

# Motivation of Lecturers and Students in Implementing the Freedom of Learning Independent Campus Program

## ABSTRACT

**Hastuti Naibaho**, Universitas  
Ciputra  
**Endang Pitaloka\***, Politeknik  
Piksi Ganesha  
**Widya Avianti**, Universitas  
Winayamukti

The freedom of learning independent campus (MBKM) policy is aimed at preparing students who can adapt to change and are relevant to the needs of the times. The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the implementation of MBKM. After almost two years, an evaluation of MBKM implementation is needed. This research aims to determine the level of interest among students in the MBKM program and the motivation of lecturers in the program. A mixed method was used in this research. For quantitative data, researchers conducted a survey using a questionnaire as a research instrument. Three hundred twenty-nine students from universities implementing MBKM participated in this research. The data is then processed descriptively. Qualitative data were obtained from interviews and FGDs with 51 structural and nonstructural lecturers, 39 students, and the heads of student organizations involved in this study. The results show that students have quite an interest in MBKM. Likewise, the lecturers are very motivated by MBKM.

Korespondence Endang  
Pitaloka, oka@piksi.ac.id

**Keywords:** MBKM Policy, Student Interest, Lecturer Motivation.

## I. Introduction

The Freedom of Learning Independent Campus (MBKM) policy is a future-oriented policy of the Minister of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology to prepare students to have the ability to adapt to change (Directorate General of Higher Education, 2020). This policy requires universities to plan and create new learning methods and more innovative learning processes, and implement them effectively so that students can achieve optimal learning outcomes. Educational institutions implement vocational education by adapting curriculum content to incorporate both soft and hard skills, aiming to achieve mental and personal enrichment that meets the needs of industry and the world of work (Avianti, Widiya, and Dewi Yuliati Indah, 2023). Desired learning outcomes include aspects of attitudes, knowledge, and skills that maintain relevance.

The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the implementation of MBKM, making it more intensive. Restriction interaction is the effort to avoid contagion of the virus COVID-19 through various strategies that limit interactions between individuals in higher education, which are realized in the form of studying from home and for lecturers working from home. Kandri (2020) stated that the pandemic had encouraged campuses to adopt online solutions within just a few months of the pandemic. COVID-19 forced the lecturers to implement an emergency solution by changing all interactions from offline to online and closing learning activities on campus. Rahman et al. (2023) report that a considerable proportion of educators had a range of mental health issues during the pandemic, including stress, worry, sadness, and burnout when studying from home. This study supports the finding that students cannot focus on learning and do not understand the teaching material well when using online learning during the Pandemic (Hapsari & Pitaloka, 2020).

COVID-19 has made us aware of how vulnerable our conventional education system is to dramatic changes in situations that require abandoning old or traditional approaches to the learning process. COVID-19 challenges entrenched ideas about the time, location, and method of delivering the educational process and the role of higher education (Kandri, 2020).

COVID-19 was the factor that caused the momentum for MBKM acceleration to be carried by the COVID-19 pandemic. After more than a year, implementing the MBKM policy requires an evaluation. Does the implementation follow the initial objectives of the MBKM policy? The MBKM policy aims to enhance the competency of college graduates by providing both hard skills and soft skills effectively, so that graduates become better prepared and

relevant to future needs, becoming superior and personable national leaders (Directorate General of Higher Education, 2020).

The MBKM policy is implemented by applying the principles of learning in higher education, which is carried out autonomously or following the needs of the University concerned and is carried out with high flexibility to build an innovative learning culture, not limiting creativity (both lecturers and students) in accordance with the government's goal (Directorate General of Higher Education, 2020). Learning in higher education is no longer carried out rigidly and does not consider students' relevant needs. MBKM gives each student the right to study for three semesters outside the campus. The internship program is the most popular MBKM program for students because this activity leads to social relationships and practical suitability after graduation (Meke, Konstantinos Denny Pareira, Richardo Barry Astro, and Maimunah H. Daud, 2022).

