

Chapter One

Introduction

This chapter focuses the introduction that which explains rationale the researcher choice of study. Therefore, there are several key points in this chapter. These include providing the background of this research which offers a general explanation of the main objectives related to the proposed research and explains the reasons for the importance of scientific research in this study. In the process of identifying the problem, the researcher uncovers the problems or weaknesses that arise during this investigation. Furthermore, on the delimitation of the problem, the researcher chooses the focus of the research to be done. The research questions, research objective, and significance of the study, will be discussed in this section too.

Background of the Research

Education is one of the institutions aimed to facilitate changes in human behavior in terms of personal growth. Therefore, it is assumed that education plays a pivotal role in improving the quality of future generations. With implementing a comprehensive and structured curriculum to ensure students acquire relevant knowledge and skills, creating a positive and inclusive learning environment with adequate educational support, such as qualified teachers, varied learning resources, and appropriate educational technology and encouraging interactive learning activities, including group discussions, collaborative projects, and real-life problem-solving. The world of education needs to receive more attention during develop itself in line with technological advancements, students'

development, and their need (Supriati et al., 2022).

Universities are the implementation of an embodiment of higher education following level of secondary education. According to Sedyati (2022) there are three roles of university in Indonesia, namely conducting education, conducting research, and engaging in community service. They are expected to be able to cultivate talents, interests, and potential for the students. Through the development of student activities at a university, it is expected that students will improve their quality, both in the educational environment and in the community as well as in academic and non-academic life.

Within a relatively brief period, Indonesia's curriculum implementation has undergone significant transformations. It requires education professionals to comprehend and adapt to these shifts. The policy has altered to reflect the content of one curriculum, enabling the implementation of that curriculum. Consequently, the learning outcomes that were previously evaluated using competencies and outcomes have undergone modifications.

The competency benchmark for the learning has been replaced with learning outcomes. The curriculum, formerly known as the Based Curriculum Competencies (KBK), is inevitably changed into an Outcomes-Based Curriculum as a result of this adjustment (KBO). The difference between the two is that the Competency-Based Curriculum (KBK) considers competencies as the measure of final success, while the Outcome-Based Curriculum (KBO) requires that the achieved competencies be linked to their relevance in society, the workforce, and

equivalence to specific qualifications (Solikhah, 2015). These competencies are referred to as learning outcomes. And now changes and the creation of a new curriculum, specifically *Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka*, have occurred over time.

The presence of the policy of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia in 2020 with the existence of *Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka* (MBKM) has brought up a new paradigm in the world education includes higher education. The core concept of *Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka* (abbreviated as MBKM in Indonesia) is “*merdeka*” which means freedom of learning. It entails the promotion of independency for educational institutions both in state universities as well as in private universities. The goal of the program is to improve the quality of resources of good researcher, developing students' interests and talents for challenges and solutions in a way scientific, producing quality research and benefits to society as well as increasing creativity and innovative (Apoko, Hendriana, Handayani, et al., 2022). This is in line with the implementation of several programs within the *Merdeka* Curriculum.

Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka is essential in the learning process because there are no more restrictions in learning, students can determine the desired courses if students and teachers are stuck, they will not be able to innovate and improve the quality of learning. (Saleh, 2020). Through this program students will have a creative spirit, able to collaborate and ready to work (Siregar et al., 2020).

The implementation of MBKM refers to the utilization of *Permendikbud* (The Educational and Culture Ministerial Regulation) number 3 of 2020, which is related to National Higher Education Standards. This regulation facilitates the right for students to take courses outside of their own campus, participate in the internship project, do a community development, join exchange program, and the like. In addition, this MBKM programs can be converted with maximum of 40 credits. This allows students to learn something beyond the classroom study programs for one semester or equal to 20 credits. The MBKM programs include student's exchange, internship, teaching assistance, research, humanity project, entrepreneurship, independent projects and developing village or *Kuliah Kerja Nyata Tematik* (Merdeka, 2020).

Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka curriculum has a new concept where the *MBKM* pattern aims at abolishing the paradigm of linearity which is a barrier between scientific fields. Given today's increasingly complex life emphasizes the broader aspects of insight and comprehensive again, to prepare it, of course, it requires various scientific collaborations both in a good manner multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary science (Sonia, 2022).

