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Agriculture Students' Cultural Understanding During Students' Exchange in *Kampus Merdeka* Program: A Literature Review Approach

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ABSTRACT

This article investigates the role of the *Kampus Merdeka* Program in promoting cross-cultural understanding in the context of agriculture during students' exchange. By employing a literature review as the methodological approach, the study synthesizes existing scholarly works to analyze the effectiveness of international exchange programs in fostering intercultural learning within the agricultural domain. The review delves into various aspects, including the impact of cultural immersion, communication barriers, and the significance of intercultural competence in the context of agricultural education. The findings aim to shed light on the benefits of cross-cultural experiences in agricultural learning environments, paving the way for future enhancements in the *Kampus Merdeka* Program and similar initiatives worldwide.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Globalisation and cultural diversity are two topics that have recently received a lot of attention in the academic world. A change in educational institutions is being driven by globalisation, which is causing the world society to move towards greater interdependence. The changes are being driven by the need to train workers to be part of the global economy and to have citizens who can take part in international politics (Torres, 2002). Cultural study is an analytical approach to an item, incorporating literary criticism, media studies, historical sociology, and other related disciplines. Conducting a cultural analysis is crucial for students to gain insights into the cultural dynamics of their own country and various other nations. This enables them to make meaningful comparisons and identify areas that require improvement (Supardi et al., 2023).

The MBKM (*Merdeka Belajar – Kampus Merdeka*) curriculum is revolutionising education by introducing the notion of mastery. Under this curriculum, students from different disciplines are required to acquire the information necessary to become well-rounded graduates with comprehensive competence. The implementation of Kampus Merdeka allows students to concentrate on a particular scientific field rather than a specific academic programme (Susetyo, 2020). Students need to be prepared to adapt to the changing labour market, social and cultural norms, and the Big Data Era, and the curriculum plays a key role in this (Osberg et al., 2021). We need to revamp our educational system to produce college grads who can solve today's complex problems while staying deeply rooted in our nation's rich cultural history (Tedesco et al., 2014). It's imperative that we do this in this era of unprecedented change.

In Indonesia, the *Merdeka Belajar-Kampus Merdeka* (MBKM) programme strives to enhance graduates' competence in both hard and soft skills so that they can become leaders with exceptional personalities who are prepared to adapt to changing times. Students are encouraged to develop their potential in accordance with their passions and talents through the MBKM activity, which takes the shape of experiential learning activities. Our Independent Student Exchange Programme is just one of many MBKM offerings. The purpose of the independent student exchange programme is to provide students with the chance to learn in settings other than their home universities or study abroad programmes. Students' critical thinking, creative thinking, collaborative skills, and communication abilities will all be enhanced by this exercise, which will also give them valuable experience. Students benefit from participating in an international student exchange programme, according to studies conducted by Lestari et al. (2023). Among these benefits is the opportunity for students to meet new people, learn about different cultures, and grow as communicators and thinkers in the local community. The fact that students get to study from native speakers has also boosted their confidence and proficiency in the English language.

Student exchange is a crucial programme that universities must implement.The student exchange programme is expected to mitigate the issue of disparity in infrastructural and educational facilities in Indonesia. In addition, student exchange programmes provide students with the chance to explore academic disciplines that may not be offered in their current study programme further (Faiz & Purwati, 2021). Additional advantages of student exchange programmes include increased self-efficacy in online learning through effective time management, heightened communication skills, willingness to acknowledge personal challenges and seek assistance, and access to supportive resources (Fatima et al., 2021). Student exchange is a highly sought-after extracurricular activity among students. Students have the option to enrol in courses either at international institutions or at universities inside their own country. Through this approach, students can acquire supplementary knowledge and experience the unique ambiance of a different campus. However, these aspects are contingent upon a collaboration agreement that has been duly controlled by the government. Each university will synchronise the grades and credits earned by students from overseas universities (Prahani et al., 2020).

