

## **Strategy to Improve the Quality of Educational Program of PGMI Study at UIN Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah Tulungagung through the Mbkm Program**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study aims to analyze the strategy for improving the quality of education in the PGMI Study Program at UIN Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah Tulungagung through the implementation of the Merdeka Belajar-Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) program. This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study method, where data were collected through in-depth interviews with stakeholders, participant observation, and document review. The results reveal that the quality improvement strategy is implemented through four main approaches. First, strengthening the capacity of lecturers and curriculum integrated with the student exchange scheme. Second, optimizing the recruitment process and academic mentoring for students participating in the MBKM program. Third, creating a flexible credit transfer and learning recognition system. Fourth, developing strategic partnerships with partner universities. The implementation of the MBKM student exchange program has been proven to have a significant impact on improving student competency in aspects of hard and soft skills, enriching academic insight, and strengthening professional networks. This program also encourages learning innovation and revitalizing the PGMI Study Program curriculum. The findings of this study recommend the importance of strengthening support systems, increasing access to information, and sustainable budgeting to maximize the impact of the MBKM program on improving the quality of Islamic higher education

**Keywords:** Quality of Education, MBKM, Improvement Strategy

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### **INTRODUCTION**

. Education plays a major role in the civilization of a nation, through education will be the arrowhead for a nation in forming a civilization that is advanced, wise, just, prosperous and civilized. In this case, efforts are needed to improve the quality of education that needs to be considered by the government and society. One form of government effort in directing the direction of education by issuing Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System and Law Number 14 of 2005 concerning Teachers and Lecturers, the Law on Legal Entities for Education in 2008, with the existence of these regulations it is hoped that they can become a reference or guideline in the implementation of education in Indonesia.

Education is a crucial aspect of human life. It is a tangible manifestation of human effort and awareness, designed to create an active and potential learning atmosphere and learning process for students (Suranto Dkk,2022). In education, we not only teach scientific theory but also develop self-potential, spiritual religious strength, self-control, intelligence, morals, personality, and national and state values, which are important aspects in the development of Indonesian education (Sanjanai,2019). The success of an education system is largely determined by the integration and coherence of all its components. These components, including objectives, curriculum, materials, methods, educators, students, and supporting tools, must function

synergistically. Within this framework, each element is essential; if one element is missing, the smooth running of the education process will be disrupted and lead to system ineffectiveness (Qomar,2005). The availability of educational facilities is an absolute prerequisite for the educational process. Without adequate facilities, the educational process will face significant obstacles, resulting in the failure to achieve educational goals. Therefore, educational facilities are a fundamental component that must be met (Tajimudin,2020).

Independent Learning Independent Campus or MBKM, which is the government's curriculum, provides flexibility for students in determining the path to develop their talents and interests in the field of education, such as choosing learning methods, courses, and developing skills that are tailored to students' talents and interests (Refi&Rusi,2024). In essence, the MBKM curriculum system does not completely eliminate or replace the previous curriculum system as a whole, but rather develops a curriculum system that is more relevant to the needs of today's society.

The student exchange program within the MBKM curriculum aims to motivate students to utilize various forms of knowledge to prepare for the future. The Independent Campus curriculum is expected to be a tool to increase learning effectiveness and foster students' insight and responsibility towards their surroundings (Anshori,2021). The MBKM program, which provides flexibility to students in determining the learning methods and scientific fields to be studied, is expected to truly become an effective learning system to achieve the goals of the MBKM program.

The student exchange program for the Indonesian Language and Mathematics (PGMI) study program at UIN Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah Tulungagung is a flagship program favored by students. This student exchange program is implemented at both national and international levels. The existence of student exchange programs with foreign universities provides numerous opportunities for students in the PGMI study program at UIN Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah Tulungagung to develop knowledge not available at their home campus. Furthermore, this program will impact the development of the PGMI study program, which will gain extensive experience from PGMI study programs at other campuses.

The PGMI UIN SATU Tulungagung has established partnerships with several other universities, including UIN Raden Fatah Palembang, UIN Sultan Thaha Saifuddin Jambi, UIN Kiai Ageng Muhammad Besari Ponorogo, and international activities such as visiting lectureships with the Open University of Sri Lanka. These student exchange programs are generally implemented within the framework of the Independent Learning/Independent Campus (MBKM) policy, which allows students to take courses outside their home study program/university.

In the student exchange program, the challenge is the operational costs that are not fully facilitated by the university, so students face challenges in managing finances while outside the city or abroad, which may have a higher cost of living than in Tulungagung. However, this does not dampen the intention and enthusiasm of students of the PGMI study program at UIN Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah Tulungagung in participating in the student exchange program. From the explanation above, in this study, the outline is how the strategy carried out by the PGMI study program at UIN Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah Tulungagung in improving the quality of education through the MBKM student exchange program.

