# Kwangsan

# KAMPUS MERDEKA (INDEPENDENT CAMPUS) POLICY IN INDONESIA: AN EVIDENCE-BASED CRITICAL REVIEW

### Kebijakan Kampus Merdeka Di Indonesia: Sebuah Tinjauan Kritis Berbasis Bukti

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#### ABSTRACT:

#### Keywords:

education policy; higher education; kampus merdeka; literature review; universities

#### Kata kunci:

kebijakan pendidikan; pendidikan tinggi; kampus merdeka; tinjauan pustaka; universitas Implementing the Kampus Merdeka (Independent Campus) policy for higher education in Indonesia opens new perspectives on the transformation of higher education. This strategic approach aims to improve institutions' quality flexibly and wants to place students in a central position in the university by involving students in the real-world activities through various field projects. Nevertheless, few doubts arise on how this policy program is implemented, including its sustainability. Through evidence-based critical review, this article aims to review the implementation of the Kampus Merdeka policy and some of the challenges that may arise. We identify three main challenges, including decision-making authority, external collaboration, and benchmarks of success which then lead to conclusions and recommendations regarding the skills of higher education institutions in carrying out external collaboration and tools to measure the success of field projects.

#### ABSTRAK:

Penerapan kebijakan Kampus Merdeka pada pendidikan tinggi di Indonesia membuka perspektif dalam transformasi pendidikan tinggi. baru Pendekatan strategis ini bertujuan untuk meningkatkan kualitas institusi secara fleksibel dan menempatkan mahasiswa pada posisi sentral di perguruan tinggi dengan melibatkan mahasiswa dalam kegiatan di dunia nyata melalui berbagai proyek lapangan. Namun

keraguan demikian, beberapa muncul tentang bagaimana program kebijakan ini diimplementasikan, termasuk keberlanjutannya. Dengan pendekatan tinjauan literatur berbasis bukti, artikel ini mengulas implementasi kebijakan Kampus Merdeka dan beberapa tantangan yang mungkin muncul. Kami mengidentifikasi tiga tantangan utama, antara lain kewenangan pengambilan keputusan, kolaborasi eksternal, dan tolok ukur keberhasilan. Ketiganya mengarah pada kesimpulan dan rekomendasi mengenai keterampilan institusi pendidikan tinggi dalam melakukan kolaborasi eksternal beserta instrumen untuk mengukur keberhasilan proyekproyek di lapangan.

### INTRODUCTION

Higher education in Indonesia focuses on developing the quality of human resources. At the same time, the quality development of human resources is adapted to the technological developments so that the students will be better prepared and qualified graduates to enter the industrial world. The number of universities in Indonesia is currently more than 4,000 universities spread throughout the Indonesian archipelago from western to eastern Indonesia (Fonna, 2019; Wardhani et al., 2021; Yusuf, 2022).

The Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia has launched a higher education policy called "Merdeka Belajar, Kampus Merdeka". "Kampus Merdeka" (Independent Campus) has four main programs to improve the quality and the role of the universities and eight main activities/ projects in which the

students function as the center of the program (Dasrimin, 2021).

Many off-campus field projects finally encourage the students to have new motivation and experiences through field projects. They carry out selected programs recommended by the chancellor initiated or by the government. The students focused on the field projects that were widely implemented during the first two years of implementation. Some facts on the ground in this regard is presented in this article.

Eventhough many academics and students have welcomed this program, but it doesn't mean that there aren't any criticisms. Some consider that the field projects are too diverse so that it might have the potential to interfere the focus of student studies. There is also the dilemma issue of the sustainability of this new policy which could change again due to a change of leadership (Lhutfi & Mardiani, 2020).

The challenges regarding the successful implementation of this policy

becomes quite prominent when collaboration of discussing the universities and project partners because they are considered to require special skills. Finally, to see the extent to which this program is successful, it is also necessary to raise the issue of how the success is measured. Its implementation has become increasingly difficult due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Eventhough the targets, objectives, and project implementation time is already in place, the program is still running with several breakthroughs (Dasrimin, 2021).

So far the studies discussing the topic of the "Kampus Merdeka" are still limited. This is due to the policy about "Kampus Merdeka" which was just recently implemented. However, it is not impossible if studies on its application emerge now. The discussion so far has been about the readiness of universities to adopt this policy. Furthermore, the other studies discussed is how the approaches adopted according to the perspective of a particular scientific field.

The studies and discussions concerning "Kampus Merdeka" have not exposed much evidence and views from an economic and public policy perspectives. In fact, this policy does not only contribute directly to the world of education where this policy was born but also contributes economically and socially (Fonna, 2019; Ibda, 2019; Karim, 2020; Rochana et al., 2021). Based on these reasons, this article intends to fill this gap in two ways.

