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Submission date: 06-Apr-2023 01:55PM (UTC+0700)

Submission ID: 2057362872

File name: Curriculum Design for Emancipated Learning.pdf (821.83K)

Word count: 3833

Character count: 21652



Curriculum Design for Emancipated Learning at Higher Education to Accommodate Experiential Learning for the Students

Bambang Yulianto^(✉), Syamsul Sodiq, Prima V. Asteria, Harmanto Harmanto, Bachtiar S. Bachri, Sueb Sueb, and Hasan Subekti

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Universitas Negeri Surabaya, Surabaya, Indonesia

bambangyulianto@unesa.ac.id

Abstract. The curriculum has a central role in academic activities. The implementation of *Merdeka Belajar* (transl. Emancipated Learning) issued by the Minister of Education and Culture as the new framework is to respond to dynamic changes life in the disruption era. This is an initial developmental research to characterize the Emancipated Learning for both educational and non-educational study programs at the higher education to accommodate the experiential learning for the students. The characterization of the curriculum consists of the structure of the curriculum, programming, and course conversion, as the core concept of the Emancipated Learning curriculum. The data were elaborated through qualitative to represent the characteristics of the curriculum at the university. The results show that the preference for student learning patterns 5-1-2 and 6-0-2 patterns through internships or work practices, real world activities, student exchanges, and research internships and can be used as a form of learning patterns for 2 (two) semesters outside the main programs as mandated by the curriculum. The patterns are to be the reference for the study programs in the implementation of the curriculum to accommodate experiential learning of the students.

Keywords: Curriculum design · experiential learning · higher education

1 Introduction

Unesa as LPTK is obliged to produce quality graduates, especially professional teachers. Getting closer to the world of work is one of the effort to make learning meaningful and from an early age, students have been introduced to the world of work in the future. The concept of introducing students to the world of work is known as the concept of experiential learning. A similar phrase states, that experiential learning is an active learning process in which learners develop knowledge, skills and attitudes that can be transferred from direct experience inside or outside the classroom environment [1]. The theory of experiential learning states that knowledge is created through transformations caused by experience and describes how learning through a process of cognition located can occur [2]. Contextualize potential contributions that experience-based learning may

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S. Setiawan et al. (Eds.): IJCAH 2022, ASSEHR 724, pp. 1105–1113, 2023.

https://doi.org/10.2991/978-2-38476-008-4_118

offer to those involved in the development of academic and professional management, pedagogy, and education [3].

Experiential learning allows students to learn to communicate and collaborate with others, acquire valuable interpersonal skills, and solve complex problems [4]. The theory of experiential learning takes a fundamentally different view of the learning process compared to the theory of behavioral learning [5]. This important point of learning places life experience as a central and important part of the learning process. Problem-based learning or project-based learning is one way to implement experiential learning that is in line with the policy of independent learning.

The government through the Ministry of Education and Culture has enacted the Emancipated Learning (MBKM) curriculum as a form to come Unesa new framework in the field of education. This policy is also intended as a step to respond to the dynamics of changes in various sectors of life today [6]. Through the MBKM programs, it is expected that higher education is able to produce graduates who have 21st Century skills and adapt the challenges and opportunities in the disruptive era [7] and develop an educational curriculum that answers the needs of the industrial revolution era 4.0 [8]. The essence of the Emancipated Learning programs is to provide opportunities for the students to explore their potentials in innovation and collaboration to improve the quality of learning independently according to the needs and passion of each student [8], even when the students have to participate in the off-campus activities beyond the study program they are enrolled.

The existence of higher education is essentially related to the phenomenon of globalization and the competition for mastery of high-quality abilities in all aspects of life. However, education achievements in Indonesia have not yet reached the best quality of education [9] to face challenges in a dynamic and challenging future. The Merdeka Belajar-Kampus Merdeka (MB-KM) Policy issued by the Minister of Education and Culture is a new framework in the field of education to respond to various changes in various fields of life [10]. Through these Emancipated Learning programs, it can meet the desired goals of education which is to build an independent human being as stated by the Indonesian Founding Father of education [11]. The MBKM programs are also expected to produce graduates who are ready to win the challenges of an increasingly complex life in the 21st century the essence of independent learning is to explore the potential of learners and learners in innovating and improving the quality of learning independently. Optimization of education plays an important role in preparing Indonesian citizens to excel in quality terms of education in welcoming Indonesia's golden age, of course, it needs to be developed.