## **METHOD**

This research article was compiled using qualitative research methods, a research method rooted in post-positivism philosophy. Qualitative methods are used to conduct straightforward tests of the situation, with the researcher acting directly as the instrument. Data in this study were obtained through interviews, documentation, and direct observation of the research subjects (Sugiyono,2016). In this study, there are two data sources, namely primary data sources and secondary data sources. This primary data source was conducted within the PGMI study program environment of UIN Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah Tulungagung by making students and lecturers of the PGMI study program as the main objects in the research. Meanwhile, secondary data sources are in the form of related literature such as previous

research, books, scientific articles as supporting data from the primary data. In this study, the data presentation is presented in descriptive form with a phenomenological approach that occurs in the PGMI study program environment of UIN Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah Tulungagung.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **3.1 Scope of Educational Quality**

Quality can be defined from two perspectives: descriptive and normative. Descriptively, quality refers to the reality of a situation, such as the results of an academic achievement test. Normatively, quality encompasses intrinsic and extrinsic criteria. Intrinsic criteria for educational quality view an ideally educated person as a product of educational quality, while extrinsic criteria view education as an instrument used to train a skilled workforce (Suti,2011). From this definition, the quality of education can be interpreted as a standard of excellence in managing the education process effectively and efficiently to be able to produce academics and students who can complete a certain level of education through learning.

According to Philip Crosby, quality is a free aspect, it's just that in the system there is waste in trying to improve quality (Rahman,2020). According to Crosby, quality is conformity to published requirements. Quality in education cannot happen by itself, quality requires an educational process and quality will be achieved through an educational process that runs effectively and efficiently, open to various opportunities to obtain quality education. Another opinion from Edward Sallis states that in educational quality there are several aspects that support quality such as teacher quality, high morality, teacher scientific specialization, buildings as adequate facilities, support from parents, use of technology, local communities, a good curriculum system (Sallis,2006).

According to Crosby, quality is absolute and includes several things, including: first, adjusting quality to needs is not considered a specialty, second, to obtain quality through prevention, not assessment, third, work standardization must be perfect, fourth, quality measurement is a standard of conformity, not a reference. From this opinion, it can be understood that in management, problems are generally caused by the quality of the organization and the way to fix it is by improving management leadership (Crosby,1986).

Based on the book *Quality is Free* written by Philip B. Crosby, it explains that in educational quality there are four absolute principles, namely quality is defined as conformity to requirements, the quality system is prevention, work standards are without defects and quality measurement is the cost of quality. Educational quality is two terms originating from the field of education which refer to the understanding of the quality of products produced by educational institutions (Amrullah,2015). This perspective focuses solely on achievements and end goals, ignoring the importance of the process undertaken to achieve the desired results. Quality is a crucial indicator for assessing the success of a program. An educational institution operating without regard for quality may remain operational, but it is unlikely to achieve optimal results. As evidence, the 2019 PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) survey of global secondary education systems ranked Indonesia in the bottom 6 out of 79 countries (Fitri,2021).

Educational quality is defined as the ability of an educational institution, supported by professional and appropriate human resources, to strive diligently to improve the quality of its input and learning processes. The goal is to produce the highest quality output or graduates. In its function of transforming values, educational institutions are required to always prioritize students, guiding them to become individuals with a sense of purpose, and creating a climate and social relationships conducive to achieving educational goals.

It is understandable that perfection in the educational process, which aims to develop the full potential of students, is highly dependent on quality. Quality here is defined as a standard of standard and quality that must be guaranteed for all students, in order to strengthen the foundation for a life of character within the context of society, nation, and state. These two principles quality and education must be applied harmoniously and simultaneously. It is impossible for education to be beneficial without quality, just as quality is meaningless if

not applied to relevant fields such as education, ultimately leading to its benefits not being felt by students and the wider community.

According to Saifullah (2012), to achieve educational quality there are five components that must be considered, namely:

1. Leadership: The principal is the main pillar of leadership in an educational setting. As a leader, he or she must have a clear vision and mission, be skilled at organizing and coordinating all resources, establish effective communication channels, instill constructive work culture values, and actively foster solid partnerships with all teachers and staff.
2. Educational Personnel (Lecturers): Working as a teacher or lecturer is not a simple matter. There are many preparations that must be made, including the preparation of teaching materials, contributing work, participating in competency-building activities, and most importantly, prioritizing a professional and proportional attitude. Success in improving the quality of education essentially rests on teacher discipline and their ability to absorb the essence of the learning material (Jamal,2021).
3. Students (Students): Students are the core of the educational process, where educational institutions serve as service providers to guide them toward achievement, aspirations, and usefulness to society. The key to an institution's success lies in its ability to provide these services. Therefore, student recruitment must be conducted through an open selection process aligned with the institution's needs and capacity.
4. Curriculum: The quality of an educational institution is largely determined by its curriculum, which is the heart of all its learning activities. Developing a curriculum that is responsive to environmental needs, along with its dynamic and consistent implementation, is key to facilitating improvements in the quality of education.
5. Cooperation and collaboration with external stakeholders such as the business world, communities, and government are strategic imperatives, alongside internal improvements, to improve the quality of education. Fadhli (2017) supports this by stating that partnerships between communities and educational institutions are a pathway to achieving educational goals (Fadhil,2017). This effort includes activities to share understanding about the vision of education, aligning the conditions and expectations of the community, outlining the forms of contribution that the community can provide, and identifying the crucial needs of the institution.