Firstly, we present facts on the ground from various sources regarding the implementation of this policy. Secondly, based on the implementation experiences, we draw out several issues having the potential to become challenges in the policy implementation in the future.

These two approaches are expected to answer our essential question in this study, namely: (1) to what extent "Kampus Merdeka" policy has been implemented, and (2) what challenges might arise that could hinder its successful implementation.

The remainder of this article is organized as follows. The second part describes the concepts and literature review related to the "Kampus Merdeka" policy. The third section explains methodologically how this review article was carried out. We discuss the essence of this article in the fourth section, in the results and section. discussion Finally, the conclusion and recommendation section close the article.

### LITERATURE REVIEW

The Merdeka Belajar (Freedom of Learning) Concept in Implementing the Independent Campus Policy

Education is a humanistic process motivated by a person's human right to be humanized. Humanistic education demands freedom from isolation, which restricts a person and threatens his or her dignity (Susilawati, 2021a; Tilaar, 2005). This kind of concept is very relevant to the idea of Merdeka Belajar, where every human being has the right to be free to think and see as far as possible, and with their views, they can use them to solve various life problems (Noach, 2021; Sari et al., 2021). Independence in thinking can also make it easier to solve multiple problems with a clear mind. It can produce competent and better human resources (Lubaba, 2020). According to Wattimena, (2012), four things must be passed to achieve independence in thinking, including awareness and self-awareness of how to think logically, rationally, and free from negative assumptions; recognizing that we have a particular way of thinking; being open to various other points of view that are different from ourselves; and having a broad and wise perspective in thinking.

In Merdeka Belajar, every student is given the right to autonomy to choose the best learning method independently. Universities that implement this concept are also directed to follow the latest developments in learning methods. The idea of academic freedom or freedom of learning, which was first developed by the German educational philosopher Wilhelm von Hamboldt in 1809, is the basis for the formulation of the concept of Merdeka Belajar (Sorkin, 1983; Susilawati, 2021). Academic freedom regarding the idea of Merdeka Belajar in Indonesia gives freedom to students in higher education to choose subjects and ways of learning, while educators also have the freedom to teach and guide students according to their expertise (Azizah, 2022; Darlis et al., 2022; Harahap et al., 2023; Purwanti, 2022; Sariani et al., 2021; Subakti et al., 2022). In humanistic theory, this theory of learning independence is closely related to increasing the potential and abilities of students, realizing students to be independent, able to understand the problems around them, and have the ability to offer solutions to problems in their environment (Subakti et al. 2022; Darlis et al. 2022; Sariani et al. 2021).

Based on this explanation, the Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) program implemented in higher education institutions, where each student is given the right for three semesters to engage in activities outside of their study program, is an application of the concepts of academic freedom and The humanistic learning theory. implementation of MBKM in higher education is carried out in many methods, ranging from those implemented outside the study

program but still on campus, outside the study program but off campus, and some are carried out in universities abroad. The purpose of these various forms of MBKM policy implementation models is so that each student can optimally show their abilities according to their respective potentials and interests.

On the other hand, lecturers continue to act as mentors, advisors, and facilitators in implementing these MBKM programs and activities. The main thing that the lecturer has to do is to guide the students first to get to know their potential so that in implementing each program and activity of MBKM, the students can carry it out optimally and efficiently. In other words, the purpose of this process is to direct students to "learn how to learn" and encourage them to become independent learners who can motivate themselves or "selflearners" motivated (Susilawati, 2021).

Regarding curriculum development, MBKM has emphasized character building, not only academic skills. This is because some of the activity models involve students in the social environment, require them to be more creative, face and appreciate cultural differences, and make them think critically (Aji, 2021; Fadjarajani et al., 2021; Purnomo, 2021). The term Independent Campus in the MBKM concept means allowing students more freedom to develop themselves outside their comfort zone in their study program or at their home university (Noach, 2021; Rahman, 2021). This will also provide meaningful learning and a more personalized quality of learning for students, an important goal of education that some experts refer to as "experiential learning" (Chickering, 1977; Kolb, 2014; Lewis & Williams, 1994). In implementing the MBKM program outside the campus, students are at the center of implementing the MBKM policy, and they are exposed to learning methods that are applicable but still contextualized. This is inseparable from the role of the lecturers, who act as teachers and facilitators.

## *Implementation of MBKM in Higher Education Institutions*

The Industrial Revolution 4.0 affects almost all aspects of life and is almost always discussed, mainly when it is about the world of education. The term of Education 4.0 has emerged, which is driven by the Industrial Revolution 4.0 which is full of IT role, creativity, and innovation and emphasizes the central position of students or students within its scope (Sasikirana, 2020; Uswatiyah et al., 2021).

