
INNOVATIVE LEARNING STRATEGIES IN IMPLEMENTING THE INDEPENDENT LEARNING CURRICULUM

Sidharta Adyatma, Akhmad Munaya Rahman

Department of Geography Education, Universitas Lambung Mangkurat

e-mail: sidharta.adyatma@ulm.ac.id

Article History

Received : 10-07-2025

Revised : 25-09-2025

Published : 30-09-2025

Keywords:

Teacher Strategy; Innovative Learning; Independent Learning Curriculum

Abstract

The Independent Learning Curriculum is the main foundation in educational innovation in Indonesia, and challenges teachers to try to develop adaptive and responsive learning strategies to student needs, so to understand teachers' efforts to face these challenges, this study explores innovative learning strategies used by MGMP Geography teachers in Banjarmasin City in the context of the implementation of the Independent Learning Curriculum. The research employed a quantitative approach, involving structured interviews with 48 geography teachers who had implemented the Independent Learning Curriculum in 2023-2024 School Years, as well as classroom observations and the analysis of learning documents. The analysis was carried out thematically to identify patterns of learning strategies that emerged. The results show that most geography teachers use a variety of innovative strategies, including the use of technology to support online and offline learning, the integration of field projects, and the implementation of problem-based learning. Adapting learning strategies to the needs of students and the challenges faced in implementing the Independent Learning Curriculum is crucial, as geography teachers play a vital role in leading learning transformation through a responsive and progressive approach. The results of the research are expected to provide valuable insights into effective learning practices within the new curriculum, and to lay a foundation for the development of more adaptive and relevant learning strategies.

Kata Kunci:

Strategi Guru; Pembelajaran Inovatif; Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar

Abstrak

Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar merupakan fondasi utama dalam inovasi pendidikan di Indonesia, dan menantang guru untuk mencoba mengembangkan strategi pembelajaran yang adaptif dan responsif terhadap kebutuhan siswa, sehingga untuk memahami upaya guru dalam menghadapi tantangan tersebut, penelitian ini mengeksplorasi strategi pembelajaran inovatif yang digunakan oleh guru MGMP Geografi di Kota Banjarmasin dalam konteks implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif, yang melibatkan wawancara terstruktur dengan 48 guru geografi yang telah menerapkan Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar, serta observasi kelas dan analisis dokumen pembelajaran. Analisis dilakukan secara tematis untuk mengidentifikasi pola strategi pembelajaran yang muncul. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa sebagian besar guru geografi menggunakan berbagai strategi inovatif, termasuk penggunaan teknologi untuk mendukung pembelajaran daring dan luring, integrasi proyek lapangan, dan implementasi pembelajaran berbasis masalah. Menyesuaikan strategi

pembelajaran dengan kebutuhan siswa dan tantangan yang dihadapi dalam mengimplementasikan Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar sangat penting, karena guru geografi memainkan peran penting dalam memimpin transformasi pembelajaran melalui pendekatan yang responsif dan progresif. Hasil penelitian ini diharapkan dapat memberikan wawasan berharga tentang praktik pembelajaran yang efektif dalam kurikulum baru, dan meletakkan dasar bagi pengembangan strategi pembelajaran yang lebih adaptif dan relevan.

Korespondensi Penulis

Email: sidharta.adyatma@ulm.ac.id

Tersedia secara online pada <https://ppjp.ulm.ac.id/journals/index.php/pakis>

How to Cite:

Adyatma, S., & Rahman, A. M. (2025). Innovative Learning Strategies in Implementing the Independent Learning Curriculum. *Publikasi Berkala Pendidikan Ilmu Sosial*, 5(2). <https://doi.org/10.20527/pakis.v5i2.17077>

INTRODUCTION

Education in Indonesia during President Jokowi's administration has undergone various changes in its national education system, by striving to improve the quality of education through various innovative policies and programs, including the Independent Learning Curriculum in 2020 proposed by the Ministry of Education and Culture. The implementation of the Independent Learning Curriculum is an ambitious step to bring significant changes in the education system, promoting more inclusive, relevant, and student-oriented learning. The implementation of the Independent Learning Curriculum requires teachers to play a crucial role as the primary agent of change, emphasizing the importance of developing 21st-century skills and addressing global challenges, such as critical thinking, collaboration, communication, and creativity. Geography teachers, who have an important role in introducing the concept and understanding of space and geographical phenomena to students, have an obligation as a driving teacher who encourages the transformation of Indonesian education, so as to support the growth and development of students holistically into Pancasila Students, and mentors for other teachers for student-centered learning, as well as being role models and transformation agents for the educational ecosystem (Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 2020).

