

# A Systematic Literature Review of Prior Studies on the Indonesian Independent Campus Policy (2020–2023)

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**Abstract.** Based on prior research indexed in the Scopus database, this coherent literature review explores the transformative impact of the independent campus policy on Indonesian higher education by highlighting its role in forming the autonomy of students to shape their academic trajectories. The analysis spans 63 publications from 2020 to 2023, revealing a notable increase in yearly publications and diverse global authorship, with Indonesian scholars contributing prominently. The review identifies several bibliometric indicators in prior studies: the number of publications, authorship patterns, document types, authors' countries, co-authorship, and keyword co-occurrence. Additionally, this study employs rigorous content analysis, thematic coding, and cross-disciplinary comparisons to reveal nine distinct research streams. The findings confirm that 'Freedom to Learn on Campus' is the philosophical value of the independent campus policy that aims to respond to evolving educational needs in Indonesia. While providing valuable insights, the author acknowledges limitations, including temporal constraints, potential bias, and the lack of exploration of future regional variations. With its interdisciplinary nature, this pioneering review addresses a research gap and offers a profound understanding of the policy's global significance and transformative effects on Indonesia's educational landscape.

**Keywords:** education, learning freedom, policy, research evolution, transformation

## Introduction

Higher education in Indonesia is undergoing an era of significant transformation, driven by a change in the learning paradigm through the policy of the *Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka* (MBKM).<sup>1</sup> This

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<sup>1</sup> In subsequent narratives of this article, the term "MBKM" will be replaced with "Independent Campus" to help readers understand its meaning. The first is the Indonesian local term, which has a substance similar to the second one.

regulation, introduced in 2020 by the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture, provides greater flexibility and autonomy to higher education institutions in developing curricula and academic activities. It encourages students to be more independent and ready to face the challenges of the employment landscape through various programs. It also allows students to select courses outside their study program or at other universities, both domestic and abroad, to develop broader competencies relevant to industry needs. In line with these objectives, the policy introduces the “Freedom to Learn on Campus” (FLC) principle, which marks a significant change in the learning approach in Indonesian higher education. The courage to grant the FLC is a monumental step because today, students have the right to explore various fields based on their interests and talents, not limited to the confines of the study program (Quibrantar & Ezezika, 2023). Moreover, granting such freedom provides discretionary spaces for students to explore their hidden potential and nurture their entrepreneurial spirits (Bukhari et al., 2021; Flores et al., 2024; Forliano et al., 2021; Oulhou & Ibourk, 2023). Such an initiative provides academic freedom and encourages them to engage in various practical learning contexts.

The advantage of an independent campus that applies an independent learning system is that it allows students to pursue learning outside of their college, even in different study programs at other colleges that enrich their academic experience and open opportunities to interact with diverse educational environments, because such a system is a tailor-made program for learners to successfully develop their will and skills independently (Macfarlane, 2016; Moore, 1973). More than just escaping the confines of the classroom, independent campuses provide unique opportunities and challenges. Students can cultivate their personality, capacity, and creativity through responsive learning to individual needs (Popenici & Brew, 2013). In the process, students are also involved in the field’s dynamics, encountering skill expectations, practical challenges, social engagement, teamwork, self-management, and performance standards that enrich their learning experience (Huang & Lajoie, 2023; Lagat & Concepcion, 2022; Le et al., 2018).

As the independent campus policy requires, higher education in Indonesia must put knowledge into students’ minds and mould their independence in seeking, discovering, and applying knowledge in a real-world context. The independent campus becomes the foundation for producing graduates who have deep academic comprehension and are ready to face the complexities of the labour market with courage, creativity, and personal excellence. The policy intends to instill knowledge and encourage learning that is more dynamic and adaptive to global changes. In an era marked by dynamic transitions across various sectors, including the world of education, the policy emerges as an innovation that stimulates and changes the learning paradigm in higher education.

Various parties hope that it will not only be positioned merely as a policy but also as a breakthrough that presents fresh thinking about student freedom in determining the course of instruction. By allowing students the flexibility to select their courses, lecturers, and institutions, the policy will catalyze fundamental transformation that not only eliminates the traditional limitations of study programs but also opens the door to a broader exploration of knowledge relevant to the interests and talents of each

student. Such freedom is a matter of choice that encourages them to explore their untapped potential. By gaining it, students will become agents of change who make their mark in academia, industry, and society in an extraordinary way. Therefore, a profound insight into the research evolution around this policy is critical to providing a holistic view of its impact or implications.

This article seeks to offer comprehensive insights into the progression of research on the independent campus policy in Indonesia, specifically focusing on the nexus of knowledge that emerges from it. By combining bibliometric and critical review methods, this study will uncover key trends, researcher contributions, and collaborative networks formed in the policy context. The significance of understanding the nexus of knowledge in prior studies lies not only in the consequences of the policy on universities but also in how that permeates and impacts various disciplines. In addition, the author also explores the pivotal role of these studies in determining the future direction of higher education policy in Indonesia. As such, this article is a primary contribution to tracking and analyzing research development, understanding the nexus of knowledge formed, and identifying future research directions that can positively impact and shape Indonesia's higher education policy.

The introduction of the independent campus policy in 2020 has become a focal point for Indonesia's rapidly growing body of research. From 2020 to 2023, the Scopus database records 63 pieces of literature available, reflecting the interest and significance of this topic in an academic context. Previous studies have broader scopes than several aspects of policy execution in universities, although this remains the center of attention. Instead, they also extend to a broader dimension, covering the dynamics of its implementation at various levels of education, particularly the Merdeka Curriculum in primary and secondary schools. Following the official enactment of this curriculum in 2022 in Indonesia, various published works of literature portray responses and adaptations to noteworthy changes in the national education ecosystem. These studies span from policy analysis and implementation in higher education to the policy's consequences on curriculum-based practices in primary and secondary education.

