



## Exploration of The Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) Curriculum Policy in The Early Childhood Islamic Education Study Program in Indonesia

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**Abstract:** This study aims to explore the development of the Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) curriculum in the PIAUD study program in Indonesia. This research adopts a qualitative descriptive approach with a literature review method. The subjects of this research are faculty members and curriculum developers from the PIAUD study programs at State Islamic University of Syekh Nurjati Indonesia, State Institute for Islamic Studies of Kudus, and State Islamic University of Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah Tulungagung. Data collection techniques involve literature study, and data analysis techniques employ data reduction and data identification. The results of the study reveal that the MBKM curriculum is a designed framework that addresses the challenges of the 21st century by emphasizing the freedom and independence to learn various fields of knowledge. The development of the MBKM curriculum consists of five stages: preparation, planning, development, implementation, and evaluation. Its implementation comprises nine key activities such as curriculum adjustment, collaboration with partners, and continuous assessment.

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## Introduction

The concept of the Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) curriculum is learner or student-centered (Zainal, 2021). The freedom to study 3 semesters outside the study program is part of the decision of the Minister of Culture of the Republic of Indonesia given to universities to be implemented (Oksari, et al., 2022). Therefore, in essence, the MBKM curriculum is aimed at obtaining an optimal and quality learning activity process (Purwanto & Risdianto, 2022). Helping students develop a deep understanding in various fields of knowledge in accordance with their expertise, with the aim of preparing them to be ready to compete in a global environment is the goal (Baharuddin, 2021); (Fatmawati, 2020); (Makarim & Junaidi, 2020); (Hidayatullah, 2021); (Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture Number 03 of 2020 concerning National Higher Education Standards, 2020). Learning objectives in the form of a competency that must be mastered by students. Changes to the curriculum framework require adaptation by all elements of the education system. The process requires careful management so as to produce the impact we want, namely the improvement of the quality of learning and education in Indonesia. Improvement in the quality of learning and education in Indonesia (Mones et al., 2022).

Analysis of the problem reveals several points that form the background of this research. First, MBKM creates freedom and autonomy to students in increasing



independence, freedom of thought, and to improve the education bureaucracy (Aji & Putra, 2021); (Endrawan, et al., 2021). In the era of the Free Learning curriculum, institutions and campuses are required to prioritize student freedom in choosing the courses they will take. The concept of an independent campus, including in the context of early childhood Islamic education, will encourage progress in each study program. However, the implementation of this concept must still pay attention to integrated campus governance and the principles of the tridharma of higher education (Wibawa, et al., 2022). The goal is to create an ideal education system and produce graduates who meet the expectations of the world of work, both in the fields of teaching, companies, business, and banking. Universities are expected to be able to achieve maximum management to produce quality graduates who can compete at the international level and optimally meet the needs of the labor market (Sherly, et al., 2020); (Sopiansyah, et al., 2022). However, there are obstacles in the implementation of the Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) curriculum in higher education. One aspect is the adjustment of the pre-existing college curriculum to the MBKM model. This change can affect the choices of students who may feel worried about changes in the number of Semester Credit Units (SKS) that must be taken in one semester (Irawan, & Suharyati, 2023).

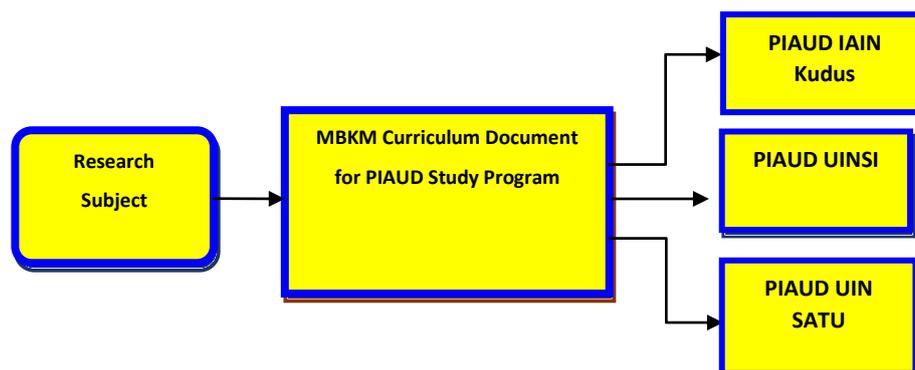
MBKM learning focuses on students as the center (student-centered learning), which is very important in the learning process (Vhalery, et al., 2022); (Chrisyarani, et al., 2022). Through a well-planned and implemented Merdeka Belajar program, students will develop technical skills (hard skills) and social skills (soft skills) significantly (Dikti, 2020). Along with curriculum changes, demands to maximize the potential of soft skills possessed by childhood children (Yulianingsih et al., 2023). The development of science in education is fast, dynamic, and innovative. In order to keep up with these changes, the newly issued Minister of Education and Culture regulations need to be implemented by all universities. This aims to create significant changes for college graduates to be ready to compete at the national and international levels. One of the solutions in improving the quality of education is curriculum development.