Education 4.0 aims not only to improve the quality of education at the national level but also to invite these educational actors to compete at the global level (Sherly et al., 2021). Therefore, it is imperative to optimize the use of technology, one of which is digital technology, to produce educational outputs that keep up with the times (N. J. Harahap, 2019). In this accordance, the national education in Indonesia is sought to increase the nation's intelligence and shift further towards the goal of mastering science, technology, and the arts (The Directorate General Higher of Education, 2020; Junaidi, 2020).

The national education curriculum is also directed to produce outputs with special literacy skills, such as data literacy, technology, and human resources with character (Suwandi, 2020). The Directorate General of Higher Education (2020) introduced 21st Century Skills, where Indonesian human resources are described as skilled in critical thinking, problemsolver, communicative, creative, innovative, and collaborative.

The government has done many efforts to prepare Indonesian human resources to face the world technological developments. It includes shaping a more responsive educational curriculum to Industry 4.0 through an independent learning approach and mastery of digital technology (Widodo, 2021). For example, at the higher education level, the government seeks to increase the connectivity between higher education graduates and the business or industrial world through the "Merdeka Belajar-Kampus Merdeka" policy or MBKM. This policy was created to direct educational institutions to produce competent and full of skilled graduates, ready to face the demands of changing times and become superior, moral, and ethical future leaders (Widiyono et al., 2021).

There are four central MBKM policies enshrined in several regulations of the Minister of Education and Culture in 2020. Among others are the opening of study programs, higher education systems, accreditation tertiary institutions with legal entities, and the right to study for three semesters outside the study program. Baharuddin (2021)presents a model of curriculum development for study programs based on MBKM policies. This curriculum is based on a structured process, namely: planning, process, assessment, and evaluation.

First, at the planning stage, learning outcomes are formulated in advance to determine the graduates' competency profiles, then described in the learning outcomes. This profile is formed based on a study of science and technology needs, and compiled by groups of similar study programs to be used as a standard reference. In this process, several stakeholders are involved, such as university management, industry or business, and the community. The aim is to match the profile of higher education graduates with their end-users in the society. Therefore, appropriate indicators must be set for the quality output of graduates connected to industry or business.

Second, following the MBKM policy, there are two ways to fulfill the study period and learning load. Students can follow the entire educational process in the study program according to the study period designed by the university. Another way is to follow part of the educational process at the original university, and the other part is carried out outside the study program, either at the same university or a different university. In addition, students can also choose the same program or another from their program original university. This method ultimately has two types of learning outcomes. The first type of output is an internal learning process that is fully implemented in the study program at the home university. The second type of output combines internal and external learning processes.

*Third*, the learning assessment in the MBKM program is determined based on the minimum criteria for learning assessing outcomes following the learning achievement targets set during the planning process. This assessment is structured following the standardized credit weights.

*Fourth,* the evaluation of learning in the MBKM program is carried out through monitoring and

reporting the results of activities. Supervisors carry out this evaluation at the university or field assistants if the students do the internships at the other institutions.

One of the keys to successfully implementing the MBKM policy program is to give the universities flexibility and autonomy to implement all processes independently. In this accordance, the universities should understand what they and what the surrounding environment needs(Yusuf, 2021; Yusuf et al., 2021; Yusuf & Arfiansyah, 2021). Agung et al. (2020) conducted a study about the readiness of the universities in Indonesia to implement the "Independent Campus" policy. The first concern is the readiness to add new study programs and improve the current accreditation status of the university study programs. The impetus to open a new study program must be adjusted to the demand in the job market, the latest technological developments, and the availability of teaching staff at the university.

Therefore, carefully planning and identifying the required resources must be considered to prepare the universities to open new study programs. In the end, the university will have an "Independent Campus" policy guideline that all parties agree upon at the university. In addition, the universities are encouraged to increase their study programs' accreditation. Study programs with A accreditation status will be encouraged to become international accreditations, while those

with B and C status are encouraged to increase their accreditation.

In the process of increasing accreditation, most issues that often arise are regarding the analysis of the needs of study programs tailored to the existing resources and how the interests or needs of the community towards the study program will be made or increased its accreditation. In this case, adequate assistance from BANPT assessors is necessary for the national/international accreditation.

Another study conducted by Agung et al (Agung et al., 2020) also stated that there is a high push from the government to improve the status of a university legal entity (becoming a Legal Entity PTN/PTN-BH, for example). Some universities have already obtained this status, but many universities still do not have PTN-BH status. Preparation for going to PTN-BH must carefully consider the main objectives and consequences.

