

Education Quarterly Reviews

Suyono, Purnomo, A., & Aristin, N. F. (2023). Student Responses to Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka Regarding Learning Loss When Experiences Outside Campus. *Education Quarterly Reviews*, 6(4), 114-120.

ISSN 2621-5799

DOI: 10.31014/aior.1993.06.04.790

The online version of this article can be found at:
<https://www.asianinstituteofresearch.org/>

Published by:
The Asian Institute of Research

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Student Responses to *Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka* Regarding Learning Loss When Experiences Outside Campus

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Abstract

The *Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka* (MBKM) has entered its fourth year in 2023. During its implementation, there was dynamic resistance from departments or students regarding changes in learning patterns and mobility policies for a maximum of 3 semesters. This research used a survey method on 357 active students of the MBKM program, Universitas Negeri Malang Indonesia. The survey covers two main parameters: program suitability with graduate learning outcomes and partner alignment with program objectives. The survey results show that MBKM has provided positive changes at the institutional level. Empirical studies and survey results show that student-centered learning through various learning activities provides a more meaningful understanding of content. Referring to increasingly complex programs, it is recommended to form a special team to accompany the MBKM in managing and developing the program so that the existing unit can focus on academic administration services.

Keywords: MBKM, Curriculum, Learning, Responses

1. Introduction

Industrial Revolution 4.0 integrates cyberspace with industrial production. Various types of artificial intelligence-based equipment displace human labor. Machines and robots replace technical human tasks (Makridakis, 2017). Multiple efforts to algorithmize human technical work continue until machines and robots can carry out complex tasks, exchange information, and give and receive commands automatically without involving humans (Talaviya et al., 2020). In extreme terms, the work of a thousand people in the Industry 1.0 era will be replaced by one modern person in the Industry 4.0 era.

The Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia issued a *Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka* (MBKM) policy based on these changes. This policy applies to all higher education institutions. *Merdeka Belajar* is a program that provides student learning flexibility to produce graduates who can compete by taking several activities equivalent to course credits or courses outside the study program, even outside the university.

This learning orientation will continue to move from work-based learning to life-based learning. In this way, efforts to provide a skilled and proficient workforce in various fields can be realized immediately (Halili, 2019; Hani & Richardus, 2021; Ismail et al., 2020; Sugiarto, 2019; Susanti et al., 2019; Yulianti & Saputra, 2019). Higher education institutions are committed to developing curricula deemed to meet students' needs in facing the challenges of dynamic developments. The curriculum is expected to be able to fill students with various abilities and skills that truly match their interests.

Designs that bridge the diversity of student characters will provide opportunities to develop knowledge more flexibly according to needs (Archer, 2007; Askham, 2008). This flexibility needs to be supported by capable elements of educational implementation (Carnell, 2007), for example, support from a system that gives them the freedom to take programs according to their interests (Hockings et al., 2007). The potential for diverse characters requires equal recognition in learning outcomes/graduate profiles (Iannelli, 2007; Huett et al., 2008; Lowe & Cook, 2003).

From a student's perspective, this research reflects how to implement MBKM in the fourth year in 2023. This research explores the experiences of students involved in the MBKM. The research results will provide an overview of the learning experience during the program and improve the program's quality.

2. Method

This research uses a cross-sectional survey design to evaluate the implementation of MBKM policies at Universitas Negeri Malang. The survey was aimed at active program students in the even semester 2023/2024 (January-July 2023). The number of students involved in the program was 3,270 from 8 faculties in the form of Student Exchange, Internship, Independent Study, Teaching Assistance, and Village Buildings (community services) activities, which were carried out for 20 weeks. Determining the sample size used the Slovin formula with an error rate of 5% with 357 students. The students were asked regarding the program's suitability with graduate learning outcomes and the alignment of partners with program objectives. These two parameters were measured using a digital questionnaire instrument, which was filled out at the end of the activity as a form of program evaluation. The collected data is analyzed using a single tabulation to see data patterns and is reported to the education services department to make program stabilization/development policies.

