

University Students' Exchange Perceive of *Kampus Merdeka* Curriculum

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ABSTRACT

The study aimed to discover students perceive of *Merdeka Belajar* Curriculum. The data can be helpful in government and policymakers and as evaluation from the host university. Additionally, it can be used to determine the overall controlling students' exchange program. Using a survey approach, the researcher conducted this research. The information was gathered using a questionnaire that was distributed through an online form. The research shows that 62% of respondents have basic information about this program in the good category in the first category. They also reported that more than 50% total of respondents felt satisfied with guiding from off-campus. Meanwhile, they complained that the most problems come from the technical issue about funding that cannot be the normal distribution, and they did not get credits recognition in the academic area from some universities in Indonesia. To sum up, this program needs a comprehensive evaluation from top to bottom. It means the university must match the guideline and prepare well before conducting and implementing this program.

Keywords: *University Students; Students' Exchange; Kampus Merdeka Curriculum.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The MBKM (*Merdeka Belajar – Kampus Merdeka*) Freedom to Learn – Merdeka Campus curriculum is introducing a new concept in education: mastery, in which students from various fields must possess the knowledge to become graduates with comprehensive competence. Implementation of *Kampus Merdeka* enables students to focus on a specific scientific area rather than a specific course of study. Referencing Permendikbud number 3 of 2020 concerning the National Standards for Higher Education, this MBKM clarifies that students have the right to attend lectures in various study programs at the same University for one semester, or the equivalent of 20 credits, for a maximum of two semesters or 40 credits. According to this curriculum, students should perform various tasks following Permendikbud 2020 number 3 [1].

The COVID-19 pandemic, which altered daily life and human customs, coincided with this competency. All activities are changed and continue to run today due to the use of internet technology. Aside from that, it is also necessary to develop students' soft skills in digital learning [2]. On the other hand, online education is a critical component of higher education's teaching and learning processes [3]. Students from all Indonesian universities participate in this model, which combines traditional face-to-face instruction with online learning [4]. SPADA Indonesia provides a platform for online

education. One of the Directorate General of Learning and Student Affairs programs of the Ministry of Research, Technology, and Higher Education is Indonesian Online Learning System (SPADA), which aims to increase equitable access to high-quality learning opportunities in higher education.

Online learning at SPADA Indonesia enables students to take specific, high-quality classes at another university. Their educational outcomes are equally recognizable by the college where the student is enrolled. SPADA Indonesia was created to address issues related to higher education, such as a lack of higher education capacity and the high cost of higher education due to inequitable distribution. In addition, there are still many universities that do not yet have adequate and high-quality educational resources, and more high-quality universities continue to be concentrated on Java's island. The low level of equal and high-quality higher education services; and the low level of assurance that the needs and demands for high-quality higher education will be met [5].

Borneo Tarakan University has conducted student exchange activities for the MBKM program. This activity demonstrates the University's commitment to implementing the MBKM, which involves student exchanges between departments/study programs throughout Indonesia. In addition to hosting a student exchange program, Borneo Tarakan University also sends its students to study outside of the University. This

activity is particularly concerning because all activities are conducted online due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. Students can only meet face to face, as we all know, when participating in a remote exchange program because one of the purposes of student exchange is to promote cross-cultural understanding [6]. MBKM is a critical component of Indonesia's higher education curriculum, which is currently under development [7].

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Merdeka Belajar as Progressivism Theory

Progressivism and human growth are inseparable concepts when it comes to education, according to ideals. To keep up with the ever-changing needs of society, education must evolve to meet those needs as well. It is consistent with the concept of lifelong education, which emphasizes the importance of education adapting to changing conditions. In 2019, the new Minister of Education and Culture, Nadiem Makarim, began to develop this. Another option is an independent learning program; the concept of independent learning is closely related to the flow of progressivism philosophy, which allows for greater freedom in education. Another option is a distance learning program [8]. Dewey's Progressivism emphasizes curriculum rather than excessive education. From a progressivist perspective, the curriculum is an experimental learning environment with a plan and an orderly arrangement [9]. Kilpatrick makes the following argument following this description: a good curriculum is based on three principles: (1) student social assistance enhanced. (2) The students' new lives are well-developed. 3) Make improvements in Students' creative abilities as a barometer of academic achievement [9].

