



A Solution with Its Own Problems : Analysing the Problems Encountered by The “Kampus Mengajar” Program

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Abstract: This study aims to highlight and evaluate the issues at an in-depth level to provide different solutions that are expected to be a reflection for the government, especially the Ministry of Education and Culture, to be able to improve the implementation and monitoring of the Kampus Mengajar Program. A descriptive qualitative approach was used, and the data were collected from a focus group discussion with students of the English Education Study Program at Universitas Lancang Kuning, then the data was analyzed descriptively. The results highlight some problems in the implementation of the *Kampus Merdeka* Program. These included a lack of coordination and clear communication between stakeholders, which led to confusion among students and schools, uneven targeting of schools, inadequate support for the program, and credit conversion, resulting in frustration and challenges. Addressing these issues, the study recommended increased socialization of the program, transparency in credit equivalency, and more accurate school data collection. In conclusion, this research offers several solutions that are expected to reflect the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology (*Kemendikbudristek*) that the *Kampus Mengajar* Program faces various challenges in its implementation, which need to be addressed for the program to effectively meet its goal of improving education in the 3T areas.

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Introduction

“Kampus Mengajar” Program is an initiative by the Indonesian Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology (*Kemendikbudristek*) dedicated to promoting education and community engagement, enabling students and lecturers to volunteer to teach in schools located in rural areas of Indonesia by supplementary teaching support and resources. As reported by Merdeka.com (2020), *Kemendikbudristek* recorded as many as 646.200 schools in Indonesia from elementary to higher education—have closed down one month into the Covid-19 pandemic, resulting in 68.8 million students studying and 4.2 million teachers and lecturers teaching from home.

The Ministry’s April 2020 national survey reported that only 2.4% of all schools in Indonesia still carried out the usual learning-teaching process, while others have postponed it for months (Al-Faqir, 2020). After the initial two weeks off from school as part of the worldwide intervention movement to “flatten the curve” of Covid infections (Ariawan & Jusril, 2020; Nurlaila et al., 2021), the lockdown period kept getting extended for more than

twelve months (Wijaya, 2021). The long absence from school has severely impacted students of all levels in the country.

More than one million university students who graduated a year after the pandemic lockdown went unemployed due to the neglect of education in their crucial final year, with the total number of open unemployment in Indonesia reaching 8,746,008 people in February 2021 (Pusparisa, 2021). Indonesia's overall reading proficiency score in the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) is expected to be at its lowest as it has already been in decline for more than a decade (Jayani, 2021). In short, the pandemic has caused unprecedented damage to the educational progress of Indonesia that must be solved as quickly as possible. Otherwise, the damage will be even more lasting to the nation.

The biggest concern for Indonesia's educational sector is the pandemic's impact on the children in the underdeveloped, outermost, and underdeveloped areas (*Area Terdepan, Terpencil dan Tertinggal/3T* area). According to Rashid & Yadav (2020), the pandemic has revealed the vulnerabilities and shortcomings of present education systems and the need for digital literacy development. Like most countries in the world, Indonesia has adapted to moving the learning environment online to continue the learning and teaching process, but students in 3T areas do not have sufficient internet access to support online learning (Etika et al., 2021; M. Fikri et al., 2021; Hasan et al., 2021; Rizki et al., 2022).

In addition, the lack of competence and understanding of teachers (Ashari et al., 2022; M. Fikri et al., 2021; Hasan et al., 2021), students who do not appreciate the content of the online learning (Anwar, 2021; Basar, 2021; Utomo et al., 2021) and the obstacles for parents in using online technology (Khairunnisa & Kurniawan, 2021; Wardani & Ayriza, 2020) are also major tasks for the government in tackling education problems in Indonesia. Bastian et al., (2023) & Sholeh et al., (2021) added that this issue requires the direction of education policy to improve so that the demand for more human resources does not lag behind and is a top priority to be addressed.

With the many problems arising from the impact of Covid-19, especially in the field of education, which will be at the forefront of preparing human resources in the future, the government is trying to take a curative step, namely the *Merdeka Campus* program. The program is an effort to establish an education system that more supports students and teachers in obtaining excellent education relevant to the disruption of the current era (Prahani et al., 2020). As explained by Nizam (2020), in accordance with *Permendikbud* No. 3 of 2020 article 5 paragraph 1, the forms of learning activities include; a) Independent student exchange, b) certified internship, c) certified independent study, d) humanitarian project, e) research or inquiry, f) thematic community service program, g) entrepreneurship program, and h) education campus.

Cited from the *Merdeka Campus* website (2021), this program is motivated by preparing students for the social, cultural, work world and rapid technological advancement. As an arena for students to develop themselves, universities must be able to design and implement innovative learning processes, so that the learning outcomes cover aspects of attitude, knowledge, and skills. *Merdeka Campus* strategically benefits students with opportunities to develop themselves through activities outside the classroom (Anwar, 2021; Hikmawati et al., 2021). Cahya et al., (2022) described that the program has a learning scope that encompasses all subjects, with an emphasis on reading and math, adaptive technology and school administrative support.

