

**THE INDONESIAN INTERNATIONAL STUDENT MOBILITY AWARDS (IISMA)
PROGRAMME OF THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, CULTURE, RESEARCH, AND
TECHNOLOGY AT POLITEKNIK NEGERI PONTIANAK**

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the implementation of the Indonesian International Student Mobility Awards (IISMA) programme at Politeknik Negeri Pontianak (Polnep) as part of Indonesia's national strategy to internationalise vocational higher education. The research addresses the issue of suboptimal implementation at the institutional level, despite strong support from national policies such as Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM). The study aims to describe how IISMA is implemented at Polnep, to identify the key challenges faced during its execution, and to propose alternative strategies for enhancing its effectiveness. Employing a qualitative descriptive approach, data were collected through interviews with three key informants, Head of International Affairs Office, a representative from the Host University, and a student awardee, as well as through document analysis. The findings reveal that several obstacles hinder the programme's effective implementation, including inconsistent comprehension of policies across departments, one-way communication practices, limited human resources, and the absence of an integrated bureaucratic framework. Moreover, overlapping authority and unclear division of responsibilities among units further impede internal coordination. In response to these challenges, this study proposes several strategic recommendations, including the reinforcement of inter-unit coordination, the development of internal guidelines for credit transfer, the establishment of structured mentoring systems, and the formation of a dedicated team to manage international mobility programmes. These measures are expected to enhance the effectiveness, fairness, and sustainability of IISMA implementation at Polnep, supporting broader efforts to strengthen the internationalisation of Indonesia's vocational education sector.

Keywords: Policy Implementation; IISMA; Vocational Higher Education

A. INTRODUCTION

The Indonesian International Student Mobility Awards (IISMA) is a programme designed by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology (Kemendikbudristek) as part of its efforts to internationalise higher education. Announced in 2021, IISMA aims to promote the internationalisation of higher education in Indonesia by providing Indonesian students with the opportunity to participate in student exchange programmes. The focus is not only on enhancing students' academic competencies but also on developing cross cultural skills, adaptability in an

international environment, and global networks strategic steps in preparing Indonesian youth to compete on the global stage.

In the era of globalisation, mastering global competencies such as intercultural communication, language proficiency, and adaptability has become increasingly vital for Indonesian students to remain competitive in the international job market. Through the IISMA programme, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology provides students with the opportunity to engage directly in an international academic environment. This enables

students to develop critical thinking skills, cross cultural communication skills, and adaptability to new environments. Additionally, the programme provides an opportunity for students to introduce Indonesian culture to the global community, making it strategic tool for cultural diplomacy.

Politeknik Negeri Pontianak, as one of the vocational higher education institutions in West Kalimantan, has participated in the IISMA programme since its inception. Established in 1987, Politeknik Negeri Pontianak aspires to position itself as a distinguished centre of excellence in higher education, committed to equipping graduates knowledge, skills, and professionalism required to succeed in a highly competitive environment. The institution's participation in IISMA reflects its commitment to supporting the government's programme to improve the quality of higher education, particularly in the vocational field.

Despite the many opportunities provided by the government, student participation in the IISMA programme at Politeknik Negeri Pontianak remains relatively low. In 2022, the ISMA programme attracted nine applicants, resulting in four students being awardees. The following year, in 2023, ten students submitted applications, with four students succeeding as awardees. Out of a total of 2,523 students, only 80 students participated in the initial screening phase. This situation highlights both the challenges in preparation and the untapped potential of students who have the capability to succeed in the global arena if given stronger guidance and motivation.

Drawing from the author's personal experience as an IISMA awardee, this study recognises the need to explore factors influencing student participation. Particular attention is given to the effectiveness of outreach efforts, academic and language preparedness, and institutional support systems. The aim is to examine the implementation of the IISMA programme at Politeknik Negeri Pontianak, to identify challenges encountered, and to propose strategies to enhance its accessibility and overall success.

The implementation of the IISMA programme can be analysed using the theory of policy implementation developed by Edward III, which identifies four key variables that influence successful implementation: communication, resources, implementer attitude, and bureaucratic structure. In addition, the theory of Sunggono provides a complementary framework by identifying common barriers to policy execution, such as unclear policy content, lack of information, and limited stakeholder support. Furthermore, Teichler's concept of higher education internationalisation, which includes dimensions such as international cooperation, mobility, and knowledge transfer, serves as a foundation for understanding how programmes like IISMA contribute to global competence development.

B. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach. Research methods are data collection steps used by writers in helping to find information or data for research writing. According to Abubakar (2020:1), "The research method is an

effort to investigate and explore a problem by using scientific work methods carefully and thoroughly to collect, process, analyse data and draw conclusions systematically and objectively to solve a problem or test a hypothesis to obtain knowledge that is useful for human life."

In this study, data were collected using interviews and documentation. According to Esteborg in Sugiyono (2020:14), "An interview is a meeting of two people to exchange information and ideas through questions and answers, so that meaning can be contributed to a certain topic." Based on the theories presented by experts, the author concludes that an interview is a form of two-way communication conducted directly between the interviewer and the interviewee to obtain detailed information, perspectives, or experiences. In addition, documentation was used to collect supporting evidence such as images, archives, or reports relevant to the research topic.

The author opted to use the structured interview method to identify obstacles and gather more detailed information from respondents. Supporting tools such as interview guidelines and a laptop unit were used to record and transcribe interview results, while mobile phones were used for documentation purposes. In this data collection process, three key informants were selected purposively. Informant 1 is the Head of the International Affairs Office at Politeknik Negeri Pontianak, who plays a significant role in the implementation of the IISMA programme at the institution. Informant 2 is the supervisor at the Host University, who holds responsibility for supporting and mentoring students during the

programme abroad. Informant 3 is a 2024 IISMA awardee alumnus at Ulsan College in South Korea, who participated directly in the programme and provided contextual and up to date insights regarding its implementation.

The data collected were presented descriptively and analysed qualitatively. According to Sugiyono (2020), "Qualitative data analysis is a way of understanding and organising data that is not in the form of numbers, such as interviews or observations. The goal is to look for patterns, themes, or relationships that can be used to understand phenomena more deeply." In this study, the data were analysed based on Edward III's policy implementation model, which includes four variables: communication, resources, implementer attitude, and bureaucratic structure. This theoretical framework guided the interpretation of the findings.

C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this research highlight several dimensions that influence the implementation of the IISMA programme at Politeknik Negeri Pontianak. The interpretation of the data is guided by Edward III's model of policy implementation, complemented by Sunggono's framework of policy barriers. Together, these perspectives provide a comprehensive understanding of how communication, resources, implementer commitment, and bureaucratic structure affect the programme's overall effectiveness.

This section presents the findings derived from the research conducted through in-depth

interviews and document analysis, in accordance with the objectives formulated earlier. The data collected have been analysed using a descriptive-qualitative approach and are presented in a structured narrative format, aligned with the three primary objectives of the study, namely: (1) how the IISMA programme is implemented at Politeknik Negeri Pontianak, (2) what obstacles are encountered during the implementation, and (3) what solutions can be proposed to overcome the challenges faced.

First, in terms of communication based on the findings from interviews with three key informants, the communication process at Politeknik Negeri Pontianak regarding the IISMA programme has been carried out through various channels, such as socialisation sessions, campus announcements, and social media. However, the dissemination of information has not yet reached all students evenly. Students who already have an interest in international programmes tend to be more responsive, while many others remain unaware or lack the motivation to explore further. This indicates that communication remains largely passive and lacks systematic mentoring or follow-up. In contrast, communication from the Host University is more structured and consistent, conducted through emails, online orientation sessions, and continuous supervision. This approach demonstrates how effective, two way communication contributes to smoother programme implementation and better student adaptation. The comparison shows that communication effectiveness is determined not only by the frequency of information dissemination

but also by the clarity, accessibility, and feedback mechanisms.

Second, according to Edward III's framework, adequate resources are crucial for successful policy implementation. In the context of IISMA, funding is fully provided by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, covering tuition, travel, insurance, and living allowances. In addition, Polnep supports students by offering free TOEIC tests and administrative assistance. However, these efforts rely heavily on individual initiatives, particularly from the Head of the International Office, rather than an institutionalised system. This dependency creates sustainability risks when personnel changes occur. Informants also revealed that academic calendar overlaps and limited understanding of credit transfer policies remain challenges. Although government regulations support credit recognition, some departments at Polnep have not fully implemented these provisions. In contrast, host universities abroad demonstrate higher readiness, with systematic support for academic mentoring and welfare services. Thus, while material resources are sufficient, institutional and human resources at Polnep still need improvement for more effective programme delivery.

