

Teachers Readiness Training in Implementing the Independent Curriculum (Concept Understanding, Structure, Learning Approach)

Tri Yuni Hendrowati¹, M. Badrun², Siswoyo³

^{1,2,3}Universitas Muhammadiyah Pringsewu Lampung

E-mail: triyunihendrowati@umpri.ac.id¹, mbadrun@umpri.ac.id², siswoyo@umpri.ac.id³

Abstract

The teachers readiness training in implementing the Independent Curriculum is designed to increase their understanding about the concept, structure, and learning approach in the Independence curriculum. The Independent curriculum offers the approach that more focuses on skill development and understanding rather than factual knowledge. This training is conducted through various methods such as lecturing, group discussion, case study, and learning simulation. The teachers will be actively involved in learning process so that they can understand and internalize the concept and their taught skills. Besides, there will be reflection section and feedback to help the teachers in repairing and increasing their learning practice. By the increasing of the teachers understanding and skill in implementing the Independent Curriculum, it is hoped that there will be the increasing of learning quality in the class. This training is one of the first steps in succeeding the implementation of Independent Curriculum as a whole in the school level.

Keywords: *Independent Learning, teacher readiness, curriculum concept, curriculum structure, Learning Approach*

1. INTRODUCTION

Independent learning is an Indonesia curriculum design that functions to increase the human resource quality. The curriculum is a series of learning program systems that contain learning outcomes and are specifically designed to achieve institutional goals (Hendrowati, 2021). The Independent Curriculum has become the center of attention in discussions of educational reform in many countries. By focusing on developing skills and in-depth understanding, this curriculum offers a dynamic and adaptive approach to fulfill the demands of ever-changing times. The rigid curriculum and separated from social reality can be an obstacle in creating a relevant and meaningful learning environment for students (Wiranto, 2021). implementation of the Independent Curriculum allows students to have the freedom to choose the learning path that is most suitable for them, so that they can achieve their potential more optimally (Sherly, at al., 2020). However, implementing the Independent Curriculum requires readiness and deep understanding from teachers as the front guard in the learning process. The teachers no longer play the role of simply implementing the curriculum but are a bridge between the curriculum and students' interests (Hendrowati, 2022).

At the global level, education faces increasingly complex challenges, where students are required to have broader skills than just factual knowledge. The learning paradigm is changing, students need to be equipped with skills and competencies that are relevant to the modern world, encouraged to be creative, innovative, think critically, collaborate, and have an understanding of technology (Jayadi et al., 2020). Students should be equipped with relevant 21st century skills that can help them succeed in facing future challenges (Zubaidah, 2016). They need to be equipped with the skills to think critically, creatively, collaborate, and have the ability to learn independently and adapt to change. The Independent Curriculum is able to emphasize critical thinking skills (Fahlevi, 2022). Encouraging the development of students' creativity by providing space to imagine, be creative and innovate in the learning process (Nelisma, 2022). Paying great attention to communication and collaboration skills (Swandari & Jemani, 2023). The Independent

Curriculum emphasizes the development of 21st century skills, such as critical thinking abilities, cooperation, communication, creativity and problem solving (Syahputra, 2018). The Independent Curriculum responds to increasingly complex challenges by emphasizing mastery of relevant competencies and adopting a student-centered learning approach.

At this context, the teacher has an important role. The teachers need to have a deep understanding of 21st century learning concepts and methods and be able to integrate technology in the teaching process (Junedi et al., 2020). They are not only learning facilitators but also designers and managers of results-oriented learning processes. Therefore, special training is needed to increase teacher readiness and understanding in implementing the Independent Curriculum.

In the next section, it will be explained in more detailed the basic concepts of the Independent Curriculum, the structure of the curriculum, and the learning approach adopted in this curriculum. Apart from that, it will also be discussed the objectives, methodology and benefits of teacher readiness training held to support the implementation of the Independent Curriculum at the school level. In this way, it is hoped that teachers will become the agents of change who are able to provide meaningful and relevant learning for students in facing future challenges.

