

OUTCOME-BASED EDUCATION (OBE) CURRICULUM: MBKM'S IMPACT ON EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS IN ARABIC EDUCATION GRADUATES AT JAMBI UNIVERSITY

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Abstract

This study examines the implementation of the Outcome-Based Education (OBE) curriculum under the Merdeka Belajar-Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) policy and its role in enhancing employability skills in the Arabic Language Education program at Jambi University. Addressing the gap between labor market demands and conventional curriculum limitations, the research employed a qualitative case study approach, collecting data through interviews (5 lecturers, 5 students), participant observation (Teaching Campus activities, collaborative projects), as well as document analysis (MBKM policies, syllabi). Findings indicate that OBE-MBKM integration improves graduate employability, with internships, industry projects, and student exchanges fostering practical, communication, and leadership skills. Institutional support (lecturer training, industry networks) is key, yet challenges persist, including uneven lecturer understanding, infrastructure gaps, and weak industry partnerships. The study affirms the potential of OBE-MBKM potential to boost graduate competitiveness but highlights the need for systematic improvements in lecturer capacity, facilities, and stakeholder collaboration. Theoretically, it contributes to employability skill integration in higher education; practically, it offers policymakers actionable insights for designing market-responsive curricula.

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Keywords:

Outcome-Based Education; MBKM; Employability Skills.

مستخلص البحث

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تحليل تنفيذ منهج التعليم القائم على النتائج في إطار سياسة "ميرديكا بيلاجار-كامبوس ميرديكا" وأثره على تنمية المهارات الوظيفية لطلاب برنامج تعليم اللغة العربية في جامعة جامبي. باستخدام منهج دراسة الحالة النوعية، تم جمع البيانات من خلال مقابلات متعمقة (مع 5 مدرسين و 5 طلاب)، والملاحظة بالمشاركة (لأنشطة الحرم التعليمي والمشاريع التعاونية)، وتحليل الوثائق (السياسات والمنهج). كشفت النتائج أن دمج OBE-MBKM يحسن جودة الخريجين، خاصة في الجاهزية للعمل، حيث ساهمت برامج مثل التدريب التربوي والمشاريع الصناعية وتبادل الطلاب في تطوير المهارات العملية والتواصلية والقيادية. بينما يمثل الدعم المؤسسي (تدريب المدرسين وشبكات التعاون) عاملاً محفزاً رئيسياً، لا تزال تحديات مثل الفهم غير المتكافئ بين المدرسين، ونقص البنية التحتية، وصعوبة بناء شراكات صناعية تعيق التنفيذ الكامل. تؤكد الدراسة أهمية نهج OBE-MBKM في تعزيز تنافسية الخريجين، مع التوصية بضرورة تعزيز قدرات المدرسين والمرافق التعليمية والشراكة مع أصحاب المصلحة.

كلمات أساسية: التعليم ضوء النتائج؛ MBKM؛ مهارات التوظيف.

Introduction

Universities are currently faced with the challenge of producing graduates who not only master academic knowledge but also have employability skills that are relevant to industry needs.¹ The Independent Learning-Independent Campus (MBKM) policy and the Outcome-Based Education (OBE) approach are present as solutions to bridge this gap by emphasizing competency-based learning outcomes.² As a response to the evolving demands of the 5.0 era, MBKM promotes a flexible, student-centered learning model that encourages innovation and autonomy.³ To realize the concept of MBKM, the Ministry of Education and Culture has implemented a new policy through Permendikbud number 3 of 2020, allowing students to participate in academic activities outside their study program and home institution for up to three semesters. This policy will enable students to learn and develop new skills through various MBKM programs.⁴

The main objective of MBKM is to prepare and develop the competencies of university graduates, including soft skills and hard skills, to be ready to compete in the modern era.⁵ MBKM in higher education is directly implemented by study programs through ministerial programs and programs specifically designed according to the needs of study programs submitted to universities, with the fulfillment of 20 % of students participating in the ministry's program. An appropriate approach to achieving this MBKM goal is outcome-based education (OBE).⁶ To

¹ Amrinder Khosa and Steven Burch, "Flipped Classroom: Students' Cognitive Needs of Relatedness, Competence, and Autonomy in a Fully-Flipped Program," *Journal of University Teaching and Learning Practice* 20, no. 5 (September 3, 2023), <https://doi.org/10.53761/1.20.5.04>.

