IMPLEMENTATION OF INDEPENDENT CURRICULUM AND ITS CHALLENGES

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Abstract
The Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology issued a policy in the development of the Independent Curriculum in education units as an additional option in the context of learning recovery during 2022-2024. The Independent Curriculum (Merdeka Curriculum) is implemented in educational units that are ready and have registered. Furthermore, The Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology policies related to the national curriculum will be reviewed in 2024 based on evaluations during the learning recovery period. The implementation of the Independent Curriculum (IKM) is inseparable from the challenges faced, especially with regard to readiness of human resources (HR) implementing the IKM. This paper examines IKM and its challenges. IKM as an additional option in the education recovery after the COVID-19 pandemic requires cooperation of all stakeholders in order to have a significant impact. Some of the IKM challenges include readiness of competencies, skills, mindset of educators as education implementers, readiness of infrastructure, as well as facilities and infrastructure. The Commission X of the House of Representatives through its supervisory function needs to encourage the Ministry of Education and Technology for the IKM to be implemented effectively in order to accelerate the education recovery.

Introduction
Every May 2 is celebrated as the National Education Day. At the 2022 National Education Day commemoration ceremony, the Minister of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology conveyed a number of developments in the Independent Learning Program. One of them is the Independent Curriculum program already applied to thousands of educational units throughout Indonesia. The Independent Curriculum is implemented based on Decree of the Minister of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology Number 56 of 2022 concerning Guidelines for the Implementation of Curriculum in
the context of Learning Recovery as a complement to the previous curriculum.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, education units used the 2013 Curriculum as the only learning curriculum. At the beginning of the pandemic until 2021, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology issued a policy on the use of the 2013 Curriculum and the Emergency Curriculum (simplified 2013 Curriculum). The implementation of the Emergency Curriculum aims at providing convenience for educational units in managing learning, thus, it becomes easier with essential material substances. Then, from 2021 to 2022, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology issued a policy on the use of the 2013 Curriculum, the Emergency Curriculum, and the Independent Curriculum at Driving Schools (SPs) and Center for Excellence Vocational High School (SMK PK).

Furthermore, in the context of learning recovery in 2022-2024, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology issued a policy that schools that are not ready to use the Independent Curriculum can still use the 2013 Curriculum and the Emergency Curriculum as the basis for providing education. The Independent Curriculum as an option is implemented in schools that are ready to implement. In 2024, a national curriculum policy will be determined based on an evaluation of the curriculum during the learning recovery period (kemdikbud.go.id, May 11, 2022). The results of this evaluation will become a reference for the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology in making follow-up policies after the learning recovery. In its implementation there are challenges in IKM. Therefore, this paper examines IKM and its challenges.

Implementation of The Independent Curriculum

The Independent Curriculum has not been implemented simultaneously and massively. This is in accordance with the policy of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology which provides flexibility to educational units in implementing the curriculum (kemdikbud.go.id, May 8, 2022). The IKM option offered is adjusted to the readiness of teachers and education staff. To participate in the IKM, the education unit registers the IKM. Furthermore, teachers and education staff in the education unit fill out readiness questionnaire already developed. From the readiness questionnaire, the most appropriate option related to the readiness of the education unit is produced. The hope is that the more appropriate, the more effective IKM will be in the education unit.