Previous researchers not only observed the effects of that policy on the way students choose courses and undergo learning in universities but also looked at the transformation in primary and secondary education that aims to grant students the autonomy to direct their learning process based on their talents and interests. The results of prior studies imply that the policy not only shapes significant changes at the tertiary level but also has a domino effect on earlier educational structures. Since its inception, the independent campus policy has garnered interest from numerous researchers. Early studies highlighted the potential of this policy in improving the relevance of the curriculum, providing a more diverse learning experience, and strengthening the linkages between higher education and industry. Programs such as internships, student exchanges, village projects, and entrepreneurship activities are considered significant breakthroughs in improving the quality of Indonesia's higher education institutions.

Nevertheless, evaluations of the policy impacts have been sporadic and segmented, with many studies only focusing on specific aspects, such as internship programs or student exchanges. They have

resulted in an incomplete understanding of the implementation and overall benefits of the policy. The locus of research is often limited to a particular organizational unit so that research results do not reflect variations in policy implementation across broader contexts.

Comparative research on the independent campus policy implementation still needs to be improved, including research that compares the implementation of this policy between developed and disadvantaged regions. Many studies only highlight the specific benefits of a particular program without linking it to the overall objectives of the policy, so there is no holistic picture of its consequences on the system of higher education in Indonesia, including changes in pedagogy, administration, and academic culture. The fragmented research approach also makes integrating research results difficult, exacerbated by the need for more collaboration between researchers and institutions. Existing research often uses preliminary or limited data, making it complicated to draw comprehensive conclusions. In addition, obstacles such as limited resources, lack of supporting infrastructure, and resistance from lecturers and students are often the focus of research without integrated solutions. Long-term evaluations that assess the impact of the policy on graduates, structural changes in higher education institutions, and broader socio-economic consequences still need to be improved, and interdisciplinary research that combines perspectives from various disciplines is yet to be completed.

Based on the above research limitations or weaknesses, a systematic literature review (SLR) of the published literature is needed to present a comprehensive insight into the research evolution over time and shed light on how these policy changes permeate and shape educational praxis at various levels. This review of 63 pieces of literature indexed in the Scopus database related to Indonesia's independent campus policy issue is the first academic exploration of this topic. Previously, there had never been a systematic effort to summarize and analyze findings from the literature accessible in a prestigious database such as Scopus. The review is a comprehensive presentation of the nexus of knowledge in previous research findings. By integrating bibliometric approaches and critical analysis, the author yields a holistic overview of key trends, researcher contributions, and emerging collaboration networks in the policy context. Over time, the relevance and impact of that policy on higher education in Indonesia have deepened, making bibliometric studies increasingly important.

An SLR that uses bibliometric analysis with critical insight offers a comprehensive and in-depth approach to disseminating and understanding the development of a research field. Bibliometric analysis allows for the systematic collection and measurement of literature based on specific metrics, such as citation counts, authors, and keywords, providing a quantitative picture of research trends, collaboration networks, and dominant topic areas. With the addition of critical observation, the author can highlight the quality and contribution of the identified literature, assessing the methodology used, key findings, and relevance to the research question at hand. This combination ensures that the review process is transparent and replicable while providing a more in-depth and contextual qualitative analysis. It will broaden the scope and depth of the evaluation literature and provide a stronger foundation for drawing more holistic and informative conclusions about the status and future research directions.

This systematic literature review will fill a research gap. As a first-of-its-kind initiative, it presents empirical results and provides an in-depth look at the research journey since the policy's enactment. By detailing the main findings of previous studies, the review will contribute to the academic understanding of the changes, trends, and policy implications of higher education in Indonesia brought about by the independent campus policy.

### **The Independent Campus Policy: Its Substance and Implementation Dynamics**

The independent campus policy is a critical milestone in shaping a revolutionary approach for Indonesia's higher education institutions. The policy was launched by the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia in early 2020 in response to the urgent need to reform Indonesia's higher education system. The system was previously considered incapable of responding to global challenges and meeting the ever-growing industry's needs. The policy offers a variety of innovative programs that equip a more contextual and varied learning experience for students to bridge the gap between the theory taught in universities and the practice required in the workplace.

Under the Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture No. 3/2020 on National Higher Education Standards, the policy gives students the freedom to manage their educational journey based on their needs and interests (Mujiwati et al., 2023; Purwanti, 2021; Sa'diyah et al., 2022). It encourages students to master various sciences relevant to the job market by enabling them to select the courses they want to take, even outside their study program. According to Article 18 of this regulation, students can fulfill their study period and load in various ways, including participating in learning processes outside the study program that better accommodate their interests and talents (Utami & Suswanto, 2022; Yusuf, 2021). This flexibility broadens their academic horizons and fosters a competitive environment where students can develop critical skills for the real world.

The Indonesian independent campus policy integrates the core elements of the Liberal Arts Education (LAE), the Bologna Process (BP), and innovative concepts from Indonesia's national education reforms. This integration aims to amplify the relevance and responsiveness of Indonesian universities, laying a solid foundation for developing inclusive educational practices through equipping students with social responsibility, adaptability, and critical skills, which are essential in a competitive global workforce (Hidayat, 2024b). The BP ensures that graduates' qualifications are recognized internationally, facilitating global mobility and enhancing job prospects (Canal Domínguez & Gutiérrez; Gareis & Broekel, 2022; Rodríguez, 2023; Salas-Velasco, 2023). Meanwhile, the LAE, with its emphasis on critical thinking, effective communication, and adaptability, is central to preparing students for the demands of the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Chen & Min, 2021; Leping, 2021; Penprase, 2021; Shen, 2016; Wang & Xu, 2021). When these two powerful educational paradigms are combined with the transformative ideas of the Indonesian government, it is hoped that in the future, they will be able to promote the creation of graduates who are academically superior and have strong leadership and ethical

skills, which will contribute to sustainable social and economic development in Indonesia.

