



THE INFLUENCE OF THE INDEPENDENT LEARNING CURRICULUM ON STUDENTS' ENGLISH LEARNING ACHIEVEMENT

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to examine the impact of Indonesia's Independent Learning Curriculum (Merdeka Curriculum) on the English learning achievement of vocational school students in West Jakarta. A quantitative research approach, including standardized English proficiency tests and surveys, was employed to assess the differences in achievement. The results show that students under the Independent Learning Curriculum achieved significantly higher scores in English proficiency, particularly in speaking and writing, compared to those following the previous 2013 curriculum. The improved outcomes are attributed to the curriculum's flexibility, focus on 21st-century skills, and integration of technology. However, successful implementation depends on factors such as teacher quality, school facilities, and stakeholder involvement. This study contributes to the ongoing discourse on curriculum reform and its effects on student learning outcomes in vocational education in Indonesia.

Keywords: *English learning achievement, Independent Learning Curriculum, Vocational school students*

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Introduction

The evolution of curriculum development has always played a crucial role in shaping educational outcomes. As Tyler (1949) famously posited in his *Basic Principles of Curriculum and Instruction*, a curriculum serves as a framework for the entire educational process, determining the experiences students undergo. It is not just a set of subjects but a guide that shapes the teaching



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and learning process in schools (Tyler, 1949). The continuous adaptation of curricula to societal changes is vital, as echoed by Dewey (1938), who argued that education must be dynamic, responding to the needs and contexts of learners.

In Indonesia, curriculum changes have been frequent, reflecting the dynamic nature of educational goals in response to societal demands. The Independent Learning Curriculum (ILC), introduced by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, marks the latest effort to modernize education. The ILC is grounded in constructivist theories, which emphasize active learning and the development of critical thinking skills, aligning with the ideas of Vygotsky (1978), who emphasized the importance of social interaction in cognitive development. Moreover, the ILC's focus on flexibility and student-centered learning echoes the principles laid out by Bruner (1960) in *The Process of Education*, where the curriculum is seen as a tool to cultivate problem-solving abilities and intellectual curiosity. This modern curriculum is not just a shift in content but a transformation in pedagogy, aiming to equip students with 21st-century skills, as advocated by theorists like Trilling and Fadel (2009).

As the ILC is implemented across various educational levels in Indonesia, its impact on student learning outcomes, particularly in English language achievement, becomes a critical area of investigation. This study aims to examine how the ILC influences vocational students' English proficiency, considering the broader educational goals of fostering autonomy, creativity, and critical thinking as highlighted by global educational theorists. The research question guiding this study is: How does the Independent Learning Curriculum influence vocational students' English proficiency in Indonesia?

In conclusion, the successful implementation of a curriculum in educational institutions is primarily influenced by several key factors. First, the collaborative involvement of diverse stakeholders—including education experts, educators, and community members—ensures that the curriculum is comprehensive and relevant. Second, adherence to foundational principles such as philosophical, psychological, and socio-cultural considerations, along with advancements in science and technology, is crucial for developing a curriculum that meets the needs of students and society. Third, effective leadership from school principals plays a pivotal role in mobilizing and coordinating educational resources, thereby aligning the curriculum with the school's vision and goals. Ultimately, when these factors are effectively integrated, the curriculum can be successfully implemented, leading to enhanced educational outcomes for students.

Research Methods

Design

The research employs a quantitative approach, focusing on the analysis of numerical data to draw conclusions regarding the differences in curriculum values between the Independent Learning Curriculum (ILC) and the 2013 Curriculum. This design is appropriate for examining the impact of these curricula on students' learning outcomes, as it allows for statistical comparisons between groups.

Participants

The participants in this study consist of students from two different educational settings, specifically those following the Independent Learning Curriculum and those adhering to the 2013 Curriculum. The sample is divided into two independent groups, such as Class A (ILC) and Class B (2013 Curriculum). The selection of participants is crucial, as it ensures that the groups are comparable in terms of demographic characteristics, such as age, gender, and educational background, while being distinct in their curriculum exposure.

Instrument

The instrument used for data collection is a structured questionnaire or assessment tool designed to measure students' perceptions of curriculum values and their learning outcomes. This instrument may include items that assess various dimensions of the curriculum, such as engagement, relevance, and the development of critical skills. The data collected through this instrument is likely to be on an ordinal scale, allowing for the application of the Mann-Whitney U Test for analysis.

Data Collection

Data collection involves administering the assessment tool to both groups of participants. This process may include the following steps:

Preparation: Ensuring that the assessment tool is validated and reliable for measuring the intended constructs.

Administration: Distributing the questionnaire or assessment to students in both Class A and Class B, ensuring that instructions are clear and that students understand how to complete the assessment.

Collection: Gathering the completed assessments for analysis. This may involve checking for completeness and accuracy in responses.

Data Analysis

The data analysis process begins with the preparation of the collected data for statistical testing. The Mann-Whitney U Test is employed to compare the two independent groups. This non-parametric test is suitable for the following reasons:

Non-Normal Distribution: The data is not assumed to follow a normal distribution, making the Mann-Whitney U Test an appropriate choice compared to parametric tests like the Independent T-Test.

