

Barriers and Strategies: Analysis of the Implementation of Independent Learning Independent Campus (MBKM) at PTKI in Aceh

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Abstract

The objective of this study is to analyze the challenges encountered in the implementation of the Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) policy in Islamic Religious Colleges (PTKI) in Aceh and to propose strategies to address these challenges and enhance the effectiveness of policy implementation. The study focuses specifically on implementing the MBKM policy in PTKI in Aceh, which is noteworthy due to the unique obstacles relating to infrastructure and human resources in this region. The study offers strategic solutions that can be employed to improve the effectiveness of MBKM policy implementation. Furthermore, it provides valuable insights for other universities in Indonesia that may confront similar challenges in implementing the MBKM policy. This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach to investigate PTKI subjects, using interviews, observations, and policy document analysis. The findings reveal that significant obstacles, including a lack of understanding and awareness, limited technological infrastructure, insufficient internet access, and financial constraints impede the implementation of PTKI in Aceh. To overcome these challenges, strategic efforts are needed to raise awareness and educate stakeholders about MBKM, upgrade technology and internet infrastructure, enhance human resource readiness and training, revise internal policies to support the flexibility of MBKM better, streamline bureaucratic processes, and explore additional or alternative sources of funding to support program implementation.

Keywords

Obstacles and Strategies: Independent Learning Independent Campus (MBKM); PTKI in Aceh

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1. INTRODUCTION

Implementing the independent learning system, known as the Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM), has brought about significant changes in Indonesia's higher education learning system. Instead of solely focusing on the confines of the study room, the MBKM encompasses all elements of the educational ecosystem with the primary objective of honing students' abilities in their respective fields and introducing them to the world of work. The decision of the Minister of Education and Culture, as stipulated in several Permendikbud (Ministry of Education and Culture Regulations), including (Mariati, 2021), serves as the foundation for the implementation of MBKM. This has become the central



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focus of all ministries that govern education, including those under the Indonesian Ministry of Religion.

Implementing MBKM appears to yield benefits in promoting equality and enhancing the quality of graduates (Susilawati, 2021). It aims to augment students' hard and soft skills, rendering them independent and adaptable in work environments (Mudrikah et al., 2022). However, each university encounters hurdles in implementing MBKM, such as the preparedness of industrial partners to accommodate MBKM activities (Loisa et al., 2022), as well as the alignment of perceptions with partners in executing MBKM (Suastika et al., 2022) and their willingness to accommodate MBKM (Loisa et al., 2022).

The MBKM policy, as stated in the Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture Number 3 of 2020, aspires to cultivate an autonomous and flexible learning environment. This environment is intended to foster an innovative learning culture, allowing students to acquire interdisciplinary knowledge that is valuable in preparing them for the challenges of the work sphere (Mariati, 2021). Independent learning also engenders a harmonious system and provides ample opportunities for students to develop themselves, be more adaptable in their learning approaches, and gain direct experience within the community (Laga et al., 2021).

The objectives of MBKM encompass the creation of an autonomous, flexible, and innovative learning environment. Furthermore, this paragraph accentuates the benefits for students, including the freedom to learn across disciplines and the opportunities to gain firsthand experience within the community. It also underscores the pivotal role of higher education in producing qualified individuals capable of competing on a global scale. It establishes a connection between the MBKM policy and government initiatives aimed at enhancing the quality standards of graduates and elevating the competitiveness of higher education at the national level (Sujarwanta, 2021).

This paragraph highlights specific aspects of the objectives of the Independent Learning-Independent Campus (MBKM) policy. It emphasizes creating an autonomous, flexible, and innovative learning environment. Additionally, it emphasizes the anticipated benefits for students, such as the freedom to learn across disciplines and opportunities to gain practical experience in the community. The paragraph also underscores the pivotal role of higher education in shaping competent individuals capable of competing globally. It establishes a connection between the MBKM policy and government initiatives aimed at enhancing the quality of graduates and the competitiveness of higher education institutions at the national level. (Sujarwanta, 2021).

