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“I Know This Is Good, but I Am Confused”: English Teachers’ Self-Efficacy in Implementing the Independent Curriculum

Zulianti Rohmah^{*1}
Hamamah Hamamah²
Esti Junining²

¹Department of Language Education, Faculty of Cultural Studies, Universitas Brawijaya, Malang 65145, INDONESIA

²Department of Language and Literature, Faculty of Cultural Studies, Universitas Brawijaya, Malang 65145, INDONESIA

Abstract

Several studies have been conducted to determine the implementation of the Independent Curriculum. However, the existing studies have not identified English teachers’ self-efficacy in implementing the curriculum. Therefore, the present research aims to investigate the English teachers’ self-efficacy in applying the Independent Curriculum in secondary schools in Indonesia. This study was a mixed method study using a questionnaire and focus group discussions with teachers in teacher support groups. The data was collected from 171 secondary school English teachers. The results show that most English teachers understand the freedom offered by the government to schools and teachers in the new curriculum. However, they have low self-efficacy in implementing the curriculum in the teaching-learning process. They do not have adequate knowledge of how to translate the learning objectives specified by the government into their own syllabi. They do not have sufficient understanding or ability to conduct a needs analysis and syllabus design as a prerequisite for implementing the curriculum. Our research suggests that the teachers need further support from the government and teacher trainers through in-person hands-on training and workshops on needs analysis, syllabus design, and materials selection and development to effectively implement the Independent Curriculum.

* Corresponding author, email: zuliatirohmah@ub.ac.id

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1. INTRODUCTION

To restore learning that was disrupted by the pandemic (Aswat et al., 2021; Bhasin et al., 2021; Engzell et al., 2021; Kuhfeld et al., 2020), the Minister of Education of the Republic of Indonesia devised a new curriculum (Yudhawasthi & Christiani, 2022), officially introduced by the Minister of Education, Research, and Technology to respond to the long-standing learning crisis impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on education which is characterized by low learning outcomes (Firmansyah et al., 2023; Irawati et al., 2022; Merrynda et al., 2022; Supriyono, 2022). This curriculum aims to develop the Pancasila student profile, emanating from the Indonesian national ideology of Pancasila, which encompasses the following traits, namely having faith in God Almighty and noble character, having global diversity views, having the ability to work together, being independent, having critical reasoning, and being creative, through various learning activities (Angga et al., 2022). The new curriculum aims to provide a more holistic and student-centered approach to education and prepare students to become knowledgeable, intelligent, responsible, creative, innovative, and socially prepared individuals (Nugrohadi & Anwar, 2022; Rizki & Fahkrunisa, 2022).

The new curriculum is often called *Merdeka* Curriculum (Independent Curriculum) since it gives schools and teachers more freedom to tailor their curriculum, syllabus, and teaching-learning processes (Irawati et al., 2022; Merrynda et al., 2022; Reza et al., 2023; Yudhawasthi & Christiani, 2022). In this research, the new curriculum is also named the Emancipated Curriculum based on the arguments provided by the Director General of Early Childhood Education, Primary Education, and Secondary Education that the new curriculum invites broad participation from school administrators and teachers to design their own syllabus in line with the learners' needs in their own schools (Indonesian G20 Education Working Group, 2022; Syahril, 2023).

The Independent Curriculum implemented in the elementary and secondary school levels incorporates intra-curricular, co-curricular, and extracurricular activities through differentiated instructions in the classrooms and projects outside of the classrooms based on the student's interests and the resources available by employing interdisciplinary approaches that reinforce the Pancasila Student Profile (Ihsan, 2022; Saleh, 2020; Sayyidi & Sidiq, 2020). The educational units formulate their own learning outcomes by designing operational curricula and lesson plans that cater to the learning needs of the students and the specific characteristics of each educational unit. The Independent Curriculum is designed to give teachers more autonomy to design learning activities that align with the goals and principles of the curriculum by employing various teaching methods (Saleh, 2020).

The involvement of English teachers in the implementation of the Independent Curriculum in Indonesia is crucial as they have a significant role in ensuring the success of the program (Patankar & Jadhav, 2013; Reza et al., 2023; Yudhawasthi & Christiani, 2022). English is a global language, and proficiency in it is essential in today's interconnected world. English teachers, therefore, have an important role to

play in teaching these skills to students. As such, English teachers need to have self-efficacy, defined by Kasalak and Dağyar (2020), as well as Lazarides and Warner (2020), as the belief in one's capability to perform a specific task successfully. Teachers with positive self-efficacy are more likely to be motivated, persistent, and successful in their teaching practices. In contrast, teachers with low self-efficacy may experience difficulties implementing the new curriculum. This is especially true in the context of the Independent Curriculum, which requires teachers to design their own syllabus. Therefore, they need sufficient school support, such as by providing resources, training, and mentoring for teachers (Irbah et al., 2022; Pratikno et al., 2022; Rizki & Fahkrunisa, 2022; Sumiat, 2022). However, there are concerns that teachers lack the essential support to implement the Independent Curriculum effectively. This may result in poor implementation and failure to achieve the desired outcomes.