Universities implement the Independent Learning Curriculum, which positively impacts students and lecturers. Feedback surveys and focus group discussions were conducted to assist lecturers and other academics in supporting MBKM and exploring their perceptions of MBKM. Lecturers should be involved in all MBKM activities, guidance, training, workload, and remuneration calculations (MY, Ani Siska, and Dewi Anggraini, 2021). The sustainability of MBKM implementation policies requires support for an information system that is easy to access. As organizers, universities must measure lecturers' and students' understanding of the MBKM Program (Suastika, I. Ketut, et al. 2022).

Research findings from Aryanti, Rachma Syifa, Whisnu Yudiana, and Rezki Ashriyana Sulistiobudi (2023) indicate that career exploration is crucial in career preparation. Implementing the MBKM curriculum can influence students' careers so that they prepare themselves to enter the world of work based on direct experience and are more effective when they enter the world of work. Various studies on implementing MBKM show a tendency for positive results, although accompanied by various notes for improvement (Rodiyah, 2021; Luthfi & Mardiani, 2020; Suliatiyani & Sukarman, 2020). However, there are multiple obstacles to implementing the MBKM program in universities, and every form of learning activity will face obstacles (Bhakti, Yoga Budi, et al., 2022). This research aims to identify students' interest in implementing MBKM and lecturers' motivation for implementing MBKM.

## **2. Method**

This research is a case study with a quantitative and qualitative approach. Quantitative data collection was carried out using the survey method. In research that uses a mixed method, it is necessary to collect data and information through FGDs, which need to be attended by various interested parties in higher education, consisting of all lecturers, involving alums, stakeholders, and students who have taken part in the MBKM learning form (MY, Ani Siska, and Dewi Anggraini, 2021).

A qualitative method was used to conduct the survey. In this study, 329 students were respondents from various universities implementing MBKM. All respondents were students who had participated in at least one MBKM program. Meanwhile, qualitative data was collected using interviews and focus group discussion (FGD) methods involving lecturers and heads of BEM and HIMA in various study programs. Fifty-one lecturers were sources for interviews and FGDs, while there were 36 students. The lecturers consisted of lecturers with the structural positions of deputy rector, dean, head of the study program, head of research and community service institutions, and lecturers without structural positions. Both students and lecturers involved in interviews and FGDs came from various universities on the island of Java that have implemented MBKM.

Quantitative data is processed using descriptive statistics. The aim is to find out students' understanding of the MBKM program. In this way, researchers can be sure that the

universities are MBKM campuses and have students actively participating in the MBKM program. Qualitative data using interviews and FGD methods was conducted to explore the motivation of lecturers in the MBKM program and how interested students are in the MBKM program. The results of interviews and FGDs were processed using data triangulation. Data triangulation is exploring the truth of information or confirming specific data using various data sources.

### **3. Findings and Discussion**

#### **Survey method (quantitative)**

The results showed that as many as 64.7% of students stated that they knew most of the contents of the MBKM policy. This finding indicates that universities and other parties' socialization of the MBKM program is sufficient to reach students. Therefore, most students know the contents of the MBKM policy.

72.3% of students perceived the ideal time to complete the MBKM program is three semesters with a credit between 40 - 60 credits. This time is sufficient for students to gain learning experience outside campus with the various MBKM schemes available. Students believed they had been sufficiently equipped with practical and professional knowledge for three semesters. However, these off-campus activities must be related to the learning achievements formulated by the Study Program.

Most students (77.8%) are ready for the MBKM program. The students did not consider adjusting to the MBKM program too tricky. Regarding the MBKM scheme, which is the most popular, the result shows the three highest answers with respective percentages: 47% student exchange, 24% industrial internship, and 19% entrepreneurship. According to students, the three schemes existed before the MBKM policy was implemented. However, industrial internships before the enactment of MBKM were only internships for three months. Apart from that, according to the students, it is not difficult in terms of time or costs as long as student exchanges can be carried out across study programs and outside universities online.

The open question part is to find out information about the benefits of the MBKM program in improving soft skills. 86% of students answered that the MBKM program could improve soft skills through off-campus programs. Students believe that off-campus activities in industrial internships, entrepreneurship, village projects, and other schemes increase opportunities for interaction with outside parties, both industry and the general public. This program improves communication skills and increases analytical power and sensitivity to business and social issues.

