

Translating the MBKM Policy into Outcome-Based Curriculum Reform in English Teacher Education

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ABSTRACT:

Introduced in 2020 by the Indonesian Ministry of Education, Culture, and Technology, the Merdeka Belajar-Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) policy was established as a national educational initiative to promote flexible learning and experiential learning. However, many higher education institutions face challenges in translating this policy into curriculum structure aligned with Outcome-Based Education (OBE) principles. This study aims to develop and examine an MBKM-oriented curriculum model in English teacher education through a collaborative curriculum development approach. The study employed a curriculum development research design adapted from the Hannafin and Peck Model, consisting of needs analysis, design, and implementation stages. Data were collected through focus group discussion, interview, documentation, and questionnaire involving lecturers, students, and external partners. Descriptive techniques were applied to examine the quantitative data, whereas the qualitative findings were interpreted through thematic analysis. The findings indicate that effective curriculum reform requires systematic alignment among stakeholder needs, outcome-based curriculum structure, and experiential learning integration. The implementation of MBKM programs such as teaching assistance, internships, and community engagement contributed significantly to students' professional competence development. However, institutional challenges including administrative readiness and partnership limitations remain significant concerns. This research provides a contribution to curriculum reform literature by proposing an integrative model for translating higher education policy into curriculum practice within teacher education contexts.

Keywords: Curriculum Reform, MBKM policy, Experiential learning, Outcome-Based Education, Teacher education.

1. Introduction

Higher education institutions worldwide are experiencing major changes driven as a result of changing workforce requirements, the acceleration of globalization, and the rapid

development of technology [1]. These changes are reshaping educational models, institutional strategies, and broader role of higher education in society. Recent studies have also emphasized the importance of integrating digital literacy into higher education curricula to enhance student

engagement and support future-oriented learning environment [2].

Universities are increasingly expected to prepare graduates who possess not only strong expertise in their respective disciplines but also the ability to responding to complex and uncertain environments through transferable competencies such as collaboration, creativity, digital literacy, adaptability, and critical thinking [3], [4]. These demands have driven a shift from traditional content-based curricula toward more flexible and competency-oriented approaches, particularly through the adoption of OBE and Experiential Learning (EL) [5].

Within the OBE approach, instructional methods, assessment systems, and intended learning outcomes are integrated in a coherent manner so that learners can develop specific competencies that correspond to the needs of professional practice [6]. In teacher education, OBE serves an essential function in equipping pre-service teachers to strengthen personal, social, professional, and pedagogical capabilities required in real teaching environments. In parallel, EL enables students to connect theoretical knowledge with authentic professional practice through real-world engagement [7], [8]. The integration of these approaches has become a key strategy for enhancing graduate employability and professional readiness.

In the Indonesian context, these global trends are reflected in the implementation of the Merdeka Belajar-Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) policy. This policy promotes flexible learning pathways by allowing students to participate in educational activities beyond the scope of their respective study programs for up to three semesters. Universities are therefore required to redesign their curricula to accommodate experiential learning and ensure alignment with industry and societal needs. However, translating this policy into curriculum practice remains a significant challenge for many higher education institutions.

The main problem lies in the inconsistency between current existing curriculum structures and the requirements of MBKM policy. Many study programs still operate within rigid, content-based curriculum structures characterized by high credit loads and limited flexibility, which restrict students' participation in experiential learning activities. In the case of the English Education Study Program, the existing curriculum had not fully integrated experiential learning components

or aligned with outcome-based education principles, resulting in limited opportunities for students to develop professional competencies.

Although previous studies have examined the implementation of MBKM, most have focused on policy execution and student participation rather than curriculum design processes [9], [10], [11], [12]. There is still limited empirical research that systematically explains how MBKM can be translated into an outcome-based curriculum framework, particularly in teacher education. Current literature highlights a gap in the systematic application of MBKM principles within teacher education, focusing primarily on general curriculum restructuring rather than specialized pedagogical needs. This gap highlights the urgent need for a structured and theoretically grounded framework capable of systematically translating MBKM policy into curriculum practice.

