THE IMPLEMENTATION OF *MERDEKA BELAJAR* CURRICULUM AT ENGLISH DEPARTMENT OF INDONESIAN UNIVERSITIES

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Abstract: This article aims at investigating the implementation of *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum at some English Language Education of Indonesian universities. The stake holders of English Language Education Study Programs of a State University in Malang and a State Islamic Institute in Kediri are purposely selected as the subject of the study. In addition, semi structured interview and documentation are used to collect the data. The data collected in this study are analyzed based on Miles and Huberman's interactive model of data analysis. The finding shows that both institutions have different

terms in the implementation. English Language Education Study Program of a State University in Malang uses terms adaptive curriculum with *MBKM (Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka)* programs without changing the existing curriculum used. Differently, English Language Education Study Program of a State Islamic Institute in Kediri develops a new curriculum which is compatible with *MBKM* policy. The new curriculum is developed from the existing curriculum, KKNI, and inserting the MBKM programs in the new curriculum structure.

Keywords: *curriculum development; Merdeka Belajar Curriculum; English study program*

INTRODUCTION

A curriculum refers to a collection of plans and systems that describe the objectives, content, and delivery strategies utilized during the teaching and learning process to meet certain educational goals (The Act No. 20/2003, National education system; Ornstein, 1987). It is a plan created to support the teaching and learning process under the leadership and supervision of a school, college, or university and its employees (Komaria 1998 as cited in Wahyuni, 2016: 73). Maipita, Dalimunthe, and Sagala (2020: 148) define curriculum as a learning program design producing a learning experience which aims at developing students' competencies. Then the curriculum in higher education must refer to Presidential Decree No.8 of 2012 concerning KKNI and the regulation of Education and Culture Ministry (*Permendikbud*) No.73 of 2013 regarding KKNI in Higher Education. Based on those regulations, the higher education qualifications stated in the curriculum must refer to the predetermined KKNI level (level 6 for undergraduate degree).

The Ministry of Education and Culture of Republic Indonesia, Nadiem Makarin, has constructed a new curriculum *Merdeka Belajar* Curriculum in 2020. The policy of Merdeka Belajar aims to encourage students mastering various useful skills and knowledge which are

applicable in the world of work. This curriculum is considered as the appropriate curriculum to build human resources ready in the fourth industrial revolution (Industry 4.0). This era is characterized by the need of complex life skills, including the mastery of technology (Erstad & Voogt, 2018). Merdeka Belajar is as bridge to a future education system which relies on mastering technology in communication (Yuhastina et al.,2020). Wahyuni (2016: 74) stated that the change of curriculum is a logical consequence of the change the political system, social, cultural, economic and science. Curriculum revision is an important aspect of higher education that helps to keep up with current research and best practices regarding how to increase student learning and how to utilize current technology (Doll, 208). Furthermore, Al'Abri (2011) found that developing countries including Oman have changed policies including in education to anticipate the globalization by providing quality access to education and training for all (Madya, 2007). Therefore, *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum becomes one of the consequences of the change of those aspects in the nation.

Merdeka Belajar or freedom of learning means that students get change to learn freely, calmly, relax and happily without stress and pressure (Abidah et al., 2020). It encourages students to be independent learner. This thought is in line with Paolo Freire's teaching in which man is the ruler of himself, and therefore human nature is to be free. This teaching thought is also recommended by Razzak (2020) to be implemented in Bahrain Kingdom especially in teaching and learning practices and curriculum development and planning.

In the implementation of Merdeka Belajar curriculum in Indonesian context, the students are expected to have good digital skill and creative thinking (Nouri et al., 2020). Furthermore, it is an effort to decrease unemployment by synchronizing education system with the world of work by mastering a variety of useful knowledge and skills (Arifin & Muslim, 2020; Maipita et al., 2020). Then the Ministry has proclaimed Merdeka Belajar would be implemented in schools and university level (Widiyono, Irfana, & Firdausia, 2021).

In university level, the policy of Merdeka Belajar Curriculum is based on the decree of the Education and Culture Ministry in 2020. The policy consists of four bases. The first is related to the easiness in opening of new study program. It is regulated based on the decree of the Education and Culture Ministry no.7 in 2020 about the founding, the change, and dispersion of higher education. The second is related to accreditation system of higher education. It is regulated based on the decree of the Education and Culture Ministry no.5 in 2020. The next is related to the easiness in transforming higher education become corporation which is regulated based on the decree of the Education and Culture Ministry no.6 in 2020. The last is related to the learning right three semesters outside the study program. It is regulated based in the decree of the Education and Culture Ministry no.3 in 2020 about National Standard of High Education (Baharuddin, 2021: 196; Rahman, Astina, & Azizah, 2021). Those policies should be implemented by universities in Indonesia.

