

Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst German Academic Exchange Service

Newsletter

Volume 10, Edition 1 Contents

Foreword

Page 1

Merdeka Belajar – Kampus Merdeka Page 2

Advertisement by German Universities

- Offenburg University
- RWTH Aachen International Academy

Page 6

Falling Walls Lab Remote 2020 Page 7

Advertisement by German Universities

- European University Viadrina
- ESB Business School Reutlingen University

Page 10

PAJ Aceh Alumni Treffen 2021 Page 11

Scholarship Now Open Page 12

Advertisements by German Universities

- NIT Hamburg
- Institute for Law and Finance Goethe Universität Frankfurt am Main

Page 12



Foreword

Dear readers,

Merdeka Belajar and Kampus Merdeka have brought considerable changes into the world of Higher Education in Indonesia. All over the country, universities are busy adapting their curricula and structures to the new developments, even under the conditions of the still ongoing Covid-19 pandemic.

But what does it mean in practice for the Higher Education Institutions to introduce a new system of learning and teaching as under Kampus Merdeka? One thing is certain: This is work for pioneers and a challenge even for experienced university teachers and managers because there are no pilot projects which can be taken as models. As you will see in our interviews with two experienced scientists and heads of international programmes and offices from IPB and UI, the tasks are really challenging but the universities have made remarkable progress.

In another article, the winner of the Falling Walls Lab Jakarta 2020 shares her experiences related to this event and tells us how the Falling Walls Lab functions as an international scientific event and as a kind of door opener for further training and networking. Some or her ideas and suggestions may help you on your way to become a young scientist, and maybe even participate in one of the next Falling Walls Labs!

The PAJ (Perhimpunan Alumni Jerman) section in Aceh has, since its foundation, always been active and engaged in many different projects which benefit education and science in the province of Aceh. In this edition of the newsletter, they report on their latest meeting. Much success in your ongoing and future work, dear colleagues!

I hope that this edition of our newsletter will bring you a lot of new and interesting information. Any comments and suggestions on our newsletter are, as always, welcome, as well as statements concerning your personal experiences with "Merdeka Belajar - Kampus Merdeka" or remarks on other topics of Higher Education.

Best wishes, and stay safe and healthy,

Thomas Zettler
Director of DAAD Regional Office Jakarta



Page 2 February 2021

Merdeka Belajar - Kampus Merdeka



When President Jokowi appointed Mr. Nadiem Makariem as the new minister of education, it came as a surprise for most people because of his background in industry as a successful start-up founder. But some people tried to look at the bright side; maybe with his background he could solve the biggest challenge for our education system which is to bring students closer to the professional world.

At the end of 2019, the new Minister of Education announced a new policy in the field of education which is Merdeka Belajar – Kampus Merdeka. The policy is expected to be the answer to this demand.

One of the interesting points of the policy is that it enables students to take credits outside the core study program for 3 semesters either at the same university or another university. There are also 8 possible learning activities outside campus namely: internship/work practices, projects in the villages, teaching in schools, student exchange, research, entrepreneurial activity, study/independent projects and humanitarian projects. All activities must be guided by the lecturers.

For this newsletter, we interviewed 2 DAAD Alumni to talk further about Merdeka Belajar - Kampus Merdeka Policy. We interviewed:



Dr. Reza Fathurrahman,

Head of International Office, Faculty of Administrative Science, Universitas Indonesia and assistant professor at the Department of Public Administration, Faculty of Administrative Science, Universitas Indonesia



Prof. Iskandar Z. Siregar

Director of International Programme and Professor at the Department of Silviculture, Faculty of Forestry and Environment, IPB University. Page 3 February 2021

Merdeka Belajar - Kampus Merdeka

As an educator, do you have any opinion about the new policy?

<u>IZS:</u> The transformation of higher education is always being envisioned and needs to be accelerated considering everchanging environments such as events of mega-trends and mega-shocks. In particular, under the current VUCA (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity and Ambiguity) and the pandemic, Higher Education Institutions have been forced to adapt their management including learning pathways or learning processes in order to produce skilled, knowledgeable and competent graduates. The Merdeka Belajar – Kampus Merdeka policy, as far as I know, provides various learning pathways that can be carried out outside campus and be acknowledged as academic credits.

RF: From the policy perspective, a particular policy is issued to address a specific problem. I believe there is a background to why the Ministry of Education chooses this policy.

