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Implementation of the Independent Learning Curriculum, Independent Campus, Department of Economic Education

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ABSTRACT

This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive design to describe and analyze the implementation of the Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) curriculum in the Department of Economic Education, Manado State University. Informants consisted of 15 key informants and 13 supporting informants who were selected purposively based on their knowledge and experience of MBKM. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation studies, then analyzed thematically. The results of the study showed that partners gave positive assessments of morals, ethics, communication skills, discipline, and students' ability to apply learning methods during the MBKM program. Lecturers and coordinators assessed that the conversion of credits, selection of partners, and the suitability of the MBKM curriculum with the study program curriculum were generally very appropriate, although there were challenges in technical standardization and integration of assessments across study programs. From the student side, most understood the concept and objectives of MBKM and actively participated in activities such as internships and village projects. Students considered this program relevant to their career needs and provided practical experience that increased competitiveness in the world of work. However, there was a gap in the dissemination of information and official guidance related to MBKM. Overall, the implementation of the MBKM curriculum in the Department of Economic Education is considered successful in forming professional competencies and student character that are in accordance with the needs of the world of education and the world of work, although improvements are needed in the alignment of the curriculum and socialization of the program.

Keywords: Implementation of Independent Learning Curriculum Independent Campus

How to Cite:

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INTRODUCTION

Education is the most important thing in our lives, this means that every Indonesian has the right to enjoy it and is expected to always develop in it. Through education, a person can gain knowledge, either through formal education or non-formal education (Riswan Assa et.al., 2022). Higher education in Indonesia faces major challenges in adapting to global dynamics, the industrial revolution 4.0, and the Society 5.0 era. To respond to these challenges, the Ministry of Education and Culture launched the Independent Learning Independent Campus (MBKM) policy through Permendikbud No. 3 of 2020. Minister of Education and Culture Nadiem Makarim changed the 2013 curriculum to the MBKM (Independent Learning Independent Campus) curriculum in 2019. The MBKM concept consists of two concepts, namely "Independent Learning" and "Independent Campus". Independent learning is freedom of thought and freedom of innovation (Ainia, 2020). Meanwhile, the independent campus is a continuation of the independent learning program for higher education. The transformation of education through the independent learning policy is one step to realize Superior Indonesian Human Resources who have the Pancasila Student Profile (Kemendikbud, 2021).

This policy provides flexibility for students to study outside the study program for three semesters, with the aim of improving the competence and competitiveness of graduates in the global job market. The implementation of MBKM aims to produce graduates who are adaptive, innovative, and ready to face the changing times. However, the implementation of this policy requires adjustments to the curriculum, learning methods, and readiness of human resources in higher education. Therefore, it is important to examine how the implementation of MBKM is carried out in various higher education institutions in Indonesia.

Several studies have been conducted to evaluate the implementation of MBKM in various universities. For example, a study by Maghfiroh and Sholeh (2021) showed that the implementation of MBKM is related to the Society 5.0 era, where creativity and innovation skills are key to producing strong and competitive human resources. Research by Mudrikah et al. (2022) found that students' readiness for the MBKM program reached 66%, while lecturers' readiness was 53%, and education personnel were 83%. This shows that there are challenges in the socialization and understanding of the MBKM program among academics. Lestiani et al. (2022) examined the implementation of MBKM in the Educational Technology Study Program, Palangka Raya University from a learning theory perspective. They found that the MBKM curriculum is based on constructivist theory, which emphasizes project-based learning and real experiences. In the context of evaluation, Triastuti and Prasetya (2022) conducted a study at the Faculty of Medicine, Duta Wacana Christian University and found that 43.22% of respondents were very interested in the MBKM program, with the most popular form of learning activity being student exchange.

Although various studies have examined the implementation of MBKM in higher education, there are still limitations in comprehensively understanding the factors that influence the success of the implementation of this policy. The scientific novelty of this article lies in the in-depth analysis of the readiness of institutions, lecturers, and students in implementing MBKM, as well as the identification of challenges and strategies that can be adopted to improve the effectiveness of this program.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive design that aims to describe and analyze in depth the implementation of the Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) curriculum in the Department of Economics Education, Manado State University. The qualitative approach was chosen because it allows researchers to understand the phenomenon holistically from the perspective of the actors directly in the field, including how they interpret and implement the MBKM policy in learning activities. The location of the study was determined purposively, namely in the Department of Economics Education, Faculty of Economics and Business, Manado State University, considering that this institution has been actively implementing the MBKM policy in recent years.