In line with this paradigmatic combination, the independent campus policy stimulates students to be more energetic, independent, and competitive in pursuing their education and careers. Eight main programs are expected to meet these goals within the framework of this policy to upgrade the worth of universities and shape students who are better prepared to face future challenges. The policy encourages students to become more independent, creative, and solution-oriented by allocating various chances to study and contribute. First, the “student exchange” program offers students the opportunity to study at different campuses, domestically and abroad, broadening their academic horizons and networks. Second, the “internship or work practice” program provides several months of actual work experience, strengthening practical skills and understanding of industry dynamics. Third, the “village project” program invites students to be directly involved in developing village communities by applying the knowledge they have gained to address local issues. Fourth, the “teaching in schools” program distributes chances for students to become teachers in schools, especially in remote areas, to boost the excellence of primary and secondary education. Fifth, the “research” program encourages students to engage in research projects relevant to their field of study, enhancing analytical and critical skills. Sixth, the “entrepreneurship activity” program fosters an entrepreneurial spirit by providing support and guidance in starting a business. Seventh, the “independent project” program allows students to propose and implement projects according to their interests and needs with supervised lecturers. Finally, the “national defense” program provides training and knowledge about national defense, fostering a love for the homeland and concern for preserving the country (Kusumawardani et al., 2024).

Nevertheless, stakeholders’ responses to the independent campus policy have varied widely. Many higher education institutions have welcomed the policy because it provides greater freedom in designing the curriculum and provides more diverse learning opportunities for students at primary schools and universities (Harlanu et al., 2024; Mursitama et al., 2022; Samsudi et al., 2024; Suharno et al., 2023; Sumani et al., 2022; Wardani et al., 2023; Zubair et al., 2023). However, there are also concerns regarding the readiness of infrastructure and human resources to execute the policy effectively (Ahyanuardi et al., 2023; Muslihata et al., 2023; Supriyoko et al., 2022). A comprehensive evaluation is needed to ensure that existing programs provide the expected benefits and not simply become an additional administrative burden for educational institutions (Usman & Hartati, 2024).

In summary, the independent campus policy presents an excellent opportunity for higher education reform in Indonesia, but its success depends heavily on practical implementation and support from all stakeholders. Continuous evaluation and adjustment are needed to ensure that this policy can make a real contribution to augmenting the grade of education and the competitiveness of graduates at the national and international levels.

## Research Method

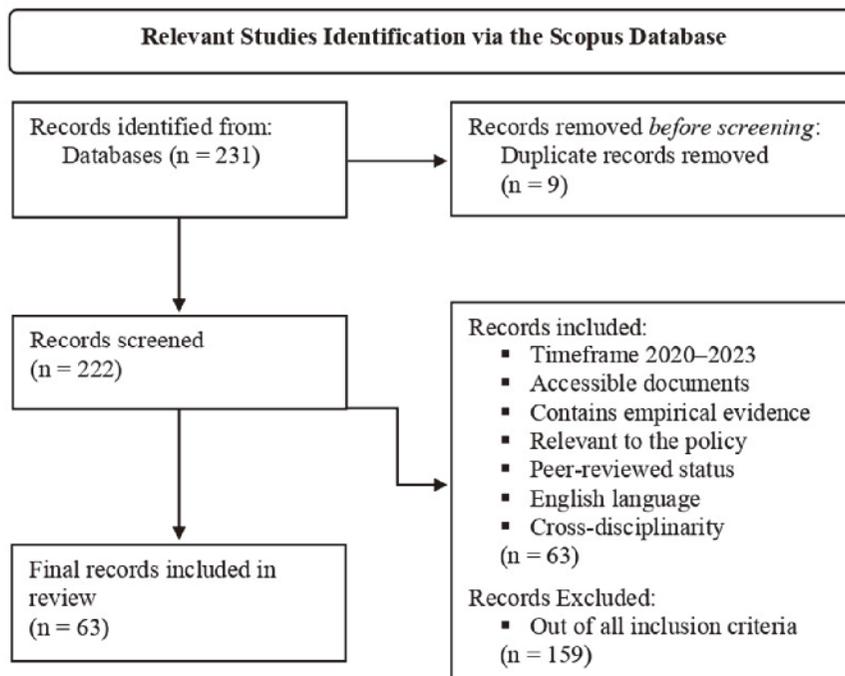
This study adhered to Tranfield et al.'s (2003) SLR framework, ensuring a methodological and transparent process. The process involved crafting a search protocol encompassing a research question, criteria, strategy, and article selection process. The investigation delved into the previous research to address three primary inquiries: (1) How do bibliometric indicators manifest in prior studies on the independent campus policy, encompassing the number of publications, authorship patterns, document types, authors' countries, co-authorship, and keyword co-occurrence? (2) Within previous research, which streams are poised to receive heightened attention? (3) What is the critical role of the previous research in shaping the future direction of Indonesia's higher education policy?

The bibliometric indicator data underwent a systematic processing procedure facilitated by the Excel spreadsheet tabulation and the VOSviewer application. In the initial phase, the author organized raw data tabulation through an Excel spreadsheet, involving meticulous arrangement and categorization to ensure the presentation accuracy of each bibliometric aspect. Subsequently, the author imported the processed data into the VOSviewer software, a powerful device for envisaging and analyzing complex bibliometric networks (Bukar et al., 2023; Firmansyah & Hidayat, 2024; Hidayat, 2024a; van Eck & Waltman, 2010). VOSviewer employs advanced algorithms to generate visual representations of relationships and patterns within scholarly data. In this case, it facilitated the creation of visual maps depicting co-authorship networks, keyword co-occurrence clusters, and other relevant bibliometric trends. The application's capabilities allow for a comprehensive exploration of the interconnectedness and thematic associations present in the dataset. By combining the Excel Spreadsheet and VOSviewer, this systematic literature review can provide a robust and comprehensive approach to handling the bibliometric indicator data. This integrated methodology ensured an accurate tabulation and enabled sophisticated visualization, enhancing the interpretability and insights derived from the complex bibliometric analysis.

The author used five inclusion criteria to ensure a thorough exploration, encompassing empirical evidence on the independent campus policy, a perspective aligned with it, peer-reviewed status, English language, and cross-disciplinarity. The author limited the literature search to English-language papers indexed in the Scopus database because this database provides broad global coverage and high-quality standards. Although there are academic journals in Indonesian that also have credibility, language limitations and international accessibility are essential considerations in ensuring broader relevance and readability. However, this review still recognizes the vital contribution of domestic literature and suggests further studies that include these sources for a more comprehensive perspective. In addition, cross-disciplinarity reflects the fact that the author included relevant documents not limited to the disciplines of public administration, government, and political sciences that are close to the author's academic proficiency, but go beyond that scope according to the data available in Scopus.

