



## Independent Curriculum in High School: It's Implementation and Teachers' Challenges in English Language Learning Classroom

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### ABSTRACT

The changing of the new Independent Curriculum at schools especially in high schools bring various impacts to the process that happened in the classroom language learning. That is why, it is important to take a deeper sight of the implementation of it and also teachers' challenges. The purpose of this study was to depict the implementation of new curriculum, namely independent curriculum, also, the teachers' challenges inside of the English language classroom. There were several instruments used to gain the deep answers. Interviews and observation were used here. The subjects were two English teachers who teaches in two different Senior High Schools. The results indicate that English teachers encountered difficulties implementing independent curricula due to a shortage of time for both material preparation and comprehending the concept. Teachers knew how differentiated learning was implemented, how to use formative and summative assessments to conduct learning evaluation, and the content of English language resources. Nevertheless, the content of learning the six skills, including the application of text-based approach and student-centered learning, was not properly interpreted by these English teachers. The study's findings indicate that these instructors' poor implementation of autonomous curriculum was caused by their ignorance of how to comprehend its many components.



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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Education plays a big role as a social change agent, so it should always be oriented towards achieving national goals. Additionally, learning itself can be defined as a process or way that people learn. The curriculum is a foundation in the world of education, and it must be renovated and evaluated in each generation along with the development of times and technologies. The curriculum is the "spirit" of education, and it must be evaluated in an innovative, dynamic, and periodic manner as it evolves with time (Rintaningrum et al., 2023). In the national curriculum, general English learning in primary and secondary schools provides opportunities for students to understand the social relations, culture and employment opportunities available throughout the world. Their critical thinking abilities can be improved by understanding this intercultural and socio-cultural knowledge. The goal of independent learning curricula is to create a fun learning environment. Making the setting comfortable for parents, teachers, and students is the aim of autonomous learning. The Independent Curriculum has enormous potential and promise that extend well beyond individual classes. Systemic support is desperately needed for its successful nationwide deployment. Programs for ongoing teacher training that are in line with the philosophy of the curriculum ought to be implemented. To support this innovative strategy, schools must make improvements to everything from the physical plant to the administrative rules (Rizki & Fahrudinisa, 2022). Moreover, legislators are quite important. The curriculum's advantages and disadvantages should be considered when crafting policies to ensure their long-term viability and efficacy. Important steps include enlisting the help of parents and the community, conducting regular evaluations and providing feedback, and making sure that people in rural and urban areas have equal access to resources.

The declining emphasis on education itself gave rise to the independent curriculum. Thus, in order to promote courage and independence in independent thought, excitement for learning, and optimism, as well as freedom of mind, it is imperative to implement an independent curriculum. Being fluent in English is no longer only a need, but rather a vital talent that fosters personal development in many facets of life in the current era of globalization. From primary to postsecondary education, English language instruction is now a required component of the curriculum in Indonesia. But frequently, it is thought that the instructional strategies used in classrooms are ineffective in producing the best possible learning results. There is a condition where kids frequently feel bored and uninterested in the information given at school in various nations, including Indonesia. This is due to the fact that most curricula are top-down, requiring pupils to adhere to standards and goals that have been set by third parties without taking into account their unique needs and interests.

As a result, the idea of an Independent Curriculum is known as a flexible learning process that allows teachers to select different teaching resources and guide the learning process based on the interests and skills of their pupils. It places a strong emphasis on student-centered learning, which motivates students to engage more fully in the activities of instruction according to their needs and skills (Tanjung et al., 2019). One further feature of autonomous curriculum is its emphasis on student-centered learning practices and a continuous cycle from phase to phase in the learning framework. Therefore, autonomous curriculum uses a project-based learning method to help students develop their personalities and soft skills in line with the Pancasila student profile. English instruction should put more of an emphasis on improving students' proficiency in the six language domains of speaking, listening, reading, writing, and watching. These abilities need to be taught in a way that integrates them with different kinds of texts.