Studies on Merdeka Belajar curriculum have been conducted by some researchers (e.g. Maipita et al., 2020; Yuhastina et al., 2020; Baharuddin, 2021; Rahman et al., 2021). Maipita et al. (2020) conducted a study on developing a structure of curriculum that is compatible with Merdeka Belajar at the Economic Faculty of Universitas Negeri Medan. The results of the study are in the form of a structure of curriculum containing of six components. Those are national policies interpretation, of university policies interpretation, conceptual basis, curriculum structure of study program, course composition, and reference for developing learning tools.

Furthermore, Yuhastina et al. (2020) conducted a study on analysing sociology teachers' opportunities and challenges at senior high school in facing Merdeka Belajar curriculum in the fourth industrial revolution. They found that teachers did not understand that they were teaching high school-level children who had grown up to be adult pupils using a pedagogical paradigm that is education for children. This paradigm is in contrast with the paradigm used in Merdeka Belajar curriculum that is andragogy paradigm (education for

adults). Furthermore, students' dependence on teachers has become the cause of teachers' difficulty to move from the pedagogical paradigm into andragogy paradigm. Infrastructural and socioeconomic condition become the other barriers that are faced by the teachers. However, the teachers try to do their best to implement Merdeka Belajar curriculum.

The next is Baharuddin (2021) who conduct a literature study on adaptation of Merdeka Belajar curriculum to be study program curriculum at Cokroaminoto University Palopo. The adaptation is focused on the concept of the development curriculum model and the implementation of MBKM (Merdeka Belajar, Kampus Merdeka) program. The result of the development curriculum model consists of planning, learning process, assessment, and learning evaluation. The planning step includes formulating the learning outcomes. In implementing MBKM, the study program plans the fulfillment services of students learning right through three categories. Those are students learning inside study program (minimum 84 credit/compulsory courses/ 1st-5th semester), students learning outside study program but still in Cokroaminoto University (maximum 20 credits/supporting courses/ 6th semester), and students learning outside the university (maximum 40 credit/ 7th-8th semester) in the form of internship, students exchange, *KKN*, social services, and final assignment. Then the implementation of MBKM is through five programs namely students exchange, introduction of preschool environment through *Guru Penggerak Daerah Terpencil* program (Mulyadi & Mardiana, 2022), internship, *KKN Tematik* "Education of digital literation", and social services.

In line with Baharuddin (2020), Rahman et al. (2021) conducted a study on developing Merdeka Belajar, Kampus Merdeka curriculum by inserting humanistic ethics principles and local wisdom values. This study resulted the MBKM curriculum at PBA study program at UNSIQ (University of Sains Al-Qur'an) in Central Java which has been inserting ideas of humanistic ethics and local wisdom values. It can be seen from the format and structure of the curriculum, learning

outcomes design of each course, courses placement, and credits allocation in each semester

The previous studies mentioned above focus on developing curriculum which is compatible with MBKM policy (Maipita et al., 2020; Rahman et al., 2021), reviewing literature study (Baharuddin, 2021), and analyzing senior high school teachers' opportunities and challenges in facing Merdeka Belajar curriculum (Yuhastina et al., 2020). Considering the policy of Merdeka Belajar, many universities in Indonesia try to develop the existing curriculum which is matched with the policy. They start to implement the new curriculum, Merdeka Belajar Curriculum, in their institution. Furthermore, the need to revise and review the curriculum in English language education based on the development of the era is crucial. The curriculum should be revised to include the use of technology, the teaching of English as a global language, the teaching of different cultures and perspectives, the teaching of 21st-century skills, and evidence-based practices (Medgyes & Nikolov (2010). English Language Education Study Program of State Islamic Institute in Kediri, for instance, has implemented Merdeka Belajar Curriculum in 2021. Furthermore, based on the result of interview to the stake holder in English Study Program of a State University in Malang, this institution has implemented the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum in 2020. Those institutions are considered as the pioneer of the implementation the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum in their regions. Therefore, this study tries to investigate the implementation of Merdeka Belajar curriculum in those institutions and also the challenges in implementing the curriculum. The research problems are formulated as follow:

1. How is the implementation of Merdeka Belajar curriculum at English Department of Indonesian Universities?
2. What are the challenges in implementing Merdeka Belajar curriculum at English Department of Indonesian Universities?

