



Perceptions of Students from the Physical Education, Health, and Recreation Program at Riau University Participating in the 2022 Teaching Assistance Program Implementation

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Abstract

This research aims to understand the perceptions of students in the Physical Education, Health, and Recreation Study Program at Riau University regarding the implementation of the Teaching Assistance program in 2022. The research problem includes discrepancies and a lack of socialization concerning the program's implementation. The study employs a qualitative design with a descriptive approach. The research population consists of 11 students from the Physical Education, Health, and Recreation program at UNRI and their supervising teachers. Purposive sampling was used to select participants, and data was collected through semi-structured interviews, documentation, and literature review. Data analysis followed the interactive model of Miles and Huberman, involving data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Triangulation was employed to ensure data validity. The findings indicate that students are not fully prepared to implement the Teaching Assistance program due to insufficient preparation and being in the early stages of their studies. Additionally, the lack of understanding and socialization of the program, along with the irrelevance of the credit conversion, presents further challenges. In conclusion, students' readiness is insufficient, and the credit conversion issue is significant. Future research should focus on improving the socialization process and refining the program specifications in line with established guidelines.

Keywords: *Perception, Students, Implementation, Teaching Assistance.*

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INTRODUCTION

With the advancement of time, countries around the world, including Indonesia, are faced with the demands of keeping up with various changes, particularly in technology, the job market, culture, and education. Amid these changes, the quality of superior human resources (HR) becomes a key factor in maintaining national competitiveness. The quality of competent HR is highly dependent on the quality of education in a country (Suryaman, 2020). Quality education enables a nation to produce individuals who can quickly adapt to global changes and make significant contributions to development. However, the quality of education in Indonesia still lags far behind that of developed countries. According to the Programme for International Student

Assessment (PISA) scores, Indonesia is approximately 128 years behind developed nations in terms of educational quality (Tintingon et al., 2023).

This situation necessitates serious efforts from the government to bridge the gap. One strategic step taken by the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia was the launch of the "Merdeka Belajar – Kampus Merdeka" program at the end of January 2020. This program, initiated by the Minister of Education and Culture, Nadiem Anwar Makarim, aims to prepare students to face rapid changes in the era of globalization. It is designed to provide students with more flexible learning opportunities, extending beyond the classroom to include practical experiences in the field (Anwar, 2021). The "Merdeka Belajar – Kampus Merdeka" program also has full support from the President of the Republic of Indonesia, Joko Widodo. According to the President, this program is expected to produce resilient human resources ready to compete on a global scale. Additionally, the program allows students to engage directly with the workforce and society, enabling them to develop practical skills that are relevant to industry needs and contemporary developments (Arifin & Muslim, 2020).

Kampus Merdeka offers various activities that allow students to learn outside their study program for up to three semesters. One semester is dedicated to taking courses outside their study program, while the other two semesters are used for practical activities outside the campus, such as internships, research, humanitarian projects, teaching assistance, and more. These activities are designed to equip students with more relevant and practical skills, preparing them to enter the workforce with higher competencies (Widiyono et al., 2021).

One of the key programs within Kampus Merdeka is Teaching Assistance in Educational Units. This program provides students with the opportunity to be directly involved in the learning process at schools, where they will serve as teaching assistants (Santoso et al., 2023). The goal of this program is to provide practical teaching experience, enhance students' pedagogical competencies, and assist schools in improving the quality of education. Students participating in this program come from various universities across Indonesia, including both public and private institutions (Kotimah, 2023).

However, despite the many benefits of the Teaching Assistance program, there are several challenges that students face in its implementation. One of the main issues is the lack of teaching experience among students. Many participants in this program have not yet completed the Professional Training Program (PLP) or taken Teaching Practice courses, leaving them less

prepared to handle classroom dynamics (Arifin & Muslim, 2020). Students who lack teaching experience often struggle to develop effective and engaging teaching methods for students, which can prevent the program's objectives from being fully achieved. Additionally, in some cases, students participating in this program are assigned to teach subjects outside their area of expertise. This poses a risk of delivering content that does not meet expected standards, as students may not have sufficient knowledge in those subjects. Such conditions can impact the quality of education provided to students (Putri et al., 2023).