2. METHOD

In this activity, several appropriate methods were applied to achieve the goal, namely to increase understanding of teachers readiness to implement the Independent Curriculum, by focusing on Developing Training Materials with Solutions: Developing training materials that include an in-depth understanding of the philosophy, principles and objectives of the Independent Curriculum; and Outcome Target: Teachers are able to thoroughly understand the basic concepts, structures and learning approaches promoted by the Independent Curriculum.

This Community Service Implementation Activity is divided into three stages, namely preparation, implementation and monitoring stage. In the preparation stage, training work programs are prepared, training modules are prepared and field coordination is carried out. At the implementation stage, the concept, principles and philosophy of the Independent Curriculum are socialized; socialization of learning approaches that are appropriate to the Independent Curriculum; socialization of teaching techniques and methods; socialization of pedagogical skills development; and socialization to strengthen collaboration and partnerships.

At Monitoring and Evaluation stage, monitoring is carried out intensively by the implementing team for each activity to ensure that the implementation of the activity can proceed according to the plan. Evaluation is carried out in line with monitoring, so that if there are problems they will be resolved immediately. Evaluation is carried out at every stage of activity. The monitoring and evaluation plan contains a description of how and when the evaluation will be carried out, criteria, indicators for achieving goals, and benchmarks which are used to indicate the success of the activities carried out.

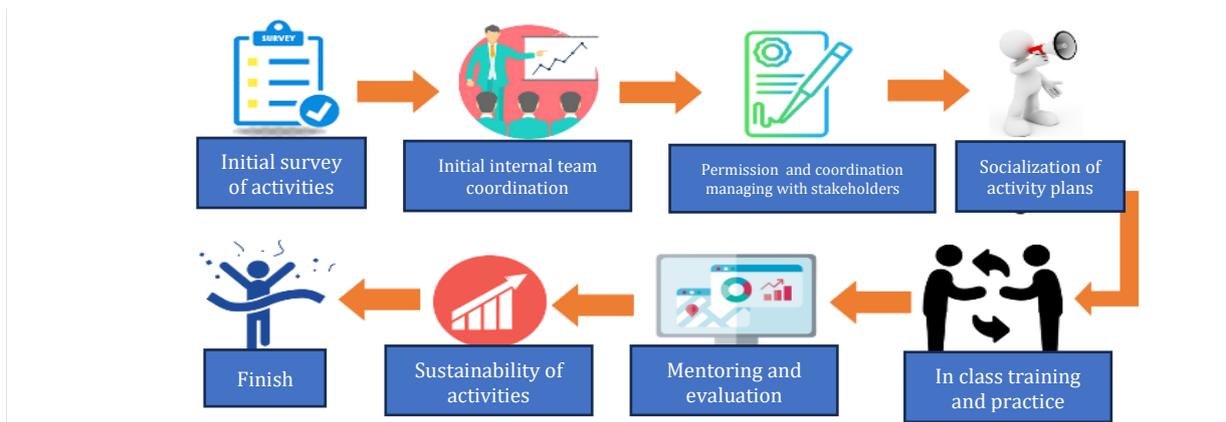


Figure 1. *The stages of Activities*

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

To ensure the successful implementation of the Independent Curriculum, teachers readiness training is a must. The readiness of teachers to implement the independent curriculum in schools is a crucial thing that must be prepared immediately, considering that teachers are the front guard in the success of the *Sekolah Penggerak* Program (SPP). Readiness is a person's ability to share actions and responses (Slameto, 2010). The success of students depends on whether an educator is ready or not (Huriyatunnisa 2022).

This teacher readiness training activity to implement the Independent Curriculum was carried out at the State Junior High School 38 Bandar Lampung which is located at Jalan Ikan Sembilang No. 16 Sukaraja, Bumi Waras, Bandar Lampung. State Junior High School 38 Bandar Lampung has 24 teachers, 1 principal and 5 school administrative staff, however, in this community service activity, the target of the activity is only the teacher. This activity was attended by 24 teachers at the State Junior High School 38 Bandar Lampung, consisting of 13 State Civil Worker teachers and 11 non- State Civil Worker teachers, spread out to carry out their functional duties in class VII (4 classes), VIII (5 classes), and IX (4 classes). These 24 teachers cover the subjects of Islamic Religious Education, Citizenship Education, Indonesian Language, Mathematics, Natural Sciences, Social Sciences, English, Physical Education, Sports and Health, Informatics, Crafts, Lampungnese Language, and Anti-Corruption Education.



