



A Study on the Impact of MBKM Program Implementation in Vocational Education: Improving Graduates' Competitiveness

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Abstract. MBKM is a program initiated by the Ministry of Education and Culture to improve the quality of vocational education in Indonesia. The program aims to allow vocational students to learn independently, innovate, and be creative. However, vocational education institutions face several challenges, including curriculum development and the quality of graduates, students, and teachers. To address these issues, qualitative research was conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of MBKM in producing competitive vocational graduates ready to enter the workforce. The study involved direct observation of a vocational college, visual analysis, literature review, and interviews. The research was conducted at the ATI Dewantara Palopo campus, where the MBKM program was implemented. The findings revealed that all graduates who completed the MBKM curriculum were accepted to work at their respective internship sites. The first batch of graduates who completed the program in August 2022, including four Electronics Engineering and two Automotive Mechanical Engineering graduates, were accepted at their internship sites. Most internship students received job offers from their respective internship sites. The study concluded that implementing MBKM has effectively produced competitive vocational graduates who are well-equipped to enter the workforce. Therefore, it recommends that vocational education institutions adopt the MBKM program to improve the quality of education and graduates.

Keywords: Vocational · Qualitative research · Learning Outcomes

1 Introduction

The Minister of Education and Culture in Indonesia, Nadiem Makarim, has introduced several policies to reform the education system. One of these policies is the Merdeka Belajar - Kampus Merdeka program, which promotes student independence and flexibility in higher education. This program allows students to study three semesters outside

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their program, allowing them to explore new interests and broaden their academic horizons [1]. Merdeka Kampus is an innovative and flexible learning environment designed to foster a learning culture that is responsive to the needs of students. It is an autonomous learning platform where students can choose their courses, learning methods, and assessments based on their interests and goals [2]. This program is intended to promote lifelong learning and equip students with the skills and knowledge they need to succeed in the 21st century.

In the context of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), lifelong learning is crucial to ensure that learners stay up-to-date with industry changes and technological advancements. TVET learners require ongoing upskilling and reskilling to remain competitive and meet the demands of the job market [3]. According to the Director-General of Higher Education, Merdeka Belajar offers a range of programs that aim to provide students with diverse learning opportunities and enhance their critical thinking, problem-solving, communication, and collaboration skills. These programs include internships or work experiences, community projects, school teaching, student exchanges, research, entrepreneurial activities, independent studies or projects, and humanitarian projects.

At first glance, it appears to be a new educational policy within the context of the current MBKM policy. Merdeka Belajar, or the freedom to learn, refers to students' significant right to select the instructional strategy to help them design and enjoy their educational experience. Students do, however, have an industrialized mindset. Professional vocational educators adapt to change and focus on their pupils' capacity to master work skills (learning outcomes). They are getting job-search training. The school is good when graduates can quickly get jobs [4]. Further investigation is required to understand this issue and the policy's underlying philosophy fully. The critical notion of education is used to find and examine the issue [5].

Quote writing Sintiawati et al. [6] through a variety of learning activities such as student exchanges, internships/work practices, research, independent projects, entrepreneurial activities, humanitarian projects, teaching assistance at education units, projects in villages/thematic real work colleges, Policy Merdeka Belajar - Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) offers opportunities for students to gain a broader learning experience with new competencies. Also, students can participate in extracurricular learning activities at the same tertiary institution with a specific credit score.

In light of this justification, ATI Dewantara Palopo, one of the universities for vocational education, introduced MBKM, which is anticipated to bring about substantial improvements for college graduates who are prepared to compete in the labor market at a national and international level.

2 Method

The author explored how students learn when applying a curriculum based on the "Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka" (MBKM) policy in this study. The MBKM is a higher education policy in Indonesia that aims to promote student independence and flexibility in choosing courses and learning methods.

To analyze student learning, the concept of recontextualization was used. Recontextualization refers to the process of adapting knowledge learned in one context to another

context [7]. This is not a simple transfer of knowledge but rather a process of modifying knowledge, context, and people to fit a new setting.

To collect data, the researchers used observation and interview methods. They observed how students learned and the learning outcomes they achieved while implementing the MBKM-based curriculum. The researchers also interviewed academic staff to obtain their perspectives on the effectiveness of the MBKM-based curriculum.

After collecting the data, the researchers conducted a descriptive data analysis. They analyzed the data to identify patterns and themes related to student learning in the MBKM-based curriculum. The analysis results were then used to conclude the effectiveness of the MBKM policy in promoting student learning and independence.

3 Results and Discussion

3.1 Vocational MBKM Curriculum

Vocational education is training that results in graduates who are prepared for the workforce and have the necessary skills. As we go into the fourth industrial revolution, there have been significant changes in several industries and the skillsets required of workers. This essay will examine the effects of the fourth industrial revolution on the vocational education curriculum. A vocational education curriculum appropriate for the industrial revolution 4.0 era and relevant to meeting the need for new skills, such as creating and managing coding, big data, and artificial intelligence, must be developed. This is based on studies of various sources and business practices. Blended learning, which combines in-person and online instruction, should be used in the vocational curriculum to improve the talents and skills of graduates. Also, the program must cover competence 4.0 topics, including data, technology, and human literacy. Government, educational institutions, and businesses must collaborate to renew the strategy and substance of the vocational education curriculum if it is to have a significant influence. To create the best-graduating performance, teachers also need to be able to plan effective learning [8].