Post-program evaluation aims to see how the objectives were achieved. Periodic evaluations are mandatory to ensure the resources effectively achieve program objectives (Bakhshi & Garcia, 2016). In addition to routine evaluations, surveys are sometimes conducted mid-program to assess participant or partner satisfaction (Earl & Timperley, 2015). Therefore, applying this survey method aims to see how effective the program is in increasing the profile of Universitas Negeri Malang graduates through collaboration with partners.

3. Results

3.1 Demographic of Students' Mobility Universitas Negeri Malang

Universitas Negeri Malang allows students to develop their capabilities through mobility activities (MBKM) for a maximum of 3 semesters as one of the higher education institutions producing teaching staff consists of 73 departments at the undergraduate level with details of 36 coming from the education department and 37 from non-education departments. The meaning of the education department is the main profile of graduates as educators or researchers in the field of education. Conversely, the main profile for non-education departments is as a practitioner or researcher in their field. With the existing department composition, the distribution of programs to be selected will be related to teaching practice or internships in the industrial world (Table 1).

Table 1: Demographic of students' mobility Universitas Negeri Malang

No.	Programs	Total of students	Proportion
1	Student Exchange	98	3%
2	Intership	1,046	32%

3	Independent Study	458	14%
4	Teaching Assistantship	1,570	48%
5	Building a Village (community services)	98	3%
Total		3,270	100%

Most students who take the MBKM program are in their third year of study, considering the study period. Students in their third year in their 5th or 6th semester choose the MBKM program recommended by the department, considering suitability to the graduate profile. Referring to the survey results, it was found that the program objectives had been well received by students and were seen as an opportunity to develop themselves (Table 2).

Table 2: Students' motives for joining the MBKM program

No.	Students' motives	Proportion
1	Institutional policy	24%
2	Adding experience/build a portfolio	40%
3	Increase knowledge/application of knowledge	13%
4	Experience studying in other places/modes	8%
5	Contribute to society	2%
6	Etc	1%

Accumulated from Table 2 that 63% of students participating in the program want to gain experience or contribute through the program. This data shows that those involved in the MBKM program at Universitas Negeri Malang aim to develop themselves while they are students.

3.2 Implementation of the MBKM Program at Universitas Negeri Malang

The MBKM program at Universitas Negeri Malang is managed by a mobility unit formed in 2022 to record and report student activities to the National Student Data Registry. The Mobility Unit will communicate to students and department leaders regarding the program through pre-program outreach. This stage aims to ensure that as many as 25% of students who are the institution's target can be achieved well and that no students have problems in the educational administration process. Survey data shows that pre-program information, which includes (1) program information, (2) registration techniques, and (3) student obligations during the program, has been delivered and well received by students (Table 3).

Table 3: Effectiveness of program outreach for students and departments at Universitas Negeri Malang

Program Socialization Item	Level of Information Clarity	Total
Information Program	Very Clear	35%
1. Eligibility of student applicants	Clear	34%
2. Program Targets	Enough	21%
3. Program Timeline	Not enough	8%
	Unclear	2%
Registration Technical Information	Very Clear	27%
1. Document Requirements	Clear	41%
2. Registration Platform	Enough	22%
	Not Enough	8%
	Unclear	2%
Student Obligations	Very Clear	20%
1. Obligations to partners	Clear	37%
2. Obligations to departments	Enough	26%
3. Post-program obligations	Not Enough	12%
	Unclear	5%

The data presented in Table 3 shows that the program outreach to the stakeholders is considered adequate. This data projects that the implementation of the MBKM program in 2023 has been well internalized and supports the institutional mission. The program internalization occurs through several channels, such as introducing academic programs to new students, social media publications, integrated platforms, and student mobility web services.

