

Implementation of the Independent Learning Curriculum from the Perspective of Educators at SMKN 1 Singgahan Tuban

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Abstract. The Independent Learning Curriculum was initiated by the Indonesian government as a step to transform education with the aim of improving the quality of learning and independent learning for students. The implementation of this curriculum provides freedom for teachers in designing learning that is more contextual, interactive, and according to local needs. This study aims to identify the views of educators related to the challenges, opportunities, and impacts of the implementation of the Independent Learning Curriculum in secondary schools. This study uses a qualitative method with semi-structured interview techniques for teachers in several schools. The results of the study show that the majority of teachers support the implementation of this curriculum, but face challenges in the preparation of modules and adjustments to assessment methods. This research provides important implications for improving teachers' readiness to implement the Independent Learning Curriculum through intensive training support and resource support.

Keywords: Independent Learning Curriculum

INTRODUCTION

The transformation of education in Indonesia is currently directed through the implementation of the Independent Learning Curriculum, a policy designed by the Ministry of Education and Culture to provide a more flexible, inclusive, and student-focused learning experience. This curriculum allows educators to design learning that is more in line with students' needs, potentials, and interests, with the goal of improving academic and non-academic skills relevant to daily life. One of the main approaches in this curriculum is project-based learning, which not only focuses on theoretical knowledge, but also on practical skills or life skills that will be useful for students in the future (Puspitasari, 2023; Ministry of Education and Culture, 2022).

However, the implementation of the Independent Learning Curriculum presents significant challenges, especially for educators. They are faced with having to adapt to more dynamic learning patterns and more diverse assessment methods than the previous curriculum. Teachers who are used to traditional learning methods often have difficulty in compiling adaptive modules, choosing effective teaching methods, and evaluating student learning outcomes holistically (Yusuf & Amalia, 2023). In addition, the curriculum encourages the wider use of educational technology to improve student interaction and engagement in the learning process. However, obstacles in the form of lack of access to technology, as well as adequate technical skills, are often obstacles for some educators in maximizing the potential of technology in the classroom (Sari & Putra, 2023).

In addition to adaptation challenges, some educators feel that they have not received enough intensive training and mentoring to implement the Independent Learning Curriculum. Several studies show that many educators feel helped if there is continuous mentoring, especially in developing learning modules that are in line with the principles of this

curriculum (Hasanah, 2023). Therefore, this research was conducted to understand the challenges and opportunities from the perspective of educators in implementing the Independent Learning Curriculum. Thus, this research is expected to provide useful input for policymakers and related parties to optimize support for educators so that the Independent Learning Curriculum can be implemented effectively, so as to have a significant positive impact on the learning process and outcomes of students.

METHOD

This study uses a field research method, using a qualitative descriptive approach. Parta and Yasa (2015), Sugiyono argues that qualitative research methods are based on the philosophy of positivism and are used in researching natural objects, with the researcher as the main instrument. This study, which uses a qualitative descriptive method, is based on primary data obtained through interviews and direct observations in the field.

The author conducted a data search directly in the field. Thus, this research is said to be field research. By conducting a search for the implementation of the Independent Learning Curriculum in the secondary school environment. The qualitative approach was chosen because it is appropriate to explore the experiences, perceptions, and challenges faced by educators in implementing this new curriculum in depth (Sugiyono, 2019).

a. Research Subject

The subjects of this study are 15 teachers from various subjects who teach at SMK N 1 Singgahan, Tuban Regency. The selection of subjects was carried out by purposive sampling technique, which allowed the researcher to select informants who had direct experience and knowledge about the implementation of the Independent Learning Curriculum (Miles & Huberman, 2014). Teachers are selected based on criteria such as length of teaching, activeness in participating in curriculum training, and involvement in the development of project-based learning modules.

b. Data Collection Techniques

The data in this study were collected through semi-structured interviews conducted in person and online. Semi-structured interviews allow educators to express their views and experiences more flexibly while still following predetermined topic guidelines. In addition, field observations and analysis of documents such as learning modules and project designs are also carried out to support the data obtained from interviews (Creswell, 2016).

The data collection method refers to the techniques used in obtaining complete, objective, and verifiable data. The author uses certain techniques or methods of data collection in this study, namely:

1. Interview methods

Interviews, also known as interviews, are a systematic method of data collection that involves interviewees and getting answers to achieve research objectives. Semi-structured interviews are a type of interview characterized by a relatively open format, in contrast to the more rigid structured interview structure. Rading, Kiyai, and Tampi (2016) according to Sutopo (2002: 58) In-depth interviews are characterized by their unstructured nature, because researchers see the need to conduct such interviews to obtain *comprehensive* and accurate information. As a result, open interviews are given to obtain in-depth information from the informants. The questions are not formally structured, allowing for a *comprehensive* exploration from the subject's perspective on a variety of topics relevant to the research. So the author chose this type of interview, because he can find problems more openly and can investigate problems appropriately. This in-depth interview was conducted at least 2 times, to check the validity of the data.

