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Comparison of the Implementation of the MBKM Curriculum in the Social Sciences Education Study Program at PTKIN in Indonesia

Mohammad Liwa Irrubai[1*], Resti Kartika Dewi[2], Emilia Fatriani[3]

[1,2,3]*Universitas Islam Negeri Mataram, Indonesia*

*e-mail: liwarubai@uinmataram.ac.id

ABSTRACT

This study examines the implementation of the Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) policy within Social Sciences study programs at State Islamic Religious Higher Education Institutions (PTKIN) in Indonesia. The research is motivated by the national importance of MBKM as a strategy to enhance the quality of higher education. At the same time, its application within PTKIN, particularly in the social sciences and religious studies, remains understudied and faces various practical challenges. This study aims to understand how MBKM is implemented, the factors that shape its execution, and its influence on teaching practices and graduate competencies. Using a qualitative approach, data were collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and document analysis in selected PTKINs. The findings reveal significant variation in MBKM implementation, influenced by institutional readiness, resource availability, and the involvement of lecturers and students. Despite obstacles such as curriculum adjustment and resistance to change, the study identifies positive outcomes, including enhanced learning creativity, improved practical skills, and greater curriculum relevance to industry and community needs.

***Keywords*:**

MBKM Curriculum; Social Sciences Study Program; PTKIN.

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini mengkaji implementasi kebijakan Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) dalam program studi Ilmu Sosial di Perguruan Tinggi Agama Islam Negeri (PTKIN) di Indonesia. Penelitian ini dimotivasi oleh pentingnya MBKM secara nasional sebagai strategi untuk meningkatkan kualitas pendidikan tinggi. Pada saat yang sama, penerapannya di PTKIN,

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***Corresponding author:** liwarubai@uinmataram.ac.id

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khususnya dalam ilmu sosial dan studi agama, masih kurang diteliti dan menghadapi berbagai tantangan praktis. Studi ini bertujuan untuk memahami bagaimana MBKM diimplementasikan, faktor-faktor yang membentuk implementasinya, dan pengaruhnya terhadap praktik pengajaran dan kompetensi lulusan. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif, data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi, dan analisis dokumen di PTKIN terpilih. Temuan menunjukkan variasi yang signifikan dalam implementasi MBKM, dipengaruhi oleh kesiapan institusional, ketersediaan sumber daya, dan keterlibatan dosen dan mahasiswa. Terlepas dari hambatan seperti penyesuaian kurikulum dan resistensi terhadap perubahan, studi ini mengidentifikasi hasil positif, termasuk peningkatan kreativitas belajar, peningkatan keterampilan praktis, dan relevansi kurikulum yang lebih besar terhadap kebutuhan industri dan masyarakat.

***Kata kunci*:**

Kurikulum MBKM; Program Studi Ilmu Pengetahuan Sosial; PTKIN.

1. Introduction

The Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) policy (Adrevi et al., 2025), launched in 2020, aims to increase curricular flexibility and strengthen the relevance of higher education to the job market in Indonesia (Purwanti, 2021). Through this policy, students are encouraged to learn beyond their study programs (Ariani & Zulhawati, 2022) join industry internships (Chandra & Anwar, 2025), and participate in community or humanitarian projects to improve practical competencies and social engagement (Yanto et al., 2025). However, despite its ambitious goals, the implementation of MBKM has revealed substantial challenges (Yusriadi et al., 2024), particularly in State Islamic Religious Higher Education Institutions (PTKIN) offering Social Sciences study programs (Rahmawati & Maghfirah, 2025). The core problem lies in the misalignment between MBKM policy expectations and the actual conditions in PTKIN (Saiful et al., 2025). Existing studies report persistent confusion among lecturers and students regarding MBKM procedures, limited institutional partnerships, and insufficient administrative support (Nafisah, 2023). These issues are intensified by limited human resources and inadequate infrastructure available at PTKIN (Murdiyanto, 2022).

The need to investigate this topic arises from the fact that research on MBKM implementation in PTKIN, especially within Social Sciences programs, remains scarce (Tjaija, 2022). Previous findings from public universities outside PTKIN have been inconsistent: some studies report improved student competencies, while others find no significant change. Furthermore, constructivist learning theory underscores the importance of experiential learning (Novyan et al., 2024), such as internships and community-based projects, are essential for developing critical, creative, and collaborative skills. This theoretical foundation highlights the urgency of evaluating how effectively PTKIN provides such learning experiences under MBKM (Andika & Yuliana, 2024).