Several studies have been conducted to determine the implementation of the *Independent Curriculum* (Ihsan, 2022; Kamila & Agus, 2023; Mantra et al., 2022; Pratikno et al., 2022; Rahayu et al., 2022; Sayyidi & Sidiq, 2020). Some studies have been conducted to determine whether the implementation of the new curriculum can overcome problems arising from the previous curriculum. The research conducted by Sayyidi and Sidiq (2020) and Ihsan (2022) shows that the various components and curriculum structures in the new curriculum have enabled students to develop competencies through intra-curricular learning and strengthen the Pancasila profile of the students through project activities integrated with subjects or stand-alone. This may help transform students into academically strong students with the character stipulated by the Pancasila student profile.

However, the existing studies have not identified English teachers' self-efficacy in implementing the Independent Curriculum (Ihsan, 2022; Kamila & Agus, 2023; Mantra et al., 2022; Pratikno et al., 2022; Rahayu et al., 2022; Sayyidi & Sidiq, 2020). Our preliminary observation shows that the implementation of the newly introduced curriculum has not yet been accompanied by sufficient teacher training or support to help teachers understand the goals and principles of the curriculum and develop the necessary knowledge and skills to implement it in the teaching-learning processes effectively. To address this, the current research investigates English teachers' self-efficacy in applying the Independent Curriculum in secondary schools in Indonesia. Research on the implementation of the Independent Curriculum in Indonesia contributes to the improvement of the education system in Indonesia and provides valuable lessons to various regions in Indonesia seeking to implement this curriculum more effectively.

The current research, therefore, aims to investigate the English teachers' self-efficacy in implementing the Independent Curriculum in English teaching. By identifying teachers' self-efficacy in implementing the curriculum into the actual practice of teaching-learning activities in the classrooms, the findings of this research can inform policy decisions and interventions that can help improve the implementation of the curriculum. More specifically, this study answers the following questions:

1. How do the teachers perceive the new curriculum?
2. How is their understanding of the new curriculum based on the available training?
3. How is the teachers' ability to cope with needs analysis and syllabus design?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Independent Curriculum

The Independent Curriculum aims to encourage each student to have a holistic understanding, be aware of their culture, be able to appreciate other cultures, participate in one or more cultures, and be responsible for maintaining them (Ibrahim, 2013; Nurcahyono, 2018; Ordway, 2021; Rahayu et al., 2022; Rohmah, 2014; Syafi'i, 2022). The implementation of the Independent Curriculum also focuses on literacy and numeracy skills, which are associated with learning loss as a result of distance learning during the pandemic (Halawiyah, 2022).

The National Education Standards Agency (BNSP) explicates the Independent Curriculum as a learning curriculum focusing on the student's talent and interest. The Minister of Education and Culture, Nadiem Makarim, explains that it is a form of evaluation and improvement of the 2013 Curriculum. Previously, the so-called prototype curriculum was a segment of the government's programs to create future generations more competent in various fields. The prototype curriculum is a simple version of the 2013 Curriculum with a specific project-based learning system. The launch of the Independent Curriculum aligned with the introduction of the *Merdeka Mengajar* platform, which is a follow-up step in the attempts to create a digital-based education and is provided to become a partner and energizer for teachers in the instructional processes (Nurcahyono, 2018; Ordway, 2021).

There are three implementation models of the Independent Curriculum in schools, i.e., independent sharing, independent changing, and independent learning. The three options were previously offered to the schools through opinion polls or needs analysis related to the school potential and readiness to implement the curriculum. Regarding the independent sharing program, each school that chooses this option would implement the Independent Curriculum by developing its own teaching tools, and the activity begins with the presence of a Pioneer Teacher (*Guru Penggerak*) at the schools. Then, with respect to the Independent Change Model, the teachers at the schools develop/take teaching tools developed by the government and adapt them to suit their needs. The third implementation concept, which is independent sharing, means that some parts of the Independent Curriculum principles can be applied while still using the 2013 curriculum without completely changing it. Fajri (2019) explains that the differences in applying the curriculum by each school at the same level of education will later cause variations in student learning outcomes.

