
Communication patterns in the implementation of the *Kampus Mengajar* program under the *MBKM* policy

ELIN ROSALIN^{1*}, TAUFANI C. KURNIATUN², CICIH SUTARSIH³, CEPI TRIATNA⁴, NANI HARTINI⁵, AND CUCUN SUNAENSIH⁶

Abstract

This research attempted to analyze the implementation of the *Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM)* policy of the *Kampus Mengajar* program and its improvement strategies based on the Edward III approach. This qualitative research was conducted through an exploratory approach. The authors chose the Faculty of Education, Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, as the object of this research, with students, partner institutions, and university *MBKM* managers as the unit of analysis. Data analysis was carried out using NVivo 12 software based on the variables and indicators that had been prepared. The results indicate that communication has a significant role in program implementation. Communication patterns in the policy context must meet the aspects of information transmission, clarity of information, and consistency of information, where the policies communicated implications must be precise, accurate, and consistent so that decision-makers and implementers are more consistent in implementing.

Keywords

Edward III's approach,
information clarity,
information consistency,
information transmission

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¹ Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, Bandung, Indonesia, Corresponding author: rosalin.elin01@upi.edu

² Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, Bandung, Indonesia

³ Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, Bandung, Indonesia

⁴ Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, Bandung, Indonesia

⁵ Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, Bandung, Indonesia

⁶ Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, Bandung, Indonesia

Introduction

Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) is a policy introduced by the Ministry of Education and Culture through Ministerial Regulation No. 3 of 2020. The *MBKM* program grants students the right to undertake up to three semesters of learning activities outside their study program (one semester in a different program within the same university and two semesters outside the university). Learning activities outside the university include industrial internships/work placements, community service in villages, teaching in educational institutions, student exchanges, research, entrepreneurship, independent studies or projects, and participation in humanitarian programs (Directorate General of Higher Education, 2020). Through this policy, universities are expected to produce graduates responsive to contemporary developments, advancements in science and technology, the demands of the business and industrial sectors, and the dynamics of society (Directorate General of Higher Education, 2020).

Kampus Mengajar (Teaching Assistance in Educational Institutions) is one of the activity programs under the *MBKM* initiative. This program aims to provide opportunities for students interested in the field of education to learn, develop themselves, and deepen their knowledge by teaching or serving as educators outside the traditional classroom setting. In addition, the *Kampus Mengajar* program seeks to help improve the equitable distribution of education quality, enhance the relevance of primary and secondary education to higher education, and align with current societal developments. In practice, implementing this policy faces various challenges experienced by the academic community in Indonesian higher education institutions, including Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia (UPI). Only a few universities have awarded credits based on *MBKM* policy guidelines regarding curriculum design and the credit transfer mechanism. Many institutions face difficulties in determining and integrating appropriate *MBKM* learning outcomes into the existing curriculum. Regarding the availability of academic supervisors, only a small number of students have received any form of guidance from their universities when participating in *MBKM* activities. Meanwhile, in program availability, many universities have tried to prepare collaborative programs with external partners as a key step in implementing the policy. Finally, funding for *MBKM* programs is considered a significant issue for public and private universities, with most students viewing financial concerns as a significant barrier to participation.

Numerous scholarly studies on the *MBKM* policy have been conducted to strengthen the above analysis. Several of these studies indicate that factors such as funding, adjustments to academic information systems, partner engagement, and a lack of adequate information may, to varying degrees, act as barriers to the successful implementation of the *MBKM* programs (Mulyana et al., 2022). Fuadi and Aswita (2021) identified similar obstacles in the *MBKM* program, including (1) the adaptation process of the Indonesian National Qualification Framework (KKNI)-based curriculum to the *MBKM* program, (2) the limited availability of partner institutions and (3) insufficient collaboration among private universities (PTS). These challenges raise concerns that, over time, they may negatively impact student satisfaction. Low levels of student satisfaction may reduce students' interest in and engagement with *MBKM* programs. Fundamentally, the *MBKM* program is designed to foster critical thinking, independence, and creativity among students. The development of these competencies largely

