

Higher Education Strategic Partnership Management Model for the Independent Campus Internship

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Abstract:

This study aims to analyse the ideal strategic partnership model for implementing the Independent Learning Campus Internship (MBKM) program in higher education. Systematic and sustainable partnership management is crucial for optimally supporting the implementation of the MBKM program. The research approach employed was a descriptive qualitative one, utilising data collection techniques that included in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation studies. The results indicate that despite the existence of a basic MBKM implementation structure, challenges such as limited documentation, suboptimal training, and weak evaluation of collaboration remain significant obstacles. This study led to the development of a strategic partnership model comprising four main pillars: collaborative planning, institutional organisation, internship program implementation, and evaluation and sustainability of the collaboration. Two key components strengthen this model: enhancing the digitalisation system and fostering an ethical and inclusive partnership culture. The implementation of this model is expected to improve the effectiveness of collaboration, strengthen student competencies, and enhance the institution's reputation through sustainable and career-relevant partnerships.

Keywords: *Strategic Partnership, Internship Program, Higher Education Management*

Abstrak:

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis model kemitraan strategis yang ideal dalam pelaksanaan program Magang Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) di perguruan tinggi. Manajemen kemitraan yang sistematis dan berkelanjutan sangat penting dalam mendukung implementasi program MBKM secara optimal. Pendekatan penelitian yang digunakan adalah kualitatif deskriptif, dengan teknik pengumpulan data melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi, dan studi dokumentasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa meskipun telah ada struktur dasar pelaksana MBKM, tantangan seperti keterbatasan dokumentasi, pembekalan yang belum optimal, dan lemahnya evaluasi kerja sama masih menjadi hambatan utama. Penelitian ini menghasilkan model kemitraan strategis yang mencakup empat pilar utama, yaitu perencanaan kolaboratif, pengorganisasian kelembagaan, pelaksanaan program magang, serta evaluasi dan keberlanjutan kerja sama. Model ini diperkuat dengan dua komponen pendukung, yaitu penguatan sistem digitalisasi dan pembentukan budaya kemitraan yang beretika dan inklusif. Implementasi model ini diharapkan dapat meningkatkan efektivitas kerja sama, memperkuat kompetensi mahasiswa, serta membangun reputasi institusi melalui kemitraan yang berkelanjutan dan relevan dengan dunia kerja.

Kata Kunci: *Kemitraan Strategis, Program Magang, Manajemen Perguruan Tinggi*

INTRODUCTION

The importance of higher education in developing competent human resources is deeply felt by society, particularly in the face of the challenges posed by the Industrial Revolution 4.0 and the Industrial Revolution 5.0 era. The Independent Campus Program (MBKM), initiated by the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture, is a strategic step in bridging the gap between education and industry. One of the most significant implementations of MBKM is the student internship program, which aims to prepare graduates who are suited to job market needs (Agustinah, Mintawati, Sonia, Saputra, & Albert, 2023; Hardian & Hermawan, 2022; Pecamuya, 2025). However, the success of this internship program is determined not only by the readiness of students and institutions but also by how universities manage strategic partnerships with businesses, industry, and other institutions professionally and sustainably (Nugroho, Irianto, & Suryanto, 2024; Pasyah, Wulandari, & Selasдини, 2024; Prasad & others, 2024). Therefore, this research is crucial to ensure that existing partnership models effectively support the objectives of MBKM.

Although the government has implemented the MBKM program to strengthen the relationship between education and industry, many universities continue to struggle with managing and maintaining effective partnerships. Many universities rely solely on personal relationships between lecturers and industry partners or engage in unstructured, ad hoc collaborations. This results in low-quality internship experiences accessible to students, who should be focused on practical learning relevant to their fields of study. Without a robust and well-documented partnership management system, the sustainability and quality of internship programs will be hampered. Therefore, systematic and sustainable partnership management is a significant challenge that higher education institutions must overcome (Marinho, Silva, & Santos, 2020; Mogboh & AGUSIOBO, 2025; Singh & Segatto, 2020)..

Several previous studies have discussed the importance of partnership management in higher education. Kharkivska & Prokopenko (2023) demonstrated that management-based partnership management can improve institutional competitiveness, educator professionalism, and the quality of student education. Other research, such as that conducted by Putra et al. (2023), revealed that implementing a technology-based mentoring system can support partnerships between universities and industry. However, despite efforts to manage these partnerships, many universities have not yet been able to create systems that ensure the continuity and overall improvement of internship quality. This weakness is a problem that must be addressed so that existing strategic partnerships can have a tangible impact on student competency development.