Implementing the Independent Curriculum has three advantages (Syahril, 2023). First, the Independent Curriculum is more straightforward and more in-depth, focusing more on essential materials and developing student competencies. Each phase is simpler, where learning becomes more in-depth, relaxed, and fun. Second, students can choose subjects that suit their interests and talents, while teachers can teach based on the stage of student development and achievement. Third, the Independent Curriculum for educational units means that the educational units have the power and rights to develop and implement certain curricula based on the characteristics of the educational units, including the students. The Independent Curriculum provides opportunities for schools to develop their own flagship programs, which will be carried out through project activities to provide wider opportunities for students to actively explore actual concerns in society, such as environmental, health, and cultural issues.

2.2 The Importance of Needs Analysis in the Implementation of the New Curriculum

To successfully implement the Independent Curriculum, teachers should play their important roles (Widiastuti et al., 2013). They need to understand the concept of Independent Curriculum, what needs to be responded to before implementing learning activities, how to apply the teaching and learning activities in class, and how to evaluate students' success related to learning outcomes. In addition, Mantra et al. (2022) also presented the results of their research related to teachers' perceptions of the importance of training in the development and implementation of the Independent Curriculum, namely what is needed by teachers, what difficulties the teachers experience regarding the implementation of the curriculum, and how to resolve it. They need in-person training to help them understand the concept of the current curriculum and be able to apply it in their teaching activities (Comas-Quinn, 2011; Lo & To, 2023).

The teachers' role in the process of curriculum development, especially in the Independent Curriculum, is essential in fulfilling the needs of the community. The curriculum development process obliges teachers to act and reflect on society's demands at every stage of the development process. However, the process that the teachers need to follow is unclear, and how they should participate in the process is not well explained. They face many challenges when they want to participate in curriculum development (Reza et al., 2023). In addition, teachers must be able to reflect on community needs at every stage of the process. In fact, not all teachers can be involved in the implementation process due to differences in their abilities. Therefore, an analysis of the teacher's self-efficacy in applying the Independent Curriculum is very important to promote a better understanding of how effectively the curriculum is being implemented, its impact on student learning outcomes, and identifying areas for professional development and support.

3. METHODS

The current descriptive study on teachers' self-efficacy in implementing the Independent Curriculum was part of a larger research project dealing with teachers' self-efficacy, challenges, school supports, and teachers' expectations in the implementation the curriculum.

To collect data from English teachers all over Indonesia, a self-efficacy questionnaire and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were employed. The online questionnaire was distributed via Google form from 20 June to 22 July 2023 through the English teacher support groups (MGMPs) and responded to by 171 secondary school teachers.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of respondents.

Variable	Number
School Levels	
Junior High schools	42
Senior High Schools	99
Frequency of Joining Training	

Table 1 continued...

Less than 3 times	123
3-4 times	36
5-6 times	7
More than 7 times	5
Provinces	
East Java	122
West Nusa Tenggara	22
Central Java	10
East Kalimantan	8
South Kalimantan	2
West Sumatera	2
Bali	1
Lampung	1
East Nusa Tenggara	1
Papua	1
South Sulawesi	1

In collecting the data, the Regional Coordinators of the Teaching of English as a Foreign Language in Indonesia (TEFLIN) distributed the questionnaire to teachers in their regions. Voluntary participation of the respondents was the basis of the inclusion in the research. Prior to responding to the questionnaire, the participants gave their written consent to participate in the research and agreed that their data would be used for this research purpose.

The teachers' self-efficacy questionnaire includes demographic information and core content information. Demographic information includes teachers' schools, provinces, ministries, locations (towns, sub-districts, villages), and the number of training activities on the new curriculum they have joined. The first part of the core questions contains questions about teachers' perceptions of the curriculum (two questions), their understanding of the curriculum and learning objectives (three questions), and their ability to cope with needs analysis and instructional materials development (five questions). The questionnaire was written in Bahasa Indonesia to make sure that all of the English teachers understood the questions. The questionnaire had been validated by an expert before it was used to collect data. An initial validity testing shows that one item was not valid, and thus eliminated. The reliability statistics Cronbach's Alpha shows 0.919, which means that the questionnaire items are highly reliable.

In addition to the questionnaire, focus group discussions (FGDs) were also organized by collaborating with English Teachers' Support Groups (MGMPs) for secondary schools in East Java and West Nusa Tenggara. The FDGs held in *Bahasa Indonesia* involved 27 teachers in East Java and 32 teachers in West Nusa Tenggara. East Java and West Nusa Tenggara were chosen as the locations of the FDGs since the two biggest numbers of teachers responding to the questionnaire were from East Java and West Nusa Tenggara. Important selected topics based on the teachers' responses to the questionnaire were discussed to obtain more specific information from the teachers.