Based on the explanation, researchers are interested in analyzing and describing the development of the MBKM curriculum in the early childhood Islamic education study program. MBKM is an innovative program developed by the Ministry of Education and Culture (Kemendikbud) to improve the quality of education in higher education. This program offers students the freedom to pursue courses outside their main study program for three semesters by converting 20 credits. In its implementation, the active role of lecturers and students is very important for the successful application of the MBKM curriculum. Given that early childhood Islamic education requires distinctive pedagogical approaches and that research on MBKM in this specific context remains limited, further analysis is crucial to support more effective curriculum adaptation and ensure the program's relevance to the unique needs of early childhood education. Through this research, it is expected that a comprehensive understanding of curriculum development can be achieved, which may contribute to the improvement of educational practices and policies in PIAUD study programs across Indonesia.

## Research Method

This study used a qualitative descriptive approach with a literature review method. Qualitative research is defined as a tradition in social science that focuses directly on observations and interactions using the language and terminology they use (Angrosino & Rosenberg, 2011); (Becker, 1998); (Kirk & Miller, 1986). Literature is a data analysis that focuses on written materials. The purpose of the research is to analyze the MBKM curriculum

used by PTKI, especially in the PIAUD Study Program under the auspices of the Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia (Kemenag RI). This research uses the method of identifying data from documents that are relevant to the main theme of the research, namely the development of the MBKM curriculum in the PIAUD study program. The subjects and locations of this research are located in the Early Childhood Islamic Education (PIAUD) Study Program of the State Islamic Institute (IAIN) Kudus, the Early Childhood Islamic Education (PIAUD) Study Program of Sultan Aji Muhammad Idris Samarinda State Islamic University (UINSI), and the Early Childhood Islamic Education (PIAUD) Study Program of Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah Tulungagung State Islamic University (UIN SATU).



**Figure 1. Research Subjects**

The data collection technique in this research is a literature study by collecting several MBKM curriculum documents for the PIAUD study program through google searches on the websites of each campus that is the subject and location of this research. The websites of the three research location campuses that were traced by researchers to obtain MBKM curriculum document data designed by the three campuses, namely Early Childhood Islamic Education UIN Sultan Aji Muhammad Idris Samarinda through the link, namely <https://ftik.uinsi.ac.id/en/piaud/>, IAIN Kudus Early Childhood Islamic Education Study Program through the link, namely <https://piaud.iainkudus.ac.id/>, and Early Childhood Islamic Education UIN Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah Tulungagung through the link namely <http://piaud.web.uinsatu.ac.id/>. This data collection is also reinforced by several other related references such as journals, articles, books, and online news related to the big theme of the research, in order to answer the problem formulation in this study. then recording some important points so as to get the essence in the discussion through several stages of verification according to the formulation of the problem. The data analysis technique in this study is by reducing the data (Miles & Huberman, 2014). First to make it easier for researchers to find and focus the form of data, then proceed with identifying the data, namely by providing some important notes that can be presented as references and the core of the discussion and comparison in the study, in order to increase the researcher's understanding of this research problem, then the last one is describing the results of this study, namely analyzing the development of the MBKM curriculum designed by the PIAUD study program which was selected as the subject and research location.