The Independent Learning Curriculum places an important emphasis on student-centered learning, which utilizes technology and emphasizes project-based learning, so teachers are required to develop innovative and responsive learning strategies to meet student needs and new curriculum demands, for example, the use of the Blended Learning approach that combines face-to-face learning with online learning, which is becoming increasingly popular in the context of the Independent Learning Curriculum (Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 2020; Wagiono et al., 2021).

The implementation of innovative learning strategies in the context of the Independent

Learning Curriculum still faces various challenges, which include the availability of technological infrastructure evenly throughout the region, the need for training for teachers in adapting new learning strategies, and the adjustment of the curriculum to local needs, so that research on geography teachers' learning strategies in the implementation of the Independent Learning Curriculum is very important to provide a deep understanding for teachers in facing challenges and developing effective learning practices (Susanto & Harjono, 2020; Setiawan et al., 2024).

Fullan & Quinn (2015) The challenge of implementing the Independent Learning Curriculum for teachers is the difficulty of adopting innovative learning methods and strategies, because many schools in remote areas still face a lack of adequate facilities and resources, and not all teachers have access to adequate training to understand and implement new learning approaches in accordance with the Independent Learning Curriculum, besides that some teachers feel comfortable with traditional learning methods and less open to changes or new innovations in learning (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020; Katyara et al., 2022).

The research aims to explore innovative learning strategies used by Geography teachers in the implementation of the Independent Learning Curriculum, so that by understanding effective learning practice strategies, it is hoped that it can provide guidance for the professional development of Geography teachers and contribute to the understanding of effective learning practices in the context of the new curriculum.

METHOD

The research method employs a quantitative approach, conducting structured interviews with 48 teachers from the Banjarmasin City Geography Subject Teacher Conference (MGMP) in 2023-2024 School Year, who have implemented the Independent Learning Curriculum to gain an understanding of the learning strategies employed. Data is collected through several techniques, including interviews and class observations. Structured interviews were conducted with all teachers to gather data on the learning strategies used, the challenges faced, and their experiences in implementing the Independent Learning Curriculum. The percentages were then analyzed thematically to identify patterns in their learning strategies. Classroom observation was carried out to directly observe the learning practices of geography teachers in the classroom using observation guidelines, which included aspects of teacher interaction with students, the use of technology, and types of learning activities. Document analysis is conducted by examining learning materials and lesson plans related to the implementation of the Independent Learning Curriculum, providing information on how teachers plan and implement learning within this context (Sugiyono, 2021).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The results of identifying several components of innovative learning strategies used by Geography teachers in the implementation of the Independent Learning Curriculum, based on data analysis from structured interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis, can be described as research results based on the components of innovative learning strategies as follows:

1. The Utilization of Technology by MGMP Geography teachers in Banjarmasin City is presented in Table 1 and Figure 1, which most geography teachers show have used learning technology as a tool in learning, by using online platforms, digital map applications, and other online resources to present learning materials in an interesting and interactive way. A small number of geography teachers have developed multimedia-based learning materials that utilize images, videos, and animations to enhance their students' understanding of geography concepts.

