



Educational Administration and Participatory Learning in Indonesian Higher Education: A Conceptual Review

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: Participatory learning is a central element of higher-education reform in Indonesia, particularly under the Merdeka Belajar-Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) policy, yet its administrative foundations remain under-theorised. This article examines how educational administration, framed through George R. Terry's planning, organizing, actuating, and controlling (POAC) functions, can enable participatory learning in Indonesian higher-education institutions (HEIs). **Methods:** The study uses a qualitative conceptual-analytical design through a narrative review informed by PRISMA 2020 principles. Sources were identified from Scopus, ERIC, Crossref, and Google Scholar during March–May 2026, with supplementary searches in September 2026. Studies were screened using explicit eligibility criteria, appraised with a five-criterion rubric, and thematically coded using a documented codebook. The final corpus comprised 22 sources, mainly published between 2022 and 2026: 20 peer-reviewed articles, one institutional policy report, and one doctoral dissertation used only as an illustrative source. Sixteen sources concerned higher education and eleven directly addressed participatory administration. The sources were mapped onto Terry's POAC functions to develop a framework linking administration with a participatory learning ecosystem, shared governance and quality culture, and andragogically grounded learner agency. The absence of complete screening records and the use of a single coder are acknowledged as limitations. **Findings:** The synthesis indicates that planning supports flexible and co-designed curricula; organizing distributes authority among lecturers, students, and administrative units; actuating repositions lecturers as facilitators; and controlling, through internal quality-assurance (SPMI) cycles, supports continuous improvement. These relationships are interpretive propositions rather than empirically validated causal effects. Their implementation is constrained by bureaucratic rigidity, uneven institutional capacity, and limited lecturer readiness for participatory pedagogy. **Research Implications:** Educational administration should be viewed not merely as a supporting function but as an active enabler of participatory learning. The framework provides guidance for HEI leaders and policymakers seeking to strengthen participatory practices under MBKM. **Originality:** The article proposes an integrative framework linking Terry's POAC functions with participatory-learning enablement in Indonesian higher education. Its contribution lies in translating a participatory learning management perspective into a higher-education administrative framework and generating propositions for future empirical testing rather than claiming a validated model.



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INTRODUCTION

Higher education institutions (HEIs) across the globe are under increasing pressure to move away from transmission-oriented instruction toward learning environments in which students actively shape the direction, pace, and content of their own education. In Indonesia, this shift has been most strongly institutionalised through the Merdeka Belajar-

Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) policy, introduced by the Ministry of Education and Culture, which grants students the right to spend part of their study period outside their home study program through internships, student exchange, independent projects, teaching assistance, and community-based programs (Salim & Wahidah, 2023). The policy assumes that greater learner autonomy, flexibility, and participation will translate into stronger competencies for the labour market and for civic life. Yet autonomy at the classroom level cannot be sustained without a corresponding administrative infrastructure at the institutional level planning that anticipates flexible pathways, organizational structures that distribute authority, leadership styles that motivate rather than merely instruct, and quality-control mechanisms that keep participatory initiatives accountable.

Educational administration, understood broadly as the deliberate management of educational resources, structures, and processes toward institutional goals, has historically been associated with hierarchical, top-down models of school and university governance (Fahmi, Mentari, Marsyanda, Rosyada, & Rohmah, 2025). Its most widely used analytical vocabulary in Indonesia derives from the management functions set out by George R. Terry in *Principles of Management* (Terry, 1953, 1977) planning, organizing, actuating, and controlling (POAC) which build on the earlier administrative-process tradition of Fayol (1949). Terry presented these functions as interdependent elements of one managerial process through which objectives are pursued with people and other resources, and they remain a dominant lens in the Indonesian educational-management literature (Fahmi et al., 2025; Fauzi, Alim, & Harsoyo, 2024; Salam, Syaifuddin, & Syafaruddin, 2023). The functions are, however, silent about who takes part in performing them: the same four functions can be executed in a strictly top-down manner or in a manner that actively invites the voices of lecturers, students, and other stakeholders. This is an interpretive observation of the present article, not a claim attributed to Terry, but it is consistent with shared-governance research showing that participatory structures can be adopted in form while decision-making authority remains unchanged (Becker, Goode, Rivers, Tyler, & Becker, 2023; Lo, 2025). Although a substantial literature separately addresses participatory pedagogy, shared governance, and POAC-based educational management, the sources identified for this article (see the Method section) suggest that these strands have rarely been read together; this observation rests on a documented narrative review rather than an exhaustive bibliometric mapping, a limitation acknowledged in the Method and Discussion sections. This raises the central problem addressed in this article: what does educational administration look like when it is deliberately reoriented to support, rather than merely tolerate, participatory learning in Indonesian higher education?

The empirical grounding of the article is therefore drawn primarily from higher-education research on shared governance, participative leadership, participatory curriculum design, quality assurance, and MBKM implementation. One source, a doctoral dissertation by Saksana (2021), is retained only as an illustrative example of how administrative functions can be sequenced around participatory principles. That dissertation investigated participatory learning management in improving the entrepreneurial behaviour of senior high school (SMA) students at SMA Negeri 71 and SMA Negeri 102 in Jakarta, using George R. Terry's management theory and Achmad Sanusi's six-value-system theory with a qualitative descriptive method, and identified six recurring stages of participatory learning management: (1) analysing lesson planning, (2) organizing, (3) implementing enjoyable, participatory learning activities, (4) applying authentic assessment, (5) identifying obstacles faced by school leaders, and (6) formulating solutions for improvement. For reasons of scholarly transparency it must be stated plainly that this study was conducted at the secondary-education level, among students and school leaders, and not within a higher-education institution. It is therefore not used as evidence about Indonesian higher education, and no proposition of the framework rests on it alone: each proposition is backed by at least one higher-education source of direct relevance (see the Results section). The translation of its six-stage model into a higher-education register (Table 3) is an interpretive contribution of the present study, not a claim about what was observed in universities. Transferability is claimed only at the level of administrative logic the sequencing of planning, organizing, actuating, and controlling around participation and explicitly not at the level of institutional structure, learner characteristics, or accountability regime, all of which differ substantially between secondary and higher education, as discussed further in the Discussion section.

