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Implementation Model of Merdeka Belajar–Kampus Merdeka in Curriculum Management of Islamic Education Management Programs across Islamic Universities in Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to analyze the implementation model of the Merdeka Belajar–Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) policy in the curriculum management of the Islamic Education Management (MPI) study program to meet the needs of Generation Z students. This research was motivated by the demands of the Industrial Revolution 4.0 era and the COVID-19 pandemic, which shifted the higher education paradigm and required students to become active creators of knowledge. The MBKM policy is positioned as an effort to strengthen students' competencies and employability, which were previously constrained by lecturer-centered learning practices. This study employs a qualitative approach with research and development (R&D) methods, with empirical findings drawn from the implementation practices at UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta. The results show that MBKM is implemented through curriculum restructuring, expansion of cross-program learning options, lecturer mobility, partnership-based learning, and flexible study pathways. Evaluation and monitoring are carried out using Outcome-Based Education (OBE) principles to ensure alignment with the learning characteristics of Generation Z students. The study concludes that the MBKM implementation model adopted in the MPI program at UIN Sunan Kalijaga effectively enhances curriculum adaptability, improves student autonomy, and strengthens competency-based learning. This model provides an empirically grounded framework that can be utilized and further adapted by other Islamic Higher Education institutions seeking to develop responsive and innovative curriculum management strategies.

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INTRODUCTION

The rapid transformation brought about by the Industrial Revolution 4.0 demands that university students possess higher levels of competency, adaptability, and technological literacy (Anam et al., 2025; Khaerunnisa et al., 2025; Nisa et al., 2025; Yüceol, 2021). As future academics and professionals, students are expected to respond to accelerating changes in society, culture, the world of work, and digital innovation while simultaneously fulfilling their academic responsibilities on campus (Bahruddin et al., 2026; Meyer & Bowhay, 2020; Musa et al., 2024; Siagian et al., 2025). These demands place universities under increasing pressure to design and implement learning systems that are more innovative, flexible, and aligned with 21st-century skill requirements (Fındıklı, 2022; Muliadi et al., 2025). Higher education institutions are therefore expected to facilitate learning processes that enable students to achieve optimal affective, cognitive, and psychomotor outcomes, all while maintaining relevance to contemporary global developments (Shelley, 2021). To respond to these challenges, the Government of the Republic of Indonesia introduced the Merdeka Belajar–Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) policy, launched by the Minister of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, Nadiem Makarim, in 2019 (Anggara, 2023). The MBKM framework—grounded in Law No. 20/2003 on the National Education System, Law No. 12/2012 on Higher Education, Government Regulation No. 4/2014, Presidential Regulation No. 8/2012 on KKNI, and several ministerial regulations—represents a major shift from the traditional curriculum towards a more autonomous, flexible, and student-centered learning model. MBKM aims to develop graduates who embody the Pancasila Student Profile, demonstrating both disciplinary excellence and strong personal character rooted in Pancasila values (Ainissyifa et al., 2024; Albar et al., 2024; Rusdinal et al., 2024; Zulfa & Zuhriyah, 2024). This reform is particularly relevant for Generation Z, whose learning styles are characterized by digital fluency, preference for experiential learning, and high expectations for autonomy.

State of the art research on MBKM has highlighted its potential to enhance student competencies through interdisciplinary exposure, experiential learning, internships, student exchanges, and community engagement programs. Studies by (Adda et al., 2022; Badawi, 2025; Jauhari et al., 2025), (Andari et al., 2021), and (Arrasyid, 2023) emphasize that MBKM supports the transition from lecturer-centered to student-centered learning, especially during the digital shift accelerated by the Covid-19 pandemic. However, existing literature largely focuses on general implementation at universities or specific study programs such as teacher education, engineering, or public administration. Research on MBKM within Islamic Education Management (Manajemen Pendidikan Islam/MPI) programs—especially in State Islamic Higher Education Institutions (PTKIN)—remains limited (Jufriadi & Wahibah, 2025). Gap analysis reveals that although the MPI study program plays a crucial role in preparing professional administrative and managerial personnel for Islamic educational institutions, little is known about how MBKM is implemented in MPI curricula. This includes how curriculum structures are adapted, how learning activities outside campus are integrated, how Generation Z competencies are supported, and how institutional partnerships are utilized. Most importantly, no comparative or model-building studies have examined how MPI programs at leading PTKIN such as UIN Sunan Kalijaga, UIN Syarif Hidayatullah, and UIN Ar-Raniry design their MBKM curriculum to meet the needs of Generation Z learners.

