



Independent Curriculum as an Effort to Improve the Quality of Learning for Students After the Covid-19 Pandemic

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Abstract

In the face of changes due to the pandemic, of course, teaching and learning activities give rise to various problems, one of which is the lack of motivation to learn so that it affects the quality of learning that is far from the maximum and has an impact on decreasing student learning achievements. The writing of this article aims to analyze the independent curriculum in an effort to improve the quality of student learning after the Covid-19 pandemic. The writing of this article uses a literature study method derived from journals, books, websites, and other supporting literature documents. The results of this study show that the independent curriculum can help improve the quality of post-pandemic learning with interactive and relevant and competency-based learning. The role of the independent curriculum in helping to recover and improve the quality of learning that has declined due to the pandemic is quite good, but there needs to be further research, namely whether the independent curriculum is able to "accommodate" schools in remote areas that want to improve the quality and competence of their graduates but are hit with unsupportive conditions

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INTRODUCTION

The Covid-19 pandemic has made Indonesia faced with changes that tend to be rapid and massive. The pandemic has changed many aspects of life, including the changing education ecosystem. The government has received many sudden tasks with this condition, ranging from the 3 M's (wearing masks, washing hands, and maintaining distance), PSBB (large-scale social restrictions) to closing places that have the potential to cause crowds such as tourist attractions, restaurants, places of worship, and schools.

School closures are a measure to prevent the transmission of the virus that must be carried out even though there are prolonged consequences, one of which is changing the learning system to online *or online learning*. Online learning requires all school stakeholders, especially students, to adapt related to teaching and learning activities through the use of application *platforms* and/or open source learning sites as new learning media (massively) to be used in distance learning.



In the face of changes due to the pandemic, of course, teaching and learning activities give rise to various problems, thus affecting the quality of learning that is far from the maximum and has an impact on decreasing student learning achievements. According to research by the Ministry of Education and Culture (Kemdikbud, 2021), the Covid-19 pandemic has caused a significant *learning loss* in literacy and numeracy.

There are so many factors that affect the decline in the quality of learning of students during the pandemic. As stated (Khurriyati et al., 2021) in their research, the article explains that one of the factors of online learning that is not optimal is the problem of not involving students' guardians during learning, so if students experience difficulties, no one helps so that it then has an impact on learning outcomes. There is a change in the role between parents and teachers at the time of learning, and the learning outcomes between students who are accompanied by their parents and students who are not accompanied by their parents will be different.

Similar research was also conducted (Safitri & Nugraheni, 2020) to find out what is the problem in distance learning during the pandemic. The results show that students lack motivation to learn because of the difference in atmosphere between school and at home, so students feel bored. In addition, some students also do not have mobile *phones*, this makes it late in collecting the assignments given.

These factors encourage the government, especially through the Ministry of Education and Culture, to overcome the learning crisis that is getting worse due to the pandemic by designing a curriculum, called the independent curriculum. This independent curriculum emerged as a strategy of the Ministry of Education and Culture, namely by providing flexibility and offering more options, especially in terms of curriculum. Therefore, the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture provides the option to use the Curriculum in each educational unit, namely the K-13 curriculum, the emergency curriculum, and the independent curriculum (Sapitri, 2022).

Curriculum innovation, in this case, an independent curriculum can be proof of the Indonesian government's concern for education issues, regardless of whether it is due to a pandemic emergency or not. The system that is created is definitely a good goal and in general, it is certain that the policy of the system determined is the ideal of a concept towards a real impact of goodness and happiness (Marisa, 2021).

Based on these problems, it is important to examine how crucial the role of the independent curriculum is if it is implemented later. The writing of this article aims to analyze the independent curriculum in an effort to improve the quality of student learning after the Covid-19 pandemic. By analyzing the role of the independent curriculum, it is hoped that it will be a reference for policy makers and educational institutions in optimizing the education ecosystem in Indonesia through the independent curriculum.

METHODS

The writing of this article uses the **library research method**. According to Nazir (2003), literature study is a systematic way of collecting data by examining various literature related to the research problem to gain a deeper understanding and support arguments. This method allows researchers to analyze existing theories, findings, and perspectives to construct a solid conceptual framework. In this article, **various sources** are used, including academic journals, books, official reports, credible websites, and other



supporting literature documents, to ensure the reliability and comprehensiveness of the information presented. Literature review is particularly useful for contextualizing the study within previous research, identifying gaps, and reinforcing the theoretical basis for the discussion (Boote & Beile, 2005; Ridley, 2012). By relying on validated and diverse references, the article maintains academic rigor and provides a well-supported analysis of the topic.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The curriculum is an important element that cannot be separated from the world of education. The curriculum identifies learning outcomes, standards and core competencies that students must demonstrate before progressing to the next level (Mrsstrickey, 2021). According to Law No. 20 of 2003, the curriculum is a set of plans and arrangements related to the objectives, content, teaching materials and methods used as guidelines in the implementation of learning activities to achieve national education goals.

The curriculum in Indonesia has undergone several changes. Almost every change of the minister of education is followed by a change in curriculum. It is evident that currently the Nadiem Makarim era has made a new curriculum design, namely the independent learning curriculum. Improvements and/or reforms in the world of education are important and necessary because they provide opportunities for the state to review and assess the education system, especially the curriculum periodically (M'mboga Akala, 2021). The occurrence of curriculum changes cannot be separated from political, science and technology, economic and socio-cultural conditions in society.