Meanwhile, several studies have found that unstructured partnership management, limited to formal agreements such as Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) and Memoranda of Agreement (MoAs), is insufficient to achieve optimal results. For example, research by Marinho et al. (2020) indicates that many universities continue to rely on personal networks to establish partnerships, which

ultimately results in students having limited access to quality internship experiences. This highlights a gap in previous research: the need for a partnership management model that encompasses not only administrative processes but also ensures the transfer of relevant knowledge that can be implemented in the workplace. This research contributes by proposing a more holistic and systematic partnership model to support the implementation of MBKM programs in universities.

Innovation in higher education partnership management has flourished, but there is still much room for exploration to improve its effectiveness. Existing partnership management models often neglect the digitalisation and sustainable partnership culture aspects, which should be integral to higher education partnership management (Clarke & Fuller, 2010; Das, Zahra, & Warkentin, 1991; Reynolds & Sutherland, 2013). This study introduces a new approach that integrates four managerial pillars (planning, organising, implementing, and evaluating sustainability) and introduces the digitalisation of information systems and the strengthening of a partnership culture as part of the solution to address these shortcomings. This model is essential to implement because it can provide practical guidance for higher education institutions in building and managing strategic partnerships in a more structured and sustainable manner, which in turn will improve the quality of internship programs and the relevance of education to industry needs.

This study aims to develop a strategic partnership management model that higher education institutions can use to support the implementation of the Independent Campus internship program. The primary challenge is the absence of a systematic and structured model for partnership management that supports sustainable internship programs. This study argues that by implementing an integrated partnership model, universities can address existing challenges and offer students higher-quality internship experiences. By contributing a more holistic partnership management model based on sound governance principles, this study is expected to serve as a practical reference for universities in managing partnerships to support MBKM (Communication-Based Small-Scale Enterprises) while strengthening long-term relationships with industry partners and the workplace.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research employs a descriptive qualitative approach with a case study method to provide in-depth descriptions of the application of the strategic partnership management model in implementing the Independent Campus (MBKM) internship program at Nahdlatul Ulama Sunan Giri University (UNUGIRI). This approach was chosen because it allows researchers to explore complex social and institutional phenomena in a contextual and natural manner, providing space to understand the dynamics of interactions between actors in strategic partnership management. With a case study approach, this research is expected to uncover partnership management practices and strategies at UNUGIRI, which can serve as a reference for developing better partnership models in the future.

This research was conducted at Nahdlatul Ulama Sunan Giri University (UNUGIRI), located in Bojonegoro Regency, East Java, Indonesia. UNUGIRI was chosen as the research location because it is one of the universities actively implementing the MBKM program, including off-campus internship programs, and has an extensive network of partnerships with various industry partners and local government institutions. Furthermore, UNUGIRI also has a dedicated institutional structure, such as the MBKM Implementation Unit and the Partnership Institute, which provide relevant empirical data for developing the strategic partnership management model. This location also provides a rich context regarding partnership management in the implementation of internship programs involving various external parties.

The data collection techniques employed in this study consisted of three main approaches. In-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with key informants directly involved in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of the MBKM program at UNUGIRI. The informants interviewed included university leaders, heads of MBKM implementation units or teams, field supervisors, representatives of external partners, and students participating in the MBKM internship program. Furthermore, participant observation was conducted during coordination activities between the university and its partners, as well as during student internships, to gain a deeper understanding of the dynamics of these interactions. The third technique was a documentation study, which involved collecting and analysing official documents, including internal campus policies related to MBKM, collaboration agreements, internship guidelines, activity reports, and program evaluations.

Data analysis in this study followed three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and verification of conclusions. During the data reduction stage, the researcher filtered data obtained from interviews and documents to extract information relevant to the research focus. Next, the reduced data was presented in narrative and tabular form for ease of understanding. Verification and conclusions were conducted by identifying patterns and relationships between variables and the principles underlying strategic partnership management at UNUGIRI. This process employed the interactive model of Miles and Huberman, which involves a cycle of data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and verification/conclusion, to ensure the quality and consistency of the analysis results.

