The Implementation of 'Independent Campus-Freedom to Learn' Policy: Students' Perceptions

Tri Wintolo Apoko[1]*, Benny Hendriana[2], Isnaini Handayani[3], Isa Faqihuddin Hanif[4]

[1] *(English Education Department, Universitas Muhammadiyah Prof. Dr. Hamka, Indonesia)*
[2]*(Mathematics Education Department, Universitas Muhammadiyah Prof. Dr. Hamka, Indonesia)*
[3]*(Mathematics Education Department, Universitas Muhammadiyah Prof. Dr. Hamka, Indonesia)*
[4]*(Informatics Engineering Department, Universitas Muhammadiyah Prof. Dr. Hamka, Indonesia)*

*Corresponding Author. E-mail: [1]triwin_apoko@uhamka.ac.id

Abstrak

Kebijakan Kampus Merdeka-Merdeka Belajar yang dikenal dengan MBKM saat ini diikuti oleh para mahasiswa di Indonesia karena dapat memberikan transfer kredit sebesar 20-60 sks. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menyelidiki persepsi mahasiswa terhadap pelaksanaan MBKM. Peserta penelitian ini adalah 98 mahasiswa Universitas Muhammadiyah Prof. Dr. Hamka, Jakarta. Metode yang digunakan adalah desain analisis deskriptif. Instrumen yang digunakan adalah kuesioner yang diisi oleh mahasiswa yang telah mengikuti program MBKM yang diinisiasi baik oleh Kementerian Pendidikan, Kebudayaan, Riset, dan Teknologi maupun program studinya. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pengetahuan mahasiswa terhadap kebijakan MBKM sangat baik (92%) dan minat mereka terhadap program MBKM juga sangat baik (98%). Penelitian ini memiliki beberapa implikasi. Keterlibatan mahasiswa dalam program MBKM meningkat dan kapasitas mereka terhadap sikap dan keterampilan juga meningkat. Dengan demikian, hal ini mempengaruhi keberlangsungan MBKM di masa depan.

Kata Kunci: kampus merdeka, merdeka belajar, persepsi

Abstract

The policy of 'Independent Campus-Freedom to Learn' known as MBKM is currently participated by the students in Indonesia as it could provide the credit transfer of 20-60. This research aimed to investigate the students' perceptions on the implementation of MBKM. The participants of this research were 98 students of Universitas Muhammadiyah Prof. Dr. Hamka, Jakarta. The method used was a descriptive analysis design. The instrument used was a questionnaire completed by the students who already joined MBKM programs initiated either by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology or their study programs. The results showed that the students' knowledge of MBKM policy was very good (92%) and their interests in MBKM program was also very good (98%). This research had some implications. The students' involvements in MBKM programs increased and the capacity on the attitudes and skills also improved. Thus, this influences the sustainability of MBKM in the future.

Keywords: independent campus, freedom to learn, perception

Introduction

The dynamics of higher education regulations are currently undergoing changes, especially related to the learning process for students in order to improve the quality of learning and a more challenging learning experience. Based on the Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture Number 3 of 2020, it is said that students can take part in learning within the study program and outside the study program or university (Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan RI, 2020). For students who choose learning outside the study program and outside the university can take part in the programs of student exchange, internships, teaching assistance, research projects, humanitarian projects, entrepreneurship, thematic real work lectures, and state defense (Tohir, 2020). At least students have the right to study outside the study program and university for a maximum of 3 semesters or the equivalent of 60 credits.

This programs or forms of learning activities outside of study programs and universities are known as the policy of 'independent campus-freedom to learn' (abbreviated as MBKM) which has been launched since 2020 and until now the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology has offered several MBKM programs to all students, both public and private universities in Indonesia. In addition, study programs in each university also offer some forms of MBKM learning activities to their students.

The offer of these forms of learning activities for students is certainly an effort so that students are able to be independent and adapt to the new learning cultural environment. In addition, students gain a more challenging learning experience and improved soft skills. There have been several previous relevant studies related to learning independence (Buckler, 2020; Joseph et al., 2019; Laga et al., 2022; Purwanti, 2021; Sa'diyah et al., 2022; Tjaija, 2022) who found that learning outside of a study program or university encourages students to compete positively for improved academic insight, learning behavior and skills.

Especially for students at the University of Muhammadiyah Prof. Dr. Hamka, this MBKM program is an opportunity as well as a challenge to hone their academic abilities and skills while studying in the study program. For this reason, research on the implementation of MBKM is vital to be carried out. This kind of research has been undertaken quite a lot. However, research with a focus on students' perceptions on the aspects of knowledge, interests, benefits, and obstacles of the MBKM program comprehensively is still rarely conducted. Therefore, this study aims to find students' perceptions of the implementation of the MBKM policy.

