



Improving Academic Culture Through MBKM-Based Curriculum Construction at Islamic Higher Education Institution

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Abstract

Every university needs to harmonize and reconstruct its curriculum in accordance with national policies to improve the quality of its academic culture. Likewise, UIN K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan must apply the pillars of independent campus learning (MBKM) in its curriculum development. This study aims to explain the curriculum development policy, MBKM-based curriculum construction model, and its problems at UIN K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan. A qualitative field research approach through interviews, observations and documents is used in extracting research data. The results of this study are: 1) MBKM-based curriculum development at UIN K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan is based on the Rector's Decree as a derivative of the Ministry of Education and Culture and Ministry of Religious Affairs policies; 2) The curriculum construction model is characterized by textualist and substantive through the implementation of several MBKM pillars 3) Problems arisen in MBKM-based curriculum construction are related to the determination of courses to be converted, the distribution of courses that are less aligned with MBKM, the financial limitations of students, and the

limited availability of MoUs with various related agencies. This research contributes to Islamic education science by offering a context-specific model for integrating MBKM with Islamic values, such as religious moderation, addressing a gap in its application within Islamic higher education. Its long-term implications include informing curriculum frameworks that balance the national policies with the institutional identity, enhancing graduate competencies, and fostering sustainable academic quality in Islamic universities in the MBKM era.

Keywords: Curriculum Construction, Educational Policy, Islamic Higher Education Curriculum, MBKM Implementation

A. Introduction

K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid State Islamic University Pekalongan or UIN Gus Dur is a form of transfer of institutional status from the Pekalongan State Islamic Institute through Presidential Regulation of the Republic of Indonesia number 86 of 2022, dated June 8, 2022. The consequences of this status change encourage the entire academic community to transform an effort to improve the academic quality and higher education services to be commensurate with various UINs that have existed before. Efforts that have been made include structuring institutional management, strengthening human resources, completing educational infrastructure, and constructing curriculum.

The term curriculum, when associated with education, means a bright path traveled by educators with students to develop knowledge, skills and attitudes and values (Muhaimin, 2019). Curriculum can also be interpreted as subjects, planned learning activity programs, expected learning outcomes, social reconstruction agenda, and cultural reproduction which are influenced by socio-political, economic, rational, technological, moral, religious and aesthetic systems (Chotimah, 2022). The curriculum is an important and fundamental element in determining the success of a learning process as well as the spirit of an educational institution, including universities (Syaifuddin, 2021). According to the Minister of Education and Culture's regulation number 3 year 2020, concerning National Higher Education Standards, the curriculum is defined as a set of plans and arrangements regarding objectives, content and learning materials as well as methods used as guidelines for implementing learning activities to achieve the goals of Higher Education.

Curriculum development in the Higher Education environment must be based on a systematic and comprehensive approach (Syaifuddin & Taufiq, 2020) which contains the linkage between the vision, mission, goals and objectives of higher education based on the times and the needs of society, and has a special characteristic in accordance with the

orientation of the college. The development of higher education curriculum in Indonesia at least refers to the Indonesian National Qualification Framework (Maslahah, 2018), and is guided by the policies issued by the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology and related ministries under its auspices, such as the Ministry of Religion which oversees all Islamic Religious Universities in Indonesia.

The latest government policy for universities in Indonesia is Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) and was launched in 2020. The purpose of MBKM is to provide freedom to students in choosing forms of learning that are more relevant to the times and industry needs, improve the quality of higher education in Indonesia, and answer the challenges of an increasingly dynamic world of work (Masithoh, Miftah, Nahraeni, Yoesdiarty, et al., 2021).

MBKM has four main pillars which include: 1). An independent and flexible curriculum. 2). A more open, diverse and collaborative learning system. 3). Competency-based evaluation. 4). Involvement of stakeholders and the world of work (Novyan et al., 2024). To realize these four pillars, MBKM offers nine main programs that aim to provide a broader, more flexible, and relevant learning experience for students. These programs are; 1) Internship/practical work; 2) Research; 3) Independent projects; 4) Entrepreneurial activities; 5) Teaching assistance in educational units; 6) Student exchanges; 7) Village development/Thematic KKN; 8) Humanitarian project; and 9) State defense (Aris Junaidi, 2020)

UIN Gusdur as part of the State Islamic University must certainly implement national policies issued by the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology and the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia in all its educational programs and curriculum. Thus, UIN Gusdur must incorporate the MBKM pillars in its curriculum structure to improve academic quality. MBKM is important to be applied in the curriculum of UIN Gusdur because in addition to being a national college curriculum structure, MBKM is also able to facilitate the diversity of potential, interests, and talents of students through its various programs. Even MBKM also provides final project options for students other than thesis.

