THE IMPLEMENTATION OF "MAGANG MERDEKA" PROGRAM IN IMPROVING STUDENTS' SOFT SKILLS AND HARD SKILLS

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Abstract

The implementation of the Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) policy, especially the Magang Merdeka program, is one of the government's efforts in forming individual students who are competent in various matters. Therefore, this study aims to determine the improvement of students' abilities after participating in the Magang Merdeka program, as well as describe a variety of new soft skills and hard skills obtained by students from the implementation of the Magang Merdeka program. This research is a type of quantitative descriptive research, with the data analysis technique used is descriptive statistical analysis. The sample in this study amounted to 28 students of Educational Technology, Faculty of Education, Makassar State University who had participated in the Magang Merdeka program. The results of this study show a significant improvement in students' soft skills and hard skills after participating in the Magang Merdeka program, and with this program students can obtain and explore a variety of new soft skills and hard skills.

Keywords: Magang Merdeka; Soft Skill; Hard Skill

Abstrak

Pelaksanaan kebijakan Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) khususnya program Magang Merdeka saat ini, merupakan salah satu upaya pemerintah dalam membentuk individu mahasiswa yang berkompeten dalam berbagai hal. Oleh karena itu, penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui peningkatan kemampuan mahasiswa setelah mengikuti program Magang Merdeka, serta menguraikan beragam soft skill dan hard skill baru yang diperoleh mahasiswa dari pelaksanaan program Magang Merdeka. Penelitian ini merupakan jenis penelitian deskriptif kuantitatif, dengan teknik analisis data yang digunakan ialah analisis statistik deskriptif. Sampel dalam penelitian ini berjumlah 28 mahasiswa Teknologi Pendidikan Fakultas Ilmu Pendidikan Universitas Negeri Makassar yang telah mengikuti program Magang Merdeka. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan adanya peningkatan yang berarti bagi soft skill dan hard skill mahasiswa setelah mengikuti program Magang Merdeka, serta dengan program tersebut mahasiswa dapat memperoleh dan mendalami beragam soft skill dan hard skill yang baru.

Kata kunci: Magang Merdeka; *Soft Skill; Hard Skill*

How to Cite: Khusnul Hatimah, Nurhikmah H, Farida Febriati (2023). The Implementation Of "Magang Merdeka" Program In Improving Students' Soft Skills And Hard Skills. *Indonesian Journal of Educational Technology, 2* (1), 47-56.

INTRODUCTION

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Education is one of the pillars that plays a central role in the development and progress of a nation. Various challenges and obstacles faced in the world of education require universities, as the

main partner of the government to be able to face this through the formation of superior and adaptive human resources. Given the changes and developments continue to occur rapidly. The transformation that occurs in various lines of life requires individuals to have high quality and competitiveness. This, of course does not only mean high intellectual ability (hard skills) but also has adequate soft skills (Wijaya, 2021). This condition implies that the learning process should aim to achieve a balance between hard skills and soft skills through the learning experience provided. This is also supported by the phenomenon of the productivity crisis that has occurred, which has an impact on the lack of individual skills which is inversely proportional to the high number of the labor force. So that furthermore, it causes a lot of unemployment in Indonesia (Mardin, 2021).

This crucial situation that occurred encouraged policymakers to take the right steps in an effort to overcome the phenomena that occurred. This is what then underlies the birth of the Merdeka Learning Campus Merdeka (MBKM) program policy. The government through the Merdeka Learning Campus Merdeka (MBKM) program collaborates with domestic and foreign universities, as well as partners and collaborates with various parties, including. Community and private companies. The Merdeka Learning Campus Merdeka (MBKM) program is also a form of government effort in responding to global challenges.

This policy provides broad opportunities for students to gain new learning experiences and competencies from various learning activities. Based on the data presented by the Minister of Education and Research at the Merdeka Campus Festival (2021) shows that one of the MBKM program activities that open quota opportunities and attract thousands of students in Indonesia is the Internship activity. Through this activity, the Indonesian government provides opportunities for 15,000+ students to take part in certified internships at various partner institutions/agencies.