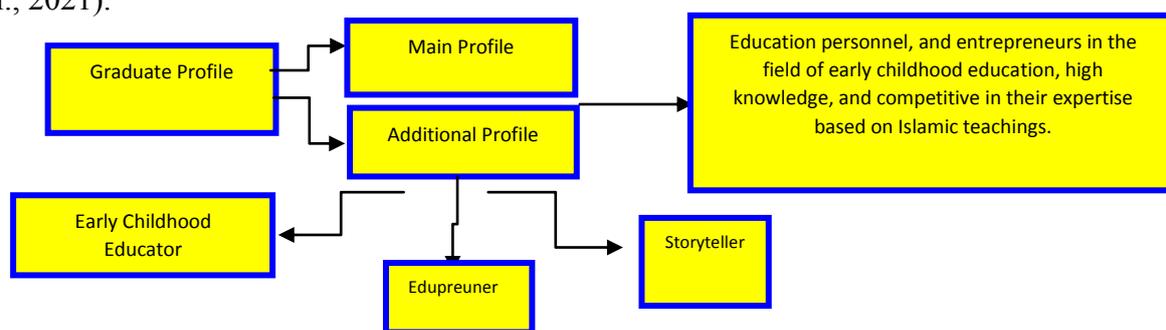
To ensure the validity of the research data, several steps were taken. The documents and sources used in this study were obtained from credible and verified platforms, such as official university websites, reputable journals indexed by Google Scholar, and published books and articles. Only sources that met the criteria of authenticity, relevance, and recency were selected for analysis. Triangulation of data was conducted by comparing information from multiple sources to cross-verify the accuracy and consistency of the data. In addition,

critical reading and evaluation of each source were performed to minimize bias and enhance the trustworthiness of the research findings.

## Results and Discussion

### MBKM Curriculum PIAUD Study Program, Sultan Aji Muhammad Idris Samarinda State Islamic University (UINSI).

The main profile of graduates of the Early Childhood Islamic Education (PIAUD) Study Program at UIN Sultan Aji Muhammad Idris Samarinda includes education personnel and entrepreneurs in the field of early childhood education. In the graduate profile, it is known that there are three components that become additional profiles in the UINSI PIAUD study program in producing student graduates, namely first, PAUD Educators, namely Educators must have the ability to combine Islamic science and PAUD science, using technology, information, and communication professionally, adaptively, and prioritizing universal human values. Second, Edupreuner i.e. Students are expected to be creative and innovative entrepreneurs in creating business opportunities in the field of PAUD by utilizing technology, information, and communication. Third, Storyteller, namely becoming a storyteller in the field of PAUD who is competent, professional, and religious (Mahmud et al., 2021).



**Figure 3. Profile of PIAUD UINSI Graduates**

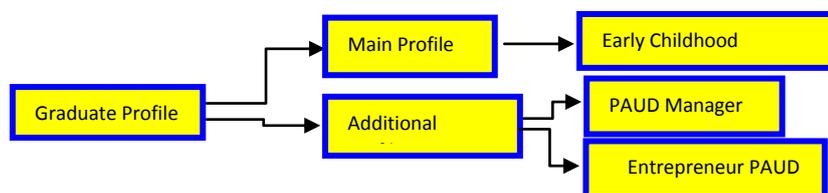
Furthermore, in the Early Childhood Islamic Education (PIAUD) Study Program at UIN Sultan Aji Muhammad Idris Samarinda, learning outcomes (CPs) include attitudes, knowledge, general skills, and specific skills (Mahmud et al., 2021).

Furthermore, the formation of PIAUD UINSI courses refers to the minimum curriculum structure of the PIAUD Study Program. The curriculum structure of the PIAUD study program consists of 4 groups of courses, including national characteristic courses, university characteristics, faculty characteristics, and study program characteristics. The Early Childhood Islamic Education (PIAUD) Study Program of UIN Sultan Aji Muhammad Idris Samarinda has national courses totaling 4 courses with 8 credits, institutional courses totaling 14 courses with 39 credits, faculty courses totaling 10 courses with 25 credits, study program courses including Integrative PKL (integrated PKL-KKN) and thesis totaling 34 courses with 76 credits. The total that must be taken by PIAUD Study Program students is 148 credits (Mahmud et al., 2021).

Off-campus learning activities follow the Ministry of Education and Culture 2020 regulations, including internships, village projects, student exchanges, research, entrepreneurial activities, independent studies/projects, humanitarian projects, and school teaching. Students can choose 8 off-campus learning activities for 1 or 2 semesters with a weight of 20 or 40 credits. Equalization of 20 credits per activity is based on relevant courses and development of hard skills or soft skills. (Mahmud et al., 2021).

## MBKM Curriculum PIAUD Study Program, Institut Agama Islam Negeri Kudus (IAIN Kudus)

The profile of IAIN Kudus's PIAUD graduates consists of three main components. First, PAUD Educators unite Islamic and PAUD knowledge by using science and technology professionally and with integrity. They also demonstrate adaptability in communication and respect for universal human values. Second, as PAUD managers who are able to organize, manage, and coordinate PIAUD institutions using effective and efficient information and telecommunication-based management approaches. They also have an Islamic leadership spirit that is creative, innovative, and communicative. Third, as PAUD entrepreneurs who are able to produce products and services that are relevant to the needs of early childhood and acceptable to the market. They use creative and innovative media, both in the surrounding environment and IT-based (Mundakir, 2021).



