

Implementation of MBKM Program in the Civil Engineering Department, Faculty of Engineering, UNP

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ABSTRACT

The implementation of the MBKM Program in the Civil Engineering Department at FT UNP was investigated to analyze its effectiveness and challenges. This descriptive qualitative study aimed to explore how the program is executed, the obstacles encountered by students, and the advantages it offers. Through interviews with six MBKM participant students and three department lecturers, data analysis revealed 17 codes, 10 sub-themes, and four main themes, including MBKM programs and activities, experiences and skills, administrative concerns, and challenges faced. The findings underscored the program's positive impact on students' skill enhancement, practical exposure, and holistic understanding of professional environments. Participation in activities such as PMM, Kampus Mengajar, and Magang Merdeka facilitated practical experiences, networking, and skill development, albeit challenges like administrative issues and credit conversion were identified. Overall, the MBKM Program significantly contributes to students' personal and professional growth, emphasizing the importance of effective coordination between stakeholders to optimize its implementation.

Keywords: MBKM; Implementation; Interview; Qualitative Research; Skill development; Experiences.

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INTRODUCTION

Higher education in today's era faces complex dynamics alongside the advancements of time. This poses challenges in creating education that progresses in line with the skills and abilities needed to face the future. Merdeka Belajar – Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) Program is a initiative that provides opportunities for universities to guide students to become experts in the field of science and technology, while also building strong character to prepare them for the demands of the workforce. [1]. The MBKM program was initiated by the Minister of Education and Culture through Minister of Education and Culture Regulation Number 3 of 2020 concerning National Standards for Higher Education, with a focus on Learning Process Standards, particularly in Articles 15 and 18 [2].

Universitas Negeri Padang (UNP) is one of the state universities that has implemented the MBKM program. The MBKM program has been running at UNP since the Academic Year of January-June 2021. UNP collaborates with various partners in the fields of education, banking, human resource development, national defense, and the three pillars of higher education. [3]. The Civil Engineering Department of UNP aims to produce graduates who are competitive in the global job market. Graduates should possess the ability to adapt and respond to changes effectively, as well as the capability to identify and capitalize on various opportunities. Students

can gain new experiences and ease of access through credit conversion between their respective study programs within the civil engineering department and the MBKM program.

The implementation of the MBKM program marks a new era in higher education in Indonesia. To achieve the maximum goals of the MBKM curriculum, it is important to conduct comprehensive socialization about the implementation of the concept of free learning campuses to students, lecturers, and the entire community. [4]. Learning activities within the MBKM, as stipulated in Minister of Education and Culture Regulation No. 3 of 2020 Article 15 paragraph 1, both within and outside the Study Program, include: Pertukaran Pelajar, Magang/Praktik Kerja, Atensi Mengajar di Satuan Pendidikan, Penelitian/Riset, Proyek Kemanusiaan, Kegiatan Wirausaha, Studi/Proyek Independen, dan Membangun Desa, Kuliah Kerja Nyata (KKN) Tematik [5]. The implementation of MBKM has been outlined to provide programs that empower students to choose freely. The MBKM is aligned with the provisions of Minister of Education and Culture Regulation No. 3 of 2020 concerning National Standards for Higher Education. This regulation mandates universities to offer options for students to broaden their learning experiences, including: First, the opportunity for students to take up to 40 credits outside the university within a maximum period of 2 semesters. Second, students can also take up to 20 credits in a different study program within the same university, within one semester.

Before commencing this research, based on the researcher's own observations, several students from the Civil Engineering Department participating in MBKM were involved in the study. Additionally, three lecturers from the UNP Civil Engineering Department, namely the Vocational Education Lecturer in Building Engineering, the Program Head, and the Department Head, were also engaged. The focus of the observation in this research pertained to the concept, development, and future opinions regarding MBKM.

