Students' Voices On The Implementation of Student Exchange Programs

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Abstract
This study aims to explore students' voices regarding the strengths and weaknesses of student exchange programs implementation (PMM-MBKM). This study was conducted through the experiences of fifth-semester students of the English Language Education Study Program (ELESP) in the academic year 2021/2022. The study involved 12 participants who attended five universities in Indonesian institutions (UST Yogyakarta, UNDIKSHA Bali, UNTAG Surabaya, UAD Yogyakarta, and UMT Banten). The method used was descriptive qualitative, based on semi-structured interviews. Overall, several aspects were identified by the respondents as potential areas in improving the PMM-MBKM of the ELESP program, including suggestions to increase the quota and transform the Nusantara Module course into a Community Service Program (KKN), the timely disbursement of funds, policy evaluation, enhancement of communication between operators and students, adaption of regulations, and refinement of the academic data input process. In practice, these findings can assist the department in providing ELESP students with written information on the strengths and weaknesses of the program implementation and a framework for improvement.
Keywords: *students' voices, student exchange program, strengths and weaknesses of the program.*

Abstrak
Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji pandangan mahasiswa tentang kelebihan dan kelemahan program pertukaran (PMM-MBKM). Penelitian ini dilakukan dengan menggali pengalaman mahasiswa semester 5 Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris (ELESP) pada tahun akademik 2021/2022. Penelitian ini melibatkan 12 peserta yang berkuliah di lima perguruan tinggi Indonesia *(UST Yogyakarta, UNDIKSHA Bali, UNTAG Surabaya, UMT Banten)*. Metode yang digunakan adalah deskriptif kualitatif, dengan menggunakan wawancara semi terstruktur. Secara umum, terdapat beberapa aspek yang teridentifikasi dari para responden sebagai potensi perbaikan program PMM MBKM ELESP, antara lain saran untuk menambah kuota dan mata kuliah Modul Nusantara yang dikonversi menjadi *Kuliah Kerja Nyata* (KKN), ketepatan waktu pencairan dana, evaluasi kebijakan, peningkatan komunikasi antara operator dengan mahasiswa, menyesuaikan ketentuan, dan menyempurnakan proses input data akademik. Dalam praktiknya, temuan ini dapat membantu jurusan memberikan informasi tertulis kepada mahasiswa ELESP mengenai kekuatan dan kelemahan pelaksanaan program dan sebagai kerangka perbaikan.
Kata kunci: *Pandangan Mahasiswa, Pertukaran Mahasiswa Merdeka, Kelebihan Dan Kelemahan Program.*

INTRODUCTION

    Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) is a government policy to accelerate the improvement of the quality of human resources through education. This policy is contained in the Minister of Education and Culture Regulation Number 3 of 2020 concerning National Higher Education Standards. An Independent student exchange program is a form of learning to realize the policy of *Independent Learning - Independent Campus* (MBKM). Based on the researchers' experience, the first batch of Student Exchange Program (PMM-1) in 2021, selected and implemented by English Language Education Study Program (ELESP) students in PMM-1 in 2021 were exchange students in the same study program/major in different universities. However, it is different from the student exchange program in Batch 2(two), based on information from students who participated in Batch 2(two), where students in the *English Language Education Study Program* (ELESP) at PMM-2 in 2022 were selected and implemented in a student exchange between different study programs, and universities. Where students are free to choose courses outside their field of study. For example, students majoring in English Education take law courses.

Without realizing it, this becomes a new obstacle for them, because they do not have the basics of subjects outside the study program they are taking. This is in line with the criticism made by the students from various Indonesian universities which was conveyed to the Commission in the opinion exchange forum RDUP (Maharani, 2022).