Therefore, this study proposes a collaborative curriculum development model that integrates the MBKM framework into an outcome-based English teacher education curriculum. The distinctive contribution of this research is reflected in its emphasis on translating national higher education policy into curriculum practice through the integration of OBE, experiential learning, and stakeholder collaboration. This study aims to provide both theoretical and practical contributions to curriculum reform in teacher education.

2. Method

This study employed a curriculum development research design adapted from the Hannafin and Peck Model, comprising the phases of implementation, design, and needs analysis [13], [14]. Each stage involves evaluation and refinement to ensure the effectiveness and relevance of the curriculum that was developed. This model was selected because it provides a systematic and iterative framework for developing and evaluating educational products.

The research was carried out through three consecutive phases. The first stage, needs analysis, aimed to identify gaps in the existing curriculum and explore stakeholder expectations. The study gathered information by analyzing documents, conducting semi-structured interviews, and organizing focus group discussions (FGDs) to examine issues related to curriculum relevance, flexibility, and alignment with the MBKM policy.

The second stage, curriculum design, involved developing an outcome-based curriculum structure aligned with MBKM principles. This process includes defining graduate profiles, formulating learning outcomes, mapping courses, and aligning curriculum components with experiential learning activities. Expert review and curriculum alignment were conducted to ensure the validity and relevance of the curriculum design.

The third stage, implementation, involved piloting the redesigned curriculum through MBKM programs including **community service, student exchange programs, internships, and teaching assistance activities**. This stage also included evaluation and refinement based on stakeholder feedback to improve curriculum effectiveness.

The participants of this study included the Head of the English Education Study Program, the Dean of the Faculty of Education and Teacher Training, lecturers, students, and external partners involved in MBKM implementation. These participants were selected to represent both academic and professional perspectives in curriculum development. Data were collected using multiple techniques, including FGDs, interviews, document analysis, and questionnaires. These methods were used to gather comprehensive data on curriculum needs, design processes, and implementation outcomes. Data triangulation was conducted by comparing findings from interviews, FGDs, document analysis, and questionnaires to strengthen the credibility and validity of the research findings.

Thematic analysis was employed to examine qualitative information gathered from documents, workshops, and interviews in order to uncover recurring themes and patterns. Quantitative data from questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive statistics to support and triangulate qualitative findings.

Figure 1 illustrates the research procedure adapted from the Hannafin and Peck Model, which is structured around three primary phases, namely implementation, curriculum design, and needs analysis. Each stage involves an evaluation process that allows for continuous refinement through feedback loops.

Curriculum Development Model (MBKM Framework)



Figure 1: Research Procedure

In the implementation of MBKM, this study adopted a structured form model within the English Education Study Program. In this model, MBKM activities are aligned with and converted into equivalent credits of existing courses rather than replacing the curriculum entirely. Each activity is systematically mapped to course learning outcomes, ensuring that experiential learning gained through programs such as internships, teaching assistance, and student exchange is formally recognized within

the academic structure. This approach maintains curriculum stability while enabling the integration of flexible learning experiences, reflecting a balance between curriculum innovation and institutional standardization in higher education.

3. Results and Discussion

This section presents and discusses the findings concerning the integration of the MBKM framework into an outcome-based English teacher education curriculum. The findings were derived from questionnaires, interviews, FGDs, and document analysis involving academic leaders, lecturers, students, and external partners. Quantitative findings were examined using descriptive analysis, whereas the qualitative data were interpreted through thematic analysis involving the processes of coding, categorizing, and identifying emerging themes.

The analysis generated several major themes related to MBKM-based curriculum reform, including curriculum flexibility, experiential learning integration, curriculum alignment, institutional readiness, and partnership sustainability. These findings indicate that translating MBKM policy into curriculum practice involves not only pedagogical transformation but also organizational and systemic adaptation within higher education institutions. Table 1 presents the thematic analysis generated from the qualitative data.