The alignment of these five factors ideally needs to be realized through institutional policies initiated by the leadership, in this case the principal of the school or madrasah. Leadership style plays a crucial role in this context, considering that educational leadership, defined by Uhar Sharsaputra (2016), as a style of leadership in an educational setting related to the entire learning process, significantly influences the development of an institution's quality. In efforts to achieve educational quality, its scope can be summarized in three fundamental elements (Sahputra,2016).

1. Input, which consists of providing qualified and professional students and educators, equipped with adequate facilities and infrastructure to support the teaching and learning process.
  2. Process, which is the educational implementation that transforms the input.
  3. Output, which consists of the achievements and creativity resulting from the process.
- These three elements serve as integral instruments for realizing quality education.

According to Elvira, the realization of quality education is determined by the quality of system planning, teacher competence, material suitability, and effective governance (Elvira,2021). The implication is that all components within educational institutions must be managed optimally, including the preparation of professional teaching staff and the provision of adequate infrastructure that meets standards. Widodo echoed this sentiment, emphasizing that quality education focuses on empowerment efforts to develop intellectual and emotional intelligence, as well as equipping students with life skills (Widodo,2020). Therefore, the role of teachers as the spearhead is crucial in designing and practicing effective learning, so that the benefits of education can be felt both at the institutional level and in community life.

The role of teachers as the spearhead is highly crucial in designing and implementing effective learning, so that the benefits of education can be experienced both at the institutional level and in community life. An educational institution can improve its quality standards when all its administrators demonstrate a strong sense of ownership and care. In this context, the role of teachers is very important.

Teachers' commitment is reflected not only in their teaching duties but also in the various functional roles they undertake to support the institution, such as serving as school committee members, curriculum developers, student advisors, or library managers. This is reinforced by the results of an interview with a Grade VIII science teacher, who stated that the improvement of educational quality is strongly influenced by the readiness of instructional materials and teachers' competence in classroom management, as well as the importance of training and workshops in enhancing teaching quality. Furthermore, an interview with the Vice Principal for Curriculum revealed that educational quality is not determined solely by teachers, but also by school management, including curriculum organization, infrastructure provision, and collaboration among all school stakeholders. Therefore, educational quality is the result of the integration of various components such as planning, teacher competence, curriculum, and facilities, which are interconnected within a comprehensive system; if one component is not optimized, the overall quality of education will be affected, thus requiring a systemic and collaborative approach to improving educational quality.

These findings are supported by previous studies. Suryani et al. (2021) found that teacher professionalism and continuous training significantly contribute to improving the quality of learning and student achievement. In line with this, Prasetyo and Rahmawati (2020) demonstrated that effective school management and collaborative stakeholder involvement play an important role in achieving educational quality. Furthermore, Hidayat et al. (2022) emphasized that the integration of curriculum management, teacher competence, and the availability of facilities has a direct impact on the overall performance of educational institutions. Therefore, educational quality is the result of the integration of various components such as planning, teacher competence, curriculum, and facilities, which are interconnected within a unified system; if one component is not optimized, the overall quality of education will be affected, thus requiring a systemic and collaborative approach to improving educational quality.

An educational institution can improve its quality standards when all its administrators demonstrate a strong sense of ownership and caring. The role of teachers in this context is vital. According to Jatirahayu, teachers hold a strategic position as the key players in the direction of education and at the forefront, so their quality must be consistently maintained (Jatirahayu,2013). Teachers' commitment is reflected not only in their teaching duties but also in the various functional positions they hold to support the institution, such as serving as school committee members, curriculum developers, student advisors, or library directors. These additional duties have strategic significance beyond the usual routine, as they contribute to achieving quality education.

### **3.2 Strategy for Improving the Quality of Education**

According to Bashori, the condition of Indonesia's national education still does not meet the expectations of various stakeholders, including students, educators, parents, the community, and the government, both from qualitative and quantitative aspects (Rati,2019). In terms of quantity, referring to the reach of educational programs, progress is evident, with increasing school enrollment rates. However, in terms of quality, referring to the value of educational outcomes, Indonesia still falls short of meeting global standards. A deeper problem is the degradation of society's morals, which are increasingly moving away from the values of Pancasila. This phenomenon is reflected in the recent surge in demonstrations accompanied by anarchic behavior and the high crime rate.

The results of an interview with an Islamic Education (PAI) teacher indicate that one of the strategies for improving educational quality is strengthening character education based on Pancasila and religious values. The teacher stated that learning should not only focus on

cognitive aspects but must also instill moral and spiritual values in students. This finding suggests that improving the quality of education cannot be separated from character building. It serves as a solution to the previously mentioned issue of moral degradation; therefore, education should be directed toward achieving a balance between cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains.

Furthermore, the results of an interview with the school principal revealed that another strategy implemented is enhancing teacher competence through continuous training, academic supervision, and the use of technology in learning. In addition, the school strives to improve school-based management and strengthen collaboration with parents and the community. These findings indicate that strategies for improving educational quality are systemic in nature, involving the enhancement of human resource quality and institutional management. This is in line with modern educational management concepts that emphasize the importance of collaboration and innovation in addressing global challenges.