Islamic Religious Colleges (PTKI) are higher education institutions that fulfill the functions and roles mandated by Law Number 12 of 2012 concerning Higher Education and other relevant laws and regulations. The primary responsibility of PTKI is to carry out the tridharma of higher education, which encompasses education, research, and community service (Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 12 of 2012 concerning Higher Education., 2012). Implementing the tri dharma in PTKI aims to cultivate competencies that can equip students to navigate social, cultural, scientific, and technological changes and advancements in the dynamic industrial and professional realms. To confront the challenges of the present era, PTKI also incorporates the Independent Learning-Independent Campus (MBKM) policy into the organizational and managerial aspects of higher education. In alignment with the MBKM policy, the Ministry of Religion, through the Directorate of Islamic Religious Higher Education, as outlined in the Regulation of the Minister of Religion Number 42 of 2016, specifies that one of the responsibilities of the Directorate is to facilitate the assurance of quality in higher education services. Consequently, the PTKI Directorate is functionally obligated to ensure that educational services provided by Islamic religious higher education institutions are truly oriented towards and founded upon quality standards. (Ananda et al., 2022).

The social system theory proposed by Talcott Parsons (Parsons & Shils, 2017), an educational institution can be seen as a system composed of interconnected components, including policies, infrastructure, human resources, and values. When implementing MBKM in PTKI, this system must

adapt to new policies while upholding core values, such as strong religious and moral principles. These components must work together synergistically to accomplish the objectives of the policy.

This study will primarily analyze the preparedness of Islamic Religious Colleges (PTKI) in Aceh province to adapt to the implementation of MBKM, the latest curriculum developed for the era of the fourth industrial revolution. This curriculum strongly emphasizes outcome-based education (OBE), an educational process centered around attaining specific tangible outcomes, such as knowledge, skills, and results-oriented behavior. (Wulandari et al., 2021). This study will also examine the efforts and obstacles faced by PTKI in Aceh. This study identified that although the Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) policy has been implemented in various universities in Indonesia, there are still significant differences in readiness and adaptability between regions, especially in remote areas such as Aceh. Previous studies tend to focus on implementing MBKM in more developed areas or large cities, where infrastructure and resources are more adequate. However, there has not been much research that specifically explores how Islamic Higher Education Institutions (PTKI) in remote areas, such as Aceh, face this challenge.

The implementation of the Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) policy as the latest curriculum that emphasizes Outcome-based Education (OBE) is a significant step in efforts to improve the quality of higher education in Indonesia. However, implementing this policy faces various challenges in each region, including the province of Aceh. Aceh Province, located at the northern tip of Sumatra Island and the westernmost province in Indonesia, has unique geographic and socio-cultural characteristics. Its distance from the center of the Indonesian capital is one factor that influences the readiness of Islamic Religious Higher Education Institutions (PTKI) in this region to adapt to changes in national policies such as MBKM. This remoteness impacts various aspects of MBKM implementation, from access to resources to the ability to adapt to increasingly demanding technological requirements in the Industrial Revolution 4.0 era. In addition, PTKI in Aceh, which generally has inadequate infrastructure compared to State Universities (PTN), such as Syiah Kuala University, faces serious obstacles in providing facilities that support outcome-based education (OBE). This minimal infrastructure includes limited internet access, a lack of educational technology facilities, and limited human resources capable of effectively supporting the MBKM curriculum implementation. Meanwhile, PTKI in Aceh also still has to implement the previous curriculum, namely the Indonesian National Qualification Framework Curriculum (KKNI), which adds to the burden of adaptation for these institutions. This duality of the curriculum creates challenges regarding resource allocation, financing, and the readiness of lecturers and academic staff to manage two different systems simultaneously.

This argument shows that the research locus at PTKI Aceh is very relevant and critical to study, given the unique challenges these institutions face in implementing MBKM. This study will not only reveal the readiness of PTKI Aceh to face policy changes but also provide in-depth insights into how the geographic context, infrastructure, and resource constraints play a role in influencing the success of curriculum implementation. Additionally, this study aims to explore how geographic and socio-cultural characteristics and infrastructure constraints in Aceh influence the process of adapting this policy. The results of this study are expected to provide in-depth insights and be used as considerations for policymakers in formulating more effective and inclusive strategies to support universities in remote areas in the process of national education transformation.