2.2. Merdeka Belajar as Perennialism Theory

The Guidebook of *Merdeka Belajar – Kampus Merdeka* [10] explains that one of the explicit goals of the implementation of the policy is to ensure that all students have equal access to education. Personality development for students. Perennialism is present in independent campus policy, but it has a more minor and less comprehensive impact than the philosophy of progressivism. In an ideal world, intelligent and skilled students would be supported by a strong character not to harm themselves or others, such as through corrupt behavior. Of course, educational liberalization should be limited so that equal opportunities in obtaining an education are available and commercialization of education is avoided. With its emphasis on societal values and knowledge, perennialism's flow is more traditional because it does not encourage students to learn practical skills through technology. Perennialism in education should be reflected academically so that Indonesia's high education standards, which lead to liberalization, have clear boundaries so that higher education liberalization does not negatively impact [11].

2. METHOD

This study investigates research problems based on field trends or the need to explain why something happened [12]. This study aimed to determine students' perception of the MBKM Curriculum, especially for the exchange program. This study is part of a survey study. A survey study is a method of obtaining a quantitative or numerical description of a population's trends, attitudes, or opinions by studying a sample of that population [13]. The researcher used a written survey to communicate with the study and questionnaire via an online platform in this study. The instrument is based on a questionnaire distributed to all students who participated in inbound and outbound student exchanges, totaling 47 students. Descriptive Analysis Percentage was the analytical method used in this study. This percentage was calculated by dividing the frequency by the respondents and multiplying by 100% [14].

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Several significant findings were made in this study. Borneo Tarakan University hosted a student exchange program for 47 students from various Indonesian universities. The findings were applied to two theories of the *Merdeka Belajar* Curriculum, which were developed further.

3.1. Students' knowledge

In this part, the respondents were asked their knowledge and all information about *Merdeka Belajar* Curriculum. To get a fundamental understanding, they must know all components and the implication from this program that they were followed. Figure 1 is shown responses:

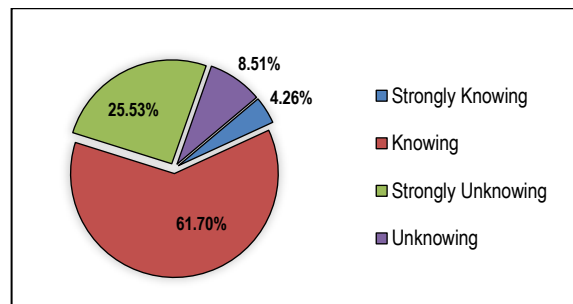


Figure 1. Students' Understanding about MBKM Curriculum

The survey results above showed that the respondents know the information about *Merdeka Belajar* Curriculum is dominated by 61.70%. Surprisingly, only 4% of respondents strongly know, compared with 26% of respondents who felt strongly knowing. Nevertheless, 8% of respondents are unknowing of that curriculum. Students' knowledge is crucial as a foundation before deciding to follow students' exchange programs.

On the other hand, if the respondents did not know this program very well, it can be impacted their academic but still get many experiences from the other aspects. It can be concluded that the respondents hopefully have the objective of this program which is to build a sense of tolerance among students through meeting spaces formed through student exchange activities and exploration of Indonesian cultural diversity. Students will move from one island to another to explore the diversity of regional cultures, introduce their native culture, and attend lectures at the receiving University. It is appropriate with the terms of *bertukar sementara*, *bermakna selamanya* (swap temporarily, means forever).

3.2. Readiness, conformity, support from the University

This section showed that the respondents were asked the readiness, conformity, support from university services.