Departing from some of the problems identified above, the researcher is interested in examining more deeply the curriculum construction of UIN K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan based on MBKM to improve its academic culture. This study aims to explain curriculum development policies, MBKM-based curriculum construction models, and problems in constructing curriculum at UIN K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan. This research is important to do in order to provide input for policy makers in developing the

curriculum at UIN K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan so that it becomes a superior and competitive university in the MBKM era for its academic community.

Some previous studies related to this research include; 1). Research with the title Higher Education Curriculum Development written by Kaimuddin and published in the journal *Al-Ta'dib*. The results of this study concluded that the basic framework of the curriculum or academic text and the structure of the higher education curriculum need to be considered when developing a higher education curriculum (Kaimuddin, 2015). 2). Research with the title *Role Model for Implementing the Independent Campus Learning Curriculum in Non-Religious Study Programs* by Rizqon Halal Syah Aji and published in the *Salam UIN Jakarta* journal. The results showed that students prefer to take part in internship activities carried out in various kinds of companies, ranging from national, international or digital companies. In addition, entrepreneurship activities and student exchanges to campus also tend to be more attractive to students (Aji & Putra, 2021). 3). Research conducted by Khotibul Umam with the title *Development of Islamic Religious Education Curriculum in Islamic Universities Synchronization with the Indonesian National Qualification Framework Policy (KKNI)*. This research underlined that the Indonesian National Qualifications Framework (KKNI) serves to be a reference in the preparation of graduate learning outcomes from each level of education nationally. Conceptually, each qualification level in KKNI is structured by four main parameters, namely (a) work skills, (b) scientific/knowledge coverage, (c) methods and levels of ability in applying the science/knowledge and (d) managerial skills (Umam, 2021).

The implementation of the MBKM, particularly in Islamic higher education institutions, emphasizes flexible, industry-relevant, and competency-based curricula, significantly impacting curriculum development in Islamic higher education by fostering interdisciplinary learning and practical experiences that align with Islamic values and modern workforce demands (Masithoh, Miftah, Nahraeni, Yoesdiarti, et al., 2021). By integrating MBKM's nine pillars, such as internships, student exchanges, and community projects, Islamic universities like UIN Gusdur can tailor their curricula to nurture students' diverse potentials while embedding religious moderation, thereby enhancing academic culture and societal relevance (Novyan et al., 2024).

Despite MBKM's widespread adoption, a significant research gap exists in its application within Islamic higher education. Previous studies have primarily focused on MBKM's general implementation or theoretical curriculum frameworks, with limited analysis of its integration with Islamic educational principles, particularly in addressing religious

moderation and local contexts (Kaimuddin, 2015). This study bridges this gap by examining the MBKM-based curriculum construction at UIN K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan, offering a nuanced analysis of its alignment with Islamic values and practical challenges. By doing so, it provides critical insights for policymakers to refine MBKM policies for Islamic higher education, and contributes to advance the Islamic education scholarship, fostering graduates who are professionally competent and rooted in inclusive religious perspectives.

Some of the relevant research above shows that in developing a curriculum in higher education, it must be in line with KKNI and MBKM policies to produce graduates who are competent in their fields. Most studies on the MBKM policy explore its general application or theoretical curriculum design, but few examine its specific implementation in Islamic higher education, especially in blending national policies with Islamic values like religious moderation. This research fills this critical gap by analyzing the MBKM-based curriculum construction at UIN K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan, identifying practical challenges such as course alignment and financial barriers, and highlighting opportunities to enhance student skills and local relevance. By offering strategies to align curricula with both Islamic principles and modern workforce needs, this study contributes valuable insights for curriculum developers and policymakers, strengthens the quality of Islamic higher education, and advances its scholarship in the MBKM era.

