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## Policy Analysis: Implementation of MBKM in Higher Education

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### ABSTRACT

The Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) policy is a fundamental breakthrough in Indonesia's higher education system that aims to transform the conventional learning paradigm into a more flexible, innovative, and high-quality education. This study aims to analyze the implementation, challenges, and policies of MBKM in higher education institutions through a qualitative approach using a literature review method. The results of the study show that MBKM provides significant benefits in expanding student learning opportunities, improving graduate competencies, and building creativity and independence. However, the implementation of MBKM also faces a number of challenges, such as expanding communication, improving facilities, and adapting policies at the university level. Nevertheless, MBKM is expected to bring positive energy to the world of higher education in Indonesia by giving students a more active role and autonomy in their learning. Further research is needed to gain a deeper understanding of the effectiveness and efficiency of MBKM implementation in the context of Indonesian higher education.

**Keywords:** *Policy Analysis, Implementation, MBKM*

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**Keywords:** *Religious Moderation, Islamic Religious Education, Integration, Learning Materials*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Higher education in Indonesia is currently facing unprecedented complex challenges. The era of globalization, the 4.0 industrial revolution, and digital transformation have created a dynamic and highly competitive educational landscape. The higher education system is no longer merely a vehicle for knowledge transfer, but must become a center for innovation, creativity, and competency development that is responsive to global changes.

Higher education has long faced a number of classic challenges, such as curricula that are not adaptive enough to the changing times, teaching methods that tend to be one-way, and limited access for students to learning experiences outside the campus. Based on data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS), the open unemployment rate among college graduates in 2020 reached 5.67%, indicating that college graduates are not yet fully able to meet the needs of industry.

Higher education plays a strategic role in producing competent and innovative human resources who are capable of facing global challenges. Technological developments, digitalization, and changes in labor needs have created new challenges in the education system. Based on the Future of Jobs report by the World Economic Forum (2020), as many as 50% of current jobs will change drastically due to automation in the next decade. In Indonesia, the higher education system has long faced a number of fundamental problems, such as: the gap between the curriculum and the world of work, the gap in access and quality, and a static curriculum.

The independent campus is an innovative policy from the Minister of Education and Culture. Initiated by Nadiem Makarim, it gives students the freedom to study outside their study program for three semesters (Siregar, 2020).<sup>4</sup> This reflects a new concept that gives students the opportunity to take the initiative in learning at university. This idea is a development of the previous concept of independent learning and is directed towards innovative learning planning that produces better learning quality.

The legal basis for the implementation of the MBKM (Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka) curriculum is contained in a series of regulations issued by the Minister of Education and Culture. These include Ministerial Regulation Number 3 of 2020, which regulates higher education standards; Ministerial Regulation Number 4 of 2020, concerning the transformation of state universities into state-owned legal entities; Ministerial Regulation Number 5 of 2020, concerning the accreditation of study programs and universities; Ministry of Education and Culture Regulation No. 6 of 2020 on the admission process for new students in study programs at state universities, and Ministry of Education and Culture Regulation No. 7 of 2020 regulating the establishment, modification, and dissolution of state universities, as well as the establishment, modification, and revocation of licenses for private universities.

The Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka policy aims to encourage students to gain a deep understanding of various disciplines in line with their expertise, so that they

are ready to compete at a global level. Through this policy, students are given the opportunity to choose courses based on their personal interests. The independent learning policy gives universities autonomy in carrying out educational activities (Fauzi, 2024).<sup>6</sup> This is a paradigm shift in education towards greater autonomy with an emphasis on innovative learning. The implementation of this policy facilitates students in the learning process at higher education institutions to become more independent and adaptable to flexible needs. Through this policy, it is hoped that graduates of higher education institutions will be able to face global challenges, adapt to technological developments, and meet the ever-changing needs of the workforce.

## **METHOD**

This research uses qualitative research methods. The data collection technique used in this research is library research. Library research is the activity of collecting materials related to research from scientific journals, literature, and authors. This library research was conducted to obtain theoretical information so that the researcher would have a strong theoretical basis for scientific results.