The informants in this study consisted of two categories, namely 15 key informants and 13 supporting informants. Key informants included the head of the department, lecturers in charge of courses directly related to the implementation of MBKM, coordinators of the MBKM program at the faculty, and active students who had participated in MBKM activities, such as teaching assistance and student exchanges. Meanwhile, supporting informants were representatives of external partners where students studied off-campus. The selection of informants was carried out using a purposive sampling technique, namely deliberate selection based on the informant's knowledge and experience of the object of study (Sugiyono, 2019) (Murdiyanto, 2020).

Data collection techniques were carried out through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation studies. Interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner to provide flexibility in exploring broader information from informant answers. Participatory observation was conducted during academic activities to directly observe how the MBKM curriculum was implemented, such as in the form of off-campus projects, interactions between lecturers and students, and the integration of MBKM activities in the curriculum. In addition, researchers also reviewed official documents such as curricula, academic guidelines, MBKM implementation reports, and relevant decrees. All data collected were analyzed using thematic analysis techniques, by reducing data, presenting data in narrative or matrix form, and drawing conclusions based on patterns and themes that emerged from the results of interviews and observations.

RESULTS

Perceptions Partners on the Implementation of the Independent Learning Curriculum

The independent learning curriculum program of the independent campus has been running well. This is evidenced by the results of interviews with 13 informants as users. A total of 6 partners stated that they strongly agree and 5 partners agree and 2 partners stated that they are neutral that MBKM participant students show good morals and ethics while in the partner environment. This reflects that the curriculum not only emphasizes academic aspects, but also the formation of student character. In terms of communication skills, 5 partners stated that they strongly agree, 6 agree. This shows that students are quite capable of establishing good communication with colleagues, supervisors, and external parties during the program. Only 2 partners were neutral, which can be used as evaluation material in soft skills training. Discipline is the aspect that is most highly rated positively, with 7 partners stating that they strongly agree and 4 agree.

This shows that the majority of students show responsibility and compliance with regulations and time. On the indicator of the ability to create teaching modules, 4 partners stated that they strongly agree and 6 agree with the students' ability to compile teaching modules. However, there were 3 partners who were still neutral, indicating that this skill can still be improved with more targeted technical training or practical guidance. The craft aspect showed a very positive perception, with 6 strongly agreeing and 5 agreeing. This shows that students show a high work ethic and enthusiasm for learning during MBKM activities. On the aspect of the ability to apply learning models and methods, 5 partners stated that they strongly agree and 6 agree. Students are considered quite good at designing and implementing innovative learning models during practice, such as project-based or problem-based learning models.

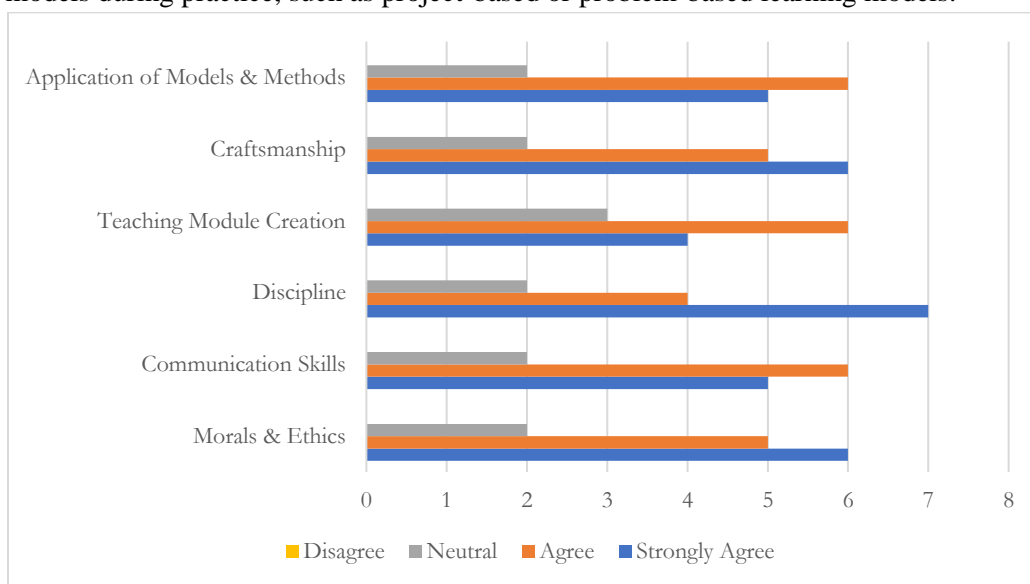


figure 1. Perceptions Partners on the Implementation of the Independent Learning Curriculum

