

(Research/Review) Article

Implementation of the Independent Campus in Enhancing Learning Autonomy in Higher Education

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Abstract: The Merdeka Learning - Merdeka Campus (MBKM) policy is a groundbreaking initiative in Indonesia's higher education system, aiming to create more flexible learning opportunities, connect students with the workforce, and integrate experiential learning. The key strength of this policy lies in its ability to empower students to develop independent learning through extracurricular activities that align with their competencies. At Yudharta Pasuruan University, MBKM has been adopted as an important strategy to enhance the quality of education while preparing graduates to be adaptive and competent in an ever-changing job market. The main aim of this research is to analyze how the planning, implementation, and evaluation of the MBKM program at Yudharta Pasuruan University contribute to improving student independence in learning. The focus of this study includes examining curriculum management, faculty support, and the university's partnerships with external organizations, which are all vital components of the MBKM program. This research uses a qualitative approach, with data collected through interviews, observations, and document analysis. The data analysis process involves data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. The results of the study indicate that Yudharta Pasuruan University has successfully implemented MBKM through clear policy planning, curriculum adjustments, and the strengthening of external partnerships. Students have gained significant benefits, including increased independence in learning, enhanced critical thinking skills, improved adaptability, and valuable real-world experiences in their chosen fields. These outcomes show that the MBKM program at Yudharta Pasuruan University plays a critical role in transforming higher education, making it more relevant, sustainable, and aligned with the needs of both students and the workforce. This research underscores the importance of MBKM in encouraging the development of a more independent and competent generation of graduates.

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1. Introduction

Higher education in the era of globalization is required to produce graduates who not only master theory but also can independently apply knowledge in the real world (Aktas et al., 2017; Ghafar, 2020). Universities play a role as centers for the development of science as well as institutions for cultivating competitive human resources (Nguyen, 2016; Wu & Zhang, 2021). Students are no longer just recipients of knowledge, but are expected to be active subjects in the learning process. This paradigm shift emphasizes the importance of developing creativity, innovation, and adaptability. Moreover, technological advancements and the dynamics of the job market demand a flexible and relevant curriculum (He et al., 2024; Kabanda, 2021). In this context, students need to be guided to be more independent in managing their learning processes. Learning independence becomes one of the keys to success in producing quality graduates.



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Merdeka Belajar-Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) is a strategic policy initiated by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology to address these challenges (Hersusetiyati & Chandra, 2022; Supriati et al., 2022; Tobondo, 2024). Through MBKM, students have the opportunity to learn outside their study programs and outside the campus while still receiving academic credit recognition. This program opens vast opportunities for students to develop their potential, skills, and relevant practical experiences in the workforce (Blenner et al., 2021; Jackson, 2015). With this flexibility, students can adjust their interests and talents to the chosen learning pathways. Kampus Merdeka encourages collaboration between higher education institutions, the industrial world, and society (Blenner et al., 2021; Kusumo et al., 2022; Purwanti, 2021). This initiative provides dual benefits, both for students and educational institutions. Ultimately, the implementation of MBKM is expected to strengthen students' self-directed learning.

Yudharta Pasuruan University, as one of the private universities, has a strong commitment to implementing the MBKM policy. This commitment is realized through the development of a curriculum that integrates MBKM programs into the academic system. Students are given the opportunity to participate in various activities, such as internships, student exchanges, research, entrepreneurship, and community service. These activities are expected to enhance self-confidence and the ability to make independent decisions. In addition, the implementation of MBKM at this university is aimed at strengthening the competitiveness of graduates at both national and international levels. Support from the university is an important factor in the successful implementation of MBKM. Thus, Yudharta Pasuruan University strives to position independent learning as one of the main goals of education.

Various previous studies have discussed the implementation of the Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) program at universities in Indonesia. A study by Endang Fatmawati in 2020 found that libraries play a strategic role as centers of literacy and information resources in supporting the implementation of the Merdeka Campus and Merdeka Learning, particularly in fostering student independence in learning. Digital transformation, online services, and collaboration between librarians and the academic community are key factors in enhancing 21st-century skills, information literacy, and student creativity during the pandemic era. The research results emphasize that the success of the Merdeka Campus policy requires support from adaptive, innovative, and networked libraries in order to produce competitive, character-based graduates who are ready to face global challenges (Merdeka & Merdeka, 2020). The research results of Rochana, Darajatun, & Ramdhany (2021) show that student interest has a significant impact on student engagement in the implementation of the Merdeka Campus policy. The highest student interest is found in the Independent Study program, while the lowest is in research, whereas the strongest engagement is influenced by the Level of Academic Challenge. Overall, this study emphasizes that the development of student interest guided by lecturers is very important to enhance their engagement in MBKM programs (Darajatun & Ramdhany, 2021).