METHOD

The aim of this study is to investigate the implementation of Merdeka Belajar Curriculum and the challenges in the implementation at English Language Education Study program of Indonesian University. To reach this purpose, a qualitative using case study is used as the research design. This design is chosen because of the uniqueness of the phenomenon that attracts the researcher to do an investigation. It is in line with Creswell (2009) in which a case study enables researchers to create a detailed analysis of a case, a program, an event, an activity, a process, or one or more people. It typically explores a phenomenon in depth and offers the greatest knowledge of a research subject based on significant data collecting.

The subjects of this study are chosen purposively based on the research purpose. The stake holders of the English study program at some universities will be selected with the consideration that they have implemented Merdeka Belajar curriculum. Based on the result of pre-study, two English Study Programs of two universities, a state university in Malang and a state Islamic institute in Kediri were chosen. Both institutions have implemented Merdeka Belajar Curriculum. English Study Program of a state university in Malang has implemented the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum since 2020. In addition, English Study Program of a state Islamic institute in Kediri also has implemented this curriculum since 2021. Therefore, the stake holders (Mrs. I (UM) and Mrs. 2 (IAIN Kediri): the head of the study programs) of those two institutions become the subject of the study.

Interview and documentation of study program in curriculum implementation are used to collect the data on the implementation of Merdeka Belajar curriculum and challenges in the implementation. Semi-structured interview is conducted to the stake holders of both institutions. Furthermore, the study program documentations of the implementation of the Merdeka Belajar curriculum are also collected to support the data result of the interview.

The data collected in this study are analyzed based on Miles and Huberman's interactive model of data analysis (Miles & Huberman,

1994). It consists of four steps namely collecting data, reducing data, displaying data, and drawing conclusion. After the data are collected, they are reduced and classified based on the themes to get the description of the important information related to the research problems, and then the group theme-based data are be displayed into conceptual charts. The last step is drawing conclusion based on the data display and discussing the finding.

FINDINGS

The research findings of this study consist of two parts. The first part is the finding on the implementation of Merdeka Belajar curriculum of both institutions, English study program of a state university in Malang and a state Islamic institute in Kediri. The next part is the finding on the challenges faced by both study programs in implementing Merdeka Belajar curriculum.

The Implementation of "Merdeka Belajar" Curriculum

Based on the result of interview to the stakeholders in the pre study, Merdeka Belajar curriculum has been implemented in English study program of a state university in Malang and State Islamic Institute of Kediri. The description of the curriculum implementation is presented as follows.

The Implementation of "Merdeka Belajar" Curriculum at English Study Program of a state university in Malang

Based on the result of interview with the head of the English study program of a state university in Malang, the terms "Merdeka Belajar' curriculum is not used in English study program of a state university in Malang. The study program uses adaptive curriculum for Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) program.

Mrs I said:

"There is no terms MBKM (Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka) curriculum, and the Ministry of Education and Culture does not suggest to use the terms. Our study program uses study program curriculum which is adaptive with MBKM program".

The head of the English study program also mentioned that the Indonesian National Qualification Framework (KKNI) is still used in the English study program of a state university in Malang. Besides implementing KKNI, the English study program also add with Outcome-Based Education (OBE) curriculum. Combination of KKNI and OBE based curriculum becomes the core of the curriculum of English study program at a state university in Malang which is adaptive with the MBKM program proposed by the Ministry of Education and Culture.

Mrs. I stated:

"In our institution beside implement KKNI (the Indonesian National Qualifications Framework), we add with OBE (Outcome Based Education) curriculum. The level 6 of KKNI is adopted and made in line with our graduate profile. The four factors of KKNI (affective, knowledge, general skill and specific skill) are synchronized with Program (Expected) Learning Outcome (PLO) which is taken from our graduate profile. The Program (Expected) Learning Outcome (PLO) is in line with the specific characteristic of our study program".

The curriculum development in a state university in Malang is based on the basis of law, national policy and institutional curriculum development of higher education in Indonesia. The basis of curriculum construction is presented in Figure 1. Then the curriculum construction based on OBE (Outcome Based Education) is presented in Figure 2.