B. Methods

This research used a type of field research with a qualitative research approach and inductive analysis. While the discussion model applied was descriptive research, which aims to describe and explain systematically, factually, fully, accurately and deeply about curriculum construction at UIN K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan. Primary data sources in exploring research data included curriculum documents for each study program, the results of interviews with the Vice Rector for Academic Affairs, the Vice Deans for Academic Affairs, the Heads of Study Programs in several faculties and the Head of the Curriculum Development Center of UIN K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan. Secondary data sources included written documents containing the profile of UIN K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan, policies related to curriculum and academics, research journals, books, websites and theses relevant to the research theme. Data collection techniques used were observation, interview and documentation. The data collected was then sought for data validity through source triangulation and analyzed through data condensation and verification, then conclusions were drawn.

The qualitative approach was adopted for this study because it is well-suited to exploring the intricate, context-specific dynamics of MBKM-based curriculum construction at UIN Gusdur. Qualitative research allows for a deep investigation of social and institutional processes, such as curriculum development, by capturing detailed insights from stakeholders like academic leaders and curriculum developers through interviews, observations, and document analysis (Prayogi et al., 2025; Waruwu, 2023). This approach aligns with the research objectives of understanding MBKM policies, curriculum models, and implementation challenges within an Islamic higher education context, as it provides rich, descriptive data that reveal how national policies intersect with institutional and Islamic values, offering nuances that quantitative methods may not capture.

Inductive analysis was chosen to complement the qualitative approach, as it enables the emergence of themes and patterns directly from the data, supporting the study's goal of generating context-specific findings without relying on predetermined assumptions. This method is particularly effective for analysing diverse data sources, such as interview responses and curriculum documents, to uncover issues like course conversion difficulties or opportunities for embedding religious moderation (Sidiq & Choiri, 2019). By facilitating the discovery of grounded insights tailored to the unique setting of UIN K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan, inductive analysis strengthens the study's contribution to understanding MBKM implementation in Islamic higher education, providing practical implications for curriculum developers and policymakers.

C. Result and Discussion

1. MBKM-Based Curriculum Development Policy at UIN K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan

Curriculum development is an important process in improving the quality of a country's education. The curriculum development policy should cover all aspects such as educational objectives to ensure that the resulting curriculum can achieve the desired educational goals and provide maximum benefits for learners (Sudarman, 2019).

The policy on MBKM-based curriculum at UIN Gusdur is the Rector's policy which is derived from the Law, PP, and Decrees of the Ministry of Education and Research and the Minister of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia. Some of these policies include the Decree of the Rector of UIN K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan Number 1101 of 2022 concerning Guidelines for the Implementation of the Merdeka Learning-Campus of UIN K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan; Decree of the Rector of K.H. State Islamic University Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan Number: 1180 of 2022 concerning Guidelines for the Preparation and Development of the KKNi Curriculum Oriented to Free Learning-Campus Merdeka UIN K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan; and Decree of the Chancellor of K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid State Islamic University Pekalongan Number: 1100 of 2022 concerning the Policy for the Implementation of Free Learning-Campus Merdeka K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid State Islamic University Pekalongan.

The MBKM curriculum policy is a policy issued by the Minister of Education and Culture, as an appropriate effort in creating a generation that has soft skills and hard skills, as well as qualified in the aspects of leadership and personality (Maulana, 2022). The policy of the Minister of Education and Culture was then derived by the Rector of UIN K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan through the rector's decision regarding the guidelines, implementation and preparation of the KKNi curriculum based on MBKM in 2022. In the same year, UIN Gusdur has implemented the MBKM curriculum for students starting from the Academic Year of 2022/2023. Each study program has been encouraged to be proactive in developing MBKM curriculum that suits the needs and characteristics of the study program and accommodates 8 MBKM programs. Apart from the study program level, the faculty also has an important role. The faculties within UIN K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan also welcome the implementation of the MBKM curriculum with policies or programs that support MBKM, such as International Student Mobility, student exchanges or other programs that are also facilitated by the Ministry of Religion through MERPATI (a portal managed by the Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia for the Merdeka Belajar program at PTKI).