Given this gap in the literature and the unique characteristics of PTKIN, this study specifically examines the implementation of MBKM in Social Sciences Study Programs across PTKIN in Indonesia. The objectives of the research are: (1) to analyze the extent to which MBKM has been successfully implemented in Social Sciences Study Programs at PTKIN; (2) to identify the major obstacles encountered during implementation; and (3) to provide strategic recommendations for improving MBKM practices in the future. By addressing these objectives, this study is expected to contribute to the development of higher education in Indonesia, particularly in enhancing the relevance and quality of education within PTKIN.

2. Methods

2.1 Research Design

This research uses a qualitative approach with a comparative case study design. The qualitative approach is chosen because it allows the researcher to deeply explore the experiences, perceptions, and challenges faced by lecturers and students in the implementation of the Freedom to Learn Independent Campus (Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka - MBKM) curriculum in Social Sciences Study Programs (IPS) at State Islamic Religious Higher Education Institutions (PTKIN) in Indonesia. The comparative case study design is used to compare the implementation of MBKM across several PTKINs, accounting for variations in implementation and outcomes.

2.2 Population and Sample

The population of this study comprises all State Islamic Religious Higher Education Institutions (PTKIN) in Indonesia that offer Social Sciences Study Programs (IPS), totaling eight campuses: UIN Suska Riau, UIN Fatmawati Sukarno Bengkulu, IAIN Ponorogo, UIN Malang, IAIN Madura, IAIN Pare-Pare, UIN Mataram, and IAIN Kudus. The sample was selected using purposive sampling to capture institutional diversity across PTKIN. Beyond methodological considerations, the sampling strategy is philosophically grounded in the need to represent variation in academic culture, geographical context, and institutional status, factors known to shape curriculum implementation and organizational responsiveness to educational reforms.

The inclusion criteria required PTKIN to have implemented the MBKM program for at least one year to ensure the presence of observable institutional practices. Based on these criteria, five PTKIN were selected: UIN Fatmawati Sukarno Bengkulu, IAIN Kudus, UIN Suska Riau, IAIN Ponorogo, and UIN Mataram. These institutions differ geographically (Sumatra, Java, and Nusa Tenggara), administratively (UIN vs. IAIN), and culturally in terms of academic traditions and institutional maturity, thereby providing a more comprehensive representation of MBKM implementation across the PTKIN system.

2.3 Data Collection Techniques

The research data were collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and document analysis. A total of 14 semi-structured interviews were conducted across the five selected PTKIN, involving 1 Vice Dean, 5 Heads of Departments, 3 Department Secretaries, and 4 lecturers

directly involved in implementing the MBKM program. The primary informants were purposively selected based on their positions, experience, and level of involvement, ensuring rich, relevant data. The interviews focused on perceptions of MBKM, implementation challenges, forms of institutional support, and recommendations for improvement. The interview guidelines were developed based on a literature review and were adjusted to the characteristics of each PTKIN.

Observations were conducted across various MBKM learning activities, including internships, field projects, and community service programs, to gain direct insight into classroom dynamics, teaching practices, and student-lecturer interactions during program implementation. Secondary data were collected through document analysis, including curricula, syllabi, MBKM activity reports, institutional guidelines, and policy documents, to examine the regulatory framework and the structural implementation of MBKM in each PTKIN.

Data trustworthiness was ensured through triangulation by comparing the results of interviews, observations, and documentation. Internal validity was strengthened through member checking, in which participants reviewed the interview summaries to confirm the accuracy of the information. External validity was maintained by comparing the research findings with relevant literature. Research reliability was ensured through an audit trail that documented the entire data collection and analysis process in detail. In addition, the researcher conducted peer debriefing with education experts to ensure the consistency and objectivity of data interpretation.

2.4 Data Analysis

The data obtained is analyzed using the qualitative analysis techniques of Miles and Huberman (Asipi, 2022). Data analysis in this study is carried out descriptively-qualitatively by describing the data obtained from interviews, documentation, and observations. After collecting data from interviews, documentation, and observations, the process continues with data reduction, data presentation, and finally, data verification. Data reduction is the process of selecting and focusing on simplifying the interview results and field notes obtained by the researcher. The reduced data is then presented in a narrative form.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Findings

The implementation of the MBKM curriculum across the Study Programs varies by campus. Some campuses have not yet implemented it, and others have implemented it but not optimally. Only one campus has implemented MBKM quite smoothly. From a regulatory perspective, all campuses have regulations in place, except UIN Mataram. However, advisories to prepare all study programs to adopt MBKM have already been issued.

