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Implementation of Project-Based Learning (PjBL) Vocational High Schools (SMK)

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ABSTRACT

Background

The inconsistency in the implementation of the PjBL learning model for class X AKL SMK PGRI Wonoasri in the independent curriculum listed in the Decree of the Minister of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia is the basis for this research.

Intention

This study aims to analyze how the implementation of PjBL class X AKL SMK PGRI Wonoasri in the independent curriculum.

Design/method/approach

This type of research is qualitative descriptive. Primary data is collected through documentation, observation, and interviews. Furthermore, data analysis is carried out by means of 1) collection, 2) reduction, 3) presentation, and 4) conclusion drawn.

Result

The research shows that the implementation of the independent Curriculum PjBL in class X AKL SMK PGRI Wonoasri is not in accordance with the PjBL of the independent Curriculum of the Ministry of Education and Culture. The PjBL learning model is a solution to address problems that occur in the field, both in the education sector and beyond.

Contributions/values

Research contributions include 1) adding insight for readers and authors regarding the implementation of PjBL learning for Vocational High School Department of Institutional Financial Accounting; 2) as a material for consideration, development, and evaluation by schools, teachers, and students in the implementation of the PjBL Learning model.

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INTRODUCTION

Modern-era education faces the global challenge of creating an inclusive, equitable, and humane system to achieve SDG number four set by the United Nations by 2030. Countries in the region are trying to design education policies to address access inequality and improve its quality. In this context, it involves increasing physical access, offering a diverse curriculum, providing inclusive teacher training, and utilizing educational technology through international cooperation and the adoption of best practices (Amedi, 2018). The SDGs provide a comprehensive framework for enhancing the quality of education, encompassing curriculum revisions and other educational initiatives. Indonesia adopted the SDGs to align with global standards in education, ensuring high standards worldwide.

By adjusting the curriculum and relevant learning strategies, Indonesia strengthens its education system (Safitri et al., 2022). To achieve effective education, guidelines, and instructions are necessary that govern the entire educational process. The curriculum serves as the main guideline that directs the course of education (Martin and Simanjorang, 2022). The government continues to strive to improve quality to achieve national education goals, namely creating a superior and integrated next-generation (Sugiarti et al., 2025).

The curriculum serves as a crucial foundation for the state in education (Angga et al., 2022). Indonesia follows an independent curriculum, as stated in Decree Number 719/P/2020. The learning in the Curriculum is more effective, allowing for extra time to understand the material. Teachers are free to choose teaching tools that suit students, and there is a Pancasila Profile Strengthening Project (Kemdikbud, 2020a). The independent Curriculum is applied at all levels of education, including vocational schools. An essential part of IKM is to create Pancasila Students with the values of faith, cooperation, and critical thinking, as reflected in the existence of the P5 (Pancasila Profile Strengthening Project) in the independent Curriculum. Cross-disciplinary learning, PBL, focuses on the process, namely that students learn from their surrounding environment. There are 7-8 project themes selected, and a minimum of 3 themes are completed.

The P5 facilitator team is responsible for designing the dimensions, allocating time, creating modules, and reporting project results (Kemdikbud, 2023). In the Merdeka Curriculum, Vocational Schools become a center of excellence that proactively overcome the challenges of improving the condition of SMKs according to the needs of the world of work. Vocational graduates are expected to be successful in working or entrepreneurship. PjBL is one of the suitable learning models (Kemdikbud, 2021a). PjBL is a learning approach that focuses on projects or activities as the center of learning activities (Marselus, 2021). Five stages in PjBL in the independent Curriculum (Kemdikbud, 2021b) namely: 1) it begins with a question; 2) planning project activities; 3) make a schedule of activities; 4) The teacher monitors the progress of the students during the project, using the rubrics that have been created to be used for valuation; 5) reflect on the experience gained.