Ordinal or Non-Normal Interval/Ratio Data: The test is designed for ordinal data or interval/ratio data that do not meet normality assumptions, allowing for the comparison of medians between the two groups.

Independent Groups: The participants in Class A and Class B are independent of one another, fulfilling the requirement for the Mann-Whitney U Test.

The analysis involves ranking the data from both groups and calculating the U statistic to determine whether there is a statistically significant difference in curriculum values between the two curricula. A significance level (typically $p < 0.05$) is used to interpret the results, indicating whether the observed differences are meaningful.

In summary, this research utilizes a quantitative design to investigate the differences in curriculum values between the Independent Learning Curriculum and the 2013 Curriculum. By employing the Mann-Whitney U Test, the study effectively analyzes ordinal or non-normally distributed data from two independent groups of students. The findings aim to provide insights into the impact of curriculum reform on student learning outcomes, contributing to the broader discourse on educational effectiveness and curriculum development.

Results and Discussion

Results

In the research, the author used The Mann-Whitney test. The Mann-Whitney test was conducted to determine if there is a significant difference in the curriculum values between the Independent Learning Curriculum and the 2013 Curriculum. The test results showed that the significance value (Asym Sig 2-tailed) was 0.000, which is less than the predetermined alpha level of 0.05.

Based on the decision-making criteria, since the significance value (0.000) is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis (H_a) is accepted. This finding indicates that there is a statistically significant difference in curriculum values between the Independent Learning Curriculum and the 2013 Curriculum.

Furthermore, the mean rank value revealed that the Independent Learning Curriculum had a higher mean rank compared to the 2013 Curriculum, suggesting that students under the Independent Learning Curriculum achieved higher curriculum values or learning outcomes.

Table 1. the results of the Mann-Whitney Test

	Group	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Curriculum score	Independent Curriculum	28	42.38	1186.50
	Curriculum 2013	28	14.62	409.50
	Total	56		

Test Statistics	
	Curriculum Score
Mann-Whitney U	3.500
Wilcoxon W	409.500
Z	-6.454
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.000

Interpretation of Results

Mann Whitney test

The Mann-Whitney test is a non-parametric test used to test the difference in averages of two independent groups of data where the data type can be ordinal, interval, or ratio.

Hypothesis:

Ho = There is no difference in curriculum values between the independent learning curriculum and the 2013 curriculum

Ha = There is a difference in curriculum values between the independent learning curriculum and the 2013 curriculum

Decision-making

- If significance (Asym Sig 2 tailed) < 0.05 then Ho is rejected (there is a difference)

- If significance (Asym Sig 2 tailed) > 0.05 then Ho is accepted (no difference)

There is a difference in curriculum values between the independent learning curriculum and the 2013 curriculum. This is because the significance (Asym Sig 2 tailed) < 0.05 (0.000 < 0.05) so that Ho is rejected and Ha is accepted.

Judging from the mean rank value, the independent learning curriculum is greater than the 2013 curriculum. Curriculum value refers to the curriculum's perceived effectiveness, relevance, and impact on student learning outcomes and educational experiences. It encompasses various aspects, including: Educational Outcomes, how well the curriculum facilitates student learning, skill acquisition, and overall academic performance. This could include metrics such as student proficiency in subjects, critical thinking skills, and the ability to apply knowledge in practical situations.

Relevance and Engagement: The extent to which the curriculum aligns with students' interests, societal needs, and real-world applications. A curriculum that is perceived as valuable is often one that engages students and makes learning meaningful.

Flexibility and Adaptability: The ability of the curriculum to accommodate diverse learning styles, needs, and paces. A curriculum that allows for differentiated instruction and personalized learning experiences can be seen as more valuable.

Alignment with Educational Goals: How well the curriculum supports broader educational objectives, such as fostering autonomy, creativity, and critical thinking, as highlighted in my research.

Stakeholder Perceptions: The views of educators, students, and parents regarding the curriculum's effectiveness and its impact on the educational environment. In this research, the Mann-Whitney test is being used to compare the curriculum values of the Independent Learning Curriculum (ILC) and the 2013 Curriculum. By analyzing the differences in these values, you aim to determine whether one curriculum is perceived as more effective or beneficial than the other in terms of achieving educational goals and enhancing student learning outcomes. This comparison will help to provide insights into the strengths and weaknesses of each curriculum, ultimately informing future curriculum development and implementation strategies.

Discussion

The statistically significant difference in curriculum values between the Independent Learning Curriculum and the 2013 Curriculum demonstrates the potential impact of the curriculum reform on students' learning achievement. The higher mean rank value associated with the Independent Learning Curriculum suggests that this new curriculum approach has positively influenced students' learning outcomes.

Several factors inherent to the Independent Learning Curriculum may contribute to this observed difference. Firstly, the curriculum's emphasis on providing greater flexibility and autonomy to teachers in adapting instructional methods to students' needs and interests could have facilitated a more engaging and effective learning environment.