Table 1. Comparison of MBKM Curriculum Implementation in Study Programs within Universities

No	PTKIN	MBKM Curriculum Implementation Activities	
		1	2
1	UIN Fatmawati Sukarno Bengkulu	The Implementation of MBKM is Quite Smooth	Present

2	IAIN Kudus	MBKM will be fully implemented in the 2023/2024 academic year. It has been partially implemented previously, along with exploration and adjustments	Present
3	UIN Suska Riau	Not yet optimal	Present
4	IAIN Ponorogo	Implementation will actually begin in the odd semester of 2024	Present
5	UIN Mataram	The process of implementing the MBKM Curriculum has begun with several courses prepared as MBKM courses, but beyond that, there has been no further implementation	More detailed regulations are not yet available, but advisories to prepare all study programs tc adopt MBKM have already been issued

Information: 1 = Implementation of the MBKM Curriculum in Study Programs; 2 = Regulations made by the University and used as guidelines in the process of implementing MBKM in Study Programs.

Most campuses have implemented the MBKM program and have collaborated with various universities/institutions. However, some campuses have implemented MBKM but have not yet established partnerships with universities/institutions. Some campuses have not yet implemented MBKM and do not have collaborations with external parties. For the MBKM program, PTKIN has implemented 6 of 8 programs in Indonesia (Table 2). The two programs that have not yet been implemented are humanitarian projects and independent entrepreneurship.

Table 2. Implementation Aspects of MBKM Curriculum in Study Programs Outside the University

No	PTKIN	MBKM Curriculum Implementation Activities	
		1	2
1	UIN Fatmawati Sukarno Bengkulu	Thematic Internships and Thematic Community Service Programs	All districts in Bengkulu Province, all levels of schools and madrasahs in Bengkulu Province, and several campuses outside Bengkulu Province
2	IAIN Kudus	Thematic Internships, Thematic Community Service Programs, Student Exchange, and Teaching Assistance	6 universities/institutions
3	UIN Suska Riau	Research, Village Development	3 universities
4	IAIN Ponorogo	Thematic Community Service Programs, Campus Teaching, and Independent Study	Not yet available
5	UIN Mataram	Not yet available, because MBKM in the Social Sciences	So far, several institutions and universities have begun

	Study Program is still mostly at the course level. Therefore, the MBKM framework has started to take shape and will continue to be adjusted with the BKP (Learning Achievement Assessment) that has been structured in stages	conducting comparative studies, either by visiting the study program or by having the study program visit other universities, such as UIN Malang and UIN Jakarta. However, there has been no follow-up regarding the collaboration

Information: 1 = MBKM Programs Implemented; 2 = Universities/Institutions that have established partnerships with the study program.

Table 2 illustrates substantial variation in how PTKIN institutions implement MBKM activities, and these differences carry important conceptual implications for assessing the quality of MBKM implementation. These variations are not merely administrative differences; rather, they reflect deeper institutional capacities, strategic orientations, and levels of readiness to carry out experiential learning programs.

3.1.1 Diversity of MBKM activities reflects institutional readiness

Institutions such as IAIN Kudus and UIN Suska Riau, which offer a wider range of MBKM activities from thematic internships to student exchanges demonstrate higher institutional capacity and stronger external partnerships. In contrast, institutions that have not yet developed formal placement lists or remain focused on course-level MBKM (e.g., UIN Mataram) indicate an early stage of policy adoption.

3.1.2 Geographic breadth of partner institutions indicates the extent of student exposure

UIN Fatmawati Sukarno Bengkulu, for example, collaborates with institutions across all districts in Bengkulu Province and several universities beyond the region. Such breadth provides students with a more diverse range of learning environments. Conversely, institutions without established partners offer more limited experiential learning opportunities.

3.1.3 The intensity and structure of partnerships signal collaboration quality

Clear and stable partnerships such as the six partner institutions at IAIN Kudus or the three universities collaborating with UIN Suska Riau suggest a more systematic and well-managed implementation of MBKM. Institutions that primarily conduct benchmarking visits without formal follow-up remain in the exploratory stage of collaboration building.

3.1.4 Variations also reflect different academic and managerial orientations

Institutions that emphasize activities such as research or village development (e.g., UIN Suska Riau) demonstrate academic priorities distinct from institutions that prioritize thematic community service or teaching assistance.