The Teaching Assistance Guidelines of the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education (FKIP) at Riau University specify that students participating in this program must complete a minimum of 20 credits. However, students often face difficulties balancing their time between participating in the Teaching Assistance program and completing their regular coursework. This results in some students missing out on classes during the current semester, leading to an imbalance in the acquisition of necessary material for graduation. Therefore, this study aims to evaluate the perceptions of students from the second batch of the Teaching Assistance program. This evaluation is expected to provide valuable feedback for the development and enhancement of the Teaching Assistance program in the future, ensuring that the program runs more effectively and achieves its primary goal of improving student competencies and the quality of education in Indonesia.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative research design, aimed at gaining an in-depth understanding of social phenomena through descriptive words and language, with a focus on naturally occurring processes. The research was conducted in Pekanbaru City, at four schools where the 2022 Teaching Assistance program was implemented, namely SDN 188 Pekanbaru, SDN 77 Pekanbaru, SDIT Az-Zuhra Pusat, and SMA Cendana Pekanbaru. The research population consists of 11 students from the Physical Education, Health, And Recreation program at UNRI who participated in the Teaching Assistance program, along with the supervising teachers involved in the activities. The sampling technique used was purposive sampling, where samples were selected based on their direct involvement in the program. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews with students and supervising teachers, supported by documentation and literature review. Data analysis employed the interactive model of Miles and Huberman, which includes data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. To ensure data validity, triangulation was performed by comparing information from various sources and different methods.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

Based on the results of the interviews conducted, several subthemes have emerged in this research. These subthemes will be presented in the form of a concept map to facilitate further understanding and analysis.

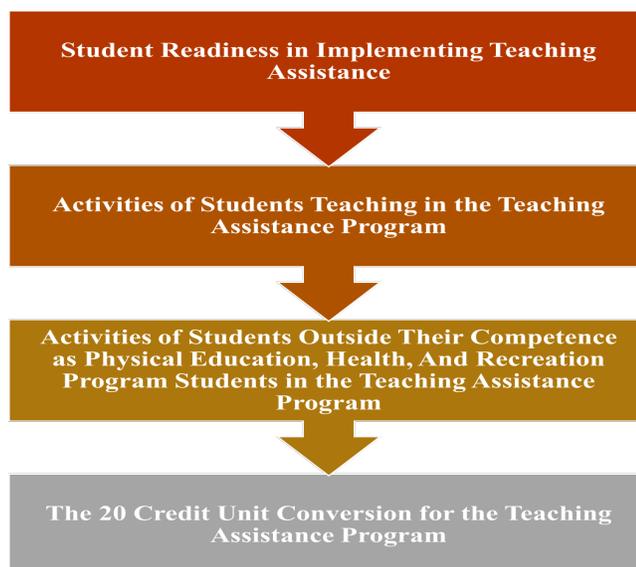


Figure 1. Concept map of the research

This study examines the readiness of students participating in the Teaching Assistance program, specifically those from the Physical Education, Health, and Recreation Study Program at the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Riau University. The program involves second-batch students who are assigned to four schools in Pekanbaru City. Eleven students from the Physical Education, Health, And Recreation program who participated in the 2022 Teaching Assistance program served as sources for this research.

Students received information about the Teaching Assistance program through their Physical Education lecturers. The registration process began with an announcement from the lecturer, followed by filling out forms and school placements. For example, M. Anugerah Luthfi mentioned that initial information about Teaching Assistance was provided by the Physical Education lecturer, who then asked students to register and fill out forms. Luthfi was placed at SDIT Az Zuhra Pusat Pekanbaru. Naimatul Rodiah joined the program after receiving a recommendation from the Physical Education lecturer, who directed her to register through a provided link, and she was placed at SDN 77 Pekanbaru. Rahmat Ali Bahri and Ii Tiara Pratiwi

also received information from the lecturer with the same registration process, being placed at SMA Cendana Pekanbaru and SDN 188 Pekanbaru, respectively.

The preparation received before the program consisted of a brief training session by the lecturer. This training aimed to provide basic knowledge about the tasks to be undertaken. Most students reported receiving only brief training from the lecturer and did additional preparation independently, such as researching teaching methods online. For instance, Rahmat Ali Bahri mentioned that in addition to the lecturer's training, he sought additional information on teaching methods. Ii Tiara Pratiwi and M. Anugerah Luthfi also relied on additional sources to prepare themselves before entering the field.

The majority of students acknowledged that their preparation for the Teaching Assistance program was minimal. They received only basic training from the lecturer without in-depth additional training. Some more proactive students engaged in extra preparation, such as learning teaching methods online and reading guides. Fani Putri Anggia and Naimatul Rodiah noted that mental preparation was an important aspect of facing their first teaching experience at school, even though they received only basic training from the lecturer.

Based on the interview results and document studies, it can be concluded that the students in the 2022 Teaching Assistance program were not adequately prepared before carrying out their tasks in the field. This was due to their early stage in their studies and receiving only basic training from the lecturer. Nevertheless, the students' basic abilities indicate that they could still implement the program with some adjustments. This study highlights the importance of more thorough preparation for students involved in the Teaching Assistance program, as well as the need for additional guidance and training to improve their readiness for teaching tasks in schools.