To ensure the validity and reliability of the data, this study employed source triangulation techniques, comparing information from various informants and supporting documents. Furthermore, member checks were used to confirm the researcher's interpretations with informants, ensuring they aligned with the intent of the narratives conveyed by the informants. These techniques are crucial for maintaining the validity of the data obtained and ensuring that the research results reflect the existing reality and align with the perspectives of the informants involved in this study.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

Analysis of Higher Education Readiness in Establishing Strategic Partnerships

Universitas Nahdlatul Ulama Sunan Giri (UNUGIRI), grounded in Islamic values and local wisdom, has shown adaptability in implementing the Independent Learning Independent Campus (MBKM) policy. The university has established an MBKM Implementation Unit under the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs to coordinate study programs, students, and external partners. This unit marks a positive first step toward a more structured partnership management system. However, the readiness of UNUGIRI is not solely based on having a structural unit, but also on how well it operates, integrates functions, and is supported by formal policies and sufficient resources.

From interviews with campus officials and MBKM management lecturers, it was found that the process of mapping and exploring partners is still heavily dependent on personal networks. While this social capital is valuable, it lacks sustainability and a formal institutional system. Many study programs lack standard operating procedures (SOPs) for partnerships, resulting in ad-hoc and poorly documented cooperation. The absence of a partner database and irregularities in renewing cooperation agreements indicate that UNUGIRI is still in the developmental stage of establishing a sustainable strategic partnership system.

The human resources aspect is also crucial in this readiness analysis. Lecturers involved in MBKM often face challenges such as additional workload, lack of time, and insufficient technical training in partnership management and student mentoring. The lack of incentives or structured rewards for lecturers actively participating in MBKM further highlights the need for a clear reward system to support their efforts. This indicates that readiness extends beyond formal structures to encompass human resource commitment, which should be incentivised and supported by a robust system.

In terms of administrative readiness, UNUGIRI has started developing a reporting and documentation system for MBKM activities. However, data is still scattered across study programs and has not been integrated into a single campus digital platform. For example, internship reports lack standardisation, post-internship evaluations are irregular, and feedback from partners is not used for program improvement. These issues suggest that the university's information systems and data management require strengthening to ensure the sustainability of its strategic partnerships.

External partners have responded positively to UNUGIRI's MBKM program, but they have highlighted the need for improved communication, more precise mapping of student competencies, and well-defined roles during internships. Some partners feel underinformed about the MBKM concept, highlighting the need for universities to establish long-term professional communication with external partners. The university should focus not just on facilitating student placements but also on fostering stronger, clearer relationships with partners to ensure mutual benefits from the internship program.

In conclusion, UNUGIRI has made significant progress in establishing strategic partnerships through the MBKM program; however, several areas still

require improvement. These include enhancing the institutional management system, integrating data and documents, developing human resources for MBKM management, and improving communication strategies with external partners. The university must also adopt a new paradigm of collaborative higher education management to address the evolving needs of industries and students, ensuring that the MBKM internship program becomes a transformative learning experience for students while enhancing the university's position in the national education ecosystem.

The Importance of Strategic Partnerships in the MBKM Internship Program

The Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka Program (MBKM) is a revolutionary policy in the world of Indonesian higher education, providing students with the freedom to learn outside the campus and gain real-world experiences that are more contextual and relevant. Among the forms of MBKM implementation, the internship program is one of the most substantial activities because it directly connects students with the world of work. The existence of strategic partnerships between universities and the business world, industry, and government agencies is an essential element. Without the support of qualified external partners, the internship program will lose its practical meaning and become merely an administrative formality. Therefore, partnerships cannot be built haphazardly or on a temporary basis, but must be managed strategically and sustainably.

At Nahdlatul Ulama Sunan Giri University (UNUGIRI), the importance of establishing strategic partnerships is growing, as this university is situated within a local ecosystem that necessitates close collaboration between educational institutions, local governments, local business actors, and communities. UNUGIRI students, primarily from the Bojonegoro area and its surroundings, require a learning space that is not only based on campus theory but also offers field experiences relevant to local challenges. By establishing strategic partnerships with local companies, BUMDes, cooperatives, the Islamic banking sector, or socio-religious institutions, UNUGIRI can present internship programs that not only meet curriculum learning achievements but also foster the spirit of empowerment based on local wisdom. This presents an excellent opportunity for the campus to enhance its role as a catalyst for social and economic transformation at the regional level.