Table 1. Number of MGMP Geography Teachers in Banjarmasin City Who Utilize Learning Technology

No.	Technology Utilization	Frequency (f)		Percentage (%)	
		Yes	No	Yes	No
1	Online Platforms (Zoom, Google Meet, Google Classroom)	1		5,4	4,6
2	Digital Map Application (Google Earth, Google Maps, Guru Maps, Waze Navigation)	2	6	6,7	3,3
3	Multimedia Applications (Canva, Powtoon, Kinemaster, Prezi, Assemblr Edu)	7	1	5,4	4,6



Figure 1. Geography teacher learning using learning technology

2. Project-Based Learning by MGMP Geography Banjarmasin City teachers is presented in Table 2 and Figure 2, which shows that most geography teachers design field

projects that involve students in field observation and survey activities, while in the analysis of geographic data only a small part, this aims to not only get a deeper understanding of the concept of geography, but can develop practical knowledge and skills such as field observation, data collection, and geographic data analysis.

Table 2. Number of MGMP Geography Teachers in Banjarmasin City Who Use Project-Based and Problem-Based Learning

No.	Project Based Learning and Problem Based Learning	Frequency (f)		Percentage (%)	
		Yes	No	Yes	No
1	Field Observations	48	0	100,0	0,0
2	Surveys	35	13	72,9	27,1
3	Geographic Data Analysis	13	35	27,1	72,9



Figure 2. Student learning in field observation, survey, and geographic data analysis based on project and problem learning

3. Problem-Based Learning by MGMP Geography Banjarmasin City teachers as presented in Table 2 and Figure 2, which shows that most geography teachers adopt a problem-based learning approach to increase student engagement and insight, by presenting challenges or geographical problems that are relevant to students' daily lives and inviting students to find solutions, so that this approach not only increases student motivation in learning, but helping to develop critical thinking, problem-solving, and caring for the surrounding environment.
4. Collaborative Learning and Discussion by MGMP Geography Banjarmasin City teachers as presented in Table 3 and Figure 3, shows that all geography teachers use collaboration between students and group discussions as an integral part of the learning strategy to create a classroom environment that supports interaction and

exchange of ideas between students in the context of online or face-to-face learning, so that discussion activities allow students to expand their understanding. They through the sharing of knowledge, perspectives and experiences.

Table 3. Number of MGMP Geography Teachers in Banjarmasin City Who Use Learning Strategies Through Collaboration and Discussion

No.	Learning Strategy	Frequency (f)		Percentage (%)	
		Yes	No	Yes	No
1	Collaboration	48	0	100,0	0,0
2	Discussion	48	0	100,0	0,0



Figure 3. Students learn in collaboration and discuss tasks

Geography teachers, through the implementation of innovative learning strategies as outlined above, are able and successful in creating interesting, relevant, and student-oriented learning experiences, so that they are in line with the goals of the Independent Learning Curriculum, which is to improve the quality of learning and prepare students to face global challenges in an ever-changing era.

Discussion

The adaptation of learning strategies that are responsive to student needs and evolving curriculum demands, causes geography teachers to continue to develop pedagogical skills to make effective use of technology, design meaningful field projects, and create a learning environment that supports the exploration of geography concepts in students.

A deep understanding of the effectiveness of innovative learning strategies used by geography teachers in the context of the Independent Learning Curriculum, shows that every teacher in his or her learning strategy must prioritize:

- a. **Relevance and Student Engagement:** Innovative learning strategies implemented by geography teachers show a high level of relevance to students' needs and interests, so by utilizing technology, field projects, and problem-based learning, teachers can successfully increase student engagement in the learning process, as previous research has emphasized the importance of student engagement in learning to improve understanding and motivation learn (Fredricks et al., 2004; Musdalifah et al., 2021).
- b. **Critical Thinking Skills Development:** Innovative project-based learning strategies and problem-based learning, can provide opportunities for students to develop critical thinking and environmental problem-solving skills through field projects and geographical challenges, so that students can analyze, synthesize, and evaluate geographic information, which is an important skill in the context of a mastery-oriented curriculum Competence (Rahman et al., 2019; Minarno, 2020).
- c. **Collaborative Skills Development:** Collaboration between students in group discussions and field projects can aid in the development of collaborative skills, so that students can learn to work together, share ideas, and achieve common goals, which are essential skills in the work and social environment, as well as in accordance with the goals of the Independent Learning Curriculum to prepare students to become individuals capable of working together and contributing to society (Johnson et al., 2014).
- d. **Challenges and Opportunities:** Innovative learning strategies offer a wide range of benefits, but are faced with several challenges such as the equitable availability of technological infrastructure and teachers' readiness to adapt new strategies, which need to be overcome to maximize the potential of innovative learning, but with adequate support and a commitment to continuously develop pedagogical skills, innovative learning strategies have the potential to provide a meaningful learning experience more meaningful and practical for students (Welsh et al., 2013).