2. Observation Methods

The method used to collect information. The observation method refers to the systematic practice of observing and recording the phenomenon being studied. The author noted the Implementation of the Independent Learning Curriculum from the Perspective of Educators at SMK N 1 Singgahan, Tuban Regency. The author begins to record relevant observations related to the topic being researched.

3. Documentation Methods

This method is used in archiving data obtained from various sources such as archives, previous research, photos, notes, and other reports to provide special guidelines needed to support the research process. Such as learning modules and project designs are also carried out to support the data obtained from interviews.

c. Data Analysis Techniques

The data were analyzed using the thematic analysis method developed by Braun and Clarke (2006). This analysis includes the steps of open coding, theme identification, data grouping, and interpretation. The first stage is open coding, where data from interviews and observations are coded to represent emerging ideas or concepts. After that, similar codes are collected into key themes, such as the challenges of building modules, project-based assessment methods, and the training support needed. All the results of the analysis were then interpreted to provide insight into the implementation of the Independent Learning Curriculum from the teacher's perspective.

d. Validity and Reliability

Data validity testing in qualitative studies includes data credibility testing (internal validity), data forwardability test (reability), transferability test (generalization), and *confirmability* test (objectivity). But the most important thing is to test the credibility of the data. The credibility test was carried out through extending the observation time, increasing triangulation, perseverance, validation, negative case analysis and discussion with colleagues.

The researcher used triangulation as a method to analyze the data in this research. Sugiyono defines triangulation as the process of researching data from various sources, using different methods, and conducting assessments at varying intervals to ensure the credibility of the findings.

This study uses Source Triangulation as a methodological approach to assess the credibility of the data by cross-referencing information collected from various sources to corroborate the findings. Researchers conduct interviews with tourism managers, communities, and business stakeholders around tourist attractions to collect data that will strengthen the research.

e. Data Processing Engineering

Data that has been obtained both from the field and literature, Rading and Kiyai, (2016) stated that the data was then processed through three stages simultaneously, namely data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing (Miles and Huberman in Sutopo: 2002), namely:

1. Data Reduction

During this phase, researchers will select and summarize information that satisfies the research focus criteria, while eliminating foreign data.

2. Display Data

Data presentation refers to an organized and structured collection of information that provides a holistic representation of the research findings. It involves presenting complete and detailed data, with the aim of identifying patterns and relationships. The presentation of data aims to facilitate the understanding of research results as a whole or certain aspects. Complete and thorough data can make it easier for researchers to understand the subtopics being researched.

3. Drawing conclusions

The third process involves verification and drawing conclusions. Researchers are involved in the data collection process with the aim of distinguishing meanings in symbols, taking notes, identifying cause-and-effect pathways, and providing explanations. This activity leads to the formulation of a comprehensive conclusion. Next, the information is directed to a more specific or elaborated segment. Final conclusions are expected to be derived after the culmination of the data collection procedure. The process of data reduction, summarization, and adaptation to the research problem is followed by data analysis and prediction of its validity.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study identifies several main themes that emerge from the analysis of interview data, observations, and documents related to the implementation of the Independent Learning Curriculum. Each theme describes the experiences, views, as well as the challenges and opportunities faced by educators in implementing this curriculum.

a. Freedom in Structuring Learning

Most teachers responded positively to the flexibility offered by the Independent Learning Curriculum. They feel that the freedom in determining teaching materials and assessment methods allows them to tailor learning according to the needs and potentials of students more specifically. These teachers also see that this flexibility supports them in creating learning approaches that are contextual and relevant to students' daily lives, for example through project-based learning that is connected to the local environment or issues around them (Sari & Putra, 2023). This approach is in line with the principle of Freedom of Learning which focuses on holistic learning, which touches various aspects of student development, and is inclusive, namely accommodating the diversity of student learning needs (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2022).

However, while this flexibility is welcome, some teachers still have difficulty choosing the right teaching method. They feel that they need more specific guidance to be able to maximize the potential of this curriculum in daily learning. According to them, more structured and continuous training will be very helpful in deepening their understanding and skills in implementing the Independent Learning Curriculum. Support in the form of this training is considered crucial so that educators can present an optimal learning experience for students in accordance with the principles of this new curriculum.

b. Challenges in the Preparation of Modules and Learning Materials

Although the Independent Learning Curriculum provides flexibility for teachers in teaching, many of them find it difficult to design learning modules that are truly in accordance with the principles of this curriculum. Project-based modules, designed to hone students' skills and understanding in a practical way, require more time, effort, and creativity than traditional teaching methods. Teachers also realize that in order to compile teaching materials that are diverse and in accordance with the individual needs of students, they need additional time and access to sufficient resources (Hasanah, 2023).

Some teachers even feel that the preparation of these project-based modules can be an additional burden, especially if they are faced with time constraints or a lack of support facilities at school. This limitation shows that teachers need further support, both in the form of special time allocation for module planning and development and the provision of adequate facilities and resources from the school or related educational institutions. This support is important to ensure that the principle of Freedom of Learning can be implemented optimally and does not add to the already high workload of teachers.

c. Teachers' Readiness in Implementing Authentic Assessments

Assessment in the Independent Learning Curriculum focuses on the competence and development of individual students' skills, emphasizing assessments that cover various aspects of student abilities. Teachers feel that this approach requires them to be more thorough in monitoring and documenting any progress that students make. The main challenge in this assessment is the need to make intensive observations and assess based on the learning process experienced by students, not just assessing the final result (Yusuf & Amalia, 2023).

