

Students' Perception About *Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka* in Strengthening Their Skills

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to get students' perspectives on the independent campus learning policy in strengthening their skills. The approach used is qualitative with a descriptive qualitative case study method. The process of collecting data used interviews, observations and group discussions. The informant is a postgraduate student at Indraprasta University, Jakarta, in the 2022-2023 academic year. The number of participants was 100 students. Data analysis uses stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion. The results of the data analysis conclude that from a student perspective, implementing the independent campus learning policy requires adjustments that align with student needs and the global context. By implementing this policy, students become more independent to continue to improve their skills or potential. Aside from that, students can develop 6C skills relevant to the educational needs of the twenty-first century. The findings of this study have implications for stakeholders in higher education institutions' understanding of the significance of comprehending student perspectives when implementing independent campus learning curriculum policies.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The rapid changes in human life due to developments in science and technology certainly impact changes in the orientation of education delivery. It is related to learning achievements for college graduates, which must be relevant to the demands of the times. Thus, the Indonesian government has made various efforts to improve the quality of education through policies related to changes in the implementation of education in tertiary institutions to produce graduates with qualified skills. This policy shift prepares a generation that is responsive and ready to face today's challenges while remaining connected to the nation's cultural roots. Creativity and innovation are critical for Indonesia's long-term development. Students studying at tertiary institutions must be prepared to become true learners who are skilled, versatile, and tenacious (agile learners). The Ministry of Education and Culture's Independent Learning - Independent Campus policy is a framework for preparing students

to become strong graduates who are relevant to the needs of the time and ready to lead with a strong national spirit. Independent Campus is a type of learning in higher education that is independent and flexible to create a learning culture that is innovative, unrestricted, and based on student needs (Tohir, 2020a). So students can develop and improve their potential and skills.

Professionals and academics must be aware of the human resource practices required in Industry 4.0 and digital revolution environments (Nicolás-Agustín et al., 2022). The Fourth Industrial Revolution has an impact on how adaptive and personalized learning is developed to meet the needs of students. The emergence of technology, artificial intelligence, and the Internet of Things has made this possible (Ally, 2019; Kosasi, 2020). Thus, the independent campus learning policy is the appropriate solution for preparing quality graduate resources.

Previous research shows that the Independent Learning Campus Program is one of the breakthroughs in the era of digitalization in the field of education. It also opens the boundaries of the (physical) classroom into a digital space, allowing it to shape students' professional character (Rodiyah, 2021). Students can gain learning experience in class and outside of the classroom, which can help improve their cooperative abilities and soft skills (Suwanti et al., 2022). The independent learning policy creates a critical education pattern that prepares graduates to face the era of Industrial Revolution 4.0 and Society 5.0 (Ismaya et al., 2021; Rahmawanti & Nurzaelani, 2021). As a result, the independent campus program prepares graduates to work, collaborate, be creative, and provide benefits for themselves (Nehe et al., 2021; Siregar et al., 2020). The curriculum is designed to develop complex and soft skills, preparing students to be more prepared and relevant to the needs of the time (Susilawati, 2021; Wardhani et al., 2022).

From several previous studies, it can be concluded that changes in government policy related to improving the quality of educational provision certainly significantly impact changes in the achievement of learning objectives or the quality of graduates to be achieved. Therefore, educational institutions must know the level of the industrial world's needs for current graduates and students' needs in carrying out learning activities. Thus, each university has made various changes to the curriculum, course mapping, educational objectives, and so on. However, the most exciting aspect that educators focus on is the ability to carry out teaching and learning in the classroom that is relevant to student needs and demands for learning outcomes as defined by the independent campus learning curriculum framework. It means that educators must be able to implement teaching innovations that promote quality improvement. This research examines students' perspectives regarding independent learning on independent campuses.