The next stage is the development of a theoretical framework, in which researchers explain the main concepts, relationships between variables, and references to previous studies to support the arguments in the study. This process aims to build a strong and relevant theoretical framework as a basis for further analysis. The entire process is then outlined in a structured research report, including an introduction, literature review, and conclusion. By following a systematic procedure, the literature study ensures that this research has a solid and in-depth theoretical basis.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) is a policy that was created in response to various challenges in higher education in Indonesia. This policy arose from the awareness of the gap between learning in higher education and the needs of the world of work, as well as the demands of the 4.0 industrial revolution, which requires rapid adaptation (Permendikbud No. 3 of 2020). In addition, the need for graduates who are more prepared for work and have the competencies required by industry is also an important consideration. The higher education system requires flexibility and a more student-centered approach to face these challenges (Merdeka Belajar-Kampus Merdeka Guidebook, 2024).

In terms of its implementation, MBKM has comprehensive objectives for student development. The program is designed to facilitate students in developing their potential according to their desires and talents through various learning activities outside of traditional classrooms. MBKM also aims to provide real learning experiences that are in line with future needs, as well as strengthen the relationship between college graduates and the business and industrial world (Directorate General of Higher Education, 2020). Furthermore, this program is expected to prepare graduates to become future leaders of

## **Policy Analysis: Implementation of MBKM in Higher Education**

the nation who are outstanding and have strong personalities, as well as to increase students' independence in determining their future (Higher Education Curriculum Development Guidelines, 2020).

The implementation mechanism of MBKM involves various forms of innovative learning activities. Students can participate in student exchange programs, internships or work placements, teaching assistance in educational units, research, humanitarian projects, entrepreneurial activities, independent projects, or village projects (Merdeka Belajar-Kampus Merdeka Guidebook, 2024). The credit system in MBKM provides students with the opportunity to take credits outside their study program for three semesters, with a maximum of 20 credits per semester or a total of 60 credits (Permendikbud No. 3 of 2020, Article 15). The implementation of this program requires careful preparation, starting from the preparation of cooperation documents with partners, curriculum development, to the credit conversion system.

Higher education institutions play a crucial role in the implementation of MBKM by formulating academic policies, preparing cooperation documents with partners, and developing a supportive administrative system (Merdeka Belajar - Kampus Merdeka Implementation Guide, 2024). They are also responsible for coordinating with partners and monitoring and evaluating the program. To ensure the quality of implementation of the Independent Learning - Independent Campus Program (), higher education institutions must have a comprehensive quality assurance system, including quality policies, quality manuals, quality standards, and SOPs. Continuous evaluation and follow-up improvements are an integral part of this process to ensure the effectiveness of the program and the achievement of the expected goals.

### **THE CONCEPT OF INDEPENDENT LEARNING CAMPUS**

The independent campus is an extension of the independent learning initiative that is currently being widely discussed in the field of education. This concept gives students the opportunity to experience three free semesters to explore learning experiences outside their studies. This statement reflects the steps taken to improve the quality of education initiated by the Minister of Education. Some of the general activities embodied in the independent campus concept include learning exchanges, internships, teaching assistance at educational institutions, research, entrepreneurial activities, and participation in village development, often referred to as real work lectures (KKN) (Asiah, 2021).

The new breakthrough concerning government policy on independent learning campuses is the opening of new study programs, which is currently guided by the following policy (Zainal, 2021):

1. State universities (PTN) and private universities (PTS) are granted autonomy to open new study programs if: a. The institution holds an accreditation rating of A or B b. New study programs may also be proposed if there is a partnership with a company,

non-profit organization, multilateral institution, , or a university ranked in the top 100 according to QS World University. c. New study programs are not included in the fields of Health and Education. 2. Collaboration with organizations includes curriculum development, internship implementation, and job placement. The ministry will work with universities and study program partners to oversee implementation. 3. New study programs will automatically receive a C-level accreditation. New study programs can be submitted by universities that already have A and B accreditations, and will automatically be given a C accreditation by BAN-PT. 4. Tracer studies must be conducted annually.