Based on the research results by Achmad Mudrikah and colleagues at the Islamic University of Nusantara, the implementation of the MBKM program shows a fairly good readiness from various components, namely students at 66%, lecturers at 53%, and educational staff at 83%, although the socialization in several study programs is still not optimal. This finding also shows that students' interest in participating in MBKM activities is quite high, with a participation percentage of 57.75%, especially in internship programs, student exchanges, and teaching assistance. Overall, this research emphasizes that MBKM can enhance students' competencies, enrich lecturers' experiences through collaboration with the business and industry sectors, and encourage the development of a curriculum that is more relevant to job needs and society (Mudrikah et al., 2022). According to the research results by Aan Widiyono, Saidatul Irfana, and Kholida Firdausia (2021), the implementation of the Pioneer Teaching Campus (KMP) at SDN 01 Sowan Lor has proven to have a positive impact on both students and learners. This program is capable of enhancing learning interest, as well as the literacy and numeracy skills of students that had previously declined due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, students gain real teaching experience, develop interpersonal skills and leadership, thus this activity provides reciprocal benefits for both elementary schools and higher education (Widiyono et al., 2021).

Although many studies discuss the implementation of MBKM, there is still a gap in the research that directly links it to the improvement of student learning independence. Most studies focus more on outcomes such as enhanced employability skills and readiness to face the professional world. Only a few studies have examined how MBKM shapes students'

independent mindset in managing their learning processes. Additionally, previous research has not extensively studied the implementation of MBKM specifically in the context of private universities such as Yudharta Pasuruan University. Each university has different characteristics, challenges, and implementation strategies. This research gap opens up opportunities for more in-depth studies. Therefore, it is important to investigate how MBKM truly promotes student learning independence in this university environment.

Based on the background and research gaps, the main goal of this study is to analyze the implementation of the Merdeka Campus in enhancing student autonomy at Yudharta Pasuruan University. This research aims to describe the extent to which the MBKM program has been applied at the university. In addition, this study aims to reveal the strategies used by the university to encourage students to be more independent in their learning. This review is also directed at understanding the forms of institutional support for the success of MBKM. Furthermore, this research seeks to evaluate the experiences of students participating in various MBKM programs. Thus, this study is expected to contribute to enriching the literature on MBKM. Ultimately, the results of this research can serve as a reference for other higher education institutions in optimizing the role of MBKM to produce independent and competitive graduates.

2. Preliminaries or Related Work or Literature Review

The Concept of an Independent Campus

Kampus Merdeka is a policy initiated by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Kemendikbudristek) as one of the breakthroughs in improving the quality of higher education in Indonesia (Purwanti, 2021; Raranta, 2023). This concept provides freedom for students to learn outside their study programs for up to three semesters, both within and outside the university. The aim is for students to gain broader, relevant learning experiences that align with the needs of the workforce and society. Furthermore, Kampus Merdeka also encourages lecturers to strengthen their role as facilitators and mentors in the learning process. Thus, learning focuses not only on the transfer of knowledge but also on the development of life skills. The implementation of this concept also emphasizes curriculum flexibility to adapt to the times. Ultimately, Kampus Merdeka becomes an important strategy in enhancing the quality of higher education graduates.

In its implementation, the Merdeka Campus emphasizes contextual learning experiences. Students not only receive theoretical material in class, but also have the opportunity to interact directly with the community, the industrial world, and government institutions (Alvadina et al., 2024; Manurung et al., 2024; Yoto et al., 2024). This learning model provides space for students to hone soft skills such as leadership, communication, and time management. Additionally, students are also challenged to develop problem-solving and critical thinking through involvement in real programs. This policy also takes into account the active involvement of external partners in supporting learning. With the synergy between higher education institutions, the business world, and the industrial sector, the learning outcomes for students become more comprehensive. Therefore, the Merdeka Campus is considered capable of addressing the challenges of 21st-century education.

The Merdeka Campus concept not only benefits students but also universities. Universities are encouraged to expand their networks of cooperation with various parties, both nationally and internationally (Fuadi & Irdalisa, 2021; Isnaini et al., 2024). This certainly can enhance the reputation, accreditation, and competitive advantage of the institutions. On the other hand, universities are also challenged to innovate in developing a curriculum that is more adaptive and responsive to the needs of stakeholders. The Merdeka Campus also opens opportunities for lecturers to conduct more application-oriented research and community service. Thus, the implementation of this policy is expected to create a more dynamic higher education ecosystem. All of this contributes to the formation of graduates who are independent, creative, and innovative.