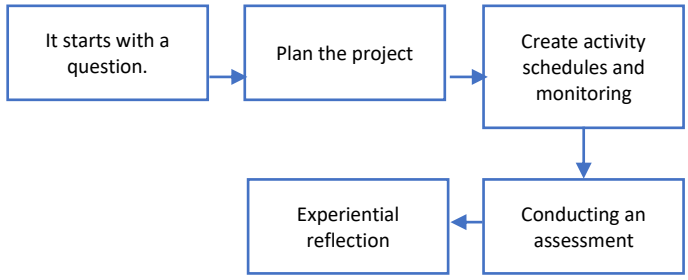

Figure 1. Stages of PjBL Independent Curriculum
Source: (Kemdikbud, 2021b)

LITERATURE REVIEW

Curriculum

A curriculum is a series of plans and rules that regulate the objectives, content, learning materials, and methods used as a guide in organizing educational activities to achieve national educational goals (Cecep., 2018). Elisa (2018) Formulating a curriculum has a crucial role in the success of education. Without an appropriate curriculum, it is challenging to achieve the desired educational goals and objectives.Sukma, Rina, and Febi (2023) stated that the curriculum in this day and age faces increasingly complex challenges. The curriculum should be interpreted as a document that is constantly changing and evolving as (Evolved documents). Hermawan, Juliani, and Widodo (2020) state that the Curriculum does not only limit itself to subjects and learning activities.

The Curriculum is a series of plans and agreements related to learning objectives, learning materials, and methods used in the implementation of learning, serving as a guide to achieving these objectives. The Curriculum is a developmental guide that directs students (Gusteti and Neviyarni, 2022). The curriculum is a series of plans and rules, including (goals, content, materials, and methods that play a vital role and must be developed in facing the challenges of complex times, affecting the development and formation of students' personalities as well as becoming a guide to students in achieving learning objectives in accordance with educational goals.

Development of the Vocational High School (SMK) Curriculum

Devi Erlistiana et al., (2022) explained that the Curriculum in Indonesia has existed since 1945 and has undergone significant changes over time. In 1984, a renewal occurred with the introduction of the Active Student Learning Method (ASLM). In 2004, there were further improvements in the Curriculum to address some of the differences. In 2006, the Learning Model of the Education Unit Level Curriculum (KTSP) was introduced and implemented until 2013. Djumali and Wijayanti (2018) Submit That the K-13 Curriculum is character- and competency-based, involving all components, such as Curriculum, lesson plans, learning processes, assessments, interpersonal relationships, learning management, school management, student self-development, infrastructure maintenance, financing, and school work culture.

The Independent Learning Curriculum is an innovative learning process that follows the needs of students (Indarta et al., 2022). Merdeka Belajar aims to create a sustainable learning concept that encourages students' independence, commitment, and ability to achieve it. The development of the vocational school curriculum has undergone changes since 1945, with the introduction of CBSA, KTSP, and K-13. The latest policy, the Independent Learning Curriculum, emphasizes continuous learning until 2024.

Independent Curriculum

The Merdeka Curriculum emphasizes core materials and character development with a Pancasila profile (Sari and Gumiandari, 2022). Freedom of Learning has several concepts: 1) freedom of learning as a response to teaching practices; 2) reducing the burden on educators through freedom in assessing learning; 3) the existence of a forum to find out the obstacles faced by educators in learning tasks; 4) The role of teachers as the front line in achieving the future of the nation (Ningrum, 2022). Mentioned in the Kemdikbud (2022a) that The Independent Curriculum continues the development of the previous Curriculum that is comprehensive, competency-based, and tailored to the needs of the student's context as a learning recovery. The independent Curriculum was previously known as the Prototype Curriculum, designed to encourage the growth of students' character, potential, and quality and to offer a flexible curriculum framework focused on primary materials. Thus, the Curriculum is independent to improve the quality of learning. This program focuses on core materials and character development with the Pancasila Profile. Freedom of Learning encompasses responses to teaching practices, alleviating the burden on educators, providing a forum to identify educators' obstacles, and highlighting the role of teachers as the frontline.

Independent Curriculum Instrument

Dian (2022) conveys that in the independent Curriculum, there are several principles of assessment guidance: 1) assessment has a vital role in encouraging learning and providing comprehensive information; 2) the evaluation is planned with the feedback function in mind; 3) Assessment is carried out fairly, proportionately, legitimately, and trustworthily, used to see the progress of learning and inform the next course of action for teachers. Teachers use authentic assessments based on "Assessment for learning," "Assessment as learning," and "Learning assessment"; 4) evaluation aims to see the learning progress of students; 5) findings from assessments as a reflection to improve teaching standards.

