

# THE ACTUALIZATION OF 'FREEDOM TO LEARN' INDEPENDENT CAMPUS PROGRAM AS A STRATEGY TO ENHANCE COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION TO BUILD VILLAGES

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**Abstract:** This study investigates the involvement and impact of students and community in MBKM projects for rural development. Using a qualitative descriptive methodology, data was collected from community members, local authorities, and pertinent literature at a rural in Gorontalo District Region, Indonesia, through observations, interviews, and documentation, based on empirical research. The findings emphasize the cooperative endeavour between students and the community, resulting in a wide range of educational, cultural, religious, and youth development activities that improve village governance and the overall quality of life. This study offers significant findings for scholars and professionals, providing direction for comprehensive and enduring development initiatives.

Keywords: community education; MBKM; rural development.

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# Introduction

The increasingly powerful and rapid development of science and technology has significantly impacted progress and changes in the standard of living and livelihood of the people of the nation in a particular country. It is necessary to have the ability to adapt to the conditions of changes, potentials, and characteristics of the community so that they can survive while making consistent efforts to follow their identity through a current progressive, sustainable development movement. The phenomenon, among other things, is that more and more jobs are being lost at the same time that various new jobs are developing that utilize technological devices. This condition shows and makes us aware that there is a paradigm shift. Gradually human labor can soon be replaced by machines. In responding to the determinants of change referred to, it is necessary to design and program efforts to improve the quality of human resources who are competent, superior, and competitive, following the needs, dynamics of change, and demands of the times. One of the strategic development sectors as a priority is education because education is a potential investment in the future that has many positive impacts on change for oneself, others, and the interests of the nation and state (Yanuarsari et al., 2021).

According to Survadi, adapted by Satiti (2019), three primary considerations for the education sector as a long-term investment priority exist. First, education is a means for economic development, not just economic growth. Modern education management says that one of the five functions of education is a technical-economic function both at the individual and global levels. The technical-economic part refers to the contribution of education to economic development. Generally, it is proven that the more educated a person is, the higher his income level will be. Second, investment in education provides a higher rate of return than physical investment in other fields. The return value of an education means comparing the total costs incurred to finance education with the total income that will be obtained after a person graduates and enters the world of work. Third, investment in education has many functions apart from technical-economic functions, namely social-human, political, cultural, and educational functions. The social-human function refers to the contribution of education to the development of human qualities and social relations at various levels of different social institutions in society.

In another context, through various programs that have been, are being, and will even be developed with a focus on village-based activities, this will also influence the movement of the socio-economic dynamics of the community in the village to further improve itself in developing the potential of natural and human resources as essential assets to enhance welfare of villagers. In order to support the improvement of the quality of life and welfare of the community, efforts based on the education system are needed for the community because such an approach is a good and meaningful endeavor as well as an ongoing concern for changing their life behavior so that they have economic resilience based on supportive environmental conditions and have an impact on increasing income and welfare of the people (Isa & Zubaedi, 2022). Additionally, Bukhori (as cited from Dwiningrum, 2021) argues that a healthy education system should be able to understand its era and try to meet the demands of that era, including the changes in the times to come.

The national development paradigm that makes the village a potential sector in the development movement is a strategic and even productive effort. This paradigm is based on the consideration that the village is the basis for implementation and the target of various development program objectives that place the village as the subject of development actors (Law Number 6 of 2014). Now villages and their communities with suitable organizational arrangements have complete discretion to manage and carry out village development. Aside from other resources and potential in the village, the capital is supplemented by a village fund allocation policy, which is also relatively adequate to support the village development movement.

Understanding that economic, social, and cultural changes continue to accelerate in the dynamics of village development, higher education institutions as educational development institutions and modernization of progressive changes should be responsive in responding to this and transform learning to equip and prepare graduates who are superior, competent, cultured and capable to face the challenges of the times.

Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia Number 3 of 2020 concerning National Higher Education Standards regulates efforts to improve the quality of learning and tertiary graduates. The Freedom to Learn Independent Campus programs initiated by Minister Nadiem Anwar Makarim basically respond to the transformation of the quality of learning. Another substance invites higher education stakeholders to synergistically build a strategic plan to prepare student competencies in a mature way to be better prepared to face the challenges of the times.