Figure 1. The basis of curriculum construction/development course learning outcomes (lldikti3.kemdikbud.go.id)

From Figure 2, it can be seen that Programme Educational Outcomes (PEO/*Tujuan Pendidikan Prodi*/TPP) is graduate expected competence of the study program which is measured 4-5 years after the students has graduated. It is developed and formulated from some sources as like accreditation institution, tracer study, and stakeholder. In addition, Program Learning Outcomes (PLO/*Capaian Pembelajaran Lulusan/CPL*) is measured after the students graduate from the study program in the aspect of cognitive, affective, general skill and specific skill. Program Learning Outcomes (PLO) should be in line with Program Educational Outcomes (PEO). Then Course Learning Outcomes (CLO/ Capaian Pembelajaran Mata Kuliah/CPMK) is formulated based on PLO and specific for each course. The outcome measurement is divided whether the students are success or failed in a certain course.
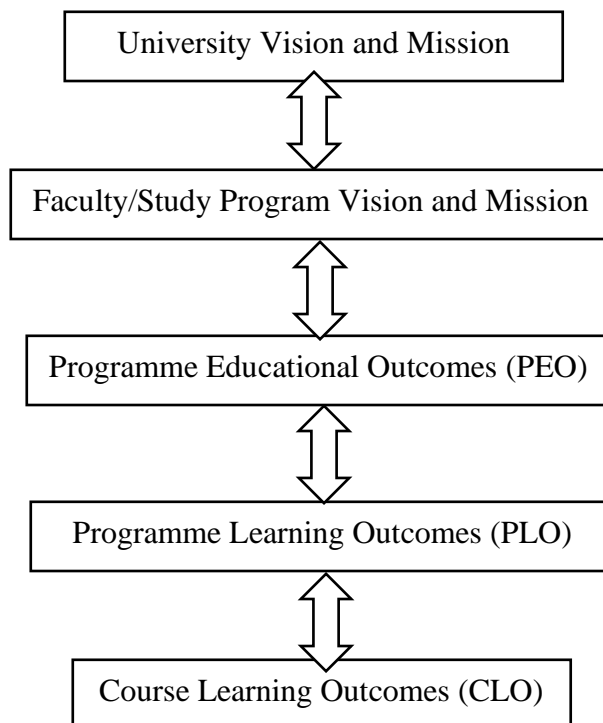
Figure 2. The curriculum construction based on OBE

Refering to the regulation of Education and Culture Ministry on *Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka* (MBKM) policy, English Education Study Program of a state university in Malang has adapted the program since 2020.

Mrs. I stated:

"Since 2020, our study program has adapted the programs of MBKM. Some of our students has joined the offered programs. Our curriculum also becomes more flexible by adapting the programs in MBKM. Our study program implements KKNI and OBE based curriculum which is adaptive with MBKM program".

The MBKM policy influences the implementation of curriculum in the study program. The curriculum implemented (KKNI and OBE based curriculum) becomes adaptive with the programs in MBKM policy. The relation of KKNI, OBE based curriculum and MBKM program is presented in Figure 3.
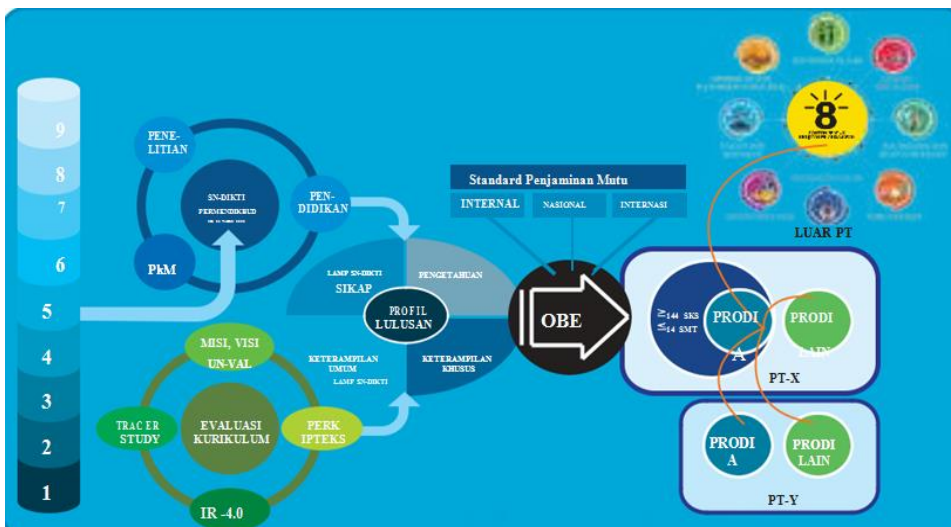