One of the reasons the government encourages universities to become PTN-BH is because PTNprovides opportunities BH for universities in terms of flexibility in financial management and educational curriculum. Previously, the requirement to become a PTN-BH was only allowed at universities with accreditation А status. However, according to the new Permendikbud regulation, No. 4/2020 (Salinan-Permendikbud-4-Tahun-2020, n.d.), this opportunity is given to any ready universities, including PTN-BLU and work units.

Furthermore, universities still face many obstacles in meeting the requirements for the number of lecturers (at least five home base lecturers), especially in opening new study programs in the fields of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM). Some universities encourage adding new study programs at the undergraduate level, but on the other hand, many university leaders are more enthusiastic about developing masters and doctoral programs. Upgrading the status of universities to PTN-BH is also still a consideration. Some universities consider the consequences that will be faced if the universities must manage their sources of funds in providing education.

The primary source of funding that is expected to be the majority comes from the student funds. However, the question is how certain universities can handle the funding source problem for students from underprivileged families. Various possibilities were still explored, one of which was the opening of a profit-oriented business entity (e.g., a shopping center at IPB University) to support university funding or other funding sources that took advantage of the environment or the potential of the area around the university.

### METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted with a qualitative approach to literature study. The aim is to generally review the achievements of the "Kampus

Merdeka" policy program in Indonesia from various literary sources. The concept and implementation of the "Kampus Merdeka" policy is reviewed in the second section of this article, followed by a study of the challenges in policy implementation in the discussion section.

A review of the implementations and challenges in the "Kampus Merdeka" policy forms the basis for formulating conclusions and recommendations in the final section. The primary sources of this article are various national journals. Secondary sources are obtained from the government documents and other online publication sources.

### **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

# The Implementation of "Kampus Merdeka"

There are currently 4,593 universities in Indonesia whose primary goal is to develop the quality of human resources, adapt to technology, and being ready for the industrial world. In Indonesia, the higher education authority is led by the Ministry of Education and Culture, headed by a Minister, and is directly under the president. Within the Ministry of Education and Culture structure, all higher education activities are controlled by the Directorate General of Higher Education.

Since 2020, education in Indonesia has undergone a

significant transformation with the policy of "Independent Learning, Kampus Merdeka". It has eight main activities, including internships/work practices, student exchanges, teaching assistance, research, village development, independent projects, humanitarian projects and entrepreneurial activities (Dasrimin, 2021).

There are four main programs in the "Kampus Merdeka" policy. The first program is related with the college accreditation. In this program, university re-accreditation is automatic for all universities regardless of the rank. college's Universities that previously received accreditation from the National Accreditation Board for Higher Education (BAN-PT) still have a validity period of five years. However, the accreditation will be renewed automatically in the "Kampus Merdeka" program.

Universities with the international accreditations that the government recognizes will automatically get A rank accreditation. Although the government provides many benefits related to accreditation, a strict evaluation will be carried out if the universities show signs of a drastic decline in quality; it also includes a sharp decline in the number of new students, a sharp decline in the number of graduates, and public complaints that are concretely proven.

According to the Higher Education Statistics (PDDikti, 2020), the number of universities in Indonesia is currently spread across 34 provinces throughout Indonesia. There are 122 (2.66%) State Universities with 1,782 study programs, and 3,044 (66.67%) Private Universities with 15,815 study programs. Besides the State and Private Universities, there are 1,240 (27%) Religious Universities with 5,377 study programs, and 187 (4.07%) Vocational Universities with 1,039 study programs.

According to its type, the of classification university accreditation includes A (95 college В (809 accreditation), college accreditation), and C (1,291 college accreditation). In addition to this classification, there other are classifications, namely: Excellent (4 universities), Very Good (50)universities), and Good (464)universities).

А State The accredited Universities are generally concentrated in Java and Bali islands with very high population density. Meanwhile, the dominant Baccredited State Universities are in Sumatra, Kalimantan, Sulawesi, Maluku Islands, and Nusa Tenggara, islands with less densely populated. In every college, there are the same categories for study programs but not all study programs in a university have the same accreditation. There are 4,373 study with A-accreditation, programs 12,224 **B**-accreditation study programs, and 5,167 C-accreditation study programs.

In addition, other classifications are the *Excellent* category of study program, there are

125 study programs, the Very Good category has 62 study programs, and the Good category has 1,740 study programs. Study programs with the most A accreditations include Accounting, Islamic Religious Management, Education, Legal Studies, Communication Studies, Agribusiness, English Education, Biology, Civil Engineering, and Development Economics.

The second program in the "Kampus Merdeka" policy is related with the granting all students the right to study outside the campus for two semesters or the equivalent of 40semester credits. Although this program is mandatory provided by the college, the student voluntarily decides whether he or she will exercise this right or not. Another option is that the students can take one semester studying in another program on campus for one semester, but this does not apply to students from the health study program.

