

# **CHAPTER I**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Background of the Research**

Soft skills are essential abilities in the world of work. Proficiency in soft skills, such as communication, leadership, and teamwork, is a necessity for students. Because this is really needed in the world of work and is the key to achieving job success. Soft skills are not only needed in the world of work, but also in everyday life. In academia, students often focus more on acquiring hard skills than soft skills. Hard skills are technically acquired skills, while soft skills are non-technical abilities that students develop through self-training.

To develop students' soft skills, there is a need for training opportunities to prepare them for the challenges of the world of work. Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) is a program established by the Minister of Education and Culture which aims to encourage students to master various sciences to prepare them to enter the world of work, both soft skills and hard skills. This program provides an opportunity for students from all tertiary institutions under the auspices of the Ministry of Education and Culture to study outside campus for one semester by offering a conversion of 20 credits of courses for each activity (Ditjen Dikti, 2020). There are eight programs formed in MBKM, one of the programs is the Kampus Mengajar.

Kampus Mengajar is a training field that will equip students with a variety of expertise and skills by becoming partners with teachers and schools who

will be placed throughout Indonesia according to the student's registered domicile. Kampus Mengajar program has a vision to overcome the education gap that exists in Indonesia by providing opportunities for students and universities to contribute to helping meet basic education needs in hard-to-reach areas. Not only that, the aim of the Kampus Mengajar is as a forum for students to train soft teaching skills by becoming teachers at their placement schools (Ditjen Dikti, 2020). This program innovation focuses on increasing literacy and numeracy in students. This program has been implemented since 2020 and has reached for batch 5. This program allows students from various fields of study to help with the learning process from various schools in Indonesia, both elementary schools and junior high schools in 3T (*Tertinggal, Terdepan, and Terluar*).

Kampus Mengajar program aims to combine teaching in remote area schools with developing students' soft skills through teaching experiences that enable students to gain communication, leadership and teamwork skills. According to (Hikmawati, 2022) that the Kampus Mengajar program can train students' soft skills and this program needs to continue to be carried out to prepare the younger generation to become professional teachers, the aspect that received the highest score was in the aspect of self-confidence, initiative and communication, while the aspect that received the lowest score was in the cooperation aspect. Aspects of soft skills that are really needed in the world of work are leadership skills, communication skills, a positive work attitude and teamwork (Seetha, 2014). According to (Togo et al., 2022) explain that communication skills are very important skills in the workplace, because

these abilities not only create a pleasant work environment but can also help ensure clear and directed communication. Team work is also an important skill, because being a good work team means trying to make the best effort to achieve common goals, such as burying egoism and being willing to collaborate with one another. Leadership skills are one of the skills that is truly important and needed in any position, because the team will be motivated, enthusiastic and led when they have someone who can direct and guide an agency to achieve work targets.

The soft skills that can be developed through the Kampus Mengajar program are as follows: (1) Communication skills: student teaching experience will train and develop their communication skills, because teaching requires strong communication in explaining subject matter or interacting with students, teachers, and staff other schools; (2) Leadership: as a teacher in the classroom, students will take on a leadership role in managing the class such as managing the class, motivating students, and guiding them. This will help students develop their leadership abilities; (3) Team work: Kampus Mengajar participants will be placed in one group from various universities and study programs, they will work together to design and implement the agreed work program. This will train students to work effectively with teams from various backgrounds; (4) Adaptation and problem solving: when students are placed in an environment that is different from the lecture environment, it will train students' ability to adapt and find creative solutions to the challenges they face; (5) Self-improvement: indirectly, the Kampus Mengajar program will provide students with the

opportunity to develop their personal potential through new experiences they encounter during this program.

Even though this program has a positive impact in developing students' soft skills, there is still a need for identification and in-depth study of student perceptions of this program in the context of developing student soft skills such as communication, leadership and teamwork. Therefore, the purpose in this research is to figure out students experiences while participating in the Kampus Mengajar program batches four and five, especially those related to the development of these three aspects of soft skills.

Understanding the purposes of this research is important because it will help increase the effectiveness of the Kampus Mengajar program in the future, as well as provide insight for universities to more effectively develop students' soft skills. Apart from that, this research will also provide insight to students regarding the role of the Kampus Mengajar in forming their soft skills that are ready for the world of work. Therefore, based on some reasons above, in this research the researcher wants to study further by conducting research with the title: **“The Implementation of *Kampus Mengajar* to Foster Soft Skills: EFL Students’ Perceptions”**.

## **1.2 Research Question**

Based on the background above, the main research question of this research is: “How the students perceive the implementation of Kampus Mengajar in fostering soft skills?”

### **1.3 Objective of the Research**

Based on the research questions above, this research is aimed to figure out student perceptions on the implemented of Kampus Mengajar program in fostering soft skills.

### **1.4 Limitation of the Research**

This research focuses on figuring out students perceptions at Kampus Mengajar for fostering three aspects of soft skills, called communication skill, leadership competences, and team work experiences. The target of this study will be students at English Study Program who had participated in the Kampus Mengajar program in batches 4 and 5 in the academic year 2022 – 2023, located at district and city areas.

### **1.5 Significance of the Research**

This research is expected to provide information about student perceptions on the implementation of Kampus Mengajar. Apart from that, the implication in these findings can provide insight to students regarding the role of the Kampus Mengajar in the formation of soft skills. This study may be used as reference for other researchers if they are conducting a research that related to this topic.

### **1.6 Definition of the Key Terms**

**Kampus Mengajar** is one of the programs of Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology's which provides opportunities for students to study outside campus by becoming partners with teachers in helping manage the school

education system. This program also has several requirements for students who want to take part, such as that it can only be taken by active students starting from fourth semester and above, at least from accredited study programs, from State Universities (PTN) and Private Universities (PTS) under the auspices of Ministry of Education and Culture (Ditjen Dikti, 2020).

**Soft skills** are a person's personal abilities based on the knowledge they have, such as abilities based on a person's talent, mentality and personality. Soft skills can also be interpreted as intrapersonal and interpersonal skills. Intrapersonal is the ability to manage yourself, while interpersonal is the ability to build relationships.

**Perception** is a person's way of interpreting and responding to information from the surrounding environment. Perception is based on each person's view and understanding of the world around them at the moment.