The search terms included variations of ‘independent learning’ OR ‘independent campus’ OR ‘kampus merdeka’ OR ‘merdeka belajar’ OR ‘MBKM’. The search spanned literature from December 2020 to December 2023, with exclusions applied for non-accessible documents and those unrelated to the policy. The four-stage review process encompassed database exploration, title-keyword-abstract screening, full-text scrutiny, and final selection. From an initial pool of 231 documents, the author chose 63 pieces of literature to emphasize comprehending the intricate relationship within the policy sphere, following rigorous screenings and evaluations. Figure 1 below illustrates these stages. The author then analyzed data through bibliometrics, content, and thematic analyses. Excel spreadsheet tabulation and VOSviewer were used to visualize and analyze bibliometric indicators, while content analysis involved coding and categorizing the main themes of the selected literature—furthermore, thematic analysis identified and categorized essential themes in the literature using a systematic coding process.

**Figure 1. Literature Search Flowchart**



## Results and Discussion

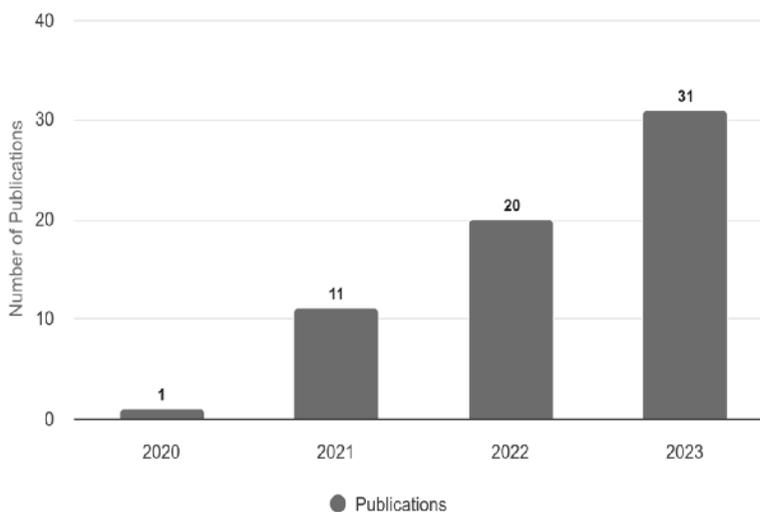
### *Results: Bibliometric indicators*

This section provides the results of bibliometric review, centering on several indicators: the number of publications, authorship patterns, document types, authors' countries, co-authorship, and keyword co-occurrence.

#### Number of publications

The data presented in Figure 2 illustrates the yearly distribution of the published literature in a particular field over four years. In 2020, there was a modest start with only one publication. However, the subsequent years witnessed a notable surge in scholarly output. In 2021, the number of publications increased significantly to 11, signaling a substantial growth in research contributions. The trend continued in 2022, with a further rise to 20 publications, suggesting sustained academic activity and potentially heightened interest in the subject matter. The pinnacle of the research trajectory materialized in 2023, as evidenced by the highest recorded number of published works during this particular year. It reached 31, indicating research productivity or a period of heightened scholarly engagement within the field. In four years, there were 63 publications, underscoring a cumulative body of work and providing a quantitative measure of the scholarship output in this specific domain over the specified time frame.

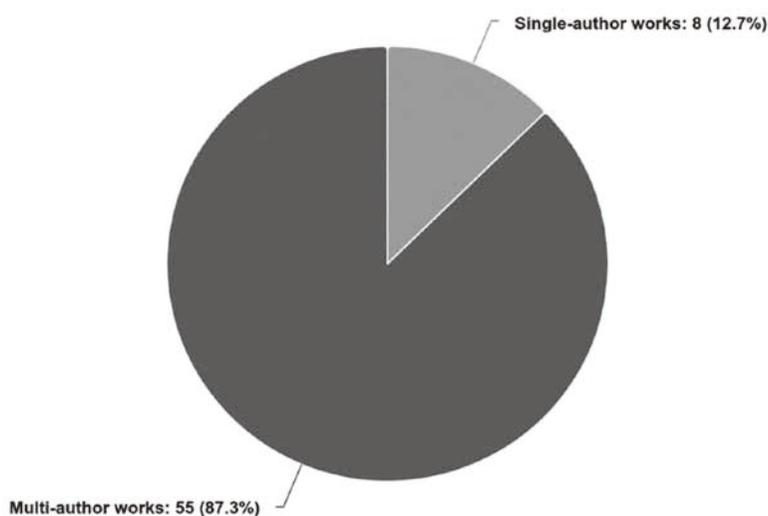
**Figure 2. Annual Publications (2020–2023)**



### Authorship patterns

Figure 3 below provides a comprehensive overview of the authorship patterns within 63 documents. Among these, eight are identified as single-authored, showcasing independent contributions and perspectives. In contrast, 55 documents were multi-authored. That signifies collaborative efforts involving two or more authors, highlighting the collective nature of scholarly endeavours. The data underscores the diversity of authorship patterns in the analyzed documents, emphasizing independent research contributions and collaborative efforts within the academic or research context.