With regard to the data analysis, first, descriptive statistics were computed to summarize the efficacy levels of the teachers. Then, the data from the FDGs were transcribed word by word. Initially, each transcript was read to get general ideas of the data. All transcripts were then reread more carefully by highlighting keywords and

applying coding by the first research assistant. The codes were then checked by the second research assistant, and inter-coder consistency could be reached. When the two coders agreed on all extracted codes, they came up with theme identification, which enriched the data obtained from the questionnaire.

4. RESULTS

This section presents the English teachers' self-efficacy in implementing the Independent Curriculum. Figure 1 displays the teachers' perception of the new curriculum.

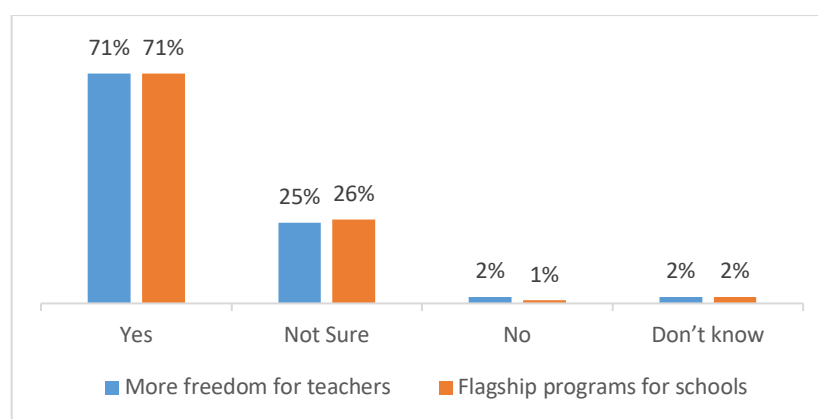


Figure 1. Teachers' perception of the curriculum.

Although most of the teachers have participated in training about the new curriculum less than three times, they agree that the curriculum gives them more freedom to determine the learning materials and more opportunities for schools to choose the desired flagship program. This clear picture of the benefits of the Independent Curriculum in the form of the schools' freedom to offer flagship programs to students, according to most teachers, is also supported by the data collected from the FGD as illustrated in the teachers' statements as follows:

Excerpt 1:

... So, each school is adjusted according to its resources, the resources are different. Maybe a school in a city or a school in another place has both students and different facilities. So it will be decided later. ... For example, this year, for example, if you want to make batik or want to make something about the diversity of Malang City, what do you want? From the culinary side? What side do you want? That's what we differ from one school to another (Mlg, SMA, 6).

Excerpt 2:

We have it, I don't know if this is a flagship program or not, but I believe that this is an advantage for our school. The first in our odd semester was a project called *Brasco Nyantrik*. ... What we like about this is the motto like "Brasco!" That's it, Miss. So *Brasco Nyantrik* is like that. So we went to the village there to help Mrs. Inang and Mr. Inang. Now for the reporting, the students can later be free to choose. So it's like choosing what... like yesterday? It's like a comic strip or storytelling. ... Then in the even semester, we have 'Fiction'. This fiction is a film festival. At film festivals, they are given time, there is a duration to work on, uh, for a video film, but only 15 minutes. But not only suddenly immediately create, no. But there is a process there, where we embraced alumni, alumni, or from UM as usual. We reached out to invite younger children in

grades 10 and 11 to tell them about the knowledge first, there is provision for that, ma'am. So there is a provision of knowledge per film, like that (Mlg, SMA, 7).)

In Excerpt 1, the female teacher did not give a clear example of the flagship program in her school; instead, she gave a general idea of how each school, with its different characteristics, formulated a flagship program. It insinuates her uncertainty about her school's chosen program. She might know how to determine a flagship program, but her school had not enforced a policy on the program. However, when prompted to give a more explicit program, the female teacher did not know about any specific flagship program in her school. However, when the same question was directed to the participants of the FGD, more teachers could easily mention the flagship programs in their schools. Excerpt 2 illustrates examples of flagship programs adopted by Brawijaya Smart School by learning various life skills from villagers that the students directly experienced in the villages. Another flagship program is a film festival where the students compete to create a short movie. Hence, data from both questionnaires and FGD confirm how most teachers understood the benefits of the Independent Curriculum in giving freedom to schools to choose their own flagship programs.