Several obstacles PTKIN faces in implementing the MBKM program include budget constraints, time constraints, regulations, and a lack of partnerships with certain universities/institutions. Specifically, UIN Fatmawati Sukarno Bengkulu faces budget and time constraints. Regulatory adjustments hinder UIN Kudus. Regulations, partnerships, and time challenge UIN Suska Riau. IAIN Ponorogo faces time and regulatory constraints. UIN Mataram faces challenges due to a lack of partnerships.

Table 3. Comparison of Obstacles in the Implementation of the MBKM Curriculum

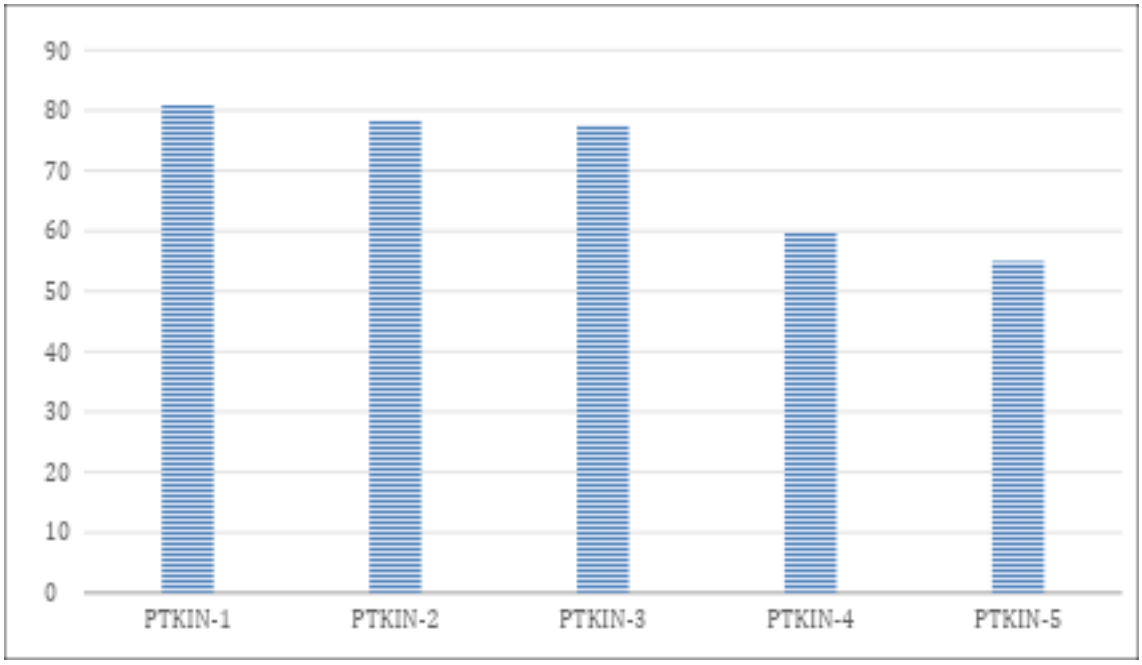
No	PTKIN	Obstacles Faced by the Study Program in Implementing the MBKM Curriculum
1	UIN Fatmawati Sukarno Bengkulu	Budget and time
2	IAIN Kudus	Regulatory adjustments between institutions, especially those with different forms (SATKER/BLU/PTKIN-BH) and institutional forms (IAIN/UIN/PTKKN/PTKBN/PTKHN, etc.)
3	UIN Suska Riau	Adjusting the existing curriculum with the MBKM curriculum, limited partners, and limited time available for lecturers to participate in MBKM activities
4	IAIN Ponorogo	Alignment of time, materials, and policies
5	UIN Mataram	Lack of collaboration between different study programs within the same university and with external institutions such as schools, companies, or related agencies

The solutions to overcome implementation obstacles in the MBKM curriculum vary across campuses, depending on the challenges faced. UIN Fatmawati Sukarno Bengkulu's solution is to hold discussions with the leadership. IAIN Kudus will conduct structured and intensive coordination. UIN Suska Riau will adjust existing courses with other universities and provide free time for lecturers. IAIN Ponorogo chooses deliberation as a solution. Meanwhile, UIN Mataram will establish communication with related institutions.