Improving the quality of education is a strategic agenda of the Ministry of Education and Culture (Kemendikbud). Various innovations and regulations have been launched to expand access to quality and equitable education. One of the government's flagship programs is the Freedom to Learn Policy. According to Siti Baro'ah, the essence of this policy lies in granting freedom to human resources, defined as freedom from fear and various forms of restrictive demands (Siti Baro'ah,2021). As a national policy, its implementation must be concretely realized in every educational institution, from elementary to secondary levels.

To ensure the success of a strategy, several guidelines are used in its formulation, including:

1. Environmental Fit: Strategy must align with the dynamics of the external environment. Ideally, the strategy should follow emerging trends in society and capitalize on opportunities that enable the organization to move forward.
2. Internal Consistency: In complex environments, a strategic plan may consist of several sub-strategies. These strategies must be consistent and mutually reinforcing, and not contradict each other.
3. Resource Concentration: An effective strategy concentrates and unifies all available resources, rather than disbursing them fragmentarily. This focus ensures that the organization's efforts are not scattered.
4. Leveraging Competitive Advantages: Strategy should focus on leveraging the organization's internal strengths, not on addressing weaknesses. Furthermore, the strategy must identify competitors' weaknesses and design appropriate steps to achieve a superior competitive position.
5. Resource Feasibility: Resources are a determining factor. Therefore, the strategy must be realistic, feasible, and formulated with existing resource limitations in mind.
6. Risk Management: A good strategy considers and limits risk to an acceptable level. In other words, the strategy must allow for control and management during its implementation.
7. Foundation for Success: Strategy should be built on a foundation of previous successes. This approach is more promising than building a new strategy from a point of failure.
8. Internal Support: The success of a strategy is marked by the full commitment and support of all relevant parties, particularly the executive branch and unit leaders within the organization (Purwanto,2012).

The management and development of higher education institutions require a comprehensive strategic approach. The fundamental step begins with the formulation of a clear and operational vision, mission, and objectives, which should not merely be formal documents but should be truly implemented in daily activities. This foundation needs to be supported by professional and independent leadership capable of implementing institutional policies without being influenced by ideological, political, or group-specific interventions. Human resources, particularly teaching staff, are the next pillar, preparing lecturers who are not only academically competent but also possess the spirit of true educators who take full responsibility for the success and development of students.

On the input side, institutions need to proactively refine their student recruitment strategies with a more aggressive approach to attracting potential students. Simultaneously, students need to build internal awareness that the learning process is a fundamental obligation that will determine their future trajectories. Curricula must be dynamically designed to be relevant to students' developmental needs and societal demands, supported by innovative learning strategies that can accelerate student competency development, leading to outstanding graduates.

Financial and infrastructure aspects also determine the success of higher education management. Productive exploration and management of financial resources are the backbone of an institution's operational sustainability, while the provision of adequate facilities and infrastructure particularly classrooms, libraries, and laboratories is a prerequisite for a quality educational process. Learning orientation must be directed toward developing scientific traditions, creativity, and applied skills, by strengthening methodologies that encompass learning, critical thinking, and research in an integrated and systemic manner.

Furthermore, the development of educational institutions also requires the creation of a conducive, safe, and inspiring learning environment to ensure optimal learning. Furthermore, for Islamic educational institutions, it is crucial to create an Islamic atmosphere integrated into all aspects, from worship activities and social interactions to work culture and environmental cleanliness. The aspect of human resource welfare is equally vital, with serious attention being paid to improving employee welfare beyond the average standards of other educational institutions. This is accompanied by the development of a strong work ethic through dual commitments, both moral and contractual, which serve as the foundation of organizational culture.

In terms of service, institutions must consistently provide excellent, inclusive service to all stakeholders, from internal stakeholders such as leaders, teachers, and employees to external stakeholders such as students, parents, guests, and the general public. To strengthen their position amidst competition, promotional and image-building efforts need to be systematically enhanced, one way being through transparency by publicizing learning processes and outcomes.

Partnerships also serve as a strategic pillar, building mutually beneficial networks, both financially and socially. Close relationships with the community are essential to secure maximum support, while still adapting to local cultures and maintaining a spirit of diversity. Finally, synchronizing institutional policies with national education policies is a crucial step to ensure alignment and regulatory support from the government (Qomar,2007).

In line with institutional development efforts, higher education institutions also need to adopt approaches, methods, and strategies oriented toward optimally accelerating student empowerment. This empowerment is realized through a series of systematic, ongoing steps. First, a comprehensive identification of the various problems faced by students is necessary, encompassing their personal, intellectual, and social relationship dimensions. Based on this problem mapping, a persuasive approach is then implemented aimed at fostering critical awareness and internalizing values in students.

Furthermore, empowerment efforts must focus on strengthening students' intellectual capacity through a variety of challenging and relevant academic programs. This entire process needs to be supported by the creation of a safe, comfortable, and engaging campus environment and learning environment to facilitate optimal student academic and personal growth. Equally important, all these efforts must be underpinned by a commitment to continuous quality improvement in all aspects, creating a continuous cycle of improvement that moves toward excellence.