Perceptions of the Head Of Department, Lecturers, And Coordinators Of The Kurikulum Merdeka Kampus Merdeka Program at the Faculty Regarding The Implementation Of Kurikulum Merdeka Kampus Merdeka

The perception of educators towards the implementation of the independent campus curriculum is reviewed from five indicators, namely first, the number of credits converted from the independent campus curriculum activities is a maximum of 20 credits, 9 people or 100% of informants stated that it is very appropriate. Second, the selection of independent learning campus partners based on the learning achievements of graduates, 6 informants, 66.66% stated that it is very appropriate and 33.34% stated that it is appropriate. Third, the implementation of independent learning campus for 2 semesters outside the study program can meet learning achievements, 77.77% stated that it is very appropriate and the remaining 22.23 stated that it is appropriate. Fourth, the conversion of grades per course based on student competency, 77.77% stated that it is very appropriate and 22.23 stated that it is appropriate. The fifth indicator, the suitability of the MBKM curriculum with the curriculum, there are 55.55% stated that it is very appropriate and 44.45% stated that it is appropriate.

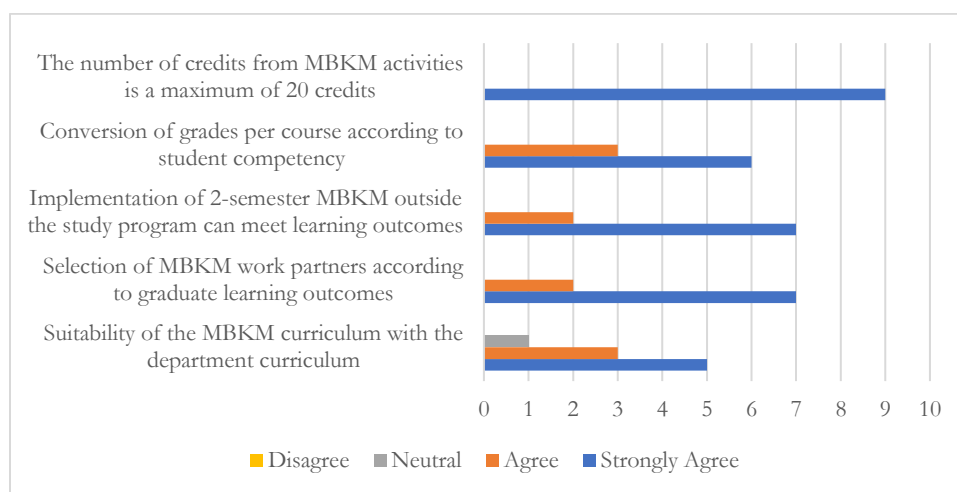
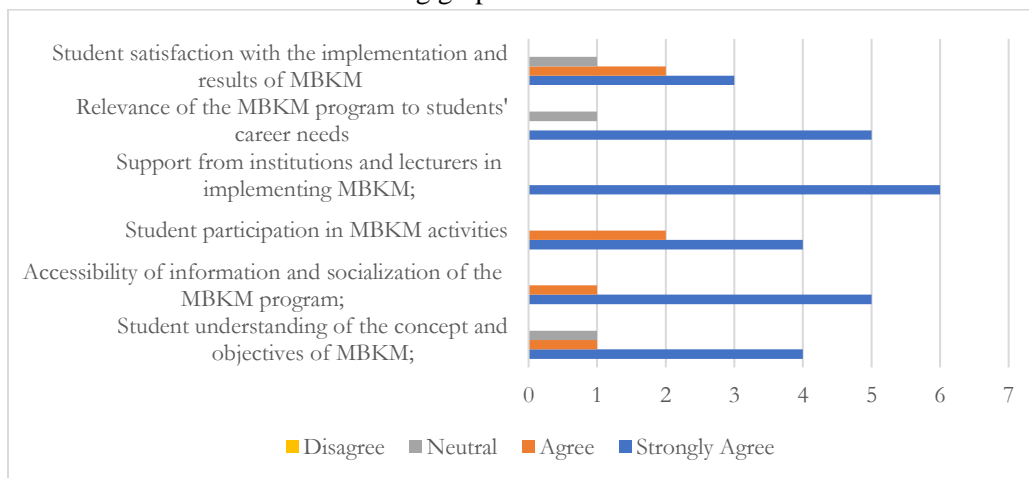