Table 4. Comparison of Solutions to Overcome Obstacles in the Implementation of the MBKM Curriculum

No	PTKIN	Solutions by the study program to overcome problems arising during the implementation of the MBKM curriculum
1	UIN Fatmawati Sukarno Bengkulu	Discussing together with the leadership
2	IAIN Kudus	Structured and intensive coordination

3	UIN Suska Riau	Adjusting existing courses with other universities and providing free time for lecturers
4	IAIN Ponorogo	Conducting deliberations
5	UIN Mataram	The study program must establish communication with relevant institutions and, if necessary, bring in representatives from external institutions to discuss students' internship needs and competencies. This way, when students return, they can become more competent and aligned with the requirements of the job market



Picture 1. Comparison of MBKM Curriculum Implementation at PTKIN

Picture 1 displays the comparative levels of MBKM curriculum implementation across five PTKIN. A comprehensive evaluation of the data indicates that UIN Fatmawati Sukarno Bengkulu (PTKIN-1) has the highest level of implementation, at 80.83%, suggesting strong institutional readiness and a more systematic integration of MBKM components.

Following closely is IAIN Kudus (PTKIN-2) with 78.33%, indicating substantial progress and consistent adoption of MBKM activities. UIN Suska Riau (PTKIN-3) also performs relatively well at 77.5%, indicating that MBKM has been fairly well integrated, although not as comprehensively as at the first two institutions.

In contrast, IAIN Ponorogo (PTKIN-4) and UIN Mataram (PTKIN-5) show considerably lower implementation rates—59.58% and 55%, respectively. These Pictures suggest that both institutions

are still in the early stages of curriculum adjustment or face structural and administrative barriers in operationalizing MBKM initiatives. Overall, the variation in implementation levels reflects differences in institutional capacity, partnership networks, administrative preparedness, and strategic orientation toward the MBKM policy.

3.2 Discussion

The results reveal significant variation in MBKM implementation across PTKIN, reflecting deeper institutional differences rather than simple administrative disparities. These findings align with earlier studies showing that MBKM adoption is often hindered by institutional readiness and resource limitations (Nafisah, 2023; Murdiyanto, 2022).

First, the diversity of MBKM activities across campuses indicates varying institutional capacities. Campuses such as IAIN Kudus and UIN Suska Riau demonstrate stronger external partnerships, supporting findings that collaborative networks are crucial to successful MBKM implementation. Conversely, UIN Mataram's limited activities and lack of formal partnerships suggest early-stage adoption (Anggara, 2023).

Second, the geographic breadth of partner institutions reinforces the role of experiential learning opportunities in enhancing student skills. This aligns with constructivist learning theory, which highlights the importance of real-world learning environments such as internships and community projects. Campuses with extensive partnerships offer richer environments for student engagement.

Third, consistent, structured cooperation such as the partnerships established by IAIN Kudus and UIN Suska Riau supports previous findings that organized collaboration enhances MBKM effectiveness. Meanwhile, institutions relying only on benchmarking visits remain in the exploratory stage, suggesting limited organizational preparedness (Caeiro et al., 2020).

The identified obstacles also reflect the challenges commonly reported in prior research: regulatory misalignment, budget constraints, and a lack of external partnerships. However, each PTKIN's solution shows a different strategic orientation, such as deliberation, policy coordination, or strengthening communication with external stakeholders.

Overall, the findings highlight the novelty of this study: 1) it provides comparative data across multiple PTKIN, 2) it focuses specifically on Social Sciences programs an area still under-researched in MBKM literature, and 3) it integrates institutional capacity, partnerships, and experiential learning theory to explain variations in implementation.

These insights underscore the importance of strengthening institutional readiness, expanding partnerships, and improving regulatory coherence to ensure more effective MBKM implementation at PTKIN.

3.3 Analysis

The research results, visualized in Table 1, reveal variations in the implementation of the Merdeka Belajar-Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) curriculum across various Study Programs (Prodi) and campuses. This interpretation can be linked to the innovation adoption theory by Dearing, (2021), which states that the adoption of new technology or innovation is not uniform and is often influenced by factors such as institutional readiness, policies, and resource support. In this context, the diversity

in MBKM implementation indicates differences in readiness and adaptation across campuses. This research indicates that some campuses are still in the early stages of MBKM implementation, while others have implemented it but not yet to the fullest extent. This is consistent with previous findings that the success of new curriculum implementation often depends on administrative support, lecturer training, and adequate infrastructure. Campuses that have successfully implemented MBKM smoothly likely possess these supporting factors, including proactive management and active participation from all stakeholders.