According to participating students, the MBKM program was initiated due to the need for a more comprehensive and practical approach to educating students. Higher education is currently facing increasingly complex demands from the job market and technological advancements. MBKM serves as a solution to provide students with in-depth experiences beyond campus-based learning through a six-month program resembling field practice. However, effective communication between students, lecturers, and the Department Head is crucial in determining the conversion of credits with the MBKM program. Despite running for two years, the program still faces several obstacles hindering the student experience. Identified issues include difficulties in document processing and credit conversion. Additionally, some students feel that the 20-credit conversion is not always fully met. Despite support from the UNP Civil Engineering Department, these challenges persist.

METHOD

The research type conducted is descriptive research with a qualitative approach. Descriptive research involves gathering information to test hypotheses or respond to questions about the current situation of the research subject. Qualitative research describes data in oral or written form [6]. The aim of this research is to outline the results of implementing the Merdeka Belajar – Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) program at the Civil Engineering Department of Universitas Negeri Padang. The research location is at the Civil Engineering Department of Universitas Negeri Padang, Padang City, West Sumatra Province. The research will be conducted in January 2024. The population of this research consists of all Civil Engineering Department students participating in MBKM. The sampling technique used by the researcher is purposive

sampling, considering respondents from students who recently completed the MBKM program (6 individuals) and lecturers who generally contribute to and assist students in the department in implementing MBKM (3 individuals, including 3 Program Coordinators and 1 Department Head).

Data collection techniques include primary and secondary data collection. Primary data collection techniques involve observation and interviews. Observations refer to direct observation of activities, interactions, or impacts resulting from the implementation of the MBKM Program. Interviews are conducted by the researcher to ask several main and in-depth questions related to the MBKM program to student respondents. Secondary data collection techniques involve supporting documents and documentation. Supporting documents include data collected from existing sources such as books, journals, government documents, research reports, or available databases regarding the MBKM program. Documentation is used to reinforce opinions or views expressed by students. In this research, it is also useful for collecting data sources other than humans in the form of photos.

The research instrument chosen is In-Depth Interviews. In-Depth Interviews are face-to-face data collection methods with informants to obtain comprehensive and in-depth information [7]. The main goal is to gain comprehensive insights into participants' experiences, views, and understandings related to the MBKM Program in the Civil Engineering Department. The interview will be conducted using a pre-prepared question guide focusing on various aspects of the MBKM Program, including its benefits, challenges faced, and suggestions for improvement. Interview participants will be selected from among civil engineering department students who have participated in or completed the MBKM Program. The interviews will be conducted directly, either face-to-face or via teleconference, between the researcher and the participants. During the interviews, the researcher will record participants' responses and try to build a good relationship to create a supportive and open environment.

Data analysis involves testing, organizing data into tables, and synthesizing evidence to support propositions or initial hypotheses in research [8]. Data obtained from qualitative in-depth interviews are then described descriptively. Thematic analysis is used to analyze qualitative data from these in-depth interviews. Thematic analysis is an analysis method used to analyze codes emerging from participants' words to obtain themes [9]. Thematic analysis is most commonly used in qualitative research because of its ease and accessibility [9]. After the data collection process with in-depth interviews, the recorded results or records are then transcribed verbatim using Microsoft Word. The transcribed verbatim is then given coding. Using an inductive thematic approach, where data are grouped according to the same theme and then categorized for the same themes [10].

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The research results consist of verbatim from in-depth interviews involving several students (6 student respondents participating in MBKM) and 3 Department Lecturers in the implementation of the Free Learning Campus (MBKM) Program, who participated in this study. All participants are Academic Civitas of the Civil Engineering Department, Universitas Negeri Padang (UNP). Data analysis yielded 17 codes, 10 sub-themes, and four themes (Picture and Table 1). The generated themes are: (1) MBKM Programs and Activities of MBKM, (2) Experiences and Skill, (3) Administrative and Credit Conversion, (4) Challenges and Obstacles.