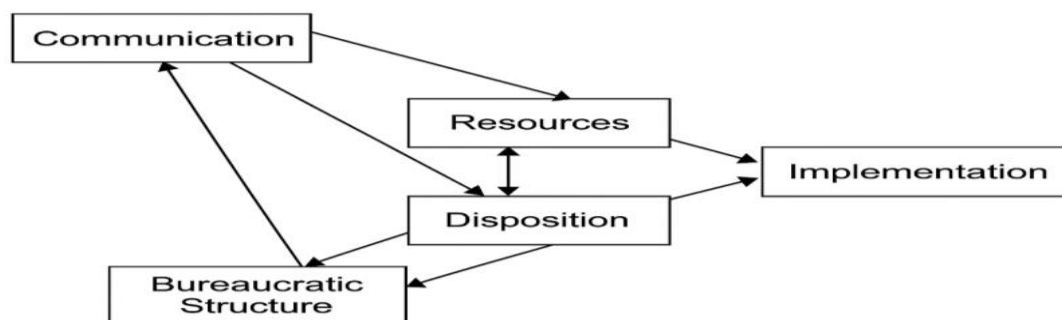
depends on the effectiveness of the policy in stimulating student interest, which ultimately influences their level of participation (Renninger & Hidi, 2002; Rochana et al., 2021).

This research aims to evaluate the implementation of the *MBKM* program in the study programs within the Faculty of Education (FIP) at Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia (UPI) and to provide strategic recommendations based on a SWOT analysis to enhance the implementation of the *MBKM* program in these study programs. The research adopts Charles O. Jones's implementation framework, which includes four key variables: communication, resources, disposition, and bureaucracy. These variables are used to examine the implementation of the *MBKM* policy across six study programs within the Faculty of Education. The communication dimension refers to conveying policy information from policymakers to policy recipients. Effective policy communication must be accurate, clear, and consistent to ensure that decision-makers and implementers align with the intended goals. Accordingly, one of the research questions posed in this research is, "How is the communication aspect of the *MBKM* program evaluated in the study programs within the Faculty of Education at UPI?" The Edwards III approach was selected based on its applicability for analyzing policy implementation by a wide range of actors, including those who are not policymakers. The concepts it offers are more in-depth and operational, even though the proposed variables are relatively simple, often more so than those presented by earlier scholars (Anggara et al., 2024). This makes the approach suitable for researchers who are not directly involved in policymaking. Moreover, this framework is commonly used in policy research and is considered a relevant indicator for assessing the implementation of education policies.

Literature Review

George Charles Edwards III stated that the implementation process is a phase within the policy cycle between policy formulation and the policy's resulting outcomes or consequences (i.e., output and outcome). This phase may include enacting laws, issuing executive orders, delivering judicial decisions, or announcing regulatory rules. In the model he developed, Edwards identified four key factors that may pose challenges during policy implementation: factors that can influence the success or failure of implementation. These factors are illustrated in the following diagram.

Figure 1. Model of the relationship between variables in Edward III policy implementation (Public Policy (2014))



The four variables, communication, resources, disposition (or the implementers' attitude), and bureaucratic structure, are interrelated and mutually influence one another in determining the success or failure of policy implementation. In detail, Edwards III's model of the relationships among these policy implementation variables can be described as follows:

Communication refers to transferring information from one place to another, involving the transmission of messages, ideas, emotions, skills, and other elements using symbols such as words, figures, and graphics. It also requires spoken or written persuasion (Mufid, 2009). Mufid further explains that communication is the process or act of delivering a message from a sender to a receiver through a medium (channel), often subject to interference or "noise." In this definition, communication must be intentional and should bring about change.

Caimey and Kwiatkowski (2017) asserted that policy communication must be accurate, clear, and consistent. Effective transmission of information is necessary to ensure that decision-makers and implementers are aligned and consistent in executing policies intended for public application. Furthermore, he identifies three key indicators of successful communication in public policy.