The MBKM-based curriculum development policy at UIN Gusdur, anchored in Rector's Decrees and Ministry regulations, provides a robust framework but encounters significant challenges in practical implementation at the faculty and study program levels. A key issue is the difficulty in aligning MBKM's experiential learning requirements, such as internships and student exchanges, with existing curricula, due to discrepancies in academic priorities across study programs. Faculty members often lack adequate training to navigate MBKM's operational complexities, such as credit conversion processes, which hinders effective

curriculum restructuring (Anggara, 2023; Iskandar et al., 2024). Moreover, limited institutional resources exacerbate coordination challenges, particularly in securing partnerships for off-campus activities, revealing a critical gap between policy directives and their practical execution.

To overcome these challenges and ensure MBKM compliance, faculties and study programs have adopted targeted strategies tailored to their contexts. For example, the Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teacher Training has aligned its existing Teaching Practice program with MBKM's Teaching Assistance pillar, facilitating credit recognition while enhancing students' practical skills. Study programs have formed internal task forces to identify MBKM-compatible courses and have organized capacity-building workshops to equip lecturers with the necessary skills for implementation. Additionally, the university has utilized the Ministry of Religious Affairs' MERPATI portal to streamline access to student exchange programs and international mobility opportunities, addressing partnership limitations. These efforts reflect a proactive commitment bridging policy and practice, though challenges persist in scaling these initiatives across all faculties (Leal Filho et al., 2018; Yahya et al., 2022).

The challenges encountered highlight broader issues of faculty readiness and resource allocation, which are critical for embedding MBKM's flexible, competency-based approach within Islamic higher education (Susanto et al., 2025). By documenting these strategies and challenges, this study offers actionable insights for other Islamic universities navigating MBKM implementation, contributing to a deeper understanding of how national policies can be effectively localized. Continued investment in training, partnerships, and infrastructure will be essential to strengthen institutional capacity and ensure MBKM enhances academic quality and student outcomes (Apoko et al., 2022; Nederstigt & Mulder, 2011).

2. MBKM Curriculum Construction at UIN K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan

Curriculum changes in higher education are routine activities that must be carried out in response to the development of Science and Technology (IPTEK) (scientific vision), societal needs, the needs of graduate users (stakeholder needs) and following government policies (Aris Junaidi, 2020). Based on these criteria, UIN Gusdur through Rector Decree Number 1100 of 2022 dated August 1, 2022 concerning the Implementation Policy of Merdeka Belajar-Kampus Merdeka, Rector Decree Number 1101 of 2022 dated August 1, 2022 concerning Guidelines for the Implementation of Merdeka Belajar-Kampus Merdeka and Rector Decree Number 1180 of 2022 dated August 1, 2022 concerning Guidelines for the Preparation and Development of the KKNi Curriculum Oriented to Merdeka Belajar-Kampus

Merdeka, mandates all study programs within UIN Gusdur to reconstruct its old curriculum (KKNI) to be adjusted to government policies related to MBKM.

The curriculum construction process at UIN Gusdur involves a collaborative decision-making framework that actively engaged diverse stakeholders to ensure alignment with MBKM objectives and Islamic educational values. Lecturers from various faculties contribute by mapping courses compatible with MBKM's nine pillars, such as internships and community projects, while students provide feedback through focus group discussions to ensure relevance to their career aspirations.

External stakeholders, including industry partners and local community leaders, are consulted via workshops to integrate practical and socio-cultural elements into the curriculum, enhancing its contextual applicability (Al-Thani, 2024; McCarthy et al., 2023). This participatory approach, guided by regular coordination meetings, ensures that the curriculum reflected both institutional goals and stakeholder expectations, fostering a sense of ownership and alignment with the desired graduate profile of professionally competent and religiously grounded individuals.

The determination of credit numbers (SKS) and their distribution across semesters are methodically designed to support the MBKM framework and the graduate profile. A curriculum task force, comprising academic leaders and quality assurance teams, employ a competency-based approach to allocate credits, prioritizing flexibility to accommodate off-campus learning activities. For instance, core courses are assigned 2–4 SKS based on workload and learning outcomes, while MBKM-specific activities, such as internships, are granted up to 20 SKS per semester, following Ministry guidelines (Nofrizal et al., 2022). Distribution across semesters is structured to balance foundational Islamic studies in early semesters with experiential learning in later ones, ensuring progressive skill development. This structure supports the graduate profile by equipping students with both theoretical knowledge and practical competencies, as validated through iterative reviews with faculty and external partners.