The curriculum is an essential guideline for an institution or study program in carrying out its educational process [12]. Some educational systems follow the national curriculum, based on a disciplinary matrix and the same for all [13]. In addition, the curriculum also illustrates whether or not the quality of education in a study program is good. If the curriculum is designed well, it can be predicted that the educational process carried out is good. A curriculum is the spirit of a learning program whose existence requires planning, design, implementation, and evaluation on an ongoing basis in line with the needs of the community, as well as stakeholders. In this context, Unesa should ensure that the education should be carried out based on the ideals of the nation,

namely educating the life of the nation. This is in line with the theme of the recommended growth strategy for the development of Unesa, namely “Unesa’s Expansion Towards Global Scale Educational Excellence” [14]. Thus, Unesa is required to be able to integrate various main issues of sustainable development in learning.

The study on the revitalization of the university’s curriculum of Emancipated Learning curriculum has been carried out by the Office of Academic Affairs in 2020 to 2021 with recommendations for the need for evaluation and innovation of MBKM curriculum development in Unesa [15]. In addition, Unesa has mapped strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges with the results of Unesa’s relative position to the environment in quadrant I or quadrant growth. Until the time this research was proposed, there were no studies that explored the evaluation of MBKM implementation in Unesa. This research position fills the research gap from research recommendations on the evaluation of MBKM implementation in Unesa. Contrary to the above presentation, the purpose of this strategic policy research is the development of a prototype of an independent learning curriculum at Surabaya State University to make it easier for lecturers and students in the Education and non-educational Study Programs. Departing from this goal, it is described as a research question, namely, What are the characteristics of the prototype of the independent learning curriculum in educational and non-educational study programs at Unesa?

2 Methods

This research approach ¹³ categorized as *conceptual research* carried out to represent the characterization of the design of the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum in the study and non-educational programs at Surabaya State University. The source of data used in this study is a document on the supplement to the Rector’s regulation Number 3 of 2021 which is found in the Letter of the Vice-Rector for Academic Affairs B/40624/UN38.I/TU.00/2021 on SI curriculum structure, programming, and course conversion. Descriptive qualitative is used to analyze data or represent the characteristics of the MBKM curriculum at Surabaya State University.

3 Findings and Discussion

Experiential learning is an effective educational or learning method used to ¹⁵ bridge the gap between the classroom and the real world. Given the multi-disciplinary nature, experiential learning is widely applied in learning and practitioners emphasize the importance of experiential learning. This section will discuss (1) the urgency of curriculum revitalization; (2) the characterization of the curriculum of educational study programs in, and (3) the characterization of the curriculum of non-educational study programs developed at Unesa. Exposure in more detail is presented as follows.

3.1 Urgency on the Revitalization of the Curriculum

If the curriculum is adhered to as a guideline for organizing the academic process in educational institutions (departments), the curriculum of the LPTK Education Study

Program should be carried out through a process of reorientation and restructuring for this purpose. The curriculum should not only be interpreted as the content of a series of study substances within a certain time but also regulate how the learning process is, how to evaluate learning outcomes and the overall learning program, as well as all professional activities. The schematization of the curriculum structure framework for the S1 Education and Non-Educational Study Program at Unesa in the 2021/2022 period is presented as follows.

If we want to pay attention to the ideal study period for the S1 undergraduate study program, which is 4 years, we can calculate how long students spend on campus so far within 4 years. Following the ministry's regulations that the number of meetings for 1 semester is 12–16 meetings (weeks), including final semester examination (UAS) activities. That means that in 1-semester students so far are only required to be present on campus for 4 months; the rest of them are off-campus (read 'holidays'). A period of 4 years is a sufficient period to produce professional teacher candidates as long as they are utilized optimally. With this calculation, there is a period of 2 months multiplied by 8 semesters or 1 year and 4 months which has been used for 'semester change holidays', which can be used to strengthen the creation of professional 'perspective teachers'. That is, can we manage the time of 1 semester period to be more effective? The remaining two months, which have been a transition period (widely used by universities to open short semesters/intermediate semesters, but not all universities do it) can be used for students to do activities at the School of Education. The end of the lecture does not have to be during the UAS period as it has always been. The lecture period of 1 semester can be extended to 20 meetings with part of the study period (4–5 weeks) to do activities at the School of Education for 7 semesters. The arrangement of the learning period per semester can be a solution to complaints of lack of 'material' that is often raised by lecturers.

In connection with this description, several academic policies taken by Unesa, namely: (1) Unesa implements an independent campus learning program (MBKM) with a pattern of 5-1-2 and 6-0-2; (2) The 5-1-2 pattern is the student's learning pattern for activities for 5 semesters in program study, 1 semester outside the study program at Unesa, and 2 semesters outside Unesa; (3) Pola 6-0-2 is a student learning pattern for activities for 6 (enam) semesters in the study program and 2 (two) semesters outside Unesa; (4) The 5-1-2 or 6-0-2 pattern does not indicate a specific course programming sequence, and (5) the 5-1-2 student learning pattern or 6-0-2 pattern through internships or work practices, real work lectures, student exchanges and research internships. The schematization of internships or work practices, real work lectures, student exchanges and research internships as part of the curriculum structure of the S1 Study Program at Unesa is presented in Fig. 1.

