



The Influence of *Merdeka Belajar - Kampus Merdeka* to Improve the Quality of Graduates in Higher Education: A Reflective Analysis

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ABSTRACT

Objective: Higher education is vital in producing qualified graduates ready to face work challenges. This research used a case study approach at Asahan University. This study aimed to analyze the effect of the *Merdeka Belajar-Kampus Merdeka* program at Asahan University. **Method:** The approach was used as an experimental research approach. The respondents constituted students and lecturers at the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education at Asahan University, which accounts for 26 participants. In sampling from the population, researchers used purposive sampling with sample characters, namely students and lecturers of the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, students and lecturers involved in the MBKM program batch 1 to batch 6. Data collection was carried out using 20 questionnaires, which were analyzed using a Likert Scale. The data was collected using the Google form integrated with Internet-Based Data Analysis (IBDA) and analyzed using the Microsoft Office Excel formula. **Results:** Therefore, based on the questionnaire distributed using Google Forms, it was found that the program MBKM that Asahan University has carried out affects the competence of graduates involved in the program, with a significance of 64.4% with significant criteria. **Novelty:** Based on the analysis and discussion results, the Learning Management System integrated the MBKM program to require a clear, structured concept and scientific transparency in all aspects to increase the number of graduates who contribute to the development of *Indonesia Maju 2045*.

INTRODUCTION

In the era of globalization and the rapid development of information technology, universities must continue to innovate to produce competent and adaptive graduates (Andrian et al., 2022; Wahyu et al., 2022). For this reason, the concept of *Merdeka Belajar-Kampus Merdeka* (MBKM) (a freedom learning-freedom campus) was introduced as an effort to improve the higher education system in Indonesia (Ramadhani, 2023; Sumani et al., 2022; Vhalery et al., 2022). This study aimed to analyze and identify efforts to improve the quality of college graduates based on MBKM. Thus, implementing the MBKM program promoted by the government can improve the quality of university graduates. The contribution of this article is an introspection for universities, especially private universities, in managing the MBKM program (Fauzi, 2019; Rachmawati, 2022). The results of previous research showed that the results of the MBKM program implemented by universities improve the quality of learning (Ananda et al., 2023), which can be an illustration that can affect the quality of graduates. In another article, it is stated that the contribution of the MBKM program in improving the quality of Cooperation will be more optimal. Therefore, synchronizing the MBKM program and the college curriculum can facilitate for students to improve the quality of graduates outside the study program (Dano, 2023; Gusdini et al., 2022)

Higher education curriculum design in Indonesia is one of the essential keys to developing quality and competitive human resources in the era of globalization (Supriyoko et al., 2022). However, universities have faced several problems in achieving optimal graduate quality over the past few years. One of the efforts to overcome these problems is to adopt the MBKM approach (Aji & Putra, 2021; Syapika et al., 2023). The following is the background of the problems underlying the need to improve the quality of college graduates based on MBKM, including the curriculum that needs to be aligned with industry needs (Masithoh et al., 2021). Many universities still use a traditional curriculum that needs to be more responsive to the development and needs of Industry and society (Qiptiah, 2023). As a result, college graduates often need to gain the skills and knowledge that the world of work demands, making it difficult to compete in an increasingly competitive job market (Loisa et al., 2022; Mizan, 2022).

Challenges of the Industrial Revolution 5.0, the rapid development of information and communication technology has dramatically changed the landscape of the world of work (Fauziah & Vantissha, 2021; Maghfiroh & Sholeh, 2022; Mudrikah et al., 2022). The Industrial Revolution 4.0 brings 5.0 more significant changes to various sectors of the economy, society, and education. Therefore, universities must be able to anticipate these changes by providing curriculum and learning experiences because they are relevant to future needs (Lismawati & Sabarudin, 2023; Maghfiroh & Sholeh, 2022; Rosani, 2023). However, due to a lack of student involvement in the learning process, the education system that is too centered on lecturers or teachers often ignores the role and involvement of students in the learning process (Setiawan et al., 2023; Vhalery et al., 2022). Actively involving students in learning can increase learning motivation and independence, supporting graduates' quality.