Figure 2. *The Community Service Activity*

The teacher readiness training to implement the Independent Curriculum is based on a review of understanding of concepts, structures and learning approaches generally shows that teachers have made significant progress in their preparation to implement the Independent Curriculum. With a deep understanding of the concepts, structures and learning approaches required, they are ready to bring more relevant and competitive learning to their students. In detail, it produces 3 (three) important points, namely:

a. The understanding of Independent Curriculum

Teachers have developed a deep understanding of the basic concepts of the Independent Curriculum, including its philosophy, objectives and principles. They understand the importance of flexibility in the curriculum, as well as the ability to adapt learning to local needs and context. With curriculum flexibility, students can learn through an approach that suits their learning style, choose material that is interesting to them, and use a variety of available resources, including digital technology (Abdiyah 2021). Developing education that is responsive is the key to creating effective and meaningful learning. Curriculum flexibility, interdisciplinary approaches, increasing student involvement, developing 21st century skills, and continuous monitoring and evaluation are the main components that need to be considered in developing curriculum and learning tools (Akhmad Fakhri, 2023).

The Independent Curriculum is a curriculum approach that is designed to reduce students' burdens, develop their creativity and diverse intelligence, and build strong character. One of the main aspects of the Independent Curriculum is to provide teachers with flexibility in designing and implementing learning according to student needs and local characteristics. In the Merdeka Curriculum, teachers have the role of exploring students' potential, designing personalized learning, developing active learning, encouraging creativity and innovation, strengthening character and ethics, connecting learning with local contexts, and developing student independence.

b. The structure of Independent Curriculum:

The teachers understand the structure of the Independent Curriculum, including the division of subjects, core and basic competencies, as well as flexibility in selecting learning materials. They are able to identify how this curriculum structure can support the achievement of more inclusive and relevant learning goals. As part of learning recovery efforts, the Independent Curriculum (previously referred to as the prototype curriculum) was developed as a more flexible curriculum framework, while focusing on essential material and developing the character and competencies of students. The main characteristics of this curriculum that supports learning recovery are: Project-based learning for the development of soft skills and character according to the Pancasila student profile. Focus on essential material so that there is sufficient time for in-depth learning of basic competencies such as literacy and numeracy. And flexibility for teachers to carry out differentiated learning according to students' abilities and make adjustments to local context and content.

Learning Principles in the Independent Curriculum include three types of learning activities as follows: 1) Intracurricular learning which is carried out in a differentiated manner so that students have enough time to explore concepts and strengthen competencies. This also provides flexibility for teachers to choose teaching tools that suit the needs and characteristics of their students; 2) Co-curricular learning in the form of a project to strengthen the Pancasila Student Profile, with the principle of interdisciplinary learning oriented towards character development and general competence; and 3) Extracurricular learning is carried out in accordance with student interests and educational resources.

c. Learning Approach:

The teachers have been trained in various learning approaches in accordance with the Independent Curriculum, such as contextual, project-based and collaborative learning. They can implement these approaches in their daily learning practices more effectively. Project-based learning is one of the approaches commonly used in the Independent Learning

Curriculum (Wulandari et al., 2022). The teacher's role in the Independent Curriculum is not only limited to providing information to students, but also to guiding and helping them become more qualified individuals and ready to face future challenges. By giving teachers the opportunity to be more flexible in designing learning. The Independent Curriculum encourages a more holistic and inclusive approach to education in accordance with the needs and potential of each student. The Independent Curriculum aims to promote a more student-centered teaching and learning approach, as well as to improve the quality of education in Indonesia (Walewangko et al., 2022).