Transmission

Effective communication delivery is essential for successful policy implementation. A policy intended for implementation must be communicated clearly to the officials responsible for executing it. However, miscommunication often occurs during the transmission process. This is typically due to the communication passing through multiple layers of bureaucracy, which can distort the policy's original intent.

Another common issue in transmission arises when implementers disagree with the policy (disposition), leading them to distort the policy directives or shut down necessary communication channels. Transmission problems may also occur when the policy must pass through a complex bureaucratic structure or when adequate communication channels and resources are lacking.

Information clarity

The communication received by policy implementers (street-level bureaucrats) must be clear and unambiguous. Clarity regarding the objectives and the methods to be used in a policy is essential to ensure its implementation as intended. However, this clarity is not always achieved. Various factors can lead to policies being formulated unclearly, including

- The complexity of policymaking involves interactions between the executive and legislative branches, often delegating implementation to lower-level officials.
- Opposition from the public or interest groups against the policy.
- There is a need to compromise between competing objectives during the policy formulation.
- Introducing new policies whose formulators may lack sufficient mastery of the issues involved.
- Such ambiguity is often found in policies related to legal regulations.

Information consistency

Effective implementation requires not only clear communication but also consistency. Even a well-transmitted message can confuse implementers if the directives are inconsistent. Several factors can lead to inconsistency in policy direction, including

- The complexity of the policy is to be implemented. When a policy is transmitted, its substance must be understood by all parties involved. However, misunderstandings often arise due to the policy's complexity and inconsistent communication.
- Difficulties encountered when initiating the implementation of a new policy. New policies must be consistently socialized and promoted so everyone involved or affected by the implementation understands them. Policymakers must develop appropriate strategies to ensure effective transmission of information.
- The policy may have multiple or conflicting objectives and targets. Policies typically consider various sectors that will be impacted during implementation. Conflicts often emerge because each has its own goals, which can lead to both support and opposition.
- The influence of various interest groups related to the issues addressed by the policy. Before a policy is enacted, it usually undergoes a campaign to garner support. While this reflects democratic decision-making, the influence of interest groups can affect the consistency of the policy, including its goals and overall direction.

Methodology

This descriptive qualitative research was conducted at the Faculty of Education, Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia (FIP UPI). The research subjects include students from six study programs within FIP, partner institutions involved in the *Kampus Mengajar* program, and MBKM administrators at the faculty and university levels as units of analysis.

The data required for this research consisted of both primary and secondary data. Primary data was obtained through interviews with stakeholders implementing the MBKM program. Secondary data include documents related to educational resources from the Ministry of Education of Indonesia, Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, and MBKM partner institutions.

The data analysis technique employed was the interactive model of Miles and Huberman, as described by Sutisna (2021), which involves data reduction, data display, and conclusion. To facilitate data processing and analysis, the researcher utilized software tools. Such software supports data entry, coding, and report generation. Specifically, QSR NVivo was selected based on recommendations by Jorgensen and Jensen (Jorgensen, 2016).