Regarding the regulatory aspect, the results show that all campuses except UIN Mataram have regulations related to MBKM. This highlights the importance of institutional policies in promoting the implementation of new curricula. According to educational policy theory, clear and supportive regulations are crucial for ensuring the consistency and success of educational policy implementation. Although UIN Mataram does not yet have formal regulations, the advisories to prepare all study programs indicate initial efforts to adopt MBKM policies, which can be understood as a preparatory stage in the policy adoption model. The differences in implementation can also be integrated into the diffusion of innovation theory, which states that the adoption of innovation occurs in a bell-shaped curve, with innovators and early adopters starting earlier compared to the majority and laggards (Dearing, 2021). In this study, campuses that have successfully implemented MBKM can be categorized as early adopters. In contrast, other campuses that are just starting or have not yet implemented it are the majority or even laggards. This indicates that the diffusion process of MBKM is still ongoing and has not yet reached all higher education institutions evenly.

Furthermore, the results of this study have practical and theoretical implications. In practice, these findings can help policymakers identify areas that require further intervention, such as training for lecturers or improvements to campus infrastructure. Theoretically, the results of this study contribute to enriching the literature on the implementation of innovative curricula in higher education, particularly in the context of MBKM in Indonesia. Recommendations for future research include more in-depth studies of the factors that support or hinder the implementation of MBKM across campuses, as well as the development of new theoretical models to explain the dynamics of educational policy implementation in Indonesia. Additionally, further research is needed to evaluate the long-term impact of MBKM implementation on the quality of education and the competitiveness of graduates.

The results in Table 2 reveal that the implementation of the Merdeka Belajar-Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) Curriculum in State Islamic Religious Higher Education Institutions (PTKIN) in Indonesia shows significant variation. These findings indicate that most campuses have implemented the MBKM program and have established collaborations with various universities or institutions. This aligns with the educational policy implementation theory, which emphasizes the importance of inter-institutional collaboration to enhance the quality and relevance of education. However, some campuses that have implemented MBKM do not have external collaborations. This condition can hinder the effectiveness of MBKM implementation because external collaboration is often crucial in providing resources and broader learning opportunities for students.

Furthermore, the finding that some campuses have not yet implemented MBKM and lack external collaborations indicates structural and managerial obstacles to its implementation. According

to Dearing, (2021) the adoption of innovation in the educational context is often hindered by factors such as lack of institutional support, limited resources, and resistance to change. Previous research by Murdiyanto, (2022) and Otoluwa, (2023) found that the institution's readiness significantly influences the success of MBKM implementation across the curriculum, facilities, and administrative support. Therefore, intervention from authorities is needed to provide more comprehensive support to institutions that are not yet able to implement MBKM and have not established external collaborations.

Regarding the programs implemented, this study shows that of the eight MBKM programs, six have been implemented by PTKIN in Indonesia. In comparison, two programs, namely humanitarian projects and independent entrepreneurship, have not yet been realized. This indicates a gap in implementing more challenging programs that require more intensive collaboration with external parties. According to Kolb's experiential learning theory (1984), programs such as humanitarian projects and independent entrepreneurship are crucial in developing students' practical skills and soft skills. The lack of implementation of these programs can impede the optimal development of student competencies aligned with the needs of the job market. Therefore, this study recommends increasing support and facilitation for campuses to implement all MBKM programs comprehensively.

The integration of these research findings into existing theories and knowledge further strengthens the argument that the successful implementation of MBKM requires robust structural support and extensive collaboration among educational institutions and external parties. Furthermore, these findings emphasize the importance of institutional readiness, including resources and administrative support, for effectively adopting educational policy innovations. Thus, this study not only contributes to understanding the challenges and opportunities in implementing MBKM but also provides a foundation for formulating more effective and efficient policies in the future.

The results in Table 3 show the various obstacles PTKIN faces in implementing the Merdeka Belajar-Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) program. These obstacles include budget constraints, time constraints, regulations, and partnerships with certain universities or institutions. Specifically, UIN Fatmawati Sukarno Bengkulu faces budget and time constraints; UIN Kudus faces regulatory challenges; UIN Suska Riau faces regulatory, partnership, and time constraints; IAIN Ponorogo faces time and regulatory constraints; and UIN Mataram faces partnership constraints. These findings align with previous research that indicates the implementation of innovative educational policies often faces complex and multi-dimensional challenges (Dearing, 2021)

The budget constraints faced by UIN Fatmawati Sukarno Bengkulu and UIN Suska Riau reflect the reality that financing is a crucial factor in the success of educational programs. According to research conducted by Ye (2023) a lack of budget can hinder the implementation of new programs by affecting the institution's ability to provide facilities, human resources, and other supporting activities. Additionally, time is also a significant obstacle faced by UIN Fatmawati Sukarno Bengkulu, UIN Suska Riau, and IAIN Ponorogo. Time constraints are often related to busy academic schedules and the need to integrate new programs within the already established timeframe.

