

Supporting Staffs' Understanding on Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka: A Case Study in Universitas Islam Malang

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Abstract: The study is conducted to find out the understanding of the supporting staffs in Universitas Islam Malang on *Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka* (MBKM) policy. The MBKM policy is related to giving the students flexibility in learning to enable them acquire more expertise in different departments or universities. As a part of the university stakeholders, the supporting staffs need to have complete understanding on the policy to support the implementation of the policy in Universitas Islam Malang. The study is a case study that employed mixed method approach by using surveys and interviews as the instruments. Form the collected data, it can be concluded that the supporting staffs in Universitas Islam Malang have known the policy, but have not completely understood all of the substances yet. Some of the substances that have not been understood are related to the semesters allowed for the students to learn outside their own departments and the number of credits given to the students as a form of recognition on the competences they earned from joining the MBKM activities. Therefore, more continuous socializations about the policy are still need to be carried out by the university and/or the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of Indonesia.

Keywords: supporting staffs; understanding; flexible learning; Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka

in 2020, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of Indonesia has launched the newest policy of flexible curriculum, called the *Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka* or MBKM for students of higher education. The goal of the curriculum is to encourage the students to master several different areas of study to prepare themselves for the working environment (Direktorat Jenderal Pendidikan Tinggi, 2020). Students are expected to be able to catch up with the demand of the industrial era 4.0 that evolves quickly. To answer such inquiry, higher education curriculum must be able to create students who are creative, innovative, and competitive (Lase, 2019). Thus, it is not sufficient for the students to be merely competent in one area of expertise as they will be more qualified when they acquire supplementary skills.

The MBKM policy enables the students to have more independent and flexible learning experiences so that they will have more freedom to learn based on what they need (Direktorat Jenderal Pendidikan Tinggi, 2020). This policy has been warmly welcomed by the rectors of many universities in Indonesia, one of whom is the Rector of Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia who regards the policy to be revolutionary as it is expected to solve several problems on the level of primary, secondary, and tertiary education (detiknews, 2020). At the level of tertiary or higher education, the MBKM policy can provide some kinds of programs which can develop the students' creativity so that there are numerous ways of thinking to promote various alternatives and creativity in solving particular problems.

There are four main programs in the MBKM policy, one of which is to give the students the right to take some subjects beyond their majors for three semesters (Direktorat Jenderal Pendidikan Tinggi, 2020). They can take selected subjects for one semester in different major in the same university, and

for another two semesters in different universities. Students can choose either to perform (1) internship; (2) community service; (3) teaching assistant; (4) students exchange; (5) research; (6) entrepreneurship; (7) independent study/project; or (8) humanitarian project. All of those types of MBKM activities facilitate the students to acquire a thorough competence to be more prepared to encounter the working environment.

The entire communities in a university have vital roles in implementing those MBKM activities, including the supporting staffs. Both the lecturers and supporting staffs have strategic, yet different, positions in improving the human resources and character building, especially in the globalization era (Hendrayanti, 2017). Related to the role of the supporting staffs, the Indonesia National Regulation (*Undang-Undang*) No. 20 year 2003 on National Education System verse 39 article 1 mentions that the roles of the supporting staffs are performing administration, management, development, supervision, and providing technical services to support the teaching and learning processes in an educational institution. This regulation shows that supporting staffs are one of the important agents in determining the quality of the teaching and learning process in an educational institution.

Lanjarsih et al. (2018) mention that one of the indicators used for measuring the achievement of excellent education is related to supporting staffs' competence. Coaching programs are important for an educational institution, including universities, in developing the supporting staffs' competence. Competence development as a form of coaching programs is performed as a way to promote and increase work productivity (Muniroh & Muhyadi, 2017). The increase of work productivity resulted in the service quality given by the supporting staffs to the other stakeholders, especially to the students.