The right to study for three semesters outside the study program has guidelines in accordance with certain policies, as follows: 1. Higher education institutions must voluntarily grant students the right to take or determine these rights. 2. Students may take credits outside the university for up to 2 semesters or the equivalent of 40 credits. 3. In addition, students may also take credits in a different study program at the same university for one semester or the equivalent of 20 credits. 4. In other words, the number of credits that must be taken in the original study program is 5 semesters of the total number of semesters that must be completed (this does not apply to health study programs). Regarding credits, there has been a change in definition or paradigm, whereby credits are now considered as hours of activity. All types of activities, whether in-class or out-of-class such as internships, student exchanges, village projects, and others, must be guided by a lecturer designated by the university. Students can choose a list of activities for those 3 semesters with options from government programs and programs approved by the rector.

The Minister of Education and Culture conveyed several reasons why the higher education system in Indonesia, which only focuses on one study program, is not optimal. First, from the perspective of finding students' identities, there are still students who feel that they are not suited to their chosen study program. The Minister emphasized that it is very difficult for students to discover their interests and talents. Second, all the skills needed in the professional world must ultimately be learned on the job, because the world of work is very different from the world and atmosphere on campus. (Mulyasa, 2021)

The concept of three semesters of independent campuses promotes the idea that effective undergraduate education is a combination of academic experience on campus and off-campus experience, such as village projects, social activities, entrepreneurship, and internships at companies (Muslimat, 2021). The Minister of Education and Culture also emphasized that undergraduate education is not the exclusive responsibility of universities, but rather a program that involves collaboration between universities, the community, and the private sector. The Minister of Education and Culture also stressed the importance of collaboration between faculties within and outside universities to create interdisciplinary subjects. The strategy is to adopt a more open approach and introduce variety in the undergraduate curriculum.

## **Policy Analysis: Implementation of MBKM in Higher Education**

The Minister of Education and Culture stated that students need to be trained not only on campus but also outside of campus. To achieve this, the approach to learning in the classroom can be changed to resemble field experience. For example, using project-based learning methods in the classroom will make students' learning experiences more relevant to real-world challenges (Arvianto, 2023).<sup>10</sup> The Minister of Education and Culture also emphasized that a person's effectiveness is not only measured by their individual abilities but also by how well they work in a team.

### **ANALYSIS OF THE MBKM INDEPENDENT CAMPUS EDUCATION POLICY**

Policies in the development of higher education through the MBKM program must be based on principles of utility and clear objectives. Policies are technical, rational, and action-oriented tools for addressing specific issues. Policies are guidelines for actions that direct and influence the behavior of those affected by the decision. Policies are deliberately formulated and designed to regulate the behavior of a target group in order to comply with and achieve the objectives of the policy. (Maulana, 2022)

The MBKM curriculum introduces the concept of independent learning for students, giving them the freedom to choose courses outside their main study program. This allows students to explore their personal interests, develop additional talents and skills, and gain disciplinary knowledge. By providing this independence, MBKM can encourage students to become more independent and innovative agents of learning.

In addition to providing learning independence, the MBKM curriculum also emphasizes the development of soft skills that are essential in the workplace. Creativity, communication skills, leadership, and critical thinking skills are some of the many skills that are focused on in the MBKM curriculum (Alwi, 2024). Thus, MBKM not only pursues academic achievement but also helps students become more competent and adaptive individuals in the future.

The implementation of MBKM policies in higher education in Indonesia is a major focus in improving the quality of education and preparing graduates who are relevant to the times, so that the objectives of MBKM are achieved, namely to improve the competence of graduates in both soft skills and hard skills, so that they are better prepared and have a strong personality.

The Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) policy provides various significant benefits for higher education in Indonesia. One of its main benefits is expanding students' learning abilities. This program provides opportunities for students to deepen their studies, including conducting in-depth research in their subjects. With this approach, students are expected to have a deeper and more practical understanding of their fields of study.