These abilities were broken down into three learning outcome elements: writing-presentation, reading-viewing, and listening-speaking. The Independent Curriculum offers a model for the future of English language instruction in Indonesia since it places a strong focus on learner autonomy and applicability to the real world. This exciting new stage of the change of education has a lot of potential. However, for it to be successful, cooperation between educators, students, parents, administrators, and legislators is required. Although the path may be difficult, the benefits a generation of self-assured, capable, and globally savvy English speakers make the effort worthwhile (Santoso et al., 2023). The Independent Curriculum's capacity to smoothly incorporate technology could be crucial to its success as the globe rapidly moves toward a digital economy. When used well, digital technologies can help students make stronger connections with the content and give them a platform for collaboration.

The writer attempts to address these issues in this essay by examining the idea of the Independent Curriculum and how it relates to learning English. She attempts to examine the advantages and disadvantages of this strategy through in-depth investigation and analysis, and offers suggestions to relevant parties on how to best execute the Independent Curriculum in Indonesian education. In addition to being significantly different from the previous curriculum, the Independent Curriculum will emphasize discussion with teachers, friends, and the surrounding environment. Indoor learning now take place outside of the classroom in accordance with the topics studied. In order to subtly impart the qualities of bravery, independence, social intelligence, politeness, and competence. Teachers are required by the autonomous curriculum to fulfill their crucial role as front-line providers in restoring learning loss. The development of pupils' fundamental competencies and the study of necessary materials should be the main topics of instruction. As a result, they would alter the thinking and character of the pupils. Additionally, the autonomous curriculum offers soft skills and takes into account the demands of the globalized society (Permendikbud 22 of 2020).

## 2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study used a qualitative approach to investigate how the Independent Curriculum Approach applied in classroom. This method is used because it allows for the exploration of phenomena in their natural environments, the emphasis on meaning, and the capturing of subtleties in the educational process. Three data gathering strategies were used in an attempt to obtain rich data. Initially, in order to gather information about how the instructor engaged with students, how teaching strategies were implemented, and how the students reacted to the approach, the study team conducted in-person observations in the classroom. In order to get the opinions of teachers and a particular set of students regarding their experiences learning with the Independent Curriculum approach, second, in-depth interviews were conducted. Third, to get more understanding of implementation in the field, a variety of resources, including lesson plans, class notes, and learning evaluations, were analyzed through document analysis (Irwahyudi et al., 2023).

The content analysis method was then applied to the acquired data. Information gathered from observations, interviews, and document analysis is categorized using this technique according to recurring themes. In order to identify specific trends and dynamics in the Independent Curriculum approach to English language instruction, each area is examined. Triangulation techniques are also used to assure the legitimacy and integrity of the data, comparing each data source to produce a consistent and precise picture of the phenomenon under study. The participant had thirty minutes to respond to six questions during the interview. There were semi-structured interviews. In contrast to a formal interview, this one is more self-contained. This type of interview, in which

participants are asked about their ideas and opinions, aims to identify challenges more openly. The participants were interviewed twice in order to elicit more information from them and to find out if their responses from the first interview were the same as those from the second. In order to prevent misunderstandings and facilitate participants' ability to express their intentions or answers to the questions posed, Indonesian was the language chosen when conducting the interviews. The teachers' inability to recognize the variations in each student's comprehension, processing, and other skills is the next issue. The instructor believes that there are significant disparities in the personalities and skill levels of the pupils in the class. The teacher's impression of the student's family history is the reason behind this. youngsters whose parents work as lecturers or who have been overseas tend to have better English proficiency than youngsters whose circumstances during yesterday's pandemic restricted them to studying at home alone with little guidance.