Related to the implementation of the eight forms of the MBKM activities, developing supporting staffs' competence need to be started with the understanding on the policy of MBKM. The staffs' understanding on the policy and mechanisms of each activity can bring more efficient administrative services needed in the implementation of each activity. Rinala et al. (2013) state that students' satisfaction on the administrative services can be attained when the given services are of good quality. It is also mentioned that providing good quality services for the students is important as they also act as the agents who bring the university's good name to other communities. Therefore, it is perilous for an educational institution to neglect the significance and quality of the provided services (Ali et al., 2016).

The implementation of MBKM activities in Universitas Islam Malang has been regulated in the *Merdeka Belajar – Kampus Merdeka* Implementation Guideline (*Panduan Implementasi Merdeka Belajar – Kampus Merdeka*) Universitas Islam Malang. The guideline describes in detail the mechanisms of the implementation of the eight MBKM activities that needs to be comprehended by every stakeholder in Universitas Islam Malang, including the supporting staffs. The current research is trying to find out how far the supporting staffs in Universitas Islam Malang have understood the policy of the *Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka* (MBKM).

METHOD

The current study is a case study that employs sequential design of mixed method research. Ary, et al. (2010:563) describes that "in sequential designs, data that are collected and examined in one stage inform the data collected in the next phase". In this study, the data from the quantitative survey collected and analysed in the first phase is supported by the data from the qualitative phase. The quantitative phase used descriptive analysis that collected and analysed the data from the survey given to the supporting staffs related to their understanding on the policy of the *Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka* (MBKM). The qualitative phase used interviews to collect the data directly from the supporting staffs in Universitas Islam Malang.

The survey given to the supporting staffs was the survey created by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of Indonesia which could be accessed through the portal named *Spada*. There were 26 questions in the survey, of which 25 of them were in the forms of multiple choices and checklists. 328 supporting staffs of Universitas Islam Malang participated in the survey. The

data collected from the survey were counted and transformed into tables and graphics to be analysed descriptively to grasp a general understanding of the patterns across the participants of the survey.

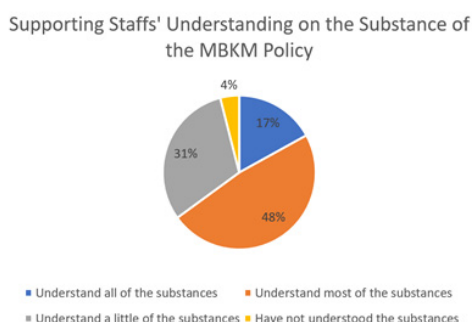
The interviews were conducted after the survey was completed on December 15-16, 2021. Purposive sampling technique was used to determine the participants of the interview. 37 out of 328 participants of the survey were selected for the interview. Among 37 of the interviewees, 25 of them were females and 12 others were male, of which all of them were between 20 to 45 years old. They have been working in Universitas Islam Malang for 5 to more than 20 years. The interviews were transcribed into several documents which then analysed by the researcher. Peer review was also performed while analysing the documents.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of the study are presented into two sub-headings. They are about the findings of the survey and interview.

The Survey

There were 26 questions in the survey about the policy and implementation of the MBKM activities. 11 of them were related closely to supporting staffs' understanding on the (1) concept of the MBKM policy; (2) implementation of the MBKM policy at the university level; and (3) implementation of the MBKM policy at the department level. Asked about how far the supporting staffs in Universitas Islam Malang have understood the MBKM policy, 48% of them believed to have known most of the substances of the policy. 17% others deemed to have understood all of the policy substances. Meanwhile, there were 31% of the staffs who comprehended a little of the substances of the policy, and 4% of them did not understand the substances of the MBKM policy. The result shows that socializations about the substances of the MBKM policy still needs to be delivered to the supporting staffs of Universitas Islam Malang to increase their comprehension about the policy.