² Tan Owee Kowang et al., "Relationship between Teaching Quality Factors and Employability among Technology Management Students," *International Journal of Evaluation and Research in Education (IJERE)* 11, no. 3 (September 1, 2022): 1154, <https://doi.org/10.11591/ijere.v11i3.21836>.

³ Rendika Vhalery, Albertus Maria Setyastanto, and Ari Wahyu Leksono, "Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka: Sebuah Kajian Literatur," *Research and Development Journal of Education* 8, no. 1 (April 1, 2022): 185, <https://doi.org/10.30998/rdje.v8i1.11718>; Kriswanda Krishnapatria, "Merdeka Belajar-Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) Curriculum in English Studies Program: Challenges and Opportunities," *ELT in Focus* 4, no. 1 (August 7, 2021), <https://journal.unsika.ac.id/ELTINFOCUS/article/view/5276>.

⁴ Hanik Mahliatussikah and Singgih Kuswardono, "Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) Curriculum Design in Arabic Language Education Study Program," in *Proceedings of the Unima International Conference on Social Sciences and Humanities (UNICSSH 2022)*, vol. 698, Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research (Paris: Atlantis Press SARL, 2023), 587–95, https://doi.org/10.2991/978-2-494069-35-0_72.

⁵ Sean Kearney and Tim Perkins, "Engaging Students through Assessment: The Success and Limitations of the ASPAL (Authentic Self and Peer Assessment for Learning) Model.," *Journal of University Teaching and Learning Practice* 11, no. 3 (August 1, 2014), <https://doi.org/10.53761/1.11.3.2>; Kazuya Saito and Adam Tierney, "Roles of Domain-General Auditory Processing in Second Language Speech Learning Revisited: What Degree of Precision Makes a Difference?," *Language Learning*, May 27, 2025, lang.12722, <https://doi.org/10.1111/lang.12722>.

⁶ Sean Kearney, Timothy Perkins, and Shannon Kennedy-Clark, "Using Self- and Peer-Assessments for Summative Purposes: Analysing the Relative Validity of the AASL (Authentic Assessment for Sustainable Learning) Model," *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education* 41, no. 6 (August 17, 2016): 840–53, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2015.1039484>.

create graduates who are ready to face the challenges of era 5.0, the Arabic Language Education (Pendidikan Bahasa Arab) study program at the University of Jambi (UNJA) has adopted the Outcome-Based Education (OBE) approach in the Multicompetences curriculum with the Merdeka Campus (MBKM). However, the implementation of the OBE-MBKM curriculum in a specific context such as the Arabic Language Education Study Program at the University of Jambi requires further in-depth investigation, particularly in terms of its impact on graduate quality. This study aims to analyze the extent to which the integration of OBE and MBKM can improve the employability skills of graduates, as well as identify supporting and inhibiting factors in the implementation process.

This approach aims to prepare graduates according to the mission of the study program, which is to produce professional Arabic language educators, competitive education entrepreneurs, and Arabic language researchers who can adapt to digital literacy by 2030.⁷ This vision is aligned with Jambi University's goal of becoming a world-class entrepreneurial institution through the implementation of an OBE curriculum that supports MBKM policy by allowing students to explore academic interests and choose appropriate learning paths. Skills such as problem-solving, communication, and adapting to new technologies are essential in the 5.0 era.⁸ Employability skills are also required for various careers, including obtaining, maintaining, and adjusting to employment and returning to the workforce during protective years.⁹ Implementing the OBE curriculum in employability skill-based MBKM in the Arabic Language Education study program still has various obstacles. The absence of standardized guidelines on the implementation of MBKM with an OBE approach at FKIP UNJA has made study programs implement the OBE curriculum with a tendency for multiple

⁷ Rashidin Idris and Juppri Bacotang, "Exploring STEM Education Trends in Malaysia: Building a Talent Pool for Industrial Revolution 4.0 and Society 5.0," *International Journal of Academic Research in Progressive Education and Development* 12, no. 2 (April 15, 2023): Pages 381-393, <https://doi.org/10.6007/IJARPED/v12-i2/16825>; Iris Tabak and Ilana Dubovi, "Gaps in Equitable Preparedness for Networked Information Society: The Critical Role of k-12 Education in Fostering Data Literacy for All," *Education and Information Technologies*, May 24, 2025, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10639-025-13537-1>.

