

*The Problem and Satisfaction of Lecturers Towards the Independent Study:
Case Study in Indonesia*

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Abstract

The aim of this research is to describe the achievement and satisfaction of teachers as users of the Independent Study or Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) program in Indonesia. Additionally, this study reveals problems related to implementation, including the benefits, obstacles, and expectations of teachers towards improving future execution of the Independent Study program. Simple statistics were used for data processing and presented through descriptive analysis. The data was collected through questionnaire dissemination and literature review. The questionnaire was randomly distributed through an online g-form to 45 state and private university lecturers in Indonesia, while literature review sources included journal articles, Independent Study guidelines, online news, and other internet sources. The results of the data analyzed showed that out of 45 respondents, approximately 56% responded positively, with the achievement of the program categorized as good and a satisfaction rate of 73%. However, around 27% were dissatisfied, revealing problems related to system obstacles and suboptimal program management. This research is important for program managers and government policymakers, as it provides input towards improving Indonesia's education quality and serves as an example of Independent Study program implementation in other countries.

Keywords: Problem, Satisfaction, Lecturers, Independent Study

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Introduction

The implementation of the Independent Study curriculum has been launched in 2020. The Independent Study curriculum poses a real challenge for every university to provide a positive response to this new curriculum. To support this program, development is needed at each university (Rohiyatussakinah, 2021). The concept of independent learning has become a widely discussed issue in education. The concept, which advocates for freedom in learning, is carried out in an effort to prepare graduates of both public and private universities to face the rapid development and changes of the times. The implementation of government policies in the field of education will automatically affect the curriculum management that supports Independent Study optimally at every level of education (Zuhrohtun et al., 2021).

Academic communities must understand the Independent Study policy within study programs that have courses related to Independent Study programs, and entrepreneurship activities have been underway to support Independent Study (Sintiawati et al., 2022). Study programs must be able to develop adaptive curricula and provide more practical experiences, and students have the right to learn outside the campus (Kodrat, 2021). The design of Independent Study programs, concepts, and models, including planning, learning processes, assessment, and evaluation, seeks to be a strategy that can be used to prepare graduates as future outstanding leaders, in order to achieve the vision of study programs at the national and international levels (Krisnanik et al., 2021; Marjan Fuadi, 2022; Baharuddin, 2021).

Some Independent Study programs include: 1) student exchange programs, 2) internships/work placements, 3) teaching in educational institutions, 4) village projects, 5) research projects, 6) entrepreneurship activities, 7) independent study/projects, and 8) humanitarian projects. Private universities in Indonesia have implemented several programs, including student exchange programs between study programs within universities and student exchange programs between universities, as well as teaching programs in educational institutions and internships supported by ministry funding (Fuadi & Aswita, 2021).

The involvement of the community aims to prepare outstanding students who uphold human values in carrying out their duties based on faith, morality, and ethics. Students proactively educate and help communities and the government solve their social problems (Krishnapatria, 2021). Students' knowledge about the Independent Study program policy is already good, but their detailed knowledge about the Independent Study program is still relatively low and adequate. Furthermore, students' readiness to participate in Independent Study activities is also good enough (Setyawati et al., 2022). The Independent Study program, particularly the internship/work placement activities, provides direct learning experiences and opportunities with the hope of obtaining the hard and soft skills needed in the world of work (Aswita, 2022).

Substantially, in accordance with Independent Study, which has been implemented since 2017, it has had an impact on achieving partner campus satisfaction indicators towards the obedience to rules, ethics, as well as students' personality and social abilities, which are already good (Riyadi et al., 2022). Students already have inherent characters from universities that can satisfy school partners. The ethics, personality, and social abilities of students can facilitate the implementation of the teaching campus program. Students, as participants in the teaching campus, are not only involved in learning activities but also play a role in helping schools in educational support activities needed by partners, such as library improvements, school drama events, and literacy strengthening (Suastika et al., 2022).

Implementation of Independent Study through their respective tasks, although most staff are not yet aware of how many semesters and credits can be equated in the Independent Study program, staff believe that there is an improvement in the quality of lecturers, students, and staff themselves in the implementation of Independent Study in higher education. Staff participate fully in the implementation of Independent Study because it is perceived as beneficial for improving the quality of graduates and will recommend to students to follow the Independent Study program according to their interests (Banda et al., 2022).