Picture 1. Graphic of Supporting Staffs' Understanding on the Substances of the MBKM Policy

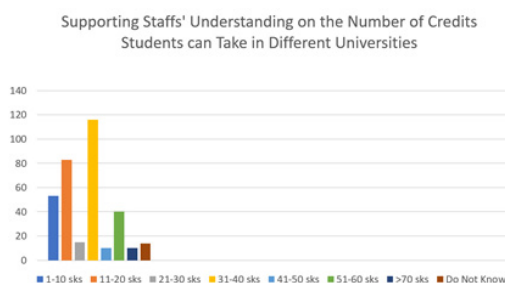
However, the number of the supporting staffs' in Universitas Islam Malang who have not fully understood about the policy of the amount of the semesters for implementing MBKM activities were bigger than those who have understood it well. Given the question about how many semesters the students can choose to study outside their universities based on the Minister Regulation (*Permendikbud*) No. 3 year 2020, 109 of the respondents chose 2 semesters to be the correct answers. Meanwhile, as many as 219 other supporting staffs selected the wrong answers. The result strengthens the previous notion that socializations about the MBKM policy still needs to be offered to the supporting staffs in Universitas Islam Malang.

Related to the supporting staffs' understanding on the total credits allowed to be taken in other universities for implementing the MBKM activities, the majority of the respondents could answer correctly by having 116 of 328 respondents' selected 31 to 40 credits. 83 others chose 11 to 20 credits to be their options, while the other options were selected by not more than 53 respondents each as shown in the graphic below. This result shows that most of the supporting staffs have already been familiar with the amount of the credits the students can have outside their universities. Still, more socializations

should be given to the supporting staffs as the percentage of the respondents who could answer correctly is under 50%.

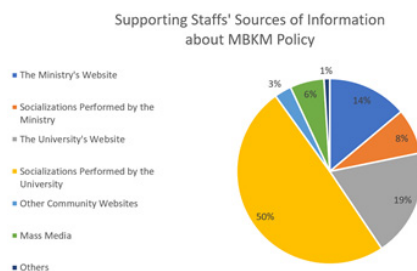
Table 1. Supporting Staffs' Understanding on the Policy of the Semesters of the MBKM Activities

No	Options	Amount
1	1 semester	22
2	2 semester	109
3	3 semester	142
4	4 semester	55



Picture 2. Graphic of Supporting Staff's Understanding on the Number of Credits of the MBKM Policy

The understanding of the supporting staffs in Universitas Islam Malang about the MBKM policy is gained mostly from the socializations performed by the university as 50% of the respondents believed that they got the information about MBKM policy and activities from either online or offline socializations held by Universitas Islam Malang. 19% of the respondents obtained the information of the policy and activities from the university's official website, while 14% others chose the socializations and websites of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of Indonesia to be the source for their information about MBKM policy and activities. As many as 31 supporting staffs in Universitas Islam Malang selected other sources, such as community websites, mass media, and other sources, to be the sources in earning some information about the policy and activities. The data indicates that the socializations conducted by Universitas Islam Malang can effectively increase the understanding of the supporting staffs about MBKM policy and activities. Besides, the data also projects that the supporting staffs in Universitas Islam Malang are actively trying to find more information as an effort to understand the policy and activities.



Picture 3. Graphic of Supporting Staffs' Sources of Information about MBKM Policy

Concerning the understanding of the supporting staffs in Universitas Islam Malang about the implementation of the eight activities of MBKM policy at the level of departments, 87% of 328 participants of the survey believed that the departments in Universitas Islam Malang have ever had some activities which were suitable with the eight activities mentioned in MBKM policy prior to the implementation of the policy. The number signifies the notion that Universitas Islam Malang has had the initiations of implementing some activities that correspond to the eight MBKM activities. Hence, it can be considered that the supporting staffs of the university have sufficient experiences related to providing administration services for the implementation of the activities equal to the MBKM activities.