Internship activities that are carried out provide opportunities for students to develop their competencies in accordance with what is needed by world-class industries and organisations. This activity can also be an effort to develop knowledge, build skills and attitudes, which will certainly be needed when students enter the real world of work, and provide opportunities for students to learn to create new jobs or become entrepreneurs (Aswita, 2021).

Therefore, in connection with the explanation above, this study will focus on improving students' soft skills and hard skills after participating in the Merdeka Internship program. This aims to see the extent to which the Merdeka Internship program is able to provide meaningful learning experiences for students so that it has an impact on improving student skills. This research is also expected to be able to become literacy material to find out and reveal the various new soft skills and hard skills that students acquire after participating in the Merdeka Internship program.

METHOD

The paper will be published in IJ-ET after peer-reviewed process and decided "Accepted" by Editor. The final paper layout will be reproduced by Editorial Office of IJ-ET. The final paper layout in PDF type, known as "Uncorrected Proof" should be corrected by Author. The final corrected proof will be published first in "Article In Press" pre-issue.

This research is a type of descriptive research with a quantitative approach. The method used in this research is descriptive statistical analysis. Quantitative descriptive research is research conducted. with the aim of knowing the value of independent variables, either for one (independent) variable or more, without making comparisons, or without connecting them with other variables (Sugiyono, 2014: 37).

The population of this study was 33 students based on data in January 2023, which was spread across the class of 2019 and 2020. The sample used was 28 students, using a simple random sampling technique. The instrument used in this study was a questionnaire.

The statements contained in the questionnaire consist of favourable statements and unfavourable statements. Favourable statements are statements that are positive (supporting) aspects of the variable, while unfavourable statements consist of statements that are negative (not supporting) aspects of the variable (Hapsari, 2019). The scoring for each alternative answer for each statement item in this instrument is in the following table.

Table 1 Norm Scoring of Iterm Statements on Research Instruments

Statement	*Favourable* Score	*Unfavorable* Score
Strongly Agree (SS)	4	1
Agree (S)	3	2
Disagree (TS)	2	3
Strongly Disagree (STS)	1	4

Scoring is done to obtain the final score by summing up the respondents' answers to each item. After each respondent's final score is obtained, the researcher calculates the minimum value, maximum value, mean (average) and standard deviation as a whole. Furthermore, for categorisation that describes the improvement of soft skills and hard skills of students, it is arranged into three categories, namely: "high", "medium", and "low". By using the reference of 3 norm limits, as listed in the following table:

Table 2 Category Formulas of the Norm Rating Range

No.	Norm Range	Category
1	$X \geq M + SD$	High
2	$M - SD \leq X < M + SD$	Medium
3	$X < M - SD$	Low

Source: Saputra, 2015

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Learners' readiness for face-to-face learning is limited, so researchers can make indicators of learners' readiness consisting of (1) Learners' physical readiness; (2) Learners' mental readiness; (3) Learners' adaptability; (4) Learners' material readiness. Then, based on which consists of indicators, (5) Learners' response to the implementation of limited PTM; (6) Implementation of learner health protocols. (Delviana et al., 2022; Destriani, M. P. 2021; Usman, U. 2021; Hermawan, A., & Widyaningsih, Y. I. 2021)

The results of the questionnaire were obtained on the student readiness indicator with a total of 12 question items distributed directly to 30 students at SMP Negeri 3 Makassar City, and then, the researchers analysed the data by calculating the percentage value based on the opinion (Ngalim, 2002). This data analysis was carried out to determine student readiness for limited face-to-face learning after Covid-19.

This study aims to see the improvement in skills or abilities that occur to students after participating in the Merdeka Internship program and to find out the various soft skills and hard skills that students have encountered after implementing the program. The data in this study consisted of two types of research data collected: categorical and numerical. Numerical data is used to collect data related to the improvement of soft skills and hard skills that occur in students. Meanwhile, categorical data is used to collect data related to new soft and hard skills obtained by students after participating in the Merdeka Internship program. The categorical data were collected through a checklist box questionnaire, while the numerical data was collected through a Likert scale questionnaire.

