

The Implementation of the Latest Curriculum in Indonesia: Perspectives and Challenges

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Abstract

The purpose of this study consists of two main discussions namely how the perception of lecturers on optimizing the implementation of MBKM and how the perception of lecturers on the mechanism for granting the equivalent of MBKM in study program curriculum. The research design was carried out using data from SPADA DIKTI and 309 lecturers from University of Islam Malang as a respondent of this study and analyzed using SPSS 16 version. Descriptive quantitative was used as a research method to deeply describe about data. The result showed that lecturers have positive perception about the implementation of MBKM at University of Islam Malang regarding with the existence of similar program of MBKM, published MBKM curriculum and the involvement of lecturers in preparing the implementation of MBKM. Further, the majority lecturers already know the mechanism of how to equivalent the credits of MBKM program towards their study programs curriculum by choosing structured forms.

Key words: Perception, Implementation, MBKM

Introduction

MBKM (*Merdeka Belajar-Kampus Merdeka*) is, in general, a new paradigm of higher education in Indonesia in which students spend five semesters in a certain study program and they can take the other three semesters either in the same study program in the same faculty, in the other faculty in the same campus, or take in the same study program in different campus.

The changing in the education system in Indonesia launched by the Minister of Education and Culture, Mr. Nadim Makarim is a breakthrough in the education model in universities both public and private universities in Indonesia. The breakthrough in the education system is called the *Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka* (MBKM) program and it has been launched since 2020 through the regulation of Ministry of Education and Culture (MoEC) Number 3 in 2020.

The MBKM program in the Indonesian education system was launched as a response to the need to improve the graduate university quality to be able to compete globally in the world. Many college graduates are inadequately equipped to meet the challenges faced in higher education and the 21st century work environment (Casner-Lotto and Barrington, 2006). Moreover, Barnett (2006), Clifford and Montgomery (2014) and Haigh (2008) said that different economic, political, social, and cultural backgrounds have led to different approaches, but most commonly the purpose of higher education is to prepare graduates as future works in the economy. The needs of university graduates in Indonesia must be able to adapt the competencies that are applicable to very fast social and cultural changes, the need for continuous renewable technology, and the inevitable digital development. This change is known as the industrial revolution 4.0 where explicitly encourages the universities to produce graduates who have soft skills and hard skills including tough, skilled and have a strong national character.

Since the application of MBKM program, there have been studies related to its implementation in universities in Indonesia. Kodrat (2021) suggest that education in universities must adapt to the needs of industrial world by preparing graduates who has skill both hard and soft skill to meet the demands of the business world and industry then to help the government reduce the problem of intellectual unemployment. Furthermore, Purwati (2020) recommends several factors to prepare for the implementation of MBKM program namely, possession, position, and process. First is possession where university must prepare

qualified resources or graduates who have soft skills and hard skills and adapt the curriculum to the world of work. Second, position is interpreted as institutional strengthening where university must strengthen cooperation with outside world of other universities and industry and improve the accreditation status of universities and study programs through *Tri Dharma* of University (Teaching, Research and Civil Services). The third is the process where the universities must prepare graduates who have self-management development attitudes and career building skills.

Additionally, Krishnapatria (2021) studies focused on the preparation of English language study programs in implementing student freedom in choosing 3 semesters of study outside the study program or departments. He found that study program or department had changed compulsory subjects into elective courses, offered MBKM programs in the form of student exchange, internship, research assistant, humanitarian project or social services and built collaborations outside study program and the industrial world. In its application, the study program has obstacles, including a 4-year study period, conversion of online lecture, conversion of semester credits, collaboration with outside universities and the academic administrative system.

Moreover, Nehe (2021) found that the process of implementing the MBKM program at his institution was carried out in the following stages: 1) socializing the MBKM program, 2) revising the curriculum, 3) collaborating with partner institution, 4) implementing campus teaching program, 5) carrying out exchange programs students and 6) the MBKM program implementation plan, but only teaching programs that have been implemented.