The government set this policy program based on an in-depth analysis where the semester credits related to the learning outside the campus are minimal so that the students do not have new motivation and experience. In addition, practical work activities and internships that were part of the previous curriculum tend to cause delays in graduation.

In the "Kampus Merdeka" program, the concept of semester credit is emphasized to mean "hours of activity" and not "hours of study" like the previous natural concept. Apart from studying, these activities include

practices/ work internships in companies/industry, student exchanges, entrepreneurial activities, research and teaching/teaching assistance, humanitarian activities, and village projects. The programs chosen by the students are selected based on the activities recommended by the rector programs initiated by or the government.

In 2021, the involvement in the "Kampus Merdeka" program is 50,000 students. Meanwhile, in 2022, the quota has tripled to 150,000 students, and the budget has also increased five times. The followings are some findings in the field obtained from various online sources related to the second policy having the most impact on the social and economic environment of the community. This second policy is very close to the students, lecturers, the community, and and its contribution is observed to have the most tangible impact on regional development.

## "Kampus Merdeka" Certified Internship Program

In the policy of the internship program for the "Kampus Merdeka", the government opened the Certified Independent Study and Internship Program (MSIB). This program involves 100 large companies in Indonesia opening 30,000 internship positions for under graduates and vocational education students. The MSIB program has two batches, in 2021 and 2022, and is carried out for 1-2 full semesters depending on the form of collaboration.

The "Kampus Merdeka" certified internship program is a well-planned internship based program on government-company collaboration. Therefore, the activities carried out are actual the company activities. Students are trained and then practice these activities in the field. This certified internship program subsidizes the stipend and living expenses for its interns, making it a very lucrative certified internship program.

The "Kampus Merdeka" Certified Internship Program provides independent learning opportunities for students, and lecturers who are involved in the internship activities can gain much experience from the collaboration formed in the "Kampus Merdeka" programs.

Lazada is an international ecommerce company with Ali Baba's business group spread across several countries in Southeast Asia. The internship program at Lazada Indonesia is one of the most extensive internship programs because they accept 80 internship students (out of 16,000 applicants) from various universities in various regions in Indonesia for five months starting in August 2021.

One of the essential benefits of this internship program is the closeness of generations of millennials with a digital economy ecosystem that will bring these students to have talents in future technology. Indonesia will have a demographic bonus in 2035, where

will college students become important actors in Indonesia's development. In internship activities, students act as this company runs. They learn how the company processes and are directly involved in every activity.

Students will provide feedback to the company in a program feedback survey in each internship activity. In this survey, students were asked to assess its performance related to its cooperation in the "Kampus Merdeka" program. A good survey result will have the opportunity to increase the quota of students to the company, while a lousy assessment result will reduce the portion of cooperation with that company, and even the collaboration may be terminated.

## Research Programs and Village Projects

Jambi University (UNJA) is a Baccredited national university located in Jambi Province. То implement the "Kampus Merdeka" program, UNIA conducts community assistance activities based on research and innovation for the community. This program is called EXIST, which refers to one of the "Kampus Merdeka" policies in the Village Innovation Program (Pro-Ide). This program involves the student activity units and other student organizations to develop and empower villagers. This program also accommodates the

students interested in research and writing activities.

The program brought by UNJA for villages is related to the manufacture of poultry feed made from banana stems and golden snail pests. The selection of Danau Kedap Village was considered appropriate because the village has a banana plantation that is quite large, while the golden snail pest is also quite disturbing plant production.

The university and students cooperate with the village officials, including the Village-Owned Enterprises (BUMDes). This activity educating the starts by village community about the production of finished goods. With this activity, the village community has new, more valuable products to market to many poultry farmers in Jambi Province.

### Entrepreneurship Program (Export School) of "Kampus Merdeka"

Another certified program for students is Certified Independent Studies-Export School. The Export School, which took the title Digital Export 2022, attended by 777 students from 223 Indonesian universities. The activities carried out for one semester in 2021, the Export School program produced 198 products ready to be exported abroad. This program is considered as a pilot program where the skills and knowledge that students have acquired during one semester are expected to produce a product ready for export.

The above activity is a good first step in starting an export-oriented

entrepreneur and taking advantage of the digital technology. In this activity, the students get the training and skills needed to enter the global market, starting with collaborating to build a business with small business partners (UMKM).

The "Digital Export 2022" exhibition is also used as a meeting place for potential business players from within and outside the country. The products produced in the Export School are dominated by creative and innovative products such as batik (a typical Indonesian fabric), rattan, ethnic fashion woven products, wood carvings, and spices. These products have previously entered the global market and carried out by many Indonesian SME entrepreneurs. Students involved in the Export School activities are expected to become the next generation of the nation that can grow the SME industry aiming to enter the global market.