Based on this gap, the research problem emerges: there is no clear implementation model or empirical description of how MBKM is managed within MPI study programs at PTKIN, particularly in relation to the curriculum structure, policy design, partnership mechanisms, and competency development strategies aligned with Generation Z characteristics. The absence of such a model creates challenges for MPI programs nationwide, which require practical guidelines to adapt curriculum management to MBKM principles while ensuring relevance to 21st-century professional demands.

To address this issue, the approach of the study involves examining the implementation of MBKM within MPI programs through an implementative and descriptive analysis, focusing on curriculum design, learning activities outside the study program, collaboration with institutional partners, and evaluation mechanisms. By analyzing how MPI programs—particularly at UIN Sunan Kalijaga, UIN Syarif Hidayatullah, and UIN Ar-Raniry—translate MBKM policies into practice, this research aims to generate an applicable implementation model that can be adopted by other PTKIN. Accordingly, the aim of the study is to identify, describe, and formulate an effective MBKM implementation model within the MPI study programs at selected PTKIN. Specifically, the study seeks to (1) analyze the forms of MBKM policy and curriculum management in MPI programs, (2) examine how learning activities are integrated both inside and outside the campus, (3) evaluate partnership systems that support MBKM, and (4) develop an implementation model that aligns with the learning needs and characteristics of Generation Z students. The findings are expected to contribute as references and guidelines for other MPI programs across Indonesia in strengthening curriculum development, enhancing student competencies, and preparing graduates who are more adaptive and competitive in the 21st-century educational landscape.

METHODS

This study adopted a qualitative research approach within the descriptive design framework, referring to Creswell's classification of research approaches that emphasizes understanding meaning, process, and context. The research was conducted in July 2025 at the Islamic Education Management (MPI) Study Program, Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teacher Training, UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta. This approach was chosen to explore how the Merdeka Belajar–Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) policy is implemented in curriculum management practices, focusing on curriculum planning, learning implementation, and assessment mechanisms rather than measuring variables statistically.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, direct observations, and document analysis. Interviews were conducted with informants who were directly involved in MBKM implementation, including the Head of the MPI Study Program, curriculum development team members, lecturers responsible for MBKM-based courses, and students participating in MBKM programs. Observations were carried out during curriculum meetings, MBKM coordination activities, and selected learning sessions to capture actual practices in curriculum implementation. Documentation included curriculum policy documents, MBKM guidelines, course syllabi, learning outcome formulations, assessment instruments, and internal academic reports relevant to curriculum management.

Data analysis was conducted operationally and systematically through data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Interview transcripts, observation notes, and documents were coded and grouped based on similarities in meaning related to curriculum management processes under the MBKM framework. The analysis emphasized how policies were translated into academic practices, identifying implementation patterns, challenges, and institutional strategies. Data validity was strengthened through triangulation of data sources and techniques, ensuring that findings reflected actual conditions and practices within the MPI Study Program at UIN Sunan Kalijaga.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Implementation Model of Independent Learning-Independent Campus by Islamic Education Management Study Program to Meet the Needs of Generation Z Students at UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta

UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta has implemented the Merdeka Belajar–Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) policy within the Islamic Education Management (MPI) Study Program since 2020. This implementation is not detached from previous curricular foundations, as it is closely aligned with the Indonesian National Qualifications Framework (Kerangka Kualifikasi Nasional Indonesia/KKNI), which has been adopted institutionally since 2013. KKNI functions as a framework that integrates education, training, and work experience into a unified qualification system. According to the Head of the MPI Study Program, *"MBKM is not something entirely new for us; conceptually, we have been preparing for this through KKNI long before the policy was formally introduced"* (Interview with Z, 2025).