The next question is the benefits of the MBKM program regarding graduates' readiness to enter the professional/industrial world. As many as 88% of students responded that the MBKM program helped prepare students to enter the professional/industrial world. MBKM activities outside campus increase students' practical knowledge and add real experience to the professional/industrial world. Students have an idea of what their careers will look like in the future. This program also benefits students' self-development and mental readiness to enter the industrial world.

The next question concerns the additional competencies students have gained since joining the MBKM program. This question is a semi-open question. There are five highest answers: professional ethics, analytical skills, communication skills, teamwork, and technical abilities such as various supporting software (design, Excel, data processing software). This result is consistent with the two previous questions that there is an increase in soft skills and readiness to face the industrial world.

In the end, the nature of the questions is open questions. Students were asked to provide opinions on potential obstacles to implementing the MBKM program. There are four answers with a percentage above 15%: Cost, clarity of MBKM procedures, course conversion

system, and parental permission. Cost barriers are generally for schemes requiring students outside the region/city, such as village projects, student teaching, etc. The challenge for this program is related to living and activity costs that must be borne.

Regarding procedural obstacles and course conversion, according to students, it is because students do not fully understand the procedures for MBKM schemes and are worried that course conversion will not run smoothly. The other factor that caused this problem is that the learning management system does not fully accommodate MBKM. The reason for parental permission is that some parents are worried about MBKM activities outside campus. According to students, parents are concerned because they trust that lecturers supervise activities on campus.

Based on the descriptive analysis above, it can be concluded that students' understanding of the MBKM program is quite good. And students have also felt the different impacts of implementing the MBKM program. Among them is increasing competence and readiness to become part of industry and society after graduating from college.

### **Results of interviews and FGDs with lecturers**

The results of interviews and FGDs show that implementing the MBKM program at various resource universities provides space for students to transform themselves through collaborative learning involving multiple internal and external parties. The study programs from these universities implement the Independent Campus Free Learning Curriculum collaboration with various parties, including other study programs at universities, from industry circles such as national and regional level, research institutions, non-government organizations, and government parties relevant to the MBKM program. This collaboration aims to ensure that student teaching and learning are the result (outcome) of collaboration. With collaborative learning, students transform themselves into independent human beings. This success will support the achievement of the Independent Campus Learning Program, Directorate of Learning and Student Affairs, Directorate General of Higher Education, Ministry of Education and Culture.

Bachelor students generally must take at least 144 credits during the education process. Around 60 out of 144 credits can be taken with the MBKM program. Several universities allow students to study off-campus with the MBKM scheme for up to 40 credits and 20 credits to exchange lessons across universities or study programs. Generally, universities implementing MBKM provide 20 credits for each Entrepreneurship, Research, and Industrial Internship scheme and village Project for six months.

To strengthen the implementation of the Higher Education entrepreneurship scheme in collaboration with partner institutions related to entrepreneurship. These partners include the local city MSME service, the Indonesia Chamber of Commercial Industry (KADIN), the entrepreneurial community, and other relevant institutions. Several universities in big cities, such as Jabodetabek, Bandung, Surabaya, Malang, and Solo, also collaborate with entrepreneurship NGOs with an international scope, such as the Wadwani Foundation International. Wadwani Foundation International is a global-scale business development institution.

Students can undertake the Internship Scheme and Research Scheme by working professionally, even as part of an internship in an industry that already has collaboration with universities implementing MBKM. The government supports the implementation of this scheme by cooperation with several state-owned companies, banking industry companies, retail, construction, property, hospitality, marketplaces, consumer goods, and many more. They create collaborations according to their respective study program fields. For example, several universities have civil engineering study programs collaborating with construction companies, transportation companies, and developers. Meanwhile, those with management and accounting study programs collaborate with banking companies, public accounting offices,

retail companies, marketplaces, hospitality, etc. This collaboration benefits both parties. For the industry, it provides additional human resources. It is a place for students to train in professionalism and improve practical competence to prepare themselves to enter the world of professional work.