### Village Project Program and Humanitarian Project of "Kampus Merdeka"

One of the eight campus activities for the "Kampus Merdeka" program is the activity for the village (village project). Village project activities can be carried out for one or two semesters or a maximum of 40semester credits. One of the village projects involves the students in developing the villages receiving the village development assistance from the Ministry of Villages, Development of Disadvantaged Regions, and Transmigration.

One of the goals of the village funds is to make villages more socioeconomically independent. Students who have financial management and administration skills manage the village funds received by the village for village social and economic development.

In the village project activities, the students transfer the knowledge and skills they've acquired in their campus. Through collaboration with the university lecturers and students, the village officials using the village funds are greatly assisted in the realization and reporting of these funds to the government. Colleagues from universities will be the working team of village officials in managing the village funds.

Students with good critical skills will assist the village officials in using the village funds in the community. In assisting the village community, the students used their creative and innovative ideas related to economic development, village infrastructure, and village youth leadership skills. The students also involved in managing the village funds by giving an understanding of the legal aspects of managing village funds.

Through the study conducted by Yanuarsari et al. examined the literature that linked to the "Kampus Merdeka" program with the village independence. Villages are considered to strengthen the character of students. In activities involving universities, the villages benefit significantly from the involvement of university students and staff (Yanuarsari et al., 2021).

It is closely related to the knowledge students the have already obtained from their universities which can be applied directly in the community life in the village. It means that the villagers as a part of the "Kampus Merdeka" program will increase their usefulness through various activities bv the students created and universities.

Students in the village projects widely implement the Village Entrepreneurial (KWD) Course program. Realizing the programs involving the village community, these activities can directly improve the capacity of the village community. Thus, after having completed this program, the village officials will have better skills and knowledge in developing villages making villages and more independent.

Susilawati (2021) and Jatmiko & Januarti (2021) suggested that the village project in the "Kampus Merdeka" program is advantageous for both, the students as well as the villagers. The students gained essential experiences in implementing their knowledge in the real life, being directly involved in dealing with various problems in the village and offering solutions.

In the end, the student involvement is an initial natural contribution to the role of the younger generation for regional development. As for the village, they will benefit from improving the quality of human resources due to the knowledge transfer from universities to the village.

Mariati (2021) argued that the development of a new curriculum is related to the challenges in the industry 4.0 era. The "Kampus Merdeka" program will encourage the creation of higher education graduates with better literacy skills and have the character of Indonesian youth with noble character.

The village project, previously known as the Real Work Lecture (KKN), is currently still running amidst the Covid-19 pandemic. However, the implementation of the village project is adjusted to the current conditions.

Village projects related to pandemic conditions. for example, are projects humanitarian to help communities affected by covid-19. The new entrepreneurship programs for those whose economies are affected by the pandemic, teaching elementary school students from house to house, and the use of IT innovation projects in the context of preventing and handling Covid-19 (Rifqi, 2021).

### Entrepreneurship Project of "Kampus Merdeka"

One of the ways to implement the results of higher education learning activities is to encourage enthusiasm and improve students' entrepreneurial skills. In the "Kampus Merdeka" program, the students' entrepreneurial abilities are tested in an Indonesian Student Entrepreneurship Program competition. This competition is held annually through four flagship activities, namely: workshops, entrepreneurship activities directly in the field, forming start-ups, and entrepreneurial business assistance.

Through the Ministry of Education and Culture, the government makes guidelines for universities so that the students who want to participate in the entrepreneurial activities will follow the appropriate procedures. For example, a student prepares a proposal to run a start-up business, and then the study program will evaluate the proposal's feasibility. If approved, the study program will appoint a companion lecturer to realize the student's business plan.

One example of this student entrepreneurship application is the start-up of an orchid business in collaboration with students from Merdeka University, Malang with Singosari Orchid Garden, Malang East The City, Java. students orchid received training on cultivation from Taman Anggrek and open Singosari an orchid marketing start-up business mentored by a university supervisor.

### *"Kampus Merdeka" Humanitarian Project for Poverty*

The student involvement in the development is an integral part of the "Kampus Merdeka" program. The students are expected to have the ability to solve problems and have a social entrepreneur spirit to help others. Social problems in their environment are the most appropriate first step for students who want to participate in this program.

This program aims to involve the students in solving social problems through social communities in the community and innovating to solve these problems with their social entrepreneurial spirit. The Ministry of Education and Culture has selected 5,140 students from all over Indonesia who are members of the Kampus Merdeka Pejuang Muda (KMPM; Young Fighters Independent Campus) to carry humanitarian activities out and innovate solving social problems in various regions in Indonesia.

