

Implementation of the Independent Learning/Independent Campus Policy at UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung: An Evaluative Study

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Received : November 20, 2025
Revised : December 11, 2025
Accepted : December 31, 2025

Abstract

This study seeks to identify how the Independent Learning–Independent Campus (MBKM) policy is implemented at Sunan Gunung Djati State Islamic University Bandung. The research employs a descriptive qualitative method, with data collection techniques consisting of observation, interviews, and documentation. Data analysis follows the steps of data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. This study is divided into six stages, namely: pre-research, formulation of research focus and questions, development of instruments, data collection and interviews, data analysis, and presentation of research results in the form of a research report. Through this study, it is expected that the MBKM policy at Sunan Gunung Djati State Islamic University Bandung will enhance students' innovation, creativity, capacity, motivation, and independence in seeking and generating knowledge based on real-world conditions and environmental dynamics. In addition, this research is expected to provide added value for partner institutions—particularly Sunan Gunung Djati State Islamic University Bandung—by presenting an in-depth analysis of the best ways to integrate national policies with local and religious needs within the institution

Keywords:

policy implementation, off-campus learning, Islamic higher education, curriculum innovation

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How to Cite: Lubis, RN, Akmalia, R., & Siahaan, A. (2025). Implementation of the “Merdeka Belajar–Kampus Merdeka” Policy at Sunan Gunung Djati State Islamic University Bandung. *JTP - Jurnal Teknologi Pendidikan*, 27(3), 1009–1023. <https://doi.org/10.21009/jtp.v27i3.64726>

INTRODUCTION

The Independent Learning–Independent Campus (MBKM) policy released by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology is intended to reform the higher education system in Indonesia so that it becomes more relevant to the demands of the labor market and global developments. This policy encourages universities to provide greater flexibility for students in ensuring a learning path that aligns with their interests and future careers (Siswanto & Hadi, 2024). MBKM offers various options such as internships, entrepreneurship projects, student exchanges, and research outside the main study program, all of which are expected to prepare graduates to be more competitive in the era of globalization (Tohir, 2020).



In the plan to prepare students to face the transformation of the world of work, social and cultural developments, as well as rapid technological advancements, students are required to prepare their competencies so that they can meet the demands of the era. The demands imposed on Higher Education Institutions are to be able to conceptualize and implement innovative learning methods so that students can achieve learning outcomes that include the assessment of attitudes, knowledge, and skills in a maximal way. This is also in accordance with Learning 4.0, which is known as a recent breakthrough that is characteristically student-centered, where this approach not only increases highly educated students but is also capable of creating a new mindset that is able to respond to life challenges, enhance creativity, and encourage innovation in various perspectives of life (Tan et al., 2018).

The MBKM program, which is used as a new learning policy, certainly provides a wide space for students to gain knowledge and expertise in higher education in a flexible way, which not only requires sitting in class to attend lectures, but also enables them to obtain knowledge and skills according to their competencies through programs developed by partners outside the campus. Universities must give authority to all students to make firm decisions on whether they wish to take or not the number of credits that have been offered, namely 40 credits outside their campus or 2 semesters that must be undertaken at partner campuses. In addition, students are also allowed, if they wish, to take credits in another study program without neglecting the total semesters that must be completed, meaning that they are permitted to take credits in another study program for one semester within their own campus.

The study in MBKM provides challenges and opportunities for the development of innovation, creativity, capacity, character, and students' motivation, and increases independence in seeking and creating knowledge through real-world experiences such as using various skills, concrete problems occurring in the field, social interaction, collaboration, self-management, performance standards, targets, and their achievements. Through the independent learning program that is well designed and implemented, students' hard and soft skills will be firmly realized. The results of the study (Puspitasari & Nugroho, 2021), reports that the MBKM policy is expected to be able to respond to various issues related to learning and employment in Indonesia, through close interaction between higher education institutions and workplace partners that is established, as well as the existence of programs outside the campus with the aim of broadening students' knowledge and experience, and it is even expected that students will have added value and be able to compete in facing challenges in the global era.