Several studies discuss the student exchange program, including research into students' motivation to participate in student exchange programs. The results of their research show that students are motivated to participate in student exchange programs because of the opportunity to explore and visit other provinces, students gain learning experience outside their home university, students improve relationships to get to know and understand cultures outside the region, increase diversity and tolerance, and get credit conversion (Anwar, 2022). Meanwhile, for further research on the effectiveness of the Nusantara Module in understanding the four pillars of nationality, the research findings show that this course can effectively improve students' understanding of the four pillars of nationality (Jumansyah et al., 2022). Meanwhile, independent research on student exchange is research that produces the essence of the MBKM student exchange program and general education as a forum for students to learn and acquire other knowledge that has never been studied before. This is an effort to shape students' knowledge so that they can think flexibly, thoroughly, and comprehensively (Faiz, 2021).

By looking at the circular from the Ministry of Education and Culture, PMM-MBKM has many benefits for those who participate in the program, while with articles from year to year, researchers find corrections to the program, this is supported by the experience of the researcher as well as input from 2 friends who participated in PMM during the 5th semester. Therefore, the researchers want to contribute to the research "S*tudents' voices on the implementation of student exchange programs"* to investigate the voices of ELESP 5th semester students regarding the strengths and weaknesses of the application of PMM-MBKM. It is hoped that the research results can improve the framework of the department and become a reference for further research.

METHOD

This research used a qualitative descriptive approach. Qualitative descriptive is a factual, accurate, and systematic description of data that attempts to delve deeper into the data, including the background that influences motives, the influence of other contexts, and why reality occurs (Kriyantono, 2020, p. 62). The researcher used purposive sampling techniques to determine the research sample. According to Sugioyono (2020, p. 94), purposive sampling is a data sampling technique with certain considerations. By paying attention to several important aspects, namely that the samples taken were students who had participated in a student exchange program at ELESP, 12 informants who had taken Batch 2(two) PMM-MBKM in the 5th semester were selected. Interviews were used to collect data from the informants. The interviews were conducted with written interviews via WhatsApp chat, and the questions were given via private chat for all participants. The interview selected by the researcher was semi-structured. Reffering to Sugiyono in Wanta et al., (2022), this type of interview is included in the category of in-depth interviews, where semi-structured interviews are conducted by asking 8 questions freely compared to structured interviews but still adhering to the interview guidelines that have been created.

After asking the questions, the researcher then arranged the stages of delivery which are described in the following SmartArt;
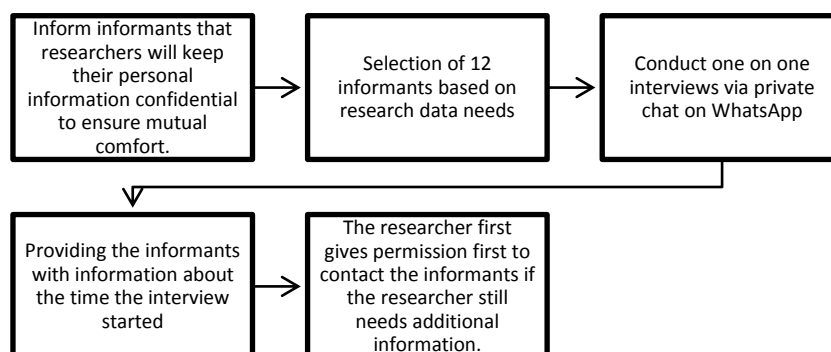
SmartArt stages of interview delivery

Based on the SmartArt above, data collection was carried out in the interview phase with informants who were deliberately selected by taking into account several aspects of their needs. After the interview phase, the next step is to carefully analyze the collected data.