Agricultural education teacher preparation programmes should prioritise early engagement with minority kids and adults. Fifty years ago, this fundamental statement was one of twelve tenets for agricultural education pre-service teachers to meet the needs of minority students (Parr, 2011). Even for educators without extensive cultural background, cultural implications in the classroom can have a significant impact on student learning. In multicultural classrooms, even teachers who don't have much experience with different cultures might make mistakes in their inclusive pedagogy. In order to adapt to the changing demands of their students, agricultural educators must embrace new cultural norms. According to Woods (2004), agricultural education can play a role in the development of culturally appropriate practices because the path towards them is vast. Agricultural education must not just not be idle but actively seek out future solutions to the problems that today's youngsters face.

A literature review turned up a number of studies on the topic of tertiary institutions' attempts to facilitate independent learning. One of these studies, by Assingkily (2020), claims that, among other things, universities are trying to match student profiles with employers' needs, come up with a fresh method of teaching, and map out how their curricula relate to one another in terms of learning outcomes (CPL). In addition, according to (Baharuddin, 2021), the study programme curriculum model that was created by modifying the MBKM policy has systems for learning evaluation, planning, and assessment. Moreover, according to research by Sudaryanto et al. (2020), various learning activities can be implemented to support independent learning in the curriculum. These include student exchanges, apprenticeships, teaching assistance in education units, humanitarian projects, entrepreneurial activities, independent studies, and real work based on college or village themes. Suwandi (2020), Ridha (2020), Nanggala & Suryadi (2020), et al. (2020), and Mariati (2021) are just a few of the other research that are relevant to the topic of creating a curriculum for independent learning on an independent campus.

Using a literature review as its methodology, the study compiles and analyses previous research on the topic of foreign exchange programmes and their impact on agricultural intercultural learning.

2. METHODS

The major method of data collection for this investigation was a literature review. A literature review is an essential component of qualitative descriptive research because the study aims to "describe, summarise various conditions, various phenomena of social reality that exist in society and become the object of research in order to draw features, characters, traits, models, signs, or descriptions about conditions, situations, or phenomena" (Holloway & Todres, 2003). This phenomenon was analysed via the lens of the effectiveness of international exchange programs in fostering intercultural learning within the agricultural domain. Data was collected via perusing digital library collections. According to Bungin (2010), one method of gathering information for social research is the library technique. A "literature review" is the name given to this sort of investigation. Creswell (2014) states that literature reviews are synopses of scholarly publications including books, journals, and dissertations. Research articles published in online journals describing both historical and modern theories and information will constitute the bulk of the material, which will be categorised according to topics and documents relevant to agriculture students' cultural understanding during students' exchange in *Kampus Merdeka* Program. There were 15 articles that made up the search results. These articles were selected because they exemplify the current state of students' exchange in *Kampus Merdeka* program at universities. Researchers grouped the parts, compared them to similar frameworks, and then drew conclusions based on their analysis of the data.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Students' Exchange in Kampus Merdeka Program

The student exchange programme, mandated by the Ministry of Education and Culture, is not only administered by the ministry but also requires each university to organise such programmes independently based on their respective capabilities and capacities. The purpose of the University is to facilitate student exchange programmes autonomously in order to promote the Independent Campus Learning programme, which has been established by the Ministry of Education and Culture through the Directorate General of Education. In 2020, the Minister of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia issued Decree Number 754/P/2020, which pertains to the Key Performance Indicators (IKU) of State Universities and Higher Education Service Institutions under the Ministry of Education and Culture. This decree specifies that one of the IKU. The objective is to offer students chances for extracurricular activities. One activity offered by this programme is student exchange, specifically the opportunity to attend lectures at domestic and foreign universities through cooperation agreements established with prestigious universities or government entities (Kemendikbud RI, 2021).

The regulations for organising student exchange programmes specify that study programmes have the authority to determine the maximum number of students allowed to engage in this activity programme. Most students support the regulations that establish participation limits for each subject in the study programme. Students recognise that the implementation of quota limitations will enhance their access to high-quality academic services during the learning process (Insani et al., 2021).

The student exchange programme in MB-KM can be converted to 20 credits by modifications to university policies and study programmes. Students participating in the exchange programme will have the opportunity to interact with students from various universities, thereby gaining a diverse experience. Direct experiential benefits for students include understanding many regional cultures, enhancing academic skills, developing leadership abilities, and building self-confidence and social awareness. The primary objective of the MB-KM student exchange programme policy is to enable students to cultivate adaptable and holistic modes of thinking in unfamiliar areas of knowledge. In

addition, it offers provisions and facilitates the development of characters to foster understanding of ethnicity, nationality, culture, race, and religion, so enhancing the significance of unity and national cohesion. This student exchange programme facilitates interdisciplinary collaboration among scientific domains, fostering the development of a cohesive knowledge community (Faiz & Purwati, 2021).

