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Initiatives and Challenges of The *Kampus Mengajar* Program to Pursue Freedom to Learn

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
	This study is aimed at exploring the implementation of Kampus Mengajar to pursue the freedom to learn. Kampus Mengajar is a national program as a part of the Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) policy by the Ministry of Education and Culture of Indonesia. This program is to help schools solve their problems and make improvements in the disruptive era, especially during the COVID-19 outbreak by sending university students to targeted schools all over Indonesia. The research involved the participants of the Kampus Mengajar program in a private elementary school in Jakarta. Data were obtained from the interview and document analysis to find out the initiatives and the challenges of conducting the program. The data were analyzed qualitatively. The findings show that to help schools, the participants planned various initiatives during the program. The main challenges of implementing the initiatives include teachers' passive participation and lack of school facilities. It can be concluded that the Kampus Mengajar program contributes to pursuing the freedom to learn at school. However, to overcome the problems and make continuous improvements, it is not enough to count on the participants of the Kampus Mengajar program. It needs the school principal's full support and teachers' commitment to making changes.

Introduction

The Indonesian government through the Ministry of Education and Culture issued the Merdeka Belajar or 'the freedom to learn' policy to overcome the problems of human capital quality in Indonesia. This policy is implemented at various levels of education. At the higher education level, the policy of Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) has eight programs to accelerate the graduates' quality improvement through their active participation outside the universities (Direktorat Jenderal Pendidikan Tinggi, 2020). The university students have the freedom to learn from other study programs, society, and workplaces for a maximum of three semesters. It is believed that by giving those opportunities, students can increase their knowledge and skills that are relevant to the real world (Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 2020).

One of the MBKM programs is Kampus Mengajar. The Kampus Mengajar program aims to help schools solve problems and improve the teaching-learning process, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic situation (Subpokja Kampus Mengajar Dirjen Dikti, 2021). This program involves third-year university students to help the targeted elementary and junior high schools all over Indonesia. The students who pass the selection process will be grouped into five to seven. They will be placed in a targeted school near the students' domicile. The groups of students are under the supervision of a lecturer. The lecturer joining Kampus Mengajar are recruited from all universities in Indonesia through an administrative selection. The program lasts for one semester (six months).

Kampus Mengajar program focuses on three areas: teaching assistant, technology adaptation, and school administration (Subpokja Kampus Mengajar Dirjen Dikti, 2021). The students as the participants of Kampus Mengajar should plan their activities covering those areas, focusing on improving the teaching of basic literacy and numeracy. A narrative study by Setiawan & Sukamto (2021) on the experiences of Kampus Mengajar batch 1 participant in a primary school in Madura found out that literacy and numeracy have not been taught seriously by the teachers for several reasons including the teachers' old age, lack of literacy and numeracy teaching concept and limited technological knowledge. As teaching assistants, the Kampus Mengajar participants are to help teachers create more interactive classes so there is no more monotonous teaching-learning process. It is expected that through the Kampus Mengajar program, there are teachers who have the freedom to teach and students who have the freedom to learn. Related to technology adaptation, the participants are to help teachers use technology for teaching and learning. Besides, they are allowed to help schools manage administrative matters.

There might be many similar programs to Kampus Mengajar in the form of an internship, community service, teaching practicum, volunteering movements, and other forms. For example, in higher education, each university has community service programs. Through this program, lecturers and university students can take part in making changes to the targeted community (Anwar et al., 2019; Rochanah, 2020; and Nurjanah & Indriyastuti, 2020). Some non-government organizations (NGOs) might also create programs to empower the targeted communities or groups of people who need helps like the Indonesia Mengajar. The Indonesia Mengajar involves selected fresh graduates from various education backgrounds (Surya, 2012) to help teach in remote areas where is a lack of teachers through collaboration with all stakeholders both private and public sectors (Fibra & Berewot, 2019). Meanwhile, the Kampus Mengajar brings a new format that involves active university students and is held by the government. Participants in the Indonesia Mengajar learned self-concept, awareness, nationalism, child education, engagement, etc. by teaching (Ananda et al., 2018). It is hoped that the Kampus Mengajar can be more sustainable to solve the education problems in Indonesia and develop graduate competencies at the same time.

This study is to explore how is the Kampus Mengajar program implemented in the targeted schools specifically the initiatives and the challenges to pursuing the freedom to learn. There are several studies and reports about Kampus Mengajar Batch 1 programs (Anwar, 2021) (Hamzah, 2021) (Khotimah et al., 2021) but the discussions were mostly on the description of the programs. Therefore, this research was conducted to find out how the freedom to learn concepts was achieved through the Kampus Mengajar program.