### 3. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

One of the challenges encountered during the implementation phase is that teachers are expected to tailor their lesson plans to the needs of their students while creating materials for the Independent Curriculum. To create products that are engaging, significant, and appropriate for the local setting, more effort and expertise are needed. English teachers must possess additional abilities in order to implement the autonomous curriculum, including project-based learning design, information technology proficiency, and alternative assessment design (Kurnia Octaviani & STMIK Sinar Nusantara Surakarta, 2023). To achieve these skills, teachers must participate in professional development and training programs. Despite its potential, the Independent Curriculum method is not without its difficulties. The benefit is in giving students more authority over their education, allowing them to follow their interests and investigate subjects in ways that they deem appropriate. Better information retention and active engagement follow from this. But for educators, this method needs more thorough planning and distinct. The adoption of the independent learning policy promotes the position of the teacher as a facilitator of learning, which is bolstered by their competencies, in addition to their role as a source of knowledge. Students also play a significant part in the learning process, particularly in the context of the Freedom to Learn curriculum. An strategy that encourages active engagement in class from both teachers and students is optimal for the learning process in the classroom.

Table 1. The Interpretation of the Teacher in Implementing Independent Curriculum

Subjects of the Study	Curriculum Components			
	Objectives	Content	Method	Evaluation
Teacher A	To help students to be able to speak English both spoken and written well	Teacher A and B agreed that the English materials in this curriculum are deeper than previous curriculum	Teaching students by using various kinds of texts can help them knowing more about words	Both, summative and formative were given to students in the first and used to gain the understanding of materials given
Teacher B	Students can explore more in spoken and written through various texts		The use of texts in teaching and learning process because they learn so many grammar rules such as preposition, tenses and others	Formative text was given at the beginning to know the students' learning style, while summative was given to evaluate the level of the students' understanding of the material given by teacher.

An approach to formative and authentic evaluation is emphasized in the Merdeka curriculum. Teachers encounter difficulties in comprehending the fundamentals of authentic and formative assessment as well as the challenges involved in putting them into practice. There are two distinct methods to the assessment process in the educational context: formative assessment and authentic assessment. The goal of genuine assessment is to gauge how well students comprehend and apply their knowledge and abilities in realistic or real-world scenarios. This method places a strong emphasis on using assignments or projects that are applicable to the real world, requiring students to use their knowledge and abilities in circumstances with obvious purpose and significance (Asmarawati, 2022). For instance, in an authentic assessment, students can be required to answer actual English-related problems, write essays, or give presentations. Authentic evaluation prioritizes application and in-depth comprehension of the material over simple data memorization. Formative assessment is an ongoing evaluation method used to tell students

how well they are doing in reaching learning objectives. It is conducted throughout the learning process. Formative assessments are meant to point out areas of weakness, help students gain a deeper knowledge of the material, and help them work toward their learning objectives. Small assignments, tests, group projects, and other activities that give students immediate feedback are examples of formative assessment. Teachers determine each student's unique learning needs based on the findings of this formative evaluation, then adjust their teaching methods accordingly.

Student differentiation is addressed, the teacher presents the information in the form of its essential ideas, and then students receive the development directly, allowing them to adapt to their own creativity. These strategies are used to overcome the challenges encountered during the implementation stage. One instance of the work that is done is when students choose which committee will handle the assignments that are assigned to them for each subject. Following the committee's determination of the responsibilities, the teacher is consulted so that the latter can advise the former on how to carry out his obligations in a way that keeps them consistent with the subject. Likewise, the new committee take turns handling tasks on following items. The instructor then keeps on with the pupils who are still not ready, supporting them and pushing them to improve (Intiana et al., 2023). Additionally, students who perform well are expected to present their assignment results to the class in an effort to inspire their peers to follow suit. The teacher reviewer then mentioned that it was really challenging to find an expert for the final issue. Nonetheless, the instructor seeks feedback on how best to instruct his peers that is, fellow educators in the same institution. Implementing the independent curriculum successfully depends not only on the lesson plans but also on how the lessons are carried out in line with the prepared lesson plans. Researchers conducted interviews, and the results show that there are several issues that teachers deal with when teaching. These issues include learning methods that are inadequate, teaching materials that are overly wide, textbooks that are solely student books, and teachers who are ill-equipped to employ instructional media in line with the goals of the independent curriculum.

