



# The Ambivalence of Emancipated Learning and Student's Learning Experience on Graduate Attributes: An Initial Identification

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**Abstract.** This is a preliminary study that aims to explain the ambivalence of the implementation of *Merdeka Learning* (transl. Emancipated Learning) and student's learning experiences towards the graduate attributes of their respective study programs. As the Ministry of Education through the Emancipated Learning grants the opportunity for students to study and participate in other programs outside the main study program, it is necessary to map the suitability and perceptions of students about what they have participated with the competencies expected by the study program. The semi-qualitative data were collected through a survey involving 300 students who have and are currently implementing the Emancipated Learning program. In general, students feel that the program they are following is in line with the study program, but on the other hand, students cannot relate the learning experience to the expected graduate attributes. The implication of this policy is as one of the references in revitalizing the Emancipated Learning curriculum to accommodate the clarity of competencies and profiles of graduates.

**Keywords:** Emancipated Learning Curriculum · Learning Experience · Ambivalence · Graduate Attributes

## 1 Introduction

This initial research aims to determine the evaluation on the progress of the implementation and development of the Emancipated Learning (MBKM) program at the State University of Surabaya (Unesa) which requires students to carry out academic activities outside the study program in which they are enrolled. This policy research is relevant with the implementation of the MBKM Curriculum which was launched by the Ministry of Education and Culture of Indonesia in 2019, and it is active starting in 2021. Since then, higher education should adapt the Emancipated Learning at the university, one of which is to grant students to pursue their academic activities outside their main university or study programs for at least two semesters.

In the context of Unesa as a higher institution, it has a moral obligation to produce quality graduates, especially its role as the Teacher Education Institute (LPTK) to prepare professional teacher candidates. Bringing students closer to the world of work is an effort to make learning meaningful and, from an early year, students are introduced to

their future world of work. The existence of higher education is essentially related to the phenomenon of globalization and competition for mastery of high-quality skills in all aspects of life.

However, current educational achievements in Indonesia have not yet reached the best quality of education [1] to face future challenges that are dynamic and full of challenges. The MBKM policy is also expected to produce graduates who are ready to face the increasingly complex challenges in the 21st century. The essence of Emancipated Learning programs by the government is to explore the potential of the students to innovate and improve the quality of learning independently based on their passion. Optimizing the experiential learning approaches in the higher education policies plays an important role in preparing Indonesian citizens to excel in quality in terms of education in welcoming Indonesia's golden age is certainly necessary.

In the implementation of the Curriculum since 2020s, there have been some issues among universities and students. There has been such ambivalence of the implementation and attitudes of the Emancipated Learning with the students' learning experiences in relation with the graduate attributes of the programs. It requires initial identification for further development of the university's policy on curriculum development.

The concept of introducing students to the world of work is known as the concept of experiential learning. Similar expressions state, experiential learning is basically an active learning process in which students develop knowledge, skills and attitudes that can be transferred from direct experience inside or outside the classroom environment [2]. The theory of experiential learning states that knowledge is created through transformations caused by experience and describes the means by which learning through processes of situated cognition can occur [3] contextualize the potential contribution that experiential learning may offer to those involved in the development of academic and professional management, pedagogy, and education [4].

The MBKM policy is expected to produce graduates who have 21st Century capabilities and adapt to the challenges of the 21st Century [5] and develop educational curricula that address the needs of the industrial revolution era 4.0 [6]. The essence of the Emancipated Learning programs is to explore and optimize the potentials of students in innovating and collaborating to improve the quality of learning independently according to the needs of each student [7]; granting students to study outside their majors, including independent study and internships, is believed to give bigger opportunities for the students to experience the real-world learning.

Based on the explanation above, the research objective is the ambivalent learning of emancipation and student learning experiences towards the attributes of graduates. The ambivalence of the students' believed would be explored based on the relevance of the programs outside the campus with the study programs and their beliefs of the score conversion with their learning experience.