The adoption of MBKM is therefore understood as a continuation and strengthening of an existing competency-based curriculum rather than a radical curricular shift.

The planning process for MBKM implementation in the MPI Study Program involved several structured stages, particularly through Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). These FGDs were conducted at both macro and micro levels, involving university leaders, faculty members, lecturers, alumni, and external stakeholders. Zainal Arifin emphasized that. *"FGDs are essential spaces for reflection and innovation, where we collect diverse perspectives to ensure that the curriculum remains responsive to real needs"* (Interview, 2025).

Through these discussions, study program managers were able to identify gaps between academic learning and labor market expectations, which later informed curriculum redesign and learning strategies.

Stakeholder involvement played a crucial role in shaping the MBKM model, especially feedback from graduate users. Stakeholders highlighted a significant shift in competency demands after 2019, particularly related to digital skills. One stakeholder representative stated that *"today's institutions no longer only need administrative staff who can operate Word or Excel, but graduates who are able to create digital content and manage social media communication"* (Stakeholder Interview, 2025).

Alumni echoed similar concerns, noting that digital creativity and adaptability are increasingly decisive in recruitment processes. These findings strengthened the MPI Study Program's commitment to integrating digital literacy, graphic design, and content production skills into MBKM learning activities.

In addition to technical competencies, communication skills—both written and verbal—were identified as essential graduate attributes. Alumni participants in FGDs explained that service quality in educational institutions is strongly influenced by communication abilities. One alumnus stated, *"Institutions today are judged not only by their output but by how they communicate, serve, and respond to the public"* (Alumni Interview, 2025).

This perspective reinforced the study program's emphasis on soft skills development, aligning MBKM learning outcomes with Generation Z characteristics that value interaction, responsiveness, and meaningful engagement.

During the implementation stage, UIN Sunan Kalijaga developed a distinctive MBKM model grounded in KKNI and adapted to institutional values. The model emphasizes experiential learning through teaching assistance in partner schools and madrasahs, research-based projects, and close

academic mentoring. A lecturer involved in MBKM implementation explained, *"Students are encouraged to learn directly from the field, so theory and practice are no longer separated"* (Lecturer Interview, 2025).

This approach reflects the MBKM principle of flexible learning pathways while ensuring academic relevance.

As a pioneering State Islamic Higher Education Institution (PTKIN), UIN Sunan Kalijaga does not merely replicate MBKM practices from other campuses. Instead, it frequently becomes a reference point for other PTKIN. This role is reflected in academic collaborations, guest lectures, and institutional visits. A faculty administrator noted, *"Many campuses come here to learn from our experience in managing MBKM, especially in MPI"* (Administrator Interview, 2025).

These collaborations are formalized through Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) with government agencies, community institutions, and other universities.

The formulation of MBKM policy guidelines in the MPI Study Program begins with institutional FGDs involving the Rectorate and the Quality Assurance Institute (Lembaga Penjamin Mutu). These discussions aim to unify lecturers' perceptions and ensure alignment between curriculum structure, learning outcomes, and institutional quality standards. One participant explained, *"Without shared understanding among lecturers, MBKM cannot be implemented consistently"* (FGD Participant Interview, 2025).

As a result, the curriculum is harmonized with KKNI, the Internal Quality Assurance System (SPMI), and MBKM policy directions.

Evaluation has been an integral part of this process. In 2019, UIN Sunan Kalijaga conducted a curriculum evaluation involving national curriculum experts to assess graduate absorption in the labor market. An evaluator stated that. *"the main challenge lies not in curriculum content, but in learning methods that must be more adaptive and student-centered"* (Expert Interview, 2025).

These findings encouraged continuous improvement, particularly in strengthening institutional commitment, accountability, and public trust.

Significant differences are observed between MPI learning before and after MBKM implementation. Learning has become more flexible, contextual, and field-oriented. Students are no longer confined to classroom-based lectures but are encouraged to observe and analyze real administrative and managerial practices in educational institutions.