This problem is not merely academic. Indonesian higher education operates within a highly diverse institutional landscape encompassing large state universities (Perguruan Tinggi Negeri), private universities of widely varying resource levels, Islamic religious higher-education institutions, and vocational polytechnics, each operating under the same national MBKM directive but with markedly different readiness and administrative capacity to implement it (Mahmud, Setyoningrum, & Kholifah, 2024; Salim & Wahidah, 2023). Where administrative capacity is strong, participatory learning initiatives such as interdisciplinary, community-engaged modules can flourish, as documented in a recent case study of a private university's education-for-sustainable-development program (Harjatanaya, Ferary, & Sarhindi, 2025). Where administrative capacity is weaker, the same policy directive may produce participation in name only nominal student-exchange quotas or paperwork-heavy internship recognitions that do not substantively

change how learning is planned, organised, led, or evaluated. Understanding the administrative conditions that separate these two outcomes is therefore central to realising the participatory ambitions embedded in national policy.

Guided by Terry's POAC functions as its theoretical foundation, the article draws on a documented body of recent literature on participative leadership, participatory pedagogy, shared governance, MBKM implementation, quality assurance, and entrepreneurship education in higher education, in Indonesia and internationally. The objectives are threefold: (1) to synthesise how educational-administration functions are theorised to support participatory learning in higher education; (2) to propose a conceptual framework linking administrative functions to enabling conditions and learning outcomes; and (3) to identify the barriers that most frequently constrain participatory administration in the Indonesian higher-education context. The article is structured as follows: the Method section describes the search, selection, appraisal, and coding procedures; the Results present the proposed framework, the translation table, and the characteristics and quality of the reviewed literature; the Discussion interprets the findings in relation to national policy and international literature; and the Conclusion offers recommendations and limitations.

METHOD

Research Design and Reporting Standard

This article adopts a qualitative, conceptual-analytical design, commonly labelled library research (*kajian pustaka*) or a narrative-conceptual review, appropriate where the aim is theoretical synthesis rather than the generation of new field data (Snyder, 2019). Because the aim is theory-building rather than effect estimation, neither a meta-analysis nor a full systematic review was attempted. To make the review as transparent as possible, the procedures below are reported with reference to the PRISMA 2020 principles for describing how records were identified, screened, assessed for eligibility, and included (Page et al., 2021), and the SANRA items for narrative reviews (Baethge, Goldbeck-Wood, & Mertens, 2019). Because the search log of the original round was not preserved, only the counts that can be verified are reported (Figure 1). The review proceeded in five stages: (1) theoretical scoping, (2) search and identification, (3) screening and eligibility assessment, (4) quality appraisal and data extraction, and (5) thematic coding and conceptual synthesis. The theoretical foundation is the POAC formulation in Terry's *Principles of Management* (Terry, 1953, 1977), read alongside Fayol (1949); these foundational works, and the methodological references cited in this section, were consulted as theory and method and are not counted in the review corpus.

Search Strategy

Searches were conducted in two rounds. In the original round (March–May 2026), structured searches were run in Google Scholar, Scopus, Crossref, and ERIC (for education-specific indexing) using six keyword strings applied to titles and abstracts (Q1–Q6, Table 1). The number of records retrieved by each string was not logged at the time and cannot be reconstructed reliably, because database contents change continuously; it is therefore not reported, and this is acknowledged as a limitation. At the revision stage (September 2026), six supplementary topical searches (Q7–Q12) were run to broaden the higher-education evidence on shared governance, MBKM implementation, participatory curriculum design, POAC in universities, student participation in governance, and participative leadership among lecturers. These were free-text queries on a general web search engine and on publisher and journal pages rather than controlled database strings, and their record counts were not logged. Limits were publication year 2016–2026 (prioritising 2022–2026), English or Indonesian, and peer-reviewed journal articles or recognised institutional publications.

Table 1. Search strategy used to identify the sources of the review (Q1–Q6: original round, March–May 2026; Q7–Q12: supplementary targeted search, September 2026)

ID	Search string or focus (applied to title/abstract)	Source(s) searched
Q1	"participatory learning" AND "higher education" AND Indonesia	Scopus; ERIC; Crossref; Google Scholar
Q2	"educational management functions" AND POAC	Scopus; ERIC; Crossref; Google Scholar
Q3	"Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka"	Scopus; ERIC; Crossref; Google Scholar
Q4	"shared governance" AND "higher education"	Scopus; ERIC; Crossref; Google Scholar
Q5	"student engagement" AND "meta-analysis"	Scopus; ERIC; Crossref; Google Scholar
Q6	"entrepreneurship education" AND "experiential learning"	Scopus; ERIC; Crossref; Google Scholar
Q7	Shared governance in higher education (faculty and students)	Web search engine; publisher and journal pages (revision stage)