According to Rodivah (2021), the Freedom to Learn Independent Campus (MBKM) program is one of the innovations to accelerate the development of human resource quality, character, and noble character because, through this program, it is hoped that both students and lecturers will be able to have a good experience which in turn will enrich their knowledge, skills and attitudes, the advantages of character accompany networks. Etymologically there is an essential meaning in "Freedom to Learn" and "Independent Campus". First, the concept of independent learning implies independence in thinking. Educators must initiate the essence of freedom of thought. This view is an attempt to appreciate changes in learning in educational institutions, both in primary, secondary, and tertiary schools. Second, the independent campus is part of the separate learning policy, which provides a vast space for students to hone their potential and abilities according to their talents and interests by going directly into the world of work as preparation for future careers. The MBKM program offers programs that students can carry out outside their home campus, through apprenticeships/work practices, village projects, teaching at schools, student exchanges, research/research, entrepreneurial activities, independent studies/projects and humanitarian projects.

The project to build a village is one of the programs from the Freedom to Learn Independent Campus (MBKM). In the constellation of the national development movement, the village plays a vital role, because the village is the lowest government structure of the national government system. Law Number 6 from 2014 mandates that village development aims to improve the welfare of village communities and the quality of human life. The program's priority targets focus on accelerating poverty alleviation through basic meeting needs, developing adequate village facilities and infrastructure, developing creative economic potential based on local excellence, and using natural resources and the environment sustainably. Based on regulations and policies, village development activities are carried out through two integrated approaches, namely "village builds and builds villages," both of which are integrated into village development planning. The Village Law opens village autonomy in the decentralization process of development centered on village government (Yanuarsari R. et al., 2021).

The paradigm of developing village development currently provides broad and adequate space for village communities to enable themselves to become empowered to participate in the development process. According to Sumardjo and Saharudin (as cited from Isa & Anu, 2021) that community participation is necessary because participation means: (1) improving program success is guaranteed, focused and faster; (2) having closer understanding between planners, program managers and the needs of the target group; (3) as a means to foster productive community skills, kinship, and selfconfidence; and (4) achieving the target of positive participation as a characteristic of an advanced, independent and modern society.

Kartasasmita (Surahmi & Farid, 2018) explains empirical studies that the phenomenon of lack of success in achieving development goals is due to the lack of community participation. Even in certain cases, the people can often hinder development activities. Strategies in building community participation are not only essential to support development activities by the government, but so that the community takes part in activities they can carry out themselves. Therefore, stakeholders at all levels of development leadership are responsible for guiding, mobilizing, and creating a conducive climate for community development activities.

Active involvement, or community participation, means taking part in the stages of determining direction and/or goals, regulations, policies and development strategies carried out together with the government. Another meaning of involvement is defined as bearing the burden and responsibility of carrying out development, maintaining and utilizing development results as much as possible for people's lives equitably and socially. Commitment and support from all elements of society for the implementation of development are one of the factors that can determine the success and failure of each development program and activity. Therefore, support for developing community participation should always be well maintained and paid attention to and endeavored to exist in every space and time as well as the stages of the development activity itself. This study starts from the problem of whether the actualization of the Freedom to Learn Independent Campus (MBKM) program can become a participatory community strategy to develop villages. From the literature study, data was obtained that studies on implementing MBKM in the context of village-building activities and community education

had not been studied relatively previously. It was believed that many factors contributed to optimizing community participation strategies to build villages.

This study focused on examining aspects, namely: the characteristics of population data, MBKM programs, and activities to build villages, forms of student and community participation in MBKM activities to build villages, as well as the achievements of the MBKM program to build villages in one of the village areas in the Gorontalo Regency area. The target of this study is as reference material that can be used both for the development of scientific studies, as input for stakeholders and practitioners engaged in community empowerment to carry out movements to enable and foster communities in an integrated and sustainable manner in improving the quality of life through the activities of the MBKM Developing Villages Program which in turn beneficial for the village community.