3.2 Characterization of the Curriculum of the Education Study Program

Experiential learning is becoming increasingly important especially in business education due to changing times and increasing pressure to produce graduates with 21st-century competencies [1]. Despite that fact, there is a heated debate about whether higher



Fig. 1. The schematization of the curriculum structure of the S1 Study Program at Unesa

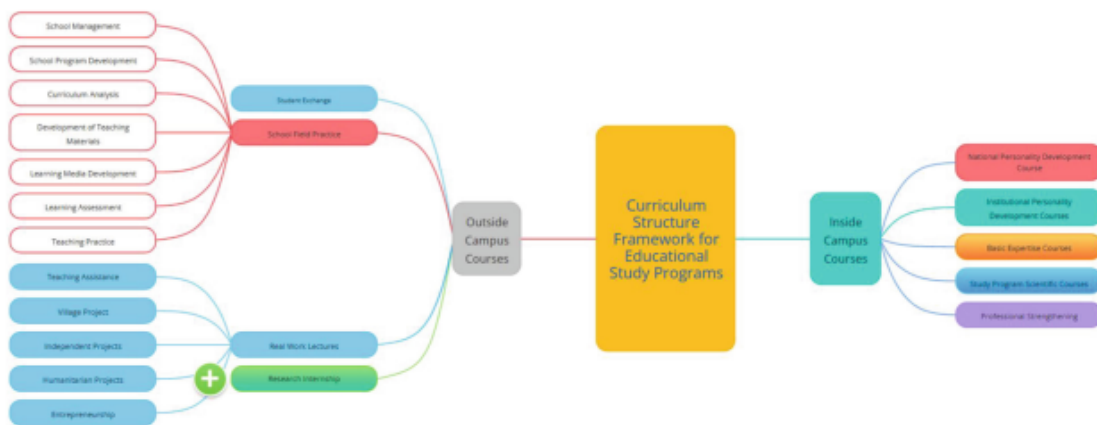


Fig. 2. Schematization curriculum structure S1 Study Program-Education in Unesa

education should be more pragmatic to answer trends or remain idealistic in industrialization. The schematization of the curriculum structure of the S1-Education Study Program at Unesa is presented in Fig. 2.

Next, to cope challenges and demands of education and the world of work, it is necessary to make adjustments to the curriculum of the Education Study Program, both related to the substance of the study (it is necessary to accommodate off-campus activities recommended by the ministry for those relevant to the profile of graduates of the Education Study Program), the learning process, and so on. Automatically the curriculum structure must change as orientation changes with the adjustment of the forms of learning activity.

21 One form of independent learning activity for undergraduate education program students through the Introduction to School Field (PLP) activities. This PLP activity is a program that provides training and application of the educational profession in early childhood, primary, secondary and vocational education units (TK, SD, SMP, SMA/SMK) through the management of guidance/learning that is relevant to pedagogical, personality, social, and professional competencies innovatively through activities to prepare learning tools, implement teaching simulations, and real teaching following the department or study program respectively.

3.3 Characterization of the Curriculum of Non-educational Study Programs

Internships or work practices are activities for students to learn to apply their professional knowledge to institutions, agencies, companies, organizations, or other names, both public and private, domestically and abroad. Internship or work practice is the name of a family of activities that bring practical student activities in the world of work/industry/service companies/community institutions whose learning process is carried out with students practicing/experiencing at work (*experiential learning*) which is carried out for 1 semester (6 months). In line with these expressions, experiential learning is believed to help students understand how the different perspectives of various participants can be connected and lead to stronger and richer insights [16]. Theorists reaffirm the way creativity, situated cognition, and experiential learning are bound together, reinforcing the unaddressed practices of our current content-based education system.

Internship or work practice is a form of activity for students to learn to apply professional knowledge to institutions, agencies, companies, organizations, or other names, both public and private, domestically and abroad. The form of learning activities for 2 (two) semesters outside Unesa, taken through 1) Internships/Work Practices 2) Real Work Lectures (KKN) 3) Student Exchanges 4) Research Internships. These four programs put forward the principle link and match between universities and the world of work/industry. This activity aims to provide opportunities for students to carry out learning in the workplace/industry with sufficient time so that students get the opportunity to implement the results of the learning experience while in the study program and get experience/knowledge after the internship program ends. Therefore, students are expected to have *hard skills* (skills according to expertise, *complex problem solving, analytical skills, etc.*), also have *soft skills* (professional/work ethics, good communication skills, ability to cooperate, ability to collaborate, etc.). The schematization of the curriculum structure of the S1-Education Study Program at Unesa is presented in Fig. 3.

