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Developing 21st Century Skills: An Analysis of the US National Research Council Model in the Independent Learning-Independent Campus Program

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Abstract

Learning at universities is often perceived to be more focused on delivering content and theory, allocating little attention to developing the skills necessary for students to enter the workforce. The presence of independent learning and independent campus policy, along with its associated learning programs, allows students to cultivate the skills demanded by the industry. The focus of this research is to analyze the development of 21st-century skills within the Independent Learning Independent Campus programs using the US National Research Council Model. The research method used is a qualitative approach with a Case Study research type in the Department of Arabic Education at Semarang State University and Malang State University. Data collection is carried out through interviews, observation, and documentation. The data sources are the heads of the departments and students of Arabic Education at both campuses and documents related to implementing the Independent Learning Independent Campus programs. Data collection is conducted through Interviews, Observation, and Documentation. The data analysis technique utilizes the Miles, Huberman, & Saldana Model, which includes Data Condensation, Data Display, Conclusion, and Verification. The research findings indicate that the independent learning, independent campus programs implemented in the Department of Arabic Education at Semarang State University and Malang State University are capable of developing 21st-century skills according to the US National Research Council model, as reflected in students, namely: 1) Cognitive Domain, reflected through the development of students in Critical Thinking and Creative Thinking, 2) Intrapersonal Domain, which is reflected through character development, 3) Interpersonal Domain, which is reflected through the development of students' collaboration and communication skills. The implication of this study is that the independent campus policy and its associated learning programs provide opportunities for students to enhance their skills to compete in a dynamic work environment.

Keywords: Independent Learning Independent Campus, 21st Century Skills, US National Research Council

1. Introduction

In the era of globalization and rapid change, educational transformation becomes necessary to prepare students to meet the complex demands of the 21st century. The Independent Learning Independent Campus (Merdeka Belajar-Kampus Merdeka) policy initiated by the Ministry of Education and Culture is an innovative step in responding to this dynamic. Independent learning on an independent campus aims to enhance the qualifications and competencies of graduates to be more prepared and relevant to the demands of the times (Direktorat Jenderal Pendidikan Tinggi Kemdikbud RI, 2020). The learning outcomes in the Independent Learning Independent

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Campus curriculum are focused on enhancing the quality of education and producing graduates who meet the needs of the industry (Vhalery et al., 2022). To achieve these outcomes, education must be designed to equip learners to face the challenges of the 21st century based on three educational principles: the principle of autonomy, the principle of participation, and the principle of productivity (Harari, 2018).

In its implementation at universities, Independent Learning Independent Campus has 8 learning programs: Student Exchange, Internship/Work Practice, Teaching Assistance in educational units, Research, Humanitarian Projects, Entrepreneurial Activities, Independent Study/Projects, and Village Development. These learning programs enable students to acquire knowledge and experiences beyond their majors, providing opportunities to enhance their skills. Based on the Ministry of Education and Culture Decree No. 3 of 2020, every higher education institution in Indonesia is required to implement the Independent Learning Independent Campus policy. The Department of Arabic Language Education at Malang State University and Semarang State University have implemented the independent learning, independent campus policy since its inauguration in 2020. Six out of eight Independent Learning Independent Campus programs have been implemented by the Department of Arabic Language Education at both universities: Student Exchange, Internship/Work Practice, Teaching Assistance in educational units, Research, Independent Study/Projects, and Village Development.

Learning activities in the Independent Learning Independent Campus curriculum emphasize the acquisition of 21st-century skills needed at present (Direktorat Pendidikan Tinggi Keagamaan Islam, 2020). The advent of the fourth industrial revolution has led to a paradigm shift in education from factual emphasis towards developing 21st-century skills, demanding individuals to possess multi-competencies. 21st-century skills, in terminology, are a comprehensive concept encompassing the knowledge, skills, and disposition required for citizens to contribute to society (Voogt & Roblin, 2010). Scott (2015) defines 21st-century skills as the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to compete in the 21st century, participate effectively in diverse societies, utilize new technologies, and tackle rapidly changing problems.

Competence is not only limited to understanding theories, concepts, or knowledge but also involves functional aspects, such as technical skills, interpersonal abilities, and the application of ethical values (Ontario, 2016). Among the models for classifying 21st-century skills is the US National Research Council model, which divides skills into 3 Domains: Cognitive Domain, Intrapersonal Domain, and Interpersonal Domain (Pellegrino & Hilton, 2012). The US National Research Council model is considered the most authoritative framework for understanding 21st-century skills as more profound learning. It offers a simple way to comprehend various skills by categorizing them into three skill domains (Lamb et al., 2017).