# Method

The approach used in this research is a qualitative descriptive type with a phenomenological formula that refers to an empirical study of a learning program as a participatory strategy for empowering communities in building their villages. This approach deals with real phenomena or studies of visible symptoms accompanied by the researcher's awareness according to the study's focus. The application of the phenomenological approach focuses on the activities of the MBKM program, which is carried out in one of the village areas in the Gorontalo Regency Region. This is in line with Sugiyono's formula (2018) that qualitative research is a research method used to examine the conditions of natural objects.

The data used in this research comes from primary and secondary data. Primary data sources come from community informants, local government, and theoretical sources, namely a number of literatures related to the study's problem. Other secondary sources are data and information, as well as documents obtained from the community. Data collection techniques were through in-depth interviews, observation, and document review. The data analysis technique uses the Miles and Hubermen interactive formula (Sugiyono, 2018) dividing three stages in analyzing the research: data reduction, data presentation and drawing conclusions. Miles and Hubermen divide the stages in analyzing qualitative research as shown in the following figure:

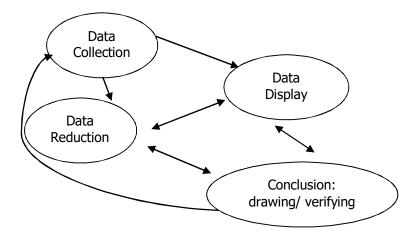


Figure 1. Data Analysis Models

To obtain the level of validity of the data, four main standards or criteria are carried out, namely (1) credibility standards; (2) transferability standards; (3) dependability standards; and (4) confirmability standards.

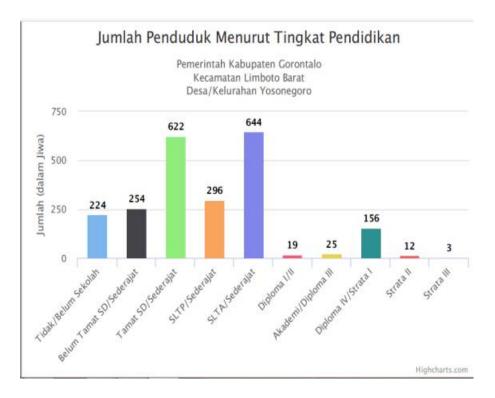
### **Result and Discussion**

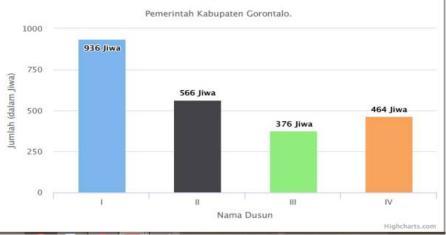
#### Result

As stated in the previous description, national development activities focus on village-based activities. This national agenda will also influence the movement of the socio-economic dynamics of the community in the village, so that they can further improve themselves in developing the potential of natural and human resources as essential assets to enhance the welfare of rural communities. In order to support the improvement of the quality of life and the interest of the community, efforts based on education are needed because such an approach is a good and meaningful endeavor as well as an ongoing concern for changing life behavior. The Freedom to Learn and Independent Campus (MBKM) program, as a national policy of the Ministry of Education and Culture, is one of the dimensions of its activities to build villages. Implementing MBKM programs and activities facilitated by the government through student program intervention directly influences life behavior, especially community participation in developing their village.

From the implementation of the MBKM program to build villages, the findings of the research data are described, including data characteristics of villagers, the realization of the MBKM program to build villages, forms of student and community collaboration in the MBKM program, as well as data on the achievements of the MBKM program to build villages.