In the independent Curriculum, there is an assessment component that is expected to measure relevant aspects holistically. Assessments in the independent Curriculum include formative and summative assessments. Educators employ various assessment techniques that align with the function and objectives of the assessment. The results of the formative assessment are to provide feedback on learning, while the results of the summative assessment are to report the learning outcomes (Kemdikbud, 2020c). Assessments in the Independent Curriculum play a crucial role in encouraging learning and providing comprehensive information. Evaluations are planned with fair and trustworthy feedback functions in mind. Dian (2022) highlights the use of authentic assessment based on "for learning," "as learning," and "of learning" to monitor learning progress and enhance teaching

standards. The Independent Curriculum incorporates formative and summative assessments that holistically measure relevant aspects. Teachers conduct various assessments, including self-assessments and evaluations at the daily, mid-semester, and end-of-semester levels. The assessment of affective aspects utilizes observation and journal techniques, while the knowledge aspect is evaluated through written tests, oral tests, and assignments. Assessment results provide feedback and report learning outcomes.

PjBL in the Independent Curriculum

PjBL-based learning is essential in the independent Curriculum, which aims to provide a practical and in-depth learning experience about the subject matter with the hope of improving student learning outcomes. PjBL helps students easily understand the benefits of learning and its relevance (Lubis et al., 2021). Eriza (2023) state that the focus of PjBL learning methods is on achieving the assigned tasks, primarily through a project model that encourages students' active participation in writing and collecting information. Instructions related to the project take center stage. Instructional strategies that challenge learners in executing projects are categorized as project-based instruction. The five stages of PjBL in the independent curriculum (Kemdikbud, 2020b) are as follows:

1. Start with the essential question: Learning begins with the main questions that give assignments to students.
2. Design a plan for the project: Teachers and students work together to design a project plan that includes (rules, activities that support the main questions, as well as the necessary tools and materials).
3. Create a schedule: Create a shared schedule of activities that includes timelines and deadlines. Students are also invited to think about ways that suit the project and explain their choices. The teacher monitors the student's progress during the project, using rubrics that the teacher has created.
4. Assess the outcome: After the project is completed, an assessment is conducted to measure the standards and provide feedback to the students.
5. A reflection on the experience: Finally, teachers and learners reflect on their experiences in the project, discussing future improvements.

A summary of the stages of the PjBL learning model is found in the following table 1.

Table 1. Stages of the PjBL Learning Model

Activity	Role	
	Teacher	Learners
It starts with a question	√	
Plan project activities	√	√
Create a schedule of activities	√	√
Monitoring	√	
Conducting an assessment	√	
Reflect or evaluate	√	

Source: Kemdikbud (2020a)

Angela et al. (2022) explain that PjBL is a way of learning where learners create projects to develop their creativity, with teachers serving as facilitators. Kemdikbud (2020b) reveals that PjBL is a learning approach in which students are actively involved in solving problems, both in groups and individually, following scientific steps with a specific time limit, the results of which are expressed in the form of products and shown to others. There are several characteristics of PjBL. Students do assignments alone or in groups, from planning to presentation. They take full responsibility for their projects, involving friends, teachers, parents, and the community. This approach also encourages the practice of creative thinking skills. Additionally, the class supports the development of students' ideas. Some assessment mechanisms in project-based learning (PjBL) (Kemdikbud, 2022b): 1) Assess learners' performance through practice, product development, projects, or portfolios; 2) Assessment projects involve planning, executing, and reporting tasks that must be completed within a specified timeframe; 3) Written testing with written questions and answers to measure students' abilities; 4) Written tests can take various forms, including essays, multiple-choice questions, or other types; 5) An oral evaluation in which learners answer questions orally, usually in a classroom setting; 6) Assignments are given to learners to measure understanding and help them acquire knowledge; 7) At the vocational level, a typical assessment method is fieldwork practice assessment.

Project-based learning (PjBL) is an integral part of the independent Curriculum. The goal is to provide a real and profound learning experience to students. PjBL encourages students to be active in seeking and collecting information through the project model, focusing on completing tasks, increasing creativity, problem-solving, and engaging in productive projects—teachers as facilitators in project-based learning (PjBL).