There is growing feedback that campus, regardless of various efforts, is still far from the reality; meaning that some people believe that there is a discrepancy between what is taught in campus and what is actually happening in society. As a result, students who graduate from university may not be able to fully address the actual problems faced by society.

Merdeka Belajar – Kampus Merdeka is a solution offered by the Ministry of Education (in response to this feedback). This policy is believed to address the discrepancy, namely, to bring the campus closer to the society by emphasizing the value of collaboration and multidisciplinary approaches between campus and their stakeholders.





How has your university adapted to "Merdeka Belajar – Kampus Merdeka", e.g. in the field of curriculum design, teacher qualifications or in other fields?

IZS: IPB has just developed the IPB 4.0 or K-2020 curriculum which came into effect last year. This new curriculum has been designed to anticipate 21st century skills consisting of foundational literacies, competencies and character quality. In particular, the competencies of "four Cs" skills such as critical thinking/problem-solving, creativity, communication and collaboration have been added to the structure to approach the complex challenges. In addition, character qualities have also been included to approach the changing environments. So, the new policy seems to have come just in time for IPB and already fits into the newly developed K-2020 curriculum.

RF: Since last year, Universitas Indonesia has been preparing the infrastructure required for the implementation of the "Kampus Merdeka-Merdeka Belajar" policy. I believe we will start implementing this policy in 2021.

There are several things that we have prepared. One of them is to update the curriculum to accommodate "the rights" of individual students to take three semesters outside of their study program. Every faculty and department has prepared a package and updated the curriculum; for example, by reducing the number of credits to be taken at student's home institution. Normally, a student will need to complete 144 credits at our Faculty to graduate and receive a Bachelor Degree. In the newly updated curriculum, we will reduce the number of credits to only 100 (to be taken at the home institution) plus around 44 credits to be taken outside the Faculty. By reducing the number of mandatory credits, there is a greater room for flexibility for the students to decide if they want to learn from another study program or to learn the same subject at a different university for 3 semesters or to do other alternative activities.

I believe the infrastructure is quite ready to embrace it, but we may need gradual improvement along the way.

Page 4 February 2021

Merdeka Belajar - Kampus Merdeka



The new regulation enables students to study for 1-3 semesters in other fields, even at other universities, to do internships at enterprises etc. These activities will be fully recognized and granted with CTS points. How will this, in your opinion, influence the lives of students and universities? And how can the universities prepare for these new developments?

IZS: Basically, as we know, the learning pathways include class work, lab work, co-operative placements, international experience and multi/inter/transdisciplinary group work. In the future, student life will change significantly so that they will have to be familiar with the process of developing a very sound study plan following the standard operating procedure (SOP) prepared by university. They have to be ready to carry out local, national and international placements. Students learning independence is of paramount importance and, based on experience, they are usually adaptive and fast learners; who are ready for new changes

RF: We may be able to perceive it, see it, from at least two perspectives. The first one is from the university management's (the faculty and department) perspective and the second is from the students.

From the perspective of university management, at least, there are four things to be prepared.

- The first is to design an updated curriculum to accommodate the requirements imposed by the ministry. In the case of Universitas Indonesia, we have reduced the number of credits and identified specific subjects that can be taken by students from different majors.
- The second is related to collaboration with internal and external parties. The university management needs to prepare various agreements and activities with partners, especially from outside campus; otherwise, it will not work.
- When we talk about the "Kampus Merdeka-Merdeka Belajar" policy, students can choose eight different activities inside and outside the campus. Each activity has its own nature. We need to identify and agree with partners about the skills or goals to be reached by the time the students finish their activities because our main objective is to make sure that the students get the knowledge, skills, and attitude required to address problems in society.
- The fourth is regarding supervision and evaluation. We need to make sure the lecturers can upgrade their competences to supervise students who do various activities outside the campus. In other words, the lecturers will have a bolder role as an academic supervisor. When students are interested in conducting activities outside the campus, they need to discuss it first with their academic supervisor (lecturer). In this case, the lecturer as an academic supervisor plays a vital role in helping the students to design it and monitor the progress. Other than that, it is also crucial for the lecturer to make a standard on how to quantify the activities outside the campus and convert it to credits.



Page 5 February 2021

Merdeka Belajar - Kampus Merdeka



From the students' perspective, several things need to be prepared. Based on my experience, some students want to graduate as soon as possible even without any clear reason.

