

# The Development of Vocational Village Concept Based on Local Wisdom and Inclusiveness in North Aceh

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## ABSTRACT

This study aimed to develop the vocational village concept based on the values of local wisdom in the community and the inclusivity of stakeholders in the implementation of vocational village programs in North Aceh. This was descriptive qualitative research. Data were collected through observation, interviews, focus group discussion, and documentation. The research subjects were village officials, community leaders, businessmen and workers in vocational villages. The research was conducted in four vocational villages in North Aceh and involved various related departments of the government of Aceh Utara in data collection. The results showed that the vocational village concept implemented in North Aceh had not been well-developed. The concept of vocational villages that prioritizes the superior potential of the village is constrained in its implementation because: a) it has the lack of the integration of local wisdom values in planning, implementing and supervising the vocational village programs in North Aceh; b) it has not involved the parties intensively in all those stages; c) the socialization of vocational village programs based on local wisdom is limited. On the other hand, North Aceh has enormous potential of natural resources to improve the economic welfare of rural communities. This research is expected to be a reference for local government in developing policies and programs to improve the economy of rural communities in North Aceh.

**Keywords:** *vocational village concept, local wisdom, inclusivity, North Aceh*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Vocational is the mastery of certain applied skills so that someone has ready-made skills or can be independent in working. The vocational village is a rural area that develops a variety of skills and education services that have comparative and competitive advantages based on local wisdom. The purpose of the vocational village is to help people to have the knowledge and productive skills that can be utilized to manage local resources, which in turn will benefit themselves and the community. Entrepreneurial attitudes and behavior that are in line with the values or rules that apply in the region, and produce, market products, services or other works that have high economic value, are unique and have an active and positive comparative advantage on the community, village and regional development (Ayuningrum, D & Dewi S, 2013).

The objectives of the vocational village are harmonizing the rural life in education, economic, social, cultural and environmental sectors; providing education and training in skills and entrepreneurship; creating small business groups; empowering the potential of the environment for productive ventures; strengthening the existing socio-cultural values; exploring and preserving the natural potential; constructing a skilled, creative and innovative environment wisely.

The potentials in the implementation of vocational villages include: (1) increasing the communities participation and their active role in implementing the vocational village program; (2) increasing the ability of participants to innovate, such as processing soybeans into tofu or tempeh or processing bags; (3) the learning of theory and practice given in the vocational village program is easy for the community to understand; (4) vocational villages have adequate facilities or places for the implementation of vocational village programs, namely in the village hall for learning the theory.

Determination of vocational villages aims to explore the potential of human and natural resources to improve the welfare of the community (Pakarti, 2016). The target of the vocational village is the productive age community so that later it becomes skilled and independent resources with entrepreneurship ability.

The strategy of developing vocational village programs based on local wisdom and inclusiveness is directed at increasing community economic productivity, added value, competitiveness and prosperity (Lak Lak Nazhat El Hasanah, n.d.)

Local wisdom is a custom practiced by the community which aims to protect and preserve nature and the environment. This interaction process is influenced by people's views, attitudes and behavior (Azizah, 2017). The form of local wisdom provides an opportunity for people's

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creativity which then develops into a home industry, producing goods that have the economic added value.

The Government of North Aceh has so far been running a vocational village program aimed at developing human and environmental resources, that are based on cultural values by utilizing the local potency. The village vocational program is expected to construct a village area to be a centre for a variety of vocations, utilizing the potential of natural resources and local wisdom. North Aceh Regency already has more than 300 vocational institutions which are expected to become government partners in increasing the workforce capacity in the vocational village. However, the existing institutions are still oriented towards market needs in general, instead of oriented to the values of local wisdom that will provide higher competence and competitiveness in the ASEAN Economic Community's job market.

In its implementation, the vocational village program in North Aceh district was established as an institution and given a decree by the Education, Youth and Sports Agency of North Aceh and was permitted to operate for two years. The support provided by the North Aceh government, in this case, is only in the form of guidance and consultations about the efforts or measures taken so that they can progress and develop. Hence, it is necessary to discuss further the issue related to the potential sources to develop vocational village concept based on local wisdom and inclusiveness in vocational village communities in North Aceh Regency.

## **2. RESEARCH METHODS**

This study used a qualitative approach employing primary and secondary data. Research informants were the Head of the North Aceh Regency Education, Youth and Sports Office, the Head of the North Aceh District Social and Women's Empowerment Office, the Head of the Agriculture and Food Crops Office, the Head of the Tourism, Youth and Sports Office, the Head of the Village Community Empowerment Office. The interviews were done to collect data from workers and businessmen of four villages in four districts representing 27 sub-districts in North Aceh Regency, to obtain a comprehensive description of the concept of the vocational village that has been implemented in the North Aceh district. Primary data were gathered by structured interviews, which were submitted to respondents and informants selected by purposive sampling, and observation, while secondary data involved literature study.