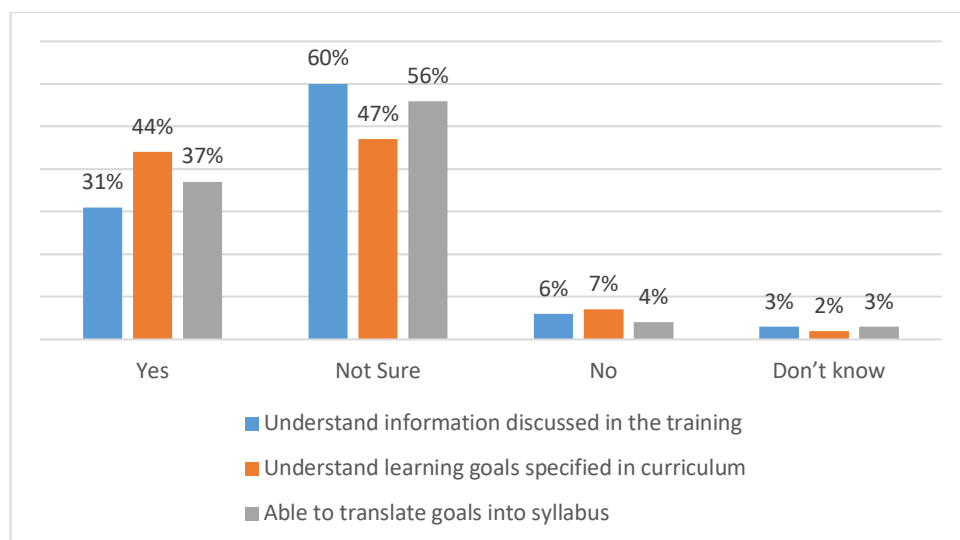


Figure 2. Teachers' perception of their comprehension.

However, based on the questionnaire results shown in Figure 2, the teachers were mostly unsure about the three points included in the questionnaire. They were unsure they could understand the information delivered in the Independent Curriculum Implementation (IKM) training. This is also in line with the results regarding their understanding of the *Capaian Pembelajaran* (CP/Learning Goals), where the majority of the teachers were not confident that they had a good comprehension of learning goals in the English lessons for the secondary school level. Data in Figure 3 also suggest that most teachers were hesitant about whether they could translate goals into detailed *Alur Tujuan Pembelajaran* (ATP/syllabus). The qualitative data collected from the FGD clarify why this is the case.

Excerpt 3:

- a. ... There is one difficulty here, that is, getting into the breakdown of ATP then CP that we find very very difficult (Mlg, SMP, 15).
- b. ... We don't have the knowledge yet... Yes, there is a training, but I don't understand (Mtr, SMP, 1)
- c. ... what I felt and what we experienced during the implementation was, as you said earlier, if you are confused, just like us, ma'am. ... Currently, in the Independent Curriculum, what is very complicated at this Vocational School is the CP that was developed for SMA, Ma'am. (we feel we want to) vomit, ma'am. Then we are a school whose core is engineering technology, right? Then how can I teach narrative text to students from the automotive program, I was told to tell a story like that (Mtr, SMK, 3).
- d. I had a seminar from the school supervisor. Indeed, he gave direct practice on how we translate CP into TP, that's how it is. So, that's what I'm still confused about. There's a lot of CPs, right, ma'am, meaning that the reading also has a theme, and there's also a lot of speaking, so we divide it up per semester, we're confused, right? (Mlg, SMA, 19).
- e. So I understand this curriculum as if it were a kind of puzzle, ma'am. So, one thing first, then what is after this. More to add, then a new one arrives, uh, it turns out the one yesterday didn't fit, take it, replace that one with another thing, that's it (Mlg, MTs, 6-7).
- f. Oh Erlangga's book says this, later this publisher's book is like this, later when I join an in-house training, I get something different. MGMP introduces more new things. So, even so, I confused, confused myself (Mlg, SMA, 15).
- g. It's called the Independent Curriculum but to be honest I'm still confused (Mtr, MAN, 2).

The statements explicate the teachers' confusion on how to translate the learning objectives in the curriculum into a syllabus at the school level. The training provided for them, mostly online, with some in-house training by the school supervisor, did not clarify their confusion. One of the teachers of a vocational school could understand why the learning objectives for vocational schools were the same as those of general schools (Excerpt 3c). Another teacher also conveyed her confusion about how they could decide on different learning objectives for, for example, the reading and speaking skills (Excerpt 3d). In conclusion, most of them only experimented with implementing the new curriculum, as stated by a teacher from an Islamic school (Excerpt 3e). However, some were still confused; the more they read from different sources, the more they got confounded (Excerpt 3f).

Similarly, most teachers were unsure if they could do a needs analysis to translate the syllabus into learning modules suitable for students' needs and schools. The majority of teachers stated that they were not confident when they answered more detailed statements on whether they had a good understanding of how to develop modules, whether they had any experience with that, and whether they had the ability to implement them, evaluate, and review the modules.

