

The MBKM Programs in The Higher Education Settings: EFL Students' Expectations

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A B S T R A C T

The *Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka* or Emancipated Learning-Independent Campus, hereinafter called *MBKM*, was launched by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology in 2020. In consequence, several higher education institutions may implement the *MBKM* curriculum. This study attempts to explore EFL students' expectations towards eight programs of the *MBKM*. This study utilized qualitative descriptive, and the data were obtained through open-ended questions. Furthermore, 33 students in the sixth semester of the English Language Education Study Program (ELESP) participated as the respondents. The data were analyzed descriptively by describing the students' expectations towards the *MBKM* programs in their study program. The findings revealed that they have high expectations for each program of *MBKM*, for instance, the Internship program provides a real-life experience, and clear job descriptions for students from different majors. The next program, the Teaching Assistance provides students opportunities to teach in the class and improve their teaching skills. Meanwhile, the Research activities enhance students' critical thinking skills, problem-solving, article publication, and knowledge of research methods. Furthermore, the Humanity project enhances students' social sensitivity to community issues. The Entrepreneur program facilitates students in the business sector and reduces unemployment in Indonesia. The Independent project enhances students' innovative ideas and increases students' bargaining power at both national and international levels. The last program, the Community service facilitates students to identify communities' problems, and develop the village. The implication of the *MBKM* curriculum will positively contributed to the successful of the best practice of the aforementioned programs in each higher institution in the near future.

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Introduction

Today's advances in science and technology have evolved in many aspects of life, including in the educational sector. Learning transformation is required to equip and train higher education graduates to become an excellent generation, and possess the knowledge and skills necessary for entering the workforce and industry (Akmalina & Prastyo, 2023; Arrozi *et al.*, 2022). However, the advancement of technology must be fully supported by the creativity and innovation of human resources (Ahmad *et al.*, 2022). Student competencies must be developed to be more sensitive to the demands of the 21st learning paradigm to prepare students to face rapid changes in society and the workplace, as well as the challenges of rapid technology advancements (Dian *et al.*, 2023).

The Director of General of Higher Education (*Dirjen Dikti*) confirms that Indonesia's sustainable growth highly depends on creativity and innovation. Therefore, university students must be prepared to become skilful, and adaptable, possess critical thinking skills, effective communication, and able to solve complex problems (Arrasyid,

2023). In response to these issues, Nadiem Makarim, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia, launched the *Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka* or Emancipated learning-Independent Campus in 2020, hereinafter called *MBKM*. This optional program allows students both in state and private universities to study outside of their main study program and campus (Apoko *et al.*, 2022).

According to Ministerial Decree Number 3, Year 2020 regarding the education national standard, a university should facilitate the students to take credits from outside of the institution for a maximum of two semesters, which is equal to 40 credits, and to take credits from several study programs within the same university for one semester, which is equal to 20 credits (Ahmad *et al.*, 2022). Next, a university should create academic rules and/or guidelines to support outside learning programs, and it should provide a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the project partners. Eight supervised activities can be conducted by students outside of universities, namely 1) Internship program; 2) Community service projects (*KKN*); 3) Teaching assistants; 4) Student exchange programs; 5) Research projects; 6) Entrepreneur; 7) Independent projects; and 8) Humanity project.

The purpose of *the MBKM* program is to optimize graduates' competence in both soft and hard skills (Nadeak, 2023; Sukmawati *et al.*, 2023), so that they will be more suitable to the needs of the times and will be ready to lead the nation's success in the future. It also aims to build graduates' character. By joining this program, students will have chances to gain more experience, knowledge, critical thinking skills, and collaboration skills (Mukhtar *et al.*, 2021). These experiential learning programs are equipped with a flexible curriculum and designed to help students develop their potential based on their interests and abilities.