The implementation of Independent Study can provide improvements in both hard and soft skills for students. Especially the internship program, which is the most dominant program under Independent Study, is highly sought after by students because it is related to their future employment after graduation (Meke et al., 2021). The Independent Study program also has an impact on social skills for students. This can be seen from the difference in the level of social skills between students who participate in campus teaching activities and those who do not attend Campus Teaching (Sumani et al., 2022). In addition, students who participate in the Independent Study program have slightly higher average soft skills than non-Independent Study students, with a significant difference in leadership competencies (Kuncoro et al., 2022). Through Independent Study activities, students also feel more flexible towards the learning process, gain experiences with the community, and prepare for their future careers, as well as becoming a real forum that can guide students about diversity (Laga et al., 2021; Pamungkas & Sudigdo, 2022).

In terms of benefits, students gain real-world experiences outside of campus and learn through experiential learning. In addition, lecturers can increase their capacity as educators (Kholik et al., 2022). However, there is also research indicating that students who participate in Independent Study activities feel stressed. Specifically, the greatest level of stress is caused by pressure from learning and unfulfilled self-expectations (Hakim et al., 2022).

The main obstacles faced by private universities in implementing the Independent Study program include: 1) adapting the KKNi curriculum to the Independent Study program, 2) limited partner campuses, 3) collaboration between private universities in Indonesia and external parties such as companies, state-owned enterprises, regional-owned enterprises, and even the government is still very minimal, 4) management of funds by foundations that have not budgeted for Independent Study, and 5) the quality and productivity of lecturer and student human resources (Fuadi & Aswita, 2021). In addition, other obstacles faced include limited funding, suboptimal academic information systems, inadequate human resources, and lack of information about the Independent Study program (Sintiawati et al., 2022). Another challenge in implementing the Independent Study program, particularly in granting students the right to study for three semesters outside of their major, is in the aspects of curriculum adjustment, funding, exploration of partners, and academic information adjustment (Kholik et al., 2022).

Given the above problems related to the implementation of the Independent Study program, it is necessary to conduct further research on the extent of quality achievement and the level of satisfaction of lecturers as users of the Independent Study program in implementing the policies within it. This research is different from previous studies, which mainly focused on the impact and perceptions of students regarding the Independent Study program. This study focuses on the perceptions of teaching staff (lecturers) regarding the quality and level of satisfaction with the implementation of Independent Study so far. This study also investigates the extent to which lecturers perceive the benefits and challenges of the Independent Study program towards education implementation in Indonesian higher education.

Research Methods

This research was conducted in October 2022, in the first semester of the academic year 2022/2023. The approach used was a descriptive qualitative approach. The primary data was collected through direct interviews with several faculty members who received the Independent Study program and through online questionnaire distribution. Secondary data was obtained through literature studies by collecting Independent Study data sourced from national and international journal articles, books, Independent Study guideline documents, online news, and other internet sources that discuss Independent Study.

The focus of the study was on the implementation of the Independent Study program in higher education. To obtain data on this study, researchers randomly sampled 45 faculty members who were implementing the Independent Study program from various public and private universities in Indonesia who are currently pursuing their S3 studies at the State University of Malang. The questionnaire was prepared based on evaluation indicators for the implementation of the Independent Study program. Furthermore, research analysis was conducted descriptively and data collection sources were triangulated. The respondent data in this study are as follows:

Table 1. Data of Respondents as State and Private University Lecturers as Practitioners of Community Service Program in Indonesia