Figure 2. Perceptions of the head of department, lecturers, and coordinators of the MBKM program at the faculty regarding the implementation of MBKM

Student perceptions of the Implementation Of The Independent Learning Curriculum Independent Campus

Indicators of student perceptions regarding the implementation of the independent learning curriculum independent campus: 1) Student understanding of the concept and objectives of MBKM; 2) Accessibility of information and socialization of the MBKM program; 3) Student participation in MBKM activities; 4) Support from institutions and lecturers in implementing MBKM; 5) Relevance of the MBKM program to students' career needs; 6) Student satisfaction with the implementation and results of MBKM. Student answers can be seen in the following graph:



Discussion

Partner Perceptions of MBKM Implementation

The results of interviews with partners show that in general, MBKM program participants have demonstrated good morals and ethics during activities in the work environment. Students are polite in communicating, respect leaders and colleagues, and maintain behavior according to the norms applicable in partner institutions. This ethical attitude is the main capital in building good relationships between students and partner institutions. In addition, partners also feel that students demonstrate high integrity, such as not misusing facilities and maintaining the good name of their home institution. The image of students as individuals who uphold work ethics has a positive impact on the acceptance of the MBKM program in the future. Deni Sopiansyah (2022) emphasized that the character and ethics of students during MBKM are important indicators of the success of the program. In fact, according to Muhsin, H. (2021), partners will be more open to accepting students if they are proven to have high work and ethical values of honesty in their work.

In terms of communication, partners acknowledge that students have good skills in interacting with various parties. Both in internal team discussions, consultations with supervisors, and when dealing with parties outside the institution, students are able to communicate effectively, clearly, and politely. They are able to adjust their communication style to the situation at hand and are open to input and criticism. This smooth communication facilitates the process of carrying out tasks, speeds up the completion of work, and improves cross-division collaboration. This skill is an added value that is highly appreciated by partners, because it shows students' readiness to enter the professional world of work.

Regarding the aspect of responsibility and compliance with regulations and time, partners said that students showed high discipline. They were on time, completed work according to schedule, and complied with all internal rules that apply in the work environment. Students not only carried out their duties, but also showed initiative and a sense of ownership of the responsibilities given. Some partners even said that students worked independently without having to be continuously supervised. This shows that the MBKM program has succeeded in instilling the values of professionalism and independence in students, which is reflected in their behavior during the activities.

In the educational environment, teacher partners assess that students have quite good abilities in compiling teaching modules. The modules that have been compiled have followed the correct learning structure, starting from objectives, materials, learning activities, to evaluation. Students are also considered diligent and persistent, especially in preparing teaching materials and assisting in teaching and learning activities. Not only that, students are also able to apply various learning models and methods that suit students' needs, such as discussion methods, simulations, or project-based learning. Students' readiness and flexibility in teaching provide a refreshing new experience for partner educational institutions. Overall, partners' perceptions of the implementation of MBKM are very positive, because students have demonstrated personal and professional qualities that meet the expectations of the world of work and the world of education (Baharuddin, M. R. (2021). The implementation of this MBKM program provides benefits for partners themselves, including partners being able to obtain the expected workforce according to their needs and partners being able to collaborate with universities such as in terms of sharing information about scientific developments (Fuad, 2021).

Teachers' Perceptions of the Implementation of the MBKM Curriculum

The results of the study showed that most educators understand the importance of SKS conversion as a form of recognition for extracurricular activities such as internships, humanitarian projects, or entrepreneurship. From the interviews, it was revealed that the lecturers support this SKS conversion policy because it provides a doctrine for students to study outside the campus. However, the main challenge mentioned is the absence of uniform technical guidelines between study programs regarding the maximum number of SKS that can be converted. For partner selection, educators agreed that MBKM partners should be selected based on the suitability of learning achievements, not just the availability of institutions. Several lecturers stated that they actively assess the quality of partners before approving student participation, because the success of the program is highly dependent on the relevance of partner activities to the targeted competencies.