Strategic partnerships in internship programs are not only crucial for program sustainability but also for the reputation and credibility of educational institutions. Partners who are satisfied with the performance of interns will be more likely to open up job opportunities, expand collaboration networks, and even contribute to curriculum development based on industry needs. On the other hand, if partnerships are not managed professionally—for example, if students come without sufficient debriefing, no monitoring from supervisors, or no formal evaluation—then not only are students harmed, but the credibility of the campus also decreases. This is where the urgency of strategic partnership management becomes very clear: to maintain partner trust, ensure program quality, and instil a positive image for graduates in the eyes of the world of work.

Additionally, in the modern higher education landscape, the presence of strategic partnerships is a significant indicator in the assessment of institutional accreditation. National and international accreditation institutions assess the extent to which a university can establish cooperation that has a real impact on improving student competence and the quality of its graduates. UNUGIRI, as a developing campus, needs to realise that the competitiveness of the institution today is no longer measured only by the number of graduates produced, but by how strongly its graduates can be absorbed into the world of work and how actively the campus collaborates with external partners. In other words, strategic partnerships are not only a matter of implementing internships, but also part of the campus's grand strategy in building a competitive position at the regional and national levels.

This urgency is also strengthened by the fact that the world of work is currently becoming increasingly dynamic and changing rapidly, so universities are required to continually update their learning approaches through direct input from industry partners. A good strategic partnership opens up space for two-way dialogue between campuses and partners, allowing partners to provide input on the skills most needed and for campuses to adapt their curriculum to be more responsive to local realities. Without partnerships like this, colleges will struggle to break out of their academic shell and risk producing graduates who are irrelevant. Therefore, at UNUGIRI, building strategic and sustainable relationships with partners is a critical step in realising responsive and applicable education.

By considering all of the above aspects, it becomes clear that strategic partnerships are not just a complement to the MBKM program, but are the primary foundation that determines the quality of internship implementation. UNUGIRI must prioritise partnerships in its academic policies and institutional strategies. This step must be realised through the establishment of a strong, data-based partnership management system, having clear SOPs, and involving all internal campus stakeholders. Partnerships designed with a strategic approach will serve as a bridge between the campus world and the real world, creating a collaborative, relevant, and far-reaching learning ecosystem that benefits not only students but also the institution as a whole.

Ideal Model of Strategic Partnership for MBKM Internship Program

To strengthen the implementation of the MBKM program, UNUGIRI needs to develop an ideal strategic partnership model that aligns with the institution's characteristics, student needs, and local and national workforce dynamics. This model should be built on four pillars: planning, organising, implementation, and evaluation of sustainability. These pillars form an interconnected cycle, ensuring that the MBKM internship program operates effectively and offers mutual benefits for both students and external partners.

The first pillar, collaborative planning, involves mapping potential partners based on student needs, the relevance of learning outcomes, and program fields. Initial dialogue between the university and partners is essential to align expectations and define roles. The partnership plan should be formalised through documents like MoUs or MoAs, detailing technical flow, timeframes, success

indicators, and evaluation schemes, ensuring that internship programs are structured and productive.

The second pillar, institutional organisation, emphasises establishing an MBKM management unit, such as the MBKM Centre or Internship Coordination Unit, to handle administration, documentation, and communication with partners. This unit should have clearly defined roles and be supported by internal regulations and reporting systems. Cross-disciplinary collaboration between study programs will expand the university's network of strategic partners and enhance its negotiating power in the job market.

During the implementation phase, students must receive training in both technical and soft skills before commencing their internships. Regular monitoring, such as weekly reports, field visits, and digital communication, ensures that students and supervisors are aligned. It is essential to match student profiles with the partner's needs to maximise work effectiveness and productivity. Additionally, the campus should provide both technical and emotional support to help students navigate the challenges they face during their internships.

The evaluation and sustainability pillar focuses on gathering feedback from students, supervisors, and partners. UNUGIRI should establish a standardised evaluation system to assess internship outcomes, process dynamics, and partner satisfaction. Regular reflective meetings and joint training will strengthen long-term partnerships and foster continuous improvement for future internship programs, ensuring that the partnerships remain mutually beneficial.