No. Resp	Institution	MBKM Program	No. Resp	Institution	MBKM Program
Resp. 1	Univ. Muhammadiyah Bengkulu	Pertukaran Pelajar	Resp. 24	Univ. PGRI Silampari	Kampus Mengajar
Resp. 2	Institut Kesehatan Prima Nusantara	Kampus Mengajar	Resp. 25	Univ. Muhammadiyah Ponorogo	Kampus Mengajar
Resp. 3	Univ. Negeri Gorontalo	Pertukaran Pelajar	Resp. 26	Univ. Negeri Manado	Pertukaran Pelajar
Resp. 4	Univ. Negeri Malang	Kampus Mengajar	Resp. 27	Institut Teknologi Nasional Malang	Dosen Magang
Resp. 5	Univ. Jember	Kampus Mengajar	Resp. 28	Univ. Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa	Pertukaran Pelajar
Resp. 6	Univ. Negeri Malang	Hibah Penelitian	Resp. 29	Univ. Trunojoyo Madura	Hibah Penelitian
Resp. 7	STKIP PGRI Nganjuk	Kewirausahaan	Resp. 30	Univ. Galuh	Kampus Mengajar
Resp. 8	Univ. Jember	Kampus Mengajar	Resp. 31	Univ. Trunojoyo Madura	Pertukaran Dosen
Resp. 9	IKIP PGRI Bojonegoro	Kampus Mengajar	Resp. 32	Univ. Brawijaya	Pertukaran Pelajar
Resp. 10	Univ. Katolik Widya Mandala Madiun	Pertukaran Pelajar	Resp. 33	Univ. Bengkulu	Kampus Mengajar
Resp. 11	Univ. Billfath	Kampus Mengajar	Resp. 34	Univ. Indraprasta PGRI Jakarta	Hibah Penelitian
Resp. 12	Univ. Tanjungpura	Kampus Mengajar	Resp. 35	Univ. Sembilanbelas November Kolaka	Pertukaran Pelajar
Resp. 13	Univ. Pendidikan Ganesha	Kampus Mengajar	Resp. 36	Univ. Muhammadiyah Surabaya	Kampus Mengajar
Resp. 14	Univ. PGRI Palembang	Kampus Mengajar	Resp. 37	Univ. Sriwijaya	Pertukaran Pelajar
Resp. 15	Univ. Samudra	Studi Independen	Resp. 38	Univ. Negeri Yogyakarta	Kampus Mengajar
Resp. 16	Univ. Muhammadiyah Metro	Bina Desa	Resp. 39	Univ. Panca Marga	Pertukaran Dosen
Resp. 17	Univ. Muhammadiyah Kendari	Kampus Mengajar	Resp. 40	Univ. PGRI Kanjuruhan Malang	Modul Nusantara
Resp. 18	Univ. PGRI Palembang	Kampus Mengajar	Resp. 41	Univ. Negeri Makasar	Kampus Mengajar
Resp. 19	Univ. PGRI Sumatera Barat	Kampus Mengajar	Resp. 42	Univ. PGRI Kanjuruhan Malang	Bina Desa
Resp. 20	Univ. Muhammadiyah Surakarta	Kampus Mengajar	Resp. 43	Univ. Tribhuwana Tunggaladewi	Pertukaran Pelajar
Resp. 21	Univ. Negeri Malang	Studi Independen	Resp. 44	Univ. Jabal Ghafur	Hibah Penelitian
Resp. 22	Univ. Pattimura	Pertukaran Pelajar	Resp. 45	Univ. Wiralodra	Dosen Magang
Resp. 23	ITP Markandeya Bali	Pertukaran Pelajar			

Result and Discussion

Implementation of Independent Study in Learning

From the online questionnaire distributed to 45 respondents, consisting of both public and private university lecturers in this research, the following results were obtained;

Table 2. Quality data on the achievement of Independent Study program implementation

Quality of Achievement	Sum	Percentage
Excellent	2	4%
Good	25	56%
Good enough	8	18%
Not good enough	10	22%
	45	

Source: Survey Results and Research Data Processing (2022)

From the table above, it shows a significant development of the implementation of the Independent Study program. Of the 45 respondents, only 2 people answered very well with a percentage of 4 percent, 25 people answered well with a percentage of 56%, about 8 people answered quite well with a percentage of 18%, and about 10 people answered not well with a percentage of about 22%.

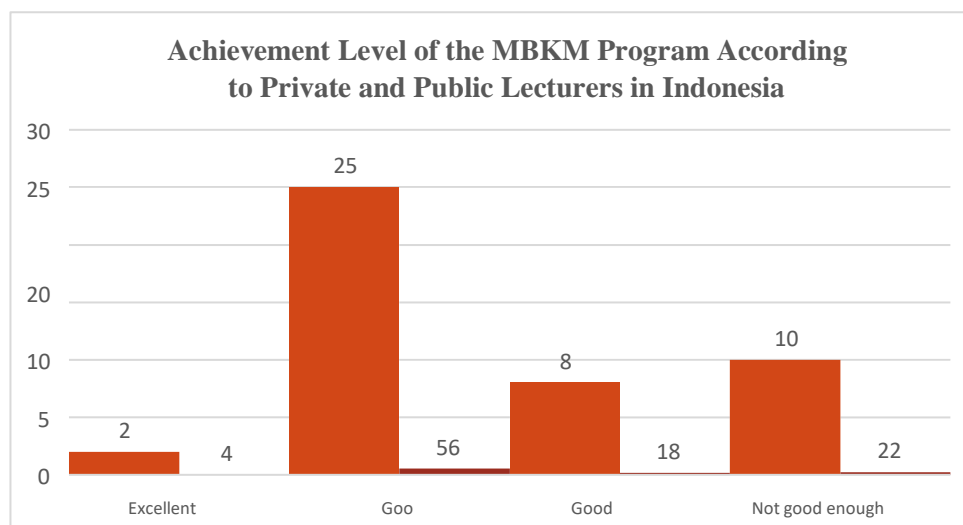


Figure 1. Graphic percentage of quality achievement of Independent Study program implementation