**Figure 4. Profile of PIAUD Graduates IAIN Kudus**

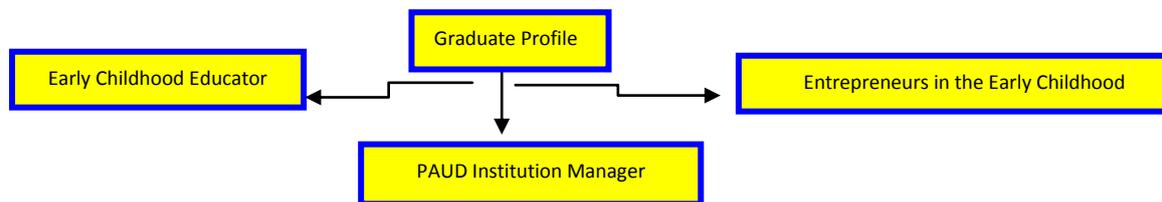
Furthermore, PIAUD IAIN Kudus uses 4 learning achievements including attitude, general skills, knowledge, and specific skills (Mundakir, 2021). The formation of Makul PIAUD IAIN Kudus refers to the structure of courses in the curriculum of PIAUD Study Program. The curriculum structure of the PIAUD study program consists of 3 groups of courses which include national characterization courses, institutional characteristics, and scientific characteristics of the study program (Mundakir, 2021). In the completion of student studies, there are a total of 147 credits divided into 7 semesters. Each semester has a different number of credits (Mundakir, 2021).

In implementing the right to study for 3 semesters, PIAUD IAIN Kudus applies a flexible and adaptive approach according to the development of science and technology and the needs of the job market. The implementation of the right to study for a maximum of 3 semesters consists of internships / work practices = PKL / PPL (outside the university), teaching assistance in educational units = PPL (outside the university), research = research / thesis / collaboration (outside the university), humanitarian projects = PKM / KKN (outside the university), entrepreneurial activities = PKM / PKL (outside the university), independent study = research (outside the university), building villages = PKM / KKN (outside the university), student exchange = study at another university (outside the university). (Mundakir, 2021).

## MBKM Curriculum PIAUD Study Program Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah Tulungagung State Islamic University (UIN SATU)

The main profile of graduates of UIN SATU's PIAUD study program is to become educators, managers of PAUD institutions, and entrepreneurs in the field of PAUD. In the profile of graduates to become educators, students can become professional educators at the PAUD unit level who have competence in the field of PAUD science, have a global outlook, mastery of technology and have a multicultural spirit. In the graduate profile of PAUD institution managers, students can become PAUD managers who are able to develop quality PAUD programs, adapted to early childhood development, cultural diversity, and technological advances. Furthermore, in the profile of graduate entrepreneurs, students can

become entrepreneurs who develop businesses in the field of PAUD in supporting early childhood learning and development. (Susilo et al., 2022).



**Figure 5. PIAUD UIN SATU Graduate Profile**

PIAUD UIN SATU's CPL are prepared following learning outcomes involving aspects of attitudes, attitudinal skills, general skills, specific skills, and knowledge, which refer to KKNi and national standards of higher education. The minimum standards for attitudes and general skills are regulated in Permendikbud No. 3 of 2020, which is then enriched by the study program to provide uniqueness to its graduates. Meanwhile, specific skills and knowledge are formulated in accordance with the KKNi descriptors applicable to the relevant education level (Susilo et al., 2022).

Furthermore, it is known from the study completion scenario designed by PIAUD UIN SATU based on MBKM courses as follows: In semester 1, there are 8 courses with a total of 20 credits. Consisting of 2 compulsory study program courses totaling 7 credits, 3 compulsory faculty courses totaling 6 credits, and 3 compulsory institutional courses totaling 7 credits. Semester 2 also has 8 courses with a total of 20 credits whose details are the same as semester 1. In semester 3, there are 8 courses with a total of 22 credits. Consists of 7 compulsory study program courses totaling 16 credits and 2 compulsory faculty courses totaling 4 credits. Semester 4 has 9 courses with a total of 22 credits, consisting of 7 compulsory study program courses and 2 compulsory faculty courses. In semester 5, there are 9 MBK courses with a total of 20 credits. Semester 6 also has 9 courses with a total of 22 credits, consisting of 8 MBK courses with a total of 20 credits. In semester 7, there are 8 courses with a total of 18 credits. Consisting of 1 MBKM course and 8 SKILL courses with a total of 20 credits. In semester 8, there is 1 compulsory study program course with a total of 6 credits. In the period of semester 1 to 8, students are required to complete a total of 60 courses with a total of 150 credits. Thus, students must complete a number of courses with the allocation of credits that have been mentioned in each semester, until they reach the total specified (Susilo et al., 2022).