## 2 Methods

This research is a preliminary study that aims to identify the ambivalence of students' learning experiences with graduate attributes of the study programs as the results of

the implementation of the Emancipated Learning (MBKM) programs. The MBKM programs include both Ministerial (government-funded) and independent (self-funded) programs. This qualitative research manages semi-qualitative data through a survey involving undergraduate students ( $N = 301$ ) of State University of Surabaya, a state university which has been fully implemented the Emancipated Learning (MBKM) curriculum in the last 2 years. The students who were targeted and said to be suitable are students who have participated in the programs and those who are currently undergoing the programs in the current semester. Data were analyzed descriptively to describe the inquiries given by students in the survey related to students' understanding of the suitability of learning experiences and competencies and graduate attributes of the study program they took at the university.

### 3 Findings and Discussion

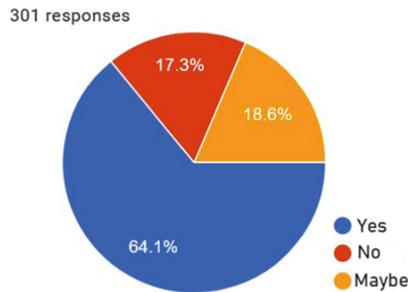
In this section, two aspects are being discussed, namely related to the suitability of the learning experience of the students who have conducted or are currently doing the MBKM programs outside the main study program with the competence of the graduate profiles of the study program and how they perceive this suitability in terms of score conversion.

#### 3.1 Characterization of Learning Experience and Study Program

To see the suitability of the learning experiences carried out by the students in relation to the competence of the study program, it is necessary to characterize the program activities designed outside the campus. There were three things that were asked of the student respondents regarding this aspect, including assignments during activities, work programs during MBKM program implementation, and the suitability of assignments and work programs with the conversion of grades and credits in courses in each study program.

Regarding the willingness of activities or assignments that require students to relate to fields of knowledge, 64.1% of respondents said that activities during the MBKM program were specifically contextualized with fields of study. Other respondents felt unsure or even did not feel that the activities and assignments during the implementation of the MBKM program were in accordance with their field of study. This finding requires confirmation from students regarding the learning experience with conversion policies, whether for them this is appropriate (Fig. 1).

Several suitability factors are supported by the role of the subject/academic supervisors assigned by the university or study program specifically to assist the students in planning activities, implementing activities, as well as evaluating and reporting activities. In other words, only study programs that has designed specifically based on MBKM curriculum (program-based MBKM curriculum) require the characterization of activities by field of study. These supervisors come from the main study program where students are enrolled so that they fully understand the characteristics of the study program and thus encourage the students to carry out activities that are relevant to the scientific field.



**Fig. 1.** The relevance of MBKM activities with students' study programs.

Their role is different from that of site supervisors who are designated to focus more on technical aspects and coordination with related parties on the site during the activities.

Students who are from study programs which have not implemented or set specific MBKM curriculum may not assign special academic supervisors for the implementation of MBKM programs. It should become the concern of the university's center of curriculum as part of the evaluation. Current university's policy is to encourage the study programs to conduct revitalization on their curriculum subject to the current Ministerial policy, which is to align into Emancipated Learning trend and connect with industrial and business world.

Even though more than half of the respondents said that the activities and assignments of the MBKM program were in accordance with their field of study, the number of respondents who felt or doubted the suitability of the activities was also high (35.9%) – more than a third of the respondents. It can be said that there is an ambivalence in understanding students when participating this program with the graduate profile they expect while in college.

### 3.2 Students' Perception Towards the Relevance of the Programs

While carrying out the program, students were involved intensively with activities in the field outside the main study program in which they are enrolled. The MBKM programs are indeed important manifestation of student-centered learning based on experiential learning approach which provide bigger opportunities for the students to develop their potentials based on their passion and current trend. This activity encourages the students to optimize creativity, capacity, personality, and student's needs, as well as develop independence in seeking and finding knowledge through field realities and dynamics such as ability requirements, real problems, social interaction, collaboration, self-management, performance demands, targets and achievements [8].