Educators assessed that the implementation of the MBKM program for two semesters outside the study program provided a great opportunity for students to broaden their insights and cross-disciplinary skills. Research shows that most lecturers agree that the experience helps students achieve learning outcomes in a more contextual way. However, some expressed concerns about the difficulty of integrating cross-study program experiences into the academic assessment system. For the value conversion indicator, some lecturers stated that they developed a competency-based assessment rubric so that student learning outcomes could be translated into course grades. However, the uniformity of assessment standards between lecturers and study programs is still a challenge in ensuring fairness in value conversion.

The study showed that there were diverse perceptions regarding the suitability of the MBKM curriculum with the curriculum that had been implemented in the study program. Most lecturers stated that they had adjusted the curriculum to accommodate MBKM activities, but several study programs still had difficulty integrating the flexible structure of MBKM into the previously rigid curriculum. The interview results supported this finding, where lecturers expressed the need for special training and periodic curriculum revisions so that MBKM could run optimally. They also highlighted the importance of institutional support such as faculty and university policies that facilitate synchronization between national MBKM policies and implementation at the micro level, namely the study program curriculum.

The results of this study are in line with research conducted by Listriyanti Palangda et.al (2023), the conversion of credits from off-campus activities such as internships and social projects was considered positive by lecturers because it provided contextual experiences to students. However, they also highlighted the absence of uniform technical guidelines between study programs in regulating the number of credits that can be converted, resulting in differences in implementation across campuses. In addition, a study by Santoso and Hidayat (2023) showed that selecting the right partner that is relevant to learning outcomes plays a major role in the success of the MBKM program. Lecturers are very selective in approving partners so that student learning outcomes are maintained. Anwar, R. N. (2021), the implementation of MBKM activities for two semesters outside the study program was able to enrich students' insights and skills, especially in terms of cross-disciplinary collaboration. This supports the view of educators that the flexibility of time and place of learning is an advantage of MBKM.

Student Perceptions on MBKM Implementation

The results of the study showed that most students understood that MBKM aims to provide freedom to study outside the study program to develop multidisciplinary competencies. Interviews with several respondents showed that they knew eight types of MBKM activities, such as internships, humanitarian projects, and student exchanges. However, some students also admitted that this understanding was obtained independently through the internet and senior experiences, not from official provision. Students stated the importance of having modules and mentoring from the start so that the MBKM concept is not only understood in general, but also practically and in accordance with the context of each study program. This study found that there is still a gap in the dissemination of MBKM information. Some students feel that the information provided by the campus regarding the registration flow, types of programs, and credit conversion procedures has been well socialized. This is reinforced by the results of the interview, where students admitted to getting information through faculty social media or chats between friends, and from academic supervisors.

The level of student participation in MBKM activities is quite high, especially in internships and village projects. Interview results stated that the main motivation for students to participate in MBKM is to gain practical experience that can improve competitiveness in the world of work. Research also shows that in faculties that actively socialize MBKM, students are more confident in participating in the program. Most students consider MBKM activities to be very relevant to future career preparation. Programs such as internships, entrepreneurship, and research are considered to provide a competitive advantage compared to conventional classroom learning. Interviews support this finding; students stated that the MBKM experience made them more confident when applying for jobs and job interviews because they already had real-world experience. The level of student satisfaction with MBKM is moderate to high. Students who participated in internship and independent study programs expressed satisfaction because they gained new insights, professional networks, and improved soft skills. Interviews also revealed that students felt proud to be able to participate in a national program recognized by the government.

The MBKM program provides opportunities and opportunities for students to choose the courses they will take according to their abilities and interests (Sopiansyah et al., 2022). This triggers students' independence and freedom of thought to decide something, such as choosing the courses they will take later (Aji & Putra, 2021).

CONCLUSION

The implementation of the MBKM program generally received a positive response from partners, lecturers, and students. Partners assessed that MBKM participants demonstrated good ethical and moral attitudes, effective communication, and high discipline and responsibility during the activity. This strengthens the positive image of students and facilitates collaboration between partners and educational institutions. From the lecturer's perspective, MBKM is considered to provide an opportunity for students to broaden their insights and cross-disciplinary skills through real experiences outside the campus. However, challenges arise related to the uniformity of technical guidelines for credit conversion and flexible curriculum integration. Meanwhile, students understand the purpose of MBKM as an opportunity to learn outside the main study program to develop multidisciplinary competencies. Although there are

shortcomings in the official socialization of information, student participation is quite high and they feel significant benefits in career preparation and improving soft skills. The MBKM program also encourages student independence in choosing courses according to their interests and abilities. Overall, MBKM has succeeded in providing a contextual learning experience that is relevant to the world of work and education.

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