Table 1. Thematic Analysis of MBKM-Based Curriculum Reform

Theme	Sub-Theme	Representative Quotes	Interpretation
Curriculum Flexibility	Rigid curriculum structure; limited learning mobility	"The current curriculum does not provide enough flexibility for students to gain learning experiences outside the classroom." (Lecturer)	Stakeholders perceived the previous curriculum as overly content-oriented and insufficiently adaptive to MBKM implementation.
Experiential learning	Authentic learning; professional readiness	"Teaching assistance helped me understand actual classroom dynamics and improve my confidence in teaching." (Student)	Experiential learning contributed to the development of pedagogical competence and workplace readiness.
Curriculum Alignment	Credit Conversion; outcome equivalency	"Aligning MBKM activities with existing courses makes the conversion process more manageable." (Program Coordinator)	The structured model facilitated systematic integration between MBKM activities and course learning outcomes.
Institutional Challenges	Administrative readiness; lack of coordination	"The academic system has not fully accommodated MBKM activities, especially in the credit conversion process." (Administrative Staff)	Institutional infrastructure and governance system were not fully prepared to support curriculum transformation.
Partnership and Collaboration	External collaboration; sustainability	"Partnership development remains challenging, particularly with industry and international institutions." (Lecturer)	Sustainable collaboration with external stakeholders is essential for effective MBKM implementation.

Table 1 presents the thematic analysis derived from interviews, FGDs, and document analysis. The findings reveal five major themes related to MBKM-based curriculum reform: curriculum flexibility, experiential learning, curriculum alignment, institutional challenges, and partnership sustainability. These themes demonstrate that the implementation of MBKM involves not only pedagogical transformation but also organizational, administrative, and collaborative dimensions. The thematic findings further strengthen the quantitative results by providing contextual and experiential evidence regarding the challenges and opportunities associated with curriculum reform in teacher education.

Table 2 Stakeholder Perceptions of MBKM-Based Curriculum Reform

No	Indicator	Percentage (%)
1	Need for curriculum flexibility	88%
2	Importance of experiential learning integration	91%
3	Relevance of MBKM to employability	86%
4	Importance of curriculum alignment with OBE	89%
5	Institutional readiness of MBKM implementation	72%

It can be seen in Table 2 that quantitative findings obtained from questionnaires showed that 88% of participants perceived the need for greater curriculum flexibility, 91% emphasized the

importance of integrating experiential learning into the curriculum, and 89% agreed that MBKM activities contributed significantly to the development of professional competencies and employability skills. However, only 72% of participants indicated that the institution was adequately prepared to implement MBKM effectively, particularly in terms of administrative systems, partnership management, and credit conversion mechanisms. These quantitative findings demonstrate that although stakeholders strongly support MBKM-oriented curriculum transformation, institutional readiness remains a significant challenge for sustainable implementation.

3.1. Curriculum Misalignment and the Need for Outcome-Oriented Reform

The findings indicate a fundamental misalignment between the existing curriculum structure and the requirements of the MBKM policy. The previous curriculum was predominantly content-oriented, highly centralized, and characterized by a large credit load that can limit students' opportunities to participate in experiential learning activities. Questionnaire results showed that 88% of participants perceived the curriculum as insufficiently flexible to accommodate learning experiences outside the classroom. Qualitative findings from FGDs revealed that the existing curriculum was perceived as rigid and overloaded. One participant said, "The curriculum does not give students enough flexibility to explore learning outside the classroom especially in real teaching environments." Similarly, another participant explained, "students are often more concerned with completing academic requirements than developing professional competencies relevant to the workplace."

These findings suggest that the curriculum structure prioritized content coverage rather than competency achievement. From an outcome-based education perspective, this condition contradicts the principle that curriculum design should be driven by clearly defined learning outcomes that guide teaching, learning, and assessment [15]. The absence of such alignment in the existing curriculum suggests a structural limitation in preparing students for professional practice. These findings confirm prior research highlighting the mismatch between university curricula and the needs of the labor market [16], while also extending the discussion by

demonstrating how this gap manifests in the context of MBKM implementation. Therefore, curriculum reform is not merely a policy response but a structural necessity.