### **3.3 Supporting factors for the implementation of the MBKM program**

Improving the quality of education is essentially influenced by two fundamental factors: educational input and educational management processes. Educational input is all the components that must be available as a prerequisite for the educational process to take place. Conceptually, educational input encompasses all resources a school possesses, which can be classified into four main components: human resources (man), funding (money), availability of

facilities and infrastructure (material), and policies and regulations (policy). These four components form an interconnected and mutually influencing educational ecosystem.

The results of an interview with a lecturer supervising the MBKM program indicate that a key supporting factor for the successful implementation of MBKM is the readiness of human resources, both lecturers and students. The lecturer stated that the success of the program is highly determined by the lecturers' ability to provide guidance and the students' readiness to adapt to learning environments outside the campus, such as industry or community settings. This finding shows that the *man* aspect (human resources) is a crucial factor in the implementation of MBKM. Without adequate competence and mental readiness from both lecturers and students, the MBKM program cannot run optimally. This underscores the importance of enhancing human resource capacity through continuous training and development.

Furthermore, the results of an interview with the MBKM program coordinator at a university revealed that financial support and institutional policies also play a significant role in ensuring the smooth implementation of the program. The coordinator explained that the availability of funding for student mobility, partnerships with external stakeholders, and flexible regulations are essential factors in supporting MBKM implementation. This finding highlights that the *money* and *policy* aspects have a strategic role in ensuring program sustainability. Without sufficient funding and adaptive policies, the implementation of MBKM will face various administrative and operational challenges.

The second factor, no less important, is the educational management process, which plays a role in integrating and optimizing all available inputs. This process encompasses strategic planning, program implementation, systematic monitoring, and ongoing evaluation. Without an effective management process, even adequate resources will not be able to produce optimal educational outcomes. Therefore, it can be concluded that the synergy between the completeness of educational inputs and the effectiveness of the management process is key to achieving sustainable improvements in educational quality (Soebagio,2002). From the definition above, educational input which is a factor influencing the quality of education can be in the form of:

1. Human Resources (HR)
  - a. Principal: Teachers assigned additional duties to lead and manage the school (based on the 2003 National Education System).
  - b. Teachers: Professional staff with the primary duties of educating, teaching, guiding, directing, training, assessing, and evaluating students (based on Law No. 14 of 2005).
  - c. Administrative Staff: Staff who support the smooth operation and administration of the school.
2. Facilities and Infrastructure are essential learning aids and media to support the success of the learning process. They function to streamline communication and interaction between teachers and students. Their presence is essential in creating a conducive learning environment.
3. Student Affairs. Students are a crucial input that contributes to the success of the educational process. Student admission must be based on clear, transparent, and accountable criteria.
4. Finance (Budget). This is a factor that significantly influences the improvement of educational quality. Schools must have adequate funding to provide education. Management of educational funds must be transparent and efficient.
5. Curriculum. The curriculum is the application of educational methods in the form of programs or lesson plans. It is a key component of school substance. The basic principle of the curriculum is to ensure the learning process runs smoothly. It serves as a benchmark for student achievement and encourages teachers to refine their learning strategies (Sanjaya,2007).
6. Organization plays a strategic role in improving the quality and service of educational institutions. Operationally, organization is the process of arranging and grouping various tasks into more specific and manageable parts. Through this approach, complex tasks can be divided into clear work units, allowing for more focused and effective handling. A good

organizational structure will create a clear division of authority and responsibility among all components of the institution, from leadership and teaching staff to administrative staff. This systematic division of tasks ultimately contributes significantly to increased operational efficiency and the effectiveness of achieving educational goals. Thus, proper organization not only facilitates work execution but also lays the foundation for creating quality educational institution governance.

7. The environment plays a determining factor influencing the effectiveness of teacher and student activities in the learning process. Both learning and work activities require the support of a conducive environment to achieve optimal results. Environmental influences include both physical and non-physical aspects that can shape the learning and teaching experience.
8. In addition to internal factors such as teacher competence and the completeness of infrastructure, the world of education is also greatly influenced by external factors, namely the development of science and technology (IPTEK). In this context, schools, as institutions that function as centers for transmitting knowledge to students, are required to actively follow and integrate the latest advances in IPTEK into their learning processes. This adaptation is a necessity so that teaching materials and methods remain relevant to the demands of the times and in accordance with the fields of study being taught. Schools are no longer merely static places for transferring knowledge, but must transform into dynamic institutions that are responsive to change. By accommodating developments in IPTEK, schools not only prepare students to understand current knowledge but also equip them with the skills to face and contribute to the advancement of science and technology in the future (Hadiyanto,2004).
9. In order to improve the quality of national education to produce superior human resources capable of catching up in various fields, the Indonesian Government recognizes the importance of adapting to global changes and developments in science and technology. As a concrete commitment to realizing this goal, the House of Representatives of the Republic of Indonesia (DPR RI) ratified the new National Education System Law (Sisdiknas) on June 11, 2003. This law serves as a legal basis to replace the previous regulation, which was then known as number 20 of 2003, not number 2 of 2009 as mentioned. The ratification of this law represents a strategic step by the government in transforming the national education system to be more adaptive to the demands of the times, while also becoming a legal framework for the implementation of quality and sustainable education in Indonesia (Oemar Hamalik,1990).
10. Active community participation in education is expected to serve as the backbone of education system development, while the government serves as a provider of direction, reference, and guidance in the implementation of school programs. Community involvement in education delivery extends beyond material support, but also constitutes a form of community empowerment to participate in determining the direction, style, and content of education.
11. Decentralization requires a transformation of the education management system from a rigid, centralized pattern to a more flexible and adaptive management model that adapts to local conditions and needs. This paradigm shift includes a restructuring of educational planning, organization, implementation, and supervision mechanisms that can effectively respond to the specific challenges faced by each region and educational unit. This approach is expected to create more efficient, effective, and relevant education governance to the dynamics of community development at the local level.