Inconsistent assessment standards and the mismatch between assessment standards and the competencies expected of university graduates can lead to differences in the quality of graduates from one university to another (Fuadi & Aswita, 2021; Wijaya et al., 2022). This can hinder the overall progress and improvement of graduate quality. In some cases, there are low-quality teaching and teaching staff; some tertiary institutions need help recruiting and retaining high-quality teaching staff (Rorong & Rares, 2023). Because of that, lecturers who are inadequately qualified or have poor teaching skills can hurt student learning and the quality of graduates produced (Maulana et al., 2022; Tjaija, 2022). Therefore, if there are new policies and programs, students always have the luck to experience the impact of these policies or programs. (Bagus et al., 2021; Kuncoro et al., 2022).

A significant challenge of this research is the support policies for the Learning Management System (LMS) program. A more flexible curriculum supported by the LMS application is expected to provide a positive solution for students to follow all MBKM programs and as an attempt to reconstruct higher education towards educational transformation (Megayanti, 2022; Rachmawati, 2022; Syahri et al., 2023). So, the above is expected to provide convenience for students with low economic backgrounds, limited information, and more space to seek information or exchange experiences, which often become obstacles for students in higher education (Kuncoro et al., 2022). This causes a gap for students who will access information and better job opportunities for graduates. Thus, this article provides perspectives on designing new policies or programs while upholding the competencies of graduates. Thus, this article can provide an accumulation of responses to universities that run MBKM programs. This current research differs from existing research, including the limited sources of respondents involved, the focus of

research on the MBKM program, and the relationship between the experience of students participating in the program and the application of prior knowledge to the competence of graduates.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses a qualitative descriptive approach, which refers to a research approach that aims to understand and explain phenomena in depth from the perspective of the subject or participant (Meke et al., 2021). This qualitative descriptive method seeks a comprehensive understanding of the context, meaning, and perspective underlying the phenomenon under study. This method is used by researchers who want to explore and understand complex phenomena that are difficult to measure with numbers or quantitative data.

Based on the explanation, this study by Mardiana (2020) used several measuring instruments that will be used, among others: 1) In-depth description investigates in detail and depth what happened, how it happened, and why it happened by digging up information through interviews, observations, and text analysis, 2) Holistic approach studied in the context of the whole different elements interrelated, present in the process of data collection and interpretation, and self-reflection, 3) Qualitative analysis, data obtained from interviews, observations, or text materials are analyzed more descriptively and narratively, rather than using statistical techniques. 4) Use of primary data: The data collected is non-numerical, such as direct participant quotations, field notes, and interview transcripts. 5) Limited generalization: The results of qualitative research are contextual and cannot be generalized to a broader population. However, this research can provide insight and a deep understanding of a particular case.

The Likert Scale analyzed the instruments of the data: strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree. They were finalized by a score scale of 5, 4, 3, 2, and 1 (Marliana & Fachruddin, 2020). Reflective analysis was made, using past experiences as a positive input in reconstructing future actions. It is hoped that this approach can reconstruct the results of policies and the implementation of policies or programs as a form of assessment and evaluation towards results by expectations. Data collection is carried out using integrated Internet Data Analysis (IBDA) based on Google form while analyzing the data obtained is integrated on Microsoft affice and Excel using the 2019 version (Rusli et al., 2021; Satriani et al., 2022). Based on the three concepts used to analyze the reflection carried out, the following reflection analysis framework is described in Figure 1.

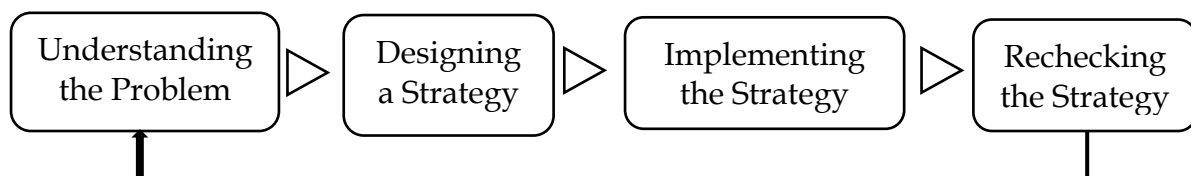


Figure 1. Flowchart the reflective analysis.