**Figure 3. Authorship Patterns in Published Literature (2020–2023)**

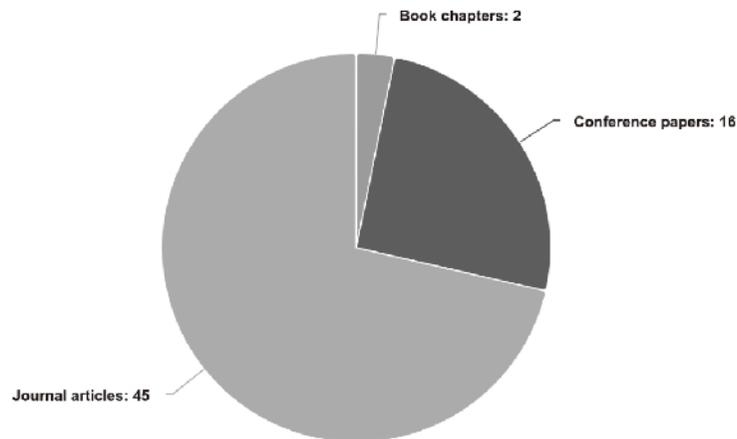


### Document types

The following Figure 4 reveals the distribution across different formats of published literature from 2020 to 2023, consisting of three document types: book chapters, conference papers, and journal articles. The breakdown indicates two book chapters, 16 conference papers, and 45 journal articles, contributing to 63 publications. This information offers insights into the diverse nature of scholarly output within prior studies, focusing on journal articles, followed by conference papers and book chapters. The distribution

among these document types provides a snapshot of the communication channels and dissemination strategies employed by researchers in the given domain.

**Figure 4. Types of Publications (2020–2023)**



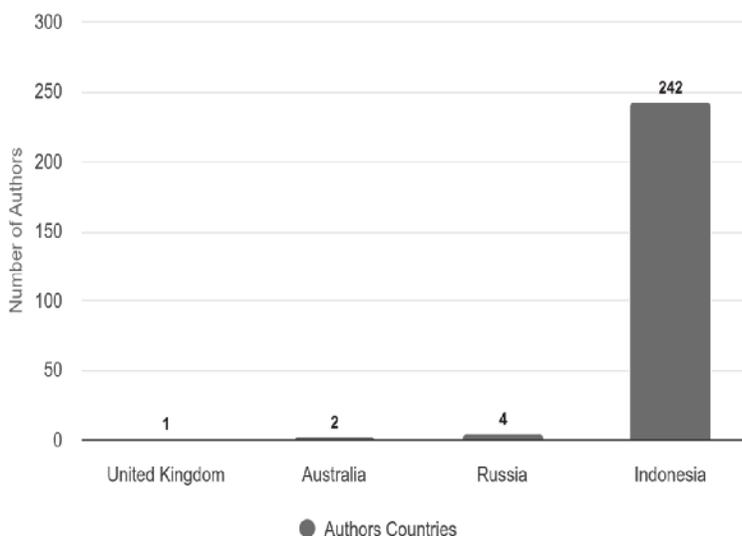
### Authors' countries

Figure 5 visualizes the global distribution of 249 authors associated with the 63 publications in the Indonesian independent campus policy research domain. The data underscores a pronounced concentration of research output in Indonesia, with 61 publications attributed to authors from this country. That points to substantial and noteworthy contributions from the Indonesian scholarly entities to the field under investigation. Australia provided two authors who collectively contributed to one publication; four Russian scholars compiled a single article with five Indonesian lecturers; and the United Kingdom is associated with two documents from an author affiliated with University College London.

The detailed information about specific foreign authors sheds light on diverse affiliations and collaborative efforts. Dorothy Ferary, linked to University College London in the UK, played a multifaceted role as the Country Program Manager for the Duke of Edinburgh's Award in Indonesia and as a visiting lecturer at Satya Terra Bhinneka University in Indonesia. Adam Voak and Brian Fairman are authors affiliated with James Cook University in Australia and jointly contributed to a single publication. Their collaborative endeavours extended to partnerships with authors Abdullah Helmy from *Politeknik Negeri Malang* and Anggi Afriansyah from the National Research and Innovation Agency in Indonesia. Meanwhile, Vadim V. Ponkratov, Gevorg T. Malashenko, Mikhail E. Kosov, and Olesya V.

Dudnik, Russian scholars, co-authored one article, together with Lili Abdullah Rozak and five additional authors from various universities in Indonesia. This collaborative international engagement among authors from different countries reflects a rich and interconnected network of researchers contributing to the scholarly output in the specified field. The emphasis on Indonesian participation underscores the country's significant role in shaping the research landscape within this dataset.

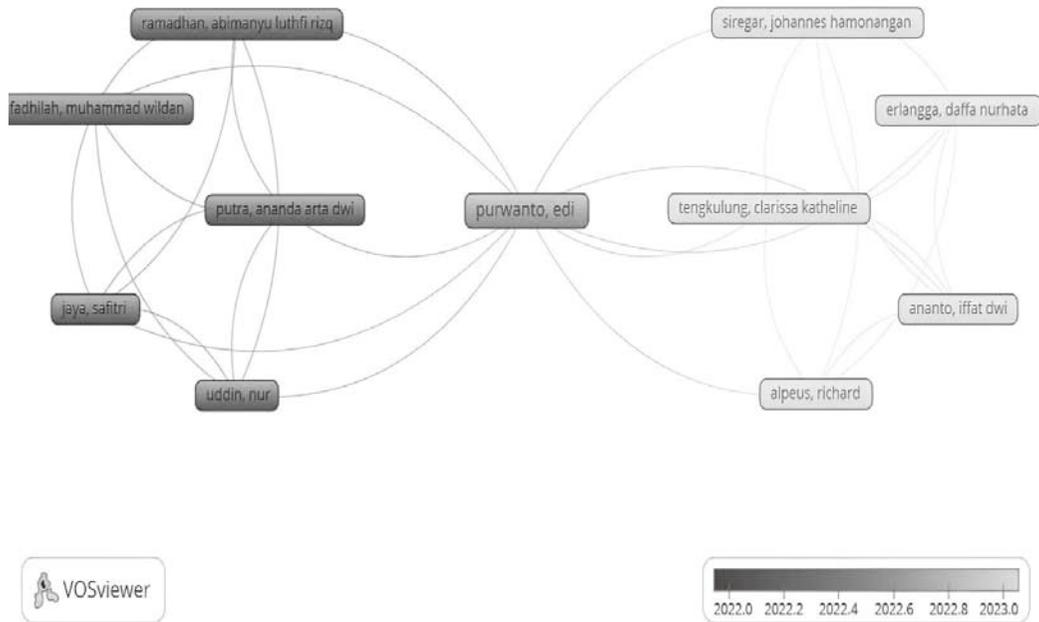
**Figure 5. Authors' Countries (2020–2023)**