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative method approach centered on the practice of PjBL, specifically a single-case study descriptive qualitative research, as a means of deepening the implementation of PjBL in the Class X Department of AKL SMK PGRI WONOASRI. Data collection techniques are carried out by means of 1) documentation, in the form of teacher teaching tools, teaching and learning activities in the classroom; 2) observation, direct observation of facilities and infrastructure, school environment, teachers, and students in obtaining a logical picture of the object observed by the researcher with the solution of the problem; 3) Interview, by preparing a list of questions related to the implementation of PjBL, through informant one (1) waka curriculum tasked with coordinating the implementation of the Curriculum implemented in schools. Informants of two (2) class X AKL teachers who carry out learning activities with the PjBL model. Informants of three (3) class X AKL students who follow and implement the PjBL learning model applied by class X AKL teachers. Data validation test using triangulation of sources and techniques. Triangulation of sources through interviews in obtaining different information, namely interviews by coordinating and comparing statements from several informants, including the curriculum waka, accounting teachers of class X AKL, and students of class X AKL as comparative materials for consistency conveyed by informants. Meanwhile, technical triangulation was conducted

through documentation, observation, and interviews. The four stages of the research procedure are shown in Figure 2. that is:

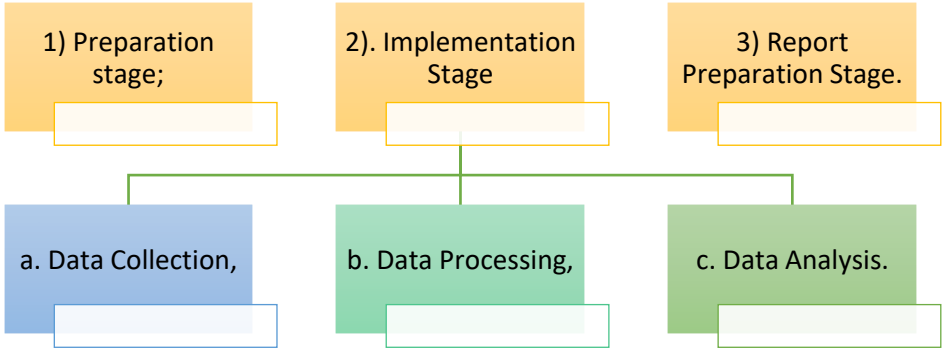

Figure 2. Research Procedure

RESULT

Implementation of PjBL

The learning approach involves several interrelated stages. The teacher starts by delivering the material through lectures or explanations to the students, providing an initial understanding of the relevant concepts. After that, students are given the freedom to access additional sources of information and delve deeper into the material that has been studied. The next stage involves planning projects or tasks that align with the material delivered, encouraging the implementation of concepts in real-life situations. The implementation schedule or assignment deadline is mutually agreed upon, providing students with flexibility in managing their time.

Teachers actively monitor students' progress in the classroom, periodically evaluate their assignment work, and listen for any obstacles that may arise. After the assignment is completed, the teacher conducts a thorough assessment of the results of the project or assignment that the students have collected and worked on. The evaluation of the assessment results is delivered to students with the aim of understanding learning achievements and identifying opportunities for improvement. In the PjBL independent curriculum in class X at AKL SMK PGRI Wonoasri, students are only asked to work on problems without being required to create projects.

School Management

The implementation of the independent Curriculum is introduced in grades X and XI-12 in SMK PGRI Wonoasri for the 2022/2023 school year. SMK PGRI Wonoasri also has a school website that contains general information about the school and various majors offered at SMK PGRI Wonoasri. However, the website does not explain how the concept of PjBL is applied in the context of the independent Curriculum.

Facilities and Markets

Computer Lab

Computer laboratories are available at SMK PGRI Wonoasri, equipped with a total of 20 PCs. However, the situation is less than optimal for implementing learning in the lab because there are 28 students in class X of the AKL SMK PGRI Wonoasri, which is not balanced with the number of existing PCs.

Wifi or internet network

SMK PGRI Wonoasri has approximately eight wifi points. However, in some classes, such as Class X, using AKL wifi is difficult, and students often resort to personal data packages when learning activities require an internet connection.

Integrated technology

SMK PGRI Wonoasri has eight (8) LCD projectors, two (2) of which cannot be used. Teachers at SMK PGRI Wonoasri have already adopted the use of LCD projectors in their learning, but there are still a few who have not. When using LCD Projectors, students borrow from the *inventory room* at SMK PGRI Wonoasri.

