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The Effectiveness of the 2024 Kampus Merdeka Competition Programme Internships under the Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka Institutional Support System in Enhancing the Work Skills of Students at Palangka Raya University

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyse the effectiveness of the 2024 'Kampus Merdeka' Institutional Support System 'Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka' (PK-KM ISS MBKM) internship programme in enhancing the employability skills of students at the University of Palangka Raya, as well as to identify the factors that support and hinder its implementation. The study employed a descriptive qualitative approach using interviews, observation and documentation. The findings indicate that the internship programme is fairly effective based on indicators such as understanding of the programme, target accuracy, timeliness, achievement of objectives, and tangible changes. The programme has an impact on improving students' hard and soft skills, particularly communication skills, teamwork, discipline, the use of technology, and employability. The constraints identified include mismatches in internship placements, limited monitoring, and variations in the quality of field supervisors.

Keywords: Effectiveness, PK-KM ISS MBKM, internships, work skills

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INTRODUCTION

The Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) programme is a higher education policy aimed at enhancing students' competencies through experience-based learning, one form of which is work placements. Work placement programmes provide students with the opportunity to gain real-world work experience, thereby enabling them to develop the hard and soft skills required in the workplace. As part of the implementation of MBKM, the University of Palangka Raya is organising the 2024 'Kampus Merdeka Institutional Support System Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka Competition Programme' (PK-KM ISS MBKM), involving undergraduate students from various degree programmes. This programme is expected to bridge the gap between academic theory and the needs of the workplace through direct practical experience. However, the implementation of the programme still faces several challenges, such as mismatches in internship placements, limited monitoring, and variations in the quality of supervisors at partner organisations. These circumstances highlight the importance of evaluating the programme's effectiveness to determine the extent to which it is able to enhance students' employability skills. Therefore, this study aims to analyse the effectiveness of the 2024 PK-KM ISS MBKM internship programme in enhancing the employability skills of students at the University of Palangka Raya, as well as to identify the factors that support and hinder its implementation.

Effectiveness is a measure of a programme's success in achieving its set objectives. According to Sutrisno (2010), a programme's effectiveness can be assessed by the extent to which its implementation produces outputs in line with the planned targets. In this study, effectiveness was measured using indicators of understanding of the programme, accuracy of targeting, timeliness, achievement of programme objectives, and tangible changes. These indicators were selected because they provide a comprehensive picture of the programme's success, from the implementation process through to the impact experienced by programme participants.

The Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) programme is a higher education policy aimed at enhancing students' competencies through experience-based learning. One form of its implementation is an internship programme that provides students with the opportunity to gain first-hand work experience. The Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka Institutional Support System Competition Programme (PKKM ISS MBKM) has been developed as a form of institutional support to strengthen the implementation of MBKM through collaboration with various partners, with a view to improving graduates' readiness for the world of work.

Work skills refer to an individual's ability to carry out tasks and responsibilities effectively in accordance with the demands of the job. Robbins (2006) explains that work skills encompass both technical and non-technical abilities that support an individual's productivity. In the context of work placements, the development of work skills encompasses

not only hard skills but also soft skills such as communication, teamwork, discipline, adaptability and problem-solving.

Several previous studies have shown that the MBKM programme and work placement activities have a positive impact on enhancing students' competencies. Maghfiroh's (2023) study indicated that the implementation of the ISS MBKM programme was successful and contributed to improving students' abilities. Fitriani and Sabban's (2023) study found that work placement activities were able to enhance students' practical skills through direct involvement in work-related activities. Furthermore, research by Femica (2023) indicates that the MBKM programme is effective in improving students' employability by enhancing their communication skills, teamwork and self-confidence. Based on this prior research, the present study focuses on analysing the effectiveness of the 2024 ISS MBKM PK-KM internship programme in enhancing the work skills of students at the University of Palangka Raya, using the effectiveness indicators proposed by Sutrisno (2010).

METHODS

This study employs a qualitative approach using a descriptive research design to analyse the effectiveness of the 2024 'Kampus Merdeka' Institutional Support System 'Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka' (PKKM ISS MBKM) internship programme in enhancing the employability skills of students at the University of Palangka Raya. The research focuses on programme effectiveness indicators as defined by Sutrisno (2010), namely understanding of the programme, target accuracy, timeliness, achievement of programme objectives, and tangible changes. Data collection techniques included interviews, observation and documentation. The research informants comprised students participating in the PK-KM ISS MBKM internship programme, field supervisors, programme managers, and internship partners, selected using purposive sampling. The data obtained were then analysed through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. To ensure data validity, the study employed source triangulation and methodological triangulation.

RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

The research findings indicate that the implementation of the PK-KM ISS MBKM work placement programme has, in general, been quite effective in enhancing students' work skills. This is evident from the improvement in students' technical and non-technical skills following their participation in the work placement programme. Students gained hands-on work experience that enabled them to link the theory learnt in the classroom with practical application in the workplace.

Understanding of the Programme

The majority of students have understood the objectives, mechanisms and benefits of the internship programme. Students are able to explain the internship process, their obligations during the programme, and the benefits gained in terms of their readiness for the workplace. This good understanding helps students carry out their tasks in a more focused manner and facilitates their adaptation to the workplace environment. However, there are still some students who do not fully understand the programme because they did not participate fully in the information sessions. These findings indicate that the programme's effectiveness is determined not only by the quality of the orientation provided by the university but also by students' active participation in receiving and understanding programme information. These research findings are consistent with Sutrisno's (2010) theory, which states that an understanding of the programme is a crucial prerequisite for its successful implementation. These findings also support the research by Femica (2024), which found that an understanding of the programme is one of the key factors in the successful implementation of MBKM.