Structured MBKM model as a Mechanism for Policy Translation

This study proposes a structured form model as a mechanism for translating MBKM policy into curriculum practice within English teacher education. Unlike the free-form approach, this model aligns MBKM activities with existing courses through equivalency mapping and credit conversion processes. In this model, experiential learning activities including community service, student exchange programs, internships, and teaching assistance activities are formally integrated into the curriculum as credit-bearing learning components rather than treated as supplementary academic activities. The findings indicate that the structured integration model provides greater curriculum coherence, administrative feasibility, and academic accountability. Through systematic alignment between Program Learning Outcome (PLOs), Course Learning Outcome (CLOs), and MBKM activities, the model ensures that students' experiential learning contributes directly to the achievement of graduate competencies. One program coordinator explained, "Aligning MBKM activities with existing courses makes the credit conversion process more manageable while maintaining curriculum consistency and academic standards."

This model operationalizes the principle of constructive alignment [17] by ensuring that learning outcomes, learning activities, and assessment are coherently integrated. Furthermore, this study extends previous research by demonstrating that policy implementation in higher education requires not only regulatory adaptation but also systematic curriculum translation mechanisms. Recent studies have highlighted that curriculum-integrated experiential learning promotes stronger employability skills, professional competence, and institutional sustainability when embedded into formal academic structures rather than implemented as isolated activities. Overall, this finding extends existing MBKM studies by moving beyond implementation descriptions toward a structured framework for curriculum integration. The model demonstrates how national policy can be translated into curriculum design through systematic alignment processes

thereby contributing to the theoretical discussions on policy-curriculum integration.

3.2 Experiential Learning and Professional Competence Development

The implementation of MBKM programs provides students with authentic learning experiences that enhance their professional competence. Students engaged in teaching assistance and internships reported increased confidence, improved pedagogical skills, and greater adaptability in real-world contexts. Students reported significant improvements in their professional skills through experiential learning activities. One student noted, "Teaching assistance helped me understand real classroom dynamics and improve my confidence in teaching." Another student stated, "Internship experiences allowed me to apply what I learned theoretically to actual situations."

These results reinforce David A. Kolb's experiential learning theory [18], which explains learning as a continuous cycle consisting of concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. The findings demonstrate that experiential learning functions as an effective bridge between theoretical knowledge and professional practice. The finding is also consistent with Elliot and Healy [19], who emphasized that work-integrated learning significantly contributes to graduate employability, professional competence, and workplace readiness through authentic learning experiences. The similar result was also reported by Ni Nyoman Padmadewi et al [20], which highlighted that Project-Based Learning facilitates experiential learning by promoting competence development and learner autonomy. Recent comparative studies in Asian education also emphasize the importance of sustainable, student-centred, and inclusive learning approaches in preparing future-ready teachers [21]. These findings reinforce the argument that curriculum reform in teacher education should move beyond content transmission toward competency-oriented and experiential learning ecosystems.

This study extends previous research by showing that experiential learning, when systematically integrated into the curriculum, can function as a core pedagogical approach rather than a supplementary activity. The findings emphasize the importance of embedding experiential learning within formal curriculum structures to promote authentic learning experiences, competency development, and professional

readiness. This perspective aligns with previous studies highlighting that work-integrated and experiential learning become more effective when institutionally embedded into curriculum design rather than implemented as isolated co-curricular programs [22]. Similarly, Fergusson and van der Laan [23] argued that work-based learning in higher education should be positioned as a transdisciplinary and curriculum-embedded mode of learning that connects academic knowledge with authentic workplace experiences.

3.3 Institutional Constraints and System-Level Challenges

Despite the positive outcomes, the findings reveal several institutional challenges, including limited administrative readiness, insufficient infrastructure, and the absence of a dedicated MBKM management unit. One lecturer stated, "The absence of a centralized MBKM management unit makes coordination difficult across study programs." Additionally, an administrative staff member noted that, "the academic system has not fully accommodated MBKM activities, especially in the credit conversion process."

These constraints indicate that curriculum reform is not solely a pedagogical issue but also an organizational and systemic challenge requiring institutional coordination, administrative adaptability, and sustainable governance structures. Similar challenges have been reported in recent studies on higher education reform and curriculum transformation, which emphasize that successful policy implementation depends heavily on institutional readiness [24], [25], [26], [27], leadership support [28], and integrated academic systems [29]. As argued by Ronald Barnett [30], universities operate within complex ecosystems that require adaptive and coordinated responses to change. This perspective aligns with the broader understanding of organizations as complex adaptive systems, which require flexibility, collaboration, and continuous learning to navigate dynamic and uncertain environments [31].