Supporting Staff's Understanding of the Departments
Activities Equal to the MBKM Activities

Picture 4. Graphic of Supporting Staffs' Understanding of the Departments Activities Equal to the MBKM Activities

The majority of the supporting staffs in Universitas Islam Malang, which was as many as 142 of 328 respondents, selected internship to be the activity that has been implemented by the departments in Universitas Islam Malang earlier than the implementation of MBKM policy. Some other department activities which also have been performed before the MBKM policy was launched by the government are student exchange, community service, and research with 121 people chose the students exchange to be the second activity applied the most. Independent study/project becomes the activity believed to be the least executed in the university prior to the implementation of the policy.

Table 2. Department Activities Implemented Before the MBKM Policy

No	Options	Amount
1	Teaching assistant	63
2	Research	100
3	Humanitarian project	56
4	Community service	111
5	Entrepreneurship	83
6	Internship	142
7	Independent study/project	31
8	Student Exchange	121

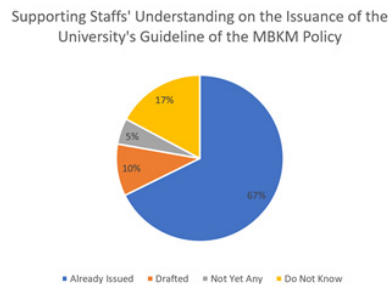
Concerning the recognition or equalization of the MBKM activities with the subjects the students should take, as many as 132 participants of the survey selected the right option, of which an MBKM activity can be equalized from 10 to 20 credits in a semester. 55 other respondents chose 31 to 40 credits. However, there were 34 supporting staffs who had no idea of how many credits can be equalized with an MBKM activity in one semester. The result portrays that the supporting staffs in Universitas Islam Malang have had good understanding on the recognition or levelling of the credits with an MBKM activity in a semester.

Table 3. Supporting Staffs' Understanding of the Credit Recognition to an MBKM Activity

No	Options	Amount
1	10-20 sks	92
2	21-30 sks	18
3	31-40 sks	48
4	41-50 sks	3
5	51-60 sks	15
6	Less than 10 sks	25
7	Do not know	20

Asked about the policy belongs to Universitas Islam Malang on the implementation of MBKM policy, 67% of the university's supporting staffs have already informed about the issue of the Rector's Decree on *Merdeka Belajar – Kampus Merdeka* Implementation Guideline (*Surat Keputusan Rector*

tentang Panduan Implementasi Merdeka Belajar – Kampus Merdeka). The guideline manages the university’s internal mechanisms of the implementation of each MBKM activity, one of which is about the recognition or equalization of credits for the students who join an MBKM activity with the subjects that should be taken. Yet, there were still 17% of the supporting staffs who did not know about the issuance of the university’s guideline.



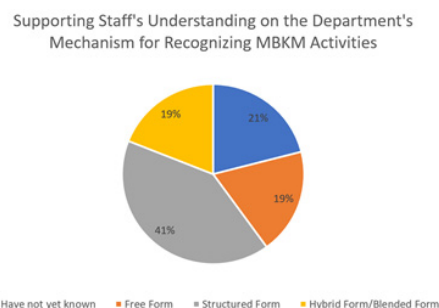
Picture 5. Graphic of Supporting Staffs’ Understanding on the Issuance of the University’s Guideline of the MBKM Policy

Related to the understanding of the concept of MBKM policy for higher education, 127 of 328 supporting staffs in Universitas Islam Malang claimed that they have already known and understood the concept. Meanwhile, a bigger number of staffs, which was 182 people, have already known the policy, but have not yet understood the concept. 19 others believed that they have not known and understood the concept. Again, these numbers imply that socializations from both the university and Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of Indonesia should be intensified to improve the supporting staffs’ comprehension on the concept of the MBKM policy for higher education.