Phase Activities The Research Approach

Phase of Based Line Analysis

Phase 1. Preparation

Preparation, resource gathering, and needs analysis meant that the preparatory phase begins with a rigorous needs analysis. Resource gathering - the preparation stage also includes gathering the resources required for the project or activity.

Phase 2. Observation

Observation is a research or data collection method by directly observing and recording behavior, events, or phenomena without manipulating the observed object. Observation was usually done to gain a deeper understanding of a phenomenon or to collect data objectively.

Phase 3. Literature Review

A literature review constitutes a critical and systematic analysis process for collecting, evaluating, and synthesizing various literature sources related to a particular research topic or study, including scientific journals, books, papers, and other relevant sources (Suardi, 2017).

Phase of Progress Analysis

Phase 1. Document Management

Phase Research document management constitutes the activity that involves collecting, organizing, and managing documents related to the conduct of research.

Phase 2. Conducting the Research

Research implementation constitutes the actual research carried out in data collection, data analysis, and interpretation of results to answer research questions or test hypotheses that have been proposed.

Phase 3. Analysis of Results

Analysis of research results constitutes a process to interpret and explore the meaning of the data that has been collected. At this analysis stage, researchers process data using statistical methods or other analytical techniques to answer research questions or test previously proposed hypotheses.

Phase 4. Results Report

The results report constitutes a written document that contains a summary, analysis, and interpretation of the results of the research or study that has been conducted. The results report is a form of the research findings systematically, accurately, and transparently so that readers can understand and evaluate the findings.

Phase 5. Dissemination

Dissemination constitutes disseminating or communicating research results, information, or knowledge to various interested parties or the wider community, likely in Figure 2.

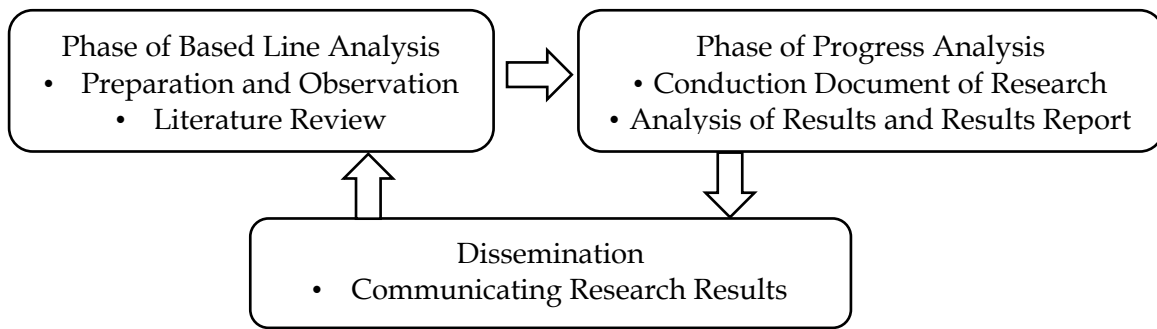


Figure 2. Phase Activities the research procedure.

Table 1. Indicator question instruments.

No. Item	Indicator Question Instruments
1.	The concept of MBKM at Asahan University can improve the quality of graduates.
2.	The strategy implemented by Asahan University in implementing MBKM can improve the quality of graduates.
3.	MBKM approach at Asahan University can develop the skills and competencies of graduates.
4.	Asahan University evaluates the MBKM program's effectiveness in improving graduates' quality.
5.	Asahan University applies the principles of MBKM to improving the quality of graduates.
6.	Cooperation with Industry and the community can increase the MBKM program's relevance and improve graduates' quality.
7.	Asahan University has ensured equality and opportunities for all students to participate in the MBKM Program.
8.	Asahan University ensures graduates have skills relevant to current work needs through the MBKM Program.
9.	Evaluation and monitoring of graduates' quality achievements are carried out within the framework of the MBKM program.
10.	MBKM program approach at Asahan University can contribute to developing graduates' abilities.
11.	The role of Asahan University is to support innovation and improve the quality of graduates through the MBKM Program.
12.	Asahan University made concrete efforts to integrate an understanding of labor market needs into the MBKM curriculum.
13.	MBKM program facilitates the improvement of the digital and technological literacy of graduates at Asahan University.
14.	MBKM program at Asahan University supports lifelong learning to ensure graduates remain relevant in the world of work.
15.	Asahan University monitors graduates' soft skills, such as communication and leadership skills, through the MBKM program.
16.	Asahan University collaborates with external stakeholders, such as Industry and society, to improve the quality of graduates through the MBKM program.
17.	MBKM program at Asahan University is different from the ministry program, so it impacts the quality of graduates.
18.	I am happy to participate in the MBKM program at Asahan University to add scientific insights and learning experiences.
19.	I am satisfied with MBKM at Asahan University to improve the quality of graduates.
20.	MBKM at Asahan University has a good track record.