The third program of the "Kampus Merdeka" policy relates to granting autonomy rights to universities that have A and B accreditations (public and private) and have collaborated with the world's top universities according to the QS Top 100 to open new study programs. However, this autonomy right is not granted to the Health and Education study program.

The newly established program will automatically receive C accreditation. The Ministry of Education and Culture will strictly oversee the course of this new program in terms of the program curriculum structure, the form of external cooperation, and the placement university graduates. Tracking of all these related to activities is mandatory to ensure the establishment of new programs provides measurable outcomes.

The fourth program of the "Kampus Merdeka" policy relates to freedom choose the to the legal university's status as а Perguruan Tinggi Negeri Berbadan Hukum (PTN-BH) for universities with Badan Layanan Umum (BLU) and Satuan Kerja (Satker) statuses. So far, the university has gone through a somewhat complicated procedure that wants to change its legal entity status. However, the procedure will be much easier in the "Kampus Merdeka" program and not related to the accreditation status.

# Challenges in Implementing the Kampus Merdeka

The "Kampus Merdeka" policy, which was recently considered a fundamental transformation in education in Indonesia, was very well received. The noble goal to be realized by this program is to form the quality of university graduates who are solid and responsive to developments technological and changing times and have a high spirit of patriotism and nationalism (Dasrimin, 2021).

The programs carried out by the "Kampus Merdeka" provide flexibility for students to choose learning for 1-2 semesters offcampus according to the interests and abilities of students (Prahani et al., 2020).

The implementation of the "Kampus Merdeka" policy is also considered to have an essential role in the progress of the times that demand an increase in various skills and competitive abilities in the 4.0 Industrial Revolution era and to produce a new generation of leaders who are superior and have good morals (Sumarto, 2020; Susilawati, 2021; Syarif, 2020).

The "Kampus Merdeka" concept is very relevant to the challenges faced and needed in the work. Students are considered the center in the "Kampus Merdeka" program (Muslikh, 2020). The implementation of its policies provides space for universities to shape the character of higher quality students. In this regard, the students are given time or opportunity to put into practice the theories and concepts of knowledge they have gained during the learning process on campus. Through the application of "Kampus Merdeka", not only the mastery of knowledge the concern of students but also its application in areas of the world of work that they are interested in and according to their abilities (Amalia, 2021). The proximity of the "Kampus Merdeka" policy to the world of work and the community can provide more significant opportunities for university graduates to face the world of work earlier so that it is expected to reduce unemployment (Suryaman, 2020).

Although the "Kampus Merdeka" policy received an outstanding response from academics and students, several policy makers in higher education criticized this program as having the potential to disrupt the focus of student study paths due to the many study options that can be taken. In addition, this policy is a new policy where there is always a dilemma when policies often change along with changes in leadership in the ministries which can ultimately threaten the sustainability of the existing education system (Lhutfi & Mardiani, 2020).

On the other hand, the "Kampus Merdeka" policy requires various forms of university collaboration with external parties or campus partners related to plans for applying student knowledge in the field according to their interests (Amalia, 2021). The collaboration of universities with their partners such companies or industries, as community organizations, and other universities presents unique challenges for new and small-scale universities. In this case, the question is, for example, what are the opportunities for large companies or established companies to collaborate with small or new universities and what about the opportunities for Caccredited universities to collaborate with A-accredited Superior or universities (Arifin & Muslim, 2020).

An essential consideration is to establish clear indicators of success for each program or project that is selected and implemented. Do not let the government give students the freedom to make education in Indonesia tend to be liberal (Nanggala & Suryadi, 2021). For example, in an internship project or work practice, it is also necessary to provide clear boundaries and rules for the form of collaboration between

universities and companies regarding the working relationship between students and companies. The application of knowledge possessed by students in companies should not give the impression that students are used as workers in the company.

The implementation of the "Kampus Merdeka" has so far been greatly affected by the Covid 19 Pandemic. The pros and cons of this when policy arise the "Kampus Merdeka" projects must be implemented immediately, while on the other hand, it is constrained by the restrictions on activities in the community, which must consistently implement strict health protocols even though each project has a target, goal, and deadlines (Dasrimin, 2021).

Recently, the Ministry made a breakthrough in teaching techniques during the pandemic, which also became an alternative project in the "Kampus Merdeka" policy program, namely the Pioneer Teaching Campus (KMP) program.

In the KMP project, students are given the opportunity to implement their project by being involved in teaching at an elementary school near their neighborhood. Implementing this project also means realizing one of the objectives of the "Kampus Merdeka" program, which is to bring universities closer to the community and the world of work (Widiyono et al., 2021).

# SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATION

The "Kampus Merdeka" Policy for universities which began in 2020 opens a new perspective on transforming Indonesian higher education, always following the The "Kampus Merdeka" times. Policy has a strategic program that places the students in a central position in higher education with the primary objective of involving students in the real-world activities through various field projects.

In addition, the main program in the "Kampus Merdeka" policy also focuses on improving the quality of institutions that are more flexible in the accreditation process, not too long-winded, opening up many opportunities for universities to be more independent. On the other hand, there is a rigorous evaluation for universities regarding the quality of graduates and public service.

One of the leading programs of the "Kampus Merdeka" policy, which focuses on students, offers eight main activities, that is: internships/work practices, student exchange, teaching assistance, research, village building, independent projects, humanitarian projects, and entrepreneurial activities.

The students are given the voluntary right to choose these projects according to their interests and abilities to carry out for one or two semesters. The aim is to bring the students closer to the world of work and the social environment they will face after they graduate.

Several examples the of implementation of the "Kampus Merdeka" projects are: (1) how the programs in the "Kampus Merdeka" policy are in great demand by the students, and also (2) what are benefits for industry and society. The activities offered to the students can bring them closer to the actual conditions of the current industry. Changes in today's alldigital industrial world are very close to today's young generation. They are involved in essential processes run by the company and help solve the problems faced by the company.

Students having a research interest can carry out research projects with the staff of the university which are then correlated with the environmental needs. Research projects like this generally examine the potential of regional commodities that can be developed into new products that can then be marketed and increase the people's income.

Even if the research products produced have high added value and can potentially enter the global market, the "Kampus Merdeka" project can also facilitate this by adding the skills students need in creating products, enhancing entrepreneurial skills, and providing knowledge on how to enter the global market.

It is not only the entrepreneurial spirit of business built through the "Kampus Merdeka" projects but they can also have a social entrepreneurial spirit and increase their sense of humanity. They can also be a vital part of providing solutions to various social problems in society and face challenges in developing under developed areas in Indonesia.

This policy is also very in line with the times, advances in digital technology, and the industrial revolution 4.0. The policy concept is very relevant to the challenges and needs of today's world of work. Furthermore, the "Kampus Merdeka" policy programs that seek to bring students closer to industry and society are the essential points that are the goals of these programs.

College graduates who have met earlier to know the world of work and the social environment in the "Kampus Merdeka" projects are expected to be more adaptable when they enter the real world of work.

Several challenges arise within the university itself. It is related to the sustainability of the "Kampus Merdeka" policy and its follow-up policies, which often change due to changes in the central government's policy-making authority for universities. There are also problems from the academic management side who think that the many choices offered in the "Kampus Merdeka" policy program can break the focus of student studies.

Implementing the "Kampus Merdeka" policy for universities means asking them to cooperate and collaborate with the external environment. It demands an increase in higher education skills in proper collaboration so that policy programs can be carried out effectively and on target.

Universities must be good at seeing the potential for external cooperation and must also be able to adapt it to the organization's internal capabilities. It is not impossible for universities with middle levels to be able to cooperate with universities at the highest level. It is also not impossible that the developing universities can attract the interest of established industries because these universities have new sources of intelligence and potential workers.

Another important challenge is the measuring of the project success with clear parameters. It is helpful to see whether the students' projects are running effectively, efficiently, and have the right impact. The relationship between students and companies must also be regulated so that the unique skills possessed by students do not have the potential to be used unilaterally for the company's commercial interests.

Conversely, companies, institutions, or communities that accept students must also have clear benchmarks in measuring the student performance and success in providing better impacts, benefits, and changes in their work environment.

This article has briefly reviewed the literature on implementing Indonesia's "Kampus Merdeka" policy. We explored various sources that raised evidence or experiences, doubts about implementing this policy, and question edits sustainability as a future Indonesian education policy. At this stage, we summarize three main challenges on implementing Indonesia's "Kampus Merdeka" policy: decision-making authority, external collaboration, and benchmarks of success.

As a follow-up, we recommend two critical tasks for academics, researchers, practitioners, and public policy makers in the future, including: first, improving higher education institutions' skills in external collaboration, and second, ensuring the availability of tools to measure the success of the "Kampus Merdeka" project in the field.

Working on this article, we realize that the literature discussing implementing the "Merdeka Campus" policy and its role in economic and social development is insufficient. Therefore, the source of data or literature is one of the limitations that we cannot avoid.

Nevertheless, we try to assemble the various findings of studies that directly these or indirectly discuss economic and social perspectives other than education. Future studies are strongly recommended to find more related literature and complement the relatively short discussion in our article.

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