multiple Intelligences method, where students are encouraged to learn according to their dominant intelligence, such as logical, linguistic, artistic, or interpersonal intelligence. This approach creates a more fun learning experience, which helps students to be more engaged in the learning process. In addition, the curriculum aims to foster an entrepreneurial spirit through activities that involve project management and innovation. Students are taught to think critically and creatively when solving problems and are encouraged to take initiative when creating new opportunities. Thus, X-Day molds academically savvy students and produces a generation ready to face real-world challenges with strong entrepreneurial skills.

By integrating the Multiple Intelligences approach and entrepreneurial elements, the X-Day program nurtures a holistic learning environment where students can academically and personally thrive. This unique framework allows students to align their learning journey with their innate strengths, making education more personalized and impactful. Incorporating entrepreneurial activities, such as project-based learning and innovation challenges, equips students with practical skills like teamwork, leadership, and adaptability. These experiences prepare students for future professional endeavors and instill a proactive mindset essential for navigating a dynamic world. Ultimately, X-Day fosters a balanced development of intellect, creativity, and life skills, ensuring students are well-rounded and future-ready.

Several previous studies have shown the importance of developing life skills through learning

activities focusing on collaboration, communication, and self-appreciation. Research by (Novitasari, 2023) It confirms that programs that provide students with opportunities to participate in in-depth, interest-based activities can strengthen their social skills, such as teamwork and problem-solving. X-Day supports this finding by forming interest clubs, where students can explore their talents and skills while interacting with peers with similar interests. In addition, the concept of appreciation taught in the program is instrumental in building students' self-confidence, in line with Maslow's (1954) theory of motivation, which emphasizes the importance of recognition of achievement to increase motivation to learn (Calicchio, 2023).

Howard Gardner's Multiple Intelligences Theory forms the basis for the X-Day curriculum in encouraging students to learn according to their dominant intelligence. Previous research by (Mohammad & Hamza, 2020) This theory's application in education makes students more engaged and motivated in the learning process as they can explore ways of learning that suit their strengths. X-Day adopts this approach through various activities that support logical, linguistic, artistic, and interpersonal intelligence, creating a more inclusive and adaptive 'fun learning' environment.

Based on the results of an interview with the vice principal, X-Day has been held since the 1996-1997 academic year. Currently held every Wednesday, from 09:10-16.00. Types of X-Day activities include:

No.	Field	Time
1	Art	09:10-10:30
2	Language	10.50-12.10
3	Sport	13.00-16.00

In addition, data regarding students' involvement in X-Day activities, as well as the process of selecting areas of interest (art, language, or sports) through a questionnaire at the beginning of the semester, were obtained from interviews with the X-Day Coordinator and several teachers directly involved in the program. The instrument to collect this data was a semi-structured interview, which included open-ended questions regarding the mechanism for filling out the questionnaire and the procedure for authorizing interest classes. Based on the information obtained, whenever a minimum of 15 students choose the same field, the X-Day Coordinator will authorize the group as one interest class that combines X and X-grade students with similar interests. X-Day activities are regulated in a mechanism as follows:

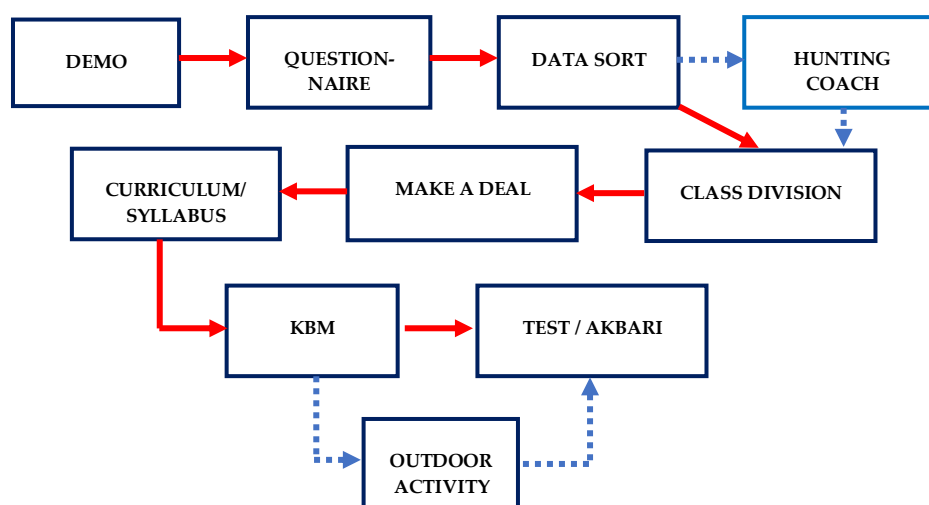


Figure 1. X-Program Determination Mechanism Day

This data comes from interviews with the X-Day Coordinator and teachers involved in the program. This data was obtained through semi-structured interviews using a list of open-ended

questions, aiming to explore in-depth information about the implementation of X-Day activities, including the selection of interest areas by students and the mechanism for managing interest classes.