Descriptive Analysis of Data on the Implementation of the Independent Internship Program in Improving *Soft Skills of* Educational Technology Students FIP UNM

Based on the results of the calculation of the total score on the *soft skills* scale research questionnaire on FIP UNM Educational Technology students, it was found that the highest score from the questionnaire was 104, and the lowest score was 76. Furthermore, the acquisition of the overall total questionnaire score for the *soft skills* variable can be stated as follows:

Table 3 Summary of Soft Skill Variable Data Characteristics

Type of Statistical Value	Statistical Value Gain Results
Highest Score	104
Lowest Score	76
Average (*Mean*)	85
Standard Deviation	7

From these values, the researchers then categorized to see the improvement of soft skills that occurred in Educational Technology students after participating in the MBKM program.

Table 4. 2 Frequency Distribution of Soft Skill Improvement of TP Students

No.	Score Interval	Category	Frequency	Percentage
1	X ≥ 92	High	3	10%
2	78 ≤ X < 92	Medium	23	82%
3	X < 78	Low	2	8%
	Total		**28**	**100%**

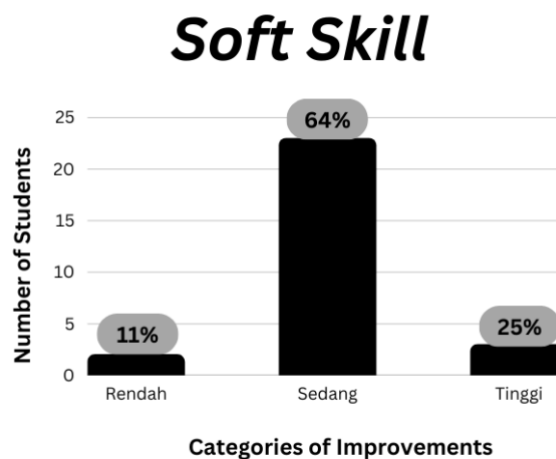If displayed in diagram form, it can be seen in the figure below:

Figure 1 Percentage and Category of Student Soft Skill Improvement

The table and figure above show the results of research on improving the *soft skills of* students who have participated in the Merdeka Internship program. The existing data shows that overall, as many as 28 FIP UNM Educational Technology students who were sampled, 3 (10%) of them were classified as experiencing a "high" increase, while around 23 (82%) other students experienced an increase at the "medium" level, and the remaining 2 (8%) felt a fairly "low" increase. Based on these results, it can be interpreted that the Merdeka Internship program is the right policy, which can be used to optimize and maximize student abilities through *real and* contextual learning.

Descriptive Analysis of Data on the Implementation of the Independent Internship Program in Improving the *Hard Skills of* Educational Technology Students FIP UNM

The data obtained using a Likert scale questionnaire shows that the highest score of the *hard skill* scale questionnaire is 41 and the lowest score is 30, for complete data can be seen in the attachment. The following is the overall total score of the *hard skills* variable questionnaire*:*

Table 4. 3 Summary of Hard Skill Variable Data Characteristics

Type of Statistical Value	Gain Results
Highest Score	41
Lowest Score	30
Average (*Mean)*	34
Standard Deviation	3

From these values, the researchers then categorised to see the improvement of *soft skills* that occurred in Educational Technology students after participating in the MBKM program.