Student Learning Independence

Self-directed learning is the ability of students to manage their own learning process without fully relying on lecturers (van Hout-Wolters et al., 2000; Zainuddin et al., 2019). This independence includes aspects of planning, implementation, and evaluation of learning independently. Students who possess self-directed learning skills can manage their time, choose learning strategies, and actively seek additional sources of knowledge. With self-directed learning, students also have a strong intrinsic motivation to continue developing.

This independence is crucial in facing the challenges of the workforce that require adaptation and lifelong learning. Higher education plays an important role in fostering self-directed learning through participative learning approaches. In the context of the Merdeka Campus, self-directed learning has become one of the primary targets to be achieved.

The independence of learning is also influenced by various factors, both internal and external (Chamidy et al., 2023; Mulyani et al., 2021). Internal factors include motivation, interest, talent, and self-confidence of students. Meanwhile, external factors encompass the learning environment, support from lecturers, campus facilities, and access to technology and information. Students who are used to independent learning will find it easier to adapt to the Merdeka Campus learning system. This is because they are accustomed to taking the initiative in managing their learning. Conversely, students who are less independent often face difficulties in adapting to flexible learning models. Therefore, universities need to design strategies to support the development of student learning independence. One of them is by providing effective academic guidance.

Self-directed learning is also closely related to the development of digital technology. Students are required to utilize various online learning resources such as e-books, journals, learning videos, and Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) platforms. Access to this technology allows students to set their own learning pace according to their needs. In this way, students can develop competencies in a more personalized manner. Digital-based self-directed learning also fosters better information literacy and digital literacy. This is in line with the needs of the 4.0 industrial era, which emphasizes mastery of technology. Therefore, students' self-directed learning should be seen as a crucial capability that must be cultivated through higher education systems. Thus, graduates produced are truly prepared to face global challenges.

The Implementation of the Merdeka Campus in Enhancing Learning Independence

The implementation of the Independent Campus aims to enhance student learning autonomy through various programs, such as internships, research, humanitarian projects, entrepreneurship, student exchanges, and teaching activities in schools (Mujib et al., 2023; Yohana, 2021). These programs provide hands-on experience that strengthens students' abilities to manage their learning. For example, through the internship program, students are required to organize schedules, complete tasks, and adapt to the work environment independently. This trains their autonomy in decision-making and helps develop their professional skills. Meanwhile, the research program enables students to manage the scientific process from planning to publication. All these activities contribute to the formation of graduates who are not only academically intelligent but also personally mature.

The implementation of the Independent Campus also changes the learning paradigm in higher education (Peters, 2012; Sa'diyah et al., 2022). Lecturers no longer act as the sole source of knowledge, but rather as facilitators who help students in developing their potential. Students are given the freedom to design their own learning paths, according to their interests and career goals. This requires students to be more proactive in seeking learning experiences. Thus, learning independence not only becomes a skill but also a habit that is embedded in students. This transformation of the lecturer's role also has a positive impact on the relationship between students and lecturers. A more egalitarian relationship encourages the creation of a healthy learning environment.

The implementation of the Independent Campus in enhancing learning independence needs support from various parties (Ishak, 2021; Yusuf, 2021). Higher education institutions must provide adequate policies, infrastructure, and support systems. The business world and industry also need to be actively involved in providing learning opportunities for students. In addition, students should be guided to optimally take advantage of the available opportunities. The challenge is how to ensure that every student can adapt to this flexible system. Therefore, evaluation and monitoring need to be conducted periodically to measure the effectiveness of the program. With appropriate support and supervision, the implementation of the Independent Campus can truly enhance students' learning independence.

3. Materials and Method

This research uses a qualitative research type with a descriptive approach (Setiawan, 2018). This approach is chosen because the research focuses on exploring in-depth the implementation of the Merdeka Campus in enhancing students' learning independence (Gunawan, 2023). The research design used is a case study at Yudharta

Pasuruan University (UYP). Data were collected through in-depth interviews with students participating in the Merdeka Campus program, supervising lecturers, and the MBKM curriculum managers at the university. In addition, participatory observation was conducted during lecture activities and student activities off-campus in the MBKM program. Documentation of policies, implementation reports, and other supporting data were also used to enrich the information. Therefore, this research is expected to provide a comprehensive picture of the implementation of the Merdeka Campus at Yudharta Pasuruan University.