### Figure 1-3. Data on Population Characteristics of MBKM Locations

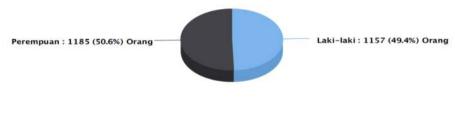




#### Jumlah Penduduk Desa Yosonegoro – Kecamatan Limboto Barat

#### Jumlah Penduduk Berdasarkan Jenis Kelamin

Pemerintah Kabupaten Gorontalo Kecamatan Limboto Barat Desa/Kelurahan Yosonegoro



Highcharts.com

The data presented above can explain the characteristics of the population according to gender composition, the distribution of communities according to the village or neighborhood, and what is very important is the education level of the people. From the design of the village population according to gender, there were 1185 women (50.6%) and 1157 men (49.4%). The population distribution data by village community

is mostly in hamlets I and II, while hamlets III and IV are relatively small compared to the previous hamlets. Population data by level of education, that residents who do not/have not attended school, have not completed SD/equivalent are 478 people (20.41%), have completed SD 622 people, SLP/equivalent 296 people (39.19%), SLTA/equivalent 644 people (27.49%)), diploma I, II and III have 44 people (1.87%) Diploma IV/S1, Bachelor degree 156 people (6.66%), Master degree (S2) 12 people (0.51%) and Doctorate (S3) 3 people (0.12%). From this data it can be stated that efforts still need to be made to improve the quality of education for the population in the village because some residents have not had primary education (SD). Residents with basic education qualifications are relatively low in number. Even high school/equivalent education qualifications, Diploma, Bachelor, Master, and Doctorate still need improvement in various strategic programs to develop the quality of human resources, one of which is with the priority program of Freedom to Learn Independent Campus learning with thematic build a village.

No.	Types of Programs	Participant Characters	Number of People	Execution Time
1.	Updating of Village Population Data	Village Officials and Students	17	May - June 2022
2.	Organizational Strengthening and Youth Organization Programs	Management and Members of Karang Taruna	12	June - July 2022
3.	Construction of Village Facilities: village boundaries, gates and trash cans	Students and Youth	20	June - July 2022
4.	Reading and Writing Guidance	Elementary students	20	July 2022
5	Teaching in schools	Elementary students	30	July 2022
6.	Workshop on Strengthening Scientific Writing Competency for Elementary School Teachers	Elementary teachers	25	July 2022
7.	Creating Learning Media	University students	15	June - July 2022
8.	National Webinar	Student and Teacher	100	July 2022
9.	Development of Cultural and Religious Activities for Youth	Youngster	25	July – August 2022
10	Art Sports Development and productive skills for youth	Youngster	30	August - September 2022

Table 1. Data on MBKM Activities Building Villages.

The MBKM program with the theme of building villages as a component of MBKM activities has shown its impact on the continuity of various programs and activities in the village. The intended activities include updating population data, organizational strengthening and fostering youth organizations, making village community public service facilities, reading and writing guidance, teaching in elementary schools (SD), workshops on strengthening the competence of writing scientific papers for elementary teachers and developing learning media. National Education Webinars, fostering cultural and religious activities for youth and artistic sports and productive skills for youth. These programs have involved community components as activity participants, students, village officials, teachers and elementary school students, youth committee members, and village youth. The implementation of these various activities took place over a period of 5 (five) months, from May to September 2022.

No.	Program Update	Form of Participation	Other information
1.	Education Program	Data identification activities,	Development and
	Strengthening	program planning and facilitation	Governance
		of the implementation of	
		educational activities.	
2.	Village Administration	Staff assistance in data updating,	Governance and
		verification, data analysis and	Development
		visualization activities as well as	
		socialization of village	
		development programs.	
3.	Cultural and Religious	Socialization and coaching	Social Society
	Development	activities, cultural preservation	
		and strengthening of religious	
		programs	
4.	Organizational	Strengthening the organization	Development and
	Strengthening and Youth	and active participation of youth	Social Community
	Organization Programs	both in the planning,	
		implementation, monitoring and	
		evaluation stages of the youth	
		youth program	
5.	Sports and Arts	Actualization of talent	Development and
	Development and youth	development activities for youth	Social Community
	productive skills	interests in sports and arts as well	
		as development of potential	
		productive skills for youth	

 Table 2. Data on Forms of Student and Community Participation in the MBKM Program