Findings

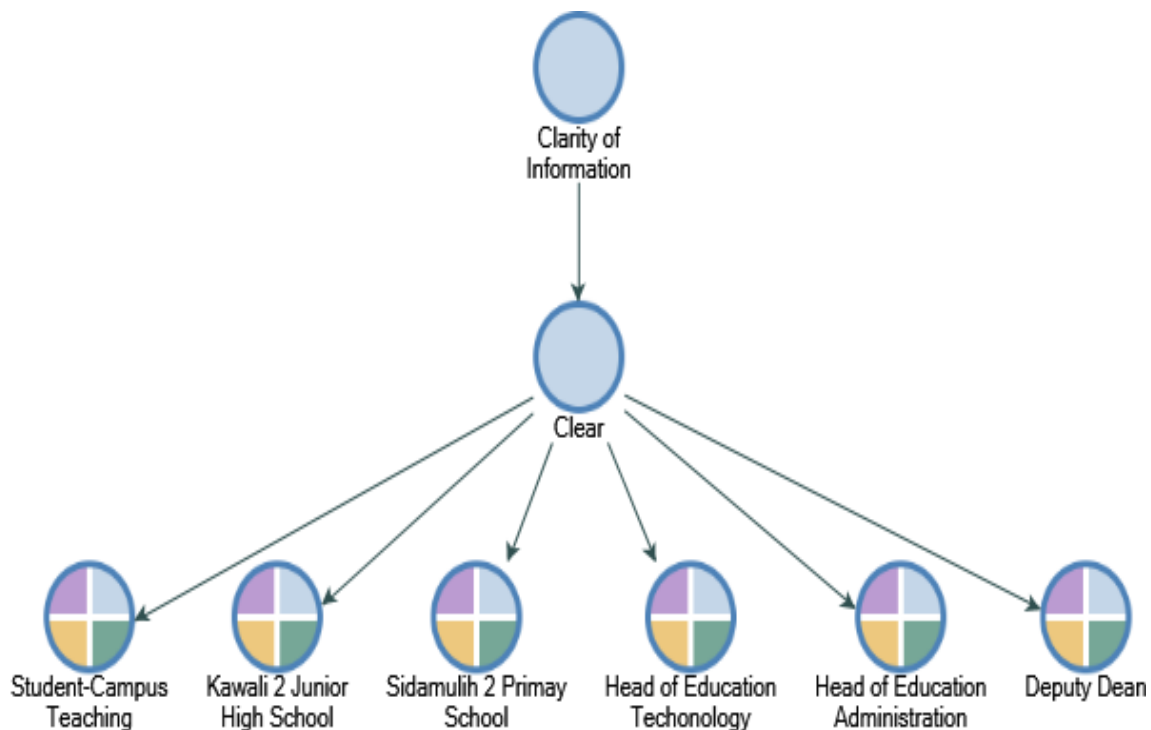
Using the Edwards III approach and data processed with NVivo 12 software, a project map was developed to illustrate and map the analysis results of the communication patterns in implementing the *Kampus Mengajar* program. According to Edwards III, in the policy

communication process, in addition to clear communication and effective transmission, policy implementation must be consistent and not subject to frequent changes.