Unfortunately, this is contrary to what the researchers found. Based on initial interviews with the students who followed this program, they brought several field issues to light. Looking at studies on *Kampus Mengajar* Program and its implementation for target

schools, the results generally illustrate that this program is highly effective in overcoming the declining quality of education in the fields of reading, writing, arithmetic, technology, and administration, which are the four main issues to be addressed. Yet, the following studies by Anugrah (2021); Anwar (2021); Bali et al., (2022); Etika et al., (2021); Hikmawati et al., (2022); Mulyati et al., (2021) and Nurhasanah & Nopianti (2021) have focused less on examining the issues and more on describing how they implemented the program with an effective outcome picture as if this *Kampus Mengajar* Program was far from failing in its application.

Therefore, a more focused and intensive study is needed to examine all the issues arising from this program, especially in batches 1 and 2, as comparative studies of multiple batches are still minimal. This research also aims to provide solutions that the Ministry can account for when executing future batches. It is expected that these issues can be elaborated in more depth as they are directly expressed by college students who are the printers of the future teachers of Indonesia, whose background knowledge of education provides more complex insights.

Based on the above description, this research asks the questions: “1). What are the issues faced by FADIKSI Unilak students while pursuing the *Kampus Mengajar* Program? 2) What steps will be taken to resolve these issues?”. This study aims to highlight and evaluate the issues at an in-depth level to provide different solutions that are expected to be a reflection for the government, especially the Ministry of Education and Culture Research and Technology, to be able to improve the implementation and monitoring of the *Kampus Mengajar* Program.

Research Method

This study is designed as descriptive to be qualitative as it tries to draw data from authentic accounts provided by the selected participants. The data is collected from interviewing seven students of the English Education Study Program at Universitas Lancang Kuning on April 2022. These students were selected because they have joined the *Kampus Mengajar* Program and taught at various schools for at least more than twelve weeks. To differentiate their status from the younger students that they taught and the permanent teaching staff of the schools they volunteered in, this study will use the term “student-teachers.” The qualitative descriptive analysis method was adapted from Sugiyono (2017). The participants in this study were seven students enrolled in Universitas Lancang Kuning *Kampus Mengajar* Program Class IV.

Table 1. Profiling the student-teachers.

No	Names (Later Codes)	Teaching Location	School	Generation	How Long
1	P1	Dusun Rimba Cempedak Kecamatan Kerinci Kanan	SDN 013 Kerinci Kanan	1	3,5
2	P2	Jl. Lorong Medan, Kecamatan Keritang, Indragiri Hilir	SD Plus Riadi Cendekia	2	5
3	P3	Jln. Perjuangan, Rumbai	SD IT Al-Qudwah	2	5
4	P5	Jln. Perjuangan,	SD IT Al-Qudwah	2	5

		Rumbai			
5	P6	Jl. Sembilang, Limbungan	SD Smart Indonesia Pekanbaru	2	5
6	P7	Jln. Perjuangan, Rumbai	SD IT Al-Qudwah	2	5
7	P8	Jl. Tengku Said Jafar, Pelalawan	SDIT Mujahid Setia	2	5

The interview was a focus group discussion (FGD), with a list of questions that could be adjusted depending on the participants' responses. As defined by Creswell & Creswell (2018), FGD is advantageous when the interaction among interviewees will likely yield the best information and when they are similar to and cooperative with each other. FGD is also useful when the time to collect information is limited and individuals are hesitant to provide information. This kind of interview can encourage all participants to talk and to take their turns talking. The in-person interviews were recorded by audiotaping and the researchers also took notes in the event that recording equipment failed. Limitations include the fact that the information may have been influenced or biased due to the researchers' presence and that not all the participants were equally articulate. The interview recordings were then transcribed and then translated into English to analyze the participants' answers and group them into larger meanings of understanding, such as codes, categories or themes. The coding process was focused on finding the major points related to the problems faced by students in running the program. The data obtained from the interviews were arranged systematically into the appropriate categories, and then synthesized into themed patterns (Sugiyono, 2017). Subsequently, it is necessary to draw conclusions from important data so that it might be easily understandable.