Target Accuracy

The majority of students are placed in organisations that align with their fields of study and academic competencies. This alignment provides students with opportunities to develop relevant work skills, such as administrative skills, communication, teamwork, and the ability to complete tasks within their respective fields. From the perspective of programme administrators, field supervisors and internship partners, student placements are considered to have taken into account the needs of the organisations and the students' educational backgrounds. However, some students still feel a mismatch between their interests, competencies and the location of their internship placement. This situation indicates that, although the programme has generally achieved its objectives, improvements are still needed in the placement mechanism so that all students can derive maximum benefit from the programme. According to the researchers, the alignment between students' competencies and the location of their internship is a strategic factor as it determines students' opportunities to develop skills relevant to the needs of the workplace.

Timeliness

The implementation of the internship programme was assessed as having proceeded in accordance with the schedule set by the University of Palangka Raya and the internship partners. All stages of the programme, from placement and implementation through to the completion of the internship activities, were carried out in line with the agreed timeline. The four-month duration of the internship was deemed sufficient to provide students with meaningful work experience. This adherence to the schedule demonstrates good coordination between the university, the students and the internship partners. In line with Sutrisno's

(2010) theory, programmes carried out according to schedule demonstrate a higher level of effectiveness because the entire process can proceed in a planned and measurable manner. Furthermore, an adequate duration provides students with the opportunity to adapt, understand the work culture and gradually improve their professional skills.

Achievement of Programme Objectives

The research found that the programme's main objective—to enhance students' employability skills—had been achieved. Students demonstrated improvements in both hard skills and soft skills following their participation in the work placement programme. Improvements in hard skills were evident in their ability to operate computers, manage administrative tasks, draft documents, and understand the organisation's operational systems. Meanwhile, improvements in soft skills were reflected in their communication skills, teamwork, discipline, sense of responsibility, and ability to adapt to the work environment. These findings demonstrate that hands-on work experience serves as an effective learning tool in developing students' competencies. These research results support the findings of Fitriani and Sabban (2023), who stated that MBKM internship activities make a significant contribution to improving students' practical skills through direct involvement in work activities. According to the researchers, the programme's success in achieving its objectives demonstrates that the experiential learning model applied in MBKM is capable of bridging the gap between the worlds of education and work.

Tangible Changes

All informants acknowledged the positive changes experienced by students after completing the internship programme. These changes were evident in increased self-confidence, communication skills, teamwork skills, discipline, responsibility, and readiness for the world of work. Students also demonstrated a more mature and professional mindset compared to before undertaking the internship. The experience of interacting directly with the workplace enabled students to better understand the real demands of the world of work. These findings reinforce Sutrisno's (2010) theory, which states that the effectiveness of a programme can be gauged by the tangible changes experienced by the programme's target participants. This study is also consistent with research by Saragih (2025), which found that the MBKM internship programme is effective in enhancing students' employability through improvements in both technical and non-technical competencies.

This study also identified factors that support and hinder the implementation of the programme. Supporting factors include institutional support from the University of Palangka Raya, good cooperation with internship partners, alignment between students' fields of study and internship locations, a conducive working environment, and the provision of guidance

and monitoring by academic supervisors and field supervisors. These factors play a key role in creating an optimal learning experience for students. Meanwhile, the hindering factors include a lack of understanding of the programme amongst some students, differences in students' abilities and readiness to adapt to the working environment, and a mismatch between internship placements and the interests or competencies of some participants. According to the researchers, these obstacles do not detract from the overall success of the programme, but serve as important points to note for improving the programme's implementation in the next period.

The research findings indicate that the PK-KM ISS MBKM internship programme has been effective in enhancing the employability skills of students at the University of Palangka Raya. This effectiveness is reflected in the achievement of most of the effectiveness indicators identified by Sutrisno (2010), particularly in terms of programme understanding, timeliness, the achievement of objectives, and the tangible changes experienced by students. Consequently, the PK-KM ISS MBKM internship programme can be regarded as a relevant strategy for preparing students to be better equipped to meet the demands of the world of work, whilst simultaneously enhancing the quality of higher education graduates.

CONCLUSION

The research findings indicate that the PK-KM ISS MBKM Internship Programme at the University of Palangka Raya has been quite effective in enhancing students' employability skills. Based on the indicators of effectiveness outlined by Sutrisno (2010), students generally demonstrated a good understanding of the programme; internship placements were sufficiently aligned with participants' competencies; the programme was delivered on schedule; the programme's objective of enhancing employability skills was achieved; and there were tangible changes in the students following their participation in the internship. These changes are evident in improvements in both technical and non-technical abilities, such as administrative skills, communication, teamwork, discipline, responsibility, and readiness for the world of work. Thus, this study answers the research question that the PK-KM ISS MBKM internship programme is sufficiently effective in supporting the enhancement of work skills among students at the University of Palangka Raya.

This study also found that the programme's effectiveness was supported by collaboration between the university and internship partners, a conducive working environment, the suitability of the internship fields, and the provision of guidance and monitoring throughout the programme. The constraints identified included a lack of understanding of the programme amongst some students, differences in students' abilities and adaptability, and unsuitable internship placements for some participants. In practical terms, the results of this study highlight the importance of strengthening outreach, support,

and internship placement mechanisms so that the benefits of the programme can be realised more effectively. This study has limitations due to the non-continuation of the programme, which is due to end in 2024.

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