In the current context, curriculum innovation can be said to be quite urgent due to pandemic conditions. As the name implies, the Ministry of Education and Culture provides independence related to the implementation of the independent curriculum, which is optional. This is related to the problem of school readiness that still needs to adapt to curriculum changes. Although optional, the independent curriculum is designed not without consideration and in-depth research. Mainly, the independent curriculum is expected to be a "helper" for learning lag during the pandemic, but it can also help develop student competencies.

The independent curriculum was developed as a more flexible curriculum framework and focused on essential materials as well as the development of students' character and competencies (Oktifa, 2022). The 2013 curriculum has indeed emphasized character development, but does not provide a special part in the curriculum structure, such as the independent curriculum where 20-30% of the lesson hours will be used for character development (Sapitri, 2022).

Competency development means that the independent curriculum is oriented towards achieving concrete results, such as abilities and behavior. As planned by Nadiem Makarim, in the independent curriculum the learning process will not only occur in the classroom, but will also be carried out outside the classroom. This is related to learning through project-based learning activities that will be carried out if the independent curriculum is implemented. Project-based learning refers to an inquiry-based instructional method that engages learners in the construction of knowledge by having them complete meaningful projects and develop products in the real world (Guo et al., 2020).



Project-based learning in the independent curriculum will provide opportunities for students to actively explore further issues such as the environment, socio-culture, health and so on. So that learning becomes interactive and relevant. Therefore, in line with the opinion of Suryadien et al (in Sapitri, 2020), it is important to implement this project-based learning in addition to providing experience to students (*experimental learning*), also as a form of character development and combining with essential competencies learned from various disciplines.

The independent curriculum is designed to continue the development direction of the previous curriculum, namely the 2013 curriculum, which is holistic-oriented, competency-based, and contextual. Holistic orientation in an educational perspective is education that aims to develop students' physical, behavioral, social, creativity, intellectual and spiritual potential (Afroni, 2014). The independent curriculum is considered to develop students holistically, including academic and non-academic abilities.

Then the independent curriculum is designed based on competencies, not content. According to Spencer & Spencer (in Vernia & Sandiar, 2020) competence is an individual ability that is related to effective and superior performance in a job. Meanwhile, McAshan (in Mariyana, 2016) states that competence is the knowledge, skills and abilities that a person masters so that they can perform cognitive, affective and psychomotor behaviors well. Therefore, the independent curriculum according to Nadiem Makariem's direction emphasizes competence rather than content or only certain materials, and is designed to encourage students to have the skills they want to develop.

The next development of the curriculum design is a matter of contextual learning. This can help teachers to connect knowledge with its implementation in the daily lives of students, both as students, family members and citizens (Afriani, 2018). Therefore, the independent curriculum is made according to the context (school mission, environment, culture) and most importantly the needs of the students themselves.

In helping to recover and improve the quality of learning that has declined due to the pandemic, of course the independent curriculum is the solution. The independent curriculum makes students not feel bored, bored and burdened, because it is designed to be flexible in helping teachers to teach according to the student's abilities (*teach at the right level*) and focus on essential materials, so that students have enough time for *deep learning* related to literacy and numeracy competencies mentioned by the Ministry of Education and Culture experience *learning loss* During distance learning during the Covid-19 pandemic.

If you look at the overall mission of the independent curriculum, then ideally this curriculum is more than just helping learning that had weakened during the pandemic. Especially in the current 21st century, challenges and competition are getting higher, as well as the rapid development of science and technology, so the independent curriculum can be said to be the fundamental for students in facing this in the future. According to (Suryaman, 2020) *Outcome-Based Education* (OBE) is an orientation of the concept of an independent learning curriculum that focuses on the level of competency mastery and success of its graduates to adjust to the needs of the industry.



An effective curriculum is one that provides (teachers, students, school leaders and stakeholders and the community) a measurable plan and structure to provide quality education (Mrsstrickey, 2021). The curriculum with the concept of Independent Learning opens up opportunities as well as challenges for the world of education in creating a new civilization. Superior abilities must be possessed by students in each educational unit to adapt to changes in civilization (Kurniawan et al., 2020). There are many advantages of the independent curriculum in its role of developing many aspects in students to support life after graduation.

CONCLUSION

The independent curriculum emerged as a strategy of the Ministry of Education and Culture, namely by providing flexibility and offering more options with many advantages. The independent curriculum provides opportunities for students to actively explore further issues such as the environment, socio-culture, health and so on so that learning becomes interactive and relevant.

The independent curriculum is considered to develop students holistically, including academic and non-academic abilities. Then the independent curriculum is designed based on competencies, not content. The independent curriculum aims to create contextual learning to be able to connect knowledge with its implementation in daily life.

The role of the independent curriculum in helping to restore and improve the quality of learning that has declined due to the pandemic is quite good. However, there needs to be further research related to the independent curriculum, namely the extent of the role of the independent curriculum after it is designed, whether the independent curriculum is able to "accommodate" schools in remote areas that want to improve the quality and competence of their graduates but are hit with unsupportive conditions.

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