The *MBKM* curriculum brings significant solutions for enhancing Indonesia's human resources (Marpaung *et al.*, 2022). Meanwhile, Sampelolo & Kombong, (2022), state that there are two main advantages of the *MBKM* programs, namely academic advantages and life skills advantages. However, the *MBKM* programs provide some challenges and chances for students to develop their creativity, innovation, abilities, personality, and interests. The successful candidate for the program should fulfill the requirements such as; the student is active and officially registered in *PDDikti* at a university or institution that has been awarded with “B” accreditation level. In addition, the successful implementation of *MBKM* requires the cooperation of several stakeholders, including, students, study programs, faculties and universities, and collaborators or industry (Mulyono *et al.*, 2023).

The students' expectations are important to be taken into consideration by the authority because students as the target of the program will address what they want to achieve and expect by participating in the *MBKM* program. This information will be used as beneficial input for the improvement of the *MBKM* program and its implementation shortly. Sutisna, (2001), states that the expectation is belief or conviction about what people feel that happens in a specific circumstance. Moreover, expectation is a person's tendency to act with the expectancy of specific outcomes and an attraction to the activities and outcomes achieved. Knowing students' expectations can be the greatest way to evaluate and identify the weaknesses and strengths of the *MBKM* program, as well as improve it for the coming years (Mulyono *et al.*, 2023). In this present study, the expectations refer to EFL students' expectations to achieve through the eight *MBKM* programs that were launched by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia in 2020.

Several studies have been conducted on the issue of *the MBKM* curriculum, for instance, Wardhani & Katoningsih, (2022), conducted a study to examine how the students of the UMP Civil Engineering Study Program perceived the *MBKM* program. They thought that the program prepares students to be ready to work in the community upon they graduate. Thus, they have positive perceptions towards the implementation of *MBKM* in their study program. However, students found it hard when they were outside of campus because they were not ready to handle the jobs assigned by the users. In addition, there are some gaps between what they had on campus and what they faced at the workplace.

Suartini & Hidayat, (2022), carried out a study to figure out how students in the Faculty of Law at Universitas Al Azhar Indonesia perceive the implementation of the *MBKM* program, and to identify any challenges they may encounter. A qualitative descriptive was used as a method of the research, and 466 active students participated as respondents in an online survey. The findings of the study indicated that students' perceptions of the *MBKM* program are categorized into low level, due to a lack of information, socialization, and understanding about the program. Despite the results, the majority of students believe that the *MBKM* activities are beneficial to facilitate them in meeting the demands of the work industry.

Another relevant study carried out by Putera & Sugianto, (2020), examined the students' perceptions and optimism about the *MBKM's* policy off-campus internship program. The findings showed that students had a favorable attitude toward the off-campus internship program (49%) and were highly optimistic that it would be helpful if it is implemented (71%). (Permono *et al.*, 2021), carried out a quantitative study to find FIK UNNES students' perceptions about the *MBKM* program and how it affects their participation. To gather the data, the researchers used a questionnaire through Google Forms. The result of the study revealed students obtained a percentage of 43.8% in the receiving aspect, a percentage of 44.6% in the comprehending aspect, and a percentage of 44.6% in the assessing component. Thus, they concluded that the *MBKM* program is categorized into a "Medium" level.

Despite the plethora of studies into the *MBKM* program in the university context, the study that is focused on the expectations of EFL students towards eight *MBKM* programs is still a few to the best of the author's knowledge. Most of the studies which have been conducted by previous researchers only deal with students' perceptions in partial, and do not comprehensively discuss the whole programs of the *MBKM*. Besides, the previous studies mostly examined the implementations of the *MBKM* program. Meanwhile, the present study explored the students' perceptions of the whole (eight) programs of the *MBKM*, namely internship programs, community service programs, teaching assistants, student exchange programs, research, entrepreneurship, independent projects, and humanity projects in a qualitative descriptive approach by exploring EFL students' expectations through the open-ended questions as the research instrument. It is worth exploring students' expectations before implementing the programs to get a better picture of how the program would be implemented.

The English Language Education Study Program (ELESP) of Universitas Teknologi Yogyakarta (UTY) is one of the English study programs that support the *MBKM* curriculum. It is believed that through *the MBKM* curriculum, student's academic skills and experience would be increased and fulfill the requirement to work in the community in years to come. For instance, EFL students at the ELESP of Universitas Teknologi Yogyakarta took part in one of the eight programs in *the MBKM* curriculum, namely Teaching Assistance (field teaching practice). This program provides real

experience for EFL students to implement their teaching knowledge and learning theory obtained in the microteaching and TEFL class at the university by teaching students in secondary level education. Thus, the program plays an important role in preparing students to be professional teachers in the future.