Method

This type of research was a descriptive qualitative design. It presented the results of its research in the form of percentages and provided an explanation of the phenomena. This research was conducted in the odd semester of the 2021/2022 academic year with a total of 98 participants from the University of Muhammadiyah Prof. Dr. Hamka who had participated in the MBKM programs, consisting of 26 male students and 72 female students.

There were several stages of this research process. Firstly, the researcher conducted an FGD and carried out the preparation of instruments as can be seen in table 1. Secondly, researchers distributed questionnaires to students who had participated in the MBKM program. Thirdly, the data that had been collected was analyzed and presented in the form of figures.

Table 1. Blueprint of questionnaire on students' perceptions of MBKM program

No	Indicators	Item numbers
1	Knowledge about MBKM policy	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6
2	Interests in joining MBKM	7, 8, 9, 10, 11

3	Benefits of joining MBKM	12, 13, 14, 15
4	Obstacles of MBKM program	16, 17, 18, 19

Results and Discussion

Knowledge on MBKM Policy

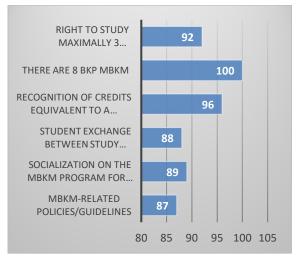For the level of understanding or knowledge of students on this MBKM policy can be seen in figure 1.

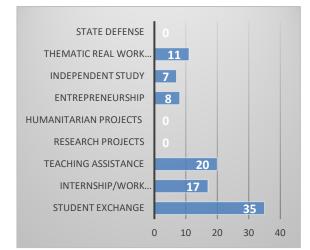Figure 1. Students' understanding of MBKM

Based on the figure above, it was found that 92% of students who took part in the MBKM program were aware of the student's learning rights policy for a maximum of three semesters. Then, data obtained from all students (100%) who also knew that there were eight forms of MBKM learning activities offered to students.

The following findings illustrate that the level of student knowledge is very high (96%) related to the recognition of one form of MBKM learning activities for 1 semester equivalent to 20 credits. For the students' knowledge of the exchange programs, it was found that 88% of students knew about it where they could take the same or different courses outside the course of study or outside of college. Based on the results of the study, it was found that 89% of students knew that the study program had socialized the MBKM program, including the availability of MBKM policy documents such as regulations and guidelines

that had been known mostly by students (87%). This is in line with the results of the research conducted by (Astro et al., 2022) saying that more students were aware of the MBKM policy as they got socialization from their university. In addition, Yuliasari (2022) in her study found that 64% of the students knew a lot about MBKM program from their lecturers. However, the curriculum containing the MBKM implementation were required to socialize more as some students thought that it was something new to know; thus, it was necessary to facilitate the quality of learning (Oksari et al., 2022).

Based on the above findings, this showed that universities through the Institute for Educational and Teaching Development (LP3) had organized effective socialization of the MBKM policy to students. In addition, information from social media owned by university, study programs, and the Directorate General of Higher Education, Ministry of Education and Culture such as Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube Channel also helped students' knowledge of MBKM policies.
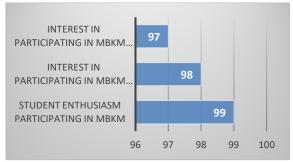
Students' Interest in MBKM

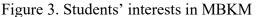In relation to students' interests, it is described the forms of learning activities participated by students.

Figure 2. Learning activities of MBKM participated by students

Figure 2 above shows that the forms of learning activities that students are most interested in are student exchange programs (35%), teaching assistance (20%), and

internships/work practices (17%). These findings are in line with the results of the study (Dwianika et al., n.d.) which stated that the interest of students at Pembangunan Jaya University was good and most students were interested in internship programs, student exchanges, and entrepreneurship. Meanwhile, the forms of learning activities that students lacked or did not participate in were research projects and humanitarian projects including defending the country. Overall, almost all students (99%) participated in the MBKM program with great enthusiasm (See Figure 3). This is also supported by Kamalia & Andriansyah (2021) who found 81% of the students were willing to join MBKM programs in the next semester.

Figure 3. Students' interests in MBKM

Based on these data, it can be said that all study programs offered student exchange programs to their students. The high enthusiasm and interest of students in participating in the MBKM program was because they knew that they would get a maximum of 20 credits from the MBKM program they were participating in. In addition, they were interested in MBKM as they gained a different learning experience as well as different cultural adaptation.

Benefits of MBKM

Most students were believed to gain benefits from MBKM program as described in the following figure.