Figure 3. The relation of KKNI, OBE based curriculum and MBKM Programs (lldikti3.kemdikbud.go.id)

The implementation of the curriculum which is adaptive with MBKM program is based on the regulation of Education and Culture Ministry/*Permendikbud* No.3 in 2020 article 15 verse 1 which can be implemented inside and outside study program. It is study rights for

three semesters outside the study program. Higher education must provide this right for students. They can take or not take credits outside study program on campus in one semester (20 credits), and two semesters outside campus (40 credits). For implementing two semester study outside campus, there are eight programs that can be adapted by the study program (See Figure 4). Those are students exchange, internship/ work practicum, teaching assistance, research, humanity project, entrepreneurship, independent study or project, and thematic community learning or village developing. However, in English study program of a state university in Malang, not all programs can be taken by the students. The students need to see their academic advisor to consult about the MBKM program that can be followed to make sure that the followed program is really suitable with graduate profile of the study program.

Mrs. I said:

"Since 2020, our students have joined MBKM programs. However, before the students join the program, they need to consult it to their academic advisor whether the program is appropriate with our graduate profile or not. If the program is not suitable with our graduate profile, the academic advisor will direct the students to join other programs in MBKM which is appropriate with the graduate program. Therefore, the conversion of the course credits can be done and will be easier".


Figure 4. The programs of MBKM (lldikti3.kemdikbud.go.id)

The graduate profile of English Language Education Study Program of Malang University is English language teacher and entrepreneur in English Language Education. This graduate profile should be considered by the students in joining the MBKM program. The academic advisors also need to considered this graduate profile when giving suggestion to the students. The purpose is to make easier in converting the credits to the existing courses in English study program. The recognition credits on MBKM program joined by the students is conducted by the stakeholders of the study program. The total recognition credits based on the study program in 2021 is presented in Figure 5.
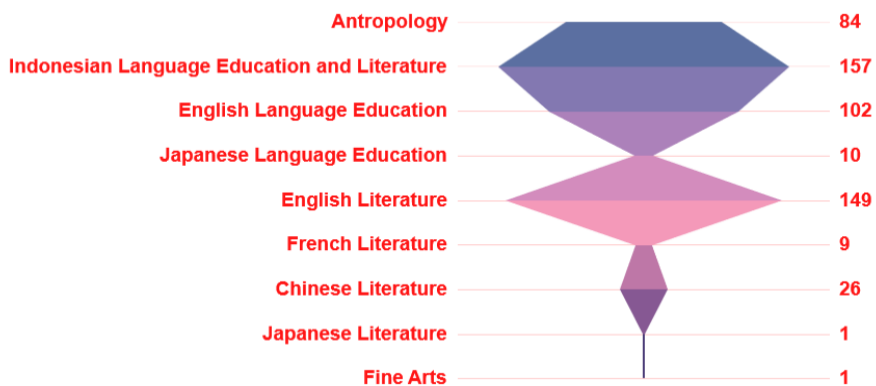
Figure 5. Total recognition credits based on study program (documentation)

Until 2021, there were 69 students joined MBKM programs, and the total recognition credits are 102. Even though there are eight MBKM programs proposed by the Ministry of Education and Culture, only three programs were joined by the students of English Language Education Study Program. Those are students exchange, internship, and teaching assistance. The distribution of the MBKM programs joined by students is presented in Figure 6.
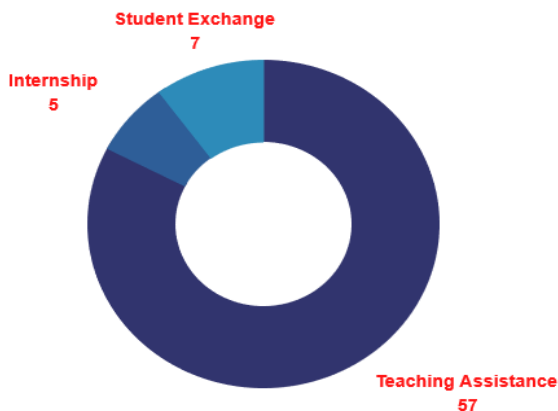
Figure 6. The participation distribution on MBKM program (Documentation)

From Figure 6, it can be seen that teaching assistance program becomes the most preference program chosen by the students in MBKM program (57 students). Then it is followed by student exchange (7 students), and internship program (5 students). Those three programs are provided by Dikti's system, and the whole universities below the Ministry of Education and Culture can directly join the program through the system.