Table 4. Supporting Staffs’ Understanding of the Concept of MBKM for Higher Education

No	Options	Amount
1	Have already known and understood	127
2	Have already known, but not yet understood	182
3	Have not yet known or understood	19

About the mechanism for recognizing or equalizing the MBKM activities with the applied curriculum, 41% of the respondents selected structured form as the equalizing mechanism performed by the departments in Universitas Islam Malang. As many as 21% of other respondents do not know the mechanism yet. 19% of other participants of the survey each consider the mechanism contained in the curriculum to be free form or hybrid form.



Picture 6. Graphic of Supporting Staffs’ Understanding on the Department’s Mechanism for Recognizing MBKM Activities

The Interview

37 of 328 supporting staffs of Universitas Islam Malang who participated in the survey joined the interview. The data attained from the interview was used to support the data gained from the survey. There were three questions given to the interviewees related to the *Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka* (MBKM) policy.

Related to how far the supporting staffs in Universitas Islam Malang have understood the MBKM policy, the majority of the interviewees stated that they have had some information about the policy, but have not fully understood it yet. AF said, *“the policy gives freedom to the universities, especially the students, to join some activities, such as student exchange, internship, teaching assistant, and independent study or independent project”*. Similarly, DL described that MBKM policy provides the students the opportunity to take some subjects in different departments that to obtain other expertise beyond the expertise offered by their own department. DL also mentioned two kinds of MBKM activities, they were (1) entrepreneurship activity to make the students more independent and (2) community service activity to give the students opportunities for contributing to the society. Meanwhile, LA described the MBKM policy gives freedom to the university students to continue their study at the last two or three semesters in different departments within their university or in different universities.

Such understanding was obtained from the socializations held by Universitas Islam Malang which were performed either online or offline. YD said, *“I have ever joined the socializations of the MBKM policy from the faculty or university, either online or offline. I know some about the policy from those socializations”*. SN gave similar statement, of which the university has ever completed some socializations on the MBKM policy, both online and offline, as a form of support to the implementation of the policy. Likewise, CLE strengthened both statements by saying that information about MBKM policy have been shared to the supporting staffs, both written and oral, through socializations to shape similar perceptions on how to execute the MBKM policy at the university and department levels.

Besides from the socializations given by the faculty and university, several supporting staffs also mentioned other sources for getting the information on the MBKM policy. LH mentioned that she was not only got the information about the policy from the university's socialization, but also from some of the lecturers in the faculty where she is stationed. MZF said that before getting the socializations from the university, he already understood a little about MBKM policy from mass media and social media, such as Instagram and Twitter. NS mentioned similar things of which mass media and websites were the other sources for her to attain some information related to the MBKM policy. Meanwhile, AF stated that the official websites of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of Indonesia was one of the sources for him to get some explanations about the policy, besides from the university's official website and social media.

Discussion

The study is performed to get a grasp about the understanding of the supporting staffs in Universitas Islam Malang concerning *Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka* (MBKM) policy which was launched by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of Indonesia in 2020. Based on the data attained from the survey and interview, the majority of the supporting staffs are already familiar with the policy, but still do not understand the whole substances of the policy. Such familiarity or understanding on the substances of MBKM policy is important since supporting staffs' role is getting more important nowadays. Rytberg and Geschwind (2017) mention that due to the rapid development across the globe, the roles of the support and service staffs in higher educations are getting more specific and at the border between them and the society. Related to the implementation of the MBKM policy, the notion implies that the roles of the supporting staffs in supporting the implementation of the policy at the faculty and university level are also getting more detailed and have a closer impact to the society.