Ultimately, the model underscores the importance of digitalisation and an inclusive partnership culture. UNUGIRI should develop a digital platform for tracking partners, student placements, and cooperation status, which will improve transparency and efficiency. The university must also uphold principles of justice, honesty, and cooperation in its partnerships, while preparing students with work ethics and social responsibility, ensuring that strategic partnerships are rooted in trust and collaborative learning. This dynamic model should be periodically reviewed to adapt to changes in MBKM regulations, industry demands, and student needs, ensuring the ongoing success of the internship program and contributing to the university's long-term development.



Figure 1. Ideal Model of Strategic Partnership

Obstacles and Challenges in Partnership Implementation

The implementation of strategic partnerships in the Independent Learning Independent Campus (MBKM) internship program at Nahdlatul Ulama Sunan Giri University (UNUGIRI) faces several fundamental obstacles related to institutional aspects, human resources, and cooperation mechanisms. One of the main challenges is the lack of a well-integrated and documented partnership management system. Most of the cooperation that has been established still relies on personal relationships between lecturers or informal networks, rather than systematic institutional databases. As a result, many partners have not been formally included in the campus cooperation tracking system, which has hindered the potential for long-term cooperation. In addition, the lack of standardisation in the format of cooperation documents (MoU/MoA), communication flows, and internship report results makes the administrative process feel inefficient and difficult to evaluate.

Another significant obstacle is the lack of training and technical debriefing for MBKM management lecturers and intern students. Field supervisors often do not receive specialised training on how to conduct internship assistance optimally, both from a technical perspective within the industry and pedagogical approaches. In fact, the role of lecturers is very central in bridging communication between campuses and partners. Likewise, many students admit that they lack the mental readiness and practical skills when entering the partner work environment. This happens because the debriefing materials provided are general and have not been adjusted to the specific needs of diverse industry partners. Without careful preparation, students tend to experience culture shock, lack confidence, and may struggle to carry out their internship duties properly.

From the external side, the challenges faced by UNUGIRI are related to the perception and readiness of partners. Some partners do not fully understand the concept of MBKM and consider the internship program to be equivalent to ordinary fieldwork practices, which typically last a short time and involve no significant responsibility. As a result, they do not provide special companions, do not provide clear work targets, or do not compile evaluation reports on students. This results in the quality of the student learning experience being highly dependent on personal initiative and informal guidance. Limited partner time and resources are also obstacles, especially in the MSME sector or non-profit institutions that lack a human resources team specialising in handling interns.

The lack of an optimal monitoring and evaluation system for implementing internships is a significant challenge to the sustainability of strategic partnerships. So far, the monitoring process for interns has been carried out manually and not routinely, depending on the availability of the supervisor's time and the readiness of partners to provide reports. This makes it difficult for the campus to obtain valid real-time data on student performance and program effectiveness. Additionally, the limited use of information technology in reporting and storing MBKM data creates a potential for loss of cooperation and difficulties in data-driven decision-making. Without a reliable reporting system, it is difficult for institutions to evaluate and improve the quality of existing cooperation.

The culture of internal organisations that are still administratively oriented and not fully collaborative is also a challenge in itself. Many study programs still consider MBKM as an additional burden rather than an integral part of the results-based learning process. Cross-unit coordination has not been carried out synergistically, and not all lecturers have seen the importance of building a network of cooperation with partners as part of their academic responsibilities. As a result, partnership management tends to be centralised on specific individuals or units only. To overcome this obstacle, it is necessary to change the managerial paradigm, increase partnership literacy, and encourage university leaders so that all campus elements feel that they have a role in the successful implementation of MBKM's strategic partnership.

Discussion

The research findings on the ideal model of strategic partnerships for the MBKM internship program at UNUGIRI demonstrate four main pillars: planning, organising, implementation, and sustainability evaluation. These pillars align with Etzioni's theory of complex organisations, which emphasises the importance of coordination within an institution to achieve collective goals (Manta & Palazzo, 2024; Tricomi et al., 2024). The study reveals that UNUGIRI's model effectively reinforces the concept of organisational coordination, further illustrating the significance of having a cohesive structure that supports partnerships across various campus units (Alam & Muchtar, 2025; Inayah, Kusumaningsih, & Nurkolis, 2025).

In terms of collaborative planning, the research indicates that UNUGIRI emphasises early dialogue and aligning perceptions with potential partners. This approach aligns with the principle of normative consensus, which emphasises that organisations require legitimacy and shared values to function effectively (Laux et al., 2024; Metz et al., 2023). UNUGIRI's focus on integrating these values into the partnership agreements – through documents like MoUs and MoAs containing success indicators – demonstrates a commitment not only to formal contractual agreements but also to collaborative values. This reflects Drucker's theory that modern organisations must prioritise the creation of shared values to foster effective partnerships (Jaworski & Cheung, 2023). The findings suggest that including partners in the early stages of planning ensures that the objectives of the internship program are clearly defined and mutually beneficial.