For research schemes, universities implementing MBKM collaborate with research institutions. Several universities in Jabodetabek, both state and private, can collaborate with the Indonesian Institute of Science (LIPI). Most universities collaborate with independent research institutions, nationally accredited journal publishers, book publishers, investment management, and the Indonesian Stock Exchange. Some collaborate with the industry in terms of opportunities to collect research data.

### **Lecturer motivation in the MBKM program**

The results of interviews and FGDs with lecturers show that the lecturers from all study programs support the implementation of MBKM. There have been many regulatory changes related to the implementation of MBKM. There are also many things that lecturers need to learn regarding MBKM policies. However, these changes do not reduce lecturers' motivation to implement the MBKM program. All lecturers know that this change was made to support the implementation of MBKM because this program significantly impacts students. The MBKM program, which focuses on student-centered learning and freedom of autonomy in higher education, will have a positive impact on increasing graduate competency, both in terms of non-technical (soft skills) and technical (hard skills), so that graduates are better prepared and in line with the needs of the times. It is hoped that the experience-based learning program (experiential learning) with flexible pathways will facilitate students to develop their potential according to their potential.

In implementing MBKM, The lecturers are concerned with technical support, which is more than just guidelines. Besides that, lecturers and students from all universities also have obstacles to participating in the MBKM program. One is the lack of clarity regarding grade conversion for cross-prodigy courses and off-campus MBKM schemes. Higher education institutions are required to make per-semester reports regarding the courses taken by students. Without a clear course conversion policy, reporting on student lectures will cause problems.

Implementing the MBKM program requires sufficient skills and knowledge from the lecturer. Even though the lecturer must have adequate educational qualifications and teaching experience, implementing the Independent Learning program requires more skills than before. Lecturers generally do not have sufficient knowledge about the Independent Learning program. For this reason, coaching and increasing the competence of lecturers in the form of workshops, training, and various other upgrading facilities related to implementing the MBKM program are necessary to realize their capacity as driving lecturers. Therefore, lecturers need to learn from other institutions that may have successfully implemented similar programs and achieved impressive success. Sharing sessions from different universities or comparative studies with leading universities that have implemented this kind of program are small ways that might be good for successfully implementing the MBKM program.

### **Results of interviews and FGDs with students**

For students, the Merdeka Belajar program is an effective learning method that can maximize mastery of hard and soft skills in a collaborative space. The Study Program has adequate strength in human resources, cooperative networks, and leadership commitment. If the majority of the lecturers have doctoral qualifications, then the study program has sufficient competency to strive for the success of the Independent Learning program.

As part of higher education, study programs must have networks with companies that allow collaboration in MBKM activities. Students can do internships/practical work in various companies for at least six months. This time is enough to give enthusiasm and professionalism

in the industry or world of work. The commitment of universities and the corporations that support them is also a strength factor in implementing the Independent Learning program in universities. Apart from that, it is felt that the MBKM entrepreneurship program can prepare students to become superior entrepreneurs and increase their enthusiasm and entrepreneurial mindset. This scheme can also equip students to innovate and be creative in the businesses they start.

The interviews and FGDs with the heads of student organizations show that students know that the MBKM has been implemented for approximately two years. Students have also participated in the MBKM program. Specifically, student exchange schemes across study programs at several universities were already running before the MBKM program was implemented. Almost all students are familiar with and understand the MBKM policy. The level of student knowledge and understanding of this program is quite diverse. Students also feel that more intense socialization about the MBKM program is needed. Students consider Socialization media effective through seminars/workshops organized by universities or study programs, social media, and communities such as industry, research institutions, etc. Socialization to industry, research institutions, and others aims to ensure that external parties also understand the MBKM program and can collaborate with study programs and students in implementing MKBKM.