The academic environment at Universitas Negeri Malang also supports program implementation. Students in their third year planning a mobility program can consult with the department head, academic assistant lecturer, and colleagues (Table 4). However, for the record, the Mobility Unit at the university level still needs to be an option for students who want to consult the MBKM program. This shows that the designated unit only plays a role at the university level and has yet to serve students' needs directly at the department level.

Table 4: Student consultation channels during the pre-MBKM program

No.	Consultation channels	Proportion
1	Academic assistant lecturer	17%
2	Head of Department	30%
3	Colleagues (upperclassmen/program alumni)	53%

3.3 Profile of MBKM Program Partners, Universitas Negeri Malang

Universitas Negeri Malang's MBKM program partners are grouped into two clusters: educational institutions and business/industry or government institutions. Both clusters cater to different types of programs. Partners from educational institutions play a role in providing experience in the world of work for departments with targets for achieving graduate profiles as educators. Meanwhile, partners from the world of business/industry or government agencies play a role in providing experience in the world of work for departments that aim to achieve a graduate profile as a practitioner.

The flow of partners to join the MBKM program at Universitas Negeri Malang is managed by the Education and Learning Development Technical Implementation Unit (UPT LPPP). LPPP is tasked with reviewing partners from educational institutions for the Teaching Assistance program and the business/industry world or government institutions for the Internship/Independent Study program (Figure 1).

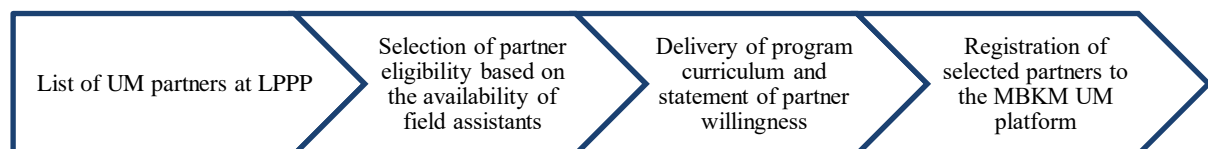


Figure 1: Flow of study of UM MBKM program partners

On hundred eleven partners have joined the MBKM program until 2023, from educational institutions, the business/industry world, or government institutions. Before partners join the program, partner leaders will receive direction regarding the program curriculum and the obligation to provide credible field assistants by the specified criteria. This prerequisite ensures horizontal alignment between the curriculum and the program (Table 5).

Table 5: Evaluation of partner alignment with the MBKM program

Partner Alignment	Level of Alignment	Total
Partner Understanding of the Program	Very Suitable	36%
1. The Purpose of Program	Suitable	38%
2. Curriculum Program	Enough	21%
	Less	3%
	Not Suitable	2%
Partner Suitability for the Program	Very Suitable	30%
1. Availability of Field Assistants	Suitable	40%
2. Alignment of Internship Material	Enough	24%

with the Curriculum	Less	4%
	Not Suitable	2%

3.4 Program Obstacles

In the fourth year of implementing MBKM at Universitas Negeri Malang, obstacles related to program substance have been reduced—however, the more complex the program, the more substantial technical support it requires. Obstacles to the MBKM program found in the field included alignment of new partners with learning outcomes, platform updates according to program complexity, and low involvement in the role of field assistant lecturers (Table 6).

Table 6: Program obstacles

No.	Obstacles	Proportion
1	New partners who are less relevant to learning achievement	15%
2	Knowledge that is not appropriate to lectures	19%
3	The platform needs service improvements	18%
4	Supervision is only a visit without follow-up	28%
5	There are no obstacles	20%

Management units and policy-making leaders must address obstacles in program implementation immediately to reduce the risk of program failure. For partners who still need to be aligned with the curriculum or learning outcomes, there needs to be a tiered program introduction stage starting from the partner leader to the appointed field assistant. The introduction of this tiered program aims to ensure equal understanding between partners and universities.