Student's perceptions regarding the activities were obtained based on two aspects, namely how they think about the learning experience and academic course load as indicated by credit conversion. Current university's policy emphasizes a course set (designed for one semester) that converts directly to the equivalent of 20 credits for total activities based on the curriculum in one semester.

Regarding the university's policy of the score conversion, the majority of students (85.7%) perceived that the MBKM activities were worth 20 credits (as set based on

the university's policy). Students conveyed some information including learning experiences, starting from preparation for the activities to the assignments obtained while carrying out activities outside the campus. For students who said that it was not appropriate or did not know how to calculate the score conversion (14.3%) said that they did not find a connection between the activities in the field and the field of study they took on campus.

Another consideration related to the suitability of the score conversion policy is the duration of their participation in activities equivalent to and even longer than normal academic calendar of 16-week term, namely 44.4% of students took part in the program for 4 months (equivalent to 16 weeks) and the remaining 5 to 6 months (equivalent to 20–21 weeks). With this duration is considered more complex for the students because they had to conduct activities in the field as well as assignments set by the academic supervisors who ensure that the assignments can be carried out in accordance with the context of the student's field of study. In principle, the MBKM programs require the students spend more time in the field with all its dynamics than normal lecture activities on campus.

The second aspect is general reflection on the learning experience in the field. In general, students showed positive perceptions which are indicated by learning experiences related to personality and character development. Some of the benefits of learning experiences while participating in the MBKM program were the increase of sense of self-autonomy, responsibility, discipline, self-confidence, as well as having the ability to manage and work together or collaboration (because of meeting and working with new people). The following inquiry from one student shows how the students really experienced personal transformation while being involved in the activities in the field.

*“[during the programs], I am basically becoming more disciplined on time, when I joined this program it increased my confidence and developed the character that I have because I had to meet many people [and work together with them].”*  
(S1)

The learning experience of the students when implementing the MBKM program is not on the aspect of scientific substance, but on aspects of personality and character that have an impact on students' cognitive stabilization in deepening the knowledge of each study program. Personality traits may affect examination performance by means of intention, anticipated regret, student identity, and autonomous intrinsic motivation [9].

The ambivalence of the student's learning experiences with MBKM programs outside the study program is more due to students' unawareness regarding the program they are participating in or lack of information. Students may not find out which program they are in or they may not get enough direction from the course of study. This is not entirely the responsibility of the study program because it is a fact that not all study programs at the University have implemented the MBKM special curriculum – a curriculum policy that implements independent learning that is unique to the profile of study program graduates.

A holistic evaluation is needed in the implementation of the MBKM program so that student anxiety can be minimized. In addition, study program principals can firmly “release” their students to carry out academic activities outside the study program. Two

recommendations that can be implemented are first by encouraging the study programs to revitalize the MBKM curriculum with the characteristics of each program. The implication of this policy is that students get assistance from the beginning to implementation, contextual assignments so as to encourage students to get a maximum learning experience and can relate it to the field of knowledge they take on campus, and students can project their action plans after participating in the MBKM program outside campus [10].

The second recommendation relates to the revitalization of the Emancipated Learning policy by the university in accordance with the primary indicator of university's performance (IKU), including developing a more systematic off-campus student exchange curriculum. In addition, in order to provide wider opportunities for students to take part in off-campus activities, universities need to increase collaboration with various parties, especially how to increase cooperation between universities that link the business world and the industrial world (DUDI) so that students are able to gain direct or hands-on experience from the industrial world and competencies in accordance with the needs of the labor market.

## 4 Conclusion and Suggestion

Students' ambivalence is mainly due to the lack of information and academic supervision provided by the study programs while they are conducting off-campus activities as part of the MBKM programs. In general, it is expected there should be curriculum revitalization and evaluation in terms of implementing MBKM programs, especially implementing independent off-campus learning. Future studies are recommended on the practice, evaluation, and development of the MBKM curriculum in the Indonesian context and adapted to the dynamic challenges of the times.

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