⁸ Tonglin Jiang and Constantine Sedikides, "Awe Motivates Authentic-Self Pursuit via Self-Transcendence: Implications for Prosociality.," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 123, no. 3 (September 2022): 576–96, <https://doi.org/10.1037/pspi0000381>; Chun Lai and Pia Sundqvist, "Research Agenda: Synergizing in-Class and out-of-Class Language Learning with Technology," *Language Teaching*, May 23, 2025, 1–22, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S026144482500014X>.

⁹ Nuryake Fajaryati et al., "The Employability Skills Needed To Face the Demands of Work in the Future: Systematic Literature Reviews," *Open Engineering* 10, no. 1 (July 2, 2020): 595–603, <https://doi.org/10.1515/eng-2020-0072>; Hasanuzzaman Tushar and Nanta Sooraksa, "Global Employability Skills in the 21st Century Workplace: A Semi-Systematic Literature Review," *Heliyon* 9, no. 11 (November 2023): e21023, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2023.e21023>; Ester Van Laar et al., "Determinants of 21st-Century Skills and 21st-Century Digital Skills for Workers: A Systematic Literature Review," *Sage Open* 10, no. 1 (January 2020): 2158244019900176, <https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244019900176>.

perceptions and interpretations of lecturers who only see OBE as limited to the outcomes of the RPS, not the MBKM curriculum as a whole. Departing from this situation, this study aims to see how implementing the MBKM program is combined with OBE in preparing graduates for the PBA UNJA study program.¹⁰

This research focuses on two key aspects. First, it examines the implementation of the OBE curriculum, specifically the integration of Employability Skill-based MBKM, as a strategy to enhance the quality of graduates from the study program in the 5.0 era. Second, it explores the supportive roles and identifies the challenges encountered in the application of the OBE-based MBKM policy within the Arabic Language Education Study Program. To investigate these issues, the author proposes a basic faculty research scheme entitled Outcome-Based Education (OBE) Curriculum: MBKM Based on Employability Skills on the Quality of Graduates of the Jambi University Arabic Language Education Study Program to explore this discussion.

Method

This study used a qualitative research approach, which was considered appropriate for gaining an in-depth understanding of the experiences, perceptions, and views of participants regarding the implementation of the OBE curriculum and the Merdeka Belajar–Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) model based on employability skills in the Arabic Language Education Study Program at Jambi University in the Era 5.0. This approach enabled the researchers to explore complex, non-quantifiable aspects such as attitudes, motivations, and perceptions.¹¹

The research was conducted at Jambi University, with a focus on the Arabic Language Education Study Program. It also involved the surrounding academic environment and relevant industry sectors to understand expectations regarding graduate competencies and their alignment with market demands. In this study, research subjects included individuals and groups who provided rich, detailed insights related to the research topic. These participants took part in in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and participant observations.¹² Additional data sources included documents, institutional archives, and policy artifacts, which helped provide contextual understanding.

¹⁰ Phil Maude et al., "Identification of Authentic Assessment in Nursing Curricula: An Integrative Review," *Nurse Education in Practice* 52 (March 2021): 103011, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.nepr.2021.103011>; Rebecca Ward and Justin Awani, "Bilingualism and Flexibility in Task Switching: A Close Replication Study," *Studies in Second Language Acquisition* 46, no. 4 (September 2024): 996–1012, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0272263124000378>.

¹¹ Virginia Braun et al., "The Online Survey as a Qualitative Research Tool," *International Journal of Social Research Methodology* 24, no. 6 (November 2, 2021): 641–54, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13645579.2020.1805550>.

¹² Patrik Aspers and Ugo Corte, "What Is Qualitative in Qualitative Research," *Qualitative Sociology* 42, no. 2 (June 2019): 139–60, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11133-019-9413-7>.

The selection of research subjects was based on their relevance to the research questions and objectives. Ethical standards were maintained, including informed consent from all participants.¹³ By involving diverse research subjects such as students, lecturers, alumni, and industry parties, this research will provide a comprehensive picture of implementing the OBE and MBKM curriculum in the Arabic Language Education Study Program at Jambi University.