### **Students are interested in the MBKM program**

The student exchange scheme is also the most popular scheme for students. Students also know that their universities open industrial internship schemes, research schemes, entrepreneurship schemes, and projects in villages. Apart from student exchange, industrial internships are another scheme in which students participate. Several students have participated in industrial internship schemes at national companies, state-owned companies, and international institutions. Students have also previously been provided with MBKM guidelines. These guidelines reference students choosing the MBKM scheme according to their interests. Regarding students' interest in participating in entrepreneurship schemes and research schemes, it is currently not an option for students because they feel they are not equipped to carry out these schemes outside campus. Another reason is related to permits and procedures for implementing research schemes, which are also influenced by external parties such as the research goal, research permits, and others.

In general, students support and are enthusiastic about the MBKM program. Students know that the MBKM program will provide additional competencies that are very useful in the professional life students will lead after graduating. Apart from increasing competency in soft and hard skills, the MBKM program also opens up opportunities for student networking with various parties, which is helpful in student self-development.

### **Results of quantitative and qualitative data analysis**

The survey results are generally consistent with the results of interviews and FGDs. Universities typically target high participation from lecturers and students in the MBKM program. To ensure the high involvement of lecturers and students in the MBKM program, the University arranged several monitoring and evaluation activities needed to implement the MBKM Curriculum. Monitoring and evaluation will be conducted at the study program, faculty, and university levels. This tiered monitoring and assessment will ensure that the MBKM Curriculum Collaboration program runs as expected by all parties. To ensure that monitoring and evaluation runs carefully, universities must develop standard monitoring and evaluation parameters at the study program level. The continued implementation of the Independent Learning Curriculum is a duty and responsibility at the University, faculty, and study program levels. It is a matter of great pride if the Independent Learning Curriculum can be implemented consistently and continuously.

Efforts to maintain the sustainability of implementing the MBKM Curriculum are a joint commitment from the study program, higher education leaders, and faculties. All academics at the study program, faculty, and university levels are implementers of the sustainability of the IMBKM Curriculum. Responsibility for program implementation can be divided into tiered tasks and responsibilities. The formulation of program policies is created and formulated at the university level. Preparing guidelines/reference guidelines for implementing the MBKM Curriculum program is carried out at the study program level. The study program development program and quality assurance based on learning outcomes (CPL) and implement the program. The arrangements for students, lecturers, field supervisors, monitoring, and evaluation in this program are also by the study program.

Apart from the internal commitment of universities, the implementation and sustainability of the MBKM Curriculum certainly need to be accompanied by the commitment of all lecturers, university leaders, and leaders at the faculties and study programs level. However, the responsibility of external parties is also essential in the implementation and sustainability of the Independent Learning Curriculum. Through the commitment of all active personnel, this noble Freedom of Learning program will be implemented well and produce independent people.

The results show that universities' readiness to implement the MBKM program is good overall. It is indicated by the number of participation of students and lecturers involved in the MKBM program in the scheme offered. Many universities also received grants for implementing the MBKM program in 2020, 2021, and 2022. Based on the information collected from interviews with the academic leader and FGDs with the non-academic leader, obtaining the grants is very helpful in facilitating institutions' readiness. Especially for study programs, the grant helps develop a curriculum, providing training to increase lecturer pedagogical competence, learning innovation, partnerships, and creating an information system for implementing and monitoring MBKM.

Universities need to develop an evaluation system for the MBKM program where external parties can provide evaluations. Collaboration partners of the MBKM program, internship or practical work scheme, or research scheme will be a tool to assess the effectiveness of the MBKM program. Communication with partners must be established and maintained so each party can exchange valuable messages to implement this good education program evaluation. As long as universities are open and willing to establish communication and strengthen cooperation through effective communication, the Merdeka Belajar program will be able to achieve the expected target, namely, creating superior, independent human beings.

#### **4. Conclusion**

This study's result provides empirical data on student interest in the MBKM program. It can be seen from the fact that most students have taken the student exchange scheme for courses across study programs. As for other schemes, the student's lack of interest in participating is caused by a lack of understanding of the MBKM requirements and information. Lecturers' motivation for the MBKM program is high because all lecturers are involved in this program as instructors of courses across study programs and universities (inbound & outbound students). Several lecturers become supervisors for industrial internship schemes. The readiness of universities, faculties, and study programs to implement the MBKM program is relatively good. The University has prepared and established policies, starting from the chancellor's decree, standard operating procedures, and other independent learning documents for implementing the Independent Learning program. These documents serve as guidelines for the Study Program in implementing the MBKM program. Realizing the success of the Independent Campus Learning Program requires high awareness and strong

commitment from every element of the study program and higher education institution. The support and participation of external parties, including the industrial world, government institutions, families, and communities, is no less critical.