Aswita dan Faudil (2020) stated that there were several challenges faced by private universities in Aceh in implementing MBKM program. The challenges were the adaptation process of the KKNI (The Indonesian National Qualification Framework), the partner campuses are still limited, the collaboration of private universities in Aceh with outside parties, both companies, BUMN (State-owned enterprises), BUMD (Municipally-owned corporations), and even the government is still limited, fund management by foundations that have not budgeted funds for MBKM program, and quality and productivity of human resources for lecturers and students.

From those studies that have been carried out by the researchers since the application of MBKM program at higher education in 2020, the researchers focused only the process of changing MBKM program and implementing the MBKM program on their campus. However, this study aims to describe the perspective of lecturers at University of Islam Malang towards the implementation of MBKM program and challenges face by them. This is line with Mkpa (1987) considers teachers or lecturers to be the most important person in the curriculum implementation program and emphasize that educators need to be involved in all stages of the curriculum process.

Method

The research design is survey research where the subject of this study were lecturers. The lecturers are asked to fill out a questionnaire that has been made by SPADA DIKTI (Indonesian Online Learning System of Higher Education) through providing freely responses without any direction from the researcher. The number of research subjects was 309 lecturers at University of Islam Malang who came 23 study programs from 9 faculties.

The instrument used as data collector was in the form of survey consisting of 25 items. However, according to the purpose of this study, only 4 items were used regarding with the question of similarities of the existed previous program in University of Islam Malang with MBKM program, MBKM curriculum documents, involvement of lecturers in preparing MBKM implementation and what lectures need to prepare so that MBKM implementation runs optimally. In accordance with the survey, the type of question in survey were open-ended questions where the respondent can fill in more than one answer and the calculation of each item is the sum of all the total answers. The data were analyzed using quantitative descriptive analysis using SPSS version 16 program.

Findings

In this section, the researcher divided two separate topics to describe about the lecturers' perspective about the similar program to support MBKM program in university, the existence of MBKM curriculum and the involvement of lecturers in preparing the implementation of MBKM and the lecturers challenge of the credits equivalent through the recognition ways in MBKM program.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No	13	4.2	4.2	4.2
	Yes	296	95.8	95.8	100.0
	Total	309	100.0	100.0	

Through the table above, the majority answer of lecturers said that all study programs at University of Islam Malang have previous program which similar with MBKM program. It is important to note that even tough MBKM program has been implemented this year, University of Islam Malang have already applied especially the program namely students' exchange both students and lecturers to Uzbekistan and Thailand. The others program are civil society and teaching assistant in the secondary school. So, most lecturers have agreed that University of Islam Malang have similar program with MBKM program.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Out of knowledge	12	3.9	3.9	3.9
	Not Exist	4	1.3	1.3	5.2
	Just a draft of MBKM curriculum	41	13.3	13.3	18.4
	Already published	252	81.6	81.6	100.0
	Total	309	100.0	100.0	

Further, since the announcement of the latest curriculum in Indonesian higher education, University of Islam Malang have already prepared and ready to implement MBKM program through Rector's Decree in 2020. So, all the study program in University of Islam Malang started to reconstruct and change their curriculum into MBKM. Therefore, generality lecturers (81.6%) answered that university have already published MBKM program. Although there are 13.3% of lecturers said that university only have a draft of MBKM curriculum.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Do not know that there are activities to prepare for the implementation of MBKM program	6	1.9	1.9	1.9
	Knowing the information about the program but not interested in following them	13	4.2	4.2	6.1
	Contribute to discussion/meetings/workshop related to MBKM implementation preparation	170	55.0	55.0	61.2
	As a team to prepare MBKM program	120	38.8	38.8	100.0
	Total	309	100.0	100.0	