Data analysis was conducted using an interactive analysis model that includes data condensation, data presentation, and conclusion/verification (Huberman & Miles, 2002). Data obtained from interviews, observations, and documentation were reduced to select information relevant to the research focus, and presented in the form of descriptive narration. Conclusions were drawn through a repeated verification process to ensure that the research results were truly valid. Data validity testing was performed using source triangulation techniques, techniques, and time, considering that the informants came from various parties at Yudharta University Pasuruan (Majid, 2017). Additionally, member checks were conducted by confirming the findings with informants at UYP. This is important to ensure that the researcher's interpretation aligns with the realities in the field. In this way, this study is expected to produce findings that are credible and scientifically accountable.

4. Results and Discussion

Planning the Merdeka Campus Program

The planning for the implementation of the Merdeka Campus program is generally a strategic step taken by higher education institutions to prepare a flexible, adaptive, and student independence-oriented learning ecosystem. This phase begins with the establishment of policies and regulations that serve as the legal foundation for the implementation of MBKM, followed by a needs analysis to align the curriculum with the demands of the job market and advancements in science and technology (Lumbanraja et al., 2025; Saa, 2025). Higher education institutions also develop credit conversion mechanisms to ensure that activities outside the campus are still academically recognized. Thus, this planning ensures that the MBKM program aligns with the university's vision and mission while also meeting national higher education standards.

The planning for the implementation of the MBKM also includes the preparation of human resources, strengthening partnership networks with external stakeholders, and providing a transparent information and administrative system. Lecturers are prepared through training to become academic advisors and field assistants, while students are given socialization and training to be ready to participate in activities. Higher education institutions establish cooperation with the business world, industry, government agencies, and community organizations to expand MBKM program options. All of these stages are concluded with a continuous monitoring and evaluation mechanism as a basis for improvement. With careful planning, the implementation of the Independent Campus is expected to run effectively and produce graduates who are independent, competent, and relevant to global needs.

A. Policy and Regulation Establishment

Yudharta University Pasuruan began implementing the MBKM (Independent Learning Independent Campus) program by establishing clear policies and regulations as the foundation for execution. The rector, together with the university senate, drafted rector regulations and technical guidelines to serve as references for all faculties and study programs. This document contains the implementation procedures, credit semester conversion, as well as the rights and obligations of both students and lecturers. These regulations are crucial to ensure that the implementation of MBKM is consistent with the university's vision and mission and meets national standards. In addition, the regulations also encompass evaluation aspects so that learning outcomes can be measured clearly. With this legal framework in place, students and lecturers have certainty in direction when conducting activities outside the campus. This also serves as the basis for legitimizing partnerships with external partners.

The MBKM policy at UYP also serves as a means of transforming education based on pesantren and multiculturalism. This university integrates values of religiosity, Islam, and local wisdom into the MBKM regulations. Consequently, students are not only directed towards achieving academic competencies but also towards character strengthening. The formulation of regulations is done participatively by involving faculty leaders, lecturers, and the university's

MBKM team. This creates a sense of ownership and shared responsibility in overseeing the implementation. Through comprehensive policy, UYP ensures that the MBKM program is not merely a formality but a real instrument to encourage students' independent learning.

B. Analysis of Needs and Curriculum Alignment

Yudharta University Pasuruan began implementing the MBKM (Independent Learning Independent Campus) program by establishing clear policies and regulations as the foundation for execution. The rector, together with the university senate, drafted rector regulations and technical guidelines to serve as references for all faculties and study programs. This document contains the implementation procedures, credit semester conversion, as well as the rights and obligations of both students and lecturers. These regulations are crucial to ensure that the implementation of MBKM is consistent with the university's vision and mission and meets national standards. In addition, the regulations also encompass evaluation aspects so that learning outcomes can be measured clearly. With this legal framework in place, students and lecturers have certainty in direction when conducting activities outside the campus. This also serves as the basis for legitimizing partnerships with external partners.

In addition, the curriculum alignment is also directed towards the integration of field experiences with theory. Students are encouraged to connect the knowledge they gain in class with real practice in the field. For example, education students can participate in the Campus Teaching program, while economics students can intern at partner SMEs. This curriculum alignment is not only about academic structure but also a strategy to build self-regulated learning. With the freedom to choose, students become more responsible for designing their learning paths according to their interests and careers. This makes the UYP curriculum increasingly adaptive, contextual, and oriented towards student independence.

C. Strengthening Partnerships with External Stakeholders

Yudharta University Pasuruan places great emphasis on the importance of external partnerships in supporting MBKM. The university's MBKM team actively collaborates with local governments, non-governmental organizations, the business world, and MSMEs. This collaboration allows students to gain hands-on experience in various sectors, such as education, economy, health, and community. These partnerships also serve as a gateway for students to contribute to local development. With a wide network of partners, UYP can offer a variety of MBKM activities that align with students' potential. This collaboration simultaneously strengthens the university's position as a center for the development of knowledge that is relevant to community needs.