IKM is implemented independently with three alternative options (kemdikbud.go.id, May 8, 2022). Firstly, the Independent Learning option that gives freedom to educational units to apply several parts and principles of the Independent Curriculum without changing the curriculum of the education unit being applied to the Early Childhood Education (PAUD) unit, grades 1, 4, 7, and 10. Secondly, the option of Independent Changing (Mandiri Berubah) that provides flexibility to educational units when implementing the Independent Curriculum by using teaching tools already provided in Early Childhood Education (PAUD) education units, grades 1, 4, 7, and 10. Thirdly, the Independent Sharing (Mandiri Berbagi) option that provides flexibility to educational units in implementing the Independent Curriculum by developing its own various teaching tools in Early Childhood Education (PAUD) education units, grades 1, 4, 7, and 10. Schools can implement one of the three options for the Independent Curriculum according to their individual readiness.
As of May 8, 2022, as many as 143,265 educational units under the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology and the Ministry of Religion have registered to implement the Independent Curriculum independently. Gradually, for stage 1 a decree has been issued for education units to conduct the IKM. For the independent learning category, there are 35,334 educational units, the independent changing category 59,429 educational units, and the sharing independent category 3,607 education units (kemdikbud.go.id, May 8, 2022).

The Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology has also started to disseminate the availability of Independent Curriculum books through a Circular Letter concerning Procurement of Independent Curriculum Books issued by the Director General of Early Childhood Education, Preliminary Education, and Secondary Education of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology. In the Circular Letter Number 2802/C/LK.00.03/2022 dated April 7, 2022 addressed to Heads of Provincial Education Offices and Heads of District/City Education Offices throughout Indonesia. It is explained that the procurement of Independent Curriculum textbooks in implementing schools is carried out through a School Procurement Information System (SIPLah) mechanism by ordering from a designated provider. The ordering process for schools was carried out until last April, while those who are not driving school program implementers were until this May. The financing for the procurement of the Independent Curriculum textbooks in SP is from School Operational Assistance (BOS) for 2022 performance, Education Operational Assistance (BOP) for 2022 performance, government assistance, and independent funds. Meanwhile, for schools who are not the SP program implementers, the financing comes from regular BOS/BOP (Kompas, May 9, 2022; kompas.id, May 11, 2022).

On the other hand, the implementation of the Independent Curriculum has been criticized by a number of educational stakeholders, including in the Ngobrol Pintar Seputar Kebijakan Edukasi forum entitled “Complete Discussion on the Implementation of the Independent Curriculum” broadcasted on YouTube Vox Populi Institute Indonesia on May 8, 2022. The member of the Commission X of the House of Representatives of RI, Ferdiansyah, reminded the government that the Independent Curriculum should not be carried out in a hurry, but it should be finalized first. Preparation of IKM must be really clear, both regarding teacher training, rule of law, and budget. Meanwhile, the education practitioner and teacher assistant, Aulia Wijiasih, said that changes for quality improvement, including through IKM, must be supported. However, learning from the experience of curriculum changes so far, important things actually already exist, but they have not been understood optimally. Furthermore, Professor of the Indonesia University of Education, Said Hamid Hasan, said that if curriculum development is still in a prototype stage, it means that the curriculum is still fluid. Meaning, it is still in the testing process, thus, it cannot be used in general. In addition, the responsibility for implementing the three curricula, namely the 2013 Curriculum, the Emergency Curriculum, and the Independent Curriculum must be clear.

Challenges in The Implementation of The Independent Curriculum

The implementation of the Independent Curriculum in schools is inseparable from various challenges. One of them is the readiness of mindset
of educators. The Director General of Vocational Education of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, Wikan Sakarinto, explained that the curriculum implemented by Indonesia in the 1970s has now adopted the German system. While the country has changed rapidly, Indonesia is still using the same pattern (detik.com, May 11, 2022). This is a challenge for educators.

In the Independent Curriculum, there is a change in the function of educators who originally taught with a uniform approach or one size fits all to become someone who is able to create students as lifelong independent learners. In this case, teachers must become mentors, facilitators, or coaches in active project-based learning activities. To change the mindset of educators, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology conducted project-based training and pedagogic competencies for teachers and lecturers (detik.com, May 11, 2022).