The demand for platform updates to respond to program complexity is an obligation for institutions to carry out development. The more demands of partners involved in the program, the more complex the platform ecosystem will be. The condition of the existing platform in 2023 will be to serve student data input from recording to post-program. However, it should be noted that external parties are still processing it manually, lengthening the workflow and increasing the risk of errors.

Regarding the involvement of the role of field assistant lecturers, it is indicated that it still needs to be higher due to the long duration of the program and the limited frequency of visits. As a result, lecturers, as the party responsible for ensuring the program's quality remains in line with higher education learning, can only capture some program implementations in detail. In response to this condition, there needs to be a review of the online monitoring frequency mechanism.

4. Discussion

The essence of MBKM is student-centered learning, where they are given the freedom and flexibility to choose their learning methods. They are the center of education. Whether they choose cognitive or affective learning experiences should guide the simulation in deciding what to do and how it will impact them. This concept contrasts with traditional learning, which is centered on lecturers. The lecturer's role is more dominating and determining in selecting and organizing content, interpreting and applying concepts, and evaluating student learning, while students are focused on recording/absorbing information. Weimer (2002) emphasized that in a student-centered classroom, the roles of lecturers and students change. The lecturer becomes a learning facilitator who views students not as empty vessels to be filled with knowledge but as seekers to be guided along the journey of their intellectual development. In-class activities involving students provide opportunities for educational institutions to help guide them in clarifying their understanding and assimilating course material meaningfully (Weimer, 2002).

Since 2019, MBKM has recommended learning to implement a student-centered approach. Baxter and Gray (2001) argue that learning that uses methods where students are actively involved in the learning process provides

a more meaningful knowledge impact. They are no longer expected to be passive absorbers of information; instead, lecturers act as facilitators and do not need to be experts in specific content (Tärnvik, 2007). This learning is expected from implementing MBKM, where students can choose which learning experience they want according to their interests, whether through lectures at other universities or other forms of learning at partner universities. MBKM is an opportunity for universities to improve the quality of their learning. Through this program, universities will review the suitability of their curriculum for those who use their graduates (Dalgarno et al., 2014). Through a form of learning that is directly related to the world of work, students have two advantages. Firstly, students will get a more significant proportion of knowledge implementation compared to theoretical understanding. Furthermore, secondly, they will get a portfolio in the world of work.

Implementation of the program requires a support system that is capable of mobility for students who are trying to find this learning experience. Empirical studies show that there have been many efforts to evaluate student-centered learning systems in higher education with various forms of learning (Kilic, 2010; Isikoglu et al., 2009; Jeffries et al., 2002). Other instruments have been developed to assess student perceptions and satisfaction (Shu-Hui & Smith, 2008; Brown, 2008; Grove & Bretz, 2007). The findings in the empirical studies that have been carried out provide lessons learned that student-centered learning through MBKM provides them with a better learning experience.

5. Conclusion

The implementation of MBKM at Universitas Negeri Malang in the fourth year (2023) has illustrated that the program has effectively provided positive change. The department responded by reviewing the alignment of its curriculum with graduate users. The university responded by establishing a particular unit to manage MBKM starting in 2022 for better coordination. However, the formed unit still needs to provide direct services to students regarding program plans. This finding is due to the unit's specific tasks being limited to the program administration process. For the record, several good practices demonstrated from program implementation include student perceptions of the program, clarity of program flow, a supportive academic ecosystem, and partner support. Forming a special team to accompany the MBKM unit in managing and developing the MBKM program is recommended.

Funding: This research was funded by Universitas Negeri Malang through the institutional assignment scheme entitled Implementasi kebijakan MB-KM di Universitas Negeri Malang: Persepsi mahasiswa, relevansi, dampak, masalah dan solusinya

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest

Informed Consent Statement/Ethics approval: This paper is a part of research involving several bachelor student's participations. In Indonesia, their age is considered to be adulthood, therefore neither their parents nor a legal guardian's permission is required. The research questionnaire was reviewed by ethical research committee.

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