External partnerships also provide dual benefits, both for students and partners. Students gain contextual learning opportunities, while partners receive tangible contributions from the presence of students. For example, students assist small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in digital marketing or develop technological literacy in schools. This form of collaboration creates a mutually beneficial and sustainable environment. UYP also strives to ensure that every collaboration is formalized in a memorandum of understanding (MoU) so that its implementation is measurable and directed. Thus, partnerships are not just a formality but truly support learning outcomes. This makes MBKM at UYP different because it emphasizes collaboration based on local wisdom and the real needs of the community.

D. Human Resource Preparation

The human resource preparation stage at UYP focuses on strengthening the capacity of lecturers and students. Lecturers are prepared to be academic advisors as well as Field Supervising Lecturers (DPL) through training on experiential learning strategies and the mechanism of credit conversion (SKS). They are also equipped with communication, monitoring, and evaluation skills for assessing student learning outcomes in the field. Meanwhile, students participate in socialization and workshops that explain the registration process, rights, obligations, and ethics during their participation in MBKM. This preparation ensures that all parties understand their respective roles, so the implementation can proceed smoothly. With this preparation, lecturers and students are more ready to face the dynamics of MBKM.

In addition to technical aspects, human resources preparation also involves mental and character aspects. UYP instills values of religiosity, integrity, and responsibility in every training, in line with the campus identity based on pesantren (Islamic boarding school). This aims to ensure that students are not only academically competent but also possess strong ethics and morals when engaging with society. Lecturers are encouraged to be exemplary and

inspirational mentors, while students are directed to become independent learners. With the strengthening of human resources, UYP aims to produce graduates who are competitive, characterful, and able to adapt to various environments.

This careful preparation is key so that the implementation of MBKM (Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka - Independent Campus Independent Learning) is not merely a formality, but truly fosters self-directed learning.

E. Information System and Administrative Mechanism

Yudharta University Pasuruan also prepares an academic information system that supports the implementation of MBKM. This system functions for registration, validation, monitoring, and the conversion of student credits. Through integration with the MBKM platform of the Ministry of Education and Culture, students can more easily choose programs according to their interests. Administration is carried out transparently and documented so that all processes can be accounted for. In addition, the academic bureau and the university's MBKM team actively facilitate students who encounter technical difficulties. With this system, all processes become more efficient, accountable, and accessible.

A clear administrative mechanism also facilitates coordination between students, lecturers, and external partners. Every stage, from the approval of the program head, verification by academic advisors, to the conversion of credits, has documented procedures. This reduces the risk of miscommunication and ensures that all parties understand their respective responsibilities. UYP also utilizes information technology to expedite bureaucratic processes, allowing students to focus more on the learning experience. With an organized administrative system, the implementation of MBKM can proceed according to academic quality standards. This system not only supports the sustainability of the program but also serves as evidence of UYP's seriousness in building a professional higher education governance.

F. Monitoring, Evaluation, and Continuous Improvement

Yudharta University Pasuruan (UYP) designs a monitoring and evaluation system as an important part of the implementation of the MBKM (Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka) to ensure that learning processes outside the campus go according to goals. Monitoring is conducted regularly through student reports in the form of logbooks, activity journals, and weekly reflections that are monitored by Academic Supervisors (PA) and Field Supervisors (DPL). In addition, external partners also provide feedback regarding student performance, including aspects of discipline, responsibility, and actual contributions to the program. This system ensures that student activities are always within the corridor of the learning outcomes established by the study program.

In terms of evaluation, UYP not only assesses the final outcomes of activities but also monitors the learning process of students from the beginning to the end of the program. The evaluation includes academic achievements, professional skills, as well as the development of soft skills such as communication, teamwork, and problem-solving. All evaluation data is compiled by the MBKM university team for analysis and serves as the basis for improving recommendations. UYP also integrates the evaluation results into regular coordination meetings of the faculty and academic bureau, ensuring continuity between implementation, assessment, and follow-up.

The stage of continuous improvement is designed through policy revisions, curriculum refinement, and strengthening networks with external partners. For instance, if obstacles are found in the credit conversion mechanism, the university promptly adjusts the technical guidelines to be simpler and more transparent. Similarly, regarding cooperation patterns, if there is feedback from partners, UYP follows up with the signing of a new memorandum of understanding that is more relevant. With this pattern of monitoring, evaluation, and continuous improvement, UYP ensures that the implementation of MBKM is not just a temporary activity, but becomes an adaptive, beneficial program that consistently enhances students' learning independence.