The learning activities at *Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka* has been running since 2020. In this study, the researcher wanted to conduct an analysis related to student perceptions of *MBKM* activities *MBKM* is a program of one of the study programs at a private university. The primary objective of this research is to investigate the perception of students regarding the activities associated with

the shortcomings of *MBKM*. By gaining the insight, valuable knowledge can be obtained to enhance the preparation and implementation of *MBKM* in the future.

The COVID-19 pandemic is not an obstacle to the implementation of the *MBKM* program. Various types of *MBKM* programs are participated by students from both private and public universities in Indonesia. Although it is a new program launched by the ministry of education, the enthusiasm of students is very high in participating in this activity. For example, in the data from career development center at one Islamic private university in Yogyakarta show that the MSIB program batch 4 there were 167 applicants and 59 were accepted. These various programs certainly give rise to meanings from each party. Therefore, this study has a research objective to analyze perceptions of students about the *Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM)* program.

In the implementation of the *MBKM* activities, there are certainly various perceptions among the students. These differing perceptions arise from the different activities that each student participates in. Some are motivated by the desire to gain experience, while others face challenges while participating in *MBKM* activities.

Due to the recent launch of the program, limited research has been conducted on the topic of *Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM)*. Therefore, this research holds significant value as it aims to uncover further insights, particularly regarding students' motivation and challenges when participating in the program.

Identification of the Problem

ELED of one department at a private university in Yogyakarta supports its students to take part in MBKM activities. Based on the researcher's observations and inquiries to the students, they are eager to take part in outside learning activities within the scope of the study program. This was observed by the researcher, there were several students who registered for the MBKM program. The problems that are often found are first, students are lazy to participate in learning activities in class, so they want to use credit conversion activities to substitute learning in the classroom. Second, students also want to have other skills. The third is difficult credit recognition, which is where each MBKM program should be converted with a maximum of 20 credits of course taken, but some study programs do not agree with the policy for non-linear reasons with the course.

Regarding the other matter, the study program had already devised a well-structured curriculum, so that with its existence, the program had to change the course offerings again. Some of the requirements were quite minimal because students could only choose one of the two banks for the liquidation of living expenses. Additionally, sometimes it was challenging to find a place that fit our budget because funds were not always received on time.

Delimitation of Problem

For the study investigation, the researcher delimits the study area to gain specific results. This research focused on what students' motivation in participating and challenges of joining *Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka*

program. In addition, this research is addressed only for EFL students' who have joined *Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka* program at one private Islamic university in Yogyakarta. EFL students have been chosen as the focus of this study due to several reasons. Firstly, EFL students may face various challenges when participating in MBKM activities. Language barriers can be a significant obstacle to their full participation and understanding of the program's content. Furthermore, other challenges that they may encounter include self-socialization and adjusting to activities outside their study group, which can pose challenges in actively contributing, expressing ideas, or engaging in effective discussions. The researcher selects four *MBKM* programs namely IISMA (Indonesian International Student Mobility Awards), MSIB (*Magang and Studi Independet Bersertifikat*), and KM (*Kampus Mengajar*). Moreover, there will only be take six participants who are involved in the research taken from the four programs.

Research Questions

This research is intended to answer the following questions:

1. What motivates EFL students to join MBKM programs?
2. What are the perceived challenges faced by EFL students when participating in MBKM program?

The Objectives of the Research

In accordance with the focus and research questions above, then this research aims:

1. To know students' motivation in *MBKM* programs according to the EFL students.
2. To find out the challenges of joining *MBKM* program according to EFL students' perception.

The Significance of the Research

To be beneficial, this study will give some significance. The finding of the study will provide advantages for.

Students. It can be used for students to know the motivations in joining *MBKM* program and can anticipated the challenges when joining the *MBKM* program.

Lecturer. It is expected that there will be more supportive policies regarding regulations or recognition of credit set by the *Kampus Merdeka*, as well as planning activities and allowing students to participate in *MBKM* activities so that it is easier to conduct activities.

Other Researchers. It is expected that the findings of this study can serve as a theoretical overview of further research on the same topic and possibly become a recommendation for further research.

Organization of the Chapter

This research is presented in five parts. Chapter one explains the researcher rationale for choosing this study, including background of the study, statement of the problem, research questions, objective of the study, and significance of the study. In the chapter two, the researcher explains about the

definitions. In the chapter three, the researcher explores the methodology employed in the research. In chapter four, the researcher explores the discussions and findings. Lastly, in chapter five, the researcher presents the conclusions and suggestions drawn from the study.