The data collection techniques included in-depth interviews with students, lecturers, alumni, and relevant industry representatives. The in-depth interviews allowed the respondents to share their experiences, views, and thoughts in detail, thus allowing the researcher to understand the complexities of the curriculum and graduate readiness from different perspectives. The main instrument used in data collection was an in-depth interview guide developed specifically for each group of research subjects.

This study collected data through interviews, observations, and documentation with data sources from lecturers, students of the 2022 class, alumni of the 2021 class, and related stakeholders in Arabic Language Education Study Program at Jambi University. Participants involved included twenty lecturers, five students, and graduates. Data collection techniques included interviews to obtain information about the implementation of OBE-based MBKM, observations of MBKM activities, and documentation related to the RPS and the MBKM curriculum in study program. The data obtained will be used to analyze the effectiveness of the implementation of MBKM in the study program.

This research method used the Miles and Huberman interactive analysis model as a data processing approach. Qualitative data analysis was carried out consistently and interactively, with in-depth and careful research, until the data is considered sufficient.¹⁴ The process includes key steps: data reduction, data presentation, conclusion drawing/verification, and data triangulation, which are further explained in the diagram provided.

Result and Discussion

MBKM-OBE Curriculum Planning Based on Employability Skills

Curriculum planning for Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) with an Outcome-Based Education (OBE) approach for the Arabic Language Education (PBA) Study Program shows a commitment to producing graduates who are

¹³ John W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (SAGE, 2014); Shagufta Bhangu, Fabien Provost, and Carlo Caduff, "Introduction to Qualitative Research Methods – Part I," *Perspectives in Clinical Research* 14, no. 1 (January 2023): 39–42, https://doi.org/10.4103/picr.picr_253_22.

¹⁴ Mijung Kim, David Wagner, and Qingna Jin, "Tensions and Hopes for Embedding Peace and Sustainability in Science Education: Stories from Science Textbook Authors," *Canadian Journal of Science, Mathematics and Technology Education* 21, no. 3 (September 2021): 501–17, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s42330-021-00157-3>.

competitive and relevant to industry needs.¹⁵ In this context, the curriculum is designed to meet academic standards and equip students with the skills needed in the world of work. Interviews with lecturers and alumni show agreement on the importance of integrating communication skills, cooperation, and analytical abilities into the curriculum. Therefore, further emphasis should be placed on integrating technology into learning to ensure all students have the required skills.¹⁶

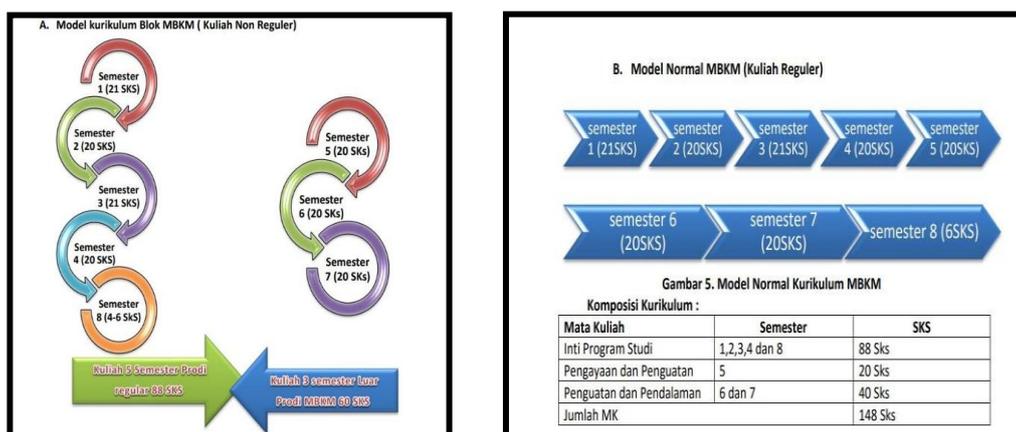


Figure 1. MBKM-OBE PBA 2021 Curriculum Model¹⁷

MBKM-OBE curriculum planning for the Arabic Language Education Study Program based on employability skills shows excellent potential in preparing ready-to-use graduates. By optimizing relevant teaching methods and strengthening partnerships with industry, this curriculum can be more effective in meeting the job market's needs. Periodic evaluation of the curriculum and feedback from students and alumni will be essential to ensure the curriculum remains relevant and responsive to changes in the world of work. The following figure shows the MHM-OBE planning in the Arabic Language Education Study Program at Jambi University.