The organisational structure, which includes the creation of a dedicated MBKM Centre, aligns with Porck & van Knippenberg's view that organisations require clear, formal structures and role divisions for effective functioning (Porck & van Knippenberg, 2023). This approach goes beyond mere administrative organisation by strategically enhancing its bargaining power with partners through a coordinated MBKM unit. Moreover, the research expands on Etzioni's theory by adding an interdisciplinary element – emphasising collaboration across study programs, which strengthens the institution's position in building a broader and more effective network of partners. This interdisciplinary collaboration is a novel aspect of the approach, adding a layer of flexibility and adaptability that is not explicitly addressed, thereby enriching traditional organisational structure theory (Pacheco-Cubillos et al, 2024; Zhang et al., 2024)

During the implementation stage, students are prepared through soft skills training and routine monitoring, which aligns with Etzioni's instrumental dimension of organisations. The internship program is designed not only to meet campus needs but also to address the expectations of both students and external partners (Egart & Healy, 2023; Zhang et al., 2024). The research highlights the use of weekly reports and field visits as methods of systematic social control, reinforcing the idea of a structured organisation that moves members toward common goals (Orazani et al., 2023; Pianese et al., 2023). However, the study adds a new dimension by illustrating the role of supervising lecturers as mediators, which emphasises personal relationships in addition to formal processes. This enriches the concept of organisational structure, which primarily focuses on formal structures, by introducing an interpersonal dynamic that is essential for successful internship experiences (Ansari, 2025).

The evaluation and sustainability of the partnerships in this model align with the concept of an evaluative cycle, which ensures organisational legitimacy and adaptability to change. The inclusion of partners in the evaluation process strengthens the sense of shared ownership and collaboration, a practice that is crucial for maintaining the legitimacy and effectiveness of an organisation (George et al., 2024). By fostering reflective meetings and joint training, this approach ensures continuous improvement and long-term sustainability of partnerships. The evaluation is not merely a formality but a means to enhance the quality of the internship program and solidify long-term relationships with partners (Meinke et al., 2023).

In the context of Ki Hajar Dewantara's philosophy of the Tri Pusat Pendidikan, the model integrates academic values with social values by emphasising student development in real-world work environments. The study reveals that the MBKM program fosters character development through the emphasis on work ethics, social responsibility, and loyalty, which are central to Ki Hajar Dewantara's educational philosophy. Moreover, the integration of digitalisation into the partnership model, such as utilising digital dashboards for monitoring, demonstrates an adaptation to modern technological needs, further expanding Ki Hajar's ideas to meet the demands of 21st-century education. By bridging modern management theory with local educational philosophy, this model provides a contextualised and adaptive approach to strategic partnerships, making it both relevant and practical for today's dynamic higher education and workforce environments. This hybrid approach not only strengthens existing theoretical frameworks but also contributes to the development of a more comprehensive model of strategic partnership management in higher education.

CONCLUSION

The most significant finding of this study is the importance of establishing and managing structured and sustainable strategic partnerships in implementing the Independent Campus (MBKM) internship program at Nahdlatul Ulama Sunan Giri University (UNUGIRI). This study reveals that, although UNUGIRI already has a strong foundation for partnerships, several aspects still require improvement, including more integrated data and document management, enhanced training for MBKM lecturers, and strengthened communication with

external partners. The lesson from this study is that strategic partnerships are not solely dependent on administrative formalities but also require thorough planning, committed human resources, and a mutually beneficial partnership culture.

The strength of this paper lies in its contribution to the development of a holistic and systematic strategic partnership model for the MBKM program, integrating organisational management theory and local educational philosophies, such as the thoughts of Ki Hajar Dewantara. This research provides insights into how universities can design and manage partnerships to create relevant and adaptive learning experiences for students. However, this study has limitations, particularly the limited location of UNUGIRI, so the results cannot necessarily be generalised to all universities in Indonesia. For future research, the scope of locations can be expanded, and the role of digital technology in strengthening strategic partnerships in the MBKM program can be studied in more depth.

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