Previous researchers have studied 21st-century skills in the Independent Learning Independent Campus curriculum. Mahliatussikah & Kuswardono (2022) investigated the Design of Independent Learning Independent Campus Curriculum in the Arabic Language Education Program. The research was conducted using a qualitative descriptive method with the object of the Arabic language curriculum in the Arabic language education program. The research findings indicate that the implementation of MBKM is related to the era of society 5.0, which demands creativity and innovation skills to become resilient and skilled human resources. Putra et al. (2022) Conducted research on the implementation design of the Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (Independent Learning, Independent Campus) with a focus on one of the programs, namely the internship/work practice program at Maulana Malik Ibrahim State Islamic University of Malang. The research utilizes a qualitative method. Among the research findings is that the evaluation process in the internship program is conducted to determine the improvement in competencies or skills students possess as learning outcomes of the study program. Fitriasari et al. (2022) Analyzed the development of students' citizenship skills in the student exchange program, which is one of the independent learning - independent campus programs. The method used is a case study with 23 students as research subjects. The results show that student exchange activities develop intellectual abilities with a high awareness of communication and the ability to understand new knowledge. This indicates that communication skills and cognitive skills, which are part of 21st-century skills, are developed through the student exchange program.

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Research on the analysis of 21st-century skills in the Independent Learning Independent Campus program with the object of the Arabic Language Education department still needs more research analyzing 21st-century skills in the MBKM learning program using the US National Research Council model. Therefore, this research is essential to further examine the model of 21st-century skills possessed by students of the Arabic Language Education department after participating in the learning program within the Independent Learning Independent Campus curriculum and to provide knowledge to students in general about the benefits of participating in the MBKM learning program for the development of the skills they need to enter the era of the fourth industrial revolution.

2. Method

This qualitative study uses a case study approach in the Arabic Language Education departments of Malang State University and Semarang State University. Data were obtained through 1) direct interviews with the heads of the Arabic Language Education departments and the responsible parties for the Independent Learning Independent Campus curriculum activities at both campuses, as well as direct interviews with 20 students participating in the Independent Learning Independent Campus curriculum program at both campuses, 2) direct observation at the venues where the Independent Learning Independent Campus program activities take place to observe the students' activities, and 3) analysis of documents regarding the Implementation of the Independent Learning Independent Campus program, including documents from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, and documents about the Implementation of the Independent Learning Independent Campus program in the Arabic Language Education departments of Semarang State University and Malang State University.

The researchers will present the activities of students in the 6 Independent Learning, Independent Campus programs that have been implemented in the Arabic Language Education departments of both campuses, namely Student Exchange, Internship/Work Practice, Teaching Assistance in educational units, Research, Independent Study/Projects, and Village Development. From the data on students' activities, the researchers will then analyze the development of 21st-century skills through indicators of the Cognitive Domain, Intrapersonal Domain, and Interpersonal Domain as perspectives of 21st-century skills based on the US National Research Council model.

The required data include 1) students' activities in the Independent Learning Independent Campus program and 2) the skills acquired after participating in the program from the perspective of 21st-century skills based on the US National Research Council model. Data analysis techniques include Data Condensation, Data Display, Conclusion, and Verification (Miles et al., 2014). In the condensation phase, the researchers sift through important information from all the data obtained without losing its meaning and substance. In the data display phase, the researchers present the information from the data analysis clearly to make it easier to understand. Moreover, in the Conclusion and Verification phase, the researchers interpret the findings and ensure that the conclusions are consistent with the data obtained.

3. Result And Discussion

3.1 Development of The Cognitive Domain

The cognitive domain can be identified through critical thinking and creative thinking skills (Pellegrino & Hilton, 2012). Critical thinking, as one of the 21st-century skills, is described as the ability to design and manage projects, solve problems, and make effective decisions using various tools and resources (Fullan, 2013). Critical thinking requires students to acquire, process, interpret, rationalize, and critically analyze a large amount of often conflicting information until they reach a point of making accurate and timely decisions (C21, 2012). Meanwhile, creative thinking is often described as the pursuit of new ideas, concepts, or products that meet needs in the world. Innovation involves elements of creativity and is often described as the realization of new ideas to make beneficial contributions in specific fields (Ontario, 2016).

