



INTERDISCIPLINARY COLLABORATION MODEL FOR COMMUNITY SERVICE AND VISITING LECTURER PROGRAM TO MALAYSIA

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ABSTRACT

Interdisciplinary community service activities conducted through benchmarking visits and visiting lecturer programs in Malaysia represent a strategic initiative to enhance faculty capacity, strengthen institutional networks, and advance the internationalization of Indonesian higher education institutions. This study aims to describe and analyze a collaborative community service model that brings together lecturers from diverse academic disciplines such as economics, law, technology, and health sciences to engage in knowledge exchange and academic activities at selected universities in Malaysia. Utilizing a descriptive qualitative approach with a case study design, data were collected through observations, interviews, and document analysis. The findings demonstrate that cross-disciplinary collaboration through benchmarking and guest lecturing fosters significant improvements in lecturer competencies, promotes curriculum innovation, and supports the implementation of Indonesia's Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) initiative by exposing faculty and students to global academic practices. Furthermore, the program strengthens institutional partnerships, facilitates mutual learning, and enhances the visibility of Indonesian higher education on the international stage. The collaborative model also encourages the integration of global perspectives into local teaching and community engagement practices. Given these outcomes, the study recommends institutionalizing such interdisciplinary and cross-border initiatives as a sustainable strategy for higher education development. This approach not only responds to the demands of educational globalization but also contributes to building a more interconnected, innovative, and competitive academic ecosystem in Indonesia.

Keywords: interdisciplinary community service, benchmarking, visiting lecturer, internationalization, higher education collaboration

ABSTRAK

Kegiatan pengabdian kepada masyarakat yang bersifat lintas disiplin melalui kunjungan studi tiru dan program dosen tamu ke Malaysia merupakan inisiatif strategis untuk meningkatkan kapasitas dosen, memperkuat jejaring kelembagaan, serta mendorong internasionalisasi perguruan tinggi di Indonesia. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan dan menganalisis model kolaborasi pengabdian masyarakat yang melibatkan dosen dari berbagai bidang ilmu seperti ekonomi, hukum, teknologi, dan ilmu kesehatan dalam kegiatan pertukaran akademik di sejumlah perguruan tinggi pilihan di Malaysia. Metode yang digunakan adalah kualitatif deskriptif dengan pendekatan studi kasus, dilengkapi pengumpulan data melalui observasi, wawancara, dan analisis dokumen. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kolaborasi lintas bidang melalui studi tiru dan perkuliahan tamu mampu meningkatkan kompetensi dosen, mendorong inovasi kurikulum, serta mendukung pelaksanaan Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) dengan memperkenalkan praktik akademik global kepada dosen maupun mahasiswa. Selain itu, program ini mempererat kerja sama kelembagaan, memfasilitasi pembelajaran timbal balik, dan meningkatkan daya saing perguruan tinggi Indonesia di kancah internasional. Model kolaboratif ini juga mendorong integrasi perspektif global ke dalam praktik pengajaran dan pengabdian di tingkat lokal. Berdasarkan temuan tersebut, penelitian ini merekomendasikan agar inisiatif lintas disiplin dan lintas negara seperti ini dijadikan sebagai strategi berkelanjutan dalam pengembangan perguruan tinggi. Pendekatan ini tidak hanya merespons tuntutan



globalisasi pendidikan, tetapi juga berkontribusi pada terbentuknya ekosistem akademik yang lebih terhubung, inovatif, dan kompetitif di Indonesia.

Kata kunci: pengabdian lintas disiplin, studi tiru, dosen tamu, internasionalisasi, kolaborasi perguruan tinggi

INTRODUCTION

The internationalization of higher education has become a strategic agenda in addressing 21st-century global challenges, including digital transformation, the Fourth Industrial Revolution, cross-border academic mobility, and the growing need for global collaboration in advancing knowledge (Knight, 2004; Altbach & Knight, 2007). Higher education institutions are now expected not only to produce high-achieving graduates at the local level, but also individuals who are competent within international networks, adaptable to global dynamics, and capable of contributing to the resolution of transnational issues such as climate change, global health, and the digital economy (Maringe & Woodfield, 2013).

One effective strategy within the internationalization framework is interdisciplinary community service conducted abroad. Activities such as benchmarking visits and visiting lecturer programs provide opportunities for faculty members to share knowledge, adopt best institutional practices from overseas partners, and expand academic and research networks (Leask, 2009; Deardorff, 2006). Direct engagement with foreign partner institutions also enhances faculty members' global literacy, intercultural communication skills, and international pedagogical competencies.