I often give them advice that they need a good reason if they want to graduate early. As a student, it is an excellent time for them to explore different activities and try new things, such as participating in student exchanges, joining student organizations, etc. If they still have this mindset, most students may prefer to choose the traditional way of doing their Bachelor's degree. The new policy will challenge students to leave their comfort zone and embrace this new opportunity.

Currently, we have already integrated several activities, for example, internship and community services, within the current curriculum (before the introduction of Kampus Merdeka). So, it should not be a problem for the students to adapt. But still, we need to discuss, update, and adjust. We have a clear ground, but students also need to prepare their mentality and update their understanding of this opportunity.

For students, they should also prepare and consider the financial consequences. There may be extra fees that they need to pay if they want to take several semesters in different universities, or any other activities outside the campus. The university may need to discuss with partners, among others, how to address these financially related matters.

How can the lecturers be assisted to become increasingly creative and autonomous in teaching?

IZS: The new policy is targeted to increase the qualities of students, lectures and the curriculum. So, all targets should be well prepared, including the external partners as host institutions such as companies, NGOs, communities as well as sister universities including central as well local government units. IPB has been preparing, also, the lecturers and tutors to be adaptive with various kinds of mode of delivery (e.g. problem based learning) and ICT infrastructure including the use of new technologies (e.g. various IPB mobile applications) for facilitating the learning management (e.g. blended learning).

RF: Now that the government has decided to implement this policy, so there are no options for the lecturers other than to improve themselves. By the time we implement this policy, more workshops to develop the lectures' competencies will be needed.

Standardisation is also needed. Universities and faculties need to build a standard operating procedure to ensure every actor involved in this policy can understand their role and know the administration required for each step. This also includes the credit conversion for each activity.

Digital platforms may also be a solution to ensure the communication between students and lecturers is going well and to monitor individual student's progress.





Page 6 February 2021

Merdeka Belajar - Kampus Merdeka

What are the main challenges for universities while implementing "Merdeka Belajar - Kampus Merdeka"?

IZS: Finding suitable partners as host institutions which can accept the students and consider the benefits for them within the context of access benefit sharing is a challenge; for example, when finding the host technical or scientific supervisors smoothly when the students are planning to do their academic activities outside of their home universities. The funding mechanism and credit transfer system platform are also important pre-conditions to be considered in order to implement the activities as planned by individual students

RF: We already have some experiences in conducting some activities involved in the new policy, for example, internships or community services. Still, we do not yet have yet sufficient expertise to conduct this policy as a complete package.

It may take some time until we are able to build a reliable system, including to increase student motivation and to improve lecturers.

Currently, we do not have yet a successful model for implementing this policy, from which we can learn from their mistakes. Therefore, during the very first year we need to explore and learn on our own to catch up with the demand from society.

In addition, there is also a concern, but maybe this is a very normative perception. As I said earlier, to implement this policy, the university management needs to do and invest in a lot of things. But, what if there is a change within the political arena? Would this policy sustain if the minister were changed? We need some sort of guarantee that when there is a change in the ministerial leadership, the new leader will keep prioritizing this policy.

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Page 7 February 2021

Falling Walls Lab Remote 2020

FALLING WALLS X BERLIN SCIENCE WEEK





As the winner of Falling Walls Lab Jakarta 2020, Ms. Dian Anggraini, got the chance to represent Indonesia in the international science forum, Falling Walls Remote 2020, which was held online from 4th – 9th November 2020 as well as join Science Communication Training from Euraxess. In this opportunity, we interviewed Ms. Dian Anggraini to share her experience of joining in with

Hi Miss Dian, thank you for your time and willingness to be interviewed. As the Falling Walls Lab Jakarta 2020 winner. you got the chance to attend a Science Communication Training from Euraxess. Could you share your experience with us?

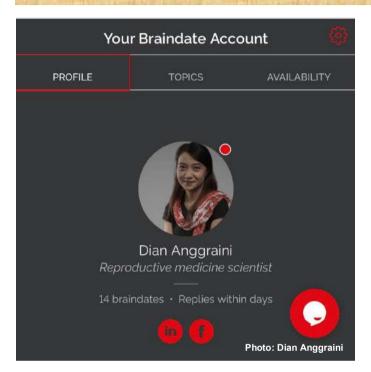
Thank you for having me. I have to say it was a fantastic experience because I could meet experts from the UK, and they taught me how to deliver my scientific speech effectively and efficiently. However, the preparation was a little challenging for me, due to the short time frame, and the need to coordinate with many people for this event, with the trainers from UK and Germany and my supervisors in Sydney. However, in the end, it was a great experience because I learned many things from the training. As a junior scientist, the training broadened my horizon because I learned deeply about science communication which had quite a different approach from my experiences and degrees

And how about your experience joining the Falling Walls Remote 2020?