The study (Mei et al., 2022), reveals that the procedure of MBKM development is an obligation that must be applied by all universities because the curriculum reflects and becomes a benchmark of competencies for future graduates. The next research result concludes that all educational elements on campus are ready to implement the MBKM program, with the assumption that all results are above 50%, in which several obstacles encountered related to this program are mostly caused by the lack of intensive socialization in several study programs (Mudrikah et al., 2022). In line with the results of the relevant research above,

regulations in the development of higher education through the MBKM program must rely on principles of effectiveness and clear objectives.

Sunan Gunung Djati State Islamic University (UIN) Bandung, as the highest institution in education that has distinctive characteristics in integrating religious knowledge with general knowledge, faces unique challenges in the implementation of the MBKM policy. On the one hand, UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung must comply with national regulations regarding higher education, but on the other hand, UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung must ensure that Islamic values remain preserved in every aspect of education, including in MBKM programs. Therefore, the adaptation of the MBKM policy at UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung requires a careful and well-planned approach so that graduates of UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung are not only superior in scientific knowledge but also possess a strong religious understanding.

The implementation of the MBKM policy at UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung requires adjustments to the existing curriculum as well as new mechanisms that accommodate off-campus activities. Although this policy has been implemented in several State Islamic Universities (UIN), many are still facing obstacles, both technically and conceptually. The main issue that arises is how to maintain a balance between achieving broader professional competencies while still preserving the Islamic-based curriculum. In addition, there are not many studies that comprehensively examine how the MBKM policy impacts the performance of UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung graduates in social, cultural, and economic contexts, especially in relation to efforts to improve the quality of life of the community and strengthen the management of Islamic-based religious institutions and corporations.

Based on this, this study aims to analyze how the Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka policy is implemented at Sunan Gunung Djati State Islamic University Bandung and evaluate its impact on student and graduate performance. The main focus of this research is to assess how the policy affects the professional skills, religious knowledge, and contributions of UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung graduates to social-religious harmony and community welfare. The urgency of this research lies in the need to develop a higher education system that is able to respond to modern challenges without neglecting religiosity and Islamic values. With the rise of globalization and the changing demands of the labor market, Islamic higher education institutions such as UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung must adapt to produce graduates who are not only professionally competent but also capable of becoming positive agents of change in society. This research is also important in supporting the implementation of government policies, while also providing guidance for UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung in formulating the right strategies to integrate the MBKM policy with their Islamic identity. With the implementation of the MBKM policy, it is expected that the planned changes can be achieved.

The results of this study are expected to improve the governance of education at UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, which in turn will contribute to improving the quality of graduates, both in terms of scientific knowledge and religious practice. This not only contributes to community welfare through the enhancement of graduate competencies, but also encourages socio-religious harmony through the active role of graduates in promoting Islamic values in society. This research is also

expected to support the preservation of Indonesian culture through the integration of local and Islamic values in higher education.

METHODS

This study applies a descriptive qualitative method with the intention of finding a clearer and more comprehensive description and data, and enabling and facilitating the researcher to conduct in-depth observation and research. This research uses primary data sources in the form of interviews with predetermined informants, namely the Vice Rector for Academic Affairs, Vice Dean I of the Faculty of Da'wah and Communication (FDK), Vice Dean I of the Faculty of Science and Technology (FST), Vice Dean I of the Faculty of Adab and Humanities (FAH), and several students who participated in the MBKM program in discussing various aspects related to the implementation of the independent curriculum policy at the State Islamic University concerned. Meanwhile, secondary data sources include curriculum documents, lecturer and student lists, the profile of the State Islamic University being studied, as well as photographic documentation of activities supporting the implementation of the independent curriculum policy in the university environment. In this case, the researcher came directly to the research site to collect data through primary and secondary informants to obtain the required research data, including observation, interviews, and document studies.

The data collection instrument used in this research is interviews. The researcher prepared a list of questions compiled by adjusting the indicators to be studied. The data collection technique in this research involves three (3) steps, namely observation, interviews, and document study. Before conducting observations, the researcher planned the objectives and focus of the observations. The researcher selected the appropriate location and time for the observations. This selection considered activities relevant to the policy being studied so that representative data could be collected. The researcher conducted direct observations of the learning process taking place. This included observing the independent curriculum policy being implemented. During the observation, the researcher recorded findings in detail. These notes may include descriptions of situations, dialogues, and behaviors observed, as well as aspects relevant to the research focus. After conducting observations, the researcher reflected on and analyzed the recorded data. This process helped the researcher understand the dynamics that occurred during the observation and prepare questions for further interviews if necessary.