The Implementation of Merdeka Belajar Curriculum at English Study Program of a State Islamic Institute in Kediri

Based on the result of interview to the Head of English study program of a state Islamic institute in Kediri, *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum has implemented since 2021. It is a new curriculum developed from KKNI curriculum which has been implemented since 2016, and *Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM)* policy.

Mrs A said:

"Our study program also gives respond to the policy of Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) from Education and Culture Ministry by implementing a new curriculum since 2021. We developed the existing curriculum, KKNI curriculum, by adopting the programs in MBKM policy".

The basis of curriculum development of the study program is presented in Figure 1 above, and in developing the new curriculum, there are same steps conducted by the stakeholders of the study program. The steps are planning, implementing, and evaluating.

In the planning, graduate profile of the study program is formulated. Considering MBKM program, there are two graduate profiles, main or major graduate profile and additional or minor graduate profile. The main/major graduate profile consists of main competencies of the study program, then additional/minor graduate profile consists of additional competencies which support or are relevant with the main competencies. The main/major graduate profile of English Language Education of a state Islamic institute in Kediri is becoming English Language teachers having competencies and skills to develop English Language curriculum, to construct an appropriate learning materials for their students, to use learning media appropriately, and to evaluate the students' learning product for primary and secondary level of school having good personality, large knowledge and proficient in the field, and are able to do the duties and responsible based on Islamic values and materials, knowledge and Indonesia. Then the additional/minor graduate profiles are becoming translators, tourism agent, creative writer, research assistant, and journalist.

After formulating the graduate profile, the next step is deciding the learning outcomes or *Capaian Pembelajaran Lulusan (CPL)*. Each graduate profile is broken down into learning outcome which consists of affective, knowledge, general skill, and specific skill aspects. Those aspects are formulated based on *SN-Dikti,* the Indonesian National Qualifications Framework (KKNI), describe the vision and mission of the higher education, faculty, and study program. Then additional/minor graduate profile and the
learning outcomes are formulated by collecting information through tracer study, suggestion from stakeholders, profession association, and the future knowledge or skill tendencies needed by industry and work world.

In course formulation, it is started with choosing the appropriate knowledge source (*bahan kajian)* and learning materials. The knowledge source becomes the learning content standard having the depth and the width based on learning outcome /CPL stated in SN-Dikti. The course structure of English Language Education of IAIN Kediri is presented in Table 1.

Tabel 1. The curriculum structure of English Language Education study program (Documentation)

Mrs. A stated:

"Regarding MBKM policy, especially on the students' right to get learning experience outside study program, we develop a new curriculum structure consisting of seven clusters. Those are compulsory courses on language skills, compulsory courses on English Language pedagogy, compulsory courses on research, compulsory courses on linguistics and literature, institution courses, faculty courses, and elective courses. The four first clusters must be taken by the students in the study program, and the three second clusters can be taken outside study program inside institution and outside institution/non higher education institution."

To graduate from English Language Education study program, the students need to pass 147 credits. The seven clusters of courses in

the curriculum structure are divided into three (compulsory courses, elective courses, and Merdeka Belajar courses). Elective courses are simultaneous courses that should be taken by the students in fourth and fifth semester. The elective courses consist of six choices; those are Journalistic, Tourism, Teaching English for Young Learners, Literature, Translation, and Linguistics. Then *Merdeka Belajar* courses are offered twenty (20) credits in the sixth semester which consist of planning the program (4 credits), developing tools/media (4 credits), implementing the program (4 credits), evaluating the program (4 credits), and developing program report (4 credits). There are six packets of *Merdeka Belajar* courses; those are Teaching Assistance, Eduprenership, Entrepreneurship, Humanity Project, Journalistic Internship, and Research Internship. The students are permitted to take one packet of the course. The learning evaluation is taken from monitoring on program evaluation and report on program result. The score of learning evaluation result is taken from the lecturer as a program advisor and program associate.