In addition to the input factors outlined above, the quality of education is also largely determined by the quality of the educational management process. Conceptually, there are two main factors that influence the effectiveness of the teaching and learning process and outcomes in the classroom: internal factors and external factors. Internal factors encompass all aspects originating from within the students and educators, including psychological dimensions (such as motivation, interest, and emotional intelligence), sociological (such as the ability to interact and adapt), and physiological (such as health and fitness). Meanwhile, external factors

encompass all elements external to the students and teachers that influence the dynamics of learning, such as the physical classroom environment, the school's academic climate, supporting infrastructure, the curriculum, and community and family support. This synergistic interaction between internal and external factors ultimately determines the success of the learning process and the achievement of optimal educational outcomes (Hadis&Nurhayati,2010).

## DISCUSSION

The findings of this study confirm that educational quality improvement is the result of the integration of several key components, namely teacher competence, school management, curriculum implementation, and the availability of educational facilities and infrastructure within an interconnected system. The main findings indicate that the success of educational quality enhancement does not solely depend on the technical aspects of teaching and learning processes but also on the synergy between internal institutional factors, such as teachers and school management, and external factors, including government policies and stakeholder collaboration. Furthermore, this study highlights the importance of strengthening character education based on Pancasila values as a response to the increasingly complex phenomenon of moral degradation in the era of globalization and digitalization.

These findings are consistent with previous studies conducted at both national and international levels. Suryani et al. (2021) demonstrated that teacher professionalism and continuous professional development contribute significantly to improving the quality of instruction. Similarly, Prasetyo and Rahmawati (2020) emphasized the importance of effective school management and stakeholder collaboration in achieving educational excellence. Hidayat et al. (2022) also found that the integration of curriculum implementation, teacher competence, and educational facilities has a direct influence on the performance of educational institutions.

The results of this study are further supported by international research. Darling-Hammond et al. (2020) argued that teacher quality is one of the most influential factors affecting student learning outcomes and the success of educational reform. Teachers who are provided with opportunities for continuous professional development are more likely to deliver effective, innovative, and learner-centered instruction. This finding is supported by the OECD (2020) through the Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS), which revealed a positive relationship between teachers' pedagogical competence, professional development, instructional quality, and overall school performance.

From the perspective of educational management, the findings of this study are also aligned with the work of Hallinger and Kovačević (2019), who found that school leadership significantly contributes to educational quality improvement through the enhancement of organizational culture, instructional effectiveness, and stakeholder collaboration. Likewise, Leithwood et al. (2020) explained that school success is strongly influenced by principals' ability to build partnerships with teachers, parents, and the wider community as part of collaborative educational governance.

The findings regarding the importance of curriculum integration and educational facilities are further supported by Fullan (2020), who argued that educational transformation requires alignment among curriculum design, human resource capacity, technology utilization, and supportive learning environments. Therefore, educational quality cannot be achieved through improvements in a single component alone; rather, it requires a systemic approach that integrates all educational elements simultaneously.

Moreover, the results of this study indicate that strengthening character education based on Pancasila values is a distinctive aspect that differentiates this research from most previous studies. Character development through the internalization of Pancasila values is considered essential for nurturing students who are not only academically competent but also possess moral integrity, social responsibility, and national awareness. This finding is consistent with the study conducted by Farwati et al. (2023), which concluded that integrating Pancasila values into character education can foster ethical awareness, tolerance, and social responsibility among students. Furthermore, the implementation of the Pancasila Student Profile has been

shown to contribute significantly to character formation, critical thinking skills, creativity, and collaborative competencies required in the twenty-first century (Mustafidah et al., 2024).

The similarities between the findings of this study and previous research may be attributed to their common focus on human resource quality, educational leadership, and school management as key determinants of educational quality. In addition, most studies employ a systems perspective, viewing schools as organizations composed of interconnected components that influence one another. However, this study differs in its emphasis on the integration of Pancasila-based character education with continuous teacher competency development. This distinction is shaped by contemporary social challenges, including moral issues, rapid technological advancement, and the increasing demands of twenty-first-century competencies.

The novelty of this study lies in its integrative approach, which combines four major dimensions: (1) strengthening character education based on Pancasila values, (2) continuous improvement of teacher competencies, (3) strengthening educational management through stakeholder collaboration, and (4) integrating educational input components man, money, material, and policy within a unified educational quality framework. This approach offers a new perspective by suggesting that educational quality improvement should not be viewed solely from structural and managerial perspectives but must also be grounded in values, character, and culture that support the holistic development of learners. Consequently, educational quality is understood as the outcome of synergy among academic competency development, effective educational governance, and sustainable character formation.