A comparative analysis of MBKM implementation reveals distinct approaches between IHEIs and general universities, offering insights for UIN K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan. At UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya, an IHEI, MBKM emphasizes an integrative-multidisciplinary model, blending Islamic studies with professional skills through a “Twin Towers” paradigm, which prioritizes religious moderation (Kuncoro et al., 2023; Ni'mah & Sari, 2022). In contrast, general universities focus on industry partnerships and micro-

credential programs to enhance employability, often with less emphasis on religious values (Kristanto et al., 2024). While UIN K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan shares similarities with UIN Sunan Ampel in embedding Islamic principles, it faces challenges in securing diverse industry partnerships, a strength of general universities. Adopting best practices, such as Universitas Indonesia's structured internship frameworks, could enhance UIN's MBKM implementation.

This comparative perspective highlights opportunities for innovation at UIN Gusdur, such as strengthening external partnerships and adopting digital platforms for credit tracking, as seen in general universities. The stakeholder-driven curriculum design and credit allocation methodology underscore the institution's commitment to produce graduates who are both globally competitive and rooted in Islamic values. However, ongoing challenges, such as faculty training and resource constraints, require sustained efforts to fully realize MBKM's potential (Iskandar et al., 2024; Leal Filho et al., 2018; Susanto et al., 2025).

Based on these two areas of the Rector's policy, each study program forms an internal team to formulate a new MBKM-oriented KKNi curriculum structure. The new curriculum structure prepared by each study program has been implemented since the odd semester of the 2022/2023 academic year for new students at UIN Gusdur. The number of credits in the MBKM-based KKNi curriculum structure at UIN Gusdur can be presented as the following table.

Table 1. Students Credit Loan

No	Fakultas	Program Studi	Semester								Jml SKS
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
1	Faculty of Shari'ah	Islamic Family Law	20	24	24	24	20	22	10	-	144
		Sharia Economic Law	20	24	24	23	23	20	10	-	144
		Islamic Constitutional Law	20	24	23	24	24	19	10	-	144
2	Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teaching Sciences	Islamic Religious Education	20	21	22	23	21	23	8	6	144
		Arabic Language Education	20	19	23	23	24	21	8	6	144
		Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Teacher Education	22	22	22	22	22	20	8	6	144
		Early Childhood Education	22	22	22	22	22	20	8	6	144

3		Tadris English	22	22	21	21	22	22	8	6	144
		Tadris Mathematics	20	20	20	20	20	20	18	6	144
	Faculty of Ushuluddin, Adab and Da'wah Qur'an and Tafsir Studies	Science of the Qur'an and Tafsir	21	23	24	23	20	21	13	-	145
		Hadith Science	21	23	22	22	22	22	10	-	142
		Tasawwuf and Psychotherapy	21	22	22	22	24	22	13	-	146
		Communication and Islamic Broadcasting	22	24	24	22	21	19	13	-	145
		Da'wah Management	22	22	21	21	21	22	13	-	145
	Faculty of Economics and Islamic Business	Sharia Economics	20	24	24	22	24	20	4	6	144
		Sharia Accounting	20	24	24	22	24	20	4	6	144
		Sharia Banking	20	24	22	24	24	20	4	6	144
	Sharia Economics										

Based on the data in table 4.1 above, it can be explained that the total credits must be taken by each new student since the 2022/2023 academic year at UIN Gusdur are 144-146 credits. The amount of credits is different from the old curriculum structure at UIN Gusdur of 146-149 credits (Maghfur, 2021). This shows that there is a reduction in student learning load by 2-5 credits. Meanwhile, the distribution of credit load for each semester in each study program varies according to the needs and academic orientation of each study program.