2. METHODS

This research was conducted using a qualitative research approach. According to Eko Murdiyanto, qualitative research is a type of research that produces findings that cannot be achieved through quantification or statistical techniques. (Murdiyanto, 2020). This study aims to explore in-depth information and explanations about the implementation of MBKM at PTKI in Aceh. The type of research is field research with a multi-site study scheme where the data is obtained from four loci for analysis.

The loci of this research are taken from UIN Ar-Raniry, IAIN Langsa, STAIN Tengku Dirundeng Meulaboh, and STIT Babussalam Kutacane. The study subjects were PTKI in Aceh and all its elements, including leaders, lecturers, education staff, and students. The objects of the study include the implementation of MBKM, efforts made by PTKI leaders, obstacles faced, and the role of lecturers, education staff, and student participation in the implementation of MBKM.

Primary data in this study is collected through direct observation, interviews with PTKI leaders, lecturers, education staff, and students, and the results of Focus Group Discussions (FGD). At the same time, secondary data is in the form of documents or archives related to the implementation of MBKM, which functions as supporting primary data. The data collection techniques in this study were carried out in several forms, including observation, interviews, and documentation. The observation was conducted by directly observing the implementation of MBKM at several Islamic Religious Colleges in the Aceh region, focusing on the effectiveness of the implementation of MBKM at the observed colleges, which were taken as research samples. Interviews were conducted directly with the leadership elements of several Islamic Religious Colleges, including the Chancellor, Vice-Chancellor, deans, vice deans, lecturers, and students. This aims to obtain in-depth data on the implementation of MBKM at the college level. Documentation sessions were also conducted to strengthen field data, collecting relevant documents such as documentation of readiness for implementing MBKM and MBKM field practices. (Aqib & Rasidi, 2019; Ardiana et al., 2021; Hamzah, 2021; Pakpahan et al., 2021; Ramadhan et al., 2021; Rodhi, 2022; Tersiana, 2018).

Data Collection Techniques include observation: directly observing the implementation of MBKM in PTKI, which is the research sample, focusing on the effectiveness of the implementation of this policy. Interviews: Conducted with PTKI leaders, such as rectors, vice-rectors, deans, vice deans, lecturers, and students, to obtain in-depth data on the implementation of MBKM. Documentation: Collect relevant documents, such as documentation of MBKM implementation readiness and MBKM field practices. Miles and Huberman propose three activities simultaneously for qualitative data analysis: data reduction, data presentation, and drawing/verifying conclusions (Miles & Huberman, 1992). The research section that was reduced in this study was interview data that was irrelevant or less significant, such as answers that were general or not directly related to the research topic (for example, general opinions about education without direct relation to MBKM or specific to PTKI). Observations that recorded things outside the focus of the research, such as daily interactions that were not related to the implementation of MBKM. Documents that were only administrative or general operational did not provide direct insight into the implementation of MBKM at PTKI.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Based on the interviews and observations conducted at Islamic Religious Colleges (PTKI) in Aceh, it was found that the lack of understanding and socialization of the Independent Learning Independent Campus (MBKM) policy was one of the main obstacles in implementing this policy. The following are specific findings identified from the data that has been collected:

Obstacles to the Implementation of Independent Learning Independent Campus (MBKM) at PTKI in Aceh

Based on the results of interviews and observations conducted at Islamic Religious Colleges (PTKI) in Aceh, it was found that the lack of understanding and socialization regarding the Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) policy was one of the main obstacles in implementing this policy. The following are specific findings identified from the data that has been collected: Barriers to the Implementation of Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) at PTKI in Aceh Lack of Understanding and Socialization As conveyed by the informant when the researcher asked about the implementation of MBKM, the informant conveyed the following: "Many lecturers and students do not fully understand

the concept of MBKM and its benefits." From the interview results above, it is understood that both lecturers and students do not yet have a deep understanding of the Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) program. This includes the objectives, principles, and how this program should be implemented.