The implementation of MBKM policy requires all stakeholders in a university to change their mindset so that the culture in the campus will also change to perform out of the box experiments in managing the teaching and learning processes as well as other academic activities (Zunaidi et al., 2021). As one of the stakeholders of a university, supporting staffs also need to adapt their mindset and working culture to the mechanisms of the MBKM policy in the university. In order to have a change of mindset and attitude, the supporting staffs in Universitas Islam Malang need to understand fully how the university implements the flexible curriculum policy. Socializations, trainings, and workshops should be continuously given to the supporting staffs to increase their understanding of the substances

and the mechanisms of the policy. By having a good understanding on the policy, the supporting staffs will be able to generate a thorough planning for improving their services to the students as the planning process need to be performed by all supporting staffs since they have to give their utmost effort suitable with their positions and functions to achieve the improvement of the service quality (Ramadhan et al., 2021). However, giving socializations, trainings, and workshops itself is not enough for improving an individual or organisational performance without transferring the results of the socializations, trainings, or workshops into on-the-job behaviour (Kasim & Ali, 2011).

Universitas Islam Malang has issued the university's guideline on the implementation of the MBKM policy to regulate the mechanisms of each MBKM activity within the university. Some of the objectives of the guideline are to (1) facilitate the students' rights to take subjects outside their departments for three semesters; (2) guide the implementation of the MBKM activities, especially the experiential learning activities; and (3) become a reference in determining the score as a form of recognition of the students' competence earned through joining the MBKM activities (Universitas Islam Malang, 2020). These objectives need the support of the supporting staffs in achieving them. The staffs must understand the points in the guideline to be able to help facilitating the students who wants to take some subjects in different departments of universities. The supporting staffs also need to get a grasp of how many credits can be equalized with one MBKM activity in a semester so that they can be of help to the department in terms of scoring the students. However, the results of the survey and interview indicate that the supporting staffs in Universitas Islam Malang have not yet understood completely the substances of the guideline. This situation may cause the supporting staffs to not have sufficient ability in executing the MBKM policy, of which it is in line with Sintiawati et al. (2022) who state that human resources become the impeding factor of the implementation of MBKM policy. The results strengthen the idea that more socializations, trainings, or workshops should be carried out to increase the supporting staffs understanding on MBKM policy as well as the substances of the university's guideline.

While Universitas Islam Malang still needs to provide socializations, its efforts in improving its supporting staffs' understanding should be acknowledged since the majority of the staffs have already grasped some of the substances of the MBKM policy. Some of the key points of the MBKM policy that still needs to be socialized more are related to the total semesters the students can have to learn in different programs within the university or in different universities and the total credits for recognizing or equalizing the competence the students gained for joining an MBKM activity. By improving the supporting staffs' understanding on MBKM policy and mechanisms, the quality of the services given to the students in Universitas Islam Malang is also expected to be improving.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Conclusion

The policy of *Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka* (MBKM) was launched by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of Indonesia in 2020. The policy provides flexible learning to the university students as they can expand their expertise not limited to the skills offered by their own department as they are allowed to learn in different departments within the university or in different universities in the last three semesters. The implementation of this new policy requires all stakeholders in a university to adapt to the new environment of learning, including the supporting staffs. The supporting staffs' roles are also improving to meet the demand of the changing mechanisms of services provided to the students due to the new flexible curriculum. Thus, it is needed for the staffs to have a complete understanding on the policy and the mechanisms of the MBKM policy. The majority of the supporting staffs in Universitas Islam Malang have known the policy, but have not understand all of its substances yet. They have understood the eight activities offered to the students and the possibilities given to the students to learn in different programs or universities. However, the staffs still have not completely grasped some specific points of the policy, such as the number of semesters the students can have for joining the MBKM activities and the credit system employed for recognizing the competence the students earned from joining an MBKM activity. Hence, more continuous socializations, trainings,

or workshops should be given to the supporting staffs to increase their understanding on the policy.

Suggestions

It is suggested for other researchers to perform more studies related to the implementation of MBKM policy in different universities. The current research can serve as one of the bases for exploring the understanding of the lecturers and/or students on the policy. Other specific studies to investigate the role of supporting staffs in the implementation of the MBKM policy can also be carried out by digging more information on their participations and perspectives at the faculty or university level. It is expected that such studies will provide a glimpse of how the new flexible learning policy is implemented across the country.

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