

Chapter One

Introduction

This chapter's introduction explains the thinking behind the researcher's choice of study. Therefore, this chapter contains several essential points. The background of this research, which provides a general explanation of the main goals related to the proposed research and justifies the significance of scientific research in this study, is one of these. In identifying the problem, the researcher identifies any issues or weaknesses during this research. The researcher also decides the research's emphasis based on the problem's delimitation. This section also covers the research questions, research objective, and significance of the study.

Background of the Research

Education is one of the determinants of a nation's progress (Rahman et al., 2023). Therefore, education is considered to play an essential role in improving the quality of future generations. Implement a comprehensive and structured curriculum to ensure students acquire the necessary knowledge and skills, create a positive and inclusive learning environment with good teachers, various learning resources, and appropriate technology, and encourage interactive learning activities such as collaborative projects, group discussions, and problem-solving.

Higher education institutions are known as universities after the secondary level of education. Hopefully, they can develop students' interests, talents, and potential. In higher education, student activities are expected to enable students to

improve their quality of life in academic and non-academic life, as well as in the educational and community environment.

The most important part of education is the curriculum. The implementation of the curriculum in Indonesia has undergone significant changes in a short time, which means that educators must understand and adapt to these changes. The policy has been changed to reflect the content of the curriculum, thereby enabling the curriculum to be implemented. Therefore, learning outcomes previously assessed using competencies and outcomes have now changed.

Through the Ministry of Education and Culture, the Indonesian government is improving the quality of human resources, which have digital skills and think creatively. Apart from that, the government is also trying to reduce the national unemployment rate by synchronizing education with the world of work and industry so that college graduates are ready to work with the skills and needs of the world of work. *Merdeka Belajar-Kampus Merdeka (MBKM)*, or Freedom to Learn-Independent Campus, is a policy formulated by the Ministry of Education and Culture through the Education and Culture policy (Purwanti, 2021).

Learning outcomes now serve as the learning competency baseline. As a result of this modification, the curriculum, which was previously known as the Based Curriculum Competencies (KBK), inevitably becomes an Outcomes-Based Curriculum (KBO) (Susanti et al., 2022). In contrast to the Outcome-Based Curriculum (KBO), which demands that the acquired competencies be connected to their relevance in society, the workforce, and equivalency to qualifications, the

Competency-Based Curriculum (KBK) views competencies as the ultimate measure of success. *Learning outcomes* are the names given to these competencies. MBKM was developed to provide opportunities for students to study outside the classroom and develop their soft skills more optimally.

The MBKM program is a new policy from the Minister of Education and Culture, which is starting to be implemented by universities (Baharuddin, 2021). Every student can study interdisciplinary within and outside the study program and even the university in the MBKM program (Kholik et al., 2022). The MBKM program has eight programs, namely (1) *Magang Bersertifikat*, (2) *Studi Independen*, (3) *Kampus Mengajar*, (4) *Pertukaran Mahasiswa Merdeka*, (5) *Membangun Desa (KKN Tematik)*, (6) *Proyek Kemanusiaan*, (7) Indonesian International Student Mobility Awards (IISMA), and (8) *Riset atau Penelitian* (Merdeka, 2022).

Magang Bersertifikat is one of eight programs that can train students' readiness to work; this form is called *Magang dan Studi Independen Bersertifikat* (MSIB). The MSIB program, or *Magang dan Studi Independen Bersertifikat* (Certified Internship and Independent Study), is one of the key initiatives under Indonesia's *Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka* (MBKM) policy. The MBKM policy was introduced by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of Indonesia to provide more flexible learning opportunities for students and better align higher education with industry needs. According to Merdeka (2022), *Magang Bersertifikat* is an activity where students work in partner organizations as trainees for a limited period and can be directly involved

in the internal activities of the institution where they are interning. Meanwhile, *Studi Independen Bersertifikat* is a non-degree learning program organized by an industry that provides knowledge and skills with a high level of relevance in the world of work and the business world, followed by collaborative activities with fellow participants and personnel of partner organizations in a project or case study.

The MSIB program offered by the government gives students the flexibility to choose which path to apply, either the *Magang Bersertifikat* or *Studi Independen Bersertifikat*. The significant difference between the MSIB Internship Program and *Studi Independen* is their output. *Magang Bersertifikat* usually provides prospective employers with work experience and a portfolio. *Studi Independen*, on the other hand, usually produces formal evidence of academic understanding and skills (Obet, 2024).

The MSIB program has been running since 2020 and has been implemented by almost all universities in Indonesia, especially universities in Java. The MSIB program positively impacts students in terms of career development. However, students often face several challenges when participating in this program.

Due to the recent launch of this program, limited research has been conducted on the topic of the MSIB program. For instance, a study conducted by Permata, Witono, and Nugroha (2021) delved into students' perceptions within the Accounting Department regarding their MSIB program experiences. By analyzing

their experiences, they can find out the impact of the MSIB program on improving their skills and expertise.