Beyond administrative and structural challenges, the findings also indicate that the successful implementation of MBKM-based curriculum reform is influenced by human and professional factors within higher education institutions. In addition to institutional readiness and governance systems, lecturers' professional commitment and enthusiasm play an essential role in sustaining curriculum innovation and translating policy into

meaningful educational practice. This finding supports the argument proposed by I Gusti Ayu Lokita Purnamika Utami et al [32] that professional enthusiasm functions as a critical “missing link” that transforms continuing professional development (CPD) participation into meaningful and high-quality educational practice. In the context of MBKM-based curriculum reform, lecturers’ professional engagement significantly influences the effectiveness of experiential learning implementation and curriculum transformation initiatives.

4. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that translating the MBKM policy into curriculum practice requires systematic alignment among outcome-based education principles, experiential learning, and curriculum structures. The findings reveal that the existing curriculum, which was predominantly content-based and rigid, requires substantial restructuring to support flexible learning pathways and authentic experiential learning activities aligned with professional competencies.

The study proposes a structured MBKM integration model in which experiential learning activities, including community service, student exchange programs, internships, and teaching assistance activities, are systematically aligned with PLOs and CLOs through equivalency mapping and credit conversion mechanisms. This structured approach enables experiential learning to function as an integral component of curriculum design rather than merely a supplementary activity. The findings further indicate that such integration plays an important role in advancing the development of pedagogical competence, communication skills, adaptability, and professional readiness among pre-service teachers.

Beyond pedagogical transformation, the study also highlights the importance of institutional readiness, governance systems, and sustainable collaboration between universities and external stakeholders in supporting curriculum reform implementation. Administrative limitations, partnership sustainability, and academic system adaptability remain critical challenges requiring continuous institutional improvement.

Theoretically, this research offers a contribution to the discourse on higher education transformation by proposing a policy-to-

curriculum translation framework that integrates outcome-based education, experiential learning, and structured curriculum alignment within teacher education contexts. Practically, the findings provide important implications for higher education institutions seeking to implement MBKM through flexible, competency-oriented, and institutionally sustainable curriculum models. Future research is recommended to investigate the sustained long-term effects of MBKM-integrated curricula on graduate employability, professional identity formation, and educational quality improvement across diverse higher education contexts.

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Author Contributions Statement

All authors contributed significantly to this study in accordance with the Contributor Roles Taxonomy (CRediT). Mawardi contributed to the study by handling the formal analysis, conducting the investigation, designing the methodology, developing the conceptual framework, and preparing the original manuscript draft. Ni Nyoman Padmadewi contributed to supervision, validation, and data analysis. I Gede Budasi contributed to methodology, writing review and editing. IGA Lokita Purnamika Utami contributed to data curation, resources, and project administration. Each author has reviewed and endorsed the final manuscript version and accepts full responsibility for every aspect of the study and its contents.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The researchers declare that the publication of this paper is free from any conflicts of interest. Furthermore, the study was carried out independently and was not influenced by any financial or commercial affiliations that might give rise to potential conflicts of interest.

Informed Consent

Prior to their involvement, all participants gave their informed consent after being thoroughly informed about the aims and purposes of the research, the procedures to be carried out, and their freedom to withdraw from the study at any stage. Throughout the entire research process, the privacy, anonymity, and confidentiality of all participants were carefully maintained.

Ethical Approval

This research adhered to established ethical standards in conducting studies involving human participants. The implementation of the study upheld key ethical principles such as maintaining confidentiality, obtaining informed consent, and ensuring voluntary participation. Based on the applicable institutional regulations, formal ethical clearance was not considered necessary for this category of research.

Data Availability

The materials and data underlying the results of this research may be obtained from the corresponding author through a reasonable request. However, public access to the data is restricted due to ethical concerns and the need to protect participant privacy.

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