Interdisciplinary community service models emphasize the importance of multidisciplinary and transdisciplinary approaches in addressing complex societal challenges. Collaboration among fields such as economics, law, technology, and health—such as that implemented in this initiative—can generate more comprehensive and contextually relevant solutions. This approach aligns with the “Mode 2 Knowledge Production” theory proposed by Gibbons et al. (1994), which posits that knowledge is produced not only within academic silos but also through societal engagement and cross-sectoral collaboration.

Malaysia was selected as the host country due to its significant advancements in higher education among ASEAN nations. Institutions such as Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) and Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris (UPSI) are recognized for their active internationalization programs, digitally driven institutional management, and innovative student business incubators and campus cooperatives (Mok, 2013; Rashid et al., 2021). Cultural proximity and geographical closeness further position Malaysia as an ideal partner for regional academic collaboration with Indonesia.

However, academic studies on integrated, cross-institutional, and interdisciplinary community service collaboration models in international contexts remain limited, particularly those involving diverse institutions and disciplinary backgrounds within a single, cohesive program. Therefore, it is essential to design and document collaborative models that are not only responsive to global community service needs but also aligned with national educational policies, such as Indonesia's Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM), which promotes faculty mobility and strengthens international partnerships (Kemdikbudristek, 2020).

METHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative method with a case study approach. Data were collected through participatory observation, semi-structured interviews with program participants, and documentation of community service activities conducted at several institutions in Malaysia. The data analysis process followed the stages of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing (Miles & Huberman, 1994). To ensure credibility, data validity was established through source and methodological triangulation.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Multidisciplinary Collaboration as a Catalyst for Innovation

The interdisciplinary collaboration implemented in the benchmarking and visiting lecturer programs demonstrates how a multidisciplinary approach enhances the relevance and impact of community service (Gibbons et al., 1994). This initiative integrated expertise from economics, law, technology, and health sciences within a unified collaborative platform. This aligns with the concept of transdisciplinary engagement, which goes beyond disciplinary integration by emphasizing collective knowledge to develop practical solutions to complex societal challenges (Pohl & Hirsch Hadorn, 2007). The benchmarking experience at Malaysian educational institutions revealed that models such as campus cooperatives, digitalization of teaching systems, and institutional autonomy policies can be adapted as best practices within the Indonesian context. Cross-national comparisons foster critical reflection on local policies and practices, while simultaneously creating space for innovation in university community service systems.

2. Visiting Lecturer: Academic Mobility and Internationalization

The visiting lecturer program represents a form of academic mobility that directly contributes to the internationalization of higher education (Knight, 2004). In this activity, Indonesian lecturers not only delivered academic content but also actively engaged in discussions with Malaysian academic communities on global issues such as learning digitalization, post-pandemic public health, and the strengthening of international legal literacy. Participants demonstrated enhanced intercultural competence—the ability to adapt and communicate effectively in multicultural environments (Deardorff, 2006). This experience not only strengthens lecturers' academic profiles but also influences curriculum development and teaching methodologies at their home institutions.

3. Synergy Between MBKM and Regional Collaboration

This cross-border community service initiative strongly aligns with the principles of Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM). One of the key MBKM indicators is faculty and student mobility within international collaborative programs (Kemdikbudristek, 2020). Activities of this nature serve as a platform for lecturers to expand professional networks, adopt adaptive international policies, and enrich curriculum materials with global experiential learning. Furthermore, within the context of ASEAN regional integration, this collaboration supports the goals of the ASEAN Higher Education Area (AHEA), which aims to enhance academic mobility and harmonize higher education systems across Southeast Asia (ASEAN Secretariat, 2021). By strengthening university partnerships between Indonesia and Malaysia, this study illustrates a tangible contribution to building an inclusive and collaborative ASEAN higher education ecosystem.

4. Challenges and Strategies for Strengthening Collaboration

Despite the positive outcomes, several challenges remain, including differences in institutional structures, limited funding, and linguistic and academic cultural barriers. To address these, strategic measures are recommended:

- a. Establishing a joint secretariat among participating universities to coordinate cross-border programs.
- b. Integrating international community service initiatives into each institution's Master Plan for Research and Community Service (RIPP)
- c. Enhancing financial support from national agencies (e.g., BRIN, LPDP) and regional bodies (e.g., ASEAN Foundation, ASEAN University Network).

CONCLUSION

The interdisciplinary collaboration model in community service through benchmarking visits and visiting lecturer programs in Malaysia has proven effective in enhancing lecturers' global competencies, strengthening academic networks, and supporting the internationalization of Indonesian higher education. The integration of knowledge across various disciplines results in a more comprehensive and contextually relevant approach to community engagement. This initiative aligns with the Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) policy and the ASEAN regional agenda in promoting academic mobility and cross-border collaboration. Despite facing structural and funding challenges, this model holds significant potential for sustainable adoption as a key component of Indonesia's national strategy for international community service.

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