From the graphic shows that, around 2% who rated the implementation of the Independent Study program very good because they felt the benefits of Independent Study were very large for students and lecturers. It is said that Independent Study allows lecturers to collaborate with lecturers across territories and gain new experience, in implementing the knowledge gained during the implementation of the program. Most lecturers, around 56%, consider the implementation of the Independent Study program to be good, because for lecturers the Independent Study program has been carefully prepared. Participating in the Independent Study program is an experience for students to learn while having an impact in the target school.

Participants in the program have the opportunity to gain knowledge outside of their field of study from various professional sources. In addition, the Independent Study program is perceived to facilitate learning activities for students throughout Indonesia to acquire competencies beyond their original department's curriculum. This activity is also said to be beneficial to the community and helps to improve literacy for both students and educators. Around 18% of respondents rated the program positively because they felt that Independent Study provides space for students to explore themselves further. Meanwhile, around 22% of faculty members rated the program poorly, stating that the implementation of Independent Study in the field is still not being executed properly, as the introduction of the new program to students is still insufficient. Evaluation factors were not well-prepared, resulting in the implementation of Independent Study still not being optimal.

Level of Lecturer Satisfaction with the Implementation of the Independent Study Program

Table 3. Data on the level of lecturer satisfaction with the implementation of the Independent Study program

Satisfaction	Sum	Percentage
Excellent	4	9%
Satisfied	33	73%
Satisfied Enough	2	4%
Not Satisfied Enough	6	13%
	45	

From the table data on the level of lecturer satisfaction with the implementation of Independent Study, it shows significant results. Of the 45 respondents, there were about 4 people who answered very satisfied, with a percentage of 9%, about 33 people answered satisfied with a percentage of 73%, only 2 people answered enough with a percentage of about 4%, and about 6 lecturers answered less satisfied, with a percentage of 13%.

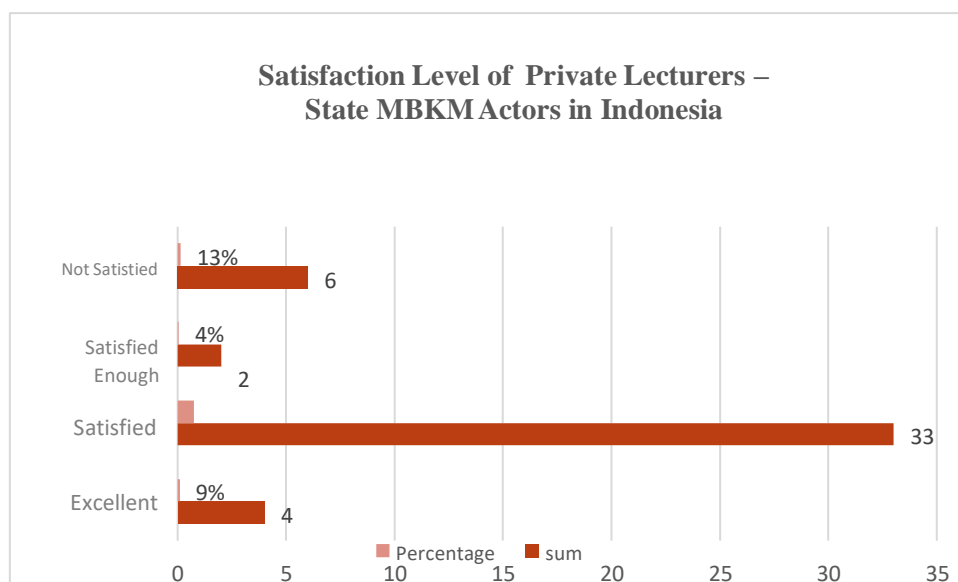


Figure 2. Graph of Lecturer Satisfaction Level with Independent Study Program Implementation

The above image shows a high level of satisfaction. Most of the lecturers, around 73%, who are satisfied with the implementation of the Independent Study program say that the Independent Study program can provide experience and insights to students and institutions in adapting to changes. In addition, Independent Study participants feel that the program can fulfill what they want to learn but is not taught in lectures. Through Independent Study, students are provided with all aspects of academic achievement, including knowledge, skills, and attitudes, not only from lecturers but also from partners who are more prepared for the world of work. The Independent Study program has been provided, and we can run it well. In addition, about 9% of lecturers feel very satisfied because they feel that the program prepares students to face rapid social, cultural, and technological changes, as well as link and match with the industrial and work world.