Teachers also proposed that more detailed assessment guidelines be provided, especially for assessing project-based learning and life skills. They consider these guidelines important so that assessments can be carried out consistently and objectively. Without clear guidance, assessments have the potential to be subjective and can lead to differences in evaluation between teachers. This shows that the success of the implementation of comprehensive assessments in the Independent Curriculum is highly dependent on the availability of detailed and uniform guidelines.

d. Training and Professional Development Support

The majority of teachers agree that the training they receive related to the Independent Learning Curriculum is still inadequate and does not cover the various needs needed in implementing this curriculum. They feel that more in-depth training is needed, especially to understand and master some important aspects of this curriculum, such as the development of appropriate learning modules, competency-based assessment, and the use of technology in the learning process. In addition, teachers propose continuous training and practical workshops facilitated by experts or educators who have experience in implementing this curriculum (Puspitasari, 2023).

This need shows the importance of structured and comprehensive professional support for teachers so that they are better prepared to implement the Independent Learning Curriculum. With continuous guidance, it is hoped that teachers can understand various learning and assessment methods in accordance with the principles of this curriculum. Continuous guidance will also help them implement this new curriculum more effectively and consistently, so that the impact can be felt by students to the maximum.

e. Utilization of Technology in Learning

Some teachers revealed that the use of technology in the learning process is a big challenge in the implementation of the Independent Learning Curriculum. This curriculum encourages educators to utilize technology as the primary means of accessing relevant information, teaching materials, and other learning resources. However, not all teachers feel comfortable using technology, and some do not have adequate digital skills. In addition, access to the necessary technological devices is also uneven, with some schools experiencing limited facilities such as computers, internet networks, or other multimedia devices (Sari & Putra, 2023).

This obstacle highlights the importance of providing adequate infrastructure to support the use of technology in learning. In addition to infrastructure, intensive training to improve teachers' digital skills is also needed so that they are able to utilize technology effectively. This support in the form of facilities and training will greatly help teachers in integrating technology in project-based learning and in the implementation of the principle of Freedom of Learning.

Discussion

The results of this study illustrate the positive response of educators to the Independent Learning Curriculum, which gives them space to be more creative and flexible in compiling and implementing the learning process. In this curriculum, teachers have more freedom in choosing methods, materials, and approaches that suit the needs of students, which has the potential to increase student involvement and participation in the learning process.

However, there are a number of challenges faced in its implementation. First, the preparation of learning modules is a challenge because it requires good skills and understanding in developing materials that are contextual and in accordance with the characteristics of students. Educators need to adapt modules to learning achievement targets, which require creativity and deep pedagogical insight.

Second, the implementation of authentic assessments is also an obstacle. Authentic assessment, which is expected to be able to measure students' abilities and understanding in a more in-depth and applicable way, requires more complex assessment design and longer time for implementation. Teachers must be able to make valid and reliable assessment instruments and conduct assessments objectively and continuously.

Third, in terms of technology utilization, many teachers still face obstacles, both due to limited infrastructure and lack of skills in utilizing technology for learning. Technology in the Independent Learning Curriculum is expected to support interactive and flexible learning, but without sufficient device support and training, the potential of technology cannot be maximized.

Based on this challenge, it is important for educators to get support in the form of intensive training that is not only done once, but carried out periodically. This training needs to include aspects of module preparation, authentic assessment methods, and the use of technology so that teachers have adequate readiness and competence. In addition, the provision of facilities such as internet access, digital devices, and technical assistance will be very helpful in creating a learning environment that is conducive to the application of the principle of Freedom of Learning.

With adequate support, the implementation of the Independent Learning Curriculum can run effectively and be able to realize the principles of student-centered education, so that learning becomes more relevant, meaningful, and in accordance with the needs and potentials of each student.

CONCLUSION

The implementation of the Independent Learning Curriculum from the perspective of educators shows enthusiasm and positive acceptance of the freedom and flexibility offered. Teachers feel that this curriculum opens up opportunities for them to design learning that is more contextual and in accordance with the needs and potentials of students. Freedom in choosing teaching materials and assessment methods allows teachers to be more creative and innovative in teaching.

However, there are significant challenges in the implementation of this curriculum, especially related to the preparation of project-based learning modules, the implementation of authentic assessments, and the use of technology. Teachers still feel the need for ongoing training and more in-depth guidance to implement this curriculum effectively. The limited facilities and facilities in some schools are also an obstacle to the use of technology in learning.

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that relevant parties provide further support to educators, both in the form of intensive training, clear guidance, and the provision of adequate facilities. With this support, teachers will be more prepared and confident in implementing the Independent Learning Curriculum, so that the goal of this curriculum to create more holistic, inclusive, and student-centered learning can be realized.

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