Table 1 illustrates that the instrument validation is valid. Based on the question mapping indicators, they are Strong Agree (5), Agree (4), Neutral (3), Disagree (2), and Strong Disagree (1). The data above was processed using the Excel data approach using the formulation, namely:

$$r_{xy} = \frac{n\sum X_i Y_i - (\sum X_i)(\sum Y_i)}{\sqrt{\{n\sum X_i^2 - (\sum X_i)^2\} \{n\sum Y_i^2 - (\sum Y_i)^2\}}}$$

With information:

- rx_y = correlation coefficient
- n = number of trial respondents
- X = score of each item
- Y = score of all trial respondent items

To test the significance of the correlation results, the researchers used the t-test (Muid et al., 2022). The indicator for explaining significance was by comparing the t-count and t-table values. If t-count > t-table, therefore, the researchers concluded whether the item is valid. T-Count Formula: The formula for finding the t-count used:

$$t_{hit} = \frac{r_{xy} \sqrt{(n-2)}}{\sqrt{(1-r_{xy}^2)}}$$

With information:

- n = number of trial respondents
- X = score of each item
- Y = score of all trial respondent items

Table 2. Items Instruments of validation result.

No. Items	Item's Aspect		
	r _{xy}	t-count	Notes
1	0.794	5.538	valid
2	0.732	4.554	valid
3	0.833	6.387	valid
4	0.856	7.016	valid
5	0.886	8.093	valid
6	0.835	6.440	valid
7	0.738	4.641	valid
8	0.869	7.438	valid
9	0.835	6.432	valid
10	0.899	8.723	valid
11	0.864	7.265	valid
12	0.840	6.576	valid
13	0.819	6.056	valid
14	0.852	6.893	valid
15	0.874	7.647	valid
16	0.843	6.660	valid
17	0.531	2.659	valid
18	0.524	2.613	valid
19	0.842	6.624	valid
20	0.819	6.058	valid

Based on Table 2, all questions were valid. This illustrated that the instrument was valid based on the formulation used. Therefore, the instrument could be used to obtain data sources.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Based on the calculations analyzed using the Google form integrated by IBDA, respondents' identities consisted of five lecturers with a presentation of 19.200% and twenty-one students with a percentage of 80.800%. Then, based on the source of respondents involved in this study, there were 26 respondents. The study programs involved in the research included the Indonesian Language and Literature Study Program 50.000%, the Mathematics Study Program 11.500%, and the English Education Study Program 38.500%. The gender involved males and females, and it could be seen that the respondents involved were based on gender: males were 15.4%, and females were 84.6%. Ages it could be seen that the age of respondents who responded to the questions given, including the range 16 - 17 = 0.000%, 18 - 23 = 73.100%, 24 - 25 = 3.800%, > 30 = 11.500%. After that, frequency followed the MBKM program; it was the data on the involvement of students and lecturers in participating in the MBKM program, including 1 = 3.800%, 2 = 28.900%, 3 = 11.500%, 4 = 30.800%, 5 = 23.100%, and 6 = 3.800%.

Table 3. Items result by using IBDA.