In the new curriculum at UIN Gusdur, the types of courses are only divided into two types, namely the types of courses at the University level and the Prodi level. Based on the Office Memorandum of the Vice Chancellor 1 for Academic and Institutional Affairs of UIN K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan number B-667/In.30/WR.1/PP.00.9/07/2022 dated June 30, 2022 regarding university-level courses, there are six courses with a total weight of 16 credits that must be offered in all study programs. These courses include Religious Moderation (3 credits), Harmonization of Science and Religion (3 credits), Indonesian Language (2 credits), Islamic Studies Methodology (3 credits), Pancasila and Citizenship Education (3 credits), Academic Writing (2 credits). For the study program courses, the total credit is between 128-130 which are adjusted to the peculiarities of the scientific character of each

study program both related to the number, name of courses and their SKS weight (Maghfur, 2022a). To make easier to understand the form of curriculum changes at UIN Gusdur, researchers present it in the following table.

Table 2. Forms of Change in the Curriculum Structure of UIN K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan

No	Previous KJNI	Total	New KJNI (MBKM)	Total
Based on Course Type				
1.	1. Institute Course	17 Courses (33 credits)	1. University Course	6 Courses (16 credits)
	2. Faculty Course	Varies	2. Study Program Course	Varies
	3. Study Program Course	Varies		
Based on Course Kinds				
2.	1. Main competency modules	Varies	No specific division found	
	2. Supporting competency modules	Varies		
	3. Other competency modules	Varies		
Total credit		146-149	144-146	

All universities in Indonesia, both private and public, in preparing the education curriculum must refer to the Indonesian National Qualifications Framework (KJNI). KJNI is a statement of the quality of Indonesian Human Resources (HR) whose level is based on the level of ability and is stated in the formulation of learning outcomes (Aris Junaidi, 2020).

In addition to referring to KJNI, each university in developing its curriculum also refers to the dynamics of changes in education policy at the central level (Ministry). This policy, such as the MBKM policy echoed by the Ministry of Education and Culture (Kemendikbud) since 2020 through Permendikbud number 3 of 2020 which was then emphasized through Permendikbudristek number 53 of 2023 is concerning the Quality Assurance of Higher Education (Kusumawardani et al., 2024). Based on the Ministry's policy, UIN Gusdur as a State Islamic Religious College (PTKIN) which is structurally under the Ministry of Religion but academically follows the policies of the Ministry of Education and Culture, has implemented the MBKM policy in the development of its educational curriculum.

UIN Gusdur's efforts to accommodate the MBKM policy into its curriculum structure are guided by the Guidelines for the Preparation of Higher Education Curriculum issued by the Ministry of Education and Culture. Based on the guidebook, there are three stages in the preparation of curriculum documents which include curriculum design, learning design, and evaluation of learning programs (Aris Junaidi, 2020). In addition to the curriculum preparation process, UIN Gusdur has also determined the forms of MBKM learning activities which include nine pillars, namely; student exchanges, internships/work practices, teaching assistance in educational units, research/research, humanitarian projects, entrepreneurial activities, independent studies/projects, building villages/thematic KKN, and state defence (Kusumawardani et al., 2024). The determination of the nine pillars of MBKM at UIN Gusdur has been accompanied by clear policies/guidelines and is contained in the UIN Gusdur MBKM implementation guidebook related to the stages of planning, recognition, reporting, and assessment of learning outcomes. Especially for the ninth pillar, namely state defense, UIN Gusdur has replaced it with the term Religious Moderation (Maghfur, 2022b). The ninth MBKM pillar on religious moderation strengthens the impression in curriculum development at UIN Gusdur which has actualized government policies on religious moderation.

3. Problems in Constructing MBKM-based Curriculum at UIN K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan

As a new program in education, of course, the MBKM curriculum has several obstacles faced, especially by universities in constructing and implementing the MBKM. Some problems are also experienced by UIN K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan in constructing this curriculum, namely:

a. Problems in determining the courses to be converted

The determination of course conversion is a crucial aspect of the implementation of MBKM, as this decision affects the official recognition of MBKM activities as part of a student's academic credit. Without proper conversion, the benefits of MBKM activities may not be properly recognized, which may reduce students' motivation to participate in the program and hinder the achievement of broader educational goals. Determining course conversion is a major challenge due to the differences in substance and methodology between courses offered by the campus and courses in the MBKM program. For example, a student participating in an internship program in industry may gain knowledge and skills that do not fully match the theoretical courses on campus. This curriculum compatibility requires a comprehensive and often subjective assessment.