Regulations are a major obstacle for UIN Kudus, UIN Suska Riau, and IAIN Ponorogo. Adjusting regulations within educational institutions often requires a lengthy and complex process. This is due to the various rules and procedures that must be followed before policy changes can be

implemented. For instance, regulations related to credit recognition, assessment standards, and other administrative procedures often require significant adjustments (Dearing, 2021). Research by the Quality Assurance Agency (2002) shows that regulatory flexibility is crucial to supporting innovation in education, and the lack of such flexibility can hinder the implementation of programs such as MBKM.

Collaboration with other universities or institutions is also a challenge faced by UIN Suska Riau and UIN Mataram. External collaboration is often a key factor in the success of the MBKM program, as it can provide students with access to resources, practical experience, and a broader professional network. Research by Connolly et al., (2023) and Kim, (2019) emphasizes that effective collaboration with external partners can enrich students' learning experiences and enhance the relevance of education to the job market. Therefore, the lack of collaboration can reduce the effectiveness of the MBKM program in achieving its goals.

In integrating these research findings into the existing theoretical framework, it can be concluded that budget constraints, time constraints, regulatory constraints, and collaboration obstacles require a comprehensive, strategic approach to overcome. This includes increasing government or donor agency financial support, adjusting academic schedules to be more flexible, revising regulations to be more adaptive, and proactively establishing collaborations with external parties. This research also provides a basis for developing new theories that link implementation constraints with the effectiveness of innovative educational programs. For example, a theoretical model can be developed to measure the impact of the combination of budget, time, regulations, and collaboration constraints on the success of MBKM program implementation.

The implications of these research findings are crucial for the development of educational policies in Indonesia. The government and educational policymakers need to consider the obstacles PTKIN faces in implementing the MBKM program and provide more comprehensive support to overcome them. By doing so, the MBKM program can be implemented more effectively and provide maximum benefits for students. Moreover, this research provides insights into the development of future educational policy implementation strategies tailored to the context and needs of each institution.

The results in Table 4 reveal that the solutions adopted by various campuses to overcome the obstacles in implementing the Merdeka Belajar-Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) curriculum vary significantly, depending on the specific challenges they face. The solutions implemented by each campus reflect a contextual approach tailored to their internal conditions and challenges. This approach aligns with the organizational adaptation theory, which emphasizes the importance of flexibility and strategic adjustments to address specific challenges.

3.3.1 The contextual solutions implemented by the campuses

UIN Fatmawati Sukarno Bengkulu uses a discussion-based leadership approach to find solutions. This approach can be interpreted as a form of participative leadership, where decisions are made collectively by involving various stakeholders. This supports the participative leadership theory, which holds that involving diverse stakeholders in decision-making can enhance commitment and policy implementation. IAIN Kudus opts for structured and intensive coordination. This approach underscores the importance of effective communication and coordination within the organization to

ensure smooth policy implementation. Previous research indicates that good coordination within educational institutions can improve the effectiveness of curriculum implementation and minimize emerging obstacles.

3.3.2 Adjustments and Deliberations as Strategies

UIN Suska Riau decided to adjust courses with other universities and provide free time for lecturers. This strategy demonstrates the application of inter-institutional collaboration theory, which has the potential to enhance the quality of education through resource sharing and best practices (Thomson, 2009; Vangrieken, 2017). This adjustment is also relevant to the concept of curriculum flexibility, which allows for adaptations to local needs (Hlebowitsh, 2018). IAIN Ponorogo adopts a deliberative approach to decision-making, reflecting the principles of deliberative democracy. Deliberation allows for consensus through in-depth discussions that consider various perspectives (Alamyar, 2023; Edgar, 2018; Irshaidat, 2021). This approach has proven effective in research that emphasizes the importance of inclusivity and participation in decision-making within educational institutions (Irshaidat, 2021)

3.3.3 Communication with Related Institutions

UIN Mataram chooses to establish communication with related institutions, highlighting the importance of external networks and partnerships in supporting the implementation of educational policies. This approach is supported by social network theory, which posits that external relationships can provide essential resources, information, and support for the successful implementation of policies (Granovetter, 2018; Rajkumar, 2022). Other research indicates that strong partnerships between educational institutions and external agencies can accelerate curricular adaptation and innovation.