It was also another fantastic experience for me. I was so excited about it, when we looked at the website, there were many lectures, seminars, and talks from a broad area on the international stage. We met a lot of experts from different fields and joined discussions about the most recent issues in the world. Of course, I didn't want to miss anything so I joined most of the events offered.

Page 8 February 2021

Falling Walls Lab Remote 2020



There was also a very interesting activity during Falling Walls Lab Remote called "Brain Date"; it was basically a date for our brain. This event was participated in by a lot of scientists and it was a great opportunity to meet in person with great scientists from around the world. In this event, we were encouraged to make a small event similar to a "talk" in which we shared our knowledge / experiences in our field. I made 2 events myself, one of them was an individual talk where I shared my personal experiences about "self-learning and how to make it efficient and fast" with other scientists in a one to one session. Another one was a bigger event, for 5-6 scientists; we discussed antibody-based diagnostic tools (my field of concern). It was a great experience because I met scientists that have more experience in this field and obtained many perspectives for this. Besides this, I also joined events that were held by other participants as well. Since I was really enthusiastic to join the event, I joined 4 – 5 talks every day for 10 days. The experience of joining different talks in the Brain Date sessions really wowed me as a scientist. From it, I got the chance to learn from fellow scientists and broaden my horizon on different topics such as Artificial Intelligence and Climate Change.

Another interesting part of Falling Walls Lab Remote was the publication workshop from Nature. It is a well known and prestigious publisher in the research field. The workshop was conducted by the director of Nature directly. During the workshop we were also split into several small groups where we heard a lecture and later, we had to present a lecture in front of all the participants. I am grateful because I experienced presenting my work in front of more than 50 participants and the Nature team. Although I was not the winner, I had a very great time and met so many talented people.

Another session that interested me was a session about Start-Ups, in which selected participants got the chance to join a workshop and meet successful start-up founders from all around the world. So at that time I also made a Start-Up proposal to join this workshop; the interesting part was I made it in only 1 day after receiving permission from the University in Australia because it was related to intellectual property. Although, in the end, I did not get selected to join the event, I was so grateful for the experience to make my own start up ideas related to my project. What if it becomes true in the future; who knows?

All in all, what I found to be the most important thing that I got from Falling Walls Lab Remote 2020 was an opportunity to network. During the event I networked with many scientists and people from different fields. What amazed me was that they are warm-hearted people. They are ready to help you and give you input and also open the door for future collaborations. Until now, we still keep in contact on social media and different platforms. I also found that Falling Walls Lab Alumni are helpful; I sent some emails to some of them and asked for the opportunity to have a further talk, and they gladly said yes and spent their time talking to me.

In the Falling Walls Lab community, I also found that people support each other. I had an unforgettable experience when I met one senior and well known scientist from Africa. I talked to her about my research experience on Preeclampsia, about the challenges, difficulties, and all. She gave me insights about her experience, and she also gave me advice on how to keep on going in this field; keep going, no matter what; because at the end of the day, it will be worth it. I felt so touched in that discussion. And I knew that I had to keep on going with this.



Development of diagnostic test using antibody or other techniques for disease: perspectives

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To develop diagnostic test for preeclampsia, a sey form of high blood pressure during pregnancy



Photo: Dian Anggraini

Page 9 February 2021

Falling Walls Lab Remote 2020

Most people are sceptical about online events, especially the opportunity to do networking through online events. Can you share your thoughts on it because it seems that you are still able to do networking during online events from your experience?

Of course, there are lots of limitations caused by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, but it does not mean all doors or roads are closed. I think it depends on how we can see the opportunities around us, even the smallest one. For example, I don't think I would have joined Falling Walls Lab Jakarta 2020 if things were normal because I would be in Sydney and doing my study. Then, because I joined Falling Walls Lab Jakarta, I also got the chance to join the Falling Walls Lab Remote. Because everything is shifting online, I can join many events such as seminars and conferences from different parts of the world without boundaries.

Not so long ago, I got an email from the Falling Walls Lab Committee. I got an invitation to join a seminar in the field of Medicine, and the seminar was attended by famous scientists and important people from all over the world. The event was also attended and closed by respected leaders from European countries. During the event, I also got the chance to do networking with people and scientists within my field of study. Without this pandemic, I don't think I would have got this opportunity.