Becoming a teacher is not an easy task, especially for students who lack basic teaching skills. Thorough preparation is required to support teachers in the process of teaching assistance (Rohmah et al., 2024). Students who are not equipped with basic skills beforehand face significant challenges, such as understanding student behavior, finding effective learning styles, and managing the classroom effectively. Insufficient readiness and limited experience interacting with students can impact their ability to deliver lessons effectively (Suwanti et al., 2022). Agus Nasrulloh admitted that, as a first-time experience, he felt surprised and not fully prepared. Robeth J.M. Saragih felt that he lacked mastery of the material and was not thoroughly ready, while

Naimatul Rodiah expressed difficulty in understanding student behavior due to limited age and experience.

Most students believe that they will need more time to be ready to teach. They feel underprepared because they only received one training session from the lecturer and are in the early stages of their studies, specifically in the fifth semester. Ii Tiara Pratiwi expressed difficulty in managing students and felt unprepared due to still being in the learning phase. Rahmat Ali Bahri added that the brief training from the lecturer was insufficient to fully prepare them, and Fani Putri Anggia S felt nervous and lacked confidence.

In line with the objectives of the Teaching Assistance program, students are to serve as assistants rather than primary teachers. They are expected to coordinate with the school teachers and receive guidance and direction from the supervising teachers (Sobara, 2022). In this regard, four supervising teachers from the partner schools provided guidance by inviting students to observe the teaching process before they became directly involved in teaching. Danny Bayu H, Muhamad Dalal, Meiza Ihsan, and Risipika Sandra stated that students were invited to observe the supervising teachers' instruction first, with the expectation that they would be able to apply effective teaching methods after gaining this experience.

The Teaching Assistance program aims to create a better educational environment and support the achievement of higher education goals through the Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) program (Lestari et al., 2022). Students, as explained by Danny Bayu H, Agus Nasrulloh, and Fiqqri, view the Teaching Assistance program more as a support role for teachers rather than as primary instructors. They understand that the purpose of the program is to help them adapt to the school environment and understand the teaching process. However, some students were surprised when they were expected to teach in the field, as expressed by Dwi Yuningsih and Robeth J.M. Saragih. Winton Sinaga and Rahmat Ali Bahri recognized that the Teaching Assistance program is an opportunity to gain firsthand experience as teacher assistants.

Overall, although students receive guidance and training from lecturers and direction from supervising teachers, they still encounter challenges in teaching due to limited preparation and understanding. However, with their problem-solving skills and understanding, students are able to carry out the Teaching Assistance program with the necessary adjustments.

The Teaching Assistance program provides students interested in the field of education with the opportunity to be directly involved in the learning process and to deepen their knowledge

in their respective fields. As assistant teachers in schools, students are expected to adapt to various teaching situations (Wardiyanto & Hadi, 2022). However, there are several challenges when students are asked to teach outside their areas of expertise. Some students from the Physical Education program face difficulties when assigned to subjects that do not align with their field, such as Indonesian, Mathematics, and Cultural Arts. For example, Agus Nasrulloh and Ii Tiara Pratiwi felt shocked and struggled when teaching subjects outside of Penjas. Dwi Yuningsih also expressed discomfort while teaching Cultural Arts and Mathematics, which are not her areas of expertise.

This situation often arises when school teachers are absent, and students are asked to fill in. Rahmat Ali Bahri and Fani Putri Anggia S mentioned that they had to teach material outside their expertise due to urgent needs. Naimatul Rodiah faced a similar situation when substituting for a sick class teacher. Although many students struggled to teach subjects outside their competency, some students remained focused on subjects aligned with their major, such as Fiqri and M. Anugerah Luthfi, who taught Physical Education and Religion in schools that matched their fields of study.

Most students who faced difficulties teaching outside their expertise tried their best to assist. Danny Bayu H, a supervising teacher, explained that these situations are conditional and often arise in emergency scenarios where students are required to substitute for teachers. As prospective teachers, good communication skills are crucial. These skills help students convey information effectively and support the success of the learning process. In this context, students are actively involved in various school activities, such as administration and extracurricular activities, although they are primarily assigned to tasks that match their competencies, as explained by Meiza Ihsan and Rispika Sandra.

Students participating in the Teaching Assistance program remain under the supervision of supervising teachers, who provide evaluations and guidance to address shortcomings in their teaching process. Despite facing challenges when teaching outside their competencies, this experience provides an opportunity to contribute to improving the school's quality and learn to adapt to various situations. Danny Bayu H emphasized the importance of students' proactive attitudes in assisting all teachers at the school and addressing any gaps that may arise. This activity reflects the need for students who not only have expertise in specific fields but also possess the ability to communicate and adapt to various tasks within the school environment.

The Teaching Assistance program is one of the initiatives under the Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) framework, aimed at supporting the teaching process in educational institutions and addressing various issues within schools. This activity lasts for three months and is equivalent to 20 Credit Units (SKS). However, the application of SKS conversion for this program poses challenges for students, as they feel that the converted credits do not correspond to the importance of the courses they are missing.