In general, the planning of MBKM learning rights in Arabic Language Education study program was carried out with several schemes and models, including implementing blended learning lectures by implementing regular lectures and MBKM in a curriculum structure. Regular lectures were carried out from semesters 1 to 4 and 8 with 88 credits of core study program courses. After that, the selection of the MBKM program was carried out in semesters 5, 6, and 7,

¹⁵ Pengyue Guo et al., "A Review of Project-Based Learning in Higher Education: Student Outcomes and Measures," *International Journal of Educational Research* 102 (2020): 101586, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijer.2020.101586>.

¹⁶ Xu Wang et al., "Empowering Teachers' Professional Development with LLMs: An Empirical Study of Developing Teachers' Competency for Instructional Design in Blended Learning," *Teaching and Teacher Education* 165 (October 2025): 105091, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2025.105091>.

¹⁷ Documentation, the curriculum book for the Arabic language study at Jambi University

equivalent to 60 credits, using the method of converting grades and fulfilling specific competencies.

Implementation of the Employability Skill-Based MBKM-OBE Curriculum

The implementation of the Merdeka Learning Campus Merdeka (MBKM) program at the Arabic Language Education Study Program (PBA), Jambi University focuses on developing employability skills or essential work skills for graduates so that they can adapt to various industrial and professional sectors, both domestically and abroad. The MBKM implemented in the PBA Study Program involves multiple activities, such as educational internship programs such as teaching assistance and teaching campus, certified independent projects, village innovation (pro-idea) and independent student exchange (PMM). These activities aim to improve students' ability skills, particularly in digital literacy, intercultural communication, and technological adaptation relevant to Arabic language teaching.

The Arabic Language Education Study Program adopts the OBE-based MBKM model by adjusting the essential learning outcomes of the CPL and the Arabic Language Graduate Profile, which align with the study program's vision and mission. The following is an overview of the MBKM implementation activities of the Arabic Language Education Study Program at Jambi University. The figure below describes the MBKM-OBE activities that PBA students have participated in from 2021-2023.



Figure 3. MBKM activities of Arabic Language Education Study Program at Jambi University¹⁸

Arabic students of Jambi University have participated in three MBKM themes: teaching assistance, independent projects, and free student exchange (PMM).

Assistance Program and Campus Teaching

The assistantship and Teaching Campus program, based on student interest, is the most popular option among Arabic Language Education students, as it is directly related to teaching and learning practices in the field. This program offers students hands-on experience in professional educational environments. According to an interview with a lecturer SJ, the internship is carried out in collaboration with various educational institutions, particularly schools that are

¹⁸ <https://new.lp3m.unja.ac.id/index.php/dokumen/>

engaged in Arabic language instruction. Students participate in the program for one semester, during which they practice language skills, translate texts, and integrate technology into language teaching. He expressed,

"Students can develop communication, critical thinking, and collaboration skills through this teaching assistant program in real work situations. They gain first-hand experience in applying classroom-acquired skills in actual educational settings, including the use of teaching technologies and digital literacy and numeracy applications." (SJ)

In addition, internships also helped students adapt to professional work culture and improve their ability to communicate effectively with schools where they serve as teachers.

Outstanding Independent Project Program

Independent project activities in the MBKM in the study program were designed to equip students with analytical and technical skills in Arabic language teaching. This project involved students creating digital content relevant to Arabic language learning, such as interactive modules, learning videos, and text analysis applications.

"This project provides a space for students to be creative and develop applicable technology-based Arabic learning products to integrate theory with practice," (SJ)

In this independent project, students were given the freedom to choose topics that are relevant to their interests but are still directed to produce work that has the potential to support their skills in the world of work. In addition, students were also guided to use digital software and applications commonly used in language teaching so that they can develop deep digital literacy. This activity allows students to apply their technical skills and problem-solving abilities in real projects and prepares them to face the demands of technology in language teaching. It is proven that after several times guided by accompanying lecturers, the students could win Arabic language competitions both nationally and internationally.