The findings of this study are expected to provide new insights, and knowledge regarding what students want to experience and achieve through the *MBKM* programs for the stakeholders, including students, authorities, universities, study program coordinators, and users. Furthermore, these findings are expected to be used as references for students, universities, authorities, and other stakeholders in making decisions and evaluations related to *MBKM* programs for the betterment of the program and its implementation in Indonesia. Thus, the present study attempts to explore the ELESP students' expectations towards eight *MBKM* programs launched by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia in 2020.

Research Method

The present study employed a qualitative descriptive research design to describe the ELESP students' expectations towards the eight *MBKM* programs launched by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia. 33 students from the sixth semester at the English Language Education Study Program of Universitas Teknologi Yogyakarta participated in the present study. They were included because they have been using the *MBKM* curriculum, and received socialization from campus related to *MBKM* programs. An online questionnaire in the form of open-ended questions was administered using Google Forms to the respondents. There were sixteen questions altogether, and students were asked to express their expectations related to each of the eight programs provided in the *MBKM*.

After gathering the data needed, researchers analysed the data using the interactive model which is proposed by Miles & Huberman, (1994) namely data reduction, data display, and conclusion. Researchers in the data reduction process classified and organized them into prominent themes. This step made it possible for researchers to focus on the necessary data and discard the irrelevant information. Meanwhile, in data display, researchers presented the relevant data from open-ended questions in the form of excerpts of what respondents uttered to express their expectations. In addition, researchers analyzed the relevant themes and cross-referenced the data and other sources to confirm the findings. In the conclusion part, researchers concluded to address the main point of findings and discussion position).

Result and Discussion

Result

The ELESP Students' Expectations Towards Eight Programs of MBKM

To gather the data needed, researchers administered an open-ended question to 33 ELESP students, and asked them to answer all items in the questionnaire by stating their expectations towards each of the eight programs of *MBKM*, namely 1) Internship program; 2) Community service projects (*KKN*); 3) Teaching assistants; 4) Student exchange programs; 5) Research project; 6) Entrepreneur; 7) Independent projects; and 8) Humanity project. The results of the open-ended question on the students' expectations for each of the *MBKM* programs are classified into the main themes and used the procedures as proposed by Miles & Huberman, (1994), described as follows.

1. Students' Expectations for the Internship Program

The results of the open-ended question revealed that the respondents expected the program to provide strong networking which will lead them to work together with people from different regions, cultures, and tribes. Thus, they can gain more knowledge and experiences, for instance, as stated by R1 and R2 in excerpt 1 as follows:

"I expect to build friendships among us from different regions, tribes, cultures, and religions, thus, it strengthens our nationality." (R1)

"I hope that students can learn more from other cultures, knowledge so that they can build a harmonious cross-cultural relationship." (R2)

Other findings revealed that most students expect that this program will have a good impact on them because they could obtain real-life experience. This program will increase the soft skill that is needed in the workplace such as; good communication skills, teamwork, and strong leadership. Besides, they have chances to implement the knowledge which have been gained during the teaching and learning process on campus in a real work situation. Those expectations were expressed by R2, R6, R7, R9, R10, R26, and R33 in excerpt 2, as follows:

"Hopefully the program can improve our skills that will support our academic knowledge obtained on campus. Indeed, the internship is a real-life experience." (R2)

"The internship program will provide opportunities for students to work, and train to work in a company or the field of education." (R6)

"Students explore the knowledge that has been taught in class (in theory) and implemented them when they participate in the internship (in practice)." (R7)

"Hopefully, the program provides chances to gain insight, networking, expands opportunities to get a job." (R9)

"My expectation is the program will create students to be active, diligent, and hard worker in the society." (R10)

"...students can be skilful and become a confident people at work, I hope this internship program can expand my academic knowledge." (R26)

"I expect that this program can have a big influence on my hard skills and soft skills. Besides, the internship facilities and places as well as a work environment will support students' activities at the workplace." (R33)