### Co-authorship

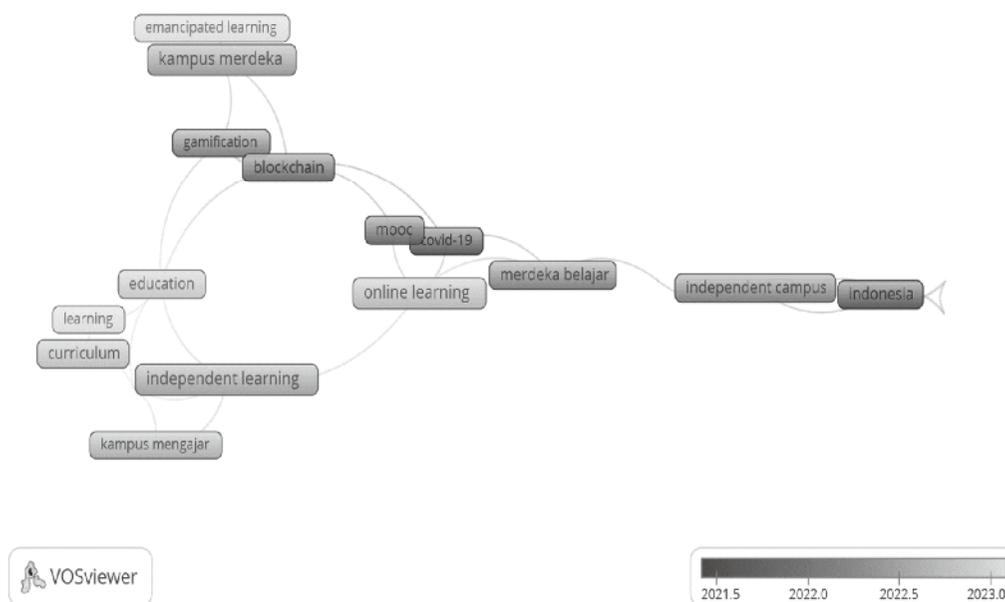
Co-authorship reflects how frequently researchers collaborate with others in an academic work. The number of collaborations among authors can reflect the level of interaction and engagement within a specific research field. In our analysis, the author set specific criteria: 1 as a minimum number of documents for an author out of 249 who met the established threshold. As a result, the analysis revealed 11 names that stood out as prominent researchers in the field, as shown in Figure 6, highlighting their significant contributions through collaborative efforts. These researchers demonstrated a noteworthy level of involvement and interaction within the academic community, as reflected in the substantial number of co-authored documents they have produced. This collaboration highlights the significance of collective knowledge-building and emphasizes the collaborative state of research in the realm of the Indonesian independent campus policy.

**Figure 6. Co-authorship in Prior Studies (2020–2023)**



Keyword co-occurrence

Keyword co-occurrence analysis indicates how often particular keywords co-occur in the scientific literature to aid the identification of relationships between topics or concepts often discussed together, the author applied specific criteria. The criteria included the requirement that each keyword appear at least twice out of the 206 terms identified, and the results showed that 22 keywords met the set threshold. As illustrated in Figure 7, these keywords consistently co-occur in the context of the scientific literature, highlighting the relationships and interrelationships between topics or concepts highly relevant to research on the independent campus policy.

**Figure 7. Keyword Co-occurrence in Published Literature (2020–2023)**

The above 22 identified terms are keywords that often appear in the literature related to the independent campus policy. The frequency of co-occurrence and the total strength of the link can be interpreted to show how these topics are related to each other in the literature. For example, the keyword “independent learning” appears five times with a total strength of four links, while “MBKM” also appears four times with a total strength of four. It confirms that independent campus literature often discusses these two terms, indicating the relevance and close relationship between independent learning and related policies.

Other keywords such as “online learning” and “education” appear five and four times, respectively, with a significant total strength of links, indicating that online learning and general education are topics often discussed in the same context as the independent campus policy. Terms such as “blockchain,” with a link strength of six, “COVID-19,” with four, and “gamification,” with four, show that aspects of technology and the pandemic are also essential parts of the discussion of the independent campus policy. The frequency and strength of these links indicate that these topics are often discussed and have significant relevance in the literature.

The results of this analysis can provide a valuable initial overview of the structure and focus of discussions in previous literature. By understanding the interrelationships between these topics, various aspects can be identified that interact with each other and contribute to the broader discussion of the independent campus policy.

## *Discussion*

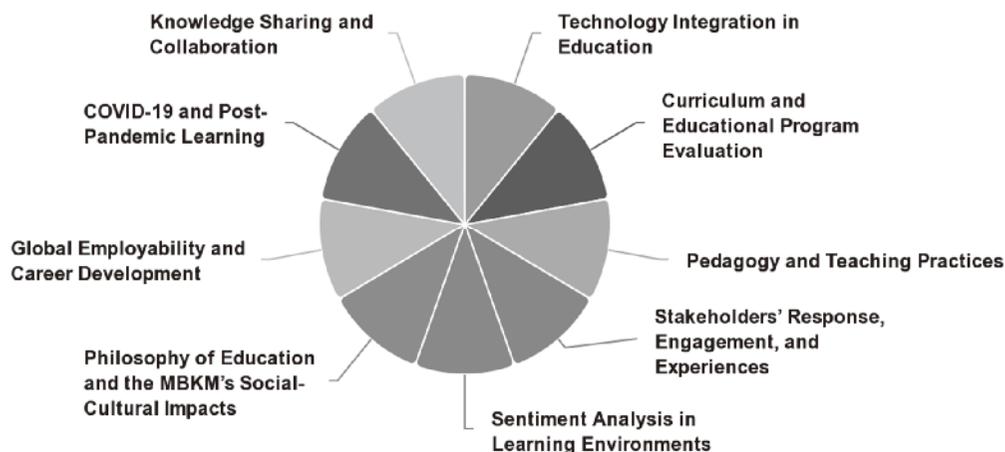
This section will comprehensively explore and address research question 2. The analysis will unfold in one pivotal dimension—streams or cross-cutting research themes on the Indonesian independent campus policy. In other words, the discussion will examine the prior extensive studies conducted between 2020 and 2023. The primary focus will be identifying cross-cutting themes emerging across multiple core disciplines: agricultural science and entrepreneurship; computer science and information technology; education policy, management, and technology; public administration; and sociology. By synthesizing findings, the narrative will unveil interconnected and overarching topics that have significantly influenced the research landscape. Such a holistic approach furnishes cohesive insights into the recurring themes that have shaped the diverse research streams during the specified period.