CONCLUSION

In the context of the Independent Learning Curriculum, innovative learning strategies are crucial for creating engaging, relevant, and meaningful learning experiences for students. Geography teachers play a crucial role in leading this transformation by adopting a responsive and progressive approach in their teaching. Thus, this article contributes to the understanding of effective learning practices in the context of the new curriculum.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The journal article was compiled by Sidharta Adyatma and Ahmad Munaya Rahman, from the Geography Education Study Program, which was financed by the Department of

Social Sciences Education, Faculty of Teacher Training and Social Sciences, UGM, through the 2024 Independent Research Program. The content of the article is entirely the responsibility of the author.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Darling-Hammond, L., Flook, L., Cook-Harvey, C., Barron, B., & Osher, D. (2020). Implications for educational practice of the science of learning and development. *Applied Developmental Science*, 24(2), 97–140. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10888691.2018.1537791>
- Fredricks, J. A., Blumenfeld, P. C., & Paris, A. H. (2004). School Engagement: Potential of the Concept, State of the Evidence. *Review of Educational Research*, 74(1), 59–109. <https://doi.org/10.3102/00346543074001059>
- Fullan, M., & Quinn, J. (2015). *Coherence: The Right Drivers in Action for Schools, Districts, and Systems*. Corwin Press and the Ontario Principals' Council.
- Johnson, D. W., Johnson, R. T., & Smith, K. A. (2014). Cooperative learning: Improving university instruction by basing practice on validated theory. *Journal on Excellence in College Teaching*, 25(3&4).
- Katyara, P., Dahri, K. H., & Muhiuddin, G. (2022). Impact Of Technology On Student's Engagement In Different Dimensions: Cognitive, Behavioral, Reflective And Social Engagement. *Webology*, 19(3).
- Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan. (2020). *Independent Learning*.
- Minarno, A. (2020). Implementation of Geography Learning in Curriculum 2013 Based on Higher Order Thinking Skills. *Journal of Educational Science and Technology*.
- Musdalipah, M., Subiyakto, B., & Rahman, A. M. (2021). Contribution of Geography in Social Studies Education to Inculcate Environmental Awareness. *The Kalimantan Social Studies Journal*, 2(2), 141-148.
- Rahman, A. M., Setiawan, F. A., & Iskandar, I. (2019). The development of geography textbook: A combination of content and pedagogy. *The Innovation of Social Studies Journal*, 1(1), 21-39.
- Setiawan, F. A., Rahman, A. M., Triana, S., & Jayanti, M. A. (2024). Dominant Indicator of Creative Thinking: The Case of Geography Learning Outcomes. *Jurnal Iqra': Kajian Ilmu Pendidikan*, 9(1), 45-59.
- Sugiyono, S. (2021). *Metode Penelitian Pendidikan: Pendekatan Kuantitatif, Kualitatif, dan R&D*. Alfabeta.
- Susanto, H., & Harjono, H. (2020). Implementation of the Independent Learning Curriculum in Geography Learning. *Journal of Geography Education*, 5(1), 1–9.
- Wagiono, F., Shaddiq, S., & Junaidi, F. (2021). Implementation of Blended Learning During COVID-19 Pandemic on Civic Education Subjects in Millennial Generation Era. *Edunesia : Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan*, 3(1), 36–44. <https://doi.org/10.51276/edu.v3i1.213>
- Welsh, K. E., Mauchline, A. L., Park, J. R., Whalley, W. B., & France, D. (2013). Enhancing fieldwork learning with technology: practitioner's perspectives. *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*, 37(3), 399–415. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03098265.2013.792042>