The researcher compared the findings from the observations with the data obtained from interviews and documentation. This triangulation aims to ensure data accuracy and consistency as well as provide an overview of the implementation of the independent curriculum policy. In conducting data analysis, the researcher applied the steps of activity as described by (Miles & Huberman, 1984; Yusuf, 2017), namely data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

1. Student Exchange

The student exchange mechanism at UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung has been clearly regulated in official guidelines that are publicly accessible, including through the university's Quality Assurance Institute (LPM) website. The Vice Dean I of the Faculty of Da'wah and Communication (FDK) explained:

“The mechanism is already clear, stated in the guidelines. Students who participate in this program become more active in organizations, but regarding its academic impact, we have not measured it specifically.”

A similar view was conveyed by the Vice Dean I of the Faculty of Science and Technology (FST), who stated:

“As for the mechanism, everything is clearly stated in the guidelines. There are guidelines. We have never measured it. But it should have an impact on students, and there should be a sense of competitiveness. Because there are also student exchanges abroad, so we go there, and they come here.”

Meanwhile, the Vice Dean I of the Faculty of Adab and Humanities (FAH) added:

“The mechanism exists. It is also shared on the LPM website, including the guidelines. For this student exchange program, it tends to be more active within the MBKM scheme. There are also student exchanges with universities abroad. We have not tested it directly yet. So based on assumptions, this should have a positive impact on students' skills—the way they think, how they complete their studies, and so on.”

These statements are consistent with document study results showing the existence of MBKM guidelines that contain procedures, rights, and obligations of students in the student exchange program (Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, 2020). This policy includes opportunities for student mobility at both national and international levels. Nevertheless, all informants acknowledged that there has been no measurable evaluation of the impact of this program on improving skills, academic insight, or student achievement. The prevailing assumption is that participation in student exchanges brings positive benefits, whether in the form of organizational activeness (FDK), increased competitiveness (FST), or enrichment of thinking patterns and study completion strategies (FAH).

2. Internship / Work Practice

The implementation of internship or work practice programs at UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung has been ongoing for quite some time and is basically part of the university's policy, although its implementation is adjusted to the characteristics of each faculty. The Vice Rector I for Academic Affairs explained:

“Internships are indeed implemented; they are facilitated from registration to completion, with a selection process, so not all students can participate.

Placement is usually adjusted to partners relevant to the study program.”

A similar statement was expressed by the Vice Dean I of the Faculty of Science and Technology (FST):

“Of course, everything is facilitated by the campus, from registration to completion. Registration usually involves selection, so not everyone participates in internships. It is adjusted.”

From the perspective of the Faculty of Adab and Humanities (FAH), the internship program has been integrated into faculty academic activities:

“As for internships, we have actually implemented them for a long time, and they are indeed part of the university program, adjusted to the study program or faculty. At FAH, internships are usually in offices. There are even some in school libraries. Yes, it is adjusted to the study program,” explained the Vice Dean I of FAH.”

However, he added that student interest in the internship program tends to be low:

“Not many students are interested in this program. Technically, there are no obstacles; it is more about interest. For example, students rarely independently register for MBKM activities.”

These statements align with the MBKM Guideline document, which states that internships are one form of off-campus learning aimed at providing real-world work experience in accordance with students’ fields of study, through partnerships with government institutions, private sectors, and community organizations (Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, 2020). However, from the perspective of faculty leaders, the main problem lies not in regulation or mechanisms, but in students’ motivation and awareness to actively engage.

3. Teaching Assistance

The implementation of teaching assistance programs in educational units, as regulated in the MBKM Guidelines listed on the website of the Quality Assurance Institute (LPM) of UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, is essentially intended to equip students with contextual teaching experience, improve pedagogical skills, and build social sensitivity to educational dynamics in the field (Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, 2020). However, interviews with Vice Deans I from three faculties indicate that this program has not yet been implemented.