In addition, the difficulty in determining which courses to convert is also caused by the assessment standards of MBKM activities or programs. Assessment standards between MBKM courses and campus courses are often not in line. In many cases, MBKM activities do not always follow the same grading system as on-campus courses, such as exam, project, or final project formats. This creates challenges in establishing fair and consistent assessment criteria for MBKM courses.

Academic staff must adapt and devise assessment mechanisms that can accommodate variations in the types of activities and outcomes achieved. The second is the making of SOPs that specifically discuss the procedures for implementing teaching campus programs, especially in terms of conversion or equivalence of credits.

b. Distribution of courses that are not aligned with MBKM

Most study program curricula within UIN Gusdur still place courses that can be converted in the early semesters. This causes students to not immediately gain practical experience that is essential for the development of their skills. According to the theory of Constructivism developed by Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky, optimal learning occurs when students engage in real experiences and construct their knowledge through direct practice and social interaction (Pande & Bharathi, 2020). This is in accordance with the MBKM guidebook that the placement of practical courses in the early semesters allows students to engage in experiential learning earlier, in accordance with the MBKM principles that prioritize contextual and applicable learning (Aris Junaidi, 2020).

In dealing with this problem, the most likely step that can be taken by each study program is to restructure the existing curriculum so that it can be in line with the MBKM program. The programs in MBKM are the rights of students, so study programs still have to prepare everything whether or not there will be students who follow. Sabatini et al explained that to hold an adaptive MBKM program, each study program can identify activities that have been running and have similarities with the MBKM program (Sabatini et al., 2022). For example, at the Faculty of Tarbiyah and Keguruan Sciences of UIN K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan, the study programs within the scope of this faculty already have a regular program in the form of Teaching Practice which must be followed by every student. This Teaching Practice program is similar to the Teaching Assistance program in MBKM.

c. Limited financial capacity of students

In an era of growing higher education, the MBKM policy is an important breakthrough to improve the quality and relevance of education in Indonesia. This

program provides opportunities for students to gain broader learning experiences through various off-campus activities, such as national and international student exchanges, teaching assistance, internships, research, and community projects. However, at UIN Gusdur, one of the significant challenges faced is the limited financial capacity of students, which affects the effective implementation of MBKM. Most students at UIN Gusdur come from middle-class economic backgrounds. Many of them depend on scholarships or assistance from their families to fulfill their daily needs and tuition fees. In the context of MBKM, the various activities offered often require additional costs, such as transportation, accommodation, or other supporting equipment.

This financial limitation is a major obstacle that hinders student participation in MBKM programs. For example, internship programs at institutions outside the city or even abroad often require high transportation and accommodation costs. For students who come from middle or lower economic families, these costs can be a burden that is difficult to bear. In addition, some students may have to choose between participating in the MBKM program or working part-time to make ends meet. This choice often forces them to prioritize work over rewarding learning opportunities. As a result, the potential that could have been gained from the MBKM experience cannot be maximized due to financial constraints.

d. Not all destination agencies are willing to do MoUs

The MBKM program offers valuable opportunities for students to gain learning experience outside the campus environment, such as through internships, research projects, or community service activities. However, at UIN Gusdur, one of the major challenges in the implementation of MBKM is the obstacles in preparing Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with national agencies or partners as the purpose of the activity.

The MoU is one of the important requirements for implementing the MBKM program, as this document officially regulates the cooperation between the campus and partner agencies. However, not all agencies are willing to cooperate and draw up MoUs with UIN K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan. Some of the obstacles faced include: 1) Lack of Interest from Agencies, some agencies may not have the interest or priority to cooperate with educational institutions, especially if they do not see direct benefits from such cooperation. 2) Limited Resources. The process of drafting and managing MoUs requires time and resources from both parties. 3) Administrative and Regulatory Requirements, some agencies may have complex internal procedures or strict regulations that must be met before agreeing to an MoU. This process can be challenging, especially if

the agency has strict policies regarding external cooperation or if there are concerns regarding legal and administrative risks. 4) Limited Networks and Contacts, the networks and contacts the campus has also affect the ability to establish MoUs. Agencies may not be open for collaborating with institutions that do not have strong relationships in the industry.