In addition to the basic concept, many lecturers and students are not fully aware of the benefits of participating in the MBKM program. These benefits include developing practical skills, increased work readiness, learning opportunities outside campus, and interaction with industry and the community. This lack of understanding can be a significant barrier to implementing the MBKM program. If lecturers and students do not understand or see the program's value, they may be less motivated to participate in or support its implementation. The conclusion from this interview is that there is an urgent need to improve socialization and education regarding the concept and benefits of MBKM among lecturers and students. This effort can be done through seminars, workshops, training, and more effective distribution of information to ensure that all parties involved understand and support the program to the maximum. Furthermore, another informant stated, "Uneven socialization causes the information received by students and lecturers to be limited." From the interview results above, it is understood that disseminating information regarding certain programs or policies, such as MBKM, is not carried out consistently and evenly among all lecturers and students. This means that some individuals or groups receive more information than others.

Because socialization is uneven, many lecturers and students only receive partial or no information about the program. The information received may be incomplete, unclear, or not reach the entire academic community. This uneven distribution of information can lead to a lack of comprehensive understanding of the program or policy. This can lead to minimal participation, support, or effective program implementation because lecturers and students do not fully understand the objectives, benefits, and how to implement them. The conclusion from this interview is that there is a need to improve the strategy and method of socialization so that information about the program or policy can be distributed evenly and effectively to all lecturers and students. This can involve using various communication channels, such as face-to-face meetings, email, social media, and other digital platforms, and ensuring the information provided is complete and easy to understand.

Infrastructure Limitations

The results of an interview with one of the informants regarding infrastructure limitations are as follows:

"Inadequate technological facilities and supporting facilities hinder program implementation."

The lack of adequate technological and supporting facilities can be a serious obstacle in implementing a program or initiative. This can hinder efficiency, productivity, and the ability to provide optimal-quality services or education. In education or other programs, inadequate technological facilities, for example, can hinder access to information, slow the learning process, or even reduce the ability to utilize the latest technology for teaching or training purposes. Inadequate supporting facilities, such as classrooms or lack of practical equipment, can also reduce the program's effectiveness in providing participants with a good learning experience.

Furthermore, the results of the interview conveyed that:

"Limited internet access in some areas causes difficulties implementing digital-based programs." Limited internet access is a major obstacle that can hinder the success of digital-based programs. This causes difficulties in accessing information, interacting online, accessing multimedia content, and making the most of online learning opportunities. This gap can also exacerbate the digital divide between well-connected areas and areas that are not. The conclusion of the interview results related to infrastructure limitations is as follows: "Lack of adequate technological facilities and supporting facilities and limited internet access are major obstacles in implementing programs and initiatives."

Inadequate technological facilities can hinder efficiency and productivity in providing services or education, especially in accessing information and using technology for teaching or training. In addition, limited internet access in some areas is a serious obstacle to the success of digital-based programs, limiting participants' ability to interact online, access multimedia content, and make maximum use of online education.

This gap hinders educational progress and innovation and exacerbates the digital divide between well-connected and poorly connected-areas. Therefore, strategic steps are needed, such as improving technology and internet infrastructure in remote areas and developing alternative solutions to ensure that all individuals have equal access to education and digital opportunities. Collaboration between governments, educational institutions, and related parties is key to overcoming these challenges and ensuring inclusive progress in this digital era.

The lack of understanding and socialization of MBKM at PTKI Aceh has significant implications for the effectiveness of the implementation of this policy. In this context, the lack of understanding among lecturers, education staff, and students is a major obstacle that results in low participation and the inability to utilize the MBKM program optimally. The lack of comprehensive and systematic socialization can be seen as one of the main causes of this problem. As expressed by several lecturers, the lack of clarity regarding the MBKM implementation guidelines made it difficult for them to adjust teaching and assessment methods to the new policy. This was exacerbated by the lack of training that would enable lecturers to understand and implement the OBE concept effectively. Students, as the party that should be the main beneficiaries of the MBKM policy, showed a very limited understanding of this policy. Suboptimal socialization caused many students to feel unsure about how to utilize the MBKM program to improve their skills and knowledge. As a result, many students did not take advantage of programs such as internships or student exchanges, which should have been important opportunities for self-development. This study's results indicate that to improve the understanding and effectiveness of MBKM implementation, more intensive and sustainable socialization efforts are needed, including through interactive training and workshops. This training should ensure that lecturers, education staff, and students deeply understand MBKM and how this policy can be implemented in the specific context of PTKI in Aceh.