The Vice Dean I of the Faculty of Science and Technology (FST) firmly stated:

“At the Faculty of Science and Technology, we do not have it yet.”

Similar conditions are reflected in the Faculty of Da’wah and Communication (FDK) and the Faculty of Adab and Humanities (FAH), where teaching assistance programs have not been included in official agendas, either as

independent activities or as part of the MBKM curriculum. In the MBKM context, the absence of this program's implementation potentially reduces opportunities for students to develop professional skills in real educational environments. Thus, although policy frameworks and implementation guidelines are available, the realization of teaching assistance programs at the faculty level still requires strategic planning, strengthening partnership networks, and adjusting program designs to suit the characteristics of each field of study.

4. Research

Research as one form of learning activity within the MBKM framework has a clear policy foundation in the MBKM Guidelines uploaded on the official website of the Quality Assurance Institute (LPM) of UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung. The document emphasizes that students can be involved in collaborative research, both within the internal university environment and with external institutions, as part of efforts to broaden scientific insight and strengthen research skills.

The Vice Dean I of the Faculty of Da'wah and Communication (FDK) stated that in his faculty, students have opportunities to be involved in research with lecturers, although participation levels still vary. This is in line with the view of the Vice Dean I of the Faculty of Science and Technology (FST), who explained the existence of research collaboration initiatives with the National Research and Innovation Agency (BRIN). He emphasized:

” There is indeed research, and it is published too, if I am not mistaken, in Scopus.“

This view indicates that although the implementation of MBKM-based research has not been systematically measured, the existence of strategic partnerships has opened opportunities for students to produce internationally recognized work. Meanwhile, at the Faculty of Adab and Humanities (FAH), emphasis is placed more on integrating research activities with students' academic needs, such as thesis writing. Although there are no quantitative reports regarding the direct impact of MBKM on the quality of student research, the three vice deans agree that research experience under the MBKM framework should equip students with better methodological skills, an understanding of research ethics, and broader academic networks.

However, to ensure these benefits are optimal, systematic monitoring and evaluation mechanisms are needed, including measurable success indicators, such as the number of students involved, the quality of publications produced, and the sustainability of research partnerships. Without this, student involvement in research risks becoming merely a formality that does not reach the strategic objectives of MBKM.

5. Humanitarian Projects

Humanitarian projects within the MBKM framework at UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung have not yet been fully implemented in a formal and structured manner as stated in the official guidelines of the Quality Assurance Institute (LPM).

Although the MBKM guideline document mentions humanitarian projects as one recognized form of learning activity, interview results show that their implementation is still at an embryonic stage and is more often represented by activities with similar objectives, such as Community Service Programs (KKN).

The Vice Dean I of the Faculty of Da'wah and Communication (FDK) explained that the annually conducted KKN essentially already contains the essence of humanitarian projects, although it has not been formally claimed as part of MBKM. This was reaffirmed by the Vice Dean I of the Faculty of Science and Technology (FST), who stated:

”For humanitarian projects, in detail, they have not been implemented yet. There are activities that resemble this, such as KKN... so far, it has not been detailed, or even claimed as MBKM practice. But the essence has already been applied.“

Similarly, at the Faculty of Adab and Humanities (FAH), the approach used is more integrative with regular community service activities, without formal MBKM labeling. All three sources agree that these activities contribute positively to shaping students' social awareness, although their effectiveness has not yet been measured using specific evaluation instruments. Thus, although the implementation of humanitarian projects at UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung currently still relies on activity models such as KKN, existing policy directions and experiences can serve as initial capital to develop more measurable, well-documented MBKM humanitarian project models with clear success indicators.

6. Entrepreneurial Activities

Entrepreneurial activities in the context of MBKM at UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung are still in the early stages of development and have not yet been fully claimed as an official part of the MBKM scheme listed in the LPM guidelines. This was revealed through interviews with Vice Deans I from the three faculties studied.