In order to implement 3 semesters of learning outside the study program, each PIAUD UIN SATU student is free to choose courses. This learning right includes 1 semester at the same college and 2 semesters outside the college. The courses available in the MBKM program outside the study program are arranged in the form of a package with a total of 20 credits, which are adjusted to the profile of graduates to be achieved. Students have their freedom and preferences, but still refer to the achievement of the Graduate Learning Outcomes of the study program. UIN SATU PIAUD Study Program provides 8 MBKM program course packages in total, consisting of 20 credits. Thus, each student has the opportunity to take courses outside their study program through the MBKM program by choosing one of the 8 available course packages (Susilo et al., 2022).

## Discussion

The MBKM curriculum has been established with reference to relevant regulations, such as Law No. 12/2012 on higher education, the implementation of the Indonesian National Qualifications Framework (KKNi), and the Outcome-Based Education (OBE) approach. In



addition, MBKM follows various other regulations related to social dynamics and advances in science and technology (Makarim et al., 2020);(Satiti & Falikhatun, 2022). One of the objectives of MBKM is to create student-centered learning and prepare them to face learning in higher education institutions that provide autonomy and flexibility. innovative, creative, and provide freedom for students to adjust to their interests. The ultimate goal is to improve the quality of graduates by developing abilities that are in line with the demands of the workplace (Alawi et al., 2022);(Hr & Wakia, 2021).

The reference in the implementation of the PTKI MBKM curriculum refers to the decision of the Director General of Islamic Education Number 1591 of 2022 concerning technical guidelines for implementing independent learning - independent campus at Islamic religious universities. The stages designed by universities in the study program have met the standard stages which include curriculum design, learning implementation, and learning evaluation. In brief, these stages include formulating graduate profiles, determining graduate learning outcomes (CPL), developing courses, course structures, and learning mechanisms.

Study Program has the responsibility of compiling the main graduate profile and additional graduate profile as a description of the duties of students after graduating from the study program in their field of expertise with the addition of certain skills (Makarim et al., 2020). The ability of students is needed to carry out the main profile through the learning outcomes that must be possessed (Susilawati, 2021). The reference for determining the main profile of graduates uses the decision of the Director General of Islamic Education. It is known based on the findings written in the research results that the PIAUD UINSI, PIAUD IAIN Kudus, and PIAUD UIN SATU study programs meet the criteria for determining the profile of graduates in which all three have main profiles and additional profiles. The characteristics of the main profile that can be seen in the three universities in the PIAUD study program are producing professional and competent PAUD educators with Islamic character, while the additional profile has the characteristic of developing PAUD management skills, entrepreneurship, and storytelling skills.

At this stage, curriculum development involves the preparation of graduate learning outcomes by outlining a description of the main graduate profile as an additional profile and additional CPL can refer to KKNI qualifications. The formulation of the main CPL can refer to the Decree of the Director General of Islamic Education on SKL and CPL for undergraduate levels at PTKI and PAI at PTU. The additional CPL can refer to the interests and talents as well as the needs of students in obtaining additional competencies. (Junaidi et al., 2020). The CPL designed by the three universities in the PIAUD study program have achieved conformity. The conformity refers to the MBKM guidelines designed by UINSI PIAUD, IAIN Kudus PIAUD, and UIN SATU PIAUD study programs.

At the next stage, course formulation begins with selecting study materials and learning materials that are in accordance with the main profile and CPL. Course formation is carried out by utilizing courses from other relevant study programs, with the appropriate SKS weight (Makarim et al., 2020);(Junaidi et al., 2020). In simple terms, the knowledge of the study program can be grouped based on the field of study in accordance with its expertise. This group includes the scientific core of the study program as well as the application of science and technology (IPTEK) as a support and support that is the hallmark of the study program.