There are 5 main activities of students in the Independent Learning Independent Campus program related to the development of the Cognitive Domain, namely: 1) Collaborating to create works/design learning programs by analyzing problems and needs, 2) Solving problems related to language, culture, and environmental conditions,

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3) Training, learning, and discussing with mentors, then practicing them, 4) Presenting tasks or works and analyzing them in front of others, 5) Discovering potentials in an environment.

Table 1. Cognitive Domain Development in the Independent Learning Independent Campus program.

No.	Student Activities	Critical Thinking Skills Development Indicators	Creative Thinking Skills Development Indicators
1	Collaborating to create works/design learning programs by analyzing problems and needs	Capable of designing and managing products or works	Integrating and evaluating group ideas into work
		Capable of problem-solving using various sources	Developing, applying, and communicating new ideas to others
		Capable of building knowledge and practicing it	Contributing with real and useful creative ideas in each field
		Capable of analyzing someone's information and arguments	Realizing ideas into practice
2	Solving problems related to language, culture, and environmental conditions	Capable of problem-solving using various sources	Elaborating, improving, analyzing, and evaluating one's own ideas
		Capable of problem-solving by identifying problem patterns	
		Capable of problem-solving through conventional or innovative means	
3	Training, learning, and discussing with mentors, then practicing acquired knowledge	Capable of critically reflecting on experiences and learning processes	Realizing ideas into practice
		Acquiring, processing, interpreting, rationalizing, and critically analyzing a large amount of information	Developing, applying, and communicating new ideas to others
4	Presenting tasks or works and analyzing them in front of others	Capable of explaining information and drawing conclusions based on analysis	Elaborating, improving, analyzing, and evaluating one's own ideas
		Capable of reflecting on learning experiences and acquired knowledge	
5	Discovering potentials that can be developed in an environment	Capable of problem-solving through conventional and innovative means	Contributing based on real and useful creative ideas
		Identifying situations to find good solutions	Creating new and valuable ideas
		Recognizing problem patterns, constructing meaningful knowledge, and applying it in the real world	Developing, applying, and communicating new ideas to others

Based on the analysis results above, it can be identified that there are indicators of cognitive skills development in the form of critical thinking and creative thinking in student activities within the Independent Learning Independent Campus program. The activity of creating works or designing programs through collaboration can be found in all Independent Learning Independent Campus learning programs. Students must be able to

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collaborate with other students from different campuses in completing tasks or designing learning products. The learning philosophy in the Independent Learning Independent Campus Program aligns with the Philosophy of Outcome-Based Education, which considers outputs or results as indicators of program completion (Spady, 1994).

In terms of critical thinking skills, individuals are expected to evaluate information and arguments critically, recognize problem patterns, and construct meaningful knowledge and apply it in the real world (Fullan & Scott, 2014). Learning to think critically is essential for developing language literacy and skills. Critical thinkers are able to reason and analyze information to generate solutions and solve problems, and the creative problem-solving skills make students have open, flexible, and independent thinking, making critical thinking a core 21st-century skill (Norris, 2019).

Activities such as creating works, designing programs, and identifying potential in the surrounding environment are also activities that develop creative thinking skills, with indicators of contributing based on real and useful creative ideas, and developing, applying, and communicating new ideas to others (Trilling & Fadel, 2009). With creativity skills, individuals have a vision for every opportunity, ask the right questions to generate new ideas, and demonstrate leadership to implement these new ideas into practice (Fullan & Scott, 2014).

3.2 Development of the Intrapersonal Domain

The intrapersonal category encompasses competencies that reside within the individual or self-capabilities in problem-solving (National Research Council, 2011). This category can also be conceptualized as attitudes and behaviors that influence how students function in school, campus, work, etc., such attitudes include having a growth mindset, learning how to learn, being motivated for success, and demonstrating resilience in pursuing goals (Soland, Hamilton, & Stecher, 2013). The development of one's character can be identified through six character qualities, namely: care, curiosity, courage, resilience, ethics, leadership (Bialik, etc., 2015).