Figure 4. Documentation of PBA student's academic achievements.

Exchange Program for Students (PMM) of the Arabic Language Program

The Merdeka student exchange program at Jambi University Education Study Program provides an essential opportunity for students to expand their academic network and enrich their learning experience. By participating in this exchange, students learn from other institutions in Indonesia and gain new perspectives on different Arabic language teaching approaches. A lecturer at the study program explains,

"This program allows students to exchange ideas and learning methods with their peers from various universities, which will certainly enrich their knowledge. Thus, this exchange supports a more comprehensive academic development for the students."

Furthermore, this student exchange also shapes students' ability to deal with cultural diversity and different learning approaches. The head of the Arabic Language Education study program at Jambi University added,

"Students who take part in this program will be better prepared to adapt and develop interpersonal skills, which are very important in the world of work."

This reflects that the program not only focuses on academic aspects but also on developing essential soft skills. The results of this interview show that the Merdeka student exchange in the Jambi University program contributes to the formation of graduates who are more competent and readier to face global challenges in the future.

Evaluation of Obe-based MBKM curriculum

In learning, there are different evaluation tools to measure OBE implementation: course report assessments, self-study evaluations, program annual reports, student surveys, and external and internal reviews. ³ In addition, some models help educators map the curriculum and ensure the progress of OBE implementation across programs in terms of depth, coverage, value, and proficiency. The implementation of MBKM in the Arabic Language Education study program has met these standards. An evaluation has been carried out in each year of program implementation.

**MAHASISWA MBKM PRODI S1 PENDIDIKAN BAHASA ARAB
BERDASARKAN BENTUK KEGIATAN PEMBELAJARAN DAN
NAMA PROGRAM TAHUN 2021 -- 2023**

BENTUK KEGIATAN PEMBELAJARAN/NAMA PROGRAM	2021	2022	2023	Total
Asistensi Mengajar	15	28	12	55
Kampus Mengajar	15	7	12	34
Magang Kependidikan	0	21	0	21
Bela Negara	0	0	0	0
Kewirahusahaan	0	0	0	0
KKNT	11	0	0	11
PHP2D	11	0	0	11
Magang Dudi	0	0	0	0
Pertukaran Mahasiswa	0	4	0	4
PMM	0	4	0	4
Proyek Kemanusiaan	0	0	0	0
Riset	0	0	0	0
Studi Indenden	0	0	0	0
Jumlah	26	32	12	70

LP3M UNJA

Figure 5. Recapitulation of MBKM PBA Jambi University

The following evaluation focuses on the recapitulation of MBKM activities of the Arabic Language Education study program that have been implemented and evaluated based on data reports from the Jambi University Merdeka Belajar information system (<https://siakadeka.unja.ac.id/>). The Jambi University Learning Development and Quality Assurance Institute (LP3M) has analyzed the data. MBKM program for the PBA study program is the teaching assistance program, which attracts the most interest every year, followed by the student exchange program and KKNT. There were 70 active students with an achievement of 20 per cent, by the central performance targets of the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia from 2021 to 2023.

Support and Obstacles to the Implementation of MBKM Based on Employability Skill

Institutional Support and Campus Policy

One of the main supports in implementing MBKM based on employability skills comes from institutional policies that support the flexibility of study programs in designing learning activities that are relevant to the needs of the world of work. According to SJ, the MBKM policy promoted by the government through the Ministry of Education and Culture and Research has provided autonomy for study programs to design a more applicable curriculum that focuses on employability skills. This support from the campus allows the study program to develop various activities that support students' abilities, such as internship programs in industry, collaborative projects with educational institutions, and student exchanges. The campus' flexible policy in building the MBKM curriculum is relevant to the Agile Curriculum theory which emphasizes the adaptability of the curriculum to the dynamics of the labor market.¹⁹ The finding that the Arabic Language Education at Jambi University utilizes MBKM autonomy to integrate internship programs and credit conversions strengthens Kember's argument that the speed of an institution's response to industry changes determines the readiness of graduates. In addition, the campus also provides convenience in the administrative process for students who take part in the MBKM program, such as adjusting study loads and converting courses.