3.2.1. Readiness of University

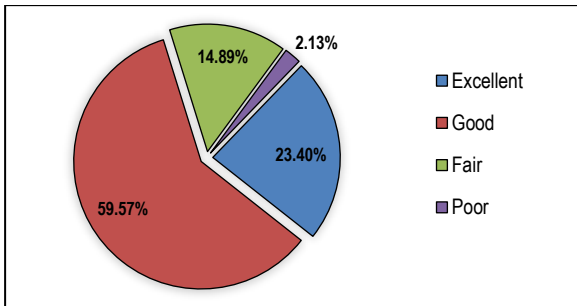


Figure 2. Origin University Readiness

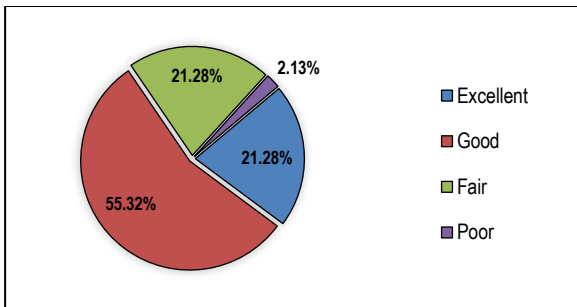


Figure 3. Destination University Readiness

Based on the data above, it was undoubtedly admitted that university readiness was the most broadly used option. More than half of respondents determined the university readiness was good. The next place was overtaken by excellent with relatively chosen by respondents more than 20%.

Meanwhile, we can see destination university readiness had a similar percentage with excellent. In contrast, the respondents also feel unsatisfied with services. Furthermore, the less percentage taken by respondents with a percentage of 2.13% for both of origin and destination universities, the context in this readiness includes student admissions, available courses, lecturers,

program policies, and alignment based on MBKM guidelines.

3.2.2. Conformity of University

These question items were asked to know university conformity based on students' perception whether both universities follow *Merdeka Belajar* Curriculum through students' exchange program. It can be seen in Figure 4 and 5 below:

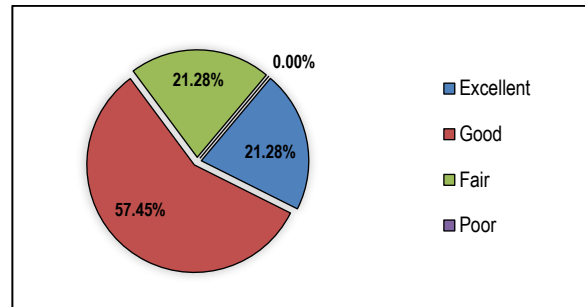


Figure 4. Origin Conformity of University

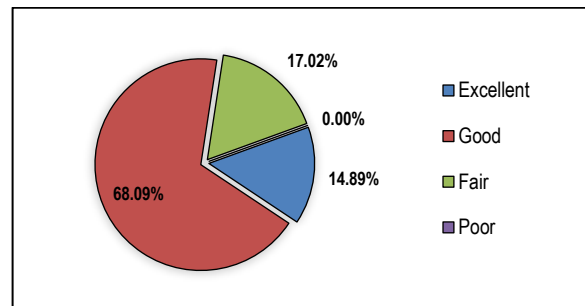


Figure 5. Destination Conformity of University

The data showed that as many 68.09% of total respondents claimed to have good conformity of University from origin university. With a percentage distribution of 17.02% recognized by students with fair assumptions, 14.89% of respondents felt excellent suitable with guidelines.

Further, from destination university in Figure 5. We can see that it is better than origin university, the majority was filled by 58% of respondents with good and the next highest percentage from excellent responses by 21.28% of respondents. Meanwhile, 21.28% of respondents felt fair for conformity aspects. In addition, in both universities, there are no respondents who choose poor for this aspect.

3.2.3. University Support Services

Consequently, the respondents were questioned about university support services to guide and help students follow this program and control students' activities outbound from campus. In provided data above, it is admitted that the number of respondents who claim to have good to excellent responses was the majority voted in terms of university support services of students'

exchange program. In response to good options, as many as 63.83% were filled by division of votes, with 23.40% filled by respondents with excellent options and 12.77% filled by respondents with fair options. The responses have been drawn in the figure below:

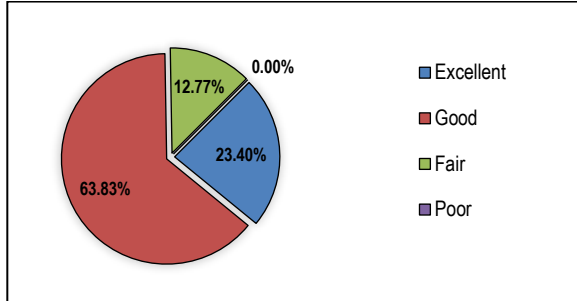


Figure 6. University Support Services

In this question, the maximum support services from the Rector, the Dean, the head of the department, advisor, academic staff, etc., were good based on students to inbound and outbound from each University.