So, this research presents a gap different from previous research as a new contribution to knowledge related to the implementation of education, namely examining more deeply independent learning on independent campuses from students' views about students' needs in improving their skills. Moreover, there has not been much research that explicitly examines students' perspectives regarding independent learning on independent campuses to strengthen their skills. Thus, this research can be a development for educational institutions and educators to map the competencies or skills that graduates must have. So, this research aims to get students' perspective on the independent campus learning policy in strengthening their skills. It is hoped that the results of this research can contribute to the development of independent campus learning curricula at universities and will be able to align curriculum needs with developments in the industrial world or the educational demands of the twenty-first century.

2. METHODS

The approach taken is qualitative, with a descriptive qualitative case study method. The research describes the results of observations with the help of searching for data from existing sources using interviews and group discussion forums (Ary, 2010; Creswell, 2014). Thus, the data collection process was qualitative, with interviews, observations, and group discussions. The observation process was

carried out at the beginning of the previous study to determine the application of independent learning in the classroom on an independent campus. Interviews were conducted with students in postgraduate studies. The interview questions are open because this research requires the informant's opinion, requires arguments from the informant, and does not limit the answers to just yes or no. This question relates to students' views about independent campus learning, linked to improving skills relevant to the current global era. Interview questions about independent campus learning policies include learning systems, learning activities outside of the study program, learning facilities, and teacher competence (Romla, 2021; Sopiandiyah & Masruroh, 2021; Tohir, 2020b). The interview process lasts two semesters, after each lecture in the odd and even semesters of the 2022-2023 academic year. The informant is a postgraduate student at Indraprasta University in Jakarta for the 2022-2023 academic year. The total number of participants was 100 students. Data analysis includes three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion. Data reduction is the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and transforming data in written transcripts. In general, insight is a collection of organized and compressed information that can be used to draw conclusions and take action. In this step, the researcher summarizes the research findings based on the research problem.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Four aspects were asked of participants during the interview session. From the results of this interview, several answers were found from the student perspective for the independent campus learning curriculum policy, namely;

- a. What do you think about the learning system in the current independent campus learning curriculum policy?

Several points of student opinion were discovered among the 100 students interviewed about the learning system as part of the independent campus learning curriculum, namely:

1. Participants code (1-35) believe that the learning system must be relevant to the needs of the current global situation in order for graduates to meet the industrial world's standards.
 2. Participants (36-80) believe that the learning system should provide opportunities for students to develop their competencies.
 3. Participants code (81-100) believe that the learning system must be able to build student autonomy during learning activities so that students can explore their potential.
- b. What do you think about learning activities outside the study program in the current independent campus learning curriculum policy?

Of the 100 students who were interviewed about the learning system through the independent campus learning curriculum, several points of student opinion were found, namely:

1. Participants code (1-41) believe that study programs outside of higher education are the right solution for students to apply technical or practical skills from theories obtained in class because the learning process is not only oriented towards achieving knowledge.
2. Participants code (42-90) believe that we like learning activities outside of college because we can learn the various advantages and disadvantages of learning activities outside of college. Moreover, this learning activity can explore the potential that students have. So, we can face social changes, knowledge and technological advances, culture, the world of work or the demands of globalization without hesitation and have unquestionable readiness. We can also compete with graduates from various universities in Indonesia and worldwide.
3. Participants code (91-100) believes that learning programs outside universities must be prepared very well by universities and prepare students to apply their knowledge following various programs that the government has designed.

- c. What do you think about the learning facilities that must be provided in the current independent campus learning curriculum policy?
1. Participants code (1-53) believe that universities must provide learning facilities that can meet the needs of learning objectives, especially the provision of technological facilities that must be in the classroom. Higher education institutions must have ready facilities and qualified human resources by the policy concept of an independent campus independent learning curriculum.
 2. Participants code (54-100) believe that learning facilities must not only be provided by universities, but teachers should also be able to provide learning facilities such as multimedia, whether related to digital technology applications, learning resources (teaching materials), or teaching methods.
- d. What do you think about the competencies that teachers must have in implementing the current independent campus learning curriculum policy?
1. Participants code (1-37) believes that every teacher must be able to follow developments in science and technology so that teaching and learning activities can be varied and can direct students to explore their potential.
 2. Participants code (38-78) believe that every teacher must always upgrade their competence according to developments in knowledge and globalization. Teachers have a significant role in achieving learning goals.
 3. Participants (79-100) believe that teachers are the leading players in the class and success in achieving learning objectives is also determined by the role of teachers with high competence in the demands of the globalization era.