Method

This study employed a qualitative approach using a case study. This case study is to answer the research question of 'why' and 'how' (Yin, 2018). This study was about why the Kampus Mengajar Program is conducted and how to pursue the freedom to learn through the program. The research took place in a private elementary school in Jakarta as one of the targeted schools of the Kampus Mengajar batch 1 program. The first batch of Kampus Mengajar was held from March to July 2021. Seven students were placed in this school. They were parts of more than fourteen thousand participants of the Kampus Mengajar batch 1 from all over Indonesia. All seven participants were recruited to take part in this study. They were purposively chosen because the researcher had the access to these participants. They are third-year students from both public and private universities in Indonesia with various study programs. Consent forms were informed before the data collection to get the agreement to participate in this study. Their confidential personal identities were carefully considered for ethical issues. This paper uses the initial names of the participants.

The data collection was to find out the implementation of the Kampus Mengajar program in the targeted school, specifically exploring the initiative and challenges. To obtain the data, interviews and document analysis were conducted simultaneously. Interviews were conducted online through the Google Meet video conference to get more accurate and detailed information from the participants. The interviews were recorded and then transcribed in Bahasa Indonesia but the extracts from the transcription used in this paper were translated into English. The documents were the participants' weekly and final reports as the supporting evidence and verification (Yin, 2012). The data were analyzed using theme analysis combining the information from the reports and the interview responses. To get the themes, all data were categorized based on the frequency of responses and referred to the research questions. The multiple data sources (Denscombe, 2010) were triangulated to ensure the related data from interview results and documentation study.

Results and Discussion

The findings of this study elaborate on the research questions about the initiatives and challenges of Kampus Mengajar in a private elementary school, in Jakarta, and how the Kampus Mengajar participants manage the program to pursue freedom to learn at school.

The Kampus Mengajar's initiatives to pursue the freedom to learn at school

From the interview and the final reports, it can be seen that the participants of Kampus Mengajar Batch 1 in a private school in Jakarta have various initiatives to help the school solve the problems and make improvements. The initiatives can be summarised as follow:

Table 1. Initiatives of Kampus Mengajar Batch 1 in a private elementary school in Jakarta

No.	Initiatives	Aims	Results
1.	Mini Library	To provide quality and relevant books for elementary school students	More than 100 new books available for students from the open donation
2.	Literacy program	To improve students' reading habit	Reading time: 15 minutes after school during the offline session (twice a week)
3.	Wall magazine	To build students' writing skills	One wall magazine during the Kampus Mengajar program consisting students' writings.
4.	Creating teaching media	To help students learn numeracy	Various teaching media to teach Math

5.	Teaching assistant	To help teachers build fun and interactive classes	Fun and interactive classes, strong engagement between students and the participants
6.	Technology adaptation	To help teachers use technology for teaching	Online classes via Zoom, Google form for the exam, social media accounts for school, 2 new PCs for teachers
7.	Digitalizing files	To manage school files and archive them in digital forms	Archived digital files including school accreditation documents

The initiatives above were based on the results of observations on the first week of the Kampus Mengajar program. During the observations, the participants also had discussions with the school principal and the teachers. After that, the participants consulted the initiatives with their Kampus Mengajar supervisor. The initiatives were started in the second week of the Kampus Mengajar program with approval from the school and supervisor.

It can be seen from the 'Aims' column that those initiatives were to solve the problems at school regarding the teaching assistant, technology adaptation, and administrative matters. The initiatives were in line with the focus of Kampus Mengajar. It can be implied from the findings that the previous teaching and learning activities were monotonous. This problem became the participants' priority. Based on the interview result, the participants came to school twice a week to teach the classes. They prepared the teaching materials based on the school teachers' lesson plans. The Kampus Mengajar participants managed the class in pairs or three. They prepared the teaching aids, games, and rewards. They claimed that the students were enthusiastic during the sessions because the participants came with fun and interactive classroom activities. *"My preparation to teach them (the elementary students) is to prepare snacks as rewards. They love playing games during the sessions, the classes were so alive, so I gave them snacks after school."* (Participant S)

Learning from the real situation at school is part of the learning process. The process of learning from life experience is called experiential learning, which is common as the opposite of learning in classrooms. However, according to the experiential learning theory (Kolb & Kolb, 2017), experiential learning is not merely about learning outside the classroom, but the holistic and multidimensional process of learning from experience involving the cycles of abstract conceptualization, active experimentation, concrete experience, and reflective observation. When university students learn from concrete experience itself is not pure experiential learning. Therefore, they need to reflect on what they have learned and transform it to make changes. The Kampus Mengajar weekly and final reports can be part of the reflection, on whether they had already found alternative solutions for the existing problems and helped teachers.

Teachers are the keys to pursuing 'freedom to learn'. According to the Minister of Education and Culture, 'freedom to learn refers' to the independence and freedom concept of Ki Hajar Dewantara. In this concept, students and teachers have the freedom to think and act (Kamil & Meiliana, 2020). It can be seen from the class activities how teachers build interactive classes and build students' engagement and interest. The Kampus Mengajar tried to build happy and meaningful classes. During the teaching assistant initiative, they tried to be creative and innovative to live their classes. They mentioned that they made different methods of teaching from the school teachers. They were given independence from the school teacher to manage their classes. Independent teachers are those who have autonomy or agency to manage their classes and are free from any pressures. The agency is achieved through 'engagement with very specific contextual conditions' (Priestley et al., 2013). It can

be summarised that the initiatives were planned to create the freedom to learn atmosphere in the school.