No.	Questions	Respondents	Percentage
1.	The concept of MBKM at Asahan University can improve the quality of graduates.	18	Agree 69.200 %
2.	The strategy implemented by Asahan University in implementing MBKM can improve the quality of graduates.	21	Agree 80.200%
3.	MBKM approach at Asahan University can develop the skills and competencies of graduates.	17	Agree 65.400%
4.	Asahan University evaluates the MBKM program's effectiveness in improving graduates' quality.	16	Agree 61.500%
5.	Asahan University applies the principles of MBKM to improving the quality of graduates.	18	Agree 69.200%
6.	Cooperation with Industry and the community can increase the MBKM program's relevance and improve graduates' quality.	15	Agree 57.700%
7.	Asahan University has ensured equality and opportunities for all students to participate in the MBKM Program.	17	Agree 65.400%
8.	Asahan University ensures graduates have skills relevant to current work needs through the MBKM Program.	16	Agree 61.500%
9.	Evaluation and monitoring of graduates' quality achievements are carried out within the framework of the MBKM program.	17	Agree 65.400%
10.	MBKM program approach at Asahan University can contribute to developing graduates' abilities.	16	Agree 61.500%
11.	The role of Asahan University is to support innovation and improve the quality of graduates through the MBKM Program.	19	Agree 73.100%

No.	Questions	Respondents	Percentage
12.	Asahan University made concrete efforts to integrate an understanding of labor market needs into the MBKM curriculum.	18	Agree 69.200 %
13.	MBKM program facilitates the improvement of the digital and technological literacy of graduates at Asahan University.	13	Agree 50.000%
14.	MBKM program at Asahan University supports lifelong learning to ensure graduates remain relevant in the world of work.	18	Agree 69.200%
15.	Asahan University monitors graduates' soft skills, such as communication and leadership skills, through the MBKM program.	16	Agree 61.500%
16.	Asahan University collaborates with external stakeholders, such as Industry and society, to improve the quality of graduates through the MBKM program.	17	Agree 65.400%
17.	MBKM program at Asahan University is different from the ministry program, so it impacts the quality of graduates.	16	Agree 61.500%
18.	I am happy to participate in the MBKM program at Asahan University to add scientific insights and learning experiences.	14	Agree 53.800%
19.	I am satisfied with MBKM at Asahan University to improve the quality of graduates.	16	Agree 61.500%
20.	MBKM at Asahan University has a good track record.	16	Agree 61.500%

Discussion

Analysis of Questions with Respondents

In every aspect of the questions given by researchers to respondents regarding the influence of the MBKM program on improving the quality of graduates in higher education, it has a positive impact. It means that this encourages students to master various fields of science with their expertise (Gusdini et al., 2022; Ulu et al., 2023) so that they are ready to compete in the global world (Ananda et al., 2023; Dano, 2023). It can be seen from Table 3 that 26 respondents agreed that there was an influence on student competence in participating in the MBKM program managed by Asahan University. However, this has yet to positively contribute to students' competence in participating in the program. Based on Table 3, some statements have yet to give high scores to each indicator. Based on 20 questions, two things need to be considered for universities, namely, the facilities used in order to improve the quality of graduates through the MBKM program are technology and communication facilities. This result gave a low response; 13 respondents disagreed, meaning the campus facilities that administer the MBKM program should have adequate facilities. In addition, The facilities in question are facilities and infrastructure to support MBKM program activities (Meke et al., 2021; Maulana et al., 2022).

The second thing is that the student learning experience of the MBKM program has yet to contribute to student learning. This question was low from 26 respondents; 12 respondents disagreed. This means that the college also facilitates the experience gained

by students in participating in the MBKM program so that student experience can contribute to student learning. This question is low from 26 respondents; 12 respondents disagree. This means that the university facilitates the experience gained by students in participating in the MBKM program so that the student experience can contribute to personality and group competence. According to this point, A good MBKM program is based on the needs of students to utilize their abilities, the environment, and the competencies gained from experience during lectures (Rodiyah, 2021; Sintiawati et al., 2022). Therefore, A good MBKM program is based on the needs of students to utilize their abilities, the environment, and the competencies gained from their experiences during lectures (Arjanto et al., 2022; Arsyad et al., 2022). Thus, student competence in academic and non-academic fields can be accounted for.