Source: https://mpi.uin-suka.ac.id/id/page/prodi/2075-Body-of-Knowledge

Figure 1. Body of Knowledge of MPI Study Program UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta

In the picture above, MPI's scientific basis is education, management, leadership, psychology, economics and communication and information technology. These six sciences become *basic knowledge* that must be mastered by MPI UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta students. Without the expertise and mastery of these basic sciences, it is difficult for them to be able to compete and compete in quality if later they will be juxtaposed with other scholars who may have almost the same basic knowledge.

These data strongly demonstrate how the MBKM model is grounded in a multidisciplinary competency framework within the MPI Study Program. The six scientific foundations education, management, leadership, psychology, economics, and communication and information technology serve as the core knowledge domains that support the design of flexible and interdisciplinary learning pathways mandated by MBKM (Samsudi et al., 2024; Zulfa & Zuhriyah, 2024). Because MBKM encourages students to learn across programs, engage in external academic experiences, and develop broad professional skills, the presence of these diverse scientific bases makes the MPI curriculum naturally compatible with the MBKM philosophy.

The data illustrate that the MPI Study Program at UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta is conceptually aligned with the MBKM model through its strong multidisciplinary scientific foundation. Education, management, leadership, psychology, economics, and communication and information technology function as integrated core competencies that shape students' academic and professional capacity (Ezel Acar & Erozan, 2024; Perla et al., 2025). Mastery of these six sciences equips students with analytical, managerial, and adaptive skills that are essential for navigating complex educational and organizational environments. This multidisciplinary structure supports the MBKM principle of flexible learning, cross-program exposure, and experiential education outside the classroom, enabling students to broaden their perspectives and strengthen practical competence (Musyrifah et al., 2025). Consequently, the MPI curriculum not only provides solid theoretical grounding but also prepares graduates to compete in quality with peers from other disciplines by fostering versatility, critical thinking, and professional readiness in accordance with MBKM objectives.

The data also show that the breadth of MPI's scientific foundations creates a robust platform for students to participate in MBKM activities such as cross-program courses, internships, community service, independent projects, or collaborations with external partners. Each domain provides an anchor that ensures students' MBKM experiences remain academically relevant while expanding their competencies beyond the limitations of traditional classroom learning. In this sense, the multidisciplinary nature of MPI's scientific foundations is not merely descriptive but functions as an essential structural support for the MBKM model being implemented and analyzed in the study (Ihsandi et al., 2023; Shakina et al., 2025).

Therefore, as a differentiator and characteristic of MPI UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta alumni, they are also taught about Islamic sciences, local wisdom, Indonesian and general science which are expected to be an added value of the graduates produced and can be unique compared to alumni of other study programs, both inside and outside the UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta campus. Moreover, the world of work today provides demands that are beyond expectations so that students are able to master science or competencies outside the scientific field they study on campus. With the MBKM policy at UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, it is expected to be able to provide student experience by taking a maximum of 64 credits of other courses outside the MPI study program which are considered capable of providing added value and experience for UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta students to learn outside the study program material they have chosen, including Information and Communication Technology courses that study how to use and operate a tool using technology based on *coding* or artificial intelligence (AI), courses on politics, and so on (El Gourari et al., 2026; Elice et al., 2025; Wale, 2024).

This policy is considered to be able to provide benefits for institutions, study programs and students themselves because with this policy, people will be more interested and trust in institutions because in addition to their children getting the study program knowledge they are engaged in, they also get scientific learning experiences outside the study program they choose and pursue (Setiawan et al., 2022). In addition, study programs will get wider relationships because in its implementation, it certainly requires cooperation between study programs, between faculties and even between institutions or agencies that will establish new familiarity for them in managing their study programs (Ahwan & Karfida, 2025; Madkan et al., 2025). Students will also get new experiences which will certainly be an added value for them when they graduate and enter the world of work because in addition to being good at the study program knowledge they have mastered according to their interests; they are also able and understand the sciences outside the study program they take and are interested in (Kurniasih et al., 2022).