To address the lack of understanding and socialization, PTKI in Aceh must adopt a more proactive approach to communicating the MBKM policy. This can include organizing ongoing training, developing clear and easy-to-understand socialization materials, and increasing student involvement through MBKM programs that are more interesting and relevant to their needs. In addition, there needs to be a periodic evaluation to measure the understanding and readiness of all parties in implementing MBKM effectively. Thus, handling the problem of lack of understanding and socialization is expected to increase the effectiveness of MBKM implementation in PTKI Aceh so that the goal of this policy, namely producing graduates ready to compete in the world of work, can be achieved more optimally.

Strategies to increase the effectiveness of policy implementation in PTKI in Aceh include: Human Resource Readiness Regarding the readiness of human resources in implementing MBKM, the informant stated the following: Questions regarding the readiness of human resources are usually directed to lecturers and administrative staff at the relevant university or also to institutional leaders such as the rector, dean, or head of the department who manage the MBKM program. Furthermore, the informant stated, "The limited number of lecturers with the appropriate qualifications to teach MBKM programs."

From the interview results above, we can conclude that the number of lecturers available is insufficient to meet the teaching needs of MBKM (Merdeka et al.) programs. Lecturers must meet certain requirements to be able to teach in MBKM programs. These qualifications can include education, experience, expertise, and special competencies relevant to the material and teaching methods in the MBKM program.

MBKM is an educational initiative in Indonesia that allows students to learn and develop themselves through various activities on and off campus. This program requires lecturers who have special qualifications to teach various courses and activities that are innovative and interdisciplinary. So, overall, the statement shows that there are challenges in meeting the need for lecturers with the appropriate qualifications to teach in MBKM programs.

Internal Regulations and Policies

The Independent Learning Independent Campus (MBKM) Program is an initiative that grants students the autonomy to study outside their designated study program or off-campus and engage in internships, humanitarian projects, research, or other forms of practical and integrated learning with the world of work and society. This flexibility necessitates policy support that allows students to take courses outside their study program, transfer credits between institutions, and recognize off-campus learning experiences as part of their academic credit.

Thus, the statement indicates the need to revise and enhance internal campus policies to facilitate the flexibility required by the MBKM program better, thereby optimizing the achievement of its objectives. Moreover, the informant expressed their viewpoint: "The effective and efficient implementation of the program is hindered by complex bureaucracy." Based on the interview above, it can be inferred that complex bureaucracy can lead to delays in obtaining the necessary approvals for various stages of program implementation. For instance, each step in the program necessitates approval from multiple departments or officials, resulting in a protracted process. Complicated bureaucratic procedures often entail completing and submitting numerous documents and forms. This can be time-consuming and energy-draining, increasing the likelihood of administrative errors. Overall, the statement underscores that complex bureaucracy can pose a significant barrier to the effective and efficient execution of a program. To enhance program performance, endeavors must be made to streamline bureaucratic procedures, expedite the approval process, and enhance coordination and flexibility in implementation.

Financial Constraints

Regarding the preparedness of human resources in implementing MBKM, the informant made the following statement: Inquiries regarding the readiness of human resources are typically directed towards lecturers and administrative staff at the relevant Higher Education Institution, as well as institutional leaders such as rectors, deans, or heads of departments responsible for managing the MBKM program. These inquiries aim to ascertain the extent of their preparedness to implement the novel learning methods advocated by the MBKM policy.

As for the results of interviews about the financial aspect, "the funds allocated for implementing the MBKM program are insufficient. This budgetary limitation constitutes the main impediment to optimizing the program's execution. The successful implementation of the MBKM program necessitates various forms of support, encompassing both operational and infrastructural aspects. Limited budgetary resources impede the provision of such support. Various routine expenses required for the program's day-to-day operations, such as lecturer salaries, travel costs, and teaching materials, are affected by budgetary constraints. These limitations can result in reductions or delays in meeting these operational expenses.

The MBKM program necessitates specific equipment and technology, such as computers, software, laboratories, and other facilities to facilitate teaching and learning activities. Budgetary constraints impede the procurement of these tools. The interview results indicate that one of the primary challenges in implementing the MBKM program is limited funding. This restriction inhibits the coverage of operational costs and the provision of adequate supporting equipment. To address this issue, efforts must be made to secure additional or alternative sources of funding, as well as improve budget management efficiency.