Student activities in the Independent Learning Independent Campus program are related to the development and training of character as part of the Intrapersonal Domain of 21st-century skills. When students choose to participate in the Independent Learning Independent Campus program according to their interests and goals for learning and self-development, they are practicing vision, self-direction, determination, and initiative which are character traits. Character development such as confidence, responsibility, patience, leadership, and perseverance are also found in the Independent Learning Independent Campus program, such as leading groups in completing tasks, adapting to learning in a new environment, and in practical activities or presenting tasks in front of other students. The development of Ethics, such as respect, politeness, and mutual assistance can be found in student activities, as in the Independent Learning Independent Campus students will encounter new environments and new friendships that require the development of good personal character.

Table 2. Intrapersonal Domain Development in the Independent Learning Independent Campus Program

No.	Student Activities	Character Development Indicators
1	Participating in the the Independent Learning Independent Campus Program to learn and self-develop	**a) Self-Actualization** Open-mindedness, self-awareness, self-management, caring, vision, sensitivity, self-direction. **b) Courage** Determination, self-confidence, risk-taking, exploration, initiative, innovation. **c) Resilience** Persistence, perseverance, patience, resilience, self-discipline, commitment, enthusiasm, adaptability, effort, optimism. **d) Ethics**
2	Adapting to learning in a new environment	
3	Completing various tasks with responsibility and on time	
4	Communicating with others regarding learning issues	
5	Engaging in learning with progressively challenging levels	
6	Practicing or Presenting tasks in front of others	

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7	Leading groups in carrying out tasks	Integrity, respect, kindness, honesty, politeness, mutual assistance, trust, citizenship.
8	Discussing with mentors or peers to learn and analyze learning problems	**e) Leadership** Responsibility, relationship skills, social intelligence, involvement, wisdom.

Based on the above analysis, it can be concluded that there is development of the intrapersonal domain in the MBKM program based on the indicators of character development, namely self-actualization, courage, resilience, ethics, and leadership. In the implementation of the Independent Learning Independent Campus, students are given autonomy in choosing the learning program that suits their interests, with the aim that they are responsible and able to direct themselves for development, especially in terms of character formation. The attributes of responsibility and self-direction are evidence that character development is one of the goals of the the Independent Learning Independent Campus program.

Dickinson (1987) views autonomy as a learning model in which each individual is responsible for all decisions related to their learning, and fully responsible for the learning done without teacher intervention or pedagogical material. Furthermore, Benson and Voller (1997) emphasize that the term Autonomous Learning is used in at least five ways: situations where learners are entirely self-directed; a set of competencies and skills that can be applied and learned independently, basic capacity is enhanced through institutional learning, training in taking responsibility for independent learning, and learners have the right to determine their learning direction autonomously.

3.3   Development of Interpersonal Domain

Interpersonal skills are defined as the ability to appreciate others' perspectives, demonstrate social responsibility, collaborate, tolerate, and communicate effectively with others (Gardner, 1993). There are two important elements in interpersonal skills, namely self-awareness and the ability to understand others (Beenen, et al). Self-awareness is related to a person's ability to read others' behaviors and formulate actions (Hayes, 2002). In the element of understanding others, it is important for an individual to realize that in social life and the workplace, interaction with others is inevitable. In the workplace and education, to be able to interact well, one must have communication and collaboration skills. Communication skills in the workplace aim to build and maintain quality work relationships and enhance performance in one's field (Adu-Oppong and Agyin-Birikorang, 2014). Meanwhile, collaboration skills become essential in various fields of work (Fisher, Rayner, & Belgard, 1995). Communication and collaboration skills are part of the interpersonal domain developed for every student participating in the MBKM program as preparation for entering the workforce.

In the Independent Learning Independent Campus programs implemented in the Arabic Language Education departments at the State University of Malang and the State University of Semarang (Student exchange program, internship, teaching assistance, research, independent study, and village development), students engage in discussions and collaborate with others to design, implement activities, or create works. These activities train students' collaboration skills with indicators such as the ability to work with others, contribute to a team, and assume responsibility in collaborative work. Discussion and collaboration activities also develop students' communication skills with indicators such as the ability to articulate ideas, communicate effectively, and formulate others' arguments. In the implementation of the Independent Learning Independent Campus program, students are tasked with presenting their assignments or works to others or examiners, and presentation activities can develop communication skills such as articulating thoughts effectively verbally and communicating effectively in diverse environments. Below is the analysis of the development of the interpersonal domain in the Independent Learning Independent Campus program.