Can you share some tips on how to do networking online?

I think the ability to do networking depends on our will, it is essential that you have the courage first to approach people and "knock on their door". You can start approaching people with small talk; then you can go with the flow. It is also important to be open-minded when we meet new people, and to make yourself like an empty glass so you can get a new perspective and new knowledge when meeting new people.

What can you learn from the winners of Falling Walls Lab 2020: Breakthrough of the year?

I think every idea about research is good. I believe all ideas are interesting. What is important is how we communicate our ideas. I watched the videos from all finalists, and I think their projects were all excellent.

Well, I always look for a pattern from something. In my opinion, there is one similarity from all the Falling Walls Lab winners. They use common language or terms that people from different fields easily understand the first time they listen to them. In my opinion, science is something abstract that can only be imagined in our heads or at least with people in our fields. Therefore, it is essential to use simple words to explain it so more people can understand what we are saying.

One said, if you want to elaborate your research, make sure that scientists or people from a different field understand what you are explaining, and get some feedback for your project, or even think "what can I do" to solve the problem you have. For example: I got a lot of feedback in terms of detection tools for preeclampsia from other fields such as biomedical engineering and robotics (AI). It just broadened my horizons to solve the "preeclampsia problem", not only from medicine research, but we can combine my field with others and it might be more efficient and fast. Because at the end of the day, for me, being a scientist is not merely about publications and being in a prestigious field. It's about solving the problems in our society as soon as possible. That is the new world, I just know it as a midwife and junior scientist

Page 10 February 2021

Falling Walls Lab Remote 2020



Photo: Dian Anggraini

Last but not least, do you have some words for those interested in joining Falling Walls Lab Jakarta in 2021?

I believe each of you has an amazing idea, and when you are applying to join Falling Walls Lab Jakarta, you have some idea in mind. But the most important thing is, don't be shy and go ahead, do not ever think that other people are better than you.

I also believe that there is a pattern for everything, and so did the Falling Walls Lab winner. So do not hesitate to learn from the previous winners of the Falling Walls Lab website. It was something that helped me before I did my presentation in Falling Walls Lab Jakarta.

Finally, a researcher will usually work in a team, so do not hesitate to present your idea in front of your team and ask for their feedback. Do not keep your idea to yourself, ask for feedback and input to improve your thoughts and presentation style. I believe I would not have won Falling Walls Lab Jakarta 2020 without valuable feedback and input from my team.

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Page 11 February 2021

PAJ Aceh Alumni Treffen 2021 by Mira Maisura, PAJ Aceh.



German Alumni Chapter Aceh (PAJ Aceh) recently gathered at the PAJ Aceh Alumni Treffen 2021 event. The event took place at the Ivory Cafe, Banda Aceh on January 12, 2021. Due to the ongoing pandemic, this gathering was limited to only 50 alumni and implemented strict health protocols.

PAJ ACEH Alumni Treffen, 2021 is a continuation of the PAJ ACEH three-yearly meeting which discusses various matters related to the organization and empowerment of German university alumni from Aceh as a whole. In that meeting, Dr.rer.nat. Muksin Umar was elected as the chairman of PAJ Aceh for the period of 2021-2024, replacing Dr.phil Saiful Akmal from the previous period.

The Alumni Treffen 2021 was also attended by Prof. Dr. Hizir (Chairman of PAJ Aceh from 2006-2012), Prof. Dr. Samadi (Chairman of PAJ Aceh from 2012-2015), Dr.rer.nat. Ilham Maulana (Chairman of PAJ Aceh from 2015-2018) and Dr.phil. Saiful Akmal (Chairman of PAJ Aceh from 2018-2021). On this occasion, Dr. Drs. Qismullah Yusuf, M.Ed, who was the initiator of the Aceh Scholarship of Excellence (ASFE) program, also shared his ideas and inspiration about a people empowerment project to the alumni from "Land der Ideen" that can be implemented and accomplished by us.

During the ongoing pandemic, PAJ Aceh often carried out online sharing activities with themes from various fields of knowledge and social issues, and managed to attract the interest of many participants. Through this gathering event which was attended by alumni from the first batch of ASFE as well as those who have recently returned to their homeland, it is expected that there will be a collaboration which will benefit our society.

Page 12 February 2021

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Who can apply:

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More information about the program, please visit www.daad.id

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