NT.	A	December A.1.	
No.	Activities	Program Achievements	
1.	Education Program Strengthening	<ul><li>a) Increased public understanding of the importance of developing quality education for self-development and quality of life.</li><li>b) Increased the more optimal level of community participation to take part in educational activities, especially among the younger generation.</li></ul>	
2.	Village Administration	<ul> <li>a) Educating the community to be able to manage the potential resources in the village to support government, development and social activities in the village.</li> <li>b) Growing public awareness that governance and full development really need to involve active, productive and beneficial community participation.</li> </ul>	
3.	Pembinaan Budaya dan Keagamaan	<ul><li>a) Provided a broad space for the community to actively participate in various efforts to preserve and develop regional cultural assets to support national culture</li><li>b) Increased productive and useful activities, especially related to religious development for the community and the village's younger generation, as an important pillar in supporting the village development movement.</li></ul>	
4.	Organizational Strengthening and Youth Organization Programs	<ul><li>a) Increased awareness of youth to organize as a forum for developing potential resources needed for future life.</li><li>b) Used youth organizations a part of developing skills that are economically productive and useful</li></ul>	
5.	Sports and Arts Development as well as youth productive skills	<ul> <li>a) The increasing enthusiasm of the youth to be active in sports and arts coaching activities as an effort to ward off negative influences on the potential of the youth.</li> <li>b) As a venue for strategic coaching to develop talents, interests possessed by youth to be further used as a mapping of achievements based on the types of sports and arts and the skills, they are involved in. Fostering the competence of productive skills and the creative economy of youth according to the resources available in the village.</li> </ul>	

#### Table 3. MBKM Program Achievement Data for Building Villages.

Based on tables 2 and 3, it can be explained that the MBKM program has actualized the development of cooperation between students and the community in the form of activities to strengthen educational programs, village government, cultural and religious development, organizational strengthening and youth programs as well as coaching sports, arts and the development of productive youth skills. The five programs implemented in the MBKM activities have supported improving the performance and quality of village development, including village government, village development, and social community development. Another important aspect is that implementing the MBKM program has facilitated increased community participation in village development movements and activities. The participatory characteristics referred to include: (1) Increasing public understanding of the importance of developing quality education for self-development and quality of life, (2) Growing public awareness that governance and development really need to involve active, productive, and beneficial community participation, (3) Providing a broad space for the community to actively participate in various efforts to preserve and develop regional cultural assets to support national culture, (4) Increasing youth awareness to organize as a forum for developing potential resources needed for future life, (5) The increasing enthusiasm of the youth to be active in sports and arts development activities as an effort to ward off negative influences on the potential of the youth, except for fostering the competence of productive skills and the creative economy of youth according to the resources available in the village.

## Discussion

The research findings show that in fact the MBKM program is a village building project that can encourage and develop active community participation in building their villages. On another dimension, the creation of empowerment potential in the context of village building projects can facilitate community members together on a common interest to be able to identify various problems, find appropriate alternative solutions based on the characteristics and potential that exists in the village to be further utilized in accelerating the achievement of village development goals. In the project to build a component village, students can participate in the empowerment process by being involved in socializing the urgency of participation in the implementation of the village management system, both through the village government and the community. The target of the MBKM program is through the project to build villages so that the presence of students can gain experience and competence in the form of knowledge, skills, and attitudes as valuable and useful capital in the process of future human development.

MBKM activities at the service location are helpful so that students can understand, live, and discover directly as an implementation of the material studied in lectures so that the knowledge learned is theoretical and contextual with what is found in the community environment. In the operational activities of the MBKM students apply their knowledge, experience and mental attitude in natural situations which will ultimately benefit them after graduating from campus to serve based on their passion and scientific field. In this context, universities are at the forefront, playing a vital role in solving various social problems such as natural disasters, social conflicts, and everyday problems in society (Baharuddin, 2021).

In addition, for tertiary institutions, implementing MBKM can be a forum for establishing cooperation and partnerships with the role of strategic planning and management consultants for village development as well as being an effort to improve the quality of government, development and social performance in villages. This mechanism can benefit the various parties involved, including consultants and village development planners who receive student assistance. Universities have the opportunity to apply knowledge, research, community service, and other productive activities. On the other hand, students can gain experience and productive skills that means that he did not get while studying in college (Caritra, 2020).