Results and Discussion

This study highlights the *Kampus Mengajar* Program by interviewing seven students with educational backgrounds as teachers in a focus group discussion. The researchers discovered some key points related to the evaluation of the *Kampus Mengajar* Program sponsored by the Indonesian Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology (Kemendikbudristek), which will be described below:

The Evaluation of *Kampus Mengajar* Program

The interviewer asked initial questions about the participants' names, semesters, majors, the schools they attended and the duration of practice in the *Kampus Mengajar* Program (Table 1), followed by several questions related to the program's implementation and field results. Based on the results of the analysis, an evaluation can be formulated that the basic teaching skills of students participating in *Kampus Mengajar* Program Class IV have not been optimally implemented. Some aspects of basic teaching skills, primarily explaining skills, have been mastered by the student-teachers. However, the aspect of skills in performing variations in learning, guiding discussions and teaching in small groups and individually is identified as low (Ramadansur et al., 2023). This is in line with the research of Ayu & Rizky (2023); Fikri et al., (2021); Rizky (2020); Rizky & Zainil (2021) and Saidah & Ngazizah (2022). The results showed that the average basic teaching skills of student-teachers were in the less skilled category due to the lack of opportunities and practical experience.

Focus Group Discussion	
Problems Encountered by Participants	Results of Interview
Lack of Coordination between Stakeholders	It was highlighted by participants that there was a lack of coordination and clear communication, which resulted in confusion among students and

	schools.
Less Evenly Targeted Schools	The school designations were rated as inaccurate.
Lack of Support from Target Schools	Certain schools are still reluctant to respond positively to the program in terms of the distribution of class hours and the way in which the school facilitates them. It is worth highlighting and offering solutions so that this program can benefit all parties involved.
Credit Equivalent	Batch 2 participants admitted that the conversion of credits obtained was only 12 credits, not in accordance with the provisions of the program, which is 20 credits.

To begin with, it was clear that information about the program was not effectively disseminated, leaving students and educators unaware of the program's objectives and procedures. It is likely that this lack of awareness led to doubts and confusion among the participants, as they struggled to understand the purpose and implementation of the program. Also, a distinct disconnect exists between the program organizers, the local government and the schools. Often, schools in the 3T areas targeted by the program were unaware of the program's existence when representatives from the education office arrived, leading to further confusion.

The program implementers' responsiveness was also criticized, with delays in providing necessary information and slow confirmation of reports affecting students' experiences. Limited support from supervisors and program coordinators created additional challenges for students participating in the program. Other than that, there is a need for better orientation and guidance for students on how to interact with the school during their on-campus education. An absence of this guidance causes uncertainty and hinders the smooth implementation of the program.

Following this, the second point in the table above highlights important issues in the *Kampus Mengajar* Program, notably related to the selection of schools and their alignment with program objectives. A participant's desire to choose another school that better fits the 3T criteria, even though the school she was assigned to was already advanced in terms of technology, raises questions about the effectiveness of the program. In fact, the participant emphasized that the selected school may not meet the desired criteria because of teachers being young and technologically challenged, which contrasts with the Ministry of Education's objectives.

The outcome of these interviews suggests a mismatch between program objectives and implementation, with schools in urban areas potentially receiving more attention than schools in remote areas. Unequal distribution of program resources and a focus on certain schools could impair the program's mission to provide quality education for all students. Therefore, to address the ongoing problem of educational inequality in the country, there is an urgent need for program implementers to re-evaluate the school selection criteria and ascertain that the program reaches schools in different regions.

Furthermore, as in the third point in the table above, participants described a concerning lack of support and resources in some schools, especially in the context of student activities and initiatives. These interviews illustrate the sad reality that targeted schools fail to provide adequate support for on-campus educational programs and activities, leaving students and teachers feeling unsupported and overburdened. In turn, the shortage of teachers, as highlighted in this point, further exacerbates the situation, forcing students to take on teaching responsibilities beyond their capabilities. Unsurprisingly, this not only hampers the

functioning of the education system, but also raises questions about the commitment of some educators to their roles. Ultimately, this highlighted the need for systemic change and increased support in schools to ensure a more conducive learning environment for students and teachers.

The latter point of the interview highlights the limitations of the *Kampus Mengajar* Program, where only 12 credits can be earned instead of the supposed 20 credits. Another limitation is due to the fact that some courses that are compulsory cannot be replaced by the program, which causes frustration and challenges for the participants, especially those involved in 3rd year teaching on campus. This mismatch in credit conversion between the expectations of the program and the reality faced by Batch 2 participants underscores the need for closer examination and possible improvements in the design and implementation of the program.

Discussion

Kampus Mengajar Program is one of the programs launched by Kemendikbudristek as a solution to the problem of education ineffectiveness and inequality amid a pandemic in remote areas. Behind the many studies that claim the program is running well, there are several issues that were found by this study, namely the lack of coordination between parties, unequal school goals, lack of support from the target school, and inappropriate credits.

