# Strengthening the social competence of lecturers and students through the principle of religious moderation within the framework of MBKM policy

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#### **Abstract**

This research is focused on the importance of efforts to strengthen the social competence of lecturers and students in the university environment. More specifically, this study emphasizes the urgency of the principle of religious moderation in enhancing the social competence of lecturers and students, in line with the curriculum policy of independent learning and independent campus (MBKM). As a new paradigm in the world of education, MBKM provides students with the freedom to learn with the aim of creating an inclusive learning environment that is relevant to the needs and demands of the workforce. Through a literature review and qualitative analysis using the Miles & Huberman interactive data analysis, which includes three main steps: data condensation, data display, and conclusion/verification, the results indicate that the principles of religious moderation, such as Tawassuth (taking the middle path), Tawāzun (balance), I'tidāl (straightforwardness and firmness), Tasāmuh (tolerance), Musāwah (egalitarianism), and Syurā (consultation), contribute to strengthening the social competence of lecturers and students in implementing the independent curriculum policy. This research provides conceptual insight into creating an inclusive university environment in a diverse society by adopting the principles of moderation. Creating such conditions will make it easier to implement MBKM policy programs.

Keywords: Social competence, principles of religious moderation, MBK

## **INTRODUCTION**

The organization of educational institutions, from elementary level to higher education institutions such as State Islamic Universities (PTKIN) and private Islamic universities (PTKIS), is one of the manifestations of society's aspirations towards a more prosperous civilization and future. Through activities carried out within educational institutions, it is hoped that they can have a positive impact on all aspects of community life. Based on this, it is normatively and collectively understood that the entire range of academic and non-academic activities provided to students or students within the curriculum is not merely for interests, but must truly be based on the needs of society today and the challenges of the future.

From here, it becomes apparent that one of the most challenging tasks for all parties, whether at the central or regional government level, administrators of public or private educational institutions, is to continuously and intelligently observe and understand the issues, followed by changes in the increasingly complex and growing life of society. This is because, from this point, it will shape the framework of education to be implemented.

Considering the changing conditions and diverse demands of the times, the existence of education must remain a shared hope in balancing these dynamics. It should not stop there; education must also be capable of guiding the formation of academic individuals by creating a Learning Environment that leads students and students to become individuals who experience growth in learning, ultimately culminating in the realization of a community with the ability to adapt and compete in every change.

Certainly, in addressing this matter, especially higher education institutions such as State Islamic Universities (PTKIN) and private Islamic universities (PTKIS), which are part of the national education system in Indonesia, their existence is not limited to conducting activities like schools. Instead, higher education is expected to create professionals, excellence, competitiveness, and the ability to realize the aspirations of the Indonesian nation in the global era. Quoting Sudiyono in Suwantoro's statement, it is mentioned that higher education should not be detached from all activities aimed at producing educated individuals while also preparing students to be part of society equipped with professional academic abilities that can be implemented in real life to improve the quality of life and contribute to enriching the national cultural heritage (Suwantoro, 2020).

The success of higher education institutions in achieving the noble goals of national education (enlightening the nation's future) greatly depends on the level of excellence of the human resources they possess. Human resources are the only component among several subsystems that play a primary role as drivers in all aspects of planning, organizing, implementing, and controlling educational institutions to collectively achieve the desired vision. In short, as stated by Betty Arli S.P. the element of human resources in an educational institution is the lifeblood that will determine the advancement or decline of the institution (Pakpahan, 2022).

Based on the statement above, it can be understood that the existence of educational organizations or institutions, including universities, always relies of the quality of human resources to fulfill their roles and functions as effective tools in bridging society towards a more stable civilizations in accordance with the demands of the area. However, this does not mean that all other aspects such as facilities, objectives, learning environment, methods, and so forth are neglected. In various studies on education, it is acknowledged that education is not just a standalone set of activities but also a interconnected system arranged based on specific patterns and functions to achieve educational goals (Syafril dan Zelhendri Zen, 2017).