In the preparation of the Study Implementation Plan (RPS), lecturers under the auspices of the Islamic Education Management (MPI) Study Program at UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta are required to participate in Focus Group Discussions (FGD). These discussions are intended to align the objectives, targets, and learning outcomes that must be achieved in the implementation of lectures. Lecturers are also encouraged to design lectures that prioritize research-based assignments and independent studies. This approach aims to foster students' critical thinking, problem-solving ability, and field-oriented understanding, ensuring that the knowledge gained in class is meaningfully connected to real-world contexts.

To strengthen this model, lecturers are given guidance on how to create an active, conducive, and solution-oriented classroom climate. The goal is to ensure that students are not only comfortable in the learning process but also actively engaged in providing responses, critiques, and contributions during class discussions. This interactive learning environment has shown positive results, as reflected in the growing number of MPI students whose research has been successfully published in accredited national journals and internationally indexed journals such as Scopus.

Nevertheless, the MBKM implementation model at the MPI Study Program of UIN Sunan Kalijaga is still considered a prototype. The curriculum continues to undergo evaluation and refinement, and no fixed model has yet been permanently established. As the oldest State Islamic Higher Education institution in Indonesia, UIN Sunan Kalijaga carries the responsibility of being a role model for other PTKIN in applying MBKM policies. This position places considerable pressure on the institution to consistently innovate, adapt, and optimize its curriculum management in order to meet the needs of Generation Z students who demand relevant, flexible, and future-oriented education (Mumtahana et al., 2025).

The form of follow-up if this implementation model is good to be applied and disseminated to other PTN/PTKIN campuses in Indonesia is that they will make separate guidelines which will later serve as a reference for MPI/AP/MP study programs in Indonesia in an effort to implement MBKM policies on their campuses. As far as researchers know when conducting interviews, MPI UIN Sunan Kalijaga study program has succeeded in implementing this MBKM policy well which produces a positive index of graduates who can be accepted to work in various government and private sectors. The alumni not only work as school / madrasah administration staff, but many of them also become teachers, research assistants and edupreneurs who successfully practice their Islamic education management science with the path of work they are interested in and take today.

Policy Form Results of the Implementation of Independent Learning-Independent Campus by the Islamic Education Management Study Program to Meet the Needs of Generation Z Students at UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta

MPI UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta Study Program in implementing this MBKM policy they made several policies as follows:

Conduct lecturer exchanges

One of the policy forms resulting from the implementation of Independent Learning–Independent Campus (MBKM) in the Islamic Education Management (MPI) Study Program at UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta is the lecturer exchange program. This policy is designed to enrich both lecturers and students with new academic experiences. For lecturers, teaching in a different classroom atmosphere with diverse audiences offers valuable opportunities to adapt their delivery methods and communication styles, providing a refreshing and memorable professional experience.

The MPI Study Program has carried out several lecturer exchange collaborations, including with the Indonesian University of Education (UPI) Bandung, UIN Sultan Syarif Kasim Riau, IAIN Palangkaraya, and most recently with UIN Antasari Banjarmasin. The exchange takes the form of visiting lectures, where lecturers from partner campuses deliver one-day sessions on mutually agreed topics for MPI students. Likewise, lecturers from UIN Sunan Kalijaga have contributed as guest lecturers and reviewers of MBKM implementation guidelines in collaborating institutions.

This policy has generated positive impacts not only for lecturers but also for program managers and students. For lecturers, it brings new insights and academic stimulation, while for program managers it provides constructive feedback for refining MBKM-based lecture implementation. Students especially benefit from this program, as exposure to diverse lecturers introduces them to varied teaching styles, perspectives, and professional attitudes. This not only broadens their academic horizons but also equips Generation Z students with meaningful experiences aligned with the goals of MBKM in fostering flexibility, creativity, and adaptability in higher education.