Data Analysis

To analyze the data, the researcher used a thematic analysis. The 6-step of thematic analysis are becoming familiar with the data, generating initial code, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining themes, and writing up (Braun&Clarke in Delahunt, 2017). In this stage, the researcher read and explored all the data collected from the participants to familiarise the researcher with the data to be analyzed. At this stage, the researcher always ensures that he or she understands the data by reading it repeatedly. Then the researcher tries to find some codes that can be used to answer the research questions. The researcher used three steps to decide on codes. The first is open coding, where the analyst groups the interview results from each interviewer. The second is axial coding, the analyst categorizes the results of open coding that have the same characteristics as each interviewer. The third is selective coding, the researcher sorts the results of axial coding according to the research question and objectives. After finding several codes, the researcher determined the themes for the codes that have been grouped, a theme is a pattern that captures important things about the data and research questions, the researcher examined the codes, some of which are paired into a theme, next the codes were organized into broader themes that relate to the meanings of this study and relevant to the research objective. In the final step, the researcher wrote a report to be presented to answer the research question.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The results of this data were obtained from interviews with 12 ELESP students who participated in PMM-MBKM Batch 2 (two) in Semester 5. By asking eight key questions, two of which were directly related to the strengths and weaknesses of the program, and four of which were specific, namely the clarity of the program objectives, program effectiveness, skill development, and support from program staff (Setiawan, 2021). The remaining two questions were related to students' expectations and solutions to the program. For this reason, in the findings section, the researchers focus on the strengths and weaknesses of the PMM-MBKM program in terms of four points, namely (clarity of program objectives, program effectiveness, skill development, and support from program staff). The findings from this section have been coded in the table below;

Table 1. Result data

Strengths	Clarity of program objectives	➢ Studying from different disciplines ➢ Attend lectures outside the region ➢ Make friends
	Program effectiveness	➢ Nusantara Module ➢ Expanding students' knowledge
	Skill development	➢ Increasing engagement in learning ➢ Expanding non-academic skills ➢ Improved academic & cultural
	Support from program staff	➢ Fast service ➢ Committee in responding to input via communication platforms
Weaknesses	Clarity of program objectives	➢ Information is limited

	Program effectiveness	➢ Need to improve conditions systems ➢ Need to pay more attention to student activity
	Skill development	➢ Doesn't facilitate comprehensive ➢ Learning activities
	Support from program staff	➢ Service less friendly ➢ Improvements are still needed

From Table 1. above, it can be concluded that the strengths and weaknesses of PMM-MBKM can be seen from the same 4 indicators, where; 1) Clarity of program objectives; 2) Program effectiveness; 3) Skills development; 4) Support from program staff.

Strengths of the student exchange program (PMM-MBKM)

The Merdeka Student Exchange (PMM) is one of the MBKM programs initiated by the Minister of Education, Mr. Nadiem Markarim. PMM-MBKM program that has been implemented since 2020. In accordance with Anwar (2022), the motivations of students to participate in student exchange programs are the opportunity to explore and visit other provinces, students gain learning experiences outside their home universities, students can add relationships to get to know and understand cultures outside the region, increase diversity and tolerance, and get credit conversion. As per the researcher's findings from students' voices about the clarity of the program objectives, where the PMM-MBKM program is an interesting program for students to develop academic and non-academic skills, and provides opportunities for students to attend lectures outside the region so that they can get to know various other differences (ethnicities, cultures, religions). In addition, this program also provides opportunities to study in different majors through cross-major course contracts and opportunities to develop friendships. Moreover, as described by Faiz (2021), independent research on student exchange produces the essence of the MBKM student exchange program and general education as a facility for students to be able to learn and gain other knowledge that has never been learned before.

According to the researcher's findings, by participating in this program, students can expand their academic knowledge, students can explore the cultural diversity of the archipelago, and the effectiveness of the program can be felt by the majority of students through the activities provided by the committee based on the Nusantara Module Course. Furthermore, citing Kemendikbudristek Indonesia (2022), independent student exchanges are conducted to achieve academic and non-academic benefits for participating students. Based on the researcher's findings, the effectiveness of the program can be felt by most students through the activities provided by the committee based on the Nusantara Module Course. This is evidenced by the fact that most of the lowest grades they obtained during the program were (A-). The researcher concluded that the Nusantara Module Course is a course that has a great experiential impact on students' academic and cultural knowledge. Culture and academics have a close relationship of importance in the PMM-MBKM program, where both are very important to the students. The attitude of nationalism, tolerance, diversity, kinship, and social spirit is very much felt in the self and soul of the students, and the students can also have a leadership spirit after attending the Nusantara Module lecture. In addition, some participants felt that there were things that needed more attention to achieve program effectiveness.