One of the hotly debated topics that has been implemented by most educational institutions, especially universities, is the policy of the Independent Learning Curriculum and Independent Campus (MBKM), initiated by the Minister of Education and Culture. This policy encompasses a series of programs with noble goals aimed at providing students with diverse knowledge to help them achieve success not only during their education but also in the working world.

As a new concept in the world of education, MBKM will provide opportunities or flexibility for all students to learn outside their major or even outside the university where they study for three semesters. This consists of one semester where students are given the opportunity to learn outside their major, and two other semesters where students are given the opportunity to engage in learning outside the university (Sutarman, 2022).

In order to support this policy and as a commitment to improving the quality of education in Indonesia, it is important for lecturers and students to actively enhance or develop all the skills, abilities, and competencies required of them. Referring to the concept of

competence for teachers and lecturers main interconnected pillars, which include pedagogical competence, personality competence, social competence, and professional competence acquired through professional education (Undang-Undang Republik Indonesia Nomor 14 Tahun 2005 Tentang Guru Dan Dosen, n.d.).

As for students, at least the social competence is interpreted by researchers as the ability and interpersonal skills that enable students to interact effectively with others in various social contexts. Therefore, with their social competence, the atmosphere when they are with others will at least demonstrate good teamwork, effective communication, as well as empathy and sensitivity to the needs of others.

As a new breakthrough in the world of education, with the concept of MBKM, active and job-oriented learning methods will always be emphasized. In simpler terms, the learning environment for students will indirectly encourage them to learn how to live in a community. Consequently, after they have completed their studies, they will appear more prepared for the workforce (Anggrawan et al, 2023). With a focus on such an orientation, students are encouraged to continually develop creativity and adaptability skills.

In line with what is outlined in the 2020 MBKM Guidelines, according to Minister of Education and Culture Regulation No. 3 of 2020, Article 15, paragraph 1, it is stated that there are at least eight forms of learning activities that can be carried out within and outside the study program. These activities include internships or teaching assistant practices in educational units, research or research projects, humanitarian projects, entrepreneurial activities, independent studies or projects, village development, Thematic Community Service Learning (KKN Tematik), and student exchanges (Buku Panduan Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka, 2020).

Through these eight programs, a paradigm shift will occur in higher education by involving appropriate partners within the context of the MBKM program. In this regard, external parties from the study program or outside the university will be directly involved. Therefore, it is necessary to strengthen social competence for both lecturers and students, as collaboration and teamwork will inevitably be required in the implementation, involving communication skills and adaptability.

In line with the statement above, Sumardi, states that the existence of social competence is closely related to an individual's ability to communicate, build relationships,

collaborate without minding differences, and take responsibility. Social competence also encompasses the ability to give and appreciate the rights of others, ultimately leading to the capability to benefit others. In this context, Sumardi emphasizes that interpersonal skills and a positive attitude towards diversity are key elements in developing social competence that positively impacts individuals and society as a whole (Nizar & Hasibuan, 2018).

From another perspective, researchers believe that with a mature level of social competence among lecturers and students, potential social conflicts that may arise in the context of MBKM, such as differences in perceptions or priorities between external and internal partners in implementing the MBKM program, or other differences such as cultural, values, or norms among lecturers and students, can be minimized. This is important for maintaining social ties among the involved partners. Moreover, Indonesia is a multicultural and multi-religious country, so it is crucial to consider this context in the implementation of MBKM.

Based on the survey conducted by Stefani Natalia Sabatini and colleagues regarding the factors of concern among students participating in MBKM, it was found that the primary concern for students participating in MBKM off-campus is related to financial issues. Subsequently, other responses include concerns about the different campus culture, leading to potential social gaps among students (Sabatini, 2022).

