

Influential Factors in the Success of the *Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) Program Implementation: A Case Study Among Students*

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Abstract: *The implementation of the Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) Program has a positive impact on the competencies of Guidance and Counseling students in the field as practitioners. This study aims to analyze the factors influencing the successful implementation of the MBKM program among students. A qualitative method was employed, utilizing a case study design with a program review option. Six students were selected as research subjects using the random sampling technique. The instruments used in this study included interview sheets, evaluation sheets, and documentation forms. Thematic analysis was utilized to examine the collected data. The analysis results indicate that three general themes contribute positively to the competencies of counselors: supporting system, experience learning, and satisfaction. The supporting system includes institutional support, mentorship, and student resources. Experience learning refers to the hands-on, practical experiences that students gain in the field, which enhance their understanding and skills. Satisfaction encompasses the students' overall contentment with the program and their perceived value of the learning experiences. Based on these results, this study can serve as a reference for future evaluations and improvements in implementing the MBKM program. These findings underscore the importance of a well-supported learning environment, practical experience, and student satisfaction in developing the competencies of Guidance and Counseling students in the field.*

Keywords: MBKM; Support System; Experiential Learning; Student Satisfaction; Case Study

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Introduction

Counselors are an important aspect of education that provides psychological services to students. The existence of a school counselor becomes fully functional when the counselor has competent hard skills and soft skills, both theoretically and practically (Atkins et al., 2017; Fitria & Sukma, 2013). This is related to the higher education factor that produces competent counselors, so they need a curriculum that can accommodate them to be ready to enter the world of work. (Putri, 2016). The reason is, higher education plays an important role in providing honing, loving, and nurturing patterns for students so that they can contribute fully to helping society's problems through the world of work that they will later enter.

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The evaluation of the MBKM program in the Universitas PGRI Kanjuruhan Malang (Unikama), Guidance and Counseling study program revealed a notable increase in the competency of prospective counselor students in both soft and hard skills. This improvement is believed to be a result of the recent implementation of the new curriculum by the Ministry of Education and Culture. As indicated in the statement, the Guidance and Counseling Study Program at Universitas PGRI Kanjuruhan Malang (Unikama) has embraced the MBKM Curriculum since 2020 to enhance students competence. Article 15, paragraph 1 of Minister of Education and Culture Regulation No. 3 of 2020 has regulated the adaptation of the MBKM Curriculum. This includes various activities such as student exchange, internships, Thematic KKN, research, teaching assistance, humanitarian projects, entrepreneurship, and independent studies. Many of these activities are believed to have a significant impact on student competence, particularly in counselor competence. Therefore, it is necessary to conduct a descriptive analysis to scientifically explain the factors that contribute to the improvement of counselor competence in the Guidance and Counseling Study Program of Unikama, including both hard and soft skills.

Referring to the explanation above regarding the MBKM Curriculum, the Ministry of Education and Culture released a new curriculum for educational institutions, namely the Independent Campus Learning Curriculum (MBKM), which was launched in 2020 (Suryaman, 2020). This curriculum promotes independent learning, allowing students to choose educational paths based on their interests and talents. It includes practical experience and partnerships, aiming to bridge the gap between ideal and real-world conditions. The MBKM policy focuses on 1) aligning education with the needs of the workforce, 2) building a competency and character-based curriculum, 3) using real-world problems as a learning foundation, 4) placing students at the center of the learning process, and 5) conducting comprehensive evaluations encompassing both academic and non-academic aspects. (Baharuddin, 2021). Furthermore, the Independent Learning Campus (MBKM) program includes four policies including 1) ease of opening new study programs, 2) changes to the Higher Education (PT) accreditation system, 3) ease of State Universities becoming legal entity Universities, and 4) rights studied three semesters outside the study program (Suryaman, 2020). The various forms of rules and focus of the MBKM curriculum have an essential aim, namely encouraging students to become competent agents and master various knowledge according to the needs of the job market.

This research aims to gain a comprehensive understanding of the factors that can influence the successful implementation of the MBKM program. This will help in completing the evaluation of program achievements at the Guidance and Counseling Study Program of Unikama.