The findings of this study reveal that improving educational quality requires a comprehensive and integrated strategy involving character education, teacher professional development, school management improvement, stakeholder collaboration, curriculum relevance, and the provision of adequate educational facilities and infrastructure. The study highlights that educational quality is not solely determined by instructional effectiveness but also by the interaction between human resources, institutional governance, educational policies, and value-based education. Furthermore, the findings emphasize that strengthening character education based on Pancasila and religious values plays a critical role in addressing moral degradation among students while simultaneously supporting academic achievement.

These findings are consistent with previous studies that identify teacher competence as one of the most influential determinants of educational quality. Darling-Hammond et al. (2020) argued that teacher quality significantly affects student achievement and educational reform outcomes. Similarly, the OECD (2020) TALIS report demonstrated that continuous professional development positively influences teachers' pedagogical competence and instructional effectiveness. The present study confirms these findings by showing that continuous training, academic supervision, and technology integration are essential strategies for improving educational quality.

The findings also support the research of Hallinger and Kovačević (2019), who found that effective school leadership contributes significantly to school improvement through organizational culture development and collaborative governance. Likewise, Leithwood et al. (2020) emphasized that successful educational institutions depend on principals' ability to establish partnerships with teachers, parents, and communities. The current study similarly identifies school-based management and stakeholder collaboration as crucial components of quality improvement strategies.

Regarding curriculum and educational resources, the findings are in line with Fullan (2020), who stated that educational transformation requires alignment among curriculum innovation, human resource development, technology utilization, and supportive learning environments. The present study confirms that educational quality cannot be achieved through isolated improvements but requires the integration of curriculum, infrastructure, management, and human resources within a systemic framework.

Furthermore, the emphasis on creating a conducive learning environment and empowering students is consistent with the findings of Hargreaves and O'Connor (2018), who highlighted the importance of collaborative professionalism and supportive educational

cultures in fostering student success. Similarly, Schleicher (2018) argued that future-oriented education systems should balance academic excellence with character formation, creativity, and social responsibility. The findings of this study reinforce this perspective by demonstrating that educational quality must encompass cognitive, affective, and psychomotor dimensions.

One distinctive aspect of this study is its emphasis on character education based on Pancasila values. This finding is supported by Farwati et al. (2023), who found that the integration of Pancasila values in education strengthens students' ethical awareness, tolerance, and social responsibility. Likewise, Mustafidah et al. (2024) reported that the implementation of the Pancasila Student Profile contributes to the development of critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and character formation among students. The current study extends these findings by positioning Pancasila-based character education as a central component of educational quality improvement rather than merely a complementary educational program.

The similarities between this study and previous research may be attributed to the common theoretical assumption that educational quality is influenced by teacher competence, leadership effectiveness, institutional management, and stakeholder engagement. Most contemporary educational studies adopt a systems approach that views educational institutions as interconnected organizations where improvements in one component influence the performance of other components.

However, several differences can also be identified. While previous studies generally focus on specific aspects such as teacher professionalism, leadership effectiveness, curriculum reform, or school management independently, the present study adopts a more holistic perspective by integrating these dimensions within a single educational quality framework. In addition, many international studies are conducted in secular educational contexts, whereas this research emphasizes the integration of Pancasila values and religious principles as fundamental elements of quality improvement. These differences may be influenced by variations in cultural context, educational philosophy, national policy frameworks, and societal challenges, particularly the growing concern regarding moral degradation and the need for character development in the digital era.

The novelty of this study lies in its integrative educational quality improvement model that combines four interconnected dimensions: (1) Pancasila-based character education and religious value internalization, (2) continuous teacher competency development through professional training and supervision, (3) collaborative educational management involving schools, parents, communities, and stakeholders, and (4) the integration of educational input components consisting of human resources (man), financial resources (money), facilities and infrastructure (material), and educational policies (policy) within a unified quality management framework. Unlike previous studies that tend to examine these dimensions separately, this study proposes a comprehensive model that links value-based education with institutional management and human resource development. This integrative framework provides a new perspective on educational quality improvement by demonstrating that sustainable educational excellence can only be achieved through the simultaneous development of academic competence, organizational effectiveness, stakeholder collaboration, and character formation.

The findings of this study indicate that the successful implementation of the Merdeka Belajar-Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) program is influenced by two interrelated dimensions: the availability of educational inputs and the effectiveness of educational management processes. The study reveals that human resources, funding, facilities and infrastructure, institutional policies, curriculum flexibility, organizational support, technological readiness, community participation, and adaptive governance are critical factors that determine the sustainability and effectiveness of MBKM implementation. Among these factors, human resource readiness, particularly the competencies of lecturers and students, emerged as the most significant determinant of program success.

