

# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **Introduction**

In this study, a few points the researcher discussed. First of all, the research background explains what motivated the researcher to research her chosen topic through the background of the study. Afterward, the identification of problems related to the topic that happens in Indonesia is discussed, followed by the delimitation of the problems. Subsequently, the research questions followed by the research objectives are presented. In addition, the significance of the research is explained, containing the benefits of the study for some groups. Finally, the organization of the research presented how the researcher organized the contents of the investigation.

## **Background of the Study**

Currently, the world is entering a new era called industry revolution 5.0. The era of Industry 5.0 focuses on the connection between people and machines (Saniuk & Grabowska, 2023). To compete worldwide, a firm must equip human resources with increasingly particular and relevant competences to the needs of these changing situations (Ismail et al., 2023). The competence in question is based on human resources who have two types of abilities: soft and hard skills. However, the thing that needs to be highlighted that many people still underestimate is soft skills. Meanwhile, soft skills have an important role equal to hard skills.

Soft skills are psychological traits such as courteous behavior, discipline, perseverance, and cooperation. They influence connections with others by contributing to emotional intelligence, which encompasses personality traits, social sensitivity, communication, language, personal habits, friendliness, and optimism (Kusnadi, 2020). Moore (2023) stated that Soft skills are essential for success in today's job economy. According to Harvard University research (as cited in Sharma, 2021), well-developed soft skills account for 85% of employment success, whereas technical abilities account for 15%. Therefore, although both soft skills and hard skills are essential, the role of soft skills is positioned above hard skills. Consequently, It's time to make developing soft skills mandatory (Irawan et al., 2023). They believe the best time to start developing soft skills is early on, with thorough instruction in official and informal learning environments. This will be emphasized more on higher education, given that higher education is the level that prepares generations to face the world of work. According to Hadiyanto et al. (2021), Competencies acquired by recent graduates should be ingrained in the curriculum and applied during their time in college. Of the many educational efforts in improving students' soft skills, recently the government supported these efforts by establishing a new policy in higher education, namely *Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka* or Freedom to Learn-Independent Campus

Merdeka Belajar-Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) is a new academic policy on higher education that is established by the new Ministry of Education and Culture, Nadiem Makarim, in which there is the granting of rights to students to study

outside their study program for three semesters (Kemendikbud, 2020). In it, there are many programs that students can participate in to fulfill the rights that have been given. These programs include industrial internships, educational internships, student exchanges, research, humanitarian projects, entrepreneurship, independent project studies, and community service program. With these programs, students are able to explore knowledge according to their interest. According to Hidayat and Sabarudin, (2022), the fundamental goal of MBKM is to develop a learning environment that will generate students who can compete in the classroom with the work of the outside world during the Industrial Revolution. 4.0 based on their academic field of interest.

One of the MBKM programs that support student to achieve the necessary soft skills is the internship program. The internship program at MBKM provides a platform for students to gain work experience in their chosen field. The Ministry of Education and Culture feels the need to hold an internship as one of the MBKM programs because students lack real-world industry experience, which makes them less prepared for employment. The non-MBKM Internships that lasting less than six months are insufficient for gaining industrial competence. On the contrary, the MBKM-internship program, which lasts 1-2 semesters, is designed to offer students with hands-on experience and experiential learning in the workplace. The Ministry of Education and Culture stated that students will develop both hard skills (skills, complicated problem solving, analytical skills, etc.) as well as soft skills (professional/work ethics, communication, cooperation,

etc.) throughout their internship. However, soft skills is highlighted to be the main aspect that is going to be studied.

Since the new policy was established, one of the Islamic Private University in Yogyakarta began to try to adapt the curriculum to ministry policies. This change is something new and somewhat different, especially for English Language Department students because most of the ELED students' activities include academic learning on campus and obligatory off-campus activities, such as school observations and community service activities. ELED students who have participated in the MBKM internship program feel a difference in experience compared to their usual activities on campus. This difference is a new insight as well as a challenge for them. Therefore, it is certain that students will get a different experience than usual in their learning process through this MBKM policy which will affect the way students think and their soft skills development. However, students still lack awareness of how the MBKM internship program affects their soft skills. Some students tend to highlight the MBKM internship program as an opportunity for them to exchange credits for off-campus activities.

A significant body of research has explored the Soft Skill Development Through MBKM-Internship Program. One of which is conducted by Maulida et al. (2023) in thirteen higher education institutions in Indonesia. The study is focusing on forty-five students who participated in Campus Teaching program which is a part of educational internship program. With descriptive quantitative study, the research found that having a teaching campus enhances the learning outcomes for students in terms of soft skills like entrepreneurship, commitment,

detail orientation, communication, integrity, leadership, motivation, self-confidence, and thinking skills.

Another research was conducted by Tandrianingsih and Rohmah (2023) in accounting education department at Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta. The participants of the research were 2 lecturers and 8 students who engaged in the MBKM program. The results revealed that using the MBKM program to increase soft skills in students could directly develop student soft skills. Soft skills such as public speaking, problem solving, leadership, and teamwork emerge from this atmosphere. In addition, challenges such as the limited conversion procedure for course grades, the limited learning process on campus, the internet network, and the lack of conduciveness are encountered.