The aforementioned findings demonstrate that English teachers appropriately interpreted the autonomous curriculum's English learning purpose, which is to improve students' oral and writing English proficiency through a variety of text types. The information demonstrates that these educators also understood the English course materials and topic appropriately from the independent curriculum. They discovered that those resources were more geared toward a deeper comprehension of the fundamentals of education. This is consistent with the feature of autonomous curriculum, which is that its content is primarily centered on fundamental skills and important knowledge. They demonstrated that they understood the diversified learning approach to English instruction correctly. According to their interpretation, diversified learning is the process of teaching according to each student's requirements and skills. They discovered that those resources were more geared toward a deeper comprehension of the fundamentals of education. This is consistent with the feature of autonomous curriculum, which is that its content is primarily centered on fundamental skills and important knowledge. They demonstrated that they understood the diversified learning approach to English instruction correctly. According to their interpretation, diversified learning is the process of teaching according to each student's requirements and skills.

Naturally, there are a few guidelines that must be followed when creating and executing the curriculum for independent learning. These guidelines include keeping things simple, making things simple to comprehend and apply, emphasizing the character and competency of the students, being flexible, and encouraging teamwork (Anggraeni, 2023). Although the idea of independent learning is simple to comprehend, putting it into practice is quite challenging and calls for the ability, independence, and dedication of both teachers and students. As a result, there is a driving teacher program in place for the implementation of the autonomous learning curriculum. Whereas this curriculum encourages teachers to stay grounded in Pancasila beliefs while exploring their own potential.

When compared to the prior curriculum, the autonomous learning curriculum is distinct in its own right. The curriculum for independent learning serves as a tool to help pupils develop their problem-solving skills in addition to their theoretical fixation. Three things make up independent learning: First, Goal-setting commitment. Objectives are the fundamental building block of decision-making, helping self-reliant pupils learn how to accomplish their objectives and resist peer pressure. Second, not dependent on the method. Self-sufficient learners acquire the ability to plan ahead and handle obstacles in the pursuit of their objectives. It is necessary for students to be able to adjust to changing circumstances by developing plans based on the resources at hand. The last, Contemplation. In order to determine their learning needs, students assess themselves. Students can assess their progress, better themselves, and identify their learning priorities by reflecting on their work. Given how widely spoken English is, Indonesia may be able to establish alliances with other English-speaking nations worldwide. These alliances may result in cooperative projects, student exchange programs, and resource sharing, all of which enhance the educational process. With its goals and design, the Independent Curriculum has the power to completely transform English language instruction in Indonesia. But in order for it to reach its full potential, there needs to be a dedication to ongoing development, confronting obstacles head-on, and making the most of everyone's combined strength. With a single goal and unrelenting commitment, Indonesia is poised to lead the globe in an educational revolution that will benefit all nations.

The curriculum that stresses the attitude of autonomous learners is theoretically known as the independent learning curriculum. Independence in this context refers to the ability to freely acquire knowledge and understanding through both formal and informal education. Because every student has unique qualities and areas of competence,

the independent learning curriculum does not limit the creativity and ingenuity possessed by teachers and students. Because diversification learning allows teachers to better meet the requirements of their pupils, it also plays a significant part in the flexibility of the Independent Curriculum. To put it another way, differentiation learning is a method of teaching and learning where students are taught content based on their aptitudes, interests, and unique requirements. This approach makes learning enjoyable for them and prevents them from feeling like a failure during the process. There are numerous significant ramifications of this study for Indonesian English language instruction. The effectiveness of this strategy shows how important it is for educators to have ongoing training so they may modify their lesson plans to meet the requirements of the Independent Curriculum. Furthermore, it is imperative that schools take into account incorporating this approach, at least partially, into their curricula (Virdhani Hia et al., 2021). Policymakers need to fully support this, and they must be informed of both the advantages and disadvantages of this strategy. Even though the curriculum has a lot of potential, it is crucial to take Indonesia's varied socioeconomic environment into account when implementing it. Not every school, particularly in more isolated or impoverished places, may have instant access to the tools or qualified personnel required to carry out the curriculum successfully. Strategies that guarantee these regions receive an equitable share of funding, training, and assistance are desperately needed.