The interviewee elaborated, "Economically disadvantaged students cannot participate in programs that entail additional expenses." Based on the interview above, it can be inferred that numerous students face economic hardships, which curtail their financial capacity to meet various supplementary educational requirements. Certain educational programs, such as the MBKM program, often entail costs beyond regular tuition fees. These additional expenses may include transportation, accommodation, learning materials, field activities, or internships. Due to financial limitations, economically disadvantaged students may be unable to partake in such programs. Consequently, this creates disparities in access to educational opportunities and experiences that can augment their competencies and career prospects. Consequently, it is evident from the interview results that many students cannot participate in specific programs due to fiscal restrictions. This underscores the necessity of providing financial support, such as scholarships, tuition assistance, or subsidies, to ensure equal opportunities for all students to engage in programs that involve additional costs.

Discussion

Obstacles in the Implementation of Independent Learning Independent Campus (MBKM) at PTKI in Aceh

a. Lack of Understanding and Socialization

Data from interviews with students and lecturers at several PTKI in Aceh revealed that many campus residents, including students and lecturers, do not fully understand the Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) policy. The information obtained shows that the socialization carried out by university leaders is still minimal and uneven. These results are reinforced by data from the Faculty of Psychology UGM, which shows a lack of student understanding of MBKM due to minimal socialization. For the focus of analysis, data showing general and non-specific responses about understanding MBKM outside PTKI in Aceh.

The study results show that limited infrastructure, such as poor internet access and a lack of technological facilities, is a significant obstacle to implementing MBKM at PTKI in Aceh. The results of interviews with administrative staff and documentation from various internal PTKI reports confirm that inadequate infrastructure hinders the development and implementation of the program. Data from areas with better infrastructure irrelevant to the Aceh context were excluded. Ideally, the campus needs to conduct detailed socialization of the MBKM policy so that campus residents understand it comprehensively and holistically. Based on the results of interviews with students, the researcher found that the socialization of MBKM is still very lacking. This aligns with research conducted by Yoga Budi, who presented that the main problem in implementing MBKM in higher education is the lack of optimal socialization. (Bisri et al., 2023). In 2021, the Faculty of Psychology UGM released the results of a survey reporting that students' understanding of MBKM was lacking because of the campus's lack of socialization. The lack of socialization about MBKM at PTKIN in Aceh province is also a major obstacle to implementing MBKM. Most respondents were slightly disappointed because of the lack of socialization and improvisation carried out by university leaders. One of the strategies carried out by university leaders so that students easily understand understanding and socialize with MBKM implementation is to translate MBKM program regulations into higher education tri-dharma activities. The findings regarding the lack of socialization were verified through triangulation with data from PTKI internal documents, which showed the lack of implementation of seminars, workshops, and MBKM socialization activities. Interviews with students from various departments also confirmed the finding that many students did not understand the opportunities and benefits of MBKM. The researchers also compared these findings with the results of other studies, such as the Yoga Budi study and the UGM Faculty of Psychology report, which showed consistency in the lack of socialization in various universities. (Sari, 2016).

b. Infrastructure Limitations

The limitations of infrastructure were ascertained by analyzing annual reports from PTKI and conducting interviews with campus leaders, who confirmed that this issue posed a significant barrier. Field observations also supported this finding, with researchers noting the inadequate technological facilities at PTKI, particularly in more remote areas of Aceh. Scholarly research indicates that insufficient technological facilities and supporting infrastructure can impede the implementation of programs. Studies have revealed that limited resources, including human resources, finances, and infrastructure, hinder program development. (Nurjanah, 2019). Obstacles to program implementation have been identified as insufficient equipment and delays in budget disbursement. (Pujosiswanto et al., 2020). Furthermore, clear standards for measuring program success and lengthy bureaucratic processes can hinder activities. (Sudiyatno & Wulandari, 2020). Poor stakeholder communication and unfavorable social, economic, and political environments further complicate program implementation (Rahayu, 2018; Pujosiswanto et al., 2020). In some cases, sub-district-level organizations struggle with inadequate infrastructure and technology due to limited financial resources, hampering their ability to effectively deliver public services (Sukarno, 2017). This finding underscores the significance of addressing resource constraints and enhancing coordination to improve program implementation across sectors.