## **3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **3.1. Concept Development in Alue Leuhob Village, Cot Girek Sub-District**

Alue Leuhob Village was formed by the transmigration program, which was originally named Desa I Cot Girek, called Unit Desa I because at the time of clearing the wilderness was close to the Cot Girek PTP 16 Sugar Factory. The Alue Leuhob village, located at the southeast end of the Cot Girek district, 6 km from the sub-district capital. This village has the potential resources with added value, unique and comparative. Potential resources in the village of Alue

Leuhob are small industries of tofu and tempeh that have run for decades. It has started since the arrival of trans-migrants (mostly from Java) who brought tofu and tempeh making expertise into the transmigration areas.

Alue Leuhob also has a ground-breaking business that has a good chance to be expanded. However, the marketing covers around Cot Girek and Lhoksukon to Lhokseumawe only. The owners and workers face some obstacles, such as the lack of water, while water is the main raw material in making tofu. Another obstacle is the expensive soybean raw material because it must be imported from other regions. Besides, the process of tofu making is done manually and does not use sophisticated tools. Licensing processes and legality for tofu businesses is not common among the owners, and there has been a lack of training provided to the Alue Leuhob community to increase their business productivity.

Alue Leuhob has the community members who could support the implementation of vocational village programs. Javanese people are known to have a hard work ethic that has proven to be resilient and serious. The local government also is quite supportive because the *keuchik* (head of the village) himself is also a businessman and often visits other regions. He himself observed that the quality of tofu in Alue Leuhob is better than other regions.

Alue Leuhob has potential resources that can be mobilized to support the creation of vocational centers and business groups in agriculture, plantations, fisheries, animal husbandry, carpentry and other village potentials. The ongoing Focus Group Discussion (FGD's) activities revealed that there are many business potentials to be developed in Alue Leuhob, such as mushroom, brown sugar, and palm oil. However, this has not been able to be explored because of the lack of knowledge in developing these products as well as the expensive raw materials.

The development of the concept of local wisdom in the Alue Leuhob village can be seen from the uniqueness of the Alue Leuhob community by developing the local potential of tempeh and tofu making, starting from the conventional process to be a home industry. Its development is also supported by people who are resilient and earnestly in favor of the environment because it is done by most families without leaving their house but they get the economic benefits.

The concept of inclusiveness is able to accept diversity and accommodate it in society. The concept of inclusiveness in the Alue Leuhob community has actively involved all components of the community because the tofu and tempeh business has been carried out by most of the community in the village, including women.

### **3.2. Concept Development in Ulee Madon, Muara Batu Sub-District**

Gampong Ulee Madon is located in Muara Batu Sub-District, North Aceh Regency, Aceh Province. It is exactly on the Medan-Banda Aceh state road, about 35 km west of Lhokseumawe City. The village is known as Aceh embroidery handicraft village because there are several locations of Aceh embroidery craft businesses in the area. The craft production itself has now been marketed to a

number of areas in Aceh Province, and some have been exported.

The embroidery craft grows initially from generation to generation in society. To date, it has grown into a small and medium industry that can absorb local labors. Thus, it can help improve the economy of the community. The craft business produces various types of handicrafts every day, such as bags of various types and sizes, wallets, prayer mats, table mats and others that are typical of Aceh embroidery.

Ulee Madon village has potential resources that can be utilized, added value, unique and comparative, among others are handicraft embroidery bag, classic motifs of Aceh, that have been around for more than 20 years. Several similar businesses are also expanded around Ulee Madon, including Meunasah Aron.

However, this circumstance leads to a problem. The number of similar businesses has caused a high level of social jealousy among producers, causing unfair competition, monotonous types of motives and the absence of handicrafts that can be the icon of every businessman. When there is a new variety, shortly there will be imitators who produce them at lower prices. For that problem, the local government provide support with the establishment of Badan Usaha Milik Gampong (BUMG) or Village-Owned Enterprises, that seeks to distribute the work of the arts and collaborating with local governments and also made a policy about craftsman union.

Local wisdom developed in the village of Ulee Madon has provided job opportunities for women without leaving home, women can solve internal affairs at home while helping the family economy with family-friendly working hours. The inclusiveness that developed in the Alue Leuhob village can be seen from the emergence of similar new businesses and support from the village apparatus that had been formed in the BUMG and helped in marketing for the Aceh embroidery bag business by partnering with artisans. Also, funding is available to distribute to the craftsmen. In its implementation community empowerment has been done through planning, deliberation, plans, realization and care.