The curriculum's capacity to change and adapt will determine how sustainable it is in the long run. It will be essential to have strong feedback systems where parents, teachers, students, and even alumni may share their experiences. In addition to highlighting areas of success, this feedback loop will reveal possible problems, enabling prompt interventions and changes. Over time, there have been many changes to English language instruction in Indonesia. One of the most promising changes is the implementation of the Independent Curriculum approach. Results show that the learning process is greatly impacted by this method. Most students reported feeling more motivated and involved. Additionally, there was a discernible improvement in the ability to talk and write in English. Though students listed numerous benefits, the teachers they spoke with emphasized the necessity of changing their pedagogical approaches. In fact, despite its promises, the Independent Curriculum gives students the freedom to choose what they want to learn and how to study it. However, this strategy necessitates more thorough planning and a change in assessment techniques for educators. As such, Indonesia must ensure that its teachers receive ongoing training to enable them to modify their pedagogical approaches to align with the requirements of the Merdeka Curriculum. In conclusion, the Independent Curriculum method presents a novel idea for Indonesian English language instruction. But how everyone involved from lawmakers to educators works together and adjusts to these changes will determine whether or not it is a success.

Nevertheless, teachers have a distinct set of difficulties even as children flourish in this new learning environment. The pedagogical transition from main knowledge suppliers to facilitators necessitates the unlearning of numerous conventional strategies and the adaptation to a new paradigm in education. This is about rethinking their duties in the classroom, not just switching up the medium of delivery. Furthermore, the Independent Curriculum fundamentally emphasizes student autonomy and independent study. This means that teachers need to be ready to accommodate a wide range of interests, questions, and learning styles in order to value and support each student's individual path. Such an approach necessitates more thorough training, ongoing upskilling, and a readiness to accept methodological flexibility in the classroom.

In differentiated learning, the teacher presents the text, its objectives, and its features. The teacher then helps students create texts by scaffolding, or offering support. Depending on their needs and skills, students are required to actively participate in class as part of the student-centered learning technique. The assessment of autonomous curricula places greater emphasis on formative evaluation. A diagnostic assessment is a type of formative assessment used at the start of a lesson to tell teachers about their students' readiness for learning. The purpose of formative assessment, also known as evaluation of the learning process, is to track and enhance the process of learning and assess how well learning objectives are being met (Suharyat et al., 2023).

Despite its benefits, instructors had to weigh the pros and cons of the new curriculum when implementing it, as it all depended on how they understood the idea of autonomous curriculum. They will accept and put it into practice if they comprehend it. Research on this topic is still in its early stages at the moment. The public therefore knows very little about the new curriculum's implementation. As a result, the goal of this study is to shed light on how field instructors understand and use autonomous curricula. In theory, the goal of diversified learning is to meet each student's unique learning needs, skills, interests, and learning style in the classroom. It enables educators to differentiate instruction based on the requirements of each student by offering varying approaches or actions. According to the study's results, English teachers correctly interpreted both formative and summative assessments of students' English learning. They saw formative assessment as a tool not just for student feedback but also for teacher evaluation of the learning activity's strategy and the needs of the students. The findings show that the participants in the study misjudged the content of the English Six abilities. They believed, for example, that all six abilities could be applied and evaluated in a single meeting. This is incredibly dishonest. Based on the data collected from the participants, it appears that they did not have enough expertise to understand how to use a text-based method. They admitted that they were still learning about the best ways to convey various text types for learning. In addition, the global trend toward remote and hybrid learning models demands that digital literacy be incorporated into the

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curriculum. The Independent Curriculum can maintain its relevance for years to come by teaching students how to comprehend, analyze, and produce digital content in addition to using digital tools. The classroom should not be the exclusive location for the learning process. Students can have more fulfilling experiences when the larger community which includes parents, nearby companies, and cultural institutions is involved. These interactions could take the form of joint events, internships, or community initiatives, resulting in a comprehensive learning ecosystem.

It's possible that conventional assessment techniques don't fully capture the depth of knowledge covered in the Merdeka Curriculum. Rethinking assessment is necessary, including the use of reflective essays, oral presentations, portfolios, and peer reviews. This all-encompassing method of assessment makes sure that students are evaluated on comprehension, application, and critical thinking in addition to memorization of material.