The findings of this study show that the learning system used to implement the independent campus learning curriculum must be capable of meeting the needs of current global developments as well as the context of student needs. Furthermore, every student has potential that can continue to develop when given the appropriate learning stimulation (Broom, 2015; El-Sabagh, 2021). Lecturers in higher education should be prepared to implement the Independent Learning-Free Campus curriculum policy regulations. A study also shows that the current curriculum must be relevant to the Industrial Revolution 4.0 platform to build graduate outcomes and develop learning materials and tools. Some lecturers have been creative in developing learning models and methods and evaluating learning outcomes based on HOTS (Restu et al., 2022).

Apart from that, strengthening the application of learning outside the study program also adds different values which challenge students to explore their potential and participate in various programs. Moreover, the Indonesian government has prepared this program very carefully and can allow students to follow it. So, the policy of learning programs outside of higher education, such as internships, fieldwork practice, teaching practice, student exchanges, research, entrepreneurial activities, and humanitarian programs, as well as across study programs and universities, also provides challenges for teachers in achieving skill competencies that are in line with the twenty-first century (Saputra, 2020). The results of the in-depth analysis of the data obtained in this research show that students have high orientation and expectations towards various types of learning programs outside of higher education to shape themselves to face global challenges in the twenty-first century.

Therefore, universities must be able to provide educational facilities that are relevant to the context of student and global needs. It is, of course, to create innovative teaching and learning. The most significant challenges in implementing the Independent Campus learning policy are regulations and human resource readiness (Yudhawasthi & Christiani, 2022). One of the challenges that teachers must face when implementing Merdeka Learning on the Merdeka Campus is the online learning process carried out through digital technology applications (Kamalia & Andriansyah, 2021). As a result, teacher or human resource competence in higher education is critical, particularly in areas requiring mastery of digital technology. Higher education administrators face significant challenges in implementing the Independent Campus Learning Policy (Nurtjahyati & Sukisno, 2021).

However, this study resulted in positive views from students concerning the implementation of the Merdeka learning policy on the Merdeka campus because, for them, this policy can support the application of practical or technical skills from the knowledge they have acquired in class. By implementing this policy, students become more independent to continue to improve their skills or potential. Aside from that, students can develop 6C skills relevant to the educational needs of the twenty-first century. Students can get support, collaboration, and independent learning that develops with potential (Hockings et al., 2018).

3 CONCLUSION

The results of the data analysis conclude that from a student perspective, implementing the independent campus learning policy requires adjustments that align with student needs and the global context. Universities must be prepared both in terms of facilities and human resources. Human resources, such as teachers, play an important role because achieving educational goals is dependent on a capable teaching system. So, implementing the independent campus learning policy corresponds to the current level of demand for graduate quality achievement. This policy provides numerous opportunities for students to explore their potential while also applying what they have learned in class in the real world. It provides students with different experiences that can lead to practice in the industrial world or face global competition.

The results of this research have implications for the understanding of stakeholders in higher education institutions regarding the importance of understanding student perspectives in implementing independent campus learning curriculum policies. It means that aspects of needs in the student context must be taken into consideration when developing various programs to achieve the goals of providing education. This study is also limited to studying students' perspectives in general on the implementation of independent campus learning curriculum policies through aspects of the learning system, learning programs outside of higher education, teaching facilities, and teacher competence. So, future researchers can still develop the results of this research in more depth, such as relating them to learning outcomes or the needs of students and the world of work regarding the competencies that students must have.

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