Regarding to MBKM programs, some students have joined the programs independently. They join the program of teaching assistence held by the Ministry of Social, an Internship program in BPN (*Badan Pertanahan Negara*). They join the selection by themselves. The Head of the study program give the easiness in joining the lectures through online during joining the programs. However, the recognition credit cannot be given to the students since there is no cooperation with the institutions. The students' participation is recognized in SKPI (*Surat Keterangan Pendamping Ijasah*).

The Challenges in Implementing Merdeka Belajar Curriculum

In implementing the curriculum, some challenges are faced by the English Language Education Study Program of a state university in Malang. The challenges are in the system used, the operational standard of implementation (*SOP)*, the requirements, implementation, evaluation and monitoring.

Mrs I said:

"It is not easy for us in implementing our curriculum which adapts MBKM programs. The problems faced are too complex. It is started with the unreadiness of our system, unavailable of operational standard of the implementation, the requirements to join MBKM program, the implementation, the evaluation, and monitoring. The students are highly motivated in joining MBKM program; however, the lecturers and the staffs have not informed yet on the programs and the implementation. So far, the implementation of the programs is just the instruction from the head of the study program to MBKM unit in the university."

Similar to the English Language Education Study Program of a state university in Malang, the English Language Education Study Program of a state Islamic institute in Kediri also have faced some problems. In implementing MBKM curriculum, some problems are the system, the operational standard of the implementation, the support from the leader of the institution.

Mrs A said:

"Our students and lecturers in English Language Education are really eager to join MBKM programs. However, we face some problems in implementation. We do not have good system yet to accommodate the students to join MBKM program. Our institution is not connected to DIKTI's system in MBKM program. Our students cannot join student exchange for example since our institution is not existed in the DIKTI''s system. We need to make independent cooperation with other higher education. Even though we have independent cooperation with other higher educations, we still get next problem especially in realizing the cooperation. The problems are too complex. Furthermore, there is no operational standard of the implementation of MBKM program in our institution. The leaders of our institution do not push the faculty or study program to implement MBKM program."

DISCUSSION

Based on the research findings above, the discussion of this research is divided into two parts. The first part discusses the implementation of *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum, both in English Language Education Study Program of a state university in Malang and in English Language Education Study Program of a state Islamic institution in Kediri which are discussed elaborately. The next part

discusses the challenges in implementing *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum in those both places.

The Implementation of *Merdeka Belajar* Curriculum

As presented in the previous section, both institutions, English Language Education Study Program of a state university in Malang and in English Language Education Study Program of a state Islamic institution in Kediri have implemented Merdeka Belajar curriculum since 2020 and 2021. However, both institutions have different terms in the implementation. English Language Education Study Program of a state university in Malang uses terms adaptive curriculum with MBKM programs. They do not change the existing curriculum used, the combination of KKNI and Outcome Based Education (OBE) curriculum. Conversion and recognition credits are implemented by the study program for students who join MBKM programs.

Different from English Language Education Study Program of a state university in Malang, English Language Education Study Program of a state Islamic institution in Kediri develops a new curriculum which is compatible with MBKM policy. The new curriculum is developed from the existing curriculum, KKNI, and input the MBKM programs in the new curriculum structure. The students who are able to join MBKM programs from outside the institution which are not in line with the graduate profile may get recognition in their *SKPI* (*Surat Keterangan Pendamping Ijazah*).

Although both institutions have different way in implementing Merdeka Belajar curriculum, they have same basis in developing their curriculum. They use KKNI curriculum in their institution. It is in line with Maipita et al (2020) stated that the curriculum development in higher education must refer to Presidential Decree No.8 of 2012 concerning KKNI and the regulation of Education and Culture Ministry (Permendikbud) No.73 of 2013 regarding KKNI in Higher Education.