Figure 4. Benefits of MBKM for students

It was found that MBKM program provided very high benefits ranging from having a different learning experience (99%), boosting students to adapt to new cultures (100%), and building characters (100%). The high response from students who took part in the MBKM program was because they immediately felt the benefits and the impacts they experienced positively. This finding is strengthened by the results of research conducted by (Kamalia & Andriansyah, 2021) where 63% of the students responded positively when they joined the MBKM program. The opportunity for them to take part in study programs outside of study programs or university was something they rarely experienced. The new environment challenged them, getting to know other students to make them motivated to study harder, and would change their skilled lives for better competences and job opportunities in the future (Nielsen et al., 2020; Sustarsic & Cheng, 2022). In addition, students who studied off-campuses for one internship program would increase their knowledge and soft skills (Baharuddin, 2021; Wang & Hsieh, 2022) such as communication skills, adaptability, and leaderships (Kuncoro et al., 2022).

Obstacles Faced by the Students

The MBKM program in its implementation experienced obstacles. There are at least three obstacles faced by students.
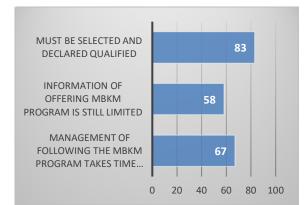
Figure 5. Obstacles faced by students

Figure 4 shows that students who took part in the MBKM program also experienced unavoidable obstacles, starting from the difficulty of joining this MBKM program as they needed selecting administratively to pass (83%), limited access to information on the MBKM programs offered (58%), and the length of the management process following the MBKM program (67%).

The existence of these obstacles illustrates that although students had the opportunity to be independent in learning, the reality was that not all the students had the chances to be able to take part in the MBKM program. Many students had registered for the MBKM programs through the Ministry of Education and Culture and study programs, but they failed or did not pass because of some factors such as admission quotas, incomplete documents needed, and written tests/interviews. Regarding limited access to information, this is similar to what was expressed by (Panjaitan et al., 2022; Purisari et al., n.d.). They argued that the biggest concern for students when they were going to take part in the MBKM program was the costs that had to be incurred, the lack of information, and the lack of campus support. Regarding the limited information, the efforts made by universities and study programs were sufficient, including access to other social media, but in fact there were still quite high students who experienced difficulties or limited access to the access they received so far. This happened as the registration time was very short. As for the management process to take part in the MBKM program, it was felt that it was quite complicated as they had to fill out the registration biodata, uploaded documents such as the endorsement sheet of the head of the study program or the Vice Rector for Student Affairs and parental permission documents so that they needed sufficient time, while the registration time was very inadequate.

Conclusion

Based on the results of research and discussion, it can be inferred that the level of knowledge of students who take part in the MBKM program is good. Similarly, students' interest in participating in the MBKM program is in the high category. This MBKM program is also very useful for students who participated in this MBKM program. For the obstacles faced by students, it tends to be the aspects of administrative selection, the limited information received, and the management process in registering and participating in the MBKM program. Therefore, it is recommended that the MBKM program is important and has a positive impact or benefit for students because MBKM policy can provide a different learning experience, encourage students to adapt to new cultures, and shape their characters. The opportunity for them to take part in a study program outside of a study program or university is something they rarely experience. Thus, the new environment challenges them to make them eager to learn harder.

Acknowledgements

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The Writers' Profiles

Tri Wintolo Apoko is a lecturer at the English Language Education Study Program, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Muhammadiyah Prof. Dr. Hamka. He graduated from Doctoral program of Language Education, Jakarta State University and completed in 2010. Currently he serves as the Chairman of the Institute for Educational and Teaching Development at Universitas Muhammadiyah Prof. Dr. Hamka.

Benny Hendriana is a lecturer at the Mathematics Education Study Program, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Muhammadiyah Prof. Dr. Hamka. He is currently pursuing for the S3 Mathematics Education program at Semarang State University. Currently he serves as the Secretary of the Institute for Educational and Teaching Development at Universitas Muhammadiyah Prof. Dr. Hamka.

Isnaini Handayani is a lecturer at the Mathematics Education Study Program, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Muhammadiyah Prof. Dr. Hamka. She graduated from the Master program of Mathematics Education, the Indonesian University of Education, Bandung. Currently she serves as the Head of Curriculum Development Division, Educational and Teaching Development Institute at Universitas Muhammadiyah Prof. Dr. Hamka.

Isa Faqihuddin Hanif is a lecturer in the Informatics Engineering Study Program, Faculty of Engineering, Universitas Muhammadiyah Prof. Dr. Hamka. He graduated from the Master program of Information Systems Management, Gunadarma University, Jakarta. Currently he serves as the Head of the Learning and Media Division, Educational and Teaching Development Institute at the Universitas Muhammadiyah Prof. Dr. Hamka.