Information transmission program

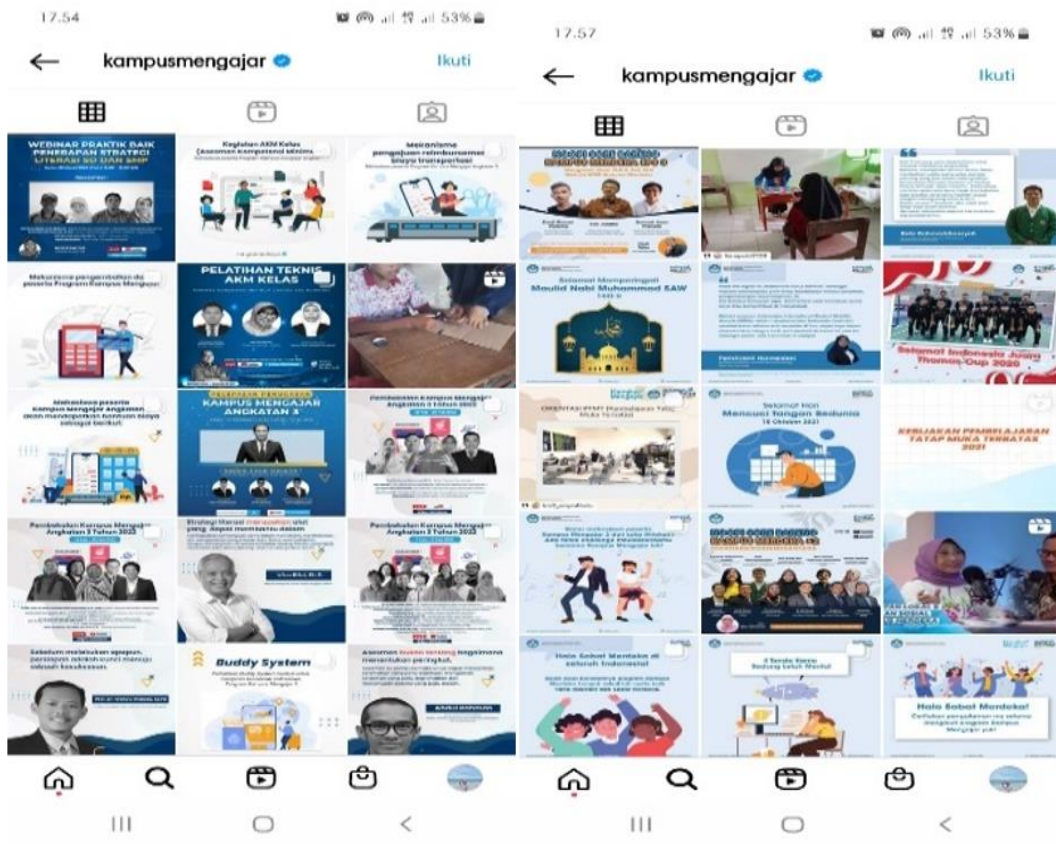
The government communicates the *Kampus Mengajar* program to students, schools, and universities through various media. As illustrated in the figure, there are differences in the communication media used. The university, represented by the head of the study program, partners, and students, tends to receive information through contemporary digital platforms such as YouTube, WhatsApp groups, Instagram, and official websites.

Figure 2. *Program transmission*



Students initially receive information from social media accounts (Instagram), Telegram, and university channels and then follow the process until they are declared to graduate from the program. Instagram is the most helpful social media platform because it is publicly accessible and actively used for program communication. The program administrators regularly share updates through posts and Instagram stories; however, they are less active in responding to questions and issues raised by participants or prospective participants (students) of the *Kampus Mengajar* program. Subsequent program communication is conducted through regular briefings, a program guidebook, and Telegram groups (W.PKM).

Figure 3. *Campus teaching social media*



Source: O.MSKM1, O.MSKM2

The *Kampus Mengajar* program is communicated to universities structurally and directly by the Ministry of Education and Culture (Kemdikbud), with formal endorsement through assignment letters from the rector. These letters are communicated to the vice-rector for academic affairs (Warek 1), vice-dean for academic affairs (Wadek 1), program coordinators, and the *MBKM* adhoc team, which includes five task forces, one of which is *Kampus Mengajar*, and eventually reaches the students. Subsequently, a process of coordination is conducted between lecturers and students to adjust academic schedules and convert credit units before the program is implemented in the field (W.PK).