Among them are in terms of system and student activeness in running the program. For this, it is necessary to socialize the program from the smallest scale. To sharpen students' minds that PMM-MBKM is a program that is not just a walk to explore the program's destination, but to expand academic and non-academic skills. Lastly, the researchers found strengths of support from program staff. Which is responsive program staff in serving student constraints, program staff are very supportive as seen from spead deaning with emergency problems. However, program staff still need to improve. One of the participants said that most lecturers do not know that there are PMM students on their campus. They are supportive but less enthusiastic. ELESP should better monitor the students' activities, e.g. by socializing about the program to minimize the students' confusion when they arrive at the destination university.

Weaknesses of the student exchange program (PMM-MBKM)

In addition to the strengths of the program, the researchers also found weaknesses in the implementation of the program through student voices. The data showed that the PMM-MBKM caused problems for students with delays in the payment of accommodation fees, a lack of official information about the program, and servers that were always down, making it difficult for students to complete monthly reports. This is in line with the criticism of students from various Indonesian universities, which was conveyed in the Opinion Meeting Forum (RDUP) with the Commission, point (5) Lack of MBKM information and disbursement of incentives not on time (Maharani, 2022). The weaknesses identified by the researcher are in line with the RDUP article with DPR, students from various universities in Indonesia, where shortcomings that need to be addressed in the implementation of the PMM-MBKM program include technical issues, confusion about conversion, lack of information about the program and disbursement of accommodation fees. The expectations for the department based on the researcher's findings are that there is a need to increase the diversification of courses, availability of information, accessibility of lecturers, and collaboration between home and host universities are key aspects that are problematic and need special attention, also Nusantara Module conveyed to KKN, implementation of Nusantara Module activities in the PMM-MBKM program is equivalent to the implementation of KKN. Students expect improvements so that they can make a significant contribution to improving the quality of the program and the learning experience of students of the English Education Study Program.

Solutions for the department

In addition to asking about the strengths and weaknesses of the program, the researchers also asked the participants directly for suggestions for the department. In general, there were several aspects identified by respondents as potential improvements to the PMM MBKM program for ELESP, including suggestions to increase the quota and modules of the archipelago converted to KKN, timeliness of fund disbursement, evaluation of policies, improved communication by operators with students, adjustment of provisions, and improvement of the academic data entry process. Of the various solutions mentioned above, there is one that stands out the most, namely that the adjustment of program provisions to the majors must be in line. The MBKM program implements independent learning, so departments must be involved so that students are free to choose courses according to their wishes.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion that can be drawn from this research is that PMM is one of the MBKM programs that has existed since 2020, initiated directly by the Minister of Education, Mr. Nadiem Markarim. The program cannot be implemented without the participation and action of students. In this study, researchers found that there are strengths and weaknesses in the implementation of the program that are directly felt by the students of the English Language Education Study Program (ELESP) in the 5th semester of the academic year 2021/2022, from 12 participants who attended the target campuses of 5 Indonesian universities (UST Yogyakarta, UNDIKSHA Bali, UAD Yogyakarta, UNTAG Surabaya, UMT Banten). The PMM-MBKM program's strengths are most influential in expanding academics and exploring the cultural diversity of the archipelago. Meanwhile, the weaknesses of the PMM-MBKM program that most influence the program activities and require improvement from the department is the lack of information related to the program. Official procedures and circulars for participation in PMM-MBKM need to be socialized to prospective PMM-MBKM students so they are not confused when they arrive on site.

Due to the limitations of researchers only finding the strengths and weaknesses of the program from the experiences of ELESP students, the researcher suggests that future researchers further explore the students' expectations included in this study to explore the effects that cause the program weaknesses to occur.

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