Interesting discussions that developed in the teacher readiness training activities to implement the independent curriculum were:

- a. Teachers recognize the added value of the Independent Curriculum approach in providing space for creativity, discovery and experience-based learning for students.
- b. Challenges that arise include adapting to paradigm changes in learning, more flexible management of time and learning materials, as well as the integration of technology in learning based on local contexts. The curriculum aims to give students more autonomy and independence in their learning, encouraging them to become active learners and take responsibility for their education. However, curriculum implementation has posed challenges for teachers who have had to adapt their teaching strategies to meet the new curriculum requirements (Rahim et al., 2021). The challenges teachers face in implementing the Independent Curriculum are rooted in the broader context of the Indonesian education system (Pertiwi et al., 2022).
- c. Discussions were directed at identifying practical solutions and strategies to overcome these challenges, such as the development of a bank of diverse learning materials, collaboration between teachers to design project-based learning, and additional training in the use of educational technology. The main challenges faced by the teachers in implementing the Independent Curriculum include: Infrastructure and technology readiness, not all schools have adequate infrastructure and access to technology. The disparity in school infrastructure between urban and remote areas means that the independent curriculum is also burdensome for some parties, especially for teachers who teach in remote areas. Teachers in remote areas or with limited facilities may face difficulties in implementing this approach. Due to these differences, strategies and solutions are needed to overcome existing infrastructure and technology gaps by requiring further investment in providing infrastructure and technology training for teachers to ensure their skills are in line with the needs of the Independent Curriculum. Increasing teacher skills such as technology integration, project-based learning, and formative assessment must be carried out, not only for young teachers, but also for all teachers, some of whom may be entering their old age, but still receive technology training for them. Facing teachers' challenges to a deep understanding of the philosophy, objectives and strategies of the Independent Curriculum, a continuous learning approach is also needed for teachers, such as workshops and inter-teacher mentoring, to ensure that every educator understands and is able to implement the Independent Curriculum well. Apart from that, teachers are faced with the task of integrating the principles of the Independent Curriculum into the real classroom environment. This involves a good understanding of the needs and characteristics of each student to create inclusive learning, so teachers need to continue to adapt and create learning strategies that are responsive to diversity in the classroom. No less important than all of that is the participation of parents and the community in implementing the Independent Curriculum which is also a challenge. With the cooperation of all parties, teachers can be a positive catalyst for change towards education that is more inclusive and oriented towards student development.

4. CONCLUSION

The teacher readiness training in implementing the Independent Curriculum is a crucial step in ensuring the success and effectiveness of the curriculum at the school level. From the various descriptions that have been presented, it can be concluded that this training has significant needs and benefits in the current and future educational context. Some of the main conclusions that can be drawn are as follows:

1. The increase of Understanding: Training helps teachers to understand the basic concepts, structures and learning approaches contained in the Merdeka Curriculum. With a deeper understanding, teachers can relate these concepts to classroom learning practices.
2. Skills Development: Teachers will be equipped with the skills needed to develop integrated and results-oriented learning plans, and be able to use various learning methods that are relevant to the Independent Curriculum context.

3. Improving the quality of Learning: Through this training, it is hoped that there will be an increase in the quality of learning in the classroom, with a focus on developing skills and in-depth understanding. Learning will become more meaningful, relevant and challenging for students.

4. Adaptation to Change: Teachers will be trained to adapt their learning practices according to the principles of the Independent Curriculum, which demands flexibility, creativity and responsiveness to students' needs and interests.

5. Curriculum Implementation Support: The teacher readiness training is an important support in the process of implementing the Independent Curriculum as a whole at the school level. With teachers who are ready and trained, it is hoped that this curriculum can have a positive impact to improve the overall quality of education.

Therefore, the teacher readiness training in implementing the Independent Curriculum is not only an urgent need, but also a strategic investment to improve the quality of education and prepare the younger generation to better face future challenges.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

A big thank is given to the entire academic community of State Junior High School (SMPN) 38 Bandar Lampung who have helped the author in carrying out teacher readiness training activities in implementing the Independent Curriculum, as a form of community service.

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