

## ABSTRACT

**Darwina. 2024.** *Exploring English Study Program Students' Experiences toward the Implementation of Merdeka Belajar-Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) Programs at One Public University in Jambi.* A thesis, Magister of English Education, Universitas Jambi in Academic year, 2024. The first supervisor is Prof. Amirul Mukminin, S.Pd., M.Sc. Ed., Ph.D. The second supervisor is Bunga Ayu Wulandari, S.Pd., M.EIL., Ph.D.

The *MBKM* has two concepts, namely Freedom to Learn and Independent Campus. This is a continuation of the independent learning program for higher education. The aim of this research was to address 3 elements: English study program students' opportunities, challenges, and strategies in practicing the *MBKM* programs. The researcher adopted qualitative phenomenology approach. By interviewing nine participants from three different kinds of *MBKM* programs, namely student exchange, teaching assistance and internship students. The researcher found in terms of opportunities, the *MBKM* program is proven to acceleration for degree completion, entrepreneurial projects will beneficial after graduating from university, experiences to increase the academic qualification of Curriculum Vitae and relation for job vacancy. In terms of challenges, the students got a very limited access to gain information about the programs, the conversion of grades. In terms of strategies employed to overcome the challenges, the students seeking help from field supervisor, the head of English study program, friends and also coping the problem individually. This research implicates that cooperation among various stakeholders is needed to strengthen the maintainability of *MBKM* programs as the way of adjusting to current demands of preparing college students for the profession. Further investigation is also required to assess the long-term impact of *MBKM* implementation on the quality of higher education in Indonesia. These include establishing courses as prerequisites, enhancing collaboration with schools, and clarifying credit transfer procedures.

**Keywords:** *Merdeka Belajar* (Freedom to Learn) and *Kampus Merdeka* (Independent Campus), Opportunity, Challenge, Strategy.