3.3. Strengths and Weaknesses

The respondents reported that this program has strengths and weaknesses based on their experiences following all courses by student exchange. For example, it can be seen in the table below:

Table 1. Strengths of the Program

Options	F	%
Adding experience, insight, and knowledge	26	56
Get lots of relationships (lecturers and friends)	9	19
Get incentives, tuition, living allowance	2	4
Get credit recognition in the curriculum	4	9
Get a replacement for the relevant subject in the Certificate of Companion of Bachelor (SKPI) and certificates of appreciation	3	5
Get all benefits	1	2
There has been no real action either in relation or otherwise	2	4

From the presented data above, it was concluded that half of the respondents claimed that one of the strengths is that the students can add experience, insight, and knowledge from this program. They can learn outside their campus to other campuses. There was a total vote of 56% of respondents admitted they got many benefits from academic aspects. On the other side, the students also get new relationships from lecturers and other classmates from all over Indonesia, evidenced by the high percentage of responses, namely 19%. The third common choice in this session was the responses to get credits recognition in their curriculum, with 9% of all respondents getting credits recognition from their institutions.

Meanwhile, with a percentage of 5%, the respondents did not get credits recognition, then this program will be transferred in Certificate, namely Certificate of Companion of Diplomas and certificates of appreciation the evidence follow this program. Following that, it was chosen by 4% of respondents get incentives, tuition, and living allowance for funding aspect, they also got a bonus to follow this program. Surprisingly, in the same percentage (4%), they like to follow this program because they did not get real interactions while in a pandemic, they can interact in a virtual room. There were only 2% of total voters got many beneficially from the students' exchange program.

This question item was asked to know weaknesses of this program; whether the respondents also got weaknesses after they got strengths based on the data above.

Table 2. Weaknesses of the Program

Options	F	%
Lack of experience, insight and knowledge gained	4	9
Not getting a new relationship	1	2
Barriers to disbursement of incentives provided	3	7
Not getting credit recognition in the curriculum of the study program/department	5	4
Cannot be recognized on SKPI or anything	3	6
All information	1	2
The program was not implemented as it was socialized at first where the implementation was still online so the essence of this program was not really achieved	2	4
	1	2

Based on the provided data, 74% of respondents choose barriers to disbursement of incentives provided, if data from benefits only 4% got incentive as benefits, but from this data, the biggest problem is the distribution of their incentives. In contrast, we can also see from the highest strengths, where 55% got many benefits from academic aspects, and 9% disagreed with this option. From the other aspects, the respondents reported that they were not getting credit recognition from their University by 6% of respondents. Then, only 4% were obtained by respondents with they did not get all clear information as the weaknesses. Furthermore, similar categories were achieved by respondents who did not get a new relationship. They also cannot be recognized on SKPI or anything else, and this program has not implemented the essence of this program which is *bertukar sementara, bermakna selamanya* (swap temporarily, means forever).

4. CONCLUSION

This study investigated the students' perception of students' exchange in MBKM schema, with the number of respondents as many as 47 students from all over Indonesia University. Three categories of implement

Merdeka Belajar Curriculum had been described based on two theories. From the first category, the students' knowledge about this program is fundamental. 62% of respondents chose to know in the questionnaire. MBKM curriculum is related to the concept of liberal arts or now known as general education.

The purpose of general education is to give learners opportunities, in this case, students, to open a new concept order by providing the opportunity to collaborate with other sciences [15]. The second category was asked the readiness, conformity, support from university services. The most percentage of these options was the good category which is more than 50% of respondents. In line with [16], higher education administrators must collaborate with domestic and international universities to implement this program and follow up with learning initiatives. The last category is the strengths and weaknesses aspect. In this finding, the researcher found that 55% of respondents reported that this program's benefit comes from getting experience, insight, and knowledge. Meanwhile, 75% of respondents complained that the problem is the distribution of incentives which is they need funds to do all tasks from lecturers. This program must organize a system for selecting exchange students that is fair to college students [17].

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