Table 3. Interpersonal Domain Development in the Independent Learning Independent Campus Program

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No.	Student Activities	Collaboration Skills Development Indicators	Communication Skills Development Indicators
1	Discussing with lecturers/supervisors/students from various campuses/society	a) Showing respect towards diverse individuals or environments b) Interacting effectively with others c) Demonstrating the ability to collaborate effectively d) Providing individual contributions to common goals e) Assuming shared responsibility in collaborative work	a) Articulating thoughts and ideas effectively using oral/written communication b) Listening effectively to interpret meaning c) Communicating effectively in diverse environments d) Formulating someone's argument, orally/written e) Utilizing media and technology, and understanding their effectiveness
2	Collaborating with the community/lecturers/other students in solving problems, creating works, completing assignments, and implementing programs		
3	Leading and presenting tasks or activities in gatherings		
4	Utilizing learning media in conducted activities		
5	Teaching students in teaching assistance/village development programs		

Among the goals of the Independent Learning Independent Campus program is for students to interact and collaborate with diverse individuals, hence the learning tasks within it are team-oriented. Collaboration skills demand an individual's active contribution within a group, productivity in work, a display of flexibility and compromise, a sense of responsibility, and mutual respect (Greenstein, 2012). In the student exchange program, students are formed into teams with peers from other campuses to design Arabic language writing learning media by analyzing the difficulties in learning Arabic writing. In the village-building program, students must collaborate with 10 other students to identify the potential of the village where they implement the program, thus enabling them to design programs based on the village's potential. And in the teaching assistance program, students must collaborate with teachers in schools to design activities at the school or identify the potential of students in the school, such as initiating a language performance program encompassing speech, poetry, drama, and singing in Arabic.

Through the development of collaboration skills, students will have a shared responsibility attitude and respect for others in different environments. With collaboration skills, students will be prepared to enter the workforce after completing university education. The higher the skill level in working together, the easier it will be to find a job and become sought-after in the 21st century workforce (Reevy, Chamberlain, & Stein, 2013). Individuals who possess team working abilities are more valued in the workforce as they can enhance a company's productivity (Alghamdi and Bach, 2018).

As for communication skills, Frederick & Tablatin (2017) state that communication skills rank first among all existing soft skills. In its implementation, there are three models of communication skills development found in all Independent Learning Independent Campus program: 1) interaction, 2) presentation, 3) discussion. Firstly, interaction. Independent Learning Independent Campus programs encourage students to learn and engage in activities in new environments such as internships, other universities, and village environments, where they interact with new people. In the interaction model, active communication skills and listening skills are essential to understand others' perspectives, absorb information well, and respond appropriately. Secondly, presentation. Presentations are activities found in all Independent Learning Independent Campus programs, where students are given the opportunity to speak publicly to explain their tasks or ideas. Through habitual presentations, communication development can also be observed in how presenters respond to questions and provide feedback. Thirdly, discussion. Discussion activities train students' communication skills by articulating their arguments and

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ideas clearly, providing responses, and respecting others' opinions. Kivunja (2015) asserts that communication skills encompass understanding given information and effectively expressing ideas or concepts.

Through the development of communication skills in Independent Learning Independent Campus programs, students will be ready to enter the workforce, as communication skills are required in the workplace. Improved communication skills will positively impact work productivity (Sasaki, et al., 2017). Communication skills with others are one aspect of interpersonal skills that influence an individual's performance success (Wood, 2010). With good communication skills, students are expected to interact effectively in various environments, manage conflicts, and build strong professional relationships.

4. Conclusion

The independent learning campus program implemented at the Department of Arabic Language Education of Semarang State University and Malang State University successfully develops 21st-century skills as reflected in students, namely: 1) Cognitive Domain, reflected through the development of students' Critical Thinking and Creative Thinking skills, 2) Intrapersonal Domain, reflected through the development of character, 3) Interpersonal Domain, reflected through the development of students' collaboration and communication skills. The analysis of 21st-century skills in the Independent Learning Independent Campus Program context ensures the curriculum's relevance to the needs of students in the current era. By understanding how far this program supports the development of 21st-century skills, educational institutions can enhance learning effectiveness. The findings of this research can provide a basis for education policymakers to make more informed decisions. The research implications can influence changes or improvements in education policies, especially in the context of implementing Independent Learning at the national level.

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