Other respondents stated that internship will give them real-life experience in the workplace, they will have work simulation in a real situation so that they will not get shocked when they enter their real job in the future. Besides, to prevent fresh graduates from not having work experience, Students' expectations on this issue, for instance, addressed by R14, R16, R21, and R30 in excerpt 3, as follows:

“...it is hoped that with the internship program, students will know more about what the world of work will be like so they can be more prepared for themselves in the future.” (R14)

“The internship program is expected to provide learning/work experience to students so that they can prepare themselves when they graduate from university.” (R16)

“I hope to gain new experiences and be able to implement the knowledge that I have gained in lectures. In addition, students can experience field practice directly.” (R21)

“I expect that this internship program will provide me with various work experiences that can help me to face the real world of work. For example, know the procedures of how to contact supervisors, communicate with co-workers, and acknowledge the corporate culture.” (R30).

2. Students’ Expectations for the Community Service Program (KKN)

In the Community Service Program, students expect to have real-life and learning experiences in the community outside the campus, identify problems, and help solutions to problems that exist in the village. The respondents' expectations on this issue can be seen, for instance, addressed by R15, R18, R21, and R28 in excerpt 4, as follows:

“...by joining the KKN program, I hope to be more sensitive to the needs of the underdeveloped villages, listen to the aspirations of residents, and facilitate their lives by implementing various work programs.” (R15)

“...I expected to gain community life experience and be able to develop, and apply academic knowledge in the village, thus, I will be a problem solver” (R18)

“I hope that the KKN program can develop my social life, help others, and implement the knowledge that has been obtained on campus, as well as increase village resources potential by working together with them.” (R21)

“I expect to obtain vivid experience before my graduation, involve myself directly in social interactions, and be a problem solver for the community.” (R28)

3. Students’ Expectations for the Teaching Assistant Program

The results of the open-ended question revealed that students expect teaching assistants to provide them with opportunities to be professional teachers and gain teacher competencies when entering the teaching profession. In addition, they hope to develop their personality, and characteristics as a real teacher. To address their expectations on this program, R1, R16, R21, and R27, stated them in excerpt 5, as follows:

“I hope to develop my competence, characteristics, personality, and knowledge as a professional teacher in the future.” (R1)

“...by joining the Teaching Assistance Program, I can gain great experience, and new knowledge that has never been taught on campus. I think I will have first-hand experience how to become a real teacher” (R16)

"I expect to recognize the school environment, know the school culture, understand the school rules. I can prepare myself very well when I am into the teaching profession in the future." (R21)

"One of the things that I want is to get a teaching certificate for my portfolio as an additional point when applying for a teaching job both in urban and rural areas throughout Indonesia. Besides, it helps the government to improve the balanced distribution of quality teachers in Indonesia." (R27)

Meanwhile, other respondents state that teaching assistant will improve their skills and give them a real teaching experience in educational units, new insight from real classrooms, and classroom management. So, this program gives a chance for them to be well-prepared before entering the teaching profession. Several expectations are expressed by R8, R12, R14, and R18, as reflected in excerpt 6, as follows:

"I hope to improve my classroom management skills, teaching and learning method, as well" (R8).

"It is hoped that we, as the prospective teachers will gain more knowledge and skills on how the teaching and learning process is taking place at the secondary schools" (R12).

"I expect that this program will bring a positive impact on us, as the pre-service teachers and the program improves each individual's teaching skills, as a future teacher" (R14)

"...with the existence of the teaching assistance program in this MBKM curriculum, there are many things that we want to know to be a provision for the future. for example, what are the fun learning methods, how to apply these methods, and many more." (R18)

Other respondents, R13, R19, and 32, stated that teaching assistants will help improve the equity of education quality in Indonesia. Their expectations are presented in excerpt 7, as follows:

"I hope this program will help improve the equity of education quality, as well as the relevance of primary and secondary education to higher education in Indonesia."(R13)

"...it is expected that the MBKM program helps improve the equitable development of education"(R19)

"It is expected to realize educational equality and help equalize the quality of education at various levels of education" (R32)