Furthermore, there is one finding obtained from the information gathered by Arinda Hermadita Agustin and colleagues that, out of the total number of students from the Faculty of Psychology participating in MBKM during the even semester of 2021/2022, comprising 225 students, there were those who successfully completed all MBKM activities. On the other hand, there were also a number of students who did not complete the MBKM activities and decided to withdraw. Students faced various challenges, including difficulty in identifying the core issues due to a lack of experience in the MBKM field, physical distance from family and close friends on campus affecting student motivation, and conflicts arising during the coordination of programs and schedules with group members. Disagreements and conflicts that emerged during the MBKM activities indicate that students need the ability to manage conflict situations to prevent aggressive behavior, as well as skills to deal with negative emotions in order to maintain their productivity throughout the MBKM program (Agustin, Rini & Pratitis, 2022).

When discussing social conflicts as indicated in the data above, the researcher considers it crucial to take into account the basic assumptions related to the principles of religious moderation associated with the concept of *washatiyah* Islam as a relevant solution. Moreover, since 2019 until now, the Indonesian government, through the Ministry of Religious Affairs, has echoed and encouraged the implementation of religious moderation in all aspects of community life, including in the field of education. Everyone agrees and believes that religious moderation is a very suitable concept to be implemented in Indonesia, a country rich in diversity.

Therefore, based on the presentation of the data above, it is crucial to explore the urgency of strengthening the social competence of lecturers and students, with an approach through the principles of religious moderation associated with the concept of *washatiyah* Islam in the context of the MBKM curriculum policy. Although the supporting data findings above only refer to the strengthening of social competence among students, the researcher assumes it is important to include the strengthening of social competence among lecturers as well, as their presence will influence the social competence of students. From this research, it is expected that the knowledge contributions generated can provide valuable recommendations, especially for the development of higher education in Indonesia.

#### **METHODS**

This research employs the non-field research method, commonly referred to as library research or literature review. Theoretically, this type of research is characterized by a greater emphasis on philosophical and theoretical analysis as opposed to empirical field testing. The research methodology encompasses three key elements: data sources, data collection, and data analysis (Taufiqur Rahman, 2018). In this context, the researcher gathers data from various literary sources related to the research topic, including books, journal articles, and other literary materials, both in print and electronic formats, that are relevant to the study. The obtained data will be unpacked and qualitatively analyzed using the Miles & Huberman's Interactive Data Analysis, which encompasses three main steps: data condensation, data display, and conclusion/verification. This serves as a foundation for new information worthy of being utilized as a basis for subsequent research.

#### RESULT AND DISCUSSION

MBKM in Conceptual Review and Orientation

The Existence of Education in Indonesia, particularly in both public and private universities, faces a myriad of diverse challenges in preparing competent and adaptive graduates. Competence is defined as an individual's ability to perform tasks or be skilled in applying their knowledge in their daily life.(Supriyatna & Asriani, 2019) Meanwhile, adaptability can be understood as a person's capability to adjust or adapt to changes in their environment. In this context, these changes primarily pertain to the social environment and the demands of the workforce.

As a consequence, all stakeholders, especially the government, must be able to take strategic steps believed to be the solution to these challenges. In this regard, the government, through the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, is attempting to introduce a new initiative in the form of the MBKM (Competency-Based Curriculum) policy to create a new atmosphere and paradigm regarding learning activities in the education sector. This initiative aims to enhance the quality and competitiveness of graduates, which has hitherto not significantly impacted their employability. Beyond this condition, MBKM also provides an opportunity to stimulate creativity and innovation in universities based on the connectivity between higher education institutions and the workforce as partners in implementing the MBKM program.

The presence of MBKM, along with a set of programs it offers, is actually a change in the atmosphere of learning that will be perceived with satisfaction by students without the burden of achieving specific grades or scores (Sabriadi & Wakia, 2021). However, on the other hand, the presence of this policy has led education into a somewhat dilemmatic situation that seems to prioritize a work-oriented approach not in line with Indonesia's national goals of developing students' potential to become religious and righteous individuals, which is a priority (Kodrat, 2021).

Furthermore, in line with this situation, some members of society also believe that the existence of MBKM in the field of education not only changes classroom learning conditions but also goes as far as shifting the philosophical foundations of Indonesian education. This raises concerns about potential conflicts between the philosophy of MBKM and the national

educational philosophy that has long been ingrained as a characteristic of the Indonesian nation and serves as the foundation for the overall education policy "(Sulaiman & Salamah, 2023).