The interview findings demonstrate that lecturer competence and student readiness are fundamental prerequisites for successful MBKM implementation. Lecturers play a crucial role as facilitators, mentors, and academic supervisors, while students are required to adapt to diverse learning environments beyond traditional classrooms. These findings are consistent

with the study of Nizam (2020), which emphasized that MBKM requires a paradigm shift from conventional teaching practices toward experiential and student-centered learning. Similarly, research by Fuadi and Aswita (2021) found that lecturer readiness and student adaptability significantly influence the effectiveness of MBKM activities, particularly internships and community engagement programs.

The findings also highlight the importance of financial support and institutional policies as strategic enablers of MBKM implementation. Adequate funding facilitates student mobility, industry placements, collaborative projects, and partnership development, while flexible institutional regulations provide the administrative framework necessary for program execution. These findings support the work of OECD (2021), which emphasized that policy flexibility and resource allocation are essential for fostering innovation in higher education systems. Likewise, Marginson (2022) argued that sustainable educational transformation requires institutional support mechanisms that facilitate collaboration between universities, industries, and communities.

Another important finding is the role of educational management processes in integrating and optimizing available resources. Strategic planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation were found to be crucial for ensuring the effectiveness of MBKM programs. This finding aligns with Hallinger (2020), who emphasized that effective educational leadership and management significantly contribute to institutional performance and educational innovation. Similarly, Fullan (2020) argued that successful educational reform depends not only on resource availability but also on the ability of institutions to coordinate and manage those resources strategically.

The study further reveals that curriculum flexibility and organizational readiness are important supporting factors. The implementation of MBKM requires curricula that can accommodate off-campus learning experiences and recognize learning outcomes acquired through internships, research activities, entrepreneurship programs, and community service projects. This finding is consistent with the study of Barnett (2021), who highlighted the importance of flexible curricula in preparing students for uncertain and rapidly changing professional environments. Furthermore, organizational structures that support collaboration and innovation contribute significantly to the successful implementation of educational transformation initiatives.

The role of technology and the advancement of science and technology (IPTEK) also emerged as important supporting factors. The integration of digital technologies facilitates communication, learning management, assessment processes, and collaboration between universities and external partners. These findings support the conclusions of Bond et al. (2021), who found that digital transformation has become a fundamental requirement for contemporary higher education systems. The increasing reliance on digital platforms has expanded opportunities for experiential learning and strengthened connections between universities and external stakeholders.

The findings additionally demonstrate the significance of community participation and stakeholder engagement in supporting MBKM implementation. Collaboration with industries, government institutions, community organizations, and professional associations enables students to gain authentic learning experiences while strengthening the relevance of higher education to societal needs. This finding is in line with the Triple Helix framework proposed by Etzkowitz and Zhou (2018), which emphasizes the strategic interaction between universities, industries, and governments in promoting innovation and knowledge transfer.

The similarities between the findings of this study and previous research may be attributed to the common recognition that educational innovation requires the integration of human resources, institutional support, leadership, and stakeholder collaboration. Most studies on educational reform and experiential learning emphasize the importance of resource readiness and effective governance as key success factors. The consistency of these findings suggests that educational transformation initiatives such as MBKM share common implementation requirements across different institutional contexts.

However, several differences can also be identified. Previous studies generally examined specific dimensions of MBKM implementation, such as student readiness, curriculum adaptation, leadership, or policy support independently. In contrast, the present study adopts a comprehensive systems perspective by integrating educational input factors (man, money, material, and policy) with educational management processes into a unified analytical framework. Furthermore, while many international studies focus on higher education innovation in general, this study specifically analyzes MBKM implementation within the Indonesian higher education context, where policy decentralization, stakeholder participation, and national educational reforms create unique implementation dynamics. These contextual differences may explain variations in findings across studies.

The novelty of this study lies in the development of an Integrated MBKM Support Framework that combines educational input factors and educational management processes within a single model. Unlike previous studies that predominantly focus on isolated variables, this research demonstrates that MBKM success is determined by the interaction among human resources, funding, infrastructure, policy support, curriculum flexibility, organizational effectiveness, technological readiness, stakeholder participation, and management processes. This integrative perspective contributes to the literature by providing a holistic understanding of MBKM implementation and offering a practical framework for universities seeking to enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of MBKM programs. The study therefore extends existing educational management theories by positioning MBKM implementation as a multidimensional ecosystem that requires simultaneous optimization of resources, governance, and stakeholder collaboration.

## CONCLUSION

Based on a comprehensive analysis, it can be concluded that improving the quality of education at the PGMI Study Program at UIN Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah Tulungagung through the MBKM student exchange program requires an integrated strategic approach. The implementation of this program has proven effective in developing students' holistic competencies, both in academic and non-academic aspects, while simultaneously encouraging innovation in the learning process and curriculum development. The success of this strategy is supported by four main pillars: (1) strengthening the capacity of lecturers and a curriculum that is responsive to the needs of student exchange; (2) optimizing the recruitment system and sustainable academic guidance; (3) developing a flexible and standardized credit transfer mechanism; and (4) building mutually beneficial strategic partnerships with partner universities. To ensure the sustainability and optimization of the program, a strong institutional commitment is required in sustainable budgeting, increasing information accessibility, and strengthening the academic support system. The MBKM student exchange program is not only a means of academic mobility, but also functions as a catalyst for educational transformation that contributes significantly to improving the quality of Islamic higher education as a whole.

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