The first research question is unique because it seems no one has previously looked at the problems that arise during the program's implementation in Riau Province, especially for future education students who teach as a major. After reviewing nearly all existing literature on *Kampus Mengajar*, the researchers found that most of the published literature focused primarily on how the program is run on Java Island. The most predominant province in reporting the impact of their program is East Java (Anwar, 2021; Ashari et al., 2022; Bali et al., 2022; Rachman et al., 2021; Rosita & Damayanti, 2021; Salsabila et al., 2022; Setyadi et al., 2021; Tsamroh et al., 2021), closely followed by West Java (Khairunnisa & Kurniawan, 2021; Mulyati et al., 2021; Safaringga et al., 2022; Usral et al., 2022; Utami, 2021). Research also covers the program in Central Java (Prasandha & Utomo, 2022; Pristya et al., 2022; Santoso et al., 2022; Widiyono et al., 2021; Widjanarko et al., 2021), Jakarta (Anugrah, 2021; Fatonah et al., 2021; Lestari et al., 2023; Rahmadani et al., 2022), Bengkulu (Nurhasanah & Nopianti, 2021), West Nusa Tenggara (Hikmawati et al., 2022), West Sumatra (Rahim & Suryani, 2022), North Sumatra (Martina et al., 2022) and South Sumatra (Hendrowati & Sunanto, 2021; Khotimah et al., 2021).

Moreover, the above areas also only show the effectiveness of the *Kampus Mengajar* Program in improving the quality of teaching and learning in the 3T area. This research opens new avenues for the next research to pay attention to areas outside of Java to perform the same evaluation so that later, the distribution of the *Kampus Mengajar* Program can be better organized and more effective, which can contribute to 3T schools affected by COVID-19 and also students as student teachers.

As the participants have explained with regard to the problems they face, its implementation is considered to be less effective, as a result of which their performance is not optimal and the contribution made is not considered as totality. This is inconsistent with the findings by Anwar (2021); Ashari et al., (2022); Cahya et al., (2022); Etika et al., (2021); Laksana et al., (2021); Pristya et al., (2022); Shabrina (2022) & Utami (2021) who found that *Kampus Mengajar* Program was seen as a tool for students to improve their reading, math and other skills. Precisely, to the findings in this current study, there are many issues that cause students to be slow to implement the program in target schools.



As the second research question relates to curative ideas, the proposed solution includes prior socialization from *Kemendikbudristek* to universities, students and target schools: transparency of the equivalent credit students is entitled to and in accordance with the amount offered; as well as collecting school data that should be clear and not misinformed. Evidence suggests that the Program faces many issues related to the issue of responsiveness, the target school selection, and the transfer of credits. To ensure that the program lives up to its main objective of providing convenience and flexibility for students and schools, these challenges must be addressed. Also, a comprehensive re-evaluation of the school criteria and target locations is needed to be aligned with the Ministry's objectives. These are important areas for improvement to greatly enhance the overall implementation and overall benefits of the *Kampus Mengajar* Program.

Additionally, the participants expected that this program would be a replacement for their graduation project, which they suggested, such as making reports during the *Kampus Mengajar* Program. It is possible that the teacher or the campus can draw up a special format for combining the results of student reports. Like taking a thesis exam, students present the results of their activities and teachers can provide tests, suggestions, or recommendations to improve the quality of their report results. Participants also asked that this program would give students briefings about the schools they attend, and how to behave with children, for example, because they feel they are unable to solve problems with schools without receiving instructions beforehand. This solution is expected to be a consideration for all parties so that future programs can be procedural, not only beneficial for students but also for students in schools in remote areas.

Conclusion

The results highlight some problems in the implementation of the *Kampus Merdeka* Program. These included a lack of coordination and clear communication between stakeholders which led to confusion among students and schools, uneven targeting of schools, inadequate support for the program, and credit conversion resulting in frustration and challenges. Addressing these issues, the study recommended increased socialization of the program, transparency in credit equivalency, and more accurate school data collection. In conclusion, this research offers several solutions that are expected to reflect the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology (*Kemendikbudristek*) that the *Kampus Mengajar* Program faces various challenges in its implementation, which need to be addressed for the program to effectively meet its goal of improving education in the 3T areas.

Recommendation

Some important issues in the *Kampus Mengajar* Program that require attention and improvement are highlighted in this recommendation. A series of recommendations are offered to address these issues and to further improve the effectiveness of the program. In order to improve coordination between all parties involved in the *Kampus Mengajar* Program, including universities, students, and target schools, the *Kemendikbudristek* needs to be aware of the importance of improving coordination. Maintain effective communication channels to ensure all parties are aligned with the program's goals and expectations. Through collaboration and transparency, confusion and uncertainty can be reduced, allowing the program to run more smoothly. Then, through better socialization, transparency in credit conversion, fair school selection, and better support mechanisms, existing challenges will become greater strengths in providing quality education in underserved areas (3T area) and

promoting better learning opportunities for students. This would not only address existing issues but also improve the overall effectiveness and impact of the program.

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