To enhance the analysis of challenges in implementing the MBKM-based curriculum at UIN Gusdur, a SWOT analysis framework is employed to systematically identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, while distinguishing between internal and external factors. The SWOT approach allows for a structured evaluation of institutional capabilities and external influences, providing a clearer understanding of root causes and potential solutions (Puyt et al., 2023). By categorizing issues into internal (institutional) and external (partnership-related) dimensions, this analysis aligns with the study's objective to offer actionable insights for improving MBKM implementation, ensuring a comprehensive assessment of factors affecting curriculum development in an Islamic higher education context.

The SWOT analysis reveals distinct internal and external factors impacting MBKM implementation. Strengths (internal) include the university's proactive adoption of MBKM through Rector's Decrees and the integration of existing programs, such as Teaching Practice, with MBKM pillars, enhancing curriculum relevance. Weaknesses (internal) encompass limited faculty training on MBKM frameworks and challenges in course conversion due to misaligned academic priorities across study programs. Opportunities (external) include leveraging the Ministry of Religious Affairs' MERPATI portal for student exchanges and potential partnerships with local industries to support internships. Threats (external) involve reluctance from external agencies to establish MoUs due to resource constraints or lack of perceived benefits, alongside students' financial limitations hindering participation in off-campus activities. This analysis highlights the need for targeted strategies to address internal capacity gaps and strengthen external collaborations.

By employing the SWOT framework, this study provides a clearer picture of factors requiring improvement within UIN K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan and those necessitating external support. Internally, the university can address weaknesses by enhancing faculty development programs and standardizing course conversion protocols, while capitalizing on strengths through broader adoption of successful program integrations. Externally, fostering stronger partnerships via targeted outreach and

leveraging national platforms like MERPATI can mitigate threats and maximize opportunities. These findings contribute to the broader discourse on MBKM implementation by offering a replicable model for other Islamic higher education institutions to systematically address curriculum development challenges, ensuring alignment with national policies and institutional goals.

Table 1. SWOT Analysis Table

No.	Category	Factors
1.	Strenghts	Proactive adoption of MBKM via Rector's Decrees
		Integration of existing programs (e.g., Teaching Practice) with MBKM pillars
2.	Weaknesses	Limited faculty training on MBKM frameworks
		Challenges in course conversion due to misaligned academic priorities
3	Opportunities	Access to MERPATI portal for student exchanges
		Potential partnerships with local industries for internships
4.	Threats	Reluctance of external agencies to establish MoUs
		Students' financial limitations restricting off-campus participation

D. Conclusion

Based on the results of the research and discussion above, conclusions can be drawn from the research on MBKM-based curriculum construction at UIN K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan. First, the MBKM-based curriculum at UIN K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan has various policies, both sourced from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology and the Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia, which are then derived into Rector Decrees as policies that applied at UIN K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan. Second, some study programs have clearly arranged MBKM activities in their curriculum documents, but there are also study programs that have not clearly planned MBKM in their curriculum documents. However, the implementation of MBKM has begun to stretch in all study programs such as guest lecture activities, student exchanges, international PPL

KKN, internships, and others. Third, in constructing MBKM-based curriculum, UIN K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan face several problems, namely: problems in determining the courses to be converted, the distribution of courses that are less aligned with MBKM, the limited financial capacity of students, and not all destination agencies are willing to MoU.

This study reveals that the MBKM-based curriculum at UIN K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan, while firmly rooted in national and institutional policies, faces significant challenges in practical implementation, including course conversion difficulties, misaligned course distribution, student financial constraints, and limited external partnerships. These findings underscore the complexity of aligning flexible, competency-based curricula with Islamic educational values, particularly religious moderation. The implications are twofold: first, curriculum development must prioritize faculty training and standardize credit conversion protocols to enhance internal capacity; second, strategic partnerships with external stakeholders are essential to support campus learning and mitigate financial barriers. Theoretically, this research advances Islamic higher education by offering a context-specific model for integrating MBKM with religious and local values, addressing a gap in the literature on MBKM's application in Islamic contexts. Practically, it provides actionable recommendations for policymakers and curriculum developers, such as leveraging national platforms like MERPATI and adopting best practices from other universities to improve educational quality and produce graduates who are both professionally skilled and ethically grounded. By highlighting these contributions, this study strengthens UIN K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan's position as a competitive institution in the MBKM era and informs broader efforts to enhance Islamic higher education.

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