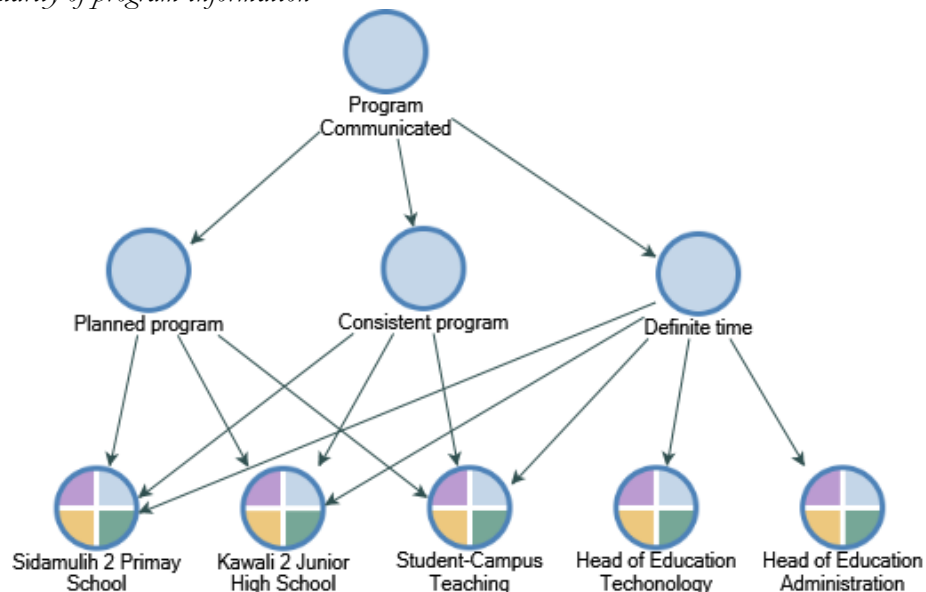
In contrast, schools represented by principals tend to receive information through more traditional channels, such as official letters and direct meetings, either virtually or in person. For the second cohort of *Kampus Mengajar*, the government, through the local Education Office, communicated policies during the student deployment meeting and provided periodic updates via field supervisors (*Dosen Pendamping Lapangan or DPL*) (W.KS1). Meanwhile, for the third cohort, in addition to giving orientation during deployment with the local Education

Office and maintaining communication with DPL, the government regularly holds online meetings via Zoom to support program implementation by students at schools (W.KS2). School communities receive information about *Kampus Mengajar* primarily from the principal and the participating students.

Clarity of program information

Regarding the clarity of information obtained from the *MBKM* program, various responses were collected from the informants. Generally, the informants clearly understood the *MBKM* program, particularly the *Kampus Mengajar* initiative. Both schools and students perceived the *MBKM* program as consistent, as expressed by one student: “Through the aforementioned media, information related to the types of programs, a general overview, stages, and timelines has been sufficiently clear, enabling students to choose the programs they are interested in.”

Figure 4. *Clarity of program information*



At the beginning of the program, students received mass briefings (involving thousands of participants) via Zoom and live YouTube sessions covering extensive material. However, students found this approach less effective, as their engagement during these sessions was difficult to monitor, leading to information gaps (W.PKM). Some program details were only communicated later in the field, resulting in ad hoc webinars via Zoom and live YouTube, for example, webinars on AKM (*Asesmen Kompetensi Minimum*) and numeracy literacy. The AKM assessments were conducted on a per-class basis mid-semester. Additionally, communication during program implementation was facilitated through Telegram to resolve various technical issues. Students were also provided with a program guidebook as a reference for implementation. Ultimately, students could clearly and comprehensively understand the

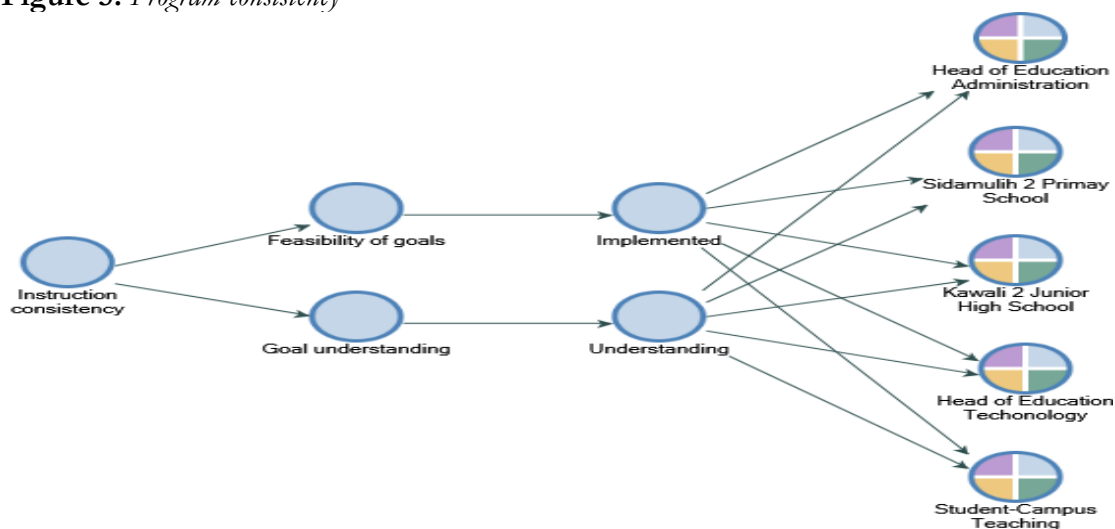
program material (W.PKM) through explanations delivered via multiple media channels, initial briefings, and ongoing guidance from field supervisors (DPL).