The Vice Dean I of the Faculty of Science and Technology (FST) explained: ”So far, there has indeed been no entrepreneurship program that is formally recognized as an MBKM activity. However, there are initiatives that are essentially aligned, such as cooperation with external parties that resulted in a tool to process used cooking oil into products with economic value.“

This was followed by another Vice Dean who stated:

” So there is a tool that can process used cooking oil and then turn it into money (perhaps calculated by weight or liter size). The tool exists at the Business Center of UIN Gunung Djati.“

From interviews with the Vice Dean I of the Faculty of Da'wah and Communication (FDK) and the Faculty of Adab and Humanities (FAH), it is known that MBKM-based entrepreneurship programs have also not been specifically implemented. Existing activities are generally extracurricular in nature or part of student interest and talent development, without an integrated learning design that

includes MBKM learning outcome indicators. Although the implementation of MBKM entrepreneurship programs at UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung is still embryonic, initiatives such as processing used cooking oil reflect significant potential to develop social entrepreneurship models that are relevant to community needs while supporting graduate profile learning outcomes.

7. Independent Study / Project

The implementation of independent study or projects as part of the MBKM program at UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta to date is still considered not to have been actively implemented. Ramdani Miftah from LPM stated frankly that this learning model has not yet become a popular choice among students. He stated that: "Projects also do not yet exist here. So, this has not been fully implemented. Not many students are interested in participating in this, which becomes a limiting factor."

Although this scheme provides space for students to develop topics or projects based on their interests in a more independent and interdisciplinary manner, in reality its implementation in the field has not progressed. Ramdani also explained that the absence of independent projects is not caused by policy obstacles, but rather by aspects of student participation and understanding.

According to him, the campus has not yet actively formed a special mentoring system to accompany students in designing and executing independent projects. In addition, there is no evaluation model that has been tested to assess the academic success of this program.

The Vice Dean I of the Faculty of Da'wah and Communication Sciences conveyed a similar view. He mentioned that the concept of independent projects actually has great potential, especially for students who want to explore social issues in depth outside the structure of courses. However, until now, there have been no students at FDIKOM who have proposed independent projects within the MBKM framework. He added:

"Perhaps students are still confused about what an independent project looks like. Is it an expanded thesis? Is it some kind of creative research? This may require more socialization and examples."

At the Faculty of Science and Technology, a similar response also emerged. WD I FST explained that independent projects have never been formally implemented. Even if there are student activities outside the formal curriculum—such as application development, tools, or experimental research—all of them are still under lecturer supervision as part of a final assignment or regular research project. He stated:

"We have never received a proposal for an independent project as part of MBKM. Maybe because students feel that there is no clear pathway yet. Even though many actually have good ideas."

In general, the implementation of independent study or projects still requires strengthening in three areas: first, initial briefing for students regarding the types

and forms of activities that meet the requirements; second, the formation of a mentoring and evaluation system; and third, strengthening student motivation to dare to take independent and innovative learning pathways.

8. Building Villages / Thematic Community Service Program (KKN Tematik)

The Building Villages Program, which in the context of UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta is better known as Thematic Community Service (KKN Tematik), is one form of MBKM activity that has been actively implemented even before the MBKM policy was officially launched. Ramdani Miftah from LPM stated that the existence of KKN at UIN Jakarta has long been part of the academic tradition, and MBKM serves as a policy reinforcement that expands the orientation and scope of the program. He explained:

“For thematic KKN, we have indeed implemented it, even before MBKM emerged. KKN has always been part of our program. MBKM really strengthens the KKN program, which previously only talked about the institution itself, and now has become broader.”

KKN, which was previously local in nature, is now directed to be more collaborative and thematic. According to Ramdani, strengthening the MBKM-based KKN concept is carried out by paying attention to cross-sector integration, cross-disciplinary approaches, and collaboration with non-campus institutions. In LPM’s evaluation, this approach provides added value, especially in sharpening students’ social sensitivity and adaptability to community realities.

One important aspect emphasized by Ramdani is the provision of supporting tools by the campus to ensure that KKN activities run systematically and measurably. He mentioned:

“From the campus side, we mainly provide KKN guidelines, so that they are more organized and more conducive in their KKN practices. This includes various things, such as the guideline book, report guidelines, implementation policies, and so on. Those are available on the LP2M website, if I’m not mistaken.”