X-Day Demo is an introduction to X-Day activities that aims to give students an overview of the fields selected in the previous semester. This demo involves teachers who have and will teach in X-Day activities so that students can better understand each field offered. During the demo, the fields displayed consist of:

- a. Art : Guitar; Choir; Art; Dance; Theater; Percussion.
- b. Language : Germany; Japan; France; and Korea.
- c. Sport : Tennis Meja; Futsal; Bola Basket; Bulu Tangkis; Bela Diri: Maen Po, Pencak Silat, dan Wu Shu; dan Senam Pernaafasan: Taichi dan Yoga

After the demo activity, new students are given an X-Day questionnaire to choose the field that suits their interests. This questionnaire aims to identify students' interests more specifically so that they can be placed in the right interest class. Meanwhile, grade XI students have chosen their interest classes at the beginning of the semester. Based on the collected questionnaire results, the interest classes will be organized and selected according to the number of applicants and students' interests. This process ensures that each interest class has enough students to run effectively, and students can engage in activities they are truly interested in.

Based on the observations and data collected, students' response to the X-Day Curriculum is very positive, especially regarding their freedom to explore their interests and talents. Students feel more motivated because they can choose their areas of interest, such as art, language, or sports, which they cannot always do in the regular curriculum. The freedom to design and participate in activities that suit their interests has increased creativity and innovation. This is evident from their enthusiasm in actively participating, with many students displaying significant development in arts, communication skills, and athletic ability after attending the X-Day program.

Students also show improvement in terms of learning independence and responsibility. Through the X-Day Curriculum, students are not only directed to learn passively but are also expected to actively take the initiative in designing their learning program. Filling out interest questionnaires at the beginning of the semester allows students to get to know themselves better and choose activities based on these interests. This not only encourages independence but also the responsibility to complete and display the results of the activities at annual events such as AKBARI. Students learn to manage their time, work together in teams, and confidently present their work.

The positive impact of the X-Day Curriculum extends beyond skill development, fostering essential life skills that are invaluable for students' future success. By taking charge of their learning paths, students cultivate a growth mindset, learning to embrace challenges as opportunities for self-improvement. The annual AKBARI event serves as a platform to celebrate these achievements, reinforcing the importance of dedication and perseverance in reaching their goals. Additionally, collaborative activities encourage teamwork and communication, while the responsibility to manage projects and meet deadlines instills discipline and time-management skills. This holistic approach ensures that students are academically capable and equipped with the emotional intelligence and resilience needed to thrive in diverse and dynamic environments.

Previous research has shown that students' freedom to choose their area of interest significantly increases motivation and creativity. For example, research by (Okumus Ceylan, 2021) shows that when students have autonomy in choosing learning activities, they are more intrinsically motivated. This is evident in the X-Day Curriculum, where students can explore their art, language, or sports interests. Research (Davis & Bowles, 2018) also supports the idea that autonomy in learning encourages creativity and innovation, as students can explore their talents and interests unencumbered by rigid curriculum

structures. As a result, many students make significant progress in their chosen fields, which aligns with the finding that academic freedom improves engagement and learning outcomes.

Research by (Astuti & Rozikin, 2024) Self-Regulated Learning highlights the importance of independence in the learning process. X-Day Curriculum encourages students to take greater responsibility for their learning by completing interest questionnaires and designing their learning programs. This research aligns with self-regulated learning, where students learn to manage their time, set goals, and monitor their progress independently. In addition, the responsibility to complete and display their work in annual events such as AKBARI shows that students learn the material and discipline, teamwork, and confidence in presenting their work. This is relevant to Vygotsky's theory of Zone of Proximal Development, which suggests that students will develop better when given challenges that encourage independence and collaboration (Silalahi, 2019).

4. CONCLUSION

The conclusion of this study shows that the X-Day Curriculum successfully encourages students to develop creativity, learning independence, and personal responsibility. By giving students the freedom to choose areas that suit their interests and talents, this curriculum allows them to be more involved in the learning process, which is fun and relevant. X-Day also facilitates the development of life skills, such as the ability to co-operate, communicate, and problem-solve, which are essential to a 21st-century education. Programs such as AKBARI allow students to express themselves, showcase their work, and foster self-confidence and motivation. Thus, the X-Day Curriculum provides an effective learning approach in preparing students to face future challenges more independently and innovatively.

Suggestions that can be given regarding the implementation of the X-Day Curriculum are that schools can expand the variety of fields of activity to be more diverse and relevant to future needs, such as the development of digital skills and entrepreneurship. The implication of implementing this curriculum is the formation of students who are more independent, creative, and innovative in the learning process, which is very relevant in facing the demands of 21st-century education. By continuously updating the program and adapting to technological developments and industry needs, X-Day can become a curriculum model that prepares students to face global challenges more effectively.

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