4. Students' Expectations for the Students Exchange Program

In the program of student exchange, several respondents, for instance, R18, R22, R26, R29, and R32 expect that they will have new experiences, new knowledge, skills, and networking. They went on to say that the program will have a positive impact on their future careers. Their expectations can be seen in excerpt 8, as follows:

“I expect that the student exchange program at MBKM can expand and increase my experience and insight for all students. In addition, it is hoped that students will be more confident exploring the world outside of the campus.” (R18)

“My expectation, is students can gain experience during learning activities, and build a harmonious relationship among the people in other campuses and environments.” (R22)

“I expect that with the implementation of the student exchange program in the MBKM curriculum, it is hoped that students or students will gain a lot of experience because they can strengthen their abilities and through student exchanges they can also get cooperation between the two parties and benefit each other.”(R26)

“...by joining the student exchange program, I hope that students can develop their knowledge and skills by the student's learning outcomes.” (R29)

“I hope that students will have the opportunity to experience a new atmosphere of learning in other campuses, develop skills, sensitivity, and expand their academic knowledge.” (R32)

5. Students' Expectations for the Research Project Program

The findings on the students' expectations of this program revealed that the program will train students' critical thinking, and problem-solving skills when they conduct research so that they can give a good solution to the existing issues around them. In addition, they expect to disseminate their findings in national journals indexed. Their expectations can be seen in R14, R22, R26, and R32, as seen in excerpt 9, as follows:

“...by participating in this program, I hope to develop my soft skills, especially my critical thinking skills and problem-solving skills” (R14)

“I expect to conduct research with other researchers from other universities, and write and submit an article in a national journal index.” (R22)

“...I hope by joining this research program, I can develop my competence in the educational field, and propose solutions to the current problems so that I will achieve good academic work.” (R26)

“...by getting involved in this program, I am expecting to train my critical thinking and problem-solving skills. This will be beneficial for various scientific disciplines at the higher education level.” (R32)

“I hope to write articles and publish them in the journal indexed by SINTA” (R33)

Other respondents expect to understand about the research methods and procedures and can conduct research properly and correctly. This issues are expressed by three respondents, namely R15, R17, and R19, as seen in excerpt 10, as follows:

“I expect to gain the knowledge on research methods and procedures, and to think critically so that I can conduct a research properly and correctly.”(R15)

“...by joining the research program in MBKM, I hope to get better skills in research methods and do it well” (R17)

"I hope I can understand and conduct a research properly, and by existing methods" (R19)

6. Students' Expectations for the Entrepreneur Program

The results of the open-ended questions on this particular program showed that the respondents expect to enhance their competencies, both soft skills and hard skills in the field of entrepreneur. Thus, they will be more prepared to face any challenges after graduating from the university. Furthermore, the program is expected to facilitate them in developing their potential to have great entrepreneurial knowledge, attitudes, and skills. Several respondents' expectations of the entrepreneur program can be seen in R1, R25, R26, and R27's statements, presented in excerpt 11, as follows:

"I hope this program will ignite my interest in entrepreneur so that it can increase employment opportunities"(R1)

"Hopefully all students who have a passion for entrepreneur can increase their knowledge and generate their entrepreneurial spirit and business opportunities."(R25)

"I hope this program will help students find their passion for business entrepreneur. Besides, it motivates students to create jobs, and to reduce unemployment."(R26)

"I hope this program creates our entrepreneurial spirit, soft skills, and other abilities that will encourage us to open various business opportunities."(R27)

Other respondents expected that the entrepreneur program would reduce the rate of unemployment in Indonesia. This expectations are expressed by R29, R30, R32, and R33, as seen in excerpt 12, as follows:

"I hope this program will open new job opportunities for many people" (R29)

"My expectations are students can explore and develop their business plan and deal with the problem of unemployment." (R30)

"I hope the entrepreneur program will create many jobs, expand networking, and reduce unemployment." (R32)

"I hope the program will create job opportunities so that it will tackle the unemployment issues in Indonesia" (R33)