M. Fatkoer Rohman, one of the principals of a high school whose school was selected as the driving school for the second generation of the 2022/2023 Academic Year explained the need to strengthen the understanding of teachers/schools that the curriculum was not limited to materials/subjects for the IKM to have an impact. In changing the curriculum so far, teachers still teach in the same way (lectures) and learning is not focused on students, thus, the curriculum changes do not have a significant impact on educational success. Actually, the Independent Curriculum is not much different from the 2013 Curriculum. The use of new terms in the Independent Curriculum actually summarizes those already in the previous curriculum but with different terms. The challenge is when teachers develop their own learning objectives. Teachers are given independence, but in terms of capability there are still many teachers who are not ready. In fact, there are still many teachers who have not been able to develop a good lesson plan (YouTube Vox Populi Institute Indonesia, May 8, 2022). Therefore, strengthening principals, teachers, and school supervisors is important. In addition, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology also needs to provide curriculum implementation guidelines that contain a curriculum framework to be referred to by schools, thus, the flexibility of schools in the IKM can be monitored and its quality is mapped.

Another matter that becomes a challenge is the readiness of students in the IKM, especially with regard to the flexibility of students to choose for themselves what they will learn. This needs to be a concern for the students to really choose what will be studied based on their talents and interests, not just to follow their friends’ choices or even due to pressure from both teachers and parents. This is where strengthening the role and cooperation of educators and parents are very important to encourage and direct students to learn according to their interests and potential to achieve optimal and meaningful learning outcomes.

Changes in the curriculum and the application of a new curriculum in education is a necessity when the previous curriculum is no longer relevant or when there is an urgent need to accelerate the recovery of education. However, changes in the curriculum that is not mature, hasty, and too quick will be very burdensome for education units as implementers, especially for schools that still need a lot of help and are in disadvantaged areas. Without proper preparation, it is not possible to achieve maximum educational results but only experimental results, and education implementers are actually troubled with demands for continuous adjustment. This is because the first curriculum has not been implemented properly. It has been replaced by a new curriculum.
Challenges and criticisms from related parties need to be considered by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology in IKM. Although it has not been implemented simultaneously, IKM will be independently implemented evenly in various regions in Indonesia. Therefore, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology also needs to ensure the readiness of IKM. Some things need to notice include, firstly, related to legal umbrella. It is necessary to ensure that the IKM is implemented on a clear legal basis. Secondly, in terms of HR. There needs to be a common understanding between teachers, principals, school committees, school supervisors, education offices, and related parties regarding the Independent Curriculum in a clear and detailed manner. There is a need for guidelines for the IKM to carried out in flexibility for schools but remains responsible for improving the quality of education. Teachers and school principals also need to receive training to understand their role in learning activities and develop competencies and skills in the IKM. Thirdly, in terms of facilities and infrastructure. The IKM certainly requires supporting facilities and infrastructure, especially because it uses a digital platform, namely the Independent Teaching (Merdeka Mengajar) Platform. Support for adequate facilities and infrastructure is needed for the platform to be accessed by minimizing obstacles. Fourthly, in terms of budget. Funding for the IKM needs to be properly budgeted so as not to burden schools. Considering the amount of BOS that schools receive is based on the amount of students, the use of BOS to purchase books and other activities related to IKM will greatly affect school operational funds, especially for schools that are not Driving School implementers.

Closing
IKM as an additional option in the recovery of education after the COVID-19 pandemic requires cooperation of all stakeholders in order to have a significant impact. Some of the IKM challenges include the readiness of competencies, skills, mindset of educators as education implementers, readiness of infrastructure, as well as facilities and infrastructure. Efforts are needed to increase this readiness. The House of Representatives of RI especially the Commission X through its supervisory function needs to encourage the IKM to be implemented effectively in order to accelerate the recovery of education, among others by: (1) encouraging the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology for the IKM to be implemented by clear regulations; (2) encouraging the IKM financing budgeting that does not burden schools, especially small schools; and (3) encouraging the readiness of human resources, as well as facilities and infrastructure for the IKM.

References
“Implementasi Dibagi Tiga Kategori”, Kompas, May 9, 2022, p. 5.