### Acknowledgements

We want to thank the University for organizing to follow the vision, mission, and goals of the University so that it can become a bridge for students' careers to superior human resources.

### References

- Aryanti, R. S., Yudianta, W., & Sulistiobudi, R. A. (2023). Aplikasi kurikulum Merdeka Belajar–Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) pada perguruan tinggi terhadap karier mahasiswa. *Jurnal Paedagogy*, 10(1), 74–84.
- Avianti, W., & Indah, D. Y. (2023). Peran uji kompetensi peserta didik pada keahlian otomatisasi tata kelola perkantoran (SMKN Linggabuana Kabupaten Purwakarta). *Jurnal Pengabdian dan Pemberdayaan Nusantara (JPPNu)*, 5(1), 68–75.
- Bhakti, Y. B., et al. (2022). Kendala implementasi kebijakan Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) di perguruan tinggi. *Research and Development Journal of Education*, 8(2), 783–790.
- Direktorat Jenderal Pendidikan Tinggi Kemendikbud RI. (2020). *Panduan Merdeka Belajar–Kampus Merdeka*. Direktorat Jenderal Pendidikan Tinggi Kemendikbud RI.
- Harsari, R. R. S., & Pitaloka, E. (2020, November). Persepsi mahasiswa Universitas Pembangunan Jaya pada study from home selama pandemik COVID-19. In *Prosiding Seminar Nasional Terapan Riset Inovatif (SENTRINOV)* (Vol. 6, No. 2, pp. 528–536).
- Kandri, S. E. (2020). How COVID-19 is driving a long-overdue revolution in education. *World Economic Forum*. <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/05/how-covid-19-is-sparking-a-revolution-in-higher-education/>
- Lhutfi, I., & Mardiani, R. (2020). Merdeka Belajar–Kampus Merdeka policy: How does it affect the sustainability on accounting education in Indonesia? *Dinamika Pendidikan*, 15(2), 243–253. <https://doi.org/10.15294/dp.v15i2.26071>
- Meke, K. D. P., Astro, R. B., & Daud, M. H. (2022). Dampak kebijakan Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) pada perguruan tinggi swasta di Indonesia. *Edukatif: Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan*, 4(1), 675–685.
- MY, A. S., & Anggraini, D. (2021). Analisis dampak kebijakan Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka terhadap mahasiswa Program Studi Akuntansi Universitas Sahid. *Management and Accounting Expose*, 4(2).
- Rahman, R. A., Isa, N. S. M., Zamri, N., Pitaloka, E., Suyoto, Y. T., & Yunus, M. H. S. M. (2023). COVID-19 pandemic and mental health of educators in higher education institution: A systematic literature review. *International Journal of Public Health*, 12(4), 1771–1778.
- Rodiyah, R. (2021). Implementasi program Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka di era digital dalam menciptakan karakter mahasiswa hukum yang berkarakter dan profesional. *Seminar Nasional Hukum Universitas Negeri Semarang*, 7(2), 425–434. <https://doi.org/10.15294/snhunnes.v7i2.737>
- Suastika, I. K., et al. (2022). Dampak implementasi kurikulum MBKM: Analisis kepuasan dan persepsi dosen dan mahasiswa. *MENDIDIK: Jurnal Kajian Pendidikan dan Pengajaran*, 8(1), 19–28.
- Sulistiani, S., & Sukarman. (2020). Membangun karakter berbasis budaya Jawa pada era Revolusi Industri 4.0, Revolusi Society 5.0, dan “Merdeka Belajar.” In *Prosiding Seminar Nasional 2020: Penguatan Pendidikan Karakter pada Era Merdeka Belajar*.