



Relevancy of Independent Curriculum Implementation in Vocational High Schools to Business / Industrial Competence Needs

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ABSTRACT

The Independent Learning Program is a future learning direction that focuses on improving the quality of human resources. It is not only intended as a response to problems that may arise in the future, but it also introduces additional highlights and directions to teaching and learning activities that inspire students to think and act independently and to ask their own questions. Schools must be able to construct graduate curriculum and competences in accordance with the requirements of the current business world in order to meet stakeholder demands for the quality and relevance of graduates to the World of Business and Industry (DUDI). The adoption of the independent learning curriculum in vocational high schools and the competency standards in DUDI served as the foundation for the composition of this paper. According to the study's findings, independent learning curriculum implementation necessitates innovation and the capacity of teachers to create learning outcomes that meet DUDI requirements.

Keywords: *Independent Learning, DUDI, Vocational High School*

1. INTRODUCTION

The Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia (*Kemendikbud Ristek RI*) directly initiated the "Independent Learning" curriculum with the aim of providing opportunities for students to develop their talents by utilizing technology. In addition, there are several advantages that need to be understood from their curriculum, namely 1) it is simpler and more in-depth because this curriculum will focus on essential material and the development of student competencies in its phases; 2) teachers and students have independence in teaching and learning activities, 3) students are given the freedom to choose subjects according to their interests, talents and aspirations, 4) teachers can teach according to the stages of achievement and development of students, 5) the school also has the authority to develop and manage curricula and learning in accordance with the characteristics of educational units and students, and 6) more relevant and interactive because learning can be done through project activities which can provide wider opportunities for students to be more active in exploring actual issues.

In principle, the independent learning curriculum will change the learning methods that were previously carried

out in the classroom to learn outside the classroom. The concept of learning outside the classroom can provide an opportunity for students to be able to discuss flexibly with the teacher. With this, students can form their character by being brave in expressing opinions, social skills, and become competent students. Students will be given the freedom to elaborate on the skills they have. Thus, teachers and students can collaborate to create active and productive learning.

The concept of "Independent Learning" can be easily understood and pronounced, but in fact it is very difficult to implement. There needs to be commitment, independence and the ability to make it happen. Commitment and independence in learning is a foundation for achieving learning goals, it's just that this is also difficult to implement. Related to the competence of the students, they get not only learning in the classroom, students also have the opportunity to seek other learning environments. So the competencies obtained by students are not individualistic but appear together with the learning environment they have created [1].

Vocational schools have the main goal of preparing their students to enter the workforce. Vocational High

School graduates are expected to become ready-to-use workforce, in other words Vocational High Schools produce graduates who are ready to work. In addition, Article 15 of Law No. 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System states that vocational secondary education has the aim of preparing students mainly to work in certain fields. According to *Departemen Pendidikan Nasional* (National Education Department) [2] there are several objectives of vocational high schools, namely:

- a. Preparing students to be able to work, either independently or to fill existing job vacancies in the world of business and industry as a middle-level workforce, in accordance with the areas of expertise they are interested in
- b. Equip students to be able to choose a career, be tenacious and persistent in competence and be able to develop a professional attitude in the field of expertise they are interested in
- c. Equip students with science and technology to be able to develop themselves through a higher level of education.

Based on the description above, it can be concluded that the purpose of the Vocational High School is to prepare students by providing them with the knowledge and skills to be in accordance with high competitiveness skills to enter the world of work.

2. VOCATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL AND WORLD OF BUSINESS / INDUSTRY (DUDI)

The World of Business / Industry (DUDI) concept is interpreted as the Link and Match Policy which was launched in 1993 and has never been revoked, as a vocational education policy and is still being maintained. Conceptually, link and match are interpreted between the world of education and the industry as users of graduates as a "link" (link and "match") between learning outcomes and the skill needs of graduates when they start working, now this slogan has reappeared with new enthusiasm. It can be said that the relationship between DUDI and Vocational High School (VHS) is a must and this is a strength for VHS, the more the school world (VHS) establishes extensive relations with DUDI, the easier it will be for VHS to field graduates according to the competencies needed by DUDI. With the existence of a cooperative relationship with DUDI, it is also necessary to have abilities and skills related to the community, in this case extracurricular activities in schools, where these activities provide skills for students for life skills which will later become provisions in carrying out work according to the competencies required. has. In fulfilling workforce needs, DUDI has strategic planning and has an overview of the workload that must be met and

completed, so that DUDI is looking for workers who have high competence in their fields and are in line with DUDI's expectations. So, of course, with technological developments and in line with the increase in results from DUDI, of course, it will require a workforce of VHS graduates who have high competence. From the competencies possessed and in accordance with DUDI, the characteristics are: DUDI requires competence in knowledge, skill, attitudes, and work experience. DUDI provides apprenticeship training to improve strategic competencies programmed by DUDI to identify needs according to the competencies possessed by the workforce from VHS graduates. From this, the world of education, in this case Vocational High Schools, must prepare graduates who are in accordance with technological developments so that in the future what is obtained can be used as well as possible to fulfil their work and apply their competencies.