3.3.4 Theoretical and Practical Implications

The findings of this research have important implications both theoretically and practically. Theoretically, these findings support and enrich theories of organizational adaptation, participative leadership, organizational coordination, inter-institutional collaboration, and social networks. This research also offers modifications to educational policy implementation theory by adding local context as an important variable in successful implementation (Spillane, 2002). Practically, the findings can serve as a guide for other educational institutions in overcoming the challenges of implementing the MBKM curriculum through contextual and adaptive solutions. Therefore, this research makes a significant contribution to the academic literature on curriculum implementation in higher education and offers practical insights useful for educational institution administrators facing similar challenges (Karakuş, 2021). In conclusion, an adaptive and contextual approach is key to overcoming implementation obstacles for the MBKM curriculum, involving the participation of various stakeholders and leveraging existing social networks.

The research results show that UIN Fatmawati Sukarno Bengkulu (PTKIN-1) is the most successful institution in implementing the MBKM curriculum, with an implementation rate of 80.83% (Picture 1). This success can be linked to educational policy implementation theory, which emphasizes the importance of visionary leadership, adequate resource allocation, and the commitment of all stakeholders. This effective implementation indicates that PTKIN-1 has successfully applied appropriate strategies to achieve significant results. IAIN Kudus (PTKIN-2), with an implementation

rate of 78.33%, shows a nearly equal achievement to PTKIN-1. Previous research by Jang, (2015) suggests that collaboration between faculty and industry, and student involvement in real-world projects, can enhance the effectiveness of curriculum implementation. This might also be the case at IAIN Kudus, where strong collaboration and partnerships have played a role in the successful implementation of MBKM. Meanwhile, UIN Suska Riau (PTKIN-3) with 77.5%, IAIN Ponorogo (PTKIN-4) with 59.58%, and UIN Mataram (PTKIN-5) with 55% show varying levels of implementation success. According to the theory of educational organization change (Bennett, 2022; Georgiadis, 2021) this success requires stages such as creating urgency, forming a guiding coalition, and communicating the vision for change.

Integrating these research findings into educational theory shows that the success of MBKM implementation depends not only on well-designed policies but also on consistent and collaborative execution. A study by Yang, (2023) emphasizes that successful institutions are those that can adjust their strategies to the local context and the specific needs of students and the community. This may explain why PTKIN-1 and PTKIN-2 are more successful compared to other PTKINs. The implications of these findings suggest the need to modify educational policy implementation theory to be more adaptive to local dynamics. A more flexible and participative policy implementation model might be more effective in the context of higher education in Indonesia. Indicates that a community-based approach and active involvement of all stakeholders can enhance the success of educational policy implementation (Jufriadi & Wahibah, 2025). These findings contribute to understanding the factors influencing the success of MBKM curriculum implementation at PTKIN, reinforce existing theories, and suggest modifications to accommodate better the higher education context in Indonesia.

4. Conclusion

The findings of this study show that the implementation of the MBKM curriculum in Tadris IPS Study Programs at PTKIN is well-prepared at the planning stage, as evidenced by curriculum alignment, SWOT analysis, partnership mapping, and assessment design. However, the implementation stage has not been fully realized due to institutional, regulatory, and resource-related constraints. These include limited funding, inconsistencies in institutional regulations, uneven partner availability, and operational challenges faced by lecturers and partner institutions.

Overall, the gap between planning and execution highlights the need for stronger institutional governance, improved coordination, and more effective management of partnerships. Without resolving these systemic issues, the transformative goals of MBKM, enhancing experiential learning, strengthening student competencies, and aligning academic programs with real-world needs are unlikely to be fully achieved.

These findings indicate that while structural readiness exists at the planning level, institutional and operational challenges continue to limit the actualization of MBKM in practice. The gap between planning and implementation suggests the need for stronger institutional governance, more robust cross-institutional coordination, and improved partnership management. Without resolving these systemic barriers, the transformative goals of MBKM—such as enhancing experiential learning,

strengthening student competencies, and aligning curricula with real-world needs—may not be fully achieved.

To improve MBKM implementation, PTKIN must strengthen inter-institutional coordination, particularly in harmonizing regulations and administrative procedures. Increased funding allocation and more flexible budgeting mechanisms are needed to support mobility programs, internships, and partnership-based learning. Study programs should also diversify their networks by collaborating with local governments, NGOs, schools, industries, and international institutions. Future research may explore longitudinal evaluations of MBKM outcomes, the effectiveness of specific MBKM activity types, and comparative studies across different faculties or institutional clusters to gain broader insights into policy implementation challenges.

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