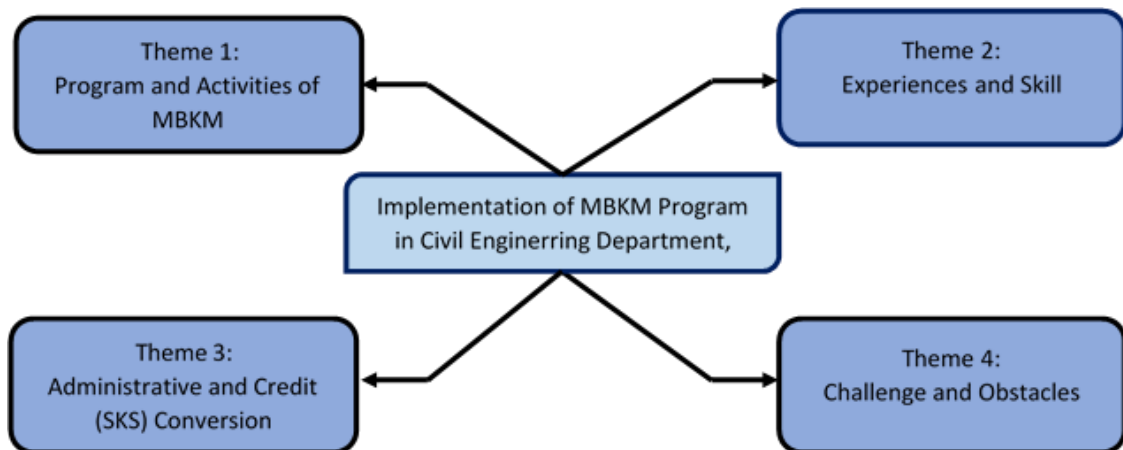


Figure 1. Structures of Research Results

Table 1. Theme, Sub-Theme, and Research Codes Overview

No	Theme	Sub Theme	Codes
1	Program and Activities of MBKM	MBKM Program	Code 1: Concept of Program
			Code 2: Goals of Program
		Forms of Activities	Code 3: Forms of PMM Activities
			Code 4: Forms of Kampus Mengajar Program Code 5: Forms of Magang Merdeka Program
2	Experiences and Skills	Experiences in Activities	Code 6: Practical Learning Experiences off Campus
		Impact of Experiences	Code 7: Impact of Development in MBKM Experience
		Skill Development	Code 8: Soft Skills Code 9: Hard Skills
3	Administrative and Credit (SKS) Conversion	Administrative Procedures	Code 10: MBKM Administrative Prep Process Code 11: MBKM Administrative Approval Process
			Credit Conversion Process
4	Challenges and Obstacles	Administrative Challenges	Code 13: Administrative Process Challenge in MBKM
		Credit Conversion Challenges	Code 14: MBKM Credit Conversion Challenges
		Handling Challenges and Obstacles	Code 15: Consultation and Recommendations
			Code 16: Departemental Assistance Code 17: Handling of Credit Conversion Management and Approval of Credit Conversion

A. Theme 1: Program and Activities of MBKM

1. MBKM Program

The MBKM (Merdeka Belajar - Kampus Merdeka) program is a revolutionary initiative in the higher education sector in Indonesia. Through MBKM, students are given the freedom to explore their academic potential beyond their department and university. The MBKM program is an effort of the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia to encourage students to master various abilities [11]. The MBKM program also expands the reach of education by allowing students to learn in various universities and industries.

In the Department of Civil Engineering, the MBKM Program is also followed by several students. The Department also provides opportunities for students to broaden their horizons beyond the Department. The implementation of this program allows Civil Engineering students to study in various universities and industries, enriching their learning experiences and preparing them to be more skilled and knowledgeable professionals.

In its concept, the MBKM program gives students the freedom to choose not only to study within their study programs but also to gain direct practical experience in the industry, including participating in student exchanges between universities. This concept promotes cross-campus learning, expands horizons, and nurtures skills needed to compete in an increasingly complex professional world. Students are also given the opportunity to experience studying in different places, converting 20 credits per semester, and exploring various learning opportunities according to their interests and needs.

The goal of the MBKM program in this Department is to provide students with a broad learning experience. They can choose to study in other universities or participate in industry internships. In Kampus Mengajar, the chosen students carry out their duties and roles by adjusting to the circumstances in their assigned partner schools and paying attention to the requirements of the schools, teachers, students, and parents [12]. All of this aims to prepare them to be more knowledgeable and experienced individuals, ready to work in various professional environments.