Collaboration with Industry and Partners

Another significant support is cooperation with industry partners and related institutions relevant to Arabic. The study program actively builds relationships with institutions that require Arabic language skills, such as translation agencies, government agencies, media, and educational institutions. This collaboration allows students to be directly involved in the field and develop skills relevant to work needs. This collaboration will enable students to engage in actual practices, such as translating texts, working as Arabic teaching assistants, or managing

¹⁹ Andrea Andrea and David David, "Applying Agile Across the IT Curriculum," *ISEDJ* 18, no. 1 (February 1, 2020), <https://isedj.org/2020-18/n1/ISEDJv18n1p14.html>.

Arabic-based content in digital media. With this collaboration, students gain hands-on experience that enhances their employability skills. Arabic Language Education Study Program collaboration with industry shows that the “learning by doing” approach remains relevant, but needs to be reinforced with long-term and sustainable partnership strategies, as proposed in the theory of ecosystem-based education.²⁰ The findings also highlight the need for further research on the effectiveness of partnership models based on digital platforms (e.g., remote internship projects) to overcome geographical limitations.

Lecturer Involvement in Guiding Students

Lecturers are essential in successfully implementing MBKM based on employability skills, especially in guiding internships, independent projects, and project-based learning. Lecturers' ability to provide guidance and feedback and monitor student development is a key factor in supporting this program. Lectures in the study program try to guide students intensively to overcome the obstacles faced during the program. The lecturers' guidance helps students develop analytical and applicative skills and adjust to industry demands. In addition, the support of lecturers in guiding and motivating students increases their confidence in applying the skills they learn in the world of work. The finding that intensive lecturer guidance helps students develop analytical and application skills is in line with the concept of transformative mentorship which emphasizes the role of lecturers as facilitators of experiential learning. The theory of employability pedagogy explains that effective lecturer mentoring is able to bridge the gap between academic knowledge and industry needs.²¹

Barriers

Infrastructure and Technology Limitations

Limited infrastructure and access to technology are the main obstacles in implementing MBKM based on employability skills in the Arabic Language Education study program. Some students from remote areas have difficulty accessing the tools and technology needed, such as language teaching software, stable internet access, and adequate computer equipment. Unstable internet access hinders the implementation of online-based programs, including during project-based learning. Many of the students were constrained by inadequate access to technology, which prevents them from participating in digital-based activities. This limitation affects students' development of the technological skills and digital literacy needed in work, especially in independent project activities and digital

²⁰ Ainurul Rosli and Luca Cacciolatti, “The Role of Universities in the Development of the Local Knowledge Base: Supporting Innovation Ecosystems through Skills Development and Entrepreneurship,” *International Journal of Intellectual Property Management* 12, no. 1 (2022): 64, <https://doi.org/10.1504/IJIPM.2022.121018>.

²¹ Michael Healy, “Careers and Employability Learning: Pedagogical Principles for Higher Education,” *Studies in Higher Education* 48, no. 8 (August 3, 2023): 1303–14, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2023.2196997>.

training.²² To overcome this obstacle, the study program seeks to provide supporting facilities on campus and additional training for students needing technological literacy assistance.

Obstacles to Student Adaptation to the World of Work

Some students experience difficulties adapting to the professional work environment and its challenges. Students not accustomed to a formal work atmosphere often have problems managing time, communication, and the demands of the work given during the internship program. "Some students are not mentally prepared to face real work situations, so adapting takes longer. This obstacle can hinder the process of developing students' illnesses. This obstacle causes students to lack confidence when entering the world of work or facing practical tasks that require professional skills.²³ To overcome this, the PBA Study Program organizes a work preparation training program before the internship to equip students with adaptation and practical communication skills. This training is expected to help students face challenges in the world of work with more confidence.

High Academic Load for Students

Implementing MBKM often poses challenges for students in terms of time management. The combination of routine academic tasks, the obligation to participate in MBKM programs such as internships or independent projects, and the demands of completing the final project make the burden on students heavy. Some students feel overwhelmed by the high academic load, especially when they have to complete academic assignments simultaneously as internships or independent projects. "Many students have difficulty dividing their time between educational and MBKM activities, thus affecting their learning outcomes.