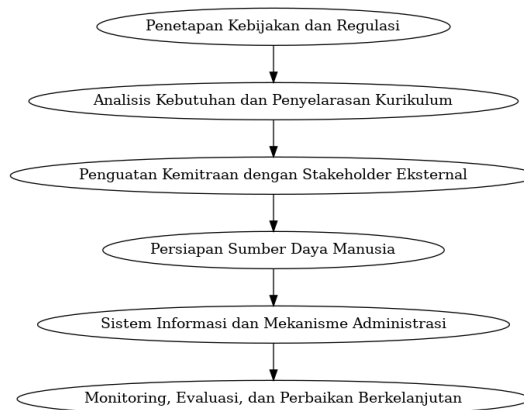


Figure 1. beneficial program

Implementation of the Independent Campus Program

The implementation of the Merdeka Campus program at Universitas Yudharta Pasuruan shows a clear direction in encouraging student independence in learning. One evident aspect is how students are given the freedom to choose programs that align with their interests and potentials. The university plays an active role by providing policy support, guidance from faculty, and relevant partnership networks. Students are not just objects of learning, but also the main actors in managing their learning experiences. In this context, students are expected to take responsibility for their academic choices and activities they engage in. The MBKM-based academic support system allows for flexibility in credit conversion, ensuring that external activities are formally recognized. This situation encourages students to be more daring in taking the initiative to define their learning paths.

The Entrepreneurship Program is a tangible implementation of the MBKM (Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka) at Yudharta Pasuruan University. This program provides students with the opportunity to develop creative business ideas that are also oriented towards market needs. Students are guided by lecturers and practitioners to design business plans, manage finances, and market their products. This activity directly trains managerial skills, problem-solving abilities, and quick and accurate decision-making. In addition, students are also encouraged to work in teams, thereby enhancing their collaboration skills. The entrepreneurship pursued by students is not limited to conventional sectors but also includes digital and innovative-based fields. University support in the form of access to small capital, business incubators, and consultation spaces underpins the success of this program. As a result, many students have successfully launched startups with good sustainability.

The involvement of students in the Entrepreneurship program also has implications for enhancing their learning independence. Students are required to seek information themselves regarding market opportunities and marketing strategies. They also independently learn how to utilize digital technology to optimize sales. This makes students more active in exploring knowledge sources outside of formal classes. The challenges faced, such as limited capital and time management, become valuable experiences for training their perseverance. The guiding lecturers only act as facilitators, while the full initiative comes from the students themselves. Thus, the Entrepreneurship program fosters a culture of learning based on direct experience. As a result, students not only acquire entrepreneurial skills but also become accustomed to independent and solution-oriented thinking.

In addition to the Entrepreneurial program, Yudharta University Pasuruan is also actively sending students to the Teaching Campus program. This program aims to provide hands-on experience for students to get involved in the education sector, especially in schools that are in need. Students are placed in elementary or secondary schools to assist in the learning process, administration, and extracurricular activities. Through this activity, students learn to manage classrooms, communicate with students, and collaborate with teachers. This experience enhances students' social sensitivity to the realities of education in society. Moreover, students are challenged to design creative teaching methods that are suitable for local conditions. The Teaching Campus program also trains adaptation and leadership skills.

The independence of student learning through the Teaching Campus program is reflected in how they are able to design learning plans independently. Students must seek references, adjust the material according to the needs of the students, and determine

appropriate methods. Challenges that arise, such as limited learning facilities in schools, require students to be more innovative. They use simple media or available technology to maximize learning. This situation encourages students to step out of their comfort zones and rely on their own creativity. Supervising lecturers only provide general guidance, while students develop strategies according to the conditions in the field. In this way, students become accustomed to making independent decisions. Ultimately, the Teaching Campus becomes an effective medium to foster courage, responsibility, and independence in learning.

The MBKM Entrepreneurship Program at Yudharta Pasuruan University is different from the Entrepreneurship program because it emphasizes strengthening the business capacity of students. In this program, students receive intensive training related to business management, product innovation, and the utilization of digital technology. The university collaborates with business practitioners and related institutions to provide comprehensive training. Students are not only required to create a business plan but are also tested on their ability to implement it. They learn about market analysis, branding, and digital marketing techniques. This activity is oriented towards creating sustainable businesses that are competitive. In addition, students are involved in business competitions to assess their business readiness at a practical level.

The implementation of entrepreneurship at UYP also demonstrates how students can become independent in managing real challenges. For instance, when their businesses face sales obstacles, students are required to conduct market research independently. They also leverage information technology to adjust their marketing strategies. University support in the form of workshops and mentoring serves only as guidance, not instant solutions. This encourages students to be more proactive in seeking solutions to the problems they encounter. Students also learn to prioritize between academic obligations and their business activities. This experience strengthens their resilience and time management skills. Thus, the Entrepreneurship program effectively enhances students' capacity for independent learning.