Furthermore, both institutions, English Language Education Study Program of a state university in Malang and a state Islamic institution in Kediri, still give chance for students to freely choose or join MBKM programs outside the institutions. This finding is in line Paulo Freire's teaching thought that students need to have freedom in learning (Razzak, 2020), and the freedom of education lies the notion of a new humanism (Marope, 2017)

In line with the finding of this study, Baharuddin (2021) also develops a new curriculum by adapting MBKM curriculum in Cokroaminoto Univeristy Palopo. The new curriculum still implements KKNI curriculum which is developed by inserting the MBKM program in the new curriculum structure. The structure consists of three clusters. The first is courses cluster to achieve main graduate profile which consists of eighty-four (84) credits. These courses are provided in the first until fifth semester. The second cluster is learning experience outside study program inside the University and *PLP* (*Pengenalan Lingkungan Persekolahan/*School Environment Identification). It consists of twenty (20) credits which are offered in the sixth semester. The last cluster is learning experience in other higher education, non-higher education and final assignment. It consists of forty (40) credits which are offered in the seventh and eight semesters.

Furthermore, Rahman, Astina and Azizah's study (2021) have a similar finding with the present study. They develop a new curriculum, MBKM curriculum, at Arabic Language Education study program of UNSIQ by integrating values of humanistic ethics and local wisdom resistance. The result shows that the MBKM curriculum of Arabic Language Education study program of UNSIQ has been designed by inserting the MBKM program in the curriculum structure and paying attention to values of humanistic ethics and local wisdom. Those integrations can be seen not only in the curriculum structure, but also in the learning outcomes designs, courses placement, and credits allocation in each semester.

The Challenges in Implementing *Merdeka Belajar* Curriculum

Implementing a new curriculum often involves managing change within educational institutions. Resistance to change, lack of support from administrators, and inadequate communication can hinder the smooth implementation of a new curriculum (Boon, 2018). As mentioned in the previous section, there are some challenges faced English Language Education Study Program of a state university in Malang and English Language Education Study Program of a state Islamic institution in Kediri. Both institutions face quite similar problems in implementing *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum. The problems faced in a state university in Malang are the unreadiness of our system, unavailable of operational standard of the implementation, the requirements to join MBKM program, the implementation, the evaluation, and monitoring. Then the problems faced in a state Islamic institution in Kediri are the system, the operational standard of the implementation, the support from the leader of the institution.

The finding of this study is in line with the finding of Arifin and Muslim's study (2020). They found that various challenges and doubts overshadows the implementation of MBKM policy, especially in the system or mechanism of the implementation. Furthermore, the disparities in facilities, academic atmosphere, and infrastructure between universities becomes the difficulties in implementing MBKM programs. Insufficient resources, such as textbooks, teaching materials, and technological tools, can hinder the effective implementation of a new curriculum. Teachers may face difficulties in accessing the necessary resources to support their teaching (Mandukwini, 2016). Yuhastina et al. (2020) also found that besides unreadiness of stake holders of the institution to implement Merdeka Belajar curriculum, the infrastructural barriers and socioeconomic conditions become challenges in implementing Merdeka Belajar curriculum.

CONCLUSION

In line with the research findings and the discussions above, it can be concluded that both institutions, English Language Education Study Program of a state university in Malang and English Language Education Study Program of a state Islamic institute in Kediri have implemented Merdeka Belajar curriculum since 2020 and 2021. However, both institutions have different terms in the implementation. English Language Education Study Program of a state university in Malang uses terms adaptive curriculum with MBKM programs without changing the existing curriculum used, the combination of KKNI and Outcome Based Education (OBE) curriculum. Conversion and recognition credits are implemented by the study program for students who join MBKM programs. Differently, English Language Education Study Program of a state Islamic institution in Kediri develop a new curriculum which is compatible with MBKM policy. The new curriculum is developed from the existing curriculum, KKNI, and inserts the MBKM programs in the new curriculum structure. The students who are able to join MBKM programs from outside the institution which are not in line with the graduate profile may get recognition in their *SKPI* (*Surat Keterangan Pendamping Ijazah*).

In implementing the Merdeka Belajar curriculum, there are some challenges faced. Both institutions face quite similar problems in implementing Merdeka Belajar curriculum. The problems faced in a state university in Malang are the unreadiness of our system, unavailable of operational standard of the implementation, the requirements to join MBKM program, the implementation, the evaluation, and monitoring. Then the problems faced in English Language Education Study Program of a state Islamic institution in Kediri are the system, the operational standard of the implementation, the support from the leader of the institution.

It is important for educators and administrators to be aware of these challenges and take proactive measures to address them. Providing adequate resources, offering professional development opportunities, and fostering a supportive environment can help

mitigate the obstacles associated with implementing a new curriculum. Overall, implementing a new curriculum requires careful planning, support, and flexibility from educators and administrators to overcome the challenges that may arise.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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