Meanwhile, the head of the study program noted that the *MBKM* program underwent several modifications to align with existing policies. Nonetheless, the eight *MBKM* programs introduced by the Ministry of Education and Culture remained intact, with the *Kampus Mengajar* program perceived as consistent and according to initial plans. The program's schedule was also clear, preventing confusion among students during its implementation. However, it was regrettable that the university was not involved in the planning or field implementation of the *Kampus Mengajar* program (W.WD, W.KP1, W.KP2). For example, the government directly managed the briefings, and the university's role during field implementation was limited to credit conversion upon receiving reports. This means the government controlled the entire process, leaving the university unaware of the program's effectiveness in the field despite the program's direct implications for students' credit conversion. Since this policy is a government mandate, the university conducted discussions to adjust the *MBKM* curriculum (including *Kampus Mengajar*) to the university's curriculum. This was aimed at determining and agreeing upon which courses could or could not be converted to ensure the curriculum of each study program aligned with *MBKM*. This adjustment was necessary because many essential courses were deemed unsuitable for conversion, even if equivalent to 20 credit units, due to graduation standards within specific study programs.

Consistency of program information

Understanding the objectives and the feasibility of the *Kampus Mengajar* program can be well comprehended and implemented, especially by students and school personnel. This is in line with the statement from the school principal (KS), who confirmed that there is mutual understanding between the students and the field supervisor (DPL) built through socialization that has been carried out. On the other hand, the head of the study program also reinforced the statement by confirming that the study program head understands the objectives of the *Kampus Mengajar* program.

Figure 5. *Program consistency*



The role of students in the *Kampus Mengajar* program includes assisting teachers in conducting face-to-face and distance learning, especially in literacy and numeracy; assisting in technological adaptation in the learning process (both online and offline); supporting the principal in school administration and management; socializing educational products from the Ministry of Education (emergency curriculum, learning modules, *AKSI*, *Rumah Belajar* Portal, etc.); socializing and improving promotional materials for the *Profil Pelajar Pancasila*; and acting as education ambassadors for behavioral change during the pandemic.

At the beginning of the *Kampus Mengajar* program implementation in schools, students experienced several obstacles, including 1) miscommunication at the initial information stage with some teachers, where the teachers defined *Kampus Mengajar* as students replacing teaching in the classroom; 2) the *Kampus Mengajar* implementation involved many programs, and students had to perform six roles as outlined in the guidelines, though the level of implementation varied; 3) some *Kampus Mengajar* programs for the third batch were informed later when students were already in the field; 4) communication during the orientation with a large amount of material via Zoom was less effective because many students who passed were not monitored even though there was a YouTube live stream (W.PKM).

Therefore, communication received by policy implementers (street-level bureaucrats) must be clear and unambiguous. Clarity of purpose and the methods used in a policy are essential to ensure the policy can be implemented as decided (Agustinus, 2006). The reason why some *Kampus Mengajar* programs, such as the socialization and improvement of promotional materials for the *Profil Pelajar Pancasila*, were implemented less was that the new policy implementers did not fully master the issues, and the materials were still unclear (W.PKM).