Around 4% of respondents who answered "satisfied enough" could not provide other input or responses because they only followed one program. Meanwhile, 6% of respondents who felt "unsatisfied" felt that the assessment was not clear and the implementation did not meet expectations. The logic behind this independent student exchange program is to provide students with learning experiences outside of campus and to be more open-minded. However, problems arise if the courses taken by students or offered by partner institutions are not relevant to the study fields of the courses at their home institution. In addition, it is quite troublesome for the study program to convert them. For the *Kampus Mengajar* program, it should be monitored so that the practices carried out by students in schools are in line with the vision and mission of the Program *Kampus Mengajar*.

Problems and Constraints in Independent Study Implementation

Based on field observations, the results of a questionnaire distributed to 45 lecturers indicate that the challenges frequently faced by lecturers during the implementation of the Independent Study program are: 1) Geographic conditions, access, and distance, particularly for programs located in remote 3T areas, make it difficult for teachers to access the destination. 2) Scheduling of classes sometimes conflicts with other activities, forcing many lecturers to choose one program. 3) Lack of internal leadership socialization regarding recognition of activities within credit units, academic integration among universities, and difficulty in converting credits and courses taken outside the study program into the homebase study program. 4) Adaptation of the Independent Study curriculum, particularly in semesters 5, 6, and 7, as well as transfer of Independent Study activities into course grades. 5) Lack of clarity in information, causing many educators to struggle to understand the benefits of Independent Study for both students and lecturers. 6) In addition, network constraints often hinder online learning. 7) Lack of collaboration with external research partners.

Furthermore, 8) Difficulties experienced as the DPL of exchange students, lack of recognition, and communication of the students' vision and mission make it challenging to align activities. 9) Coordination with Independent Study partners is still private because there is no automated system yet. 10) Guidelines for the initial to the final program activities, as well as the alignment of Independent Study results with the internal campus curriculum, are still unclear, causing confusion for lecturers and study programs in aligning courses. 11) Some face challenges in preparing the SPJ due to a lack of guidance and technical knowledge. 12) Other challenges experienced in managing the study program and students who participate in the program. 13) Inadequate funding also hinders operations in the field. 14) Excessive monitoring and evaluation result in activities not aligning with the learning objectives of the study program.

In addition, 15) Other challenges faced by lecturers are related to web-based systems because some features do not function properly, disrupting program operations. 16) Coordination with responsible parties, program choices, and implementation is not evenly distributed among all study programs. 17) Inadequate socialization results in participants and university leaders not fully understanding the Independent Study program. 18) Students' specializations and the skills of accompanying lecturers, as well as the number of recognized credits, will weaken the number of credits in the expertise field. 19) Many challenges are technical, but the main challenge is a lack of understanding of the policy-compliant implementation program, resulting in different interpretations from universities, partners, and students. 20) The synchronization process of Independent Study policies from the ministry with the study program curriculum. 21) Difficulty in directing the program to several students from non-LPTK campuses. 22) Some universities use hybrid learning, which still faces challenges during online learning.

Benefits of Independent Study Program to Improve Lecturer Ability

Despite the shortcomings and challenges of the program, what benefits do you feel the Independent Study program has for improving the quality of education for both lecturers and students? For lecturers who accompany and guide intern students in industry, it is an interesting and insightful experience for human resource development. It allows lecturers to always upgrade themselves and students to gain experience both on and off campus. As a lecturer, I have a platform to implement my knowledge and skills relevantly outside of teaching activities. Lecturers can develop materials outside of the curriculum. For students, through the Independent Study program, they gain knowledge beyond the curriculum that can be used to develop skills in the workplace.

Furthermore, lecturers can gain experience, expand their reach in dedicating themselves to education, and provide diverse campus experiences. Lecturers can observe the state of education in remote areas and provide solutions for improvement. For students, it can be an experience of how to become an educator in the region. The Independent Study program also provides many benefits such as enabling students to complete their studies quickly, overcoming boredom in face-to-face classes, and providing real work experience. Additionally, lecturers can obtain additional teaching credits as external supervisors for Independent Study activities, which can be used as community service.