The fundamental concept of the MBKM policy is based on Abraham Maslow's Humanistic learning theory. Thus, the education envisioned is one that liberates and empowers the creativity of both students and educators, in line with their competencies and inherent nature. The humanistic-based curriculum focuses on human growth while being responsive to societal pressures to achieve excellence. Therefore, the integration of the affective domain, which includes values, attitudes, and emotions, with the cognitive domain, which encompasses intellectual knowledge and thinking skills, is crucial in the provision of education (Wahyudi & Dewi, 2023).

With the idea of liberating and empowering learning activities, learners, in particular, will have the opportunity to express their spiritual desires and needs. Progress and development in learning can be observed, and the cognitive, emotional, and motor skills improvement of learners can be achieved while considering differences in talents, interests, and individual characteristics (Roqib & Sabiq, 2022).

Based on the above description, the concept of the MBKM policy, which will then bring a new dimension to the world of education, including higher education, will become a certainty that brings change. This change will not only occur in the implementation context but also in achieving its objectives. Such change is nothing less than the embodiment of the adaptability and flexibility of education in preparing graduates who play an active role in community development, equipped with knowledge and skills.

The Urgency of Strengthening the Social Competence of Lecturers and Students

In general, the campus community, especially lecturers and students, constitute a distinct segment of society with qualifications and roles that differ from other members of society in building the nation's civilization. They are not only valued as educated individuals but also because their existence is truly in a strategic position to bring about social change. First, when examined in terms of their existence, a lecturer plays a highly significant role. They are not just educators but also mentors and intellectual catalysts for students, which have an impact on social change.

Furthermore, they are expected to serve as role models with academic integrity, professional ethics, high moral values, and other social abilities. Having social competence is considered crucial for a lecturer, not only as a legal requirement but also to create a conducive classroom environment. Ultimately, this fosters a relaxed and friendly atmosphere in which students can engage in learning activities more comfortably (Sartini, 2019).

In general terms, social competence can be defined as an individual's ability to interact effectively in social contexts. It encompasses the ability to establish good relationships with others, build and maintain close relationships, and respond adaptively in various social situations. When discussing the social competence of lecturers specifically, as stated by Satori in Vaesol Wahyu Eka Irawan's work, it refers to a teacher's ability to recognize their role as an integral part of society and their capacity to fulfill their duties as members of society and citizens. Social competence also includes the ability to adapt to job demands and the surrounding environment (Irawan, 2018).

Secondly, in terms of a student's existence, the importance of social competence in a university environment is also highly significant. Students need to possess excellent skills in communication, collaboration, and even conflict resolution. With the social competence they possess, they can create comfort and ease in building a broader professional network and quickly adapting to changes. Consequently, students are expected to face challenges effectively and contribute to society.

Overall, a student's competence in educational activities can be achieved through teamwork in completing academic tasks, resolving conflicts, adapting to student organizations, enhancing self-capacity, participating in academic activities that improve communication skills, and engaging in social activities "-(Sharov, 2021). Mastery of social competence for students will lead to individuals who can actively participate in any situation and interact effectively with anyone.

Gedviliene, as mentioned in Rahmah and Fadhli (2021) work, categorizes social competence into two parts: communication and collaboration. Communication skills provide individuals with the ability to understand cultural differences in an increasingly diverse society and adopt appropriate behaviors for positive communication. Meanwhile, collaboration skills ensure effective and constructive social participation through good

interaction, strong responsibility, building a learning process, and cooperation with people from various backgrounds.

Therefore, the importance of social competence for lecturers and students as members of the campus community cannot be denied. It is not enough to merely possess social competence; it must also be enhanced and strengthened through various means in line with the existing conditions and demands. Apart from being a support in achieving the goals and tasks of higher education, social aspects are also characteristics inherent in humans as social beings.

In short, those who do not strive to strengthen and enhance these abilities and competencies seem to be losing the distinctive dimension of their humanity. Efforts to enrich oneself through skill development and capacity enhancement become the key for an individual to uphold the essence of their humanity. Conversely, a lack of effort in honing these abilities may very well lead to the loss of a unique identity that distinguishes humans from other beings.