However, during program implementation, students were accompanied by mentors in Telegram and WhatsApp groups to discuss and assist in resolving problems during implementation, along with the requirement to make daily logbooks and weekly reports to be uploaded to the *MBKM (Kampus Mengajar)* website. In addition, the LPMP conducted direct monitoring in the field with supervisors from the Education Office at the district level (W.PKM). Thus, the policy directives could be well implemented with consistent planning, monitoring, and evaluation, even though there were program additions during the implementation.

Discussion

This research shows that effective communication patterns are central to successfully implementing the *Kampus Mengajar* program as part of the *Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM)* policy. Communication elements, including clarity of information, policy consistency, and adequate delivery channels, were proven to determine educational institutions' level of engagement and readiness in running this program. These findings align with Supriyoko et al. (2022), who stated that although the general response to the *MBKM* program is positive, a comprehensive evaluation of the effectiveness of information delivery and institutional readiness is still needed.

Another aspect emerging from the research is structural constraints, such as limited academic advisors, curriculum mismatches, and funding issues. This phenomenon is supported by Gunarso et al. (2023), who emphasized that factors such as social influence, government decisions, and availability of institutional support are key determinants of student participation in the *MBKM* program. However, financial incentives surprisingly do not significantly affect student participation.

The findings also confirm the importance of curriculum integration and strengthening stakeholders' collaboration as key elements of success. This is consistent with the report by Muslihati et al. (2023), which highlights that industrial internships in *MBKM* are crucial in bridging the gap between academic knowledge and industry needs. Internships enrich students' learning experiences and enhance curriculum relevance to the workforce.

Furthermore, Nugroho et al. (2024) revealed that integrated soft skills training and work experience within the *MBKM* program can increase the job readiness of higher education graduates in Indonesia. When implemented strategically, this underscores that programs like *Kampus Mengajar* can be a driving force in enhancing graduate competencies and competitiveness.

From the perspective of cross-cultural learning and character development, this research aligns with Dewi et al. (2023), who stated that *MBKM*, through student exchange programs, successfully strengthens students' cultural literacy and citizenship, especially for future teachers. This cross-identity interaction experience broadens student perspectives and fosters values of tolerance, solidarity, and openness toward diversity—critical dimensions in building a global learning generation.

Meanwhile, regarding student contributions to society, this research also finds that involvement in *MBKM* activities, especially the *Kampus Mengajar* program, opens meaningful participation between students and local communities (Isa et al., 2024). Through direct interaction with village communities, students not only learn academically but also help improve local quality of life through educational, social, and cultural activities.

From a managerial strategy perspective, the research indicates that the success of the *MBKM* program at the faculty level heavily depends on bureaucratic readiness and resource support. This is supported by Muflihah and Warsito (2024), who stressed the importance of mastery of information technology and strategic digital education management to optimize the *MBKM* program in the context of Industry 4.0.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the findings of this research, communication patterns play a crucial role in supporting the successful implementation of the *Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM)* policy, particularly in the *Kampus Mengajar* program. Effective communication involves targeted information transmission, clarity of message content, and consistency between the information provided by policymakers and the implementers in the field. These three aspects interact with resource availability, implementers' disposition, and a supportive bureaucratic structure. The findings indicate that failure in any one aspect of communication can trigger obstacles in the overall program implementation. Therefore, optimal *MBKM* implementation highly depends on how much information is delivered consistently and is well understood by

all parties involved, ranging from the ministry, universities, and lecturers to students. Additionally, coordination among structural and cultural elements within organizations must be strengthened so that nationally designed policies can be implemented effectively and directly impact improving the quality of higher education in Indonesia.

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Biographical Notes

ELIN ROSALIN is working at Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, Bandung, Indonesia.

TAUFANI C. KURNIATUN is working at Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, Bandung, Indonesia.

CICIH SUTARSIH is working at Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, Bandung, Indonesia.

CEPI TRIATNA is working at Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, Bandung, Indonesia.

NANI HARTINI is working at Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, Bandung, Indonesia.

CUCUN SUNAENSIH is working at Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, Bandung, Indonesia.