Based on the table above, the involvement of lecturers in preparing the implementation of MBKM program can be seen that most lecturers 55% contribute to discussion, meetings, workshop related to MBKM implementation preparation. This is in line with the order of rector decree that all the study program at University of Islam Malang must apply MBKM program. Further, several lecturers 38.8% participating as a team to prepare MBKM program. This is further strengthened by the existence of several study programs in University of Islam Malang that received grants related to MBKM program. So, most of them already know about the implementation of MBKM program in their study program.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not of Knowledge	15	4.9	4.9	4.9
	Hybrid Form/Blended Form	84	27.2	27.2	32.0
	Structured Form	170	55.0	55.0	87.1
	Free Form	40	12.9	12.9	100.0
	Total	309	100.0	100.0	

Table 4 shows the lecturers' understanding of credits recognition of MBKM program. In more detail, there are 55% of lecturers understand that the recognition of the MBKM program is using structured form. Based on the guidelines of MBKM program, structured form is MBKM activates can also be structured according to the curriculum taken by students. The twenty credits are stated in the form of equivalence with the courses offered whose competencies are in line with internship activities. And there are 12.9% of lecturers said that the form of recognition uses the free form. Free form means MBKM activates for 6 month are equivalent to 20 credits without equivalence with course. This amount is expressed in the competencies obtained by students during the program both in hard skills and soft skills in accordance with the planned learning outcomes. Then, 27% of respondents stated that the recognition using mixed forms. Mixed form in this case is the combination of structured form and free form. Finally the smallest number of lecturer who answered "don't know" statement is 4.9%.

Discussion

The perception of lecturers in University of Islam Malang towards the implementation of MBKM program is positive. This case is dealing with some factors that university have in supporting the MBKM curriculum. Firstly, with the existence of similar program of MBKM, the lecturers do not face difficulties to comprehend the MBKM program because the similar program in University of Islam Malang is almost the same with the newest program of MBKM. Furthermore, University of Islam Malang already issued the rector decree which give the impact with the existence of MBKM curriculum in study program. So, most lecturers have agreed that University of Islam Malang already published the MBKM curriculum.

Additionally, majority lecturers said that they are indirectly involved in preparing the implementation of MBKM program through joining discussion, meetings, workshop related with MBKM in university and outside university. The involvement of lecturers in implementing the latest curriculum is essential because Cheung and Wong (2012) discovered that teachers need support in training, seminars, or workshop to effectively implement the curriculum reforms. On the other hand, Molapo and Pillay (2018) found that teachers or lecturers who did not have proper training seemed to be overwhelmed by the curriculum changes resulting in low teachers or lecturers' confidence and commitment. On that account, University of Islam Malang conduct any activities which support the preparation of the implementation of MBKM such as discussion, meetings and workshop.

For the purpose of credits recognition of MBKM program, most of the respondents said that MBKM program equation taken by students must be carried out in a structured way where the study program from the original university is the one who decides. The equalization can be in the form of determining which courses and how many credits are recognized to be used as the basis for equalizing MBKM program chosen by students. This is indeed not an easy matter because as stated by Chatturgoon (2008) acknowledges that teachers or lecturers can find it difficult to navigate curriculum changes, but they are still expected to change the way they teach. Therefore, it needs to be considered carefully and strategically so that University graduates are able to achieve competence in the original university and acquire competencies or hard and soft skills in accordance with that is needed by the industry and business world.

Conclusion

From the data collected and the result, it can be concluded that the lecturers have positive perception of the implementation of MBKM program at University of Islam Malang. this is dealing with the existence of similar program that support the implementation of MBKM program. Moreover, based on the lecturers' perspective, University of Islam Malang is already published MBKM curriculum through the rector decree

and it was applied in all study program at University of Islam Malang in 2021. Then, majority of lecturers indirectly involved in preparing the implementation of MBKM curriculum in university.

On the other hand, there are 3 ways of how to equivalent the credits that taken by students in joining MBKM program activities. Those are free form, structured form, and blended form. In accordance with the forms, University of Islam Malang in implementing MBKM curriculum is already chosen the structure way to equivalent the credits of MBKM program. Based on the survey, almost all lecturers at University of Islam Malang were comprehend regarding the way how to equivalent by choosing structured forms in the survey. However, still there are some study programs who do not know how to apply these strategies into their curriculum, so this case perhaps as the suggestion for further research.

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