Table 4. 4 Frequency Distribution of Soft Skill Improvement of TP Students

No.	Score Interval	Category	Frequency	Percentage
1	$X \geq 92$	High	7	25%
2	$78 \leq X < 92$	Medium	18	64%
3	$X < 78$	Low	3	11%
	Total		**28**	**100%**

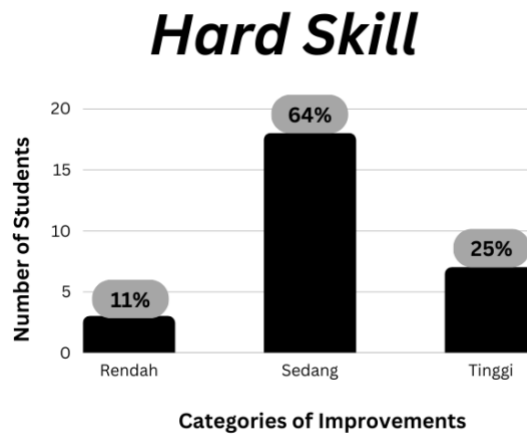If displayed in diagram form, it can be seen in the figure below:

Figure 2. Percentage and Category of Student Hard Skill Improvement

The magnitude of the *soft skills* improvement that occurred in students after the implementation of the Merdeka Internship program also turned out to be in line with the improvement that occurred in students' abilities or *hard skills*. If you look at the research results, the Merdeka Internship program has provided a "high" increase for 7 (25%) students, 18 (64%) of whom also experienced an increase at the "medium" level, and the remaining 3 (11%) experienced an increase at the "low" level. The data obtained shows that with the Merdeka Internship program, students can also get no less learning than the lecture class.

**Description of the Implementation of the Independent Internship Program in Helping FIP
UNM Educational Technology Students Acquire New *Soft Skills***

Based on data obtained using a questionnaire In the form of a *checklist,* data analysis is then
carried out using frequency and percentage techniques. *The* following is data related to the new *soft
skills* obtained by FIP UNM Educational Technology students after participating in the Merdeka
Internship program.

Table 4. 5 Level of New Soft Skill Acquisition for TP Students

No.	Soft Skills	Dimensions	Total
1	Skills to Engage in a Project	Frequency	25
		Percentage	89%
2	Oral & Written Communication Skills	Frequency	24
		Percentage	85%
3	Skills in Collaboration	Frequency	23
		Percentage	82%
4	Adaptability Skills	Frequency	22
		Percentage	78%
5	Responsible Skills	Frequency	21
		Percentage	75%
6	Critical & Logical Thinking Skills	Frequency	21
		Percentage	75%
7	Problem-Solving Skills	Frequency	21
		Percentage	75%
8	Social Ethics	Frequency	19
		Percentage	68%
9	Positive Attitude Skills	Frequency	18
		Percentage	64%
10	Resilience in the Face of Pressure	Frequency	18
		Percentage	64%
11	Skills Related to Leadership	Frequency	16
		Percentage	57%
12	Negotiation Skills	Frequency	16
		Percentage	57%
13	Mathematical Skills	Frequency	8
		Percentage	29%

Based on table 4.9, it can be seen that the implementation of the Merdeka Internship program is
able to help FIP UNM Educational Technology students acquire, recognise, and explore new *soft
skills*. From the data obtained, *the* most new *soft skill* encountered by Educational Technology students
during the Merdeka Internship program is the ability to involve themselves in a project. Around 25
(89%) of the total 28 students who consider this *soft skill* as a form of new skill they have encountered
after participating in the Merdeka Internship program.

Thus, it can be said that the implementation of the Merdeka Internship program can help FIP UNM Educational Technology students acquire soft skills that they previously thought they had never obtained or experienced.

Description of the Implementation of the Independent Internship Program in Helping Educational Technology Students FIP UNM Acquire New *Hard Skills*

The following is the data collected from the *hard skills* questionnaire in the form of a *checklist,* which emphasises the new *hard skills* obtained by FIP UNM Educational Technology students after participating in the MBKM program.