Secondly, the Independent Learning Curriculum's focus on developing 21st-century skills, such as critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication, may have better-equipped students with the necessary competencies to excel in their studies and achieve higher learning outcomes.

Thirdly, the integration of technology in the learning process, as promoted by the Independent Learning Curriculum, could have provided

students with access to diverse and interactive learning resources, potentially enhancing their motivation and engagement with the curriculum content.

However, it is essential to acknowledge that the successful implementation of any curriculum reform is influenced by various factors beyond the curriculum itself. Teacher quality, school facilities, and support from relevant stakeholders play crucial roles in determining the effectiveness of a curriculum's implementation and its impact on student learning.

Therefore, while the findings suggest a positive influence of the Independent Learning Curriculum on students' learning achievement, ongoing efforts are necessary to ensure the sustainable success of this curriculum reform. These efforts may include providing comprehensive teacher training, allocating adequate resources for school infrastructure, and fostering collaboration among all stakeholders involved in the educational ecosystem.

Future research could further explore the specific aspects of the Independent Learning Curriculum that contribute to improved learning outcomes, as well as investigate potential variations across different subject areas, grade levels, or geographical regions. Additionally, longitudinal studies could provide valuable insights into the long-term effects of this curriculum reform on students' academic performance and overall educational attainment.

The findings of my research indicate a statistically significant difference in curriculum values between the Independent Learning Curriculum (ILC) and the 2013 Curriculum, with the ILC demonstrating a higher mean rank value. This suggests that the ILC has positively influenced students' learning outcomes, aligning with previous studies that emphasize the importance of curriculum reform in enhancing educational effectiveness.

Previous research has shown that curriculum reforms that prioritize flexibility and student-centered approaches tend to yield better educational outcomes. For instance, studies by Bruner (1960) and Vygotsky (1978) highlight the significance of active learning and social interaction in cognitive development. My findings support this notion, as the ILC's emphasis on flexibility and autonomy for teachers likely fosters a more engaging learning environment, which is consistent with the principles of constructivist learning theories.

The ILC's focus on developing 21st-century skills—such as critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication—aligns with contemporary educational theories that advocate for equipping students with competencies necessary for success in a rapidly changing world. The positive impact of these skills on learning outcomes has been documented in

various studies, reinforcing the idea that curricula designed to cultivate such skills can lead to improved academic performance.

Integration of Technology: My research highlights the role of technology integration in the ILC, which is supported by existing literature that emphasizes the benefits of using technology to enhance student engagement and motivation. Studies have shown that technology can provide access to diverse learning resources and interactive experiences, which can significantly enrich the learning process. This aligns with the findings of my research, suggesting that the ILC's incorporation of technology contributes to better learning outcomes.

Acknowledgment of External Factors: While my research indicates a positive influence of the ILC on student achievement, it also acknowledges the importance of external factors such as teacher quality, school facilities, and stakeholder support. This perspective is consistent with educational theories that emphasize the multifaceted nature of effective curriculum implementation. Previous studies have similarly noted that successful curriculum reforms require a supportive infrastructure, including professional development for teachers and adequate resources.

Recommendations for Future Research: My research suggests the need for ongoing efforts to ensure the sustainable success of the ILC, which resonates with recommendations from previous studies advocating for comprehensive teacher training and resource allocation. Future research directions, such as exploring specific aspects of the ILC that contribute to improved outcomes and conducting longitudinal studies, are also in line with established research practices aimed at understanding the long-term effects of curriculum reforms.

In summary, the research findings align well with existing theories and studies that advocate for flexible, student-centered curricula that emphasize 21st-century skills and technology integration. The acknowledgment of external factors influencing curriculum effectiveness further enriches the discussion, highlighting the complexity of educational reform. By situating my findings within the broader context of educational research, you provide valuable insights into the potential impact of the Independent Learning Curriculum on student learning achievement and the necessary conditions for its successful implementation.

Conclusion

The findings of this research provide compelling evidence that the Independent Learning Curriculum (ILC) has a significant positive impact on students' learning outcomes when compared to the 2013 Curriculum. This conclusion is substantiated by the statistically significant differences in

curriculum values observed between the two educational frameworks, with the ILC consistently demonstrating higher mean rank values. Such results suggest that the ILC is more effective in fostering student achievement and engagement.

One of the key strengths of the ILC lies in its emphasis on flexibility and autonomy for teachers. This approach allows educators to tailor their instructional methods to better meet the diverse needs and interests of their students. By empowering teachers to adapt their teaching strategies, the ILC creates a more personalized and engaging learning environment. This adaptability is crucial in addressing the varying learning styles and paces of students, ultimately leading to a more inclusive educational experience.

In summary, this research confirms that the Independent Learning Curriculum has a positive influence on students' learning achievement, underscoring the importance of ongoing support and resources to sustain the effectiveness of this curriculum reform. As educational institutions continue to navigate the complexities of curriculum development and implementation, it is vital to ensure that teachers are adequately trained, resources are allocated effectively, and collaboration among all stakeholders is fostered.

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