Through the MBKM program basically, the local government also indirectly benefits because in the process it involves experts, researchers and academics who are qualified in their scientific fields. In other words, various village development agendas will be more effective and efficient, so it is expected to significantly accelerate the realization of productive and independent villages in Indonesia.

The research findings show that community participation is the role of a person or group of people in identifying problems, formulating problems, and providing alternative solutions through thought, expertise, time, and capital to be used in achieving the goals of development programs implemented by the government. As a goal, participation produces empowerment. That is, everyone has the right to express their aspirations and opinions as an alternative to making decisions that affect their lives. In an alternative form, participation is also interpreted as a mean to achieve efficiency in managing programs and activities to implement a policy product.

In the study of the ontology of community education, the dimensions of community participation are the rights and obligations of a citizen to make a real contribution to achieving goals for the common good. Participation can be in the form of mental and emotional as well as physical involvement in using all the abilities they have, both their potential and initiative, as well as productive and beneficial activities for other parties as a consequence of involvement. In the context of the general implementation of development policies, the dimension of participation based on mental attitudes and emotions is called autonomous participation. In contrast, participation that is encouraged by force can be called mobilization.

Participation is the potential of a person or group to contribute or support activities following common goals and agreements based on volunteerism so that a sense of shared responsibility for the interests of the group or organization grows. Participation is a cooperation between the people and the government in planning, organizing activities and implementing them, preserving and maintaining the results of development. Participation as a two-way communication process takes place continuously to strengthen mutual understanding agreements that are implemented in concrete actions in a particular program or activity. Participation means the participation of a person or group of people in the development process either in the form of ideas, ideas, and statements (non-physical) or in other forms of activity (physical) by contributing labor, time, expertise, capital, and or material, and taking part in utilizing and enjoy the fruits of development (Muchlisin, 2020).

From a societal epistemological perspective, it is argued that mobilizing community participation is essential for supporting development activities by the government, but also for the community to play a more significant role in activities that are productive and beneficial to themselves. In other words, it is an important task for stakeholders, including academics, to guide, mobilize and create a climate that supports community development activities (Surahmi & Farid, 2018).

The activeness and synergy of stakeholders and academics in the synergy of MBKM activities in village building projects should be accompanied by efforts to increase the role of the community in village development activities as a means of forming sustainable community empowerment. This act is intended so that the community can be actively involved in the process and results of development because with the community's support and involvement, there will be more effectiveness in development activities. It is in this context that it can be argued that the MBKM program with the thematic building of villages has directly had a significant impact on the formation of active community participation in building their villages. Thus, the actualization of the MBKM program has become one of the community's participatory strategies for building villages.

# Conclusion

Government policies through the Ministry of Education and Culture with the MBKM program in tertiary institutions have received a significant response, especially in implementing village project programs in developing community participation in village development. The implementation of the MBKM program for village building projects is able to mobilize community members to take part in every stage of village development activity, from identifying problems, planning and organizing alternative solutions to problems, and finding the right solutions to then be utilized in building according to the characteristics and potential of the village. In other aspects, through the MBKM program, students can participate in the empowerment process by being involved in the management process of strengthening village administration, community social development, and public governance in the village. This involvement is solely an effort to facilitate learning experiences for students to live in a community environment as one of the targets of the MBKM program policy.

The implementation of the Freedom to Learn Independent Campus program has a role in fostering synergetic cooperation between students and the community in the form of activities to strengthen education programs, village government, cultural and religious development, organizational strengthening of the Karangtaruna program as well as coaching sports, the arts and developing productive youth skills. The five programs implemented in the MBKM activities also support improving the quality of village development performance, including village government, village development, and social community development. Another important aspect is that implementing the MBKM program has facilitated increased community participation in village development activities. The existence and contribution of the MBKM program through the village building project program, in turn, is one of the community's participatory strategies to build their village.

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The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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