The Thematic Community Service Learning Program (KKNT) is also an integral part of the MBKM implementation at Yudharta Pasuruan University. Through KKNT, students immerse themselves directly in the community to apply the knowledge they have learned in lectures. This program focuses on solving real problems in specific villages or communities. Students collaborate with village governments, community organizations, and local residents to develop relevant programs. Activities include economic empowerment, improving the quality of education, and environmental management. KKNT trains students to understand social dynamics while honing cross-cultural communication skills. Students must also be able to design, implement, and evaluate programs independently. Thus, KKNT strengthens community-based problem-solving skills.

The independence of student learning in KKNT is clearly seen through their active role in program planning. Students must identify existing problems in the community and formulate appropriate solutions. They learn to prepare activity proposals, manage budgets, and implement programs with full responsibility. The challenges that arise in the field, such as funding limitations or community resistance, become real tests for the students. They are encouraged to be flexible, creative, and solution-oriented in facing these conditions. The field supervisors only act as general overseers, while the implementation is fully conducted by the students. With this condition, students become accustomed to making decisions and being responsible for the outcomes. KKNT thus functions as an effective social laboratory to train independence in learning.

The implementation of the MBKM at Yudharta University Pasuruan through entrepreneurship programs, teaching campus, entrepreneurship, and KKNT shows a tangible contribution to student learning independence. Students gain direct experience that strengthens their academic, social, and professional skills. They become accustomed to making decisions, managing challenges, and developing creativity without always relying on lecturers. The MBKM programs at UYP also provide opportunities for students to interact with the professional world and society. This not only boosts their confidence but also shapes a more independent and adaptive mindset. The success of the program's implementation is largely determined by the university's support through policies, mentoring, and facilities. Nevertheless, student initiative remains a key factor in the success of MBKM.

Evaluation of the Independent Campus

The evaluation of the Merdeka Campus is a process to assess the extent to which the implementation of the MBKM program successfully achieves the goals of enhancing the quality of learning and students' independence in higher education. This evaluation includes

administrative, academic aspects, stakeholder involvement, and the impact generated for students, lecturers, and institutions. Through evaluation, higher education institutions can identify successes, obstacles, and opportunities for improvement in the implementation of MBKM. The results of the evaluation are then used as a basis for refining the curriculum, strengthening partnerships, and developing more innovative learning strategies. Thus, the MBKM evaluation not only assesses existing achievements but also serves as an important instrument to ensure the sustainability and relevance of the program to the needs of the workforce and society. As for the evaluation of the Merdeka Campus program at Yudharta University Pasuruan, it includes the following points:

A. Administration and process evaluation

At this stage, UYP assesses the smooth implementation of the MBKM program's administrative processes, from student registration, document collection, to the compliance of procedures with academic guidelines. The evaluation is conducted to ensure that the process runs according to regulations, is transparent, and does not create bureaucratic obstacles. This is important so that students and lecturers can focus more on the substance of learning without being disturbed by technical issues.

B. Academic evaluation and learning outcomes

This evaluation emphasizes the achievement of learning outcomes or student learning achievements. Supervising lecturers and external partners assess the academic development, skills, and independence of students while participating in MBKM. Through logbook reports, portfolios, and assessments, the university can measure how far the program helps students achieve competencies in accordance with the curriculum.

C. Evaluation of Internal and External Stakeholders

This stage gathers feedback from students, lecturers, and external partners regarding their experiences in MBKM. Students assess the benefits of the program on their learning independence, lecturers evaluate the effectiveness of guidance, while external partners evaluate the contributions of students in the field. UYP uses the results of this evaluation as a basis to strengthen cooperation and improve the quality of MBKM implementation.

D. Evaluate the impact and benefits

This evaluation focuses more on the long-term impact of MBKM, both for students and institutions. For students, the impact can be seen from the increase in soft skills, professional networks, and self-confidence in independent learning. For universities, the benefits are reflected in the improvement of reputation, achievement of Key Performance Indicators (IKU), and strengthening relationships with external partners.

E. continuous evaluation and follow-up

The final stage is the follow-up of all evaluation results. UYP uses it to formulate strategies for policy improvements, update the curriculum, and adjust collaboration mechanisms with partners. This process ensures that MBKM does not stop at a single implementation period, but continues to evolve as a dynamic, sustainable, and relevant program to the needs of students and society.