2. Forms of Activities

Program MBKM: The Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) programs participated by students in the Civil Engineering Department at UNP include: Pertukaran Mahasiswa Merdeka (PMM) Program, Kampus Mengajar Program, and Magang Merdeka Program.

- a. Pertukaran Mahasiswa Merdeka (PMM): The program is conducted between universities with a credit transfer system. Student exchange can shape students' attitudes such as appreciating cultural diversity, perspectives, religions, beliefs, opinions, or original findings of others, cooperation, social sensitivity, or social concern for society and the environment [13]. In concept, students interested in experiencing how to study outside their own campus can try and register, but it is advisable by the department to communicate first before registering. The forms of activities were expressed by one respondent as follows:

"The MBKM program I participated in is the student exchange program where we exchange temporarily for one semester at the Receiving Higher Education Institution we choose. For me, it was at the Receiving Higher Education

Institution at the Jakarta State Polytechnic. The activity I participated in while there, the first from the student exchange program provided the Nusantara module, where the Nusantara module is our activity to explore the city of Jakarta, what's in Jakarta, like that".

b. **Kampus Mengajar Program**

The Program is one of the MBKM programs aimed at providing different learning experiences to students. This program makes schools a place for teaching practice, both in schools in cities and remote areas where Kampus Mengajar activities can be carried out at elementary schools, junior high schools, and high [13]. In this program, students have the opportunity to teach in an environment outside the campus. This program is designed to provide practical experience in the process of learning and teaching outside the campus environment.

Participation in the Kampus Mengajar Program allows students to develop pedagogical skills. Through direct teaching to students, students can improve their communication skills, understand subject matter deeply, and develop leadership skills in managing classes or small groups. This was expressed as a form of Kampus Mengajar process by one respondent:

"Then, we are also required to provide innovations in learning. Not exactly required, but it is necessary to innovate in learning. How to keep the students from getting bored in the learning process. Then, of course, public speaking is also trained in the Kampus Mengajar program."

- c. **Magang Merdeka Program:** The Program is an initiative that encourages students to have greater freedom and independence in determining the course of their education. This program aims to provide holistic and relevant learning experiences for students as well as the demands of the job market. MBKM not only emphasizes academic aspects (hard skills) but also the development of soft skills, practical skills, and student independence.

The internship program was born out of the lack of work experience for college graduates, making them less prepared to work in the industry/professional world. The internship program is conducted for 1-2 semesters by directly learning in the workplace (experiential learning). Activities for 6 months are equivalent to 20 credits expressed in the form of competencies in hard and soft skills [13]. In the Merdeka Internship Program, students can be involved in various types of internships, ranging from internships in private companies, government agencies, non-profit organizations, to startups or small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). This program is designed to provide valuable work experience that cannot be obtained in the campus environment. Students can apply the theoretical knowledge they learned in class to real-world contexts in the workplace.

"Then for the Merdeka Internship program, the program is the same, yes, also 6 months from February to July the program, we learn about the industrial world for 6 months. Then, we dive directly into the field where the learning previously, during the academic world, was not so deep, but after this Internship program, we are taught to directly practice in the industrial world".

B. Theme 2: Experiences dan Skills

1. Experiences in MBKM Activities

Experiences gained through participating in the MBKM program provide students with practical exposure to the outside world that may not be available within their university environment. According to Anggraini and Siska's (2021) research findings, one of the benefits of participating in MBKM activities is the enhancement of competencies and the acquisition of experiences beyond the scope of their study backgrounds, enabling them to develop other competencies essential for the workforce, such as communication skills, diligence due to motivation from fellow college peers, building networks, and learning public speaking. The experiences obtained from engaging in MBKM activities are directly felt by some participating students, as described below:

"So, we are required to interact or engage in teaching and learning processes with students. Additionally, we are also required, not just encouraged, to innovate in teaching. It is important to innovate in teaching to prevent students from getting bored during the learning process. Also, public speaking skills are definitely honed in the Kampus Mengajar program."

As outlined, the experiences gained by students during MBKM activities, including practical experience and learning outside the campus, vary from one campus to another. Undoubtedly, students encounter new experiences due to differences in the context of each university or the distinct classes within each MBKM program. This diversity provides opportunities for students interested in participating in MBKM programs.

2. Impact of MBKM Activity Experiences

The forms of experiences gained from MBKM activities by civil engineering department students are perceived to have both direct and gradual impacts during and even after participation in the activities. The MBKM activities programmed by the government through the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology have a profoundly positive impact on students, enabling them to develop both academic and non-academic skills outside the campus, thus providing new learning experiences [14]. This is articulated by one respondent:

"The impact on my own development, what I experienced, firstly because our original university did not provide many practical experiences, I went to a polytechnic, where I gained a lot of practical experience. At the university, we learn about structures, steelwork, while at the polytechnic, we are actually taught how to work with steel."

3. Skill Development

Skill development is a primary focus of the Independent Learning Campus Initiative (MBKM). MBKM not only offers opportunities to acquire academic knowledge but also to develop various soft and hard skills crucial for success in the workforce. Moreover, this policy aims to enhance graduates' competencies in both soft and hard skills to make them more prepared and relevant to the needs of the

times. Through various experimental learning programs, students are facilitated to develop their potentials according to their interests and talents.

a. Soft Skill Development

The development of soft skills, directly or indirectly, is perceived by students as a benefit of participating in MBKM, such as communication, leadership, teamwork, and discipline, which are highly emphasized. Additionally, MBKM policies provide students with experiences to adapt to the learning culture developed in other educational institutions. This undoubtedly enhances students' soft skills both cognitively and empirically, fostering a competitive-collaborative attitude based on scientific reasoning, thus resulting in the emergence of new adaptive attitudes towards professions and new job fields.

"Okay, in terms of soft skills, as mentioned earlier, there are numerous soft skills acquired, ranging from public speaking, leadership, discipline, and more. These are some of the soft skills that definitely have an impact on oneself, from the program's inception until now."

Students in the department experience soft skill development through MBKM, including the enhancement of non-technical skills such as communication, public speaking, leadership, and discipline.

b. Hard Skill Development

In addition to developing soft skills, MBKM also emphasizes the development of relevant hard skills in students' fields of study. Hard skills are characterized as scientific, technological, and technical competencies associated with particular fields of study [15]. For example, civil engineering students may learn skills such as design and planning, the use of technical software, or direct field practices. This is directly expressed by a respondent:

"During the Internship program, we were taught to use survey mapping tools. However, because we, from the 2019 batch, were still in the pandemic period, we learned virtually, without directly handling the tools. In this Internship program, we were given the opportunity to directly handle and practice using those tools."

Students in the department who participate in MBKM describe gaining hard skills such as practical skills, the use of tools and equipment, design and planning, and the use of software applications.

C. Theme 3: Administrative and Credit Conversion

1. Administrative

MBKM administration involves the preparation and administrative approval processes from relevant departments, as well as the management of documents and information related to MBKM activities. This includes preparing documents such as inter-university cooperation agreements, permits, and approval documents for specific activities conducted outside the campus. Administrative preparation and credit conversion can pose challenges, but the Department helps mediate administrative challenges, such as differences in courses and credit hours between

universities in the MBKM Program. This is elucidated by one Department respondent:

"Well, I encountered, there were some people (students) who faced such issues. If it's about different semesters, it's not a problem. Different credit hours, it's not a problem. So, it could be, for example, they took two credit hours there, and it turns out that the course is three credit hours here, that's not a problem. It can be converted. It's not a problem, really."

With good administrative processes, both the originating campus and the destination institution can ensure that every activity carried out in MBKM complies with the respective regulatory requirements.

2. Credit Conversion

Credit conversion is also an important aspect of MBKM involving the recognition and evaluation of courses taken outside the student's home institution for conversion within the Department. However, there are challenges and obstacles, as articulated by one respondent:

"The lecturer (at that time) said just participate first. Then when it's time for credit conversion, when we return and consult, which courses are aligned with ours, there are some courses that are aligned, like technical economics, drainage, and so on. But to fulfill the 16 credit hours that Ratri took, Ratri had to take the scaffolding work reference 2, which might be difficult to convert here because we don't have that course."

Meanwhile, the credit conversion process allows students to receive recognition for their learning efforts after participating in the MBKM Program.

D. Theme 4: Challenges and Obstacles

1. Administrative Challenges

The implementation of the Independent Learning Campus Initiative (MBKM) program, it is inevitable that students, departments, and other relevant parties will face challenges. One potential challenge relates to the administrative process of MBKM, such as document preparation, licensing, and inter-agency coordination. Administrative issues like these can hinder the implementation of MBKM and require significant efforts to resolve.

"The involvement of the Department head is indeed extensive. However, it happened until 2021, then in the following years, there was less involvement because the students went directly to UNP and directly to their destination (MBKM Program). So we didn't know, if asked at that time, in 2021, which of our students participated in MBKM? We didn't know. Suddenly, they returned, and they asked for credit conversion. I didn't accept that incident."

2. Credit Conversion Challenges

Additionally, challenges may arise in the process of credit conversion, where differences exist in credit weights and the start time of lectures between campuses. This process can be complex and requires good coordination between participating

students and departments to ensure fair recognition of the courses taken by students.

"So, the conversion of courses has many challenges, starting from the number of credit hours not matching... The course names here, for example, Concrete Technology, there it's titled Concrete 1. Then, the number of credit hours sometimes, although the names are the same, here (our department) it's three credit hours, but there it's 2 credit hours."

These challenges can impede students' progress in the MBKM program and require careful solutions as outlined by respondents in Theme 3.

3. Addressing Challenges and Obstacles

In addressing administrative challenges and credit conversion obstacles, it is important for the Department to provide adequate support to students. This may include providing technical assistance, consulting with experienced administrative staff, or implementing effective issue reporting and handling systems. Thus, administrative processes and credit conversion can proceed smoothly, allowing students to access and benefit from MBKM opportunities effectively. The Department's handling of challenges or obstacles is quite satisfactory, as seen in the facilitation of the licensing process and Credit Conversion Input.

"So, the solution is for the ones who enter the grades; the solution comes from the MBKM center to the department that enters the grades, so it's up to the Department Head now to decide. If they convert it, it's not a problem whether the credit hours are different or if they are in different semesters, it's not a problem anymore. It directly enters their transcript. For example, who was the student yesterday? So, in this SIA 2, there are MBKM options, for example, this is an exchange student program, right? So here, in Civil Engineering, on December 2, 2023, what was the name of the student? Let me remember the name (typing the name) (typing the student ID), so, for example, if they took something there, like learning evaluation, it's directly converted to the learning evaluation course here, even though it's in the upper semester."

CONCLUSION

Merdeka Belajar - Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) at the Civil Engineering Department of UNP has provided various opportunities and benefits for students in developing their skills, experiences, and understanding. Through the PMM program, Kampus Mengajar, and Magang Merdeka, students have gained practical experience outside the campus environment, enriching their understanding of the working world and broadening their insights into various fields. Participation in the PMM provides students with the opportunity to learn in different environments, expand their networks, and develop positive attitudes such as social concern. Kampus Mengajar program helps students develop pedagogical and leadership skills through direct teaching to elementary school students. Meanwhile, Magang Merdeka provides valuable work experience and allows students to apply their theoretical knowledge in real-world workplace contexts.

The experiences and impacts of MBKM activities indicate that students experience an increase

in skills, both in terms of soft skills and hard skills. They also experience improvements in communication, leadership, and teamwork skills. This provides significant benefits for the personal and professional development of students, preparing them to face the challenges of the working world. However, there are several challenges that need to be addressed in the implementation of MBKM, including administrative issues and credit conversion. Good coordination between departments and students is required to address these challenges and ensure that the MBKM process runs smoothly and efficiently.

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