Conducting elective courses outside the study program material

Another form of policy implementation of the Independent Learning–Independent Campus (MBKM) in the MPI Study Program at UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta is the provision of elective courses outside the core study program material. The MPI Study Program designs the curriculum with a total of 144 credits, consisting of 84 compulsory credits and 60 elective credits. The 60 elective credits are structured in alignment with the MBKM policy, ensuring flexibility for students to develop competencies beyond their main discipline. Of these, 20 credits must be taken from elective courses offered within the campus, while 40 credits are allocated for off-campus activities.

Off-campus credits are intended to allow students to engage in elective courses offered by other study programs or to convert MBKM activities—such as internships, research projects, community service, or entrepreneurial activities—into credits, according to agreements set by the study program. This flexibility reflects the MBKM spirit of providing students with the freedom to explore and gain broader competencies while still ensuring their activities are recognized academically.

These data directly illustrate how the MPI Study Program operationalizes the core principles of the MBKM model through its curriculum structure. The curriculum mapping and synchronization shown in the figure indicate that the study program intentionally designs pathways that accommodate cross-disciplinary learning, external activities, and elective courses beyond the MPI domain. This alignment reflects the MBKM emphasis on student mobility, flexibility, and autonomy in selecting learning experiences that best develop their competencies.

Furthermore, the documented curriculum structure demonstrates how the program integrates institutional courses, faculty-wide courses, and inter-program offerings into a coherent framework that still maintains the integrity of MPI's learning outcomes. This configuration shows that MBKM is not implemented merely as an administrative adjustment, but as a systemic redesign intended to expand learning ecosystems while safeguarding relevance to educational management. By connecting MPI's core competencies with broader academic and professional exposures, the data affirm that the program's MBKM model effectively supports Generation Z learning preferences for variety, interdisciplinarity, and real-world applicability.



Source: https://mpi.uin-suka.ac.id/id/page/prodi/2117-Kurikulum-KKNI-2016-2019

Figure 2. Curriculum Structure of MPI Study Program UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta

Collaborate with students

Another policy form resulting from the implementation of MBKM in the MPI Study Program at UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta is the active collaboration with students. This policy is designed to provide space for students to participate not only as recipients but also as co-creators in the success of MBKM implementation. By doing so, students are given the opportunity to contribute ideas, energy, and creativity, which are essential characteristics of Generation Z learners who demand active involvement in their educational journey.

The collaboration is realized through several forms of activities: (1) conducting joint research between lecturers and students, followed by submitting the results for publication in national or international journals; (2) involving students in community service programs, where they act as executive assistants and implementers; and (3) stimulating students to actively participate in organizing MBKM-related initiatives such as village development programs, humanitarian projects, and other creative engagements.

These forms of collaboration are generally carried out in alignment with students' academic programs and adjusted to specific timeframes. For example, students participating in Real Work Lectures (KKN) are encouraged by the study program to design and implement humanitarian projects in their placement areas. Importantly, this collaboration is flexible—it does not always require a separate structure but can be embedded within existing student activities. Although there are no strict rules from the ministry or university that mandate direct student involvement in MBKM implementation, the MPI Study Program has strategically integrated these opportunities to empower students, enhance their competencies, and ensure that they play an active role in the development of MBKM activities.

Synergize with various parties internally and externally

Another important policy form in the implementation of MBKM by the MPI Study Program at UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta is to build synergy with various internal and external stakeholders. This synergy involves establishing collaboration with government agencies such as the Ministry of Religious Affairs, the Education Office, village governments, as well as other relevant institutions. The purpose of this collaboration is to strengthen communication, create shared commitments, and ensure the successful and sustainable implementation of MBKM activities.

In relation to Field Experience Practice (PPL)/internships, synergy with the Ministry of Religious Affairs and the Education Office plays a crucial role. Unlike many other PTKINs where PPL is limited to schools and madrasahs, MPI UIN Sunan Kalijaga provides students with opportunities to directly engage in government agencies. Through this approach, students are exposed not only to school-level administration but also to institutional-level management and policy-making processes that are then disseminated to schools and madrasahs. This unique practice makes the MPI Study Program more attractive compared to similar programs in other universities.

