

Keynote Talk: Community Empowerment Through Student Community Service

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Although the trend of poverty rate continues to go downwards, Indonesia is still facing a problem of poverty that cannot be ignored. The Central Statistics Agency (BPS) noted that the number of poor Indonesians is more in rural than in urban areas. Community empowerment program is the priority program of the government to alleviate poverty. In the community empowerment, the process of improvement in the quality of life of the population occurs with the community participation. In contrast to the development paradigm, the empowerment paradigm positions community not as an object but as a subject.

In order to prepare students as members of society who are able to face present and future challenges, Universitas Gadjah Mada equips their students with various abilities to think critically and creatively, to communicate and to be able to solve problems. To develop these abilities, students need to participate in complex, meaningful projects that require sustained engagement, collaboration, research, management of resources, and the development of an ambitious performance or product. A community empowerment project is a form of project intended as a complex, and meaningful project. Involving students in community empowerment projects is a characteristic of Universitas Gadjah Mada (UGM) since its establishment. Student involvement in community empowerment projects is packaged in the form of Community Service Learning, which is named as Kuliah Kerja Nyata (KKN) in Bahasa Indonesia. KKN has a paradigm that places the community as the subject/actor while students participating in the KKN function as agents of change with the role of motivators, innovators, and facilitators for the community they accompanied. Such procedures should encourage joint learning between students and the community.