The Indonesian government has implemented a new curriculum for the educational process in elementary school, junior high school, and senior high school called Curriculum 2013 to improve the human resource quality and the nation's competitiveness in tandem with the development of knowledge, technology, and art [9].

The Director General of Higher Education [1] states that the problems that can be inventoried in the current vocational student internship program are as follows:

(a) Evaluation of the Ministry of Education and Culture

The policy related to the duration and timing of internships for students in Vocational Higher Education Provider Institutions (PTPPV) is currently not established. There is no uniform determination of credit allocation across campuses under the Merdeka Campus program of the Directorate General of Vocational Education.

(b) Evaluation of PTPPV

Most PTPPVs face challenges in finding suitable internship opportunities that match the competencies and profiles of their graduates. Some PTPPVs allocate an average of eight

credits for internships, but the duration and timing of the internships do not align with industry requirements.

(c) IDUKA Evaluation

The challenges in the vocational education sector in Indonesia include the absence of information on PTPPVs and their expertise programs and a lack of confidence in vocational students' competencies. To address these issues, the Ministry of Education and Research has implemented an internship program that includes micro-credential scholarships and independent studies. The aim is to give students more opportunities to gain practical experience and develop their competencies, which can enhance their chances of securing employment in their chosen field.

The Ministry of Research and Technology has launched Merdeka Belajar to provide vocational students the freedom to learn independently, be innovative, and be creative. The Kampus Merdeka program is part of the initiative to improve the education system in Indonesia. The program is designed to enhance the quality of vocational higher education by creating a more targeted lecture atmosphere that emphasizes appropriate competencies and better learning quality.

According to Veza [10], Graduation Competence Standards in vocational colleges are standards for the qualifications of graduates' abilities, including attitudes, knowledge, and skills anticipated to be attained when students finish their study time.

3.2 Implementation of the MBKM Curriculum

The Dewantara Industrial Technology Academy (ATI Dewantara) Palopo, located in Palopo and operates under the Dewantara Utama Education Foundation, was established on June 21, 1999, with a Diploma Three (DIII) level of education. The campus offers three study programs: Automotive Mechanical Engineering, Electronics Engineering, and Civil Engineering. Interestingly, the ATI Dewantara Palopo governance system was reactivated in 2019 after experiencing a governance vacuum (Fig. 1).

Implementing the MBKM curriculum at ATI Dewantara Palopo is focused on delivering a conceptual model framework through various learning elements [11]. The curriculum is designed based on 60% practical and 40% theory, where practical skills are

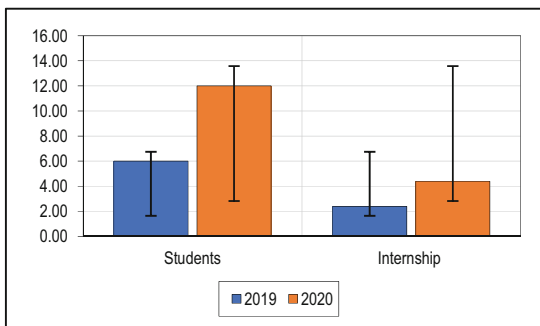


Fig. 1. Internship diagram ATI Dewantara students Palopo

acquired through laboratory work, workshops, internet simulations, and exposure to the industrial world. The semester lecture system is organized on campus from the 1st to 3rd semester, and from the 4th to 6th semester, students are placed in industries for practical training. This approach allows students to gain hands-on experience and develop their skills in real-world settings, preparing them for the demands of the industry.

Since its establishment in 2019, the total number of students at ATI Dewantara Palopo was only six, consisting of students majoring in electronic and mechanical engineering automotive, all already working as apprentices. In 2020, the number of students participating in internships during their fifth semester increased to 35 temporary people. The number of apprentices recruited by companies consisted of four people majoring in machine automotive and two people majoring in electronics engineering at PT BMS in Kalimantan, one person majoring in machine automotive, and one person majoring in electronics engineering in Kendari, one person majoring in machine automotive at PT Panrita Bawalipu, and one person majoring in machine automotive at PT Prabu Morowali. Therefore, a total of 12 students were recruited as apprentices in 2020. As for the situation in 2021, some students are in their fourth semester and are expected to be recruited during their fifth semester.

Based on the figure, the student study method implemented at ATI Dewantara Palopo follows the MBKM curriculum, allowing students to obtain credits for all courses they have taken at graduation. The chart shows that implementing the MBKM curriculum at the ATI Dewantara Palopo campus is highly effective, as evidenced by the significant increase in the number of students accepted as apprentices in 2021, which rose from 6 to 12 people. This indicates that the students who followed the MBKM curriculum have acquired the skills and knowledge highly valued by the industry.

4 Conclusion

Based on the research data analysis and discussion results, it can be concluded that the description of students' environmental concern for waste problems through applying the Field Trip method to environmental education courses cannot increase students' environmental awareness. Based on these findings, suggestions for future researchers, if there are researchers interested in researching the same theme, are expected to be able to develop this research because the conditions found in current students will be different from future students.

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