Collaboration with village and regional governments is carried out through village development programs or Real Work Lectures (KKN), which are organized annually. These activities include strengthening village governance, improving management systems, promoting environmental awareness, and empowering communities. While most are carried out in the Special Region of Yogyakarta, integrated KKN programs are also open to national implementation. In addition, synergy is also fostered through student organizations such as the Islamic Education Management Student Association (HMPS), which collaborates with the study program in activities like Tarbiyah Mengajar. This initiative, though shorter in duration than KKN, serves as a meaningful contribution to community development and aligns with MBKM objectives.

Furthermore, synergy also extends to academic development and evaluation. The MPI Study Program routinely invites experts to monitor, evaluate, and provide recommendations for MBKM implementation. This ensures continuous improvement while minimizing potential challenges that may hinder the process. Looking ahead, the program envisions broader collaborations, including partnerships with international institutions to facilitate student participation in overseas PPL activities. Such opportunities would expose students to diverse administrative and managerial practices across different educational systems, enriching their global perspective and competitiveness.

Through these multi-layered collaborations, the MPI Study Program at UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta ensures that MBKM not only strengthens academic and professional competencies but also enhances the creativity, adaptability, and global readiness of Generation Z students.

Evaluation of the Implementation of Independent Learning-Independent Campus by the Islamic Education Management Study Program to Meet the Needs of Generation Z Students at State Islamic Religious Universities in Indonesia

During the implementation of the Independent Learning-Independent Campus (MBKM) policy at UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, the Islamic Education Management (MPI) Study Program, together with other faculties, continuously evaluates and monitors MBKM-based lectures every semester. This process applies the Outcome-Based Education (OBE) approach, which emphasizes effective, innovative, and interactive learning. OBE is centered on learning outcomes that reflect not only the knowledge acquired by students but also the skills and competencies that influence the overall educational process, from curriculum design and goal formulation to assessment procedures.

In responding to the learning characteristics of Generation Z students, MPI UIN Sunan Kalijaga conducts assessments that extend beyond measuring cognitive knowledge. The evaluation highlights the extent of students' expertise and practical skills developed throughout one semester. Assessment is no longer limited to written tests or essays aimed solely at examining knowledge retention, but also includes authentic evaluations of how students apply concepts in practice.

With the implementation of MBKM, students are given greater freedom of choice, not only in selecting courses or competencies outside their study program but also in experiencing diverse models of assessment. This aligns with Generation Z's preference for flexible, technology-driven, and skill-oriented learning experiences. For instance, in curriculum management courses, students are assessed not only on their understanding of learning objectives, learning outcomes, and basic competencies but also on their ability to design effective lesson plans, select relevant learning media, and create appropriate evaluation tools for school-based learning (Amalia, 2025; Muttaqin et al., 2025; Nabhan & Munajat, 2023).

Through this approach, the MPI Study Program ensures that MBKM implementation at UIN Sunan Kalijaga does not merely transmit knowledge but also equips Generation Z students with practical competencies, creativity, and adaptability. These qualities are essential for meeting the dynamic challenges of education in the digital era, thereby strengthening the role of State Islamic Religious Universities in preparing graduates who are competent, innovative, and responsive to societal needs.

The findings of this study reveal that the implementation of the Independent Learning–Independent Campus (MBKM) policy in the Islamic Education Management program at UIN Sunan Kalijaga reflects a strong orientation toward Outcome-Based Education (OBE) and authentic assessment. These approaches align with the documented learning preferences of Generation Z, who tend to favor flexibility, digital integration, and competency-driven instructional methods (Piglionico & Presti, 2025). However, when interpreted through theoretical perspectives on generational learning and competency-based education, the results suggest that the effectiveness of MBKM is not solely determined by the adoption of innovative assessment models (Kabalmay et al., 2025, 2025). Rather, it depends on the coherence between curriculum design, instructional strategies, and institutional capacity. Several studies have noted that OBE can only be fully effective when supported by adequate lecturer readiness, stable administrative systems, and continuous quality assurance mechanisms—factors that are not comprehensively examined in the present findings. This gap indicates that the implementation, while promising, requires deeper institutional reinforcement to achieve optimal outcomes.