7. Students' Expectations for the Independent Project

From the open-ended question, it was found out that students wanted to explore their creativities, and innovations, as well as their potentials. The expectations on this particular program are seen in R11, R17, R19, R24, and R31's statements, as seen in excerpt 13, as follows:

"...by joining the independent project, I hope to be more confident and responsible for my duties." (R11)

"I hope the individual project will make students more creative and innovative, thus, the project will benefit its surroundings." (R17)

“My expectations are students can explore themselves in developing their skills, and passions that are needed in the future.” (R19)

“I expect through the individual projects students will gain the latest ideas and innovations needed for community development” (R24)

“I hope that this program enhances students’ specific competencies, and practical knowledge needed in the future.” (R31)

Other respondents expressed their expectations that the independent project will enhance their competitiveness both at national and international levels, as stated by R3, R4, and R16 in excerpt 14, as follows:

“I hope the program can develop my passions, skills, and competitiveness both at national and international level.” (R3)

“...by joining this program, I will be able to develop my innovations, and ideas to participate in the national and international events.” (R4)

“The program is expected to enhance my innovations in the related project, and propose brilliant ideas in making great works.” (R16)

8. Students’ Expectations for the Humanity Project

The findings on students' expectations for the Humanity project revealed that the Humanity project ignites them to possess social awareness; empathy, sensitivity, and solidarity to public issues and concerns. Furthermore, the Humanity Project brings positive impacts on the largest society by working together with the community to cope with the problems and find alternative solutions. It is expected that there will be many students taking part in the Humanity Project as volunteers. Several respondents' expectations of the humanity program can be seen in R13, R15, R28, R30, and R32's statements, printed in excerpt 15, as follows:

“I hope the humanity project elevates my sense of empathy and solidarity to carry out activities based on religious values, morals, and ethics” (R13)

“...by participating in this program, I expected to contribute to various humanitarian projects and events.”(R15)

“I expect the humanity project to create students to be outstanding who respect others, and humanitarian values in carrying out their duties to help social communities.”(R28)

“...this program is expected to train students to have social sensitivity to explore existing problems and participate in providing solutions by their respective areas of interest and expertise”(R30)

“I hope this project will be the greatest chance to develop and improve students' knowledge, and social skills which in turn to support the achievement of the graduates' profile in the future.” (R32)

Discussion

The results of the open-ended question revealed that the EFL students have great expectations towards the *MBKM* programs which were launched by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia in 2020. The *MBKM* program is another form of learning model that can be used by students at the university level to develop their competencies in a variety of subject areas. According to Sampelolo & Kombong, (2022), the contribution of *MBKM* programs may be categorized into two main advantages, namely academic advantages and life skills advantages. Thus, by incorporating these varied learning media and resources, the university students will have multiple qualifications, and be ready to face the 21st-century learning paradigm (Arrasyid, 2023; Zakiyyah *et al.*, 2021)

The respondents mostly have similar expectations for each of the *MBKM* programs, for instance, in the Internship programs, respondents would like to build great relationships and teamwork with other people from different backgrounds cultures, social statuses, and regions. Furthermore, respondents wish to have a link and match between what they have on campus and in the workplace or industry. The findings are in line with Ahmad *et al.*, (2022), who state that the *MBKM* program strives to link and match between university graduates and the business world. In the Community Service program, respondents expect to gain real-life learning experiences in the community and be part of the problem solvers in the villages.

In the Teaching Assistant program, respondents expect to enhance their knowledge and teaching skills in the teaching and learning process at the institutions where they are deployed. It is a golden chance for them to develop their competence to be professional teachers in the future. Therefore, this program plays an important part in developing students' ability to teach as prospective teachers (Sipahutar *et al.*, 2023). Furthermore, respondents would like to possess competencies as a professional teacher, namely pedagogical competence, professional competence, personality competence, and social competence. Nadeak, (2023), confirm that this program may improve graduates' competencies, both soft skills and hard skills so that they will be ready when entering a teaching career in the future. Moreover, the results of Nitami & Ardi, (2023), showed that teaching assistants through the *MBKM* program have significantly contributed to the participants' competencies for being a professional teacher. The findings of (Putra *et al.*, 2022) revealed that teaching profession is a challenging profession because teachers should possess a number of requirements such as pedagogical knowledge, subject matter knowledge, organization and communication skills, and socio-affective skills. Meanwhile, (Jihan *et al.*, 2023), state that teachers must be creative and innovative in teaching their students.