Difficulty in Integrating Theory with Practice

Students in Arabic Language Education study program often face obstacles in connecting the theories they learn in class with real-world situations. Although students have adequate theories, they struggle to apply them effectively during internship programs or independent projects. Students need additional time and guidance to integrate theory with relevant practices in the field.²⁴

Implementing the employability skills-based MBKM program in the study program has significant support from the institution, lecturers, and industry

²² Mingzhu Wang and Xianfei Yin, "Construction and Maintenance of Urban Underground Infrastructure with Digital Technologies," *Automation in Construction* 141 (September 2022): 104464, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.autcon.2022.104464>.

²³ Ali Budiman, "Implementation of the Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) Curriculum in PETE Study Program," *Journal of Physical and Outdoor Education* 5, no. 1 (April 30, 2023): 1–10, <https://doi.org/10.37742/jpoe.v5i1.221>.

²⁴ Zakiyyah Zakiyyah, Mutiara Dwi Cahyani, and Nurwanti Fatnah, "Readiness of the Science Education Study Program in the Implementation of the 'Merdeka Belajar - Kampus Merdeka' (MBKM) Curriculum," *Scientiae Educatia* 10, no. 2 (December 31, 2021): 160, <https://doi.org/10.24235/sc.educatia.v10i2.9243>.

partners. The support provided by the campus and lecturers allows students to access internship programs, independent projects, and student exchanges that support their work skills. Collaboration with industry partners also provides real-world experience for students, allowing them to develop the communication and digital literacy skills needed in the world of work. However, implementing this program is not free from various obstacles, such as limited access to technology for some students, difficulties in adapting to the world of work, high academic loads, and challenges in connecting theory with practice. These obstacles point to the need to provide additional support, such as adequate access to technology and guidance in applying theory to practice.²⁵

The transition to an employability skills-based curriculum, limited facilities, and the lack of stakeholder participation mainly caused the obstacles faced in implementing this research. Nevertheless, strategic efforts made during the research process have helped to reduce these obstacles and encourage the achievement of research objectives, namely improving the quality of Arabic Language Education Study Program graduates at Jambi University by emphasizing skills that increase competitiveness in the world of work.

Conclusion

The implementation of the Outcome-Based Education (OBE) curriculum based on Merdeka Belajar-Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) in the Arabic Language Education Study Program at the University of Jambi has been proven to improve graduates' work skills, especially in communication, leadership, and professional adaptation. Programs such as internships, independent projects, and student exchanges—supported by lecturer training and industry collaboration—provide practical experiences that encourage work readiness. However, challenges such as limited infrastructure, uneven understanding of OBE among lecturers, and weak industry partnerships need to be addressed immediately to optimize the program.

To strengthen implementation, intensive training for lecturers on OBE, improvement of digital facilities, and expansion of networks with Arabic-based industries are needed. Policies such as incentives for supervising lecturers, special budget allocations for partnerships, and integration of competency certification into the curriculum can be long-term solutions. Further research is recommended to focus on the long-term impact of the program on graduates' careers and more sustainable industry collaboration models.

²⁵ Herman et al., "Development Application of National Curriculum-Based Learning Outcome Assessment," *Journal of Higher Education Theory and Practice* 23, no. 2 (February 7, 2023), <https://doi.org/10.33423/jhetp.v23i2.5809>.

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Author Contribution Statement

MS conceived the study, designed the methodology, and wrote the original draft. AMZM conducted data analysis and visualization. AY contributed to literature review and validation. NBA performed formal analysis and manuscript editing. All authors reviewed and approved the final manuscript.

Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare the following financial interests or personal relationships which may be considered as potential competing interests: Muhammad Sobri has received research funding from Jambi University for projects related to this study. Additionally, Furthermore, one of the co-authors has previously collaborated with the other University on a similar topic, though this does not influence the objectivity of the current research. The funding sources had no role in the study design, data collection, analysis, interpretation, or decision to submit the manuscript for publication. All authors have disclosed any affiliations or financial involvement with any organization or entity with a financial interest in the subject matter discussed in this paper. No other potential conflicts of interest, whether direct or indirect, are reported by the authors.

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