### Streams: Cross-cutting themes of prior studies (2020–2023)

Cross-cutting themes from 63 documents were identified through a systematic literature review and academic discipline-based categorization. Rigorous content analysis and thematic coding are also employed to extract vital research themes and foci within each academic discipline. The subsequent cross-referencing and comparison across disciplines revealed overarching patterns and commonalities, forming the basis for identifying cross-cutting themes that transcended individual academic domains. These themes were conceptualized as dynamic currents shaping the intellectual landscape of prior studies.

To ensure robustness, the synthesis of cross-cutting themes underwent iterative refinement and validation through peer reviews. The result is a cohesive narrative that captures the essence of research, emphasizing shared interests and challenges across diverse disciplines. This methodological approach provides a nuanced comprehension of the interconnected fabric of the Indonesian independent campus policy research, enriching the analysis and contributing to the initiative's comprehensive intellectual landscape.

Figure 8 unveils a visual representation that encapsulates the outcome of an exhaustive analysis of 63 documents encompassing research conducted between 2020 and 2023. Within this graphic presentation, nine distinct research streams emerge, delineating the primary avenues of intellectual exploration embedded within the Indonesian independent campus policy framework. That figure is an intricate visual roadmap, providing a concise and insightful overview of the diverse research streams that collectively contribute to the multifaceted research exploration during the specified timeframe.

**Figure 8. Research Streams (2020–2023)**

In the “Technology Integration in Education” stream, a diverse range of topics unfold, exploring the integration of humanitarian technology into computer science education (Asfarian et al., 2020). Additionally, studies delve into enhancing MOOC design (Adriyanto et al., 2021) and developing effective online learning systems (Budiyanto et al., 2021). The exploration extends to digital manufacturing requirements within the apprenticeship program (Rachmat et al., 2021) and eLearning education with gamification blockchain (Aini et al., 2022). The research landscape encompasses project-based empathy learning with new technologies (e.g., inaRISK Application and Biopore Technology; Khusna et al., 2022), digital technology transformation and empowerment (Triwiyanto et al., 2022), machine-learning prediction of students’ interest (Uddin et al., 2022), blockchain-based frameworks for securing learners’ activity (Henderi et al., 2022), integration of independent learning in STEM module (Azhari et al., 2023), the effectiveness of MOOC in learning Arabic during the pandemic (Baharun, 2023), interactive multimodality books in nursing education (Anggraini & Dewi, 2023), developing social virtual reality applications for collaborative learning (Rante et al., 2023), and the independent campus policy’s emphasis on digital skills for quality education management (Muflihin & Warsito, 2024).

Research explores diverse avenues within the “Curriculum and Educational Program Evaluation” stream. Quality assurance in online learning (Pannen, 2021) and evaluations of the independent campus program (Yusuf, 2021) contribute significantly. The landscape extends to the assessment of the Indonesian higher education curriculum (Supriyoko et al., 2022), empirical assessment of educational service excellence during the COVID-19 pandemic, and the shift to hybrid education models (Rozak et

al., 2022), the policy implementation (Sa'diyah et al., 2022), readiness assessment tools for high school students (Belawati et al., 2023), evaluations of STEM students' critical thinking (Lubna et al., 2023), the execution of the learning curriculum in the integrated independent campus program (Prabawati et al., 2023), embedding SDGs in biotechnology curriculum (Purnomo et al., 2023), historical literacy skills in high schools (Purwanta, 2023), the impact of online media on students' understanding of the independent campus program (Siregar et al., 2022), implementation analysis of the policy in a high school (Taridala et al., 2023), and analyzing primary schools' Merdeka curriculum (Wardiyah et al., 2023).

In the "Pedagogy and Teaching Practices" stream, research navigated diverse aspects, examining elementary school teachers' understanding and support for the policy (Sihombing et al., 2021), teachers' perspectives on independent learning (Thohir et al., 2021), internship students' teaching skills and learning effectiveness (Tuasikal et al., 2021), the expansion of PBL-based web learning models for primary school teachers (Ahdhianto et al., 2022), learner autonomy and institutional support systems (Antara et al., 2023), determinants for participation in independent learning (Gunarso et al., 2023), contextual learning models for nursing education (Rohmah et al., 2023), and project-based learning for creative thinking (Sari et al., 2023).

Within the field of "Stakeholders' Response, Engagement, and Experiences," the research narrative encompassed students' evaluation of online learning (Mualimin, 2022), dual identities of student-teachers (Suharti et al., 2022), perceptions analysis regarding student exchange (Octaria et al., 2022), students' readiness for online education (Purwarno et al., 2023), learning students' internships experience (Muslihati et al., 2023), recognition of student participation in humanitarian activities "COVID-19 Ambassador" as part of the independent campus program and its consequence on academic justice (Suyadi et al., 2022), academic staff's pedagogical shifts and concerns under the policy (Voak et al., 2023), and Islamic religious universities' response to recent regulation (Zubair et al., 2023).