In the MBKM, there are various types of learning activities, including two semesters of learning in other study programs (Makarim et al., 2020). The concept of a three-semester learning policy outside the study program is based on the understanding that learning processes and experiences can occur in various places and take place throughout life (lifelong



learning). Through the implementation of the MBKM policy, students also have the opportunity to develop adaptability to the learning culture and culture that exists in other educational institutions. (Kholik et al., 2022);(Apriliyani et al., 2022). MBKM activities consist of various learning activities outside the study program and college, such as internships/work practice, village projects, teaching in schools, student exchanges, research, independent studies/projects, entrepreneurship, and humanitarian projects.

Student exchanges enrich students' knowledge and understanding (A. Faiz & Purwati, 2021);(Arifin & Muslim, 2020). The Internship / Work Practice Program is one of the activities for students in the world of work, industry, offices, and the service sector. This program allows students to apply the knowledge and skills they have learned during their time on campus (Makarim et al., 2020);(Junaidi et al., 2020). The teaching assistance program aims to play a role in efforts to improve and maintain the unification between primary, secondary, and higher education in the demands of the times in the teaching process (Nehe, 2021). Through research activities, students have the opportunity to develop critical, logical, systematic, rational, and scientific thinking skills that are very important in various fields of science in higher education. These thinking skills are key to better understanding and applying research methods (Zunaidi et al., 2021). Humanitarian projects reflect a commitment to providing solutions to humanitarian problems in Indonesia. Entrepreneurship aims to develop entrepreneurial activity management institutions and create innovative entrepreneurial implementation models (Makarim et al., 2020). Independent study activities/projects can be in the form of individual or collaborative activities involving students across disciplines in higher education. Through the village development program through KKNT, students can be involved in developing village development and empowerment programs together with the village community where the KKNT is implemented (Makarim et al., 2020);(Ahmad Rizal et al., 2023). Religious moderation is a religious view, attitude, and practice that encourages the application of religious values to protect human dignity and promote common welfare, with the principles of equality, justice, and adherence to the constitution as the basis for national unity. Indicators of religious moderation include a commitment to nationalism, tolerance, rejection of violence, and respect for tradition. Developing a strong national commitment, as well as understanding and practicing religion with a moderate attitude in common life that serves as a link between spirituality and loyalty to the state, to achieve the welfare of a harmonious, peaceful, and tolerant religious life and state (M. F. Faiz, 2023); (Keputusan Direktur Jendral Pendidikan Islam Nomor 1591 Tahun 2022 Tentang Petunjuk Teknis Implementasi Merdeka Belajar-Kampus Merdeka Pada Perguruan Tinggi Keagamaan Islam, 2022).

The results of the above research are expected to serve as a model for the design of the MBKM curriculum in Islamic higher education institutions (PTKI) in Indonesia. However, this study has several limitations, namely the discussion remains general and provides a broad overview of the MBKM curriculum designed by the PIAUD study programs at UINSI, IAIN Kudus, and UIN SATU, without detailing the sub-materials or specific structures included within the curriculum. It is hoped that with these limitations, future researchers can conduct a more detailed analysis by examining the innovations present in each specific component of the MBKM curriculum design. Conceptually, the findings of this study contribute to a deeper understanding of how the MBKM curriculum can be adapted within the context of early childhood Islamic education, emphasizing the importance of flexibility and interdisciplinary approaches in curriculum development. Practically, these findings can provide guidance for study programs in refining their MBKM-based curricula by focusing on specific structures that meet the unique needs of early childhood education,



thereby enhancing the curriculum's relevance and effectiveness.

### Conclusion

Based on the findings and analysis in this study, it can be concluded that MBKM is a curriculum design designed to respond to dynamic changes, facing the challenges and needs of the 21st century. Through curriculum development strategies and approaches, MBKM aims to form students who have professional competence, as well as encourage learning independence and deep understanding with the freedom to study for 3 semesters in other study programs. The development of the MBKM curriculum of the PIAUD study program involves several main elements, including the formulation of graduate profiles, the determination of learning achievements for graduates, course development, curriculum structure, and teaching mechanisms. Within the framework of MBKM learning, there are a series of activities that include student exchanges, internships or work practices, teaching assistance in educational institutions, research/research, independent projects, humanitarian projects, entrepreneurial activities, village development/theme-based real work lectures (KKN), and religious moderation.

### Recommendation

For policy makers, it is recommended to establish clear and detailed guidelines regarding the implementation of the MBKM program specifically for early childhood Islamic education programs, while also providing continuous monitoring and support to ensure that program objectives are met. For university leaders, it is essential to actively facilitate partnerships with external institutions, allocate sufficient resources to support student activities under the MBKM framework, and encourage the development of innovative learning models that align with the goals of independent learning and interdisciplinary competence.

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