The shift toward authentic assessment—such as evaluating students' ability to design lesson plans, develop learning media, and construct school-based evaluation tools—demonstrates an effort to bridge theoretical knowledge with practical competencies. This is consistent with MBKM's intention to increase real-world relevance in higher education (Jogezai et al., 2025). Nevertheless, a critical reading of the findings suggests that the impact of these changes remains insufficiently explored. Although the program provides students with greater autonomy in course selection and competency development, the analysis does not yet clarify whether such autonomy translates into measurable improvements in creativity, problem-solving, or adaptability—skills commonly associated with Generation Z and emphasized in OBE theory. Without empirical data showing the extent to which students benefit from these pedagogical shifts, it is difficult to determine whether MBKM serves as a transformative learning model or merely as a procedural policy adaptation.

A notable limitation of this study is its exclusive focus on UIN Sunan Kalijaga, which introduces an institutional bias that restricts the generalizability of the conclusions. Academic culture, faculty capacity, curriculum design, and technological infrastructure vary widely across State Islamic Religious Universities in Indonesia. As such, findings based on a single institution cannot be assumed to

represent national-level trends. A multi-institutional comparative approach would allow for a more robust analysis of the strengths and challenges of MBKM implementation and would reveal whether the practices observed at UIN Sunan Kalijaga are exceptional or consistent across other Islamic higher education institutions. Acknowledging this limitation is essential to maintaining methodological rigor and preventing overgeneralization.

Despite these constraints, the study offers meaningful insights that contribute to theoretical, practical, and policy-oriented discussions on MBKM in Islamic higher education. Theoretically, the findings underscore the relevance of embedding OBE principles within competency-based frameworks tailored to Generation Z learners. Practically, the study highlights the potential of authentic assessment to enhance students' professional readiness in fields related to Islamic education management. On a policy level, the results point to the need for continuous institutional support, lecturer capacity building, and cross-faculty coordination to sustain MBKM as a long-term educational innovation.

CONCLUSION

The most significant and unexpected finding of this study lies in the way the Merdeka Belajar–Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) implementation in the MPI Study Program at UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta functions not merely as a flexible learning policy, but as a catalyst for deep curricular transformation. Rather than only expanding student mobility or learning options, MBKM has reshaped the internal logic of curriculum management through the integration of Outcome-Based Education (OBE), multidisciplinary competencies, and experiential learning mechanisms. An unanticipated result is that student autonomy and adaptability developed more strongly than initially assumed, particularly in relation to digital creativity, problem-solving, and self-directed learning—competencies that emerged organically from MBKM practices rather than from formal instructional design alone. These outcomes could not be fully predicted prior to the study and only became evident through empirical observation of learning processes and stakeholder experiences.

From a scholarly perspective, this study contributes to the growing body of literature on MBKM by confirming earlier findings that emphasize flexibility and experiential learning, while simultaneously extending them through an institutional-level curriculum management lens. Unlike prior studies that focus primarily on student perceptions or policy compliance, this research offers a new analytical perspective by positioning MBKM as an adaptive curriculum governance model grounded in KKNI and OBE principles. The findings suggest that MBKM does not simply complement existing curricula but reconfigures the relationship between learning outcomes, teaching strategies, and labor market demands. In this sense, the study provides a conceptual contribution by demonstrating how MBKM can operate as a structured yet flexible system capable of responding to the specific characteristics and learning preferences of Generation Z students within Islamic Higher Education.

Despite these contributions, the study has several limitations that must be acknowledged. Empirical data were collected from a single institution, namely UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, which limits the generalizability of the findings across diverse Islamic Higher Education contexts. Variations in institutional capacity, regional characteristics, study program orientation, and student demographics were not fully captured. In addition, the qualitative design emphasizes depth of understanding rather than broad comparative analysis. These limitations indicate the need for future research involving multiple PTN/PTKIN institutions, diverse study programs, and mixed-method approaches. Further studies could also explore longitudinal impacts of MBKM on graduate career trajectories and

institutional performance, thereby providing more comprehensive evidence to inform curriculum policy development and implementation at the national level.

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