Another study by Susanti, Ronando, and Basyarach (2022) found that students quickly determine the readiness and impact of MBKM by analyzing their experiences. This finding indicates that the MBKM-MSIB program contributes positively to students' readiness and skills.

However, although there is much research on the MSIB experience, most concentrate on the benefits of participating in the program. Unlike previous studies, the current study will focus on the key aspects of the MSIB internship experience that EFL students consider most valuable in terms of career development and the challenges that EFL students encounter during their participation in the MSIB program.

Participants in the MSIB program come from both public and private universities across Indonesia. Although MSIB is a new program launched by the Ministry of Education, student participation in this activity is performed with great enthusiasm. For example, information from the career development center at one of the private Islamic universities in Yogyakarta revealed that 96 students were accepted into the MSIB batch 6. The implementation of this program provides different experiences for each participant. Therefore, this study's research objective is to analyze student activities related to the most valuable student experiences in terms of career development and the challenges of the MSIB program.

As the program has just been launched, limited research has been conducted on the topic of the MSIB program. Therefore, this study has significant value as it aims to uncover further insight, especially regarding students' experiences and challenges when participating in this program.

Identification of the Problem

The *Magang dan Studi Independen Bersertifikat (MSIB)* program, as part of the broader *Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM)* initiative, offers students the opportunity to gain real-world experience and bridge the mismatch between the theory and the practice. However, for students in the research site's English as a Foreign Language (EFL) department, participating in the MSIB internship program presents unique challenges that warrant further exploration.

Firstly, students have reported difficulties aligning the internship tasks with their language proficiency and academic background. While the program is designed to cater to a broad range of disciplines, EFL students often find that the tasks assigned during their internships are not fully aligned with their skill sets or future career aspirations. This misalignment can result in frustration and a feeling that the internship experience is not as valuable as it could be in terms of career development.

Secondly, there are concerns related to the language barrier and communication skills. EFL students have expressed that they sometimes struggle to fully engage in the internship environment due to their limited proficiency in the language of instruction or communication within the workplace. This issue not

only hinders their ability to perform effectively but also impacts their confidence and overall learning experience.

Thirdly, cultural adjustment and workplace dynamics present another layer of complexity. Many EFL students encounter challenges adapting to the professional culture and workplace expectations. The transition from an academic environment, which often has different norms and expectations, to a professional setting can be daunting. Students may find it difficult to navigate the unspoken rules of workplace etiquette, which can affect their ability to integrate and contribute meaningfully during their internships.

Finally, there are logistical and administrative challenges, such as managing academic responsibilities alongside internship commitments. EFL students at the research site have highlighted the difficulty in balancing their coursework with the demands of the internship. The MSIB program's structure, which requires students to commit significant time and effort, often clashes with their ongoing academic obligations, leading to stress and potential burnout.

These problems, identified through initial interviews with students, underscore the need to explore the specific experiences of EFL students in the MSIB Internship Program. Understanding the key aspects that students find valuable and the challenges they face is crucial for developing strategies to enhance the program's effectiveness in supporting students' career pathways.

Delimitation of Problem

For research investigations, the researcher delimits the research area to obtain specific results. This research focuses on key aspects of the students' experience that are considered most valuable in terms of career development, as well as the challenge of joining the MSIB. In addition, this research is intended only for EFL students who have joined the MSIB at one private Islamic university in Yogyakarta. The researcher chose one of eight *MBKM* programs, namely *Magang dan Studi Independen Bersertifikat (MSIB)*, and will focus on the internship program of MSIB, also known as *Magang Bersertifikat*. Moreover, only four participants involved in the research will be taken from one program.

Research Questions

This research is intended to answer the following questions:

1. What are the key aspects of the MSIB internship experience that EFL students consider most valuable in terms of career development?
2. What challenges do EFL students encounter during their participation in the *MSIB* internship program?

The Objectives of the Research

Based on the research questions, there is a purpose for conducting this research. This research aims are presented as follows:

1. To reveal the key aspects of the MSIB internship experience that EFL students consider most valuable in terms of career development.
2. To find out the challenges that EFL students encounter during their participation in the MSIB internship program.

The Significance of the Research

This research aims to gather information and knowledge about the selected issue from the participants. The study's conclusions were used as a guide by several groups of people, including the following:

Students. This study is expected to contribute to students' key aspects of the internship experience when participating in the MSIB internship program. The findings aim to inspire the activities and highlight the most valuable students in terms of career development.

Lecturer. To facilitate events and give students work experience, it is hoped that policies about the rules established by the *MSIB* Internship Program should more supportive. Additionally, plans for activities and permissions for students to participate in the MSIB Internship Program are made.

Other Researchers. The findings of this study are anticipated to help provide a theoretical synopsis of subsequent research on the same subject and may even suggest additional research.

Organization of the Chapter

This research paper has five sections. The first chapter explains the researcher's justification for selecting this study, along with the background of the study, statement of the problem, research questions, the study's objective, and the study's significance. The researcher explains the definitions in chapter two. The researcher examines the research methods used in chapter three. The researcher examines the discussions and findings in chapter four. Finally, the researcher offers the study's conclusions and suggestions in chapter five.