Analysis of the Relationship between Graduate Competencies and the MMKM Program

The Ministry's MBKM program has been structured and organized with a significant approach. This gives an idea to organizers, especially universities under the guidance of the Ministry of Research and Technology, that the program can be implemented more flexibly (Hardi et al., 2023; Patmaningrum et al., 2022). Based on the research instrument conducted on respondents from the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Asahan University, the campus program has yet to maximally carry out the MBKM program appropriately.

This can be seen from the questionnaire results; among others, Asahan University evaluates the effectiveness of the MBKM program in improving the quality of graduates, which is still relatively low. The 26 respondents, 16 responded to this question, which was classified as low at 61.500%. This means that MBKM activities at Asahan University still need to evaluate the MBKM program that students participate in. Based on the above statement, supervision and monitoring of a work program is better if it is continuity or continuous. Based on this statement, the evaluation and assessment of the MBKM program are based on the policies of each university (Atun et al., 2023; Doa et al., 2022; Sabatini et al., 2022).

In another aspect of the question, cooperation with industry and the community can increase the relevance of the MBKM program and improve the quality of graduates, illustrating the results that still need to be optimal. The 26 respondents who made a positive contribution, 15 respondents needed a result of 57.700%. This provides an understanding that the contribution of the business and industrial world is vital to student competence (Andika et al., 2022). So, this requires the role and responsibility of universities implementing the MBKM program to have a vast network and the direction of Cooperation based on the needs of students and stakeholders (Arsyad & Widuhung, 2022; Ulu et al., 2023).

Analysis of MBKM Program with Quality of Graduates in Higher Education

Indicators of success in improving the quality of graduates in this MBKM program are student involvement in university programs or projects such as campus product development, campus activity units, and the development of experiences for other students (Mudrikah et al., 2022; Suwandi & Hadi, 2023). The quality of graduates at Asahan University participating in the MBKM program has yet to be seen. This program is relatively new at Asahan University. This can be seen from the three instruments presented by the researcher, among others, that the concept of MBKM at Asahan

University can improve the quality of graduates with the results of 69.200% of respondents; the strategy implemented by Asahan University in implementing MBKM can improve the quality of graduates with the results of 80.200%, The role of Asahan University in supporting innovation and improving the quality of graduates through the MBKM Program with the results of 73.100% respondents.

Based on the results of these three concepts, the MBKM program at Asahan University is classified as positive towards the competence of graduates in participating in the program activities. The results of these three concepts mean that the MBKM program development program at Asahan University is still focused on concepts, strategies, and supporters of spatial planning. However, a follow-up to these activities is implementing the concept, strategy, and spatial layout of broader activities for lecturers and students. In addition, Based on these three elements, the strategy, concept, and facilities of MBKM are based on the activities and success of the program (Muid et al., 2022). Three elements can be done by conducting extensive socialization with new students and old students, guiding students who will be expected to join the program, conducting the strict selection of prospective participants, and conducting collaborative studies with university policymakers and graduate users (Masithoh et al., 2021; Wahyu et al., 2022).

CONCLUSION

Fundamental Finding: Based on the results of analyzing and discussing the results of the influence of the MBKM program at Asahan University, it reveals that 1) the MBKM program is a strategy, concept, and facility that has not been implemented in the MBKM program flexibly. 2) the basic concept of the MBKM program is formed from positive Cooperation with the needs of the Business World, and Industry is well managed; 3) the competency gap obtained from lectures has not been formed from the program presented by the Ministry of Education and Culture, so that, universities have not maximally implemented the program evenly, 4) program MBKM does not be integrated by LMS.

Implication: The linkage of programs, strategies, and facilities can be a positive means for the sustainability of the MBKM program for implementing universities. This will contribute significantly to mastering the needs of students and the World of Business and Industry. **Limitation:** The limitation of this study was the limited number of respondents involved in this research, so the results of this study have not been represented for other universities. **Future Research:** The condition of students' needs for learning experiences with the needs of the World of Work and the World of Industry can be further optimized over a long period in Cooperation, provision of facilities, and systematic work programs.

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