These guidelines serve as an important reference in implementation, starting from pre-KKN preparation, implementation at the location, to standardized final reporting.

The Vice Dean I of FDIKOM reinforced that KKN is a program that is highly relevant to the learning context in his faculty. Many students from FDIKOM are involved in KKN with themes of community development, religious outreach, and media literacy. He stated:

“FDIKOM students can take advantage of KKN as a forum to apply communication knowledge in society. They learn to design programs, work in cross-study-program teams, and directly face social dynamics.”

Meanwhile, the Vice Dean I of FST views KKN as an important opportunity to bridge science and technology with the needs of village communities. Although the participation of FST students in KKN has at times been constrained by

mismatches between academic schedules and locations far from laboratories, the faculty continues to support the deployment of students to be actively involved.

“We direct students so that during KKN they can bring simple technology-based solutions. For example, water filtration systems, household waste management, or STEM education for children in villages.”

The three informants emphasized that Thematic KKN is a program that has been running well and has received full support from the campus. The existing challenges are more technical and administrative in nature, such as schedule adjustments, transportation, and report management. However, substantively, this program is considered an effective medium for grounding academic values within the social space of the community.

Discussion

The prevailing assumption is that participation in student exchange programs brings positive benefits, whether in the form of organizational activeness (FDK), increased competitiveness (FST), or the enrichment of students' mindsets and study completion strategies (FAH). This condition reflects a phenomenon found in international literature, where many higher education institutions regard student mobility programs as an effective strategy for developing soft skills and cross-cultural competencies, yet not all possess adequate measurement instruments (Granato, M., Minello, A., & Mussino, 2024). On the other hand, research by (Di Pietro, 2022) indicates that student mobility experiences, particularly international ones, have significant potential to enhance graduates' employment opportunities, provided they are accompanied by robust evaluation systems. Thus, the administrative readiness of UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung can serve as a strong initial asset; however, strengthening aspects of monitoring and evaluation is required so that faculty leaders' confidence in the program's benefits can be substantiated through valid empirical data. This aligns with (Bhakti, C. P., Gunawan, I., & Wardani, 2024) who argue that without structured evaluation, the benefits of MBKM programs tend to remain assumptive and difficult to account for academically.

From the perspective of faculty leaders, the main issue lies not in regulatory or procedural aspects, but in students' motivation and awareness to actively participate. The phenomenon of low student participation in internships can be linked to recent research findings showing that the success of internship programs in higher education is determined not only by the quality of partnerships and curricula, but also by students' perceptions of the benefits they will gain (Jackson, D., & Wilton, 2017). As outlined in the study by (Succi, C., & Canovi, 2020) students who understand the relevance of internships to their work readiness tend to be more motivated to participate. Therefore, although UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung already has clear internship mechanisms and adequate administrative support, increasing student participation requires more persuasive communication strategies regarding benefits, including the provision of empirical evidence on the impact of internships on graduates' employment opportunities.

Statements delivered by each faculty also indicate that teaching assistance programs have not yet been included in official agendas, either as independent activities or as part of the MBKM curriculum. In fact, international literature shows that direct teaching experience for prospective teacher students can have a significant impact on strengthening teacher self-efficacy, communication skills, and adaptability to diverse learner conditions (Ronfeldt et al., 2018). Meanwhile, at the Faculty of Adab and Humanities (FAH), greater emphasis is placed on integrating research activities with students' academic needs, such as thesis writing. This expression is consistent with findings from international studies emphasizing that student involvement in collaborative research projects has the potential to enhance research literacy, critical thinking skills, and problem-solving abilities (Healey, M., & Jenkins, 2009). In addition, involvement in scientific publications alongside lecturers or senior researchers has been proven to accelerate students' academic career development and improve their readiness to face professional demands in their respective fields (Spronken-Smith et al., 2014).

The approach adopted is more integrative with regular community service activities, without a formal MBKM label. This is in line with research conducted by (Bringle & Clayton, 2022) which emphasizes that service-learning experiences can enhance empathy, cross-cultural communication skills, and students' commitment to sustainable social change. Furthermore, student involvement in systematically designed humanitarian projects has been shown to strengthen civic engagement competencies and broaden students' understanding of the complexity of societal issues (Celio et al., 2011). In addition, MBKM-based entrepreneurship programs remain extracurricular in nature or part of student interest and talent development.