In addition, MBKM also aims to improve graduate competencies, both in terms of soft skills such as communication, leadership, and teamwork, as well as hard skills

directly related to technical expertise in their respective fields. These competencies are designed to better prepare graduates to face the challenges of an ever-changing world of work. In the process, this policy also encourages students to develop their creativity and independence. By providing opportunities to study outside their study programs and university environments for three semesters, students can explore their various potentials that are not limited to academic fields.

This policy also allows students to expand their professional networks and learning experiences through activities outside of their study programs and universities. Interactions with external parties, such as industry, government agencies, or communities, provide new insights that help students broaden their perspectives. As a result, students are not only better prepared technically, but also able to solve complex problems that often arise in the real world.

This policy does not overlook the importance of direct interaction with the community. This is realized through the Thematic Community Service Program (KKN Tematik), which provides students with real-life experience of living in the community. The program is designed so that students are not only able to adapt, but also understand the needs and aspirations of people from all walks of life.

However, there are several challenges in implementing MBKM, such as expanding communication, improving facilities, and obtaining decision support from the rectorate. Better socialization to faculties and students, increased cooperation with external partners, and improved MBKM management are also challenges that must be overcome. (Sanjaya, 2020)

The implementation of the Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) policy faces various challenges that need to be overcome in order to achieve the program's objectives effectively. One of the main challenges is strengthening communication between students, lecturers, and educational institutions. Effective communication is necessary to create synergy in implementing the MBKM program. In addition, improving facilities and providing adequate infrastructure are fundamental requirements to support student activities in this program.

Another challenge is policy adaptation at the university level, including curriculum revision, improvement of human resource quality, and provision of relevant facilities and infrastructure. This adaptation process requires good coordination and seriousness from various parties on campus. On the other hand, socialization and assistance to policy makers, lecturers, and students are also important elements to ensure the understanding and implementation of MBKM policies run smoothly.

In addition, collaboration with external parties, such as companies and non educational organizations, poses its own challenges. Universities need to establish solid cooperation mechanisms with external partners to support the implementation of MBKM programs. By overcoming these challenges, the implementation of MBKM can run more effectively and have a positive impact on students and the world of education as a whole.

## **Policy Analysis: Implementation of MBKM in Higher Education**

To ensure the sustainability and long-term success of the Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) program, strong synergy between educational institutions, students, and external partners is required. This collaboration involves companies, non educational institutions, and other related parties as resources that support the achievement of the program's objectives. In addition, educational institutions need to provide adequate facilities and infrastructure so that students can carry out MBKM activities optimally.

In addition to physical support, developing student competencies is a top priority. Students need to be encouraged to develop academic, social, and adaptive skills that are relevant to the demands of the times. Good social skills will help them interact effectively in various contexts, while adaptive skills will enable them to face the changes and challenges of the modern era.

Finally, a paradigm shift in education must be carried out to support the principles of MBKM. This includes changing the culture and mindset to be more flexible, innovative, and oriented towards the needs of students and society. With these steps, MBKM can create an educational ecosystem that is inclusive and relevant to the times. (Nahdiyah, 2023)

By implementing these steps, the sustainability and long-term success of the MBKM program can be achieved. Periodic evaluation of the implementation of MBKM is also necessary to ensure that this policy successfully achieves its objectives. The evaluation should include an assessment of the quality of learning, student participation, industry involvement, and the impact of graduates on society.

Overall, MBKM has the potential to bring positive change to higher education in Indonesia by improving access, relevance, and quality of education. However, in order to be successful, there needs to be strong support from various stakeholders and a commitment to addressing the challenges of implementation.

## **CONCLUSION**

From the analysis of the MBKM Merdeka Campus education policy, it can be concluded that this program has great potential to improve the quality of higher education in Indonesia. The implementation of MBKM has provided significant benefits in expanding student learning opportunities, improving graduate competency, and building creativity and independence. However, this program also faces a number of challenges, such as expanding communication, improving facilities, adapting policies at the university level, socialization, and collaboration with external partners.

To ensure the sustainability and long-term success of the MBKM program, steps such as encouraging cooperation between educational institutions and external partners, improving facilities and infrastructure, developing students' developmental and social skills, and developing an educational paradigm in line with MBKM need to be taken.

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