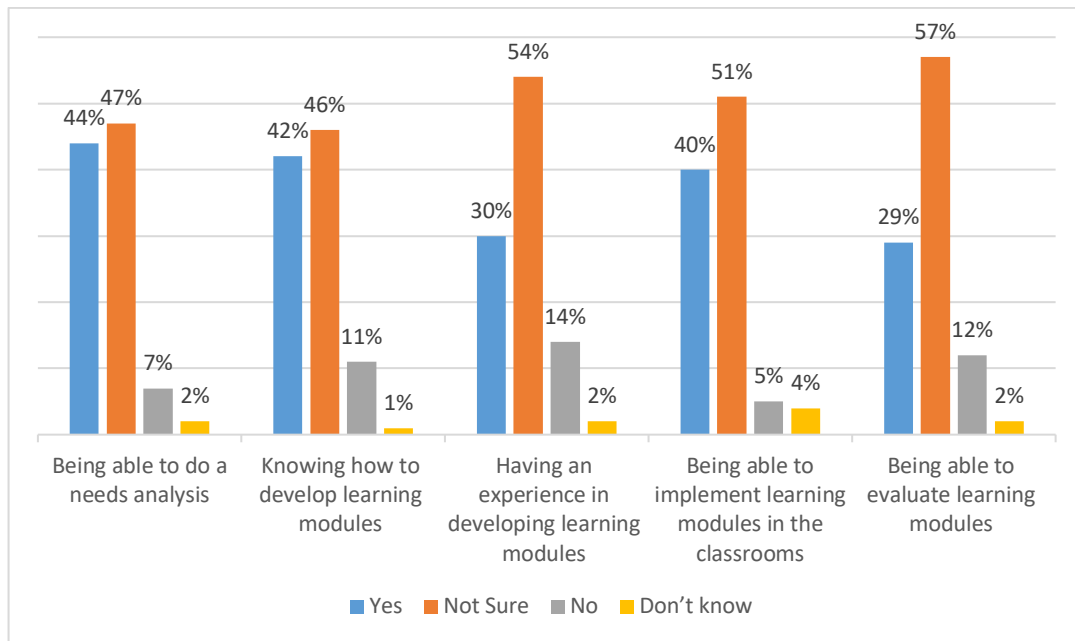


Figure 3. Teachers' ability in needs analysis and module development.

The following teachers' statements elucidate the teachers' responses to the questionnaire about the teacher's ability in conducting a needs analysis.

Excerpt 4:

- a. Earlier, what Pak V complained about learning objectives was the same as our complaint, because it was indeed a vocational school where the learning objectives should be the learning objectives for vocational schools. Our complaint is also a shared complaint about P5 (Mtr, SMK, 5).
- b. ... If you ask me how the implementation is, I can say that I'm still confused. ... now we only get 2 hours a week, while my school is high school, especially now is the zoning era, ma'am. So yeah, it's a bit confusing. So if you have to follow CP, TP, and make it into a groove and so on, so I'm sorry ma'am, that's difficult. Based on my experience, the important thing is that students understand, that's enough P5 (Mtr, SMA, 6).
- c. Yes, so class 10 just started the independent change phase. So actually for us, it's new. We should've studied independently first, but we went straight to the independent change phase, so there are still a lot of things we really don't understand, especially for P5, the Project to Strengthen Pancasila Student Profiles. I happen to be the coordinator, it makes me a little dizzy (Mtr, SMA, 2).
- d. So, at our school, this year is the second year of implementing IKM, but last year it was still like experimenting with it because we still didn't understand how to implement IKM in class as expected (Mlg, SMA, 6).

The data above portray the teachers' uncertainty in more specific information, for instance, complaints related to projects aimed to strengthen the Pancasila Profile among students, which is often called P5 (*Projek Penguatan Profil Pelajar Pancasila*). They questioned why the government provided similar objectives for general high schools and vocational schools, which caused a lot of problems in implementing it in the classroom, especially to help students internalize the Pancasila Profile in their characterization process (Excerpt 4a). More confusion was reported when they considered the allotted time for the English lesson, which is only two hours weekly, but the materials are abundant (Excerpt 4b). Moreover, the three phases of implementing the new curriculum were also confusing, especially those in the

independent change phase; they had to do everything on their own (Excerpt 4c). They had to prepare themselves to implement the curriculum, and they just experimented with implementing the new curriculum (Excerpt 4d).

Further questions were discussed during the FGS as to why they were still confused about how to implement the Independent Curriculum. Most of them admitted that they learned the Independent Curriculum mostly from the platforms provided by the government.