Realization of the Principle of Religious Moderation in Strengthening the Social Competence of Lecturers and Students Within the MBKM Framework

In general, when discussing the social competence of individuals, including in the context of this writing, which pertains to lecturers and students, it is important to consider the concept of religious moderation. This concept universally encourages every individual tos cultivate an open-minded attitude, tolerance, and appreciation for differences, primarily in beliefs (religious). In such conditions, each individual will be capable of interacting with others from diverse backgrounds with an inclusive, accepting, and mutually respectful attitude toward one another.

As a flagship program and a current issue in Indonesia, the word moderation originates from the Latin word moderatio, which refers to a state of neither excess nor deficiency. Furthermore, this term also reflects self-control to avoid excessive or deficient behavior. Meanwhile, in the Indonesian Language Dictionary (KBBI), the word moderation has two meanings, namely the reduction of violence and the avoidance of extremism (Kemenag RI, 2019).

Therefore, based on the understanding above, a moderate attitude can be interpreted as taking a balanced stance. Without excess in certain positions, it aligns itself correctly with the truth. In this understanding, moderation is synonymous with al-wasith, indicating a balance between the non-excessive truth (ifrath) and not leaning too far to the left (Tafrith). Thus, this concept encompasses the meanings of equality, goodness, security, and strength (Arifinsyah et al, 2020).

The emergence of religious moderation in the life of the Indonesian nation, which is inherently diverse, leads individuals to tend to have the ability to understand others' perspectives, appreciate differences, and effectively communicate in such diverse environments. Moreover, from these abilities, they will also enter into conditions of harmonious interaction, build cooperation, and ultimately have an impact on the development of an inclusive and sustainable society.

As a concept that promotes a shared commitment to maintaining perfect balance by learning to manage and overcome differences, religious moderation has six fundamental principles: *Tawassuth* (taking the middle path) as the second, *Tawāzun* (balance) as the third, I'tidāl (straightforward and firm) as the fourth, *Tasāmuh* (tolerance) as the fifth, *Musāwah* (egalitarianism) as the sixth, and *Syurā* (consultation) as the seventh (Penyusun, 2019). With these six principles, a moderate attitude will guide every individual in building intelligence, sensitivity, and social competence in a better direction.

From the principle of *Tawassuth* or taking the middle path in general, it will encourage the emergence of a wise attitude, capable of finding balance and openness in every human interaction. This principle will serve as a guiding source in creating mutual understanding and good cooperation with a sense of harmony in a diverse society. From the principle of *Tawāzun* or balance, it will provide impetus for the emergence of a balanced attitude. This means that with this principle, there will be an apparent respect for the needs and desires of others while also preserving one's own needs and desires. Thus, empathy, mutual understanding, and mutual benefit will be felt in social interactions.

As for the principle of I'tidal or balance and firmness, it is almost similar to the previous principle, which is to cultivate a resolute, firm, and just attitude in all aspects of life. Thus, with this principle, every individual is capable of developing their integrity, including

upholding justice. From the principle of *Tasāmuh* or tolerance, it will manifest an atmosphere of coexistence, peace, and harmony, even in the context of diverse societal life. With this principle, there is the potential for reduced conflicts and the creation of an inclusive environment.

Meanwhile, from the principle of *Musāwah* or Egalitarianism, all forms of discrimination, stereotypes, or even negative prejudices against specific groups will be eliminated. With this principle, it will also create conditions for an inclusive society where all individuals have equal rights and are respected without highlighting their differences. From the principle of *Syurā* or consultation, it teaches the importance of dialoguing with others in all aspects. With this principle, there is the potential to build a democratic and responsive society to shared aspirations and interests.