The GTZ [3] study shows an illustration that the output of VHS education, especially in the soft skills aspect, is not yet in line with the needs of the industrial world. This problem is caused by the education system (including the curriculum) of VHS not being able to equip students with skills that are relevant to the needs of the world of work. Oloruntegbe [4] suggests that the quality of unemployed vocational education graduates will cause an unfavourable influence on a country's economy so that it will cause symptoms of economically inactive. Curriculum development will be said to be effective if the output of the development is in accordance with the demands and needs of the community. In addition to referring to a strong foundation, the curriculum also needs to have principles to support the achievement of educational goals.

As an example of several studies that have been carried out in particular highlighting the field of construction services. The availability of jobs in the construction service industry for VHS graduates of the Building Engineering Expertise Program (PKTB) includes drafters, contractors, supervisors, and estimators, this is in accordance with the competencies possessed by PKTB. Currently PKTB graduates are still viewed negatively by most people because of unclear career directions, non-prestigious majors and considered menial jobs. This is reinforced by the opinion of Isnandar [5] that the stigma and negative image of PKTB if they graduate "will become builders/construction workers", even though PKTB graduates are still needed by DUDI. This is because the absorption of graduates in the industry is still low, so graduates who are unemployed will work soberly and not even work according to their field. The low absorption of graduates is caused by the industry's reluctance to employ PKTB graduates due to a mismatch of available competencies with those required by the construction service industry [6]. The results of research conducted by Mulyana [7] show that the weaknesses of VHS graduates in facing the business and industrial

world are that they do not have the competencies required or required for work, lack self-confidence so that they are unable to work independently and are not ready to face the work culture in industry and other employment opportunities. This research is also supported by Safitri [8] which states that the absorption capacity of VHS graduates according to their education is still very low because their competencies do not match market or industry needs. Another view also states that as many as 70% of graduates do not work in accordance with their areas of expertise because their competencies are not in accordance with the needs of the industrial world [9].

Based on the explanation above, it can be said that the competency mismatch of VHS graduates with DUDI's needs will result in weak planning of the education component in VHSs so that VHS graduates are not absorbed by DUDI. With this phenomenon, the competencies possessed in the world of education need to be explored so that the gaps that occur between the world of education and DUDI can be in line. Therefore, the world of education must adjust the competencies needed by DUDI and the demands of the job market can be met with competent vocational graduates.

3. RELEVANCY OF INDEPENDENT CURRICULUM AND DUDI

Curriculum relevancy is interpreted as the adaptive curriculum [10]. Relevance will link between the potential for existing employment and the ability of graduates to fulfil the job requirements. If graduates from vocational education cannot meet the requirements and needs that have been determined by employment, then vocational education is considered "failed" [11]–[13]. Very fast changes in the world of work indicate that the curriculum needs to be constantly reviewed to see if there is still a match between what is taught in schools and the needs of DUDI. However, the issue of the relevance of the curriculum in vocational education to DUDI is a crucial issue of all time. Curriculum relevance has two blades, whether it will be the biggest strength or even the biggest weakness in vocational education.

Departing from the concept of independent learning that has been described above, in the implementation of the Independent Curriculum this is in accordance with the Vocational School program that the project-based learning method that has been practiced so far in Vocational Schools is expected to make it easier for vocational schools to adopt and adapt to the Independent Curriculum. What's more, the Independent Curriculum also improves the skills of VHS students. What has been implemented so far in VHS in adjusting the implementation of the Independent Curriculum will be easier to do. Because so far, the learning process has been project-based through the teaching factory. So, VHS feels it is not too difficult in implementing the Independent Curriculum. With the new Independent Curriculum, it

can help students to explore their abilities by adding more projects that make students more independent, can improve students' skills because there will be more projects and also collaboration with the industrial world. Therefore, the teacher's creativity in creating project assignments that are relevant to DUDI is needed. Seeing the many changes that have occurred in the Independent Learning Curriculum, the mindset of teachers must also change. The success or failure of the implementation of the Independent Learning curriculum in the field depends on the quality of the teacher, because the Independent Learning curriculum will not be useful if the teacher does not have sufficient quality to implement it. So, it cannot be denied that the Independent Learning curriculum is an implementation of creative teachers. Apart from that, with the implementation of the independent curriculum through a project-based learning model, of course VHSs must be better prepared to establish good cooperation with the world of work following technological developments that are growing more rapidly.

However, the existence of cooperation between VHS and industry is a must in a VHS. Because there are school activities, which involve the industrial world such as Industrial Work Practices (*Prakerin*). DUDI in this cooperative relationship is not just gaining profit but transferring knowledge about the world of work and technology to VHS. So, if asked whether the Merdeka curriculum is aligned with DUDI, then the answer is how is teacher creativity in building student competence through project assignments given at school so that students are able to not only carry out assignments from the teacher but also develop critical thinking skills, work creatively according to DUDI needs.

4. CONCLUSION

The presence of the independent curriculum has changed the pattern of learning to be more flexible and diverse where the material will be more optimal and allows students to have enough time to explore concepts and strengthen competence. Teachers as the vanguard have the flexibility to develop their creativity in presenting innovative learning. Through exploring students' abilities by multiplying projects, students become more independent, and improve students' skills to meet DUDI's competency needs. Therefore, the teacher's creativity in creating project assignments that are relevant to DUDI is needed.

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