Despite that fact that there is ambivalent acceptance on the idea whether universities should be more pragmatic to meet the trends (economic-driven education curriculum) or remain idealistic amid industrialization. The idea of Emancipated Learning curriculum in Indonesia has become the challenges for higher education institutions, especially the curriculum objective at the higher education level as well as a deeper focus on learning in a more real community environment. On the other hand, universities should also prepare the graduates with skills to accommodate the challenges in the 21st century which requires several and complex skills. In connection with the disruption trends, higher education institutions are expected to shape the revitalization of their role to fit the demands that require 21st century skills. Based on this view, it is necessary to compile

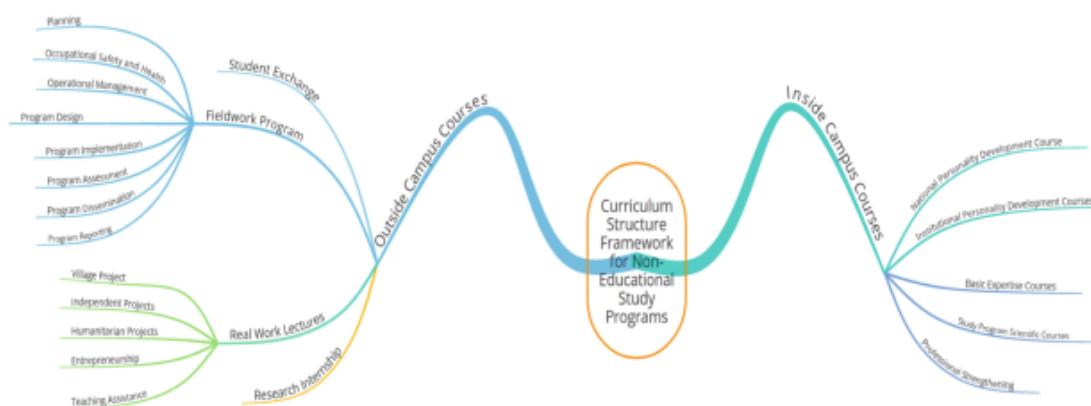


Fig. 3. Schematization curriculum structure S1 Study Program-Non-educational in Unesa

quality graduates who can compete globally and master technological developments that are very important for everyone and important for the future of a country. Thus, very urge at the higher education level to prioritize and encourage acceleration related to mastery of information and communication technology.

Unesa responds to the global challenges as well as the vast developments in several sectors by taking several strategic movements, including revitalizing the university's curriculum as to boost the educators and students' competencies that meet the labor market, industry or other sectors that are fit graduate profiles, collaborating several parties both private and public sectors in managing education funding programs, developing cooperation mechanisms with relevant agencies in managing education.

In line with the trend, Emancipated Learning is developed referring to the principle of learning that puts the students accountable for what they learn and want to be by providing a framework for the students to take responsibility for being more advanced and flexible to the dynamic of knowledge, science, and technology. Through Emancipated Learning programs, it is expected that they develop the students' maturity, self-reliance, and resilience. In addition, the students have bigger opportunity to determine the direction of their career effectively. It can be said that the Emancipated Learning promotes self-defined learning and self-organized learning based on constructivist learning which gives students the freedom to actively build their own knowledge with pros social interaction and real-life experience.

In short, the Emancipated Learning becomes one of the important manifestations of student-centered learning that provides opportunities for the development of students' creativity, capacities, personality, and needs, as well as growing self-autonomy in determining the knowledge through real-life complex skills such as the ability requirements, real problems, social interaction, collaboration, self-management, performance demands, targets and achievements.

4 Conclusion and Suggestions

The conclusion of this study is that the 5-1-2 student learning pattern or 6-0-2 pattern through internships or work practices, real work lectures, student exchanges and research

internships can be used as a form of learning patterns for 2 (two) semesters outside the Unesa campus.

We hope that this research will have an impact and reference in improving the curriculum in terms of the implementation of independent learning, especially the implementation of independent learning. Future studies are recommended on the practice, evaluation, and development of the MB-KM curriculum in the Indonesian context and adapted to the challenges of a dynamic era.

Acknowledgments. The writer team expressed their gratitude to Surabaya State University for providing funding for this research through a strategic research scheme.

Authors' Contributions. This research activity was encouraged and directed by Professor Bambang Yulianto as the Vice-Rector for Academic Affairs, Surabaya State University. The co-authors are members of senior advisors and staffs at the Office of Academic Affairs with the main task for the curriculum development at the university.

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