The implementation of the student exchange programme in MB-KM can be facilitated through three distinct techniques: (1) intra-university student exchange, where students from different study programmes within the same university participate; (2) inter-university student exchange, where students from the same study programme engage with different universities; and (3) inter-university student exchange, involving students from different study programmes across various universities (Ramadhani et al., 2021). This programme is intended for a certain group of students who have been chosen based on their performance in various selection processes and administrative requirements.

3.2 Benefit of Cross-Cultural Experience in Students' Exchange Program

These days, international student exchange programmes are an integral part of every country's educational system. Through these programmes, students are able to travel between nations and experience new academic, social, and cultural environments (Goldstein, 2022). Iskhakova et al. (2022) and Atalar (2020) found that students who take part in these exchange programmes have more chances for academic and personal improvement as well as for developing their global capabilities. Global citizenship, improved academic and professional competence, and increased cross-cultural understanding are all goals of international exchange programmes. International student exchange programmes provide numerous advantages. Participating students get the chance to learn and work in foreign settings, which helps them develop their professional skills (Wright & Cluke, 2010). They get their feet wet in the working world and land jobs in the field of international relations, making themselves competitive in the global labour market (Di Pietro, 2015). Participating in an exchange programme also gives students the chance to learn about other cultures, develop their own perspectives, and reflect on their own experiences (Curtis & Ledgerwood, 2018).

While there are many benefits to participating in an international student exchange programme, there are also certain difficulties that students may face. Their adjustment and academic performance may be hindered by language challenges, unfamiliar learning environments, and cultural differences (Nguyen, 2011). Thus, it is crucial to investigate and resolve the unique difficulties and possibilities linked to these exchange programmes. Technological developments, rising mobility, and increasing international connectedness have all contributed to the globalisation of education's rise to prominence in recent years. Transcending boundaries and cultivating a globalised learning environment, it has ushered in substantial shifts in the perception and delivery of education (Berg & Schwander, 2019).

In order to foster educational cooperation and cross-cultural understanding, international student exchange programmes are crucial. Intercultural discussion and mutual respect are fostered through these opportunities for pupils to connect with other perspectives, customs, and beliefs (Whatley et al, 2021). Students gain new perspectives and skills in their studies as they participate in these exchanges, which expose them to other research settings, pedagogical approaches, and educational systems. International student exchange programmes also help educational institutions work together and collaborate with each other across borders. They make it easier for people to share information, ideas, and the best ways to do things. This encourages partnerships between universities and study collaborations around the world (De Wit & Altbach, 2021). International partnerships like these help move scientific research forward, lead to new ideas, and spread information to other countries.

Students can improve their employability in today's globally interconnected job market by taking part in international student exchange programmes, which provide a multitude of benefits. Cultural competence and global awareness are fostered through these programmes by exposing pupils to other cultures, customs, and viewpoints (Nilsson & Ripmeester, 2016; Teichler & Janson, 2007). According to Neumannet al. (2019), students can boost their language skills, including fluency, vocabulary, and general proficiency, by immersing themselves in a foreign language environment. Students develop

their critical thinking abilities, increase their intellectual flexibility, and widen their academic perspectives through exposure to many educational systems, teaching techniques, and research contexts (Loes & An, 2023).

Personal growth and independence are two additional benefits of participating in an international student exchange programme. Students develop important life skills like problem-solving, adaptation, and intercultural communication as they venture out of their comfort zones and adjust to new social, intellectual, and cultural situations (Berg & Schwander, 2019; Mikulec, 2019). Lifelong friendships, international connections, and professional networks can be fostered by the programmes' chances for students to construct an extensive network of contacts (McManus, 2019).