Third, from the implementer's perspective the disposition of implementers greatly affects the programme's success. Findings show that the main implementer at Politeknik Negeri Pontianak demonstrates a high level of commitment and enthusiasm, actively motivating students and facilitating their preparation. However, this

dedication is still personal and not yet embedded institutionally. Some staff and lecturers remain passive, viewing IISMA as an additional task rather than a shared responsibility. At the Host University, implementers show professionalism and provide continuous academic and non-academic support through tutors and mentoring teams. From the student perspective, although some assistance was provided, many preparatory stages such as essay writing and interview practice were handled independently. This highlights the need for Polnep to institutionalise mentoring systems so that guidance becomes systematic and accessible to all students.

Lastly, The bureaucratic structure at Politeknik Negeri Pontianak remains centralised within the International Office, causing administrative processes to be time-consuming and inefficient. Ideally, the IISMA programme should involve collaboration between departments, student affairs, and academic divisions. However, weak coordination and the absence of clear Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) result in delays and confusion, especially in credit recognition and document approval. On the other hand, the Host University maintains a more standardised administrative system, offering comprehensive orientation, academic monitoring, and clear procedures. This contrast illustrates that effective bureaucratic systems significantly improve the quality and consistency of programme implementation. Therefore, Polnep needs to strengthen cross-unit cooperation, formalise SOPs, and establish an institutional

framework that supports international mobility programmes sustainably.

In addition to the four key variables of policy implementation proposed by Edward III, this study also refers to the framework of policy implementation barriers developed by Sunggono (in Handani & Frinaldi, 2020:78). This framework identifies several inhibiting factors, such as unclear policy content, lack of information, insufficient stakeholder support, and unclear division of duties. These elements are used to analyse the challenges encountered during the implementation of the IISMA programme at Politeknik Negeri Pontianak.

Several obstacles hinder the optimal implementation of IISMA at Politeknik Negeri Pontianak. These include unclear policy content, inconsistent understanding of credit transfer mechanisms, lack of accessible information for students, and insufficient internal support from lecturers and departments. The absence of a well-defined division of duties and authority has also caused administrative delays. As a result, most responsibilities fall solely on the International Office, creating an unbalanced workload.

Addressing these challenges requires stronger internal coordination, the development of standardised guidelines, and broader involvement from academic departments. Effective communication, policy internalisation, and a shared institutional commitment are key to ensuring that IISMA contributes meaningfully to the internationalisation of vocational higher education.

D. CONCLUSION

The implementation of the IISMA programme at Politeknik Negeri Pontianak can be considered partially successful. The institution has made notable progress in promoting student mobility and providing administrative support, demonstrating its alignment with the national agenda of internationalising vocational education. However, the success achieved thus far remains limited and fragile, as key challenges persist in four critical areas: communication, resources, implementer commitment, and bureaucratic structure. The programme's effectiveness is hindered by one-way information dissemination, over-reliance on a small number of personnel, inconsistent internal coordination, and the absence of integrated operational procedures. Thus, while the programme has produced some positive outcomes, its long-term sustainability and broader impact depend on the institution's ability to address these structural weaknesses through strategic reforms.

Obstacles in implementing the IISMA programme at Politeknik Negeri Pontianak largely stem from internal institutional issues. Inconsistent information flow among students and departments leads to uneven understanding of credit transfers and academic recognition. Support from lecturers and study programmes is inconsistent, leaving many students without adequate guidance. The absence of clear task division and standardised procedures hampers administrative efficiency.

To overcome these challenges, the study proposes three key strategies: improving inclusive

and consistent information dissemination, harmonising credit recognition across departments, and strengthening institutional resources through dedicated staff and clear operational guidelines. These steps are essential to ensure that the IISMA programme not only continues but also contributes meaningfully to the broader goals of higher education internationalisation in Indonesia.

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