

# The Role of the Independent Student Exchange Program in Increasing Student Tolerance Attitude

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**Abstract.** *This research aims to find out the role of the Independent Student Exchange Program in increasing student tolerance. This study used qualitative research methods. This research uses various written data sources such as articles, documents and government policies related to education. The results of this research show that the Nusantara Module activities with four activity points consisting of, diversity, reflection, inspiration and social contribution provide a very big impact and role in increasing the tolerance attitude of Independent Student Exchange Program students as well as providing opportunities for Exchange Program students. Merdeka Students' ability to carry out the learning process together with regular students of the recipient universities further strengthens the tolerant attitude of the students of the Merdeka Student Exchange Program system.*

**Keywords:** *Independent Student Exchange Program, Student Tolerance Attitude, Intercultural Exchange*

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## INTRODUCTION

Independent Learning Campus (MBKM) is one of the government policies contained in Minister of Education and Culture Regulation Number 3 of 2020 concerning National Higher Education Standards. Policies can be implemented if there is support from universities and students. This is a big challenge for universities to prepare various kinds of facilities and infrastructure to support policy implementation. Students who are used as the object of implementing the program need to be given direction, understanding and high motivation so that this program can be implemented according to the planned objectives, and it is important to know students' perceptions of MBKM policies and activities. Without the management of the student exchange program by the study program and the participation of students, these policies and activities cannot be implemented.

The Independent Campus Learning Program or (MBKM) aims to increase the competency of human resources to be able to face the era of the industrial revolution 4.0. Independent campuses provide challenges and opportunities for students to develop various soft skills and hard skills (Anwar, 2022). The freedom to choose to study at other campuses or in other study programs outside the study program of one's own choice is one of the concepts of freedom to learn. There are eight independent campus learning policies or (MBKM), namely: 1) Independent Student Exchange, 2) Internships/Work Practices, 3) Teaching in educational institutions, 4) Village Projects, 5) Research Programs, 6) Entrepreneurship Programs, 7) Independent Study Program/Project and 8) Humanitarian Project Program.

The Independent Student Exchange Program or better known by its abbreviation (PMM) is carried out for one semester between islands in Indonesia, from one region to another. The independent student exchange program is a program that can provide an experience of diversity and culture with a maximum credit transfer system of +/- 20 credits at the recipient university. Previously, in the independent student exchange program, each university contributed to the activity to encourage the implementation of cultural activities where the implementation process was submitted in accordance with the policies of each university.

In the Merdeka student exchange program, there are Nusantara Module (MN) activities or courses which are one of the courses that participants must take. who take part in the PMM program (Fahmi et al., 2023; Affendi & Fauzi, 2024). The Nusantara module is a series designed in the form of activities for diversity, inspiration, reflection and social contribution which focuses on creating a comprehensive understanding of students through sequential and repeated guidance. These activities aim to introduce the richness of Indonesian culture and increase the spirit of tolerance of students from various groups, ethnicities, races, religions and beliefs (Sipayung & Dwiningrum, 2020). The archipelago module is intended to maximize meeting space between students on various islands, increase knowledge and understanding, and increase the meaning of tolerance. Tolerance is a human attitude or behavior that follows rules, where someone can appreciate and respect the behavior of other people (Hjerm et al., 2020). An attitude of action that does not justify acts of discrimination against people from different groups or factions in a society is a term of tolerance in a social, cultural and religious context (Anwar, 2022).

The Nusantara Module course aims to maximize the meeting space between students from various regions who take part in the independent student exchange program, increasing knowledge, competence and understanding as well as increasing the meaning of tolerance (Abdurrazak & Wanda, 2022). Tolerance is a human attitude or behavior that follows rules, where someone can appreciate and respect the behavior of other people (Hjerm et al., 2020). An attitude of action that does not allow acts of discrimination against people from different groups or groups in a society is an attitude of tolerance in a social, cultural and religious context.

## **METHODS**

The method used in this research is library research, namely a method of collecting data and information by understanding and studying theories from various literature related to the research. This article uses qualitative research methods, written data sources such as articles, documents and government policies listed in the Minister of Education and Culture Regulation Number 3 of 2020 concerning National Higher Education Standards.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The independent student exchange program (PMM) can provide opportunities for students to explore, deepen and learn about cultural diversity archipelago, mingling with students from various regions spread across Indonesia. Learning and adapting to other campuses in Indonesia, receiving new experiences related to the values of ethnic, religious, belief, culture and language diversity, receiving opportunities to reflect on national values and the diversity experienced as part of the real perspective that students experience every day, strengthen and deepen the ability of competency fibers to form unity in diversity, be able to meet and interact with students from different higher education institutions from various regions, be able to hone leadership skills, self-confidence and social sensitivity, get the opportunity to choose courses within or outside the study program according to your interests and student needs, expanding and deepening academic knowledge, receiving an e-certificate from the Directorate General of Higher Education, Research and Technology, Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology.