Excerpt 5:

- a. We're from SMK Pusat Keunggulan (SMKPK/Centre of Excellence Vocational School). ... The training model from the central government was also online in Indonesia at that time. Then, it was disseminated to all school members. So, we had a learning committee. After that, the learning committee participated in training for ten days, then they shared it with all school members for 10 days as well (Mlg, SMA, 2).
- b. The pioneer schools selected were SMA 2 and SMA 4. In SMA 3, I happened to be from SMA 3, we shared an independent pioneer school. Independent sharing means that all our activities were self-organized (Mlg, SMA, 4).
- c. There was socialization (of the curriculum), but sometimes the explanation did not go into it, it was just the beginning, oh yeah, that's it, but it's not comprehensive, for example, how to teach and how the teaching modules work, the socialization was still limited. ... We participated in the socialization when we were first introduced to the new curriculum, which was now in grade 11. We also participated in the socialization conducted through the Zoom meeting. It was just that from Zoom, so we did not understand the material. It moved quickly to another slide (Mtr, MAN, 2).
- d. For those who provided training at the school, they explained the material in a general way, such as what the Independent Curriculum is like? Regarding ATP and CP, usually, the explanation comes from the curriculum itself (Mlg, SMK, 1-2).

The central government financially supported schools in the Centre of Excellence Vocational Schools (Excerpt 5a). However, schools with the independent sharing scheme should get support through their own funding (Excerpt 5b). The teachers in the independent sharing scheme needed to find references and sources independently, which sometimes confused them. All teachers had access to the platforms provided by the government. The platforms were provided to enhance the teachers' capacity to implement the new curriculum, but they did not meet their expectations. In addition, when training was provided synchronously via Zoom, the explanation was often so fast that the teachers could not catch up. Finally, the in-person training provided by the superintendents or school principals only covered general information on the new curriculum (Excerpt 5d & e). The teachers still needed more specific workshops or training on conducting needs analysis and creating modules based on the Independent Curriculum.

Teachers also consulted their colleagues to learn how to formulate a syllabus that aligned with the curriculum (Excerpt 6a). However, teachers who were less autonomous decided to use the materials designed for the previous curriculum, without conducting a needs analysis (Excerpt 6b).

Excerpt 6:

- a. ... For example, through this ATP, actually yesterday I was also looking for a few references on the internet. So, what's it, just a little look at other people's references, just that (Mlg, MTs, 8).
- b. So maybe yes, that's why if the term is like chickens that were previously well taken care of by their mother hen. In the end, when released, I'm confused about where to go, so in the end

we ended up being confused. Then, I used a shortcut. Yes, in the end, the material is like this one which is K-13 (Mlg, SMA, 15).

In conclusion, the teachers have understood that the Independent Curriculum allows them to provide flagship programs, as expected by the government. However, teachers were not confident about implementing this new curriculum in real teaching-learning activities. Hence, the data reveals that the teachers admitted that they did not have adequate self-efficacy in implementing the Independent Curriculum; they still needed further support from the government regarding the implementation of the new curriculum.

5. DISCUSSION

In this section, we discuss some important points emerging from the results of the data analysis. The results have shown that most teachers realize that the curriculum gave them more freedom to decide on the learning materials and the flagship program for their schools. However, in the interview, it was found that teachers did not understand how to implement the new curriculum in the English classes because of their low efficacy in conducting a needs analysis and syllabus design. Regardless, the teachers hoped to receive more in-person training and/or workshops to understand the Independent Curriculum better, especially in interpreting the learning objectives into a syllabus. This aligns with [Sutaris' \(2022\)](#) findings, suggesting that schools could not solve the problems, so they required support from non-governmental or other institutions to assist them with the implementation of the new curriculum. They also needed financial support from stakeholders and the community ([Malik & Sholichah, 2023](#)).

The fact that most teachers understood that the new curriculum gave more freedom to teachers to design their own flagship programs shows that the government may proceed to the next step of the new curriculum implementation ([Comas-Quinn, 2011](#)). Teachers' optimism and commitment as parts of emotional states have long been recognized as crucial aspects in second and foreign language education ([Lo & To, 2023](#); [Patankar & Jadhav, 2013](#); [Reza et al., 2023](#); [Widiastuti et al., 2013](#); [Yudhawasthi & Christiani, 2022](#)). Based on the FGD, it was evident that the teachers appreciated the opportunity to develop various interesting activities as their flagship programs.