Discussions

According to Howard N. Nichols' theory of experiential learning, the best learning process occurs when individuals are directly engaged in real experiences relevant to their life and professional context. The implementation of the Merdeka Campus at Yudharta Pasuruan University aligns with this principle, as students not only learn in classrooms but also participate in entrepreneurship programs, teaching campuses, entrepreneurship activities, and KKNT (Community Service Program). Nichols emphasizes that concrete experiences help students build a deeper and more sustainable understanding compared to mere theoretical knowledge. This is evidenced by UYP students participating in the MBKM program who were able to connect academic theory with practical application in the field. Therefore, the MBKM approach strengthens the learning transformation process from passive to active.

Nichols also highlights the importance of reflection in the experiential learning process. UYP students participating in the MBKM are required to create a logbook, journal, or reflective report that is then monitored by supervising lecturers. This reflective activity helps students internalize experiences, identify difficulties, and formulate strategies for improvement. With the reflective process, learning does not stop at activities, but rather

evolves into new knowledge. This is in line with Nichols' idea that reflection is a bridge between experiences and new concepts. At UYP, students learn not only from successes but also from failures encountered during the program.

From Nichols' perspective, independent learning is formed when students have the freedom to choose, manage, and evaluate their learning paths. The MBKM program at UYP provides students with the flexibility to choose programs according to their interests and career goals. This condition encourages the emergence of self-regulated learning, where students take full responsibility for their academic decisions. Nichols explains that autonomy in learning is an important factor in training self-discipline and responsibility. Thus, the MBKM policy becomes a strategic platform for shaping a generation of independent learners. The university acts as a facilitator, not a single control center.

The aspect of the curriculum is also closely related to Nichols' views. He emphasizes that a relevant curriculum must accommodate the needs of students as well as the social-economic demands outside the campus. At UYP, curriculum adjustments are made through needs assessment that involves the workforce, industry, and external partners. This process creates a balance between academic theory and real practice. Nichols states that contextual education is more capable of producing long-term skills compared to purely abstract learning. This is evident in the integration of MBKM activities into a flexible and adaptive curriculum.

External partnerships are also in line with Nichols' theory which emphasizes collaborative and social interaction-based learning. Nichols argues that meaningful learning experiences arise from interaction with the real environment. At UYP, collaboration with schools, SMEs, and local governments provides students with opportunities to interact with various parties. This interaction strengthens communication, collaboration, and adaptability skills. Students not only learn from lecturers but also from the community and the workforce. This type of collaboration reflects the principle of learning as a social process according to Nichols.

Monitoring and evaluation of the MBKM at UYP reflect Nichols' idea about the importance of feedback cycles in the learning process. Administrative, academic, and stakeholder evaluations provide valuable data on students' achievements and challenges. Nichols emphasizes that effective evaluation should be formative and continuous, not just summative. This is evident in UYP's practices that use evaluation results to improve curriculum, policies, and cooperation mechanisms. Thus, MBKM is not only evaluated to assess but also to improve. This cycle reflects continually evolving and adaptive learning.

The long-term impact of the MBKM implementation at UYP can be viewed from the perspective of Nichols, who emphasizes the transfer of learning. Students involved in entrepreneurship programs, teaching campuses, or KKNT are able to apply the skills they have acquired in other contexts in the future. Skills in time management, communication, problem solving, and adaptability are not only relevant to academics but also to professional careers. Nichols asserts that true learning is that which can be transferred to new situations. MBKM at UYP proves this by producing graduates who are adaptive and globally competitive.

Thus, when analyzed through Howard N. Nichols' theory, the implementation of MBKM at Yudharta Pasuruan University shows alignment with the principles of experiential learning, which emphasizes real experiences, reflection, independence, collaboration, and continuous evaluation. Each stage in MBKM, from planning to evaluation, aligns with Nichols' view that learning should be contextual, reflective, and transformative. Students not only master the material but also develop learning independence and strong character. This strengthens the argument that MBKM is an appropriate policy to face the challenges of 21st-century education. UYP has successfully utilized this framework to strengthen its role as a multicultural campus and a pesantren-based institution that is adaptive to global changes.

6. Conclusion

The implementation of the Merdeka Belajar-Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) program at Yudharta Pasuruan University shows that this policy can serve as a strategic instrument in enhancing student learning independence. Planning is carried out through policy development, curriculum alignment, and strengthening partnership networks; implementation occurs through socialization, academic consultation, registration, the appointment of supervising lecturers, onboarding, to the conduct of learning activities outside the campus; while evaluation is conducted comprehensively through administrative monitoring, academic assessments, stakeholder feedback, and continuous follow-up. As a

result, students benefit from improved soft skills, independence, and readiness to face global challenges, while the university gains strengthened academic governance and the achievement of Key Performance Indicators (KPI).

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