Table 4. 6 Level of New *Hard Skill* Acquisition for TP Students

No.	Hard Skills	Dimensions	Total
1	Skills in Utilizing Information and Communication Technology for the needs of an activity	Frequency	22
		Percentage	79%
2	*People as Resources* (Being staff or individuals who help a lot in terms of technology)	Frequency	16
		Percentage	57%
3	Able to Design, Develop, Implement and Evaluate Activities	Frequency	16
		Percentage	57%
4	Able to Design, Develop, and Produce Programs and Media to be used in Activities	Frequency	15
		Percentage	53%
5	Developing Models, Materials, and Media for Activity Implementation	Frequency	13
		Percentage	46%
6	Able to Use and Utilize WebQuest (Activities that take place with effective Web-Based and Integrative)	Frequency	12
		Percentage	43%
7	Able to Implement the Program and Comprehensive Media	Frequency	11
		Percentage	39%
8	Able to Develop and Manage Applications for Agency Interests	Frequency	12
		Percentage	43%
9	Able to Create and Develop Agency/Institution Website	Frequency	8
		Percentagee	29%

Table 4.10 illustrates the *hard skills of* Educational Technology students that are new and or can be obtained and explored through participation in the Merdeka Internship program. The data collected also prove that the skills in utilising information and communication technology for the purposes of an activity are a new thing that, with the Merdeka Internship program, students can learn and explore things related to this. As many as 33 (80.5%) of 42 students consider this skill as one thing that can be obtained through the Merdeka Internship program.

Discussion

The conventional learning mechanism that has been implemented is considered a mechanism that often needs to pay more attention to creativity. Even students' interests and talents are neglected (Rosnelli & Yuzni, 2019). Starting from determining the structure and form of various courses, the minimum learning load that has been determined, to the existence of courses that are generally packaged and have been required. The existence of this system is the impetus for the birth of the implementation of the MBKM program, which is present to provide flexibility through the formation of the MBKM program. An innovative learning culture that focuses on student's interests and talents (Mendikbudristek, 2021).

The very high demand for graduates' competence today is also a solid reason for efforts to transform the learning system and atmosphere in the world of education through implementing the MBKM program. This condition causes the MBKM policy, especially the Merdeka Internship program, to be urgently needed to provide broader and faster space for students to improve their competence to form superior human resources and be ready to face the era of *society* 5.0 (Arsanti *et al.*, 2021).

In line with this, the research results found later show that the Merdeka Internship program, through various forms and learning models that are loaded, is not only proven to improve students' abilities from the academic aspect but abilities and skills in personal aspects and social aspects can also be *covered* in the implementation of the MBKM program. This can be seen from the improvement that has occurred in students' *soft skills* and *hard skills*.

All of these abilities and skills are certainly needed in an effort to produce graduates with relevant work skills in carrying out work in the current industrial era, including abilities related to the use of technology, which is also one of the output targets of the implementation of the Merdeka Internship program (Aswita, 2021). The MBKM policy issued directly reveals that the government understands and realises that university graduates will later face the world of work and very different competency demands, especially in technological advances that are increasingly shifting the existence of humans as resources (Mendikbudristek, 2021). Therefore, the Merdeka Internship program, through *experiential learning,* allows students to meet, get to know and even explore new things directly from the experts (Apriliyani *et al.*, 2022). So that it not only helps students improve their skills or abilities but also provides opportunities for students to learn new things directly from experts (Apriliyani et al., 2022). students to enrich themselves with new skills which have yet to be encountered in lecture classes.

Therefore, the research results obtained align with the theory, which states that the existence of the Merdeka Internship program can help students interpret, discover, and explore a variety of new *soft skills* and *hard skills*. As well as being the foundation for strengthening the skills of prospective graduates of Educational Technology students in facing the industrial world.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the results of the research and discussion presented, it can be concluded that the implementation and implementation of the Merdeka Learning Campus Merdeka (MBKM) policy, especially the Merdeka Internship, has proven to be able to improve student's abilities and abilities. This can be seen from the percentage of improvement in students' *soft and hard skills* after participating in the Merdeka Internship program. In addition, implementing the Merdeka Internship program is also an appropriate learning alternative that can help FIP UNM Educational Technology students gain experience and deepen a variety of new skills, both in the form of *soft skills* and *hard skills.*

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