In the Students Exchange program, our respondents have similar expectations as they have expressed in the Intensive program which emphasized the importance of conducting activities off-campus to possess new experiences, knowledge, and large networking that can be useful for their future careers. These present findings support the findings of Lathifah *et al.*, (2022), who stated that the benefits of studying outside the campus provided students with additional competencies, both soft and hard skills. Meanwhile, in the Research program, the majority of respondents expect that they can conduct research, and will possess higher-order thinking skills (HOTS) in doing research and publications. Sampelolo & Kombong, (2022) confirm that the research program positively contributed to the enhancement of students' academic life.

In the entrepreneur program, the respondents wish to enhance their competencies, both soft skills and hard skills in the field of entrepreneur. It is highly

expected that the program facilitates them in developing their potential to have great entrepreneurial knowledge, attitudes, and skills. Knowing entrepreneur, students will open new businesses which in turn reduce the unemployment rate in Indonesia. This program is appropriate for university students to prepare them to face the world of work (Defrizal *et al.*, 2022). Therefore, they will be ready to face any challenges after graduating from the university.

The respondents, through the independent project, would like to explore their creativities, innovations, as well as their potential so that they can enhance their competitiveness both at the national and international levels. Ahmad *et al.*, (2022), confirm that Indonesia's advanced and sustainable development must be supported by the creativity and innovation of human resources. Meanwhile, Citraningtyas *et al.*, (2021) state that this program is the greatest way for students to gain more experience. Based on these issues, this program is seen as a significant solution for enhancing Indonesia's human resources (Marpaung *et al.*, 2022). The present findings revealed that the expectations towards the Humanity project are very positive because, through this program, they will work together with the community which brings a positive impact on the larger society. By being involved in this program, the students will have higher attention to social awareness and solidarity with public issues and concerns

Conclusion

Several necessary points to be highlighted concerning the EFL students' expectations for the MBKM programs are as follows: 1) The students have positive perceptions of the *Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM)* programs which have been established in 2020 by the Ministry of Education and Culture because the eight programs offered in the *MBKM* are beneficial for students to improve their academic and non-academic knowledge and skills, both soft skills and hard skills which are useful for their future life and career after graduate from university. 2) Each program offered in the *MBKM* namely the Internship program, Community service projects (*KKN*), Teaching assistants, Student exchange programs, Research project, Entrepreneur, Independent projects, and Humanity project, truly support students' personal development and contribute to the community development in the respective areas of interests.

Recommendation

Bearing in mind the great benefits of the *MBKM* programs in years to come, we hereby would like to address some recommendations to students, lecturers, institution, and the authorities as the stakeholders, they are as follows: first, students should be more creative and active to find out about the *MBKM* programs available in the respective university, and further explore the official website of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia to gather more comprehensive programs and activities conducted in each of the *MBKM* program. Moreover, students can apply to a specific program (among the eight programs) of their interest which can increase their knowledge, skills, and competencies for their future career.

Second, lecturers and/or supervisors play an important role in students' success of the *MBKM* program implementation in the future as they will supervise, assist, encourage, and motivate the participants to complete the program accordingly. Moreover, the participants' university of origin takes crucial roles in facilitating them by providing easy access to obtain related documents required and other administrative processes. Therefore, the university and/or institutions should mitigate any potential problems encountered by students before deploying them.

Third, this present study covers only participants in the English Language Education Study Program at Universitas Teknologi Yogyakarta, in Yogyakarta, therefore, we recommend other researchers include a large number of participants from across majors, and gather the data from other universities which run the *MBKM* curriculum throughout Indonesia. In addition, further studies are needed to examine both lecturers' and university students' perceptions (in the tertiary level of education) towards eight *MBKM* programs and their implementation to cope with the shortcomings of the present study. Another study may be conducted to figure out teachers' and high school students' perceptions (in the secondary level of education) towards the *MBKM* curriculums and their implementations

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