Another constraint is the limited internet access in certain regions of Indonesia, which presents significant challenges for implementing digital-based programs, particularly in education and rural development. During the COVID-19 pandemic, students in remote villages faced difficulties with online learning due to poor internet connectivity. (Jamaludin, 2021). Implementing the Integrated Broadband Village program encountered obstacles such as slow internet connections, limited electricity, and a lack of technical guidance (Ginting, 2017). Nearly 50% of students in the Mentawai Islands do not possess smartphones, impeding effective distance learning (Sinaga & Manik, 2021). However, proactive efforts are currently underway to address these issues. For instance, the Faculty of Engineering at the University of Mataram has initiated a project in Gumantar Village, North Lombok, focusing on constructing internet infrastructure and improving internet literacy, particularly in agriculture. This initiative has significantly enhanced the community's ability to access online platforms and agricultural information (Aranta et al., 2023).

Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) Implementation Strategy at PTKI in Aceh

a. Human Resource Readiness

Based on the results of the interviews, it was found that lecturers and administrative staff at PTKI in Aceh are still adapting to the new curriculum carried out by MBKM. Many lecturers admitted they had not received adequate training to implement the Outcome-Based Education (OBE) learning method. However, several lecturers showed enthusiasm for learning and adapting to the new curriculum. The data is general and not directly related to the readiness of lecturers in Aceh.

The results of the interviews with lecturers and administrative staff were verified using training data that PTKI had carried out. The results showed that although there were training efforts, the number was insufficient to prepare all lecturers and administrative staff to implement MBKM. Interviews with several lecturers who had participated in the training also provided an overview that although they felt more prepared, many of their colleagues still did not sufficiently understand the new curriculum.

The study shows that educators and administrative staff face challenges adapting to new teaching methods and curricula. Although some universities showed readiness for the new learning system, with 75% of respondents ready for the "New Normal" approach (William & Manalu, 2021), others struggled to implement competency-based curricula such as the KKNi (Waseso & Hidayat, 2017). Initially, lecturers may be less prepared to implement the new curriculum due to a lack of knowledge and experience, but continued innovation and practical experience can improve their readiness (Prihatini & Sugiarti, 2022). The team teaching method, which can enhance the learning process, is not well understood or implemented by many lecturers, indicating the need for better planning and commitment (TRISNANINGSIH, 2023). These findings suggest that although progress has been made, there is room

for improvement in preparing educators for the new teaching methodology.

The implementation of Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) in universities in Indonesia faces several challenges. Limited funding, inadequate academic information systems, and inadequate human resources are common barriers (Sintiawati et al., 2022). Many campus residents lack comprehensive knowledge about MBKM due to limited involvement in program-related activities (Nona et al., 2021). However, universities generally support the implementation of MBKM and are willing to improve their competencies to guide students better (Nona et al., 2021). The level of readiness varies among institutions, with one study reporting that 53% of universities are ready (Mudrikah et al., 2022). Inadequate socialization of the MBKM program in some departments hinders effective implementation (Mudrikah et al., 2022). To address these issues, universities should maintain and expand MBKM funding programs, increase student, faculty, and staff engagement opportunities, and provide staff development activities to support MBKM (Ardini et al., 2021). These efforts can help address the limitations in universities' qualifications to teach MBKM programs.

b. Internal Regulations and Policies

Data from various sources show that implementing the Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) policy in various universities faces significant challenges related to internal regulations and policies. These challenges are mainly related to difficulties in converting the curriculum, coordinating activities, and establishing partnerships with external parties. Information that shows general challenges related to bureaucracy in Indonesia that are not specific to the context of PTKI or MBKM is reduced so that the focus of the analysis can be directed at specific internal regulatory barriers in PTKI in Aceh. The results of interviews with PTKI leaders in Aceh and administrative staff were verified with data from internal campus documents that showed difficulties in implementing the flexibility of the MBKM curriculum. These data show that universities have difficulty adapting the old curriculum to the new demands of MBKM, which requires coordination across departments and academic units. This verification is strengthened by research by (Ismail, 2016), which also found that coordination between university leaders and deans was not optimal.

The Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) program, introduced in 2020, aims to provide flexibility in higher education but faces challenges in its implementation (Panjaitan et al., 2022). Universities struggle with curriculum conversion, activity coordination, and establishing partnerships (Wahid et al., 2022). Internal campus policies do not fully support the flexibility of MBKM, with coordination problems between university leaders and deans (Hastuti et al., 2022). Students have limited understanding of MBKM, with only 56.9% having little knowledge, most of which was obtained from mass media (Laga et al., 2021). However, students view MBKM as important for improving competency and future job prospects, with 69% believing that the program can develop skills for employment after graduation (Laga et al., 2021). Despite the challenges, 63.6% of students expressed their readiness to participate in the MBKM program, with internships being the most popular choice at 44.08% (Laga et al., 2021). Students also showed interest in the MBKM program organized by the Directorate General of Higher Education, Research, and Technology (Laga et al., 2021).

The bureaucracy in Indonesia faces complex problems that hinder the effectiveness and efficiency of program implementation. The hierarchical, rigid, and compartmentalized bureaucratic structure limits creativity and innovation in public services (Dwiyanto, 2006). The practice of corruption, collusion, and nepotism (KKN) and slow public services are still central issues in bureaucratic reform (Takko et al., 2023). Bureaucratic pathologies, such as complicated work procedures, uneven workloads, and corrupt behavior, are rooted in culture and habits that are difficult to change (Dedeng Yoesoef Maolani et al., 2022). To overcome this problem, it is necessary to implement an effective and efficient bureaucratic reform program, including strengthening civil society, law enforcement, and interrelated economic and political development strategies (Takko et al., 2023). Improvement of the characteristics and roles of the bureaucracy, as well as the application of good governance principles, are needed to

create an efficient bureaucracy (Motivasi et al., 2018).

Implementing the Merdeka Belajar-Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) program in universities in Aceh, Indonesia is hindered by various challenges. Internal regulations and policies within the universities do not fully support the flexibility promoted by MBKM. Difficulties in curriculum conversion, coordination between different units, and internal bureaucratic issues are major obstacles to implementing this program. This conclusion is supported by data obtained through interviews, analysis of internal documents, and relevant external research. One significant challenge universities face in implementing MBKM is financial constraints. Numerous studies have highlighted that inadequate funding is a significant obstacle to the successful implementation of MBKM (Sintiawati et al., 2022). Additionally, insufficient human resources, lack of information about the program, and negative perceptions among some lecturers and education personnel also contribute to the challenges faced (Sintiawati et al., 2022). To overcome these issues, universities must develop a comprehensive plan encompassing policy support, standard operating procedures, and resource allocation (Baharuddin, 2021). Collaboration among institute leaders, faculty members, students, and external organizations is crucial for the successful implementation of MBKM (Alfikalia et al., 2022). Moreover, universities should focus on adapting their curriculum, establishing credit transfer mechanisms, and organizing various MBKM activities to enhance students' learning experiences (Baharuddin, 2021).

This study holds significance due to its specific focus on PTKI in Aceh, a region with unique geographical, socio-cultural, and infrastructure characteristics compared to other regions in Indonesia. It identifies common challenges in implementing MBKM and sheds light on how the remote location and limited infrastructure in Aceh further exacerbate these difficulties. Furthermore, this study provides new insights into the relationship between the internal bureaucratic structure of universities and the effectiveness of MBKM implementation. This aspect has not been extensively explored in the context of PTKI in remote areas. The data developed in this study indicates that issues such as lack of socialization and HR readiness intensify the impact of limited infrastructure and unsupportive internal policies. Consequently, all these factors collectively contribute to the low effectiveness of MBKM implementation at PTKI in Aceh.

4. CONCLUSION

This study found that implementing Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) in Islamic Religious Colleges (PTKI) in Aceh faced major obstacles, including lack of understanding and socialization, limited technological infrastructure, and financial constraints. To overcome these obstacles, increasing socialization, improving internet access, better training for lecturers and staff, adjusting internal policies, simplifying bureaucracy, and finding additional funding sources are necessary. Implementing these strategies can significantly improve the effectiveness of MBKM implementation in PTKI.

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