Despite several studies related to students' experience of transformative learning with MBKM has done, those previous research were done at other institutions. Currently, research on related topics has not been conducted in the English Language Education Department at one of the private universities in Yogyakarta. Therefore, this would be the goal of the researcher to conduct research in the mentioned site. Previous research also determined students in different universities, while the other study focused in the Accounting Education Department as the setting of research. The current research determined English Language Education Study Program students, Faculty Of Language Education as the object of research and will focuses in MBKM-Internship program. Thus, the aim of the study was to examine students' perception of MBKM-internship programs to develop their soft skills. This research presented a series of information that would

be useful for readers about how the implementation of MBKM as one of soft skills development facilities based on the perspective of students.

### **Identification of the Problem**

Since 2021, English Language Education Department at one of the Islamic Private Universities began to adapt MBKM policy and adjust it into the curriculum that has been set in the study program. To accept the policy, a study program must create or adjust the curriculum to the Independent Campus policy's implementation model (Krishnapatria, 2021). Currently, there are three programs carried out by the campus, namely student exchange, educational internship, and industrial internship. The three programs have been implemented since 2021, while in 2022 the only program held is industrial internship and business incubation. Due to things that are considered new by students, some students have their own challenges in their experience following this program. However, students do feel the influence of the industrial internship program on their soft skill development.

In order to find basic information on how the MBKM internship program perceived by students, the researcher conducted initial interviews to few ELED students who have participated MBKM-internship programs. Based on initial interviews, one of the students admitted that he was not aware of the MBKM internship program. In addition, she felt that the program was profitable because he could exchange credits with internship activities carried out during one semester and get a refund of credits. In addition, he felt a difference in experience compared to his activities on campus, including gaining new experiences in the

field of tourism she chose and also gaining new relations. Similar to what the previous student felt, another student felt that this program was financially beneficial. In addition, he mentioned that by participating in this MBKM internship program, he had experience in the admin position he chose when joining the program.

Based on the initial interviews with the students, it can be concluded that they mostly highlighted the financial benefits they got while participating in the internship program. So far, they did not mention how their internship experience directed them towards their self-development. This shows that there are still some students who do not have a high awareness of how the MBKM internship program supports their soft skill development. Although they mentioned new experiences in their chosen field while participating in the program, they were not able to explain in detail how these experiences led to their soft skill development.

### **The Delimitation of the Problems**

The topic about implementation of MBKM has a large space to study. To overcome the widening scope of research and to keep the objectives of this research focused, the research needed to limit the reach of the study. The study focused on examining the implementation of MBKM on ELED students. The study conducted at one of the private universities in Yogyakarta. The participants of the study were the students who had participated in internship of MBKM programs. Therefore, the findings served is the implementation of MBKM-Internship on ELED students only at one of Islamic Private University in

Yogyakarta. In addition, the research was conducted on students who had participated in the industrial internship program only.

### **Research Questions**

According to the explained background, the researcher arranged two research questions:

1. What are soft skills do the student achieve while participating in the MBKM internship program?
2. What are the challenges the students encountered in the process of developing soft skills through the Kampus Merdeka-Internship Program?

### **Research Objectives**

According to the arranged research questions, the researcher has two objectives:

1. To investigate soft skills the students acquired in their participation in MBKM-internship program.
2. To examine challenges faced by students during participating in MBKM-internship program.

### **Significance of the Research**

The study was established in the hope of bringing more benefits to the students, lecturers, English Language Education Department, and future researchers.

### ***Students***



The program from MBKM, especially internship program, is essentially not mandatory for all students but only grants rights to students who are interested. therefore, there are still students who have not had experience with this program. Some students are also still lack of awareness about how this program support their soft skill development. By exploring the experiences of students who have participated in this program, it can be a deep understanding of the series of MBKM activities for students, especially those who have not experienced it. In addition, the experience of students who have participated in this program can be taken into consideration for students who do not have experience.

### ***Teachers***

As a party that also experiences the implementation of MBKM, teachers can find out how this new policy impacts their students based on the students' own experiences. Besides that, as a source of information, teachers can take this research as a reference in providing information to their students regarding the implementation of MBKM based on student experiences.

### ***English Language Education Department***

This study can be one review of the implementation of MBKM-internship programs. Through this research, the department can make an overview of what will be done in the future for the implementation of this MBKM, considering the perspective of students so that the implemented program can be more effective in supporting students' soft skill development in the industrial world.

### ***Future Researchers***

This topic has a wide scope and still not much done. Therefore, future researchers can conduct research of a similar topic in different research sites. In addition, the future researcher can also conduct the research with different perspective such as lecturers or higher parties.

### **Organization of the Research**

There are five chapters in this research. The first chapter explains the background of the research, the identification of the research, the delimitation of the research, the research questions, the research objective, and the research significance.

Chapter two is a literature review. This chapter contains an explanation of soft skills as well as MBKM policy, the aims, and the programs under MBKM policy with the descriptions of each program. This chapter will have deeper explanations of soft skills and MBKM policy in detail.

Chapter three is the methodology. This chapter describes methods, design, instruments, participants, and data collection techniques. The researcher also describes how she analyzes the data.

The fourth chapter presents the research findings and discussions. This chapter presents the findings derived from the data collected. The researcher interprets the findings, relating them to the research questions and objectives. Furthermore, this chapter discusses the implications of the findings, comparing them to the existing literature reviewed in Chapter 2, and highlighting any unexpected outcomes or patterns discovered during the analyses.

Chapter five concludes the study by summarizing the key findings and their relevance to the research objectives and questions. This chapter also makes recommendations based on the findings, including practical applications and areas for future research.

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