Learning portal

All teachers at SMK PGRI Wonoasri already have an account on the independent teaching platform provided by the Ministry of Education and Culture. On this platform, teachers can add references for teaching materials or media that will be used during in-class instruction.

Learning Media

In class X, AKL also has an Interactive LKPD, which is used when the teacher finishes delivering the material. However, the Interactive LKPD is only used when there are PLP students at the vocational school. There are still schools with limited infrastructure and a need to improve the digital literacy of teachers and education personnel (Wulaningsih and Radiana, 2024). This means that the development of learning media, namely interactive LKPD, is not only applied when students carry out educational internships in class X of AKL Wonoasri Vocational School, but in this context, it is necessary to increase the digital literacy of teachers and education staff so that the implementation of PjBL in the independent Curriculum through interactive LKPD continues even though the practice of student educational internships has been completed so that the learning process can still run effectively.

Teacher Teaching Tools

In the class X teachers majoring in AKL at SMK PGRI Wonoasri have compiled several teaching tools, such as ATP, CP, teaching modules, TP, and summative assessments. However, there has not been a preparation for the Learning Goal Achievement Indicator (IKTP).

Student Readiness

SMK PGRI Wonoasri has implemented the P5 independent curriculum. In the P5, students are encouraged to develop teamwork, creativity, and critical reasoning skills. However, in the P5 independent curriculum at SMK PGRI Wonoasri, there is no output according to the majors in SMK PGRI. The P5 activities that have been carried out are the election of the student council president, the manufacture of processed cassava, and a visit to the brem factory in Caruban.

DISCUSSION

Implementation of PjBL

Starting from the teacher by starting to deliver material through lectures or explanations to provide an initial understanding of relevant concepts to students. After that, students are given the freedom to look for additional sources of information and explore more deeply related to the material that has been studied. Next, the teacher plans projects or assignments that are appropriate to the material to encourage the implementation of the concept in real-life situations. The schedule for implementing assignments is determined jointly, allowing students flexibility in managing their time.

Teachers actively monitor students' progress, periodically evaluate their assignment work, and address any obstacles that may arise. After the assignment is completed, the teacher assesses the results of the project or assignment as a whole that the students have done. The evaluation of the assessment results is submitted to students to help them understand their learning achievements and identify opportunities for improvement.

There has not been a project that students are working on based on the five stages in PjBL in the independent curriculum (Kemdikbud, 2021b) namely: 1) *Start with the essential questions*; 2) *Designing a plan for the project*; 3) *Create a schedule*; 4) *Assess the results*; 5) *Evaluate experience*—in line with Sari *et al.,* (2023) explained that through the use of PjBL, students are given the opportunity to learn collaboratively in acquiring and deepening knowledge through each project learning activity as an effort to strengthen character. Despite the pandemic, knowledgeable characters can be developed through the development of PJBL-based textbooks (Puspita & Nugrahanta, 2024). This means that AKL class X students have gained the freedom to access information and explore the material more deeply. However, the phenomenon that occurs in learning media, namely interactive LKPD, was developed during the implementation of an educational internship for students, specifically PLP II in class X of SMK Wonoasri.

School Management

In the 2022/2023 school year, SMK PGRI Wonoasri implemented an independent curriculum in grades X, XI, and XII. The school has a website that provides general information about the institution and the various majors it offers. However, on the website, there is no explanation of how the concept of Project-based learning (PjBL) is applied in the independent Curriculum at the school.

Facilities and Markets

a. Computer Lab

Although SMK PGRI Wonoasri has provided a computer laboratory with a total of 20 PCs, the situation has become less than ideal for implementing learning in the lab because the number of students in class X of AKL exceeds 28, which exceeds the number of PCs available.

b. wifi or internet network

SMK PGRI Wonoasri has around eight wifi points. However, in some classes, such as class X AKL, wifi is difficult to use, so students have to rely on personal data packages when there is learning that requires an internet connection.

c. Integrated technology

SMK PGRI Wonoasri is equipped with 8 LCD projectors, but some of them are currently out of use. Some teachers at the school have used LCD projectors in their lessons, but their use is still relatively rare. When they want to use an LCD projector, students must borrow it from the inventory room at SMK PGRI Wonoasri.