The Independent Curriculum is more than just a language-learning program. Alternatively, it could serve as the basis for a comprehensive teaching approach. Interdisciplinary education, in which science, history, culture, and English are integrated with other courses, can provide pupils a deeper, more comprehensive understanding (Firman et al., 2024). By taking this method to studying the language, students can gain a deeper understanding of the worldwide environment in which English is spoken and enhance their linguistic journey with newfound knowledge. Every learner has a different preferred method, speed, and style of learning. With its focus on student autonomy, the Independent Curriculum is well-suited to support personalized learning pathways. This entails making sure that every student can navigate a learning experience that is specifically designed for their unique strengths and problems, rather than merely serving advanced students or those who require extra support. The Independent Curriculum is a guiding light of progressive thought as Indonesia makes its way through the challenges of 21st-century education. Not only resources be needed for its effective implementation and scaling, but also vision, perseverance, and a group effort. The risks are great, but the benefits are priceless: a generation endowed with exceptional language abilities, critical thinking abilities, and a global perspective. As the trip progresses, it's critical to keep in mind that education is fundamentally about forming futures rather than merely dispensing knowledge (Nikmah et al., 2023). Furthermore, Indonesia is ready to mold a bright and promising future for the next generation with the implementation of the Independent Curriculum. The Independent Curriculum has many potential advantages, but it's important to foresee and overcome obstacles. One of the main obstacles to consistent adoption is the Indonesian archipelago's size and diversity. In addition, even though technology is supposed to be an enabler, there is still concern about the digital divide. In addition to government action, addressing these issues calls for active community, nonprofit, and corporate sector involvement. In essence, the Independent Curriculum reflects a paradigm shift in the entire educational ethos, not just a change in methodology. Although there are many obstacles in the way of its complete realization, the vision it presents is one of empowerment, advancement, and worldwide significance. Through cooperative endeavors, persistent adjustment, and resolute dedication, Indonesia stands ready to reinvent not only its educational system but also its place in the world economy. With the Independent Curriculum serving as its compass, Indonesia is moving forward with hope and resolve as the future looms (Nafisah et al., 2023).

Real knowledge requires a close relationship between theory and practice. Retention and practical knowledge can be improved by including experiential learning, where students can interact directly with real-world applications of their language abilities. A practical method of learning the English language is through project-based learning, in which students work on extensive projects such as conducting interviews, writing reports, or even making short films.

## CONCLUSION

In summary, even though the Independent Curriculum offers a novel method for learning English, its implementation necessitates careful consideration, preparation, and funding. Nonetheless, there is a great deal of opportunity to transform the way English is taught and learned in Indonesia, making it more powerful, relevant, and engaging for the next generation, with the correct dedication, a clear vision, and strong support from all stakeholders. Developing excellent English language abilities through programs like the Independent Curriculum can be crucial to training citizens who can compete and work together on the global stage, especially in a country like this one with a big youth population and aspirations to be globally integrated. Of course, there are a number of additional factors to take into account before the Independent Curriculum is widely implemented. Due to its intrinsically social nature, education needs the cooperation of many parties. This applies to other stakeholders including policy makers and the larger community, as well as parents who must comprehend and embrace these changes. Stakeholder participation and effective communication are so essential. But putting this strategy into practice is undoubtedly not without challenges.

A key element in the successful implementation of this paradigm shift is the preparedness of teachers. The flexibility and freedom provided by the Independent Curriculum may inspire some teachers, while others may feel uncomfortable or unprepared to support this more student-centered approach to learning. Ultimately, the difficulties English instructors encountered in putting the Independent Curriculum into practice were from issues with time management, including a shortage of time for material preparation and comprehension of the concept. Additionally, they had trouble putting new teaching strategies into practice, particularly for autonomous curricula like



differentiated instruction in the classroom. They typically did not allot enough time for the teaching and learning of English. As a result, they found it challenging to evaluate their pupils in keeping with the requirements of using the Independent Curriculum. Lastly, the study shows that obstacles were encountered in implementing an independent curriculum due to a lack of infrastructure.

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