Through the description above, it provides an overview that religious moderation in the context of education, especially in higher education, is considered crucial in carrying out curriculum-based learning activities within the MBKM framework. Moreover, as a unique characteristic of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, the implementation of the MBKM program needs to enhance religious moderation, either as a part of each program or as a separate program within the ninth Learning Activity Form (BKP). There are nine keywords that should be strengthened in religious moderation, namely humanity, public welfare, justice, balance, constitutional obedience, national commitment, tolerance, anti-violence, and respect for traditions (Dirjenpendis, 2022).

From the six principles of moderation to the nine keywords that receive full attention in the implementation of the MBKM program, it will provide strong evidence that the social competence of both lecturers and students directly involved in the MBKM program will significantly increase. In this context, the reinforcement of religious moderation not only serves as an ethical foundation in executing the MBKM program but also contributes positively to the development of essential social skills for participants, including both lecturers and students.

According to a study conducted by Najmi (2023), it is stated that the cultivation of moderate values has a significant impact on the process of interaction and the formation of positive social attitudes. In general, social attitudes can be interpreted as the relationship between individuals, indicating interdependence among people in various aspects of community life.

Through the discussion above, it is evident that religious moderation in the context of education, especially in higher education, plays a significant role in conducting curriculum-based learning activities under the MBKM (Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka) framework. At the very least, the principle of religious moderation strengthens the competencies of both professors and students, especially their social competencies, which are highly needed for collaborating and working with partners from diverse backgrounds. Social competencies, including communication and interaction skills with all school stakeholders (students, fellow teachers, education staff), as well as external stakeholders (parents and the community), along with the other three competencies (pedagogical, professional, and personal), have a very significant impact on improving the quality of education (Hakim, 2015).

At a more serious level, the urgency of strengthening the social competencies of professors and students by adopting the principle of moderation does not stop at the conceptual level but extends to the realm of action. Professors and students must be proactive in their self-development through education and training that promotes the importance of religious moderation in social life. Furthermore, the implementation of an inclusive curriculum is highly necessary. By incorporating elements of religious moderation, it will create an academic environment capable of fostering understanding, openness, and mutual respect among members of the community within and outside the university.

Related to that, research conducted by Erika and Wahyuningrum (2022) concludes that social integration in the lives of students and the community is a possibility because it involves accommodating differences and diversity among individuals and their cultures. Students who can develop good social integration will demonstrate social tolerance because they are more capable of accepting and appreciating the diversity in their surroundings. Conversely, students who experience less social integration tend to be intolerant towards those with different.

Furthermore, Aris Priyanto and colleagues, in their research, state that students practicing religion moderately demonstrate a positive and appropriate level of spirituality. They tend to apply principles of religious moderation, such as moderation, balance, justice, tolerance, and experience comfort in the learning process, which also includes the aspect of academic freedom(Priyanto, 2021).

By applying the principle of religious moderation and enhancing the social competencies of professors and students within the framework of the MBKM curriculum, it

Will provide full support for the implementation of independent learning activities. Therefore, the shared aspiration to create an inclusive learning environment in universities can truly be realized. Additionally, it is important to acknowledge that all members of the academic community in universities, including professors and students, possess dialectical or analytical thinking skills. Hence, the actualization of the principle of religious moderation in enhancing the social competencies of professors and students is greatly needed as a strong foundation for carrying out the tri-dharma (teaching, research, and community service) activities in universities based on the MBKM approach, which very likely involves interactions with individuals from diverse backgrounds.

### CONCLUSION

From the entire exposition above, it can be concluded that the existence of professor and students plays a primary role in higher education and they need to enhance their competencies, especially their social competencies, in the context of implementing the MBKM (Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka) policy. The principle of religious moderation is a highly relevant way to foster open-mindedness, tolerance, and appreciation for individual differences, enabling the creation of inclusive, tolerant, and mutually respectful interactions. Strengthening the competencies of lecturers and students through the principle of moderation can be achieved by proactively developing themselves through education and training that promotes the importance of religious moderation in both university and non-university social life. Additionally, an inclusive curriculum that adopts elements of religious moderation also plays a crucial role in creating an academic environment that expands understanding, openness, and mutual understanding aming the community within and outside the university. All of these are highly relevand in the the context of the MBKM framework.

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