d. Learning portal

Every teacher at SMK PGRI Wonoasri already has an account on the independent teaching platform available from the Ministry of Education and Culture. In the platform, teachers are given access to add references to teaching materials or media to support teachers and students in the practice of PjBL Independent Curriculum. This means that the learning portal, which is usually accessed through the internet network, is one part of the school infrastructure as a means of the learning process with the independent Curriculum PjBL. Therefore, it is necessary to provide, pay attention to, and maximize these facilities so that learning becomes an effective process. As stated by (Wulaningsih & Radiana, 2024) the effectiveness of teaching is maximized with the use of information technology, where collaboration between teachers and increased access to more diverse and structured learning resources are also facilitated.

e. Learning Media

In class X, AKL also has an Interactive LKPD, which is used when the teacher finishes delivering the material. Interactive LKPD is used in class X AKL after the teacher provides the material. However, the use of Interactive LKPD is limited to when there are PLP (Field Education/Field Practice) students at the vocational school. Kemdikbud (2022c) stated that technology is used in creating learning materials through educational videos, learning through audio, interactive multimedia, as well as Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR) technologies. Teachers and students can access this content through the resources provided by the Ministry of Education and Culture.

Teacher Teaching Tools

Class X teachers majoring in AKL at SMK PGRI Wonoasri have compiled several teaching tools for the implementation of the independent Curriculum with PjBL, including ATP, CP, teaching modules, TP, and summative assessments. However, to date, no preparations have been made for the Learning Goal Achievement Indicator (IKTP). Conform to (Kemdikbud, 2022a) the teaching tools used by teachers of AKL SMK PGRI Wonoasri are in accordance with the independent curriculum. However, it still needs to be added to the assessment. Kemdikbud (2022a) conveyed that in the independent Curriculum, there are several ways of assessment mechanisms, including in the project-based learning method (PjBL), such as:

1. Assess learners' performance through practice, product development, projects, or portfolios.
2. Assessment projects involve planning, executing, and reporting tasks that must be completed within a specified timeframe.
3. Written testing with written questions and answers to measure students' abilities.

4. Written tests can take various forms, including essays, multiple-choice questions, and other types.
5. An oral evaluation in which learners answer questions orally, usually in a classroom setting.
6. Assignments are given to learners to measure understanding and help them acquire knowledge.
7. At the vocational level, a typical assessment method is fieldwork practice assessment.
8. Student Readiness

SMK PGRI Wonoasri has implemented P5 in the independent Curriculum, which encourages students to develop teamwork, creativity, and critical thinking. However, in the P5 independent curriculum at the school, there are no results or outputs that align with the various majors at SMK PGRI. Some of the P5 activities that have been carried out include the election of the student council chairman, the manufacture of processed cassava, and a visit to the brem factory in Caruban. Sulistyati, Wahyaningsih and Wijania (2021) stated that in accordance with the values embedded in the P5 of the independent Curriculum, there are six attitudes of students that are embedded, including (faith, fear of God Almighty: independence, critical reasoning, global diversity; cooperation; creative). The implementation of P5 in the independent Curriculum at SMK PGRI Wonoasri has partly instilled the attitude in P5. Still, some aspects are not in accordance with the P5 independent curriculum from the Ministry of Education and Culture, such as the absence of outputs that align with the majors at the vocational school.

CONCLUSION

The conclusions of the study are (1) SMK PGRI Wonoasri implements an independent curriculum with the PjBL learning model and (2) projects or assignments given to students based on the learning elements in the teaching module. The occurrence of inconsistencies in the project given to students by teachers in the practice of PjBL in the independent Curriculum is notable. (3) The stages of PjBL in the independent Curriculum are partly in accordance with the Ministry of Education and Culture. However, at the planning stage and making schedules, it is not in accordance with the independent Curriculum PjBL.

This research presents a different perspective from previous research in the AKL SMK department. Previously, there had been no research that considered the use of the PjBL approach in the context of an independent curriculum for AKL majors. In the implementation of P5 at SMK Wonoasri, results have not been achieved in accordance with the needs of existing departments. P5 activities are still carried out thoroughly. A key contribution of the research is to provide new insights into the implementation of PjBL in the independent Curriculum for AKL majors at the vocational school level. The implications of the findings can serve as a guide for the development of the Curriculum in the future, taking into account all the benefits and challenges offered by the PjBL approach. Therefore, each learning approach has its advantages and disadvantages, and its implementation needs to be tailored to the school's context, the student's needs, and the relevant learning materials.

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