This is consistent with the findings of (Neneh, 2022) who emphasizes that the success of student entrepreneurship programs is highly dependent on higher education institutions' support in the form of training, mentoring, and access to business networks. Moreover, research by (Nabi et al., 2017) shows that integrating entrepreneurship into the curriculum through experiential learning approaches can significantly increase students' entrepreneurial intentions and managerial skills. Although the implementation of MBKM entrepreneurship programs at UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung is still embryonic, initiatives such as the processing of used cooking oil reflect substantial potential for developing social entrepreneurship models that are relevant to community needs while simultaneously supporting the achievement of graduate profile learning outcomes.

Despite variations in implementation levels, in general, student research within the MBKM framework has the potential to serve as a strategic medium for producing graduates with strong research competencies, internationally recognized publications, and relevance to societal needs and scientific development. According to (Purnomo et al., 2021) integrating student research into independent learning policies can improve the quality of scientific publications and sharpen higher-order thinking skills. Similarly, the findings of (Dutta et al., 2020) demonstrate that student participation in collaborative research can expand academic networks and accelerate adaptation to global research standards. Lastly, in the aspect of KKN, it serves as a platform for students to engage directly with society. Based on the experience reported by (Huda et al., 2018), community service programs designed

with careful planning can cultivate leadership and cross-group collaboration. Furthermore, (Aditomo & Kurniati, 2022) note that when student humanitarian activities have clear targets, their benefits extend beyond social aspects to fostering critical thinking skills and adaptability to unexpected situations—competencies that are central to the MBKM policy itself.

In other words, what has already been implemented at UIN Sunan Gunung Djati actually rests on a solid foundation. The future challenge lies in formalizing and sharpening these programs so that their contributions are not only felt by the community, but also recognized as an integral part of students' academic learning. This is in line with the findings of (Akmalia et al., 2025), which indicate that the implementation of “Merdeka Belajar–Kampus Merdeka” at UIN Jakarta faces challenges in curriculum alignment and partner engagement, while also presenting opportunities to enhance student autonomy.

CONCLUSION

The implementation of the Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) policy at UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung demonstrates complex dynamics. In general, the university has shown institutional commitment in responding to this national policy, as indicated by the availability of MBKM implementation guidelines, cooperation with national and international institutions, and the opening of access for students to participate in several forms of off-campus learning activities. Nevertheless, its implementation has not yet been fully equitable and continues to face various challenges at the structural, cultural, and technical levels.

Based on the findings obtained in the field, it can be concluded that UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung has implemented the MBKM policy partially, with notable success in student exchange and internships/work practice, as well as in the development of collaborative research initiatives. Meanwhile, the other five forms—namely teaching assistance, humanitarian projects, entrepreneurial activities, independent studies/projects, and village development—still encounter obstacles in implementation, either due to the absence of adequate supporting systems or because of limited operational understanding at the study program level.

Going forward, strengthening internal policies, increasing MBKM literacy among lecturers and students, and developing a more flexible credit (SKS) conversion system will be key to accelerating the comprehensive implementation of this policy. With such systematic improvements, UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung is expected to implement MBKM beyond mere compliance, positioning it as a transformative and adaptive educational strategy in response to the challenges of the times.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We would like to express our deepest gratitude to all parties who have provided support and assistance in the implementation of this research. Special appreciation is extended to the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of

Indonesia and LP2M UIN Sumatera Utara Medan for the Ministry of Religious Affairs research grant awarded in 2024, based on the Decree of the Director General of Islamic Education regarding the determination of recipients of the Indonesia Bangkit Research Funding Program, Decree Number: 6841 of 2024. This research program was supported and conducted in collaboration between the Ministry of Religious Affairs and the Education Fund Management Institution (LPDP) through the MoRA The AIR Funds Program. We also express our gratitude for the facilities provided, which enabled this research to be carried out successfully. The contributions and support of various stakeholders played a vital role in the success of this research.

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