Challenges of implementing the Kampus Mengajar initiatives

While the Kampus Mengajar participants were confident to make changes at schools, they admitted that there were challenges to implementing their initiatives. The main challenges were the lack of facilities and teachers' low participation in Kampus Mengajar initiatives. From the weekly reports and interview results, it is confirmed that those two issues were mostly mentioned.

First, the challenges of school facilities. The Kampus Mengajar targeted schools are the elementary schools in remote areas and or elementary schools without accreditation or C-accredited (Direktorat Jenderal Pendidikan Tinggi, 2020). Therefore, the school facilities issue is one of the common challenges for those schools. It can be a lack of classrooms, inadequate teaching facilities, and insufficient learning resources. During online learning, this issue is dominant especially related to gadgets and internet connections. All Kampus Mengajar participants conveyed that school facilities are a challenge. Besides, most of the students do not have gadgets. They usually borrow from their parents' but sometimes are not compatible for learning except using social media like WhatsApp. Hence, for the offline learning mode, the Kampus Mengajar participants created teaching aids and selected classroom activities without high-technology support, but they argued that the activities were still fun and the materials were easily understood by the students.

The lack of facilities issue made the initiatives more challenging because the participants had to provide the tools by themselves. One participant mentioned that he and his friends helped the school collect the old computers, sell them, and buy the new ones. Hence the school has two new PCs. Another effort was the participants had to rearrange the tables, painted the room, and fix the bookshelves to create 'Pojok Baca', a book corner as a mini-library. They also opened donations for buying new books and other things for the book corner. Those activities took time but the participants did all of them together. It was just fun, they said.

The second challenge is teachers' low participation in the initiatives. Almost all participants expressed their disappointment when the school teachers did not attend the teaching-learning sessions. According to the pocketbook of the Kampus Mengajar program, the participants are the school teachers' assistants and collaborate with them, should not teach alone replacing the teachers (Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 2021). Most of the teachers did not come to classes during the face-to-face sessions, but they came to school and stayed in the teachers' room.

To help teachers adapt to technology, the participants mentioned that they offered training and coaching programs to use the technology for teaching, but the teachers refused. The teachers did not have supporting gadgets. They also perceived that using technology is complicated and they did not want to change the way they usually teach. The participants gave up asking them to collaborate. They prefer working on their initiatives without involving teachers. Nevertheless, they helped teachers prepare the Google form for the online exam, created teaching videos, and conducted synchronous online sessions using Zoom Cloud meetings to support online teaching-learning.

From the findings above, it is implied that good initiatives from the participants did not meet the teachers' expectations. The school teachers expected the Kampus Mengajar participants to replace them in the classroom. They also did not have the willingness to improve their technological skills. They might not have the motivation to learn as part of

professional development to be better teachers. According to Appova & Arbaugh (2018), this issue might be caused by the professional development activities which are not relevant to their professional growth or do not support the teachers' ability to apply the new knowledge directly to their classrooms. Another possibility might be they do not want to learn from younger people and are from a non-educational background. This reason might sound nonsense but when the Kampus Mengajar participants mentioned that four of six school teachers are elderly, it becomes possible. They might not want to learn from younger people or cross generations. Referring to Geeraerts et al., (2018), teachers can learn from their younger colleagues by developing good interaction with reciprocal and dialogical learning.

The results of this study implied that the students' freedom of learning in the targeted school is successfully implemented during the Kampus Mengajar program. However, the school teachers' freedom is negatively improved. Although the freedom to learn program is not a hundred percent achieved through the Kampus Mengajar Batch 1, they are halfway there.

Conclusion

It can be concluded that the Kampus Mengajar Batch 1 program is a good program for both university students as the participants and the targeted schools to pursue the freedom to learn. For the participants, it is an opportunity to learn from real-life experiences outside their campus. They can improve their soft skills like problem-solving, leadership, creativity, and many more to be quality human resources in the future. At the same time, they also help schools to achieve the freedom to learn through their initiatives during the program. Their initiatives should focus on the teaching assistant, technology adaptation, and school administration and management. The main challenges were the lack of school facilities and teachers' low participation. To manage the challenges, the participants found alternatives. Hence, the initiatives were completed. Referring to the objective of the Kampus Mengajar Batch 1, this program has given a positive effect on the students' freedom to learn. Unfortunately, the teachers' freedom does not significantly improve since they did not actively participate in the program.This study is limited to the implementation of the Kampus Mengajar Batch 1 in one elementary school. Further study in a wider and different context might be conducted to see how the program making changes. The teachers' and students' freedom of learning in various settings also needs to be studied from different perspectives.

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