The "Sentiment Analysis in Learning Environments" stream, explored public sentiment evaluation of the independent campus policy (Sandra et al., 2022), the positive and negative feelings assessment for the independent learning curriculum (Ariefah et al., 2023), and the investigation of the public emotional reactions and satisfactions towards the "*Kampus Mengajar*" program (Suhud et al., 2023). Meanwhile, "Philosophy of Education and the Policy's Social-Cultural Impacts" delved into the philosophical perspective of Indonesian education and its relevance to Dewantara's philosophy (Ferary, 2021, 2023), impacts of the *Kampus Mengajar* program on students' social skills (Sumani et al., 2022), historical account of VET interventions (Siminjutak et al., 2022), strengthening culture and citizenship literacy of EFL pre-service teachers (Dewi et al., 2023), neoliberal ideology manifestations in the concept of "*Kampus Merdeka*" (Hatmanto et al., 2023), and civic education and student character: impacts of the independent campus values on multicultural encounters on a campus (Suharno et al., 2023).

The stream of "Global Employability and Career Development" encompasses research on the policy's impact on students' competence in achieving global employability (Mursitama et al., 2022) and

identifying critical factors for the success of agropreneurship education (Haryati et al., 2023). These studies underscored the significance of preparing students for a competitive global marketplace regarding evolving educational strategies amidst global challenges. Within the stream of “COVID-19 and Post-Pandemic Learning,” research explores e-learning readiness during COVID-19 (Heryandi et al., 2021), the post-pandemic independent learning assistance model (Nityasanti et al., 2023), and the learning loss experience of the Zillennial Generation (Parahita et al., 2023). This stream reflected the ongoing adaptation of educational methods in the face of unprecedented disruption. Lastly, the stream of “Knowledge Sharing and Collaboration” encompassed factors encouraging knowledge-sharing culture (Pramono et al., 2022) and collaborative knowledge-sharing system design (Zulhalim & Wibowo, 2022), which emphasized the importance of collaborative efforts in knowledge management in educational environments.

In summary, the research on the Indonesian independent campus policy forms a comprehensive tapestry, weaving through various streams that collectively enhance the understanding of higher education in Indonesia. From technology integration and curriculum evaluation to pedagogy, stakeholder experiences, sentiment analysis, philosophical impacts, global employability, post-pandemic learning, and knowledge sharing, each stream contributes a unique perspective. Together, they create a nuanced narrative that captures the multidimensional impact of the policy on higher education. These findings enrich the current discourse and lay the foundation for future advancements and well-informed educational policies.

### The critical role of prior studies in shaping the future direction of higher education policy in Indonesia

The 63 pieces of literature in this SLR indicate academic interest that plays a pivotal role in determining the direction of higher education policy in Indonesia. One of the most recent policies widely discussed is the independent campus, introduced by the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture. This policy seeks to supply substantial flexibility to students in forming their academic trajectory according to individual talents and interests.

Several studies conducted between 2020 and 2023 show the policy’s multifaceted impact. For example, a study by Usman & Hartati (2024) reviewed various publications in Scopus-indexed journals to critique and assess policy implementation. They emphasized the significance of government support and the promptness of educational institutions, students, and lecturers in making this policy a success. Another relevant study by Triwiyanto et al. (2022) examines digital alteration and technology empowerment as a novel approach in classroom management to support the policy. The study’s results indicate that digital transformation creates a more adaptive and innovative learning environment.

In addition, a study by Muslihati et al. (2023) on student engagement with industry through internship programs underlines the importance of collaboration between universities and industry to

purvey students for the job market. The study highlights that internship experiences can assist students in constructing the expertise, knowledge, and attitudes required for employment. Yusuf (2021) also provides insight into the readiness of Indonesia's higher education institutions to adopt the policy. His study shows that institutional readiness and government support are critical to ensuring the policy's success.

Thus, previous studies provide a robust empirical foundation for policymakers to gauge the efficacy of the independent campus policy and make necessary improvements. These studies evaluate the policy's implementation at the university tier and the primary and secondary school levels. They serve as mirrors that reflect the successes and challenges of the independent campus policy while offering evidence-based recommendations for future improvements. Higher education policies in Indonesia must continue to evolve by considering the latest research findings to achieve better national education goals.

## **Conclusion**

The independent campus policy represents a transformative milestone in Indonesian higher education, granting students the autonomy to shape their academic path based on individual interests and talents. The burgeoning body of research recorded in the Scopus database, underscores the scholarly interest in its multifaceted impact. However, the critical review reveals a notable research gap in the existing literature. While studies explore various dimensions of policy implementation, from higher education to the Merdeka Curriculum in elementary and secondary schools, a systematic effort should be made to synthesize and analyze these findings. A consolidated overview is necessary for a nuanced understanding of the policy's holistic effects on educational levels. This review bridges this gap by offering an empirical and in-depth examination of the research evolution. Delineating the main findings of the 63 prior studies will contribute to a more holistic comprehension of the policy's implications and identify avenues for prospective studies to elevate our comprehension of the transformative shifts in Indonesia's educational landscape.

The analysis of previous research spanning 2020–2023 reveals a robust scholarly landscape. Authorship patterns showcase a mix of single and multi-author works, emphasizing collaborative research efforts. The dominant document type is journal articles, reflecting diverse communication channels. Indonesia emerges as a focal point, contributing significantly to the global distribution of authors. Co-authorship patterns and keyword co-occurrence underscore collaborative knowledge-building and illuminate thematic relationships. This comprehensive synthesis encapsulates the previous research's interdisciplinary nature and global significance, highlighting Indonesia's pivotal role in shaping this scholarly domain.

There are some notable limitations, but this systematic literature review offers valuable insights into the prior research on the independent campus policy in Indonesia. First, the review's scope is limited to research conducted between 2020 and 2023, which may only encompass some relevant literature.

This temporal constraint could omit earlier foundational studies or miss more recent developments. In addition, the focus on the 63 selected documents might overlook emerging research or alternative perspectives. The reliance on peer-reviewed synthesis and iterative refinement while ensuring thoroughness may introduce a potential bias toward well-established viewpoints. More than that, this review emphasizes cross-cutting themes without delving into specific regional or institutional variations, limiting the generalizability of the findings. The bibliometric indicators, while informative, might only capture part of the spectrum of influential works. Because this review only relies on literature in a specific language, it is also essential to acknowledge potential language bias. Lastly, this review needs to explicitly address the quality or accuracy of individual studies, which could impact the overall reliability of the synthesized findings.

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