The program also opens up more opportunities for self-exploration and wider experiences. Research encourages collaboration, leading to multiple perspectives in solving research problems. It also provides real-life experiences that education issues in our country are complex. It changes thinking and independence, and students can compete with other universities to create well-rounded and job-ready graduates, while lecturers can increase their professional quality. It helps to facilitate article writing and fulfills the student's creativity movement through products and writings after participating in Independent Study.

Many also say that the Independent Study program can provide valuable experiences for students, lecturers, and universities in implementing independent curricula. Lecturers can learn practical things through their knowledge application in the industrial and business worlds. For students, they will gain real-life experience when they enter the workforce. They can learn experientially outside of campus. It provides a platform for lecturers to optimize themselves, especially to strengthen their networks with partner schools and others. Lecturers and students can collaborate with various cultural, educational, and religious backgrounds. This can train independence, initiative, tolerance, and global perspectives. In addition, for lecturers, the

benefits obtained are to gain experience in knowing the characteristics of students from all over Indonesia in learning. Building relationships with the community and schools, relationships with students from other universities, and strengthening relationships. Lecturers gain practical experience from partners, and students are more prepared with real-life experiences from the workforce.

It also provides opportunities for the development of lecturers' professions, university management, Pekerti training, scientific article mentoring, community service proposals, and wider networking. It provides opportunities for implementing knowledge according to the needs and demands of the curriculum. It improves professional competencies, opens up more opportunities, has a positive impact on the home institution, and applies good things at the home campus. It educates students to be independent and upgrades lecturers' knowledge. As a lecturer, I can also contribute to schools through guidance to students. Lecturers have wider networks not only among academics but also among practitioners and even DUDI partners.

Recommendations for the Development of Independent Study Implementation

From the various benefits and challenges faced by lecturers, the suggestions, recommendations, and big hopes of lecturers to policy makers in improving the Independent Study program and developing the Indonesian curriculum are as follows: teaching staff hope that the government will help with the accommodation costs for lecturers and students who participate in the Independent Study program. Additional funding for each study program should be provided so that academic systems can be improved, including uniformity in terms of grade conversion. It is hoped that program guidelines can be better prepared. The Independent Study should create a rubric related to grade conversion as this can sometimes cause controversy.

Although the learning activities are already running normally, I hope that campus teaching activities will continue to achieve quality education that is evenly distributed throughout Indonesia. This good program should be continued, whoever the leader is. A regulation (manual) on course conversion should be prepared. There should be a common understanding of the program among all participants. Lecturers also hope that the Independent Study program can be better prepared in terms of administration and other aspects.

Opportunities should be provided for participants with interests outside their field of study to be channeled. Guidelines and curriculum alignment should be provided for each course in each study program so that students and lecturers do not mistakenly choose courses. The quality and quantity of the Independent Study program should continue to be improved, expanding from the current 8 activities. A robust monitoring and evaluation system should be established for the implementation of Independent Study. In terms of curriculum development, it is recommended to involve education experts in curriculum development to design the Indonesian curriculum so that it is suitable for the conditions in Indonesia. Competency mapping is necessary for program participation to help schools implement the program.

Conclusion

Based on the results of the research and discussion presented, it can be concluded that the implementation of the Independent Study curriculum has been carried out to the best of its ability. From the questionnaire distribution, it was found that out of 45 respondents, only 2 people answered "very good" with a percentage of 4%, 25 people answered "good" with a percentage of 56%, approximately 8 people answered "fairly good" with a percentage of 18%,

and about 10 people answered "not good" with a percentage of around 22%. As for the data on the level of satisfaction of the lecturers towards the implementation of Independent Study, it showed significant results. Out of 45 respondents, about 4 people answered "very satisfied" with a percentage of 9%, about 33 people answered "satisfied" with a percentage of 73%, only 2 people answered "fairly satisfied" with a percentage of around 4%, and about 6 lecturers answered "not satisfied" with a percentage of 13%. During the implementation, the lecturers faced many obstacles, especially in terms of access, inadequate facilities, lack of socialization, lack of program guidelines, and the readiness of partner study programs to implement the program. Although many obstacles were felt by the lecturers, many benefits were also obtained from the Independent Study program, starting from the improvement of skills, insights, experience, and knowledge of each lecturer.

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