Students' employability in a global job market is much improved when they participate in international student exchange programmes (Fakunle, 2021). The capacity to work well with people from many cultural origins and excellent intercultural communication skills are highly prized in today's globalised businesses (Roy et al., 2019). In addition to developing the skills necessary to succeed in a variety of contexts, students also get the global perspective, resilience, and adaptability to deal with the unexpected (Hua et al., 2019). Immersion in a foreign language environment improves students' language skills, which in turn increases their competitiveness and opens them more employment prospects in multinational firms and international organisations (Fakunle, 2021). Students that participate in international student exchange programmes gain valuable experience studying in a different country, which shows that they can adjust to new situations and viewpoints, and that they are open to new ideas (Gil & Reyes, 2020).

In conclusion, participating in an international student exchange programme can help students in many ways. These include improving their language abilities, expanding their horizons academically, growing as individuals, and increasing their marketability to potential employers. Students will be better prepared for a globalised world if these programmes help them gain the knowledge and experience to succeed in settings that are both diverse and highly interdependent.

3.3 The effectiveness of international exchange programs in fostering intercultural learning within the agricultural domain

Different fields of study and work utilise different words when describing intercultural competency. Interactions between individuals from diverse cultural origins will primarily be described in this study as intercultural competence (Deardorff, 2011). Being able to recognise and appropriately respond to cultural cues is also an important part of being interculturally competent (Karnyshev, Karnysheva, & Ivanova, 2014). Competence encompasses the three domains of personal growth: mental, behavioural, and emotional. According to Ghosh (2013), there are three dimensions to emotional intelligence: cognitive, behavioural, and emotional intelligence (i.e., knowledge, abilities, and attitudes). What makes up a culture is the shared pattern of actions, thoughts, expectations, values, and beliefs among a group's or team's members. A people's cultural background influences many facets of their daily lives, including their language, customs, ceremonies, philosophies, and sense of community. A culture can be embodied by a large or small group of people; after all, growth-promoting interactions can occur with anyone (Ghosh, 2013; Grazulis & Markuckiene, 2014).

Gaining intercultural abilities, global awareness, and an openness to differences prompted students and universities to pursue international higher education, according to Lowe et al. (2014). The assumption that college students can improve their intercultural competency is one of the key reasons why study abroad possibilities have grown support (Salisbury et al., 2013). Compared to students who do not study abroad, those who do so are more likely to develop desirable traits, such as an interest in global issues, improved critical thinking and problem-solving abilities, and marketable talents (Lowe et al., 2014). Understanding other cultures is not a destination in and of itself, but rather an ongoing process that necessitates ongoing work on one's part. Improving one's capacity to learn should be one's primary goal in the pursuit of intercultural competence. Contacting people from many cultural

backgrounds and establishing a regular communication stream provides individuals with opportunities to enhance their competency.

Participating students in foreign student exchange programmes placed a high value on developing both cultural awareness and international contacts, which are closely related. All of these factors highlight the significance of interacting with people from varied cultural origins, learning about other cultures, and making genuine friendships with them. When taken as a whole, these two factors demonstrated how profoundly impactful programmes for international student exchange can be. Students gained cultural competency, a more global view, and a greater respect for variety via cultural immersion and comprehension.

One of the most important things about foreign student exchange programmes was the emphasis on multicultural integration and adaptability. The capacity to interact and connect with people from different cultural backgrounds, hence promoting mutual understanding and communication, was a part of this advantage. Within the realm of international student exchange programmes, two notable characteristics have surfaced: future professional readiness and personal development and self-assurance. Participants in these programmes had the chance to go through a life-altering experience while also gaining employable skills. Students gained confidence, a larger worldview, and the abilities to thrive in today's interconnected world through their participation in these programmes.

4. CONCLUSION

Finally, this research provides important insight into three topics: the Kampus Merdeka Program's Student Exchange, the Value of Intercultural Understanding in the Student Exchange, and the Power of International Exchange Programmes to Promote Intercultural Understanding. Notwithstanding the constraints, this study underscores the profound capacity of international exchange programmes to bring about significant change for students. It emphasises the importance of institutions and policymakers giving priority and support to these programmes in order to improve students' experiences and outcomes. Future research should seek to incorporate qualitative methodologies, use larger and more varied samples, and investigate the specific cultural and institutional issues at play in order to address the limitations of this study. The development of targeted interventions and support mechanisms can be informed by this, which will lead to a more comprehensive knowledge of students' experiences in international exchange programmes.

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