Several students from the Physical Education, Health, and Recreation program at Riau University who participated in the Teaching Assistance program in 2022 have stated that the SKS conversion is inadequate. Firman Dwi Nugraha mentioned that crucial courses, such as statistics and research methods, which are important for research and thesis writing, are replaced by this SKS conversion. Agus Nasrulloh and Fiqqri also feel that the SKS conversion is unbalanced, especially since important courses in the fifth semester, which are more relevant for research and thesis preparation, are being replaced.

There is also an opinion that the SKS conversion would be more appropriate if conducted in more advanced semesters, such as the sixth or seventh, when students already have a stronger foundation in teaching. Ii Tiara Pratiwi and M. Anugerah Luthfi stated that the current SKS conversion feels less suited to their academic needs, particularly because the converted credits do not align with the courses they are missing.

Supervising teachers also acknowledge that while conducting Teaching Assistance in the fifth semester might be considered too early, the process provides valuable experience for students. Muhammad Dalal mentioned that sacrificing courses in the fifth semester is part of the process required to gain practical experience. Meiza Ihsan added that the timing of the Teaching Assistance program should be evaluated for future placements in more suitable semesters.

In this context, the program has two options for credit equivalency: free-form equivalency based on competencies gained during MBKM activities or structured equivalency relevant to the offered courses. MBKM learning activities should meet graduation learning outcomes and provide additional competencies for students.

Discussion

Higher education is more than just academic achievement; it aims to prepare students to think critically and select opportunities that align with their needs. Regulation of the Ministry of Education and Culture (Permendikbud) Number 3 of 2020 outlines eight learning activities within

the Merdeka Belajar-Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) framework, including Teaching Assistance (Azwar et al., 2024). This program provides students with the opportunity to contribute at the primary to secondary education levels and prepares them with hands-on teaching experience (Aswita, 2022).

At the Physical Education, Health, and Recreation Study Program at Riau University, the Teaching Assistance program was implemented for the first time with 15 students from September 26 to December 23, 2022. The program began with a preparation phase, where students received training before being assigned to partner schools. This process aimed to equip them with adequate knowledge before undertaking teaching duties. However, since the program was relatively new to the PJKR program at UNRI, both students and supervising teachers experienced confusion due to a lack of information and socialization. This highlights the need for improved communication and socialization to make the program more effective in the future.

During implementation, students observed various aspects of the schools, such as classroom environment, teaching processes, and school organization. They also taught under the guidance of supervising teachers. Despite the training, students faced difficulties in managing classes and delivering material, largely due to their lack of readiness and experience. Additionally, students were involved in activities outside their competencies, such as extracurriculars and school administration, demonstrating their flexibility and engagement in the school environment.

According to Permendikbud Number 3 of 2020, students can fulfill part of their academic load through activities outside their study program. However, the 20 SKS credit conversion for Teaching Assistance in the 5th semester was considered irrelevant by students because some crucial courses for thesis research were replaced. Some students and supervising teachers suggested that the program should be conducted in the 6th or 7th semester when students are more mature and the converted courses are more relevant, such as Field Practice Experiences (PLP) related to teaching.

For future improvements, it is essential for the Teaching Assistance program to align with academic guidelines and student readiness. Universities, faculties, study programs, and partner institutions must coordinate effectively to ensure successful implementation. Better socialization of the MBKM program is also needed to avoid future confusion. The Teaching Assistance program should be revised by considering the relevance of converted courses and student readiness so that

the program's primary goals—providing hands-on experience and enhancing educational quality—can be optimally achieved.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that students participating in the Teaching Assistance program did not have adequate preparation, as they only received one session of briefing from faculty before being deployed to the field. Most students did not undertake additional preparation and only served as teaching assistants rather than primary instructors. The Teaching Assistance program is one of the MBKM activities aimed at supporting teaching in educational institutions and addressing issues there, and it runs for 3 months and is equivalent to 20 SKS credits. However, the credit conversion for this program remains a challenge, as students feel that the courses converted are not relevant to the essential courses needed for their research.

To enhance the effectiveness of the program in the future, several recommendations can be applied. First, preparation and briefing for students need to be improved by providing more than one briefing session, including practical training and task simulations. Second, the relevance of the credit conversion should be reassessed to ensure that the converted courses align with the Teaching Assistance activities or teaching-related courses, so that students do not miss out on important courses for their research. Third, it is recommended that the program be conducted in a more advanced semester, such as the 6th or 7th semester, when students are more academically and practically prepared. Additionally, socialization and information about the MBKM program should be improved to reduce confusion and ensure more effective implementation. Finally, the program should be periodically evaluated with feedback from students, supervising teachers, and school representatives to refine and perfect the program's implementation. Implementing these recommendations is expected to provide a better experience for students and enhance their contributions to education.

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