Figure 1. Documentation of Conducting Social Contribution

The independent student exchange provides study options up to a maximum of 20 credits which include activities in the form of Nusantara Modules and courses offered by the Receiving University. Apart from that, students can choose and take a maximum of 6 credits at the sending university online. In addition, the sending university will carry out credit recognition or conversion procedures as regulated in the Decree of the Minister of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia number 74/P/2021.

The Nusantara module has 16 activities, including 8 diversity activities, 5 reflection activities, and 2 inspiration activities, as well as social contribution activities. The Nusantara Module activities carried out aim to provide opportunities for all students in the archipelago to get to know, and visit directly, historical, cultural and artistic locations around the destination campus. It is hoped that this activity will encourage students to love and preserve the culture that exists in Indonesia so that they can increase attitudes of tolerance (Ruswandi et al., 2022).

As previously explained, the Nusantara Module activities or courses consist of 4 activity points, namely diversity activities, namely awareness of differences, such as differences in religious beliefs and mutual respect for existing differences, Reflection, namely re-evaluating or reviewing activities that have been carried out. and visited to increase insight and knowledge that has been obtained in diversity activities, then inspiration activities, namely visiting places or inspiring figures around campus with the aim of providing awareness, inspiration and motivation to students, the last point is social contribution activities that provide opportunities to students to distribute aid and go directly to the community to make a contribution to society and the environment (Jones et al., 2021).

Increasing PMM students' cultural tolerance is implemented through diversity activities that provide students with experience in learning about local culture. Various activities visit historical places. Based on the search results, it was concluded that Nusantara module students had more experience and cultural knowledge. Students will see that Indonesia has a very large and diverse cultural diversity that students were previously unaware of. Indonesia's diversity includes religion, language, ethnicity, traditions, cultural customs and skin color (Putra & Ibrahim, 2023; Herbyanti, 2021). Appreciate and respect without disturbing or trying to destroy local culture. By changing perspectives, students realize that cultures do not have to be the same. The Nusantara Module activities provide an understanding that tribes in Indonesia have different customs depending on their tribal affiliation. During the activity, students live side by side with other students between islands, either through the Nusantara module group or through the dormitory where students participating in the PMM program live. As a result, students learn and experience the culture that applies to other students from different ethnic groups. Based on the results of data collection, the results obtained regarding the role of the Nusantara Module in increasing students' attitudes of cultural tolerance are as follows:

First, appreciate and respect other people's cultures. Increasing cultural tolerance of PMM students is carried out through diversity activities that provide students with experience in learning local culture. Diversity activities by visiting historical places. Based on the search results, it was found that Nusantara Module students had additional experience and cultural knowledge. Students see that Indonesia has a very large and varied cultural diversity, which was previously unknown to students. Through activities studying local culture, we can build an attitude of respect for other people's culture (Anwar, 2022).

Second, do not demean or elevate one tribe over another. The Nusantara Module course activities provide the view that tribes in Indonesia have various customs according to the tribe they belong to. During activities, students live side by side with other students between islands, either through one Nusantara Module group or through the dormitory where students live while participating in the PMM program. This makes students learn and know the culture of other students of different ethnicities. The ethnic diversity of Nusantara Module students makes students' attitudes accepting without vilifying, degrading or elevating one tribe over another.

Tolerance is a character that is able to support the creation of harmony between tribes (Wijayanti & Kurniawan, 2023). Not demeaning or elevating ethnic groups is realized by mutual cooperation (Anwar, 2022) between students. Carrying out various activities with the community such as social contributions, in social contribution activities students work together to carry out various kinds of beneficial activities for the community.

Third, do not carry out acts of discrimination, namely by viewing and treating everyone as equal and equal even though they have differences. Based on the investigation, it was found that students responded to differences in beliefs, origins and traditions of other people who had different beliefs, traditions, culture and origins with them through non-discriminatory behavior. This is a form of implementation of the Nusantara Module course which has been implemented in the independent student exchange program. Striving to equalize and look at everyone equally and not differentiate between ethnicity, religion, race and culture.

Apart from the Nusantara Module Activities, the Independent Student Exchange Program students can also increase tolerance when studying at the recipient universities, such as mingling with regular students at the recipient universities. This can happen because the Independent Student Exchange Program students are given the opportunity to carry out the teaching and learning process at in the same class as the recipient's regular universities students. By carrying out the teaching and learning process, Independent Student Exchange Program students can communicate directly with regular students of the receiving universities and foster an attitude of tolerance between Independent Student Exchange Program students and regular students of the receiving universities.

## CONCLUSION

In increasing students' attitudes of tolerance in the Independent Student Exchange Program, there are Nusantara Module activities which are carried out in 16 meetings consisting of 4 points, namely diversity, reflection, inspiration and social contribution which have the impact of increasing students' attitudes of tolerance in the fields of religion and culture, cultural diversity and Different religions are able to provide an overview and open the minds of Independent Student Exchange Program students to the importance of feelings and attitudes of tolerance between each other and mutual respect for different religions and cultures. Apart from that, students are also given the opportunity to carry out the teaching and learning process directly with regular students of the recipient universities which will strengthen and foster feelings and attitudes of tolerance between Independent Student Exchange Program students and regular students of the recipient universities.

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