### **3.3. Concept Development in Alue Capli Village, Seunuddon Sub-District**

Alue Capli Village is one of 14 villages in the Seunuddon Settlement, Seunuddon District, North Aceh Regency, located 4 Km from the sub-district capital city. The total area of Gampong Alue Capli is 383 Ha, divided into two hamlets, namely: Matang Aron and Cot Geulumpang. The total population of Gampong Alue Capli is 562 people and 129 families (the 2018 Data Collection), the majority of whom make a living as rice farmers and fish farmers.

According to several community leaders, the name Alue Capli has its own history. Before the Dutch entered Aceh, five people from Gampong Simpang Mulieng, Syamtalira Aron District now, came to Alue Capli to open new land. They found a raw chili stem (*capli*) as big as an areca nut on the edge of the *alue* (stream). At that time, the area was part of the Matang Jeulikat village under the leadership of Ulee Balang Hasan Ibrahim. Therefore, the new area was named after the Alue Capli settlement.

Alue Capli became one of the vocational village based on the Decree of the Office by the North Aceh Regency

Education, Youth and Sports Office, which is on the Tengku Markam's Pusat Kegiatan Masyarakat (PKM) or Community Activity Center, since 2017. According to Tgk. Razali, the manager of PKM, it provides activities to improve skills, such as sewing, sewing embroidery, welding skills training for men, and also skills in making tissue boxes. These skills are not based on the local potential in Gampong Alue Capli.

There is a local potency that has prospective for the community's economy, located in Cot Patisah, which has owned the craft long before. The development of the concepts of local wisdom and the inclusiveness can be carried out later in the Cot Patisah Village.

Furthermore, the research findings showed that the Alue Capli village had no superior potential for woven matting crafts that have been developed previously, so the concepts of local wisdom and inclusiveness do not develop.

### **3.4. Concept Development in Gampong Pande, Tanah Pasir Sub-District**

Gampong Pande is one of the villages in Tanah pasir sub-district, Northern Aceh, known as *Pandai Besi* (blacksmiths) Village in Aceh Province, Indonesia. Almost all the elements of sharp weapons traded in Aceh was made by the craftsmen in this village. According to history, Gampong Pande has an ancestor who is indeed the "Blacksmith" in Aceh from the era before independence day.

To date, almost no blacksmith in Gampong Pande are using traditional tools, however, the results are still in the traditional way, such as hitting a ready-made machete with a hammer to see the level of endurance and the slope of the craft. Now the Blacksmith craft Gampong Pande continues to progress; it is still a major producer of various knives, *Parangs* and even other specific traditional weapons. The community of Gampong Pande produces this craft as a daily livelihood and the need for various sharp weapons in the market of Aceh lead to the employment for the surrounding communities. Various handicrafts of the blacksmiths in Gampong Pande has also started to be marketed to some areas in Sumatra island ; West Sumatra, Jambi, Bengkulu and Palembang.

The development of the local wisdom concept has run for decades. Even many pioneered businesses were derived from the previous family. In this case, women are also one of the workers who helped the business, as conveyed by Sri Wahyuni, a woman worker, "*There is no fatigue with working like this because you are used to it, it can help the economy as well, instead of sitting for nothing. My job is to cut the iron, grind, lift the hammer to make swords that will be made, I was tired at the beginning.*" (Interview on April 2019)

Women became one of the developments of local wisdom concept in this village; every family in this village have women as blacksmiths, without leaving their houses. Women have their own salary for family benefits.

Pande village also has one society activities center, namely LKP Mandala. The vocational program done is the sewing skills as the two previous villages. This skill is not appropriate as, in general, families in Pande village are blacksmiths, producing knives and others. (Zulfikar Usman's interview, April 2019).

The development of the vocational concept based on local wisdom in Gampong Pande can be done because it is already based on the local wisdom, a craft that has been existed for decades. It also has the economic potential that empowers the community and is supported by the entire community and government apparatus.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

Vocational village development model through the empowerment of vocational centers based on local potential is one alternative to provide references to establish vocational villages based on the superior potential of villages. The superior potential of the village, previously vocational villages based on local wisdom, includes Aceh bag embroidery motifs in the Ulee Madon village, tofu and tempeh in Alue Leuhob Village, various handicraft of blacksmiths in Gampong Pande. In its implementation, only Alue Leuhob village that received government assistance, while others received funding but based on proposals made independently, and the funds obtained were not as large as the funds provided for Alue leuhob village.

There is the development of the concept of the existing vocational villages in four vocational villages, especially based on the local wisdom and the inclusivity of all stakeholders. The strategy of developing vocational village programs based on the local wisdom and the inclusiveness focuses on increasing community economic productivity, added value, competitiveness and prosperity. Some have been done both by the community and the government apparatus. The role of the government is highly expected by the people to facilitate them to produce, be independent and offer effective solutions.

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