Aside from pedagogical and methodological concerns, it is essential to improve EFL teachers' positive emotions, especially their optimism ([Dong & Xu, 2022](#)). With their optimism toward the new curriculum, there is a high possibility that the committed teachers would pay closer attention to students' needs, encourage and involve students to participate in class activities, and collaborate to achieve the school objectives. [Heng and Chu \(2023\)](#) also reported that teachers' self-efficacy had an indirect effect on work involvement, as also observed by [Xiao et al. \(2022\)](#) among 315 Iranian English instructors.

While the teachers still show a positive aspect related to their optimism toward the new curriculum, the government still needs to help teachers understand the new curriculum by providing more in-person training. Based on the results of the present study, the materials provided in the online platform designed by the government were not adequate for the teachers to understand how to translate the curriculum into their

classroom instruction. The results of the current study highlight Mantra et al. 's (2022) study showing that teachers still need in-person training although they can access some information on Independent Curriculum through the internet. The findings also strengthen those of the previous studies by Irbah et al. (2022), Pratikno et al. (2022), Rizki and Fahkrunisa (2022), and Sumiat (2022) stating that teachers still need further support from schools through training, mentoring, and resources.

Furthermore, there are many advantages of schools having the freedom to design their own syllabi. In the Independent Curriculum, it is expected that teachers have the self-efficacy in designing a curriculum, at least for their own schools or classes. The teachers should be able to conduct a needs analysis prior to designing a syllabus for their students. However, not all teachers have the capacity to perform this task. Teaching in the classroom is different from designing a curriculum. Not all teachers have both abilities. The data show that their efficacy in syllabus design is low – they do not know the process of a syllabus design. Therefore, the government needs to provide training to increase the teachers' knowledge of a needs analysis and syllabus design for their own schools, which would improve their self-efficacy. Otherwise, similar drawbacks identified during the implementation of the school-based curriculum from 2007 to 2013 will re-occur (Yusuf, 2015). With the limited knowledge of developing a school-based curriculum, one school copied the curriculum from another school. The teacher merely changed the name of the school and the name of the subject they taught.

The information about the teachers' shortcomings enables relevant parties to respond more accurately (Mirmojarabian & Rezvani, 2021). By understanding the teacher's weaknesses, teacher trainers can adjust their coaching programs to suit the teachers' needs. Teacher Professional Development programs could encompass both information on how to conduct a needs analysis and how to design a syllabus for English classes to help teachers design more efficient class activities.

To respond to the teachers' need for additional training and workshops, the government needs to offer more in-person training for the teachers in addition to the *Merdeka Mengajar* platform, which is available online for teachers. It is expected that the process of developing and implementing a new curriculum requires extra effort; therefore, all stakeholders should be involved in the entire process of reviewing, revising, and implementing the new curriculum, as advocated by Johnson (2001), Brelsford et al. (2020), Bautista et al. (2021), and Beauchamp et al. (2021).

6. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study has identified that while the Independent Curriculum has recently been introduced and is still being evaluated until 2024, more improvement is expected. Enhancing teacher quality has been identified as a key strategy, focusing on their efficacy in understanding and translating the curriculum into daily classroom practices. While the teachers acknowledge the strengths of the new curriculum, the data analysis reveals a clear deficiency in their ability to translate the government-specified learning objectives into suitable materials and activities. The qualitative data from the Focused Group Discussions (FGDs) pinpoint the causes of these issues – teachers' poor understanding and lack of ability to conduct needs analyses and to

design appropriate syllabi. Despite these challenges, the teachers express readiness for further training and prefer in-person workshops.

In response to the identified challenges, it is recommended that the government promptly take action by providing English teachers with face-to-face workshops and training sessions on needs analyses and syllabus design. This initiative aims to empower the teachers to effectively transform the specified learning objectives of the Independent Curriculum into well-designed syllabi suitable for students and their school environment. Additionally, teacher trainers are encouraged to offer workshops guiding teachers on conducting environment and needs analyses, leveraging the results to design syllabi that consider the unique context of their schools.

Despite the aforementioned identification of critical issues, the study has a limitation related to the distribution of the teachers' responses to the questionnaire. Most respondents originated from East Java, followed by West Nusa Tenggara and Central Java. Other provinces, such as West Java, South Sulawesi, Papua, and Banten, were minimally represented, leading to a geographical imbalance and failure to perform randomization. This limitation restricts the generalizability of the research findings.

The identified gaps in the teachers' efficacy and the expressed expectations for further training imply a critical need for intervention and support. Addressing these challenges through targeted workshops and training initiatives can contribute to a successful implementation of the Independent Curriculum, fostering a more effective translation of the curriculum objectives into tangible classroom practices. Moreover, this underscores the importance of future research in exploring teachers' efficacy across the diverse Indonesian regions to ensure comprehensive insights into the complexities of educational reforms in Indonesia.

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