Method

This research applied a qualitative method with a case study design, with an explanatory type specifically for describing, analyzing, and evaluating factors in explaining a phenomenon. (Yin, 2014). This type of case study would explore questions about "Why" and "How" the implementation of MBKM which had been launched by the Guidance and Counseling study program could be successful (Priya, 2021). The total population in the study was 12 students who were registered to take part in 3 MBKM program schemes (4 Teaching at school, 2 Humanitarian Projects, 6 Internships). Based on Table 1, out of the 12 students, 6 students were selected as research subjects using quota sampling techniques.

Table 1. Student Demographic Data

Subject	Semester	Age	MBKM
AL	5	20	Internships
DP	5	21	teaching assistance
NAS	5	20	Internships
GP	5	20	Internships
KOB	7	22	Humanity Project
YKW	5	20	teaching assistance

In general, research stages and procedures follow the Hutter-Hennink qualitative research cycle model, which includes the design Cycle, Data Cycle, and Analytic Cycle (Hennink et al., 2020). In stage (1) of the design cycle, activities involve formulating questions and research objects as well as reviewing theory and literature. In stage (2) data cycle, activities include formulating research instruments, selecting research subjects and/or participants, collecting field data, and formulating inductive conclusions. In stage (3) of the analytic cycle, activities consist of data reduction and data coding, description of results, and comparison of results.

Research data was taken using semi-structured interview techniques and documentation (Creswell, 2015). The interview form generally discusses three main indicators, including (1) Implementation of the MBKM program; (2) Obstacles to MBKM implementation (3) Satisfaction with MBKM implementation. The data that has been collected is then analyzed using thematic analysis techniques to identify (coding), analyze, and report patterns of verbal and non-verbal data that the subject shows (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The validity of research data is based on the results of data triangulation from coding results, research data collection, and theoretical support (Creswell, 2015).

Results

The results of the coding and thematic analysis in Table 2 show that three themes or topics are frequently raised by research subjects. These themes theoretically explain the contribution of MBKM implementation in improving student competence. The three themes are supporting systems, experience learning, and satisfaction. The support system in implementing MBKM refers to the socialization of the MBKM program, as well as the role of supervisors and mentors. The learning experience obtained from the implementation of MBKM refers to the establishment of relationships with experts from MBKM partners and the self-enhancement carried out by students through the adaptation and problem-solving process in practical institutions. In addition, the satisfaction obtained by students during the implementation of MBKM is derived from the number of course conversions and self-satisfaction because work or practice matches their talents and interests.

Table 2. Results of Thematic Analysis of Student MBKM Program Implementation

Main-Themes	Sub-Themes
Supporting System	- Role of field assistant lecturer and mentor - Program outreach
Experience Learning	- Adaptation Skills - Problem Solving Skills
Satisfaction	- Course Conversion - Self-actualization

Supporting System

Increasing student competency during the implementation of the MBKM program cannot be separated from the supportive role of universities, study programs, and MBKM partners. As a result of interviews with students, during the MBKM preparation period, they have been given socialization from the university level to study programs. Through this socialization, students are given training regarding what competencies they need. So that students can prepare themselves better in advance.

Examples:

Subject 1

"I received socialization about the MBKM program at the beginning of the semester. From this socialization, I know what I need to prepare to participate in the MBKM scheme that I choose."

Subject 2

"My friends and I were given an introduction and orientation from campuses and study programs related to the MBKM scheme. From this introduction, we know what needs to be prepared to take part in MBKM activities."

In the implementation of the MBKM for the Guidance and Counseling Study Program, every MBKM scheme implemented always includes field assistant lecturers and mentors from partners as field supervisors. The main task of field assistant lecturers and mentors is to guide students regarding soft skills, hard skills, and programs that will be implemented at partner institutions. The role of field assistant lecturers and mentors theoretically plays an important role in increasing student competency. This was explained by students during interviews:

Examples:

Subject 3

"During the implementation of MBKM, we always receive guidance from lecturers and field assistants from the internship site."

Subject 5

"During our humanitarian project activities, we were guided by the field supervisor and field assistant lecturer for the humanitarian project."

Experiential Learning

In addition to the university's support function, another factor that can help increase student competence is experiential learning – learning directly from experience. This is one of the goals that the Ministry of Education and Culture aims to achieve through the MBKM program. During these experiential learning activities, students will gain practical insights into the challenges associated with each MBKM scheme. Ideally, by encountering real-world problems, students will be able to apply their competencies to solve these issues, thereby enhancing their adaptability and problem-solving skills.

Examples:

Subject 4

"During the internship process at the Women's Prison, I experienced culture shock when I first entered that environment. However, I tried hard to adapt as quickly as possible to the environment there."

Subject 5

"When participating in a humanitarian project program, my team and I were required to be sensitive to the needs of children with special needs whom we assisted, and provide treatment according to their needs."

Satisfaction

The concept of satisfaction in relation to the outcomes of this research pertains to the appropriateness of the rewards received from participating in the MBKM program activities. The mentioned reward is the opportunity to convert a relatively large number of credits (up to a maximum of 20) compared to the standard curriculum program. According to students, this conversion makes it easier for them to choose their courses. As a result, the implementation of MBKM can serve as motivation for students to engage more actively in both academic and non-academic pursuits than they did previously.

Example:

Subject 5

After completing the MBKM program, I found it beneficial that up to 8-course credits can be converted, while only 2 credits are recognized under the regular KKN program.

Apart from that, students receive rewards in the form of credit conversions. The satisfaction they experience also comes from self-actualization. In this context, self-actualization refers to the fulfillment students feel when they are able to participate in the MBKM program based on their interests and talents. Several students expressed great happiness because the MBKM program they chose was the realization of their long-standing dreams.

Example:

Subject 6

"I really wanted to work as a teacher, so when I was selected to be one of the students who passed the teaching program at school, I was very happy."

Discussion

It is important to provide outreach to the program that will be implemented. Research conducted by Chong et al. (2021) suggests that socialization for newcomers to an institution has a positive impact on increasing job satisfaction. Universities use this strategy to prepare students for MBKM activities. Through socialization, incoming students receive orientation about the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviors needed to adapt to a new environment (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979).

Apart from the role of socialization, Chong et al., (2021) The study also pointed out that improving the competence of new workers, or in this case students, could be attributed to the influence of supervisors or mentors. It highlights the significant impact that direct guidance and support from supervisors or mentors can have on the development of essential skills and knowledge, surpassing the influence of organizational or academic socialization processes. Therefore, the interactions between supervisors or mentors and individuals can lay a crucial groundwork for hands-on learning and professional development.

Experience learning also plays an important role in honing problem-solving skills. Through direct experience, students are faced with real problems that require creative and critical solutions (Sangwan & Singh, 2021). Experience-based learning allows students to identify problems, formulate hypotheses, and test solutions practically (Sangwan & Singh, 2021). This is in line with previous research findings which emphasize that this approach can enrich analytical abilities and improve problem-solving skills (Marshall et al., 2016).

The law of effect in learning, as proposed by Thorndike's legal theory, suggests that positive consequences received by individuals will increase their satisfaction in carrying out an activity. This, in turn, can have a positive impact on increasing their soft skills and hard skills (Faysal et al., 2023). Apart from that, theoretically, students' satisfaction with practical work is also closely related to the theory of career development theory of work adjustment (TWA). This TWA theory states that the correspondence between desires and rewards received by individuals will achieve satisfaction or satisfaction at the place where they work or in this case the place where students implement MBKM (Patton & McMahon, 2014).

Theoretically, individuals who are capable of fully realizing their potential in an activity are certainly very different from the average individuals. They can evolve into better individuals by utilizing all their talents, abilities, and potential (Feist et al., 2017). Apart from that, based on the trait and factor career development theory, individuals who choose a career (in this context the choice of the MBKM scheme) according to their interests, talents and/or potential will be much more developed than individuals who just choose carelessly (Patton & McMahon, 2014). Considering all these things, it can be interpreted that student satisfaction in participating in the MBKM program can have a positive impact on increasing student competence.

Conclusion

The research results indicate that the success of implementing the MBKM program in the Guidance and Counseling Study Program at PGRI Kanjuruhan University, Malang, can be measured by the increase in student competency during MBKM activities. This increase in competency can be attributed to three factors: strong system support, learning from real-life experiences, and student satisfaction with MBKM activities. These aspects can serve as a benchmark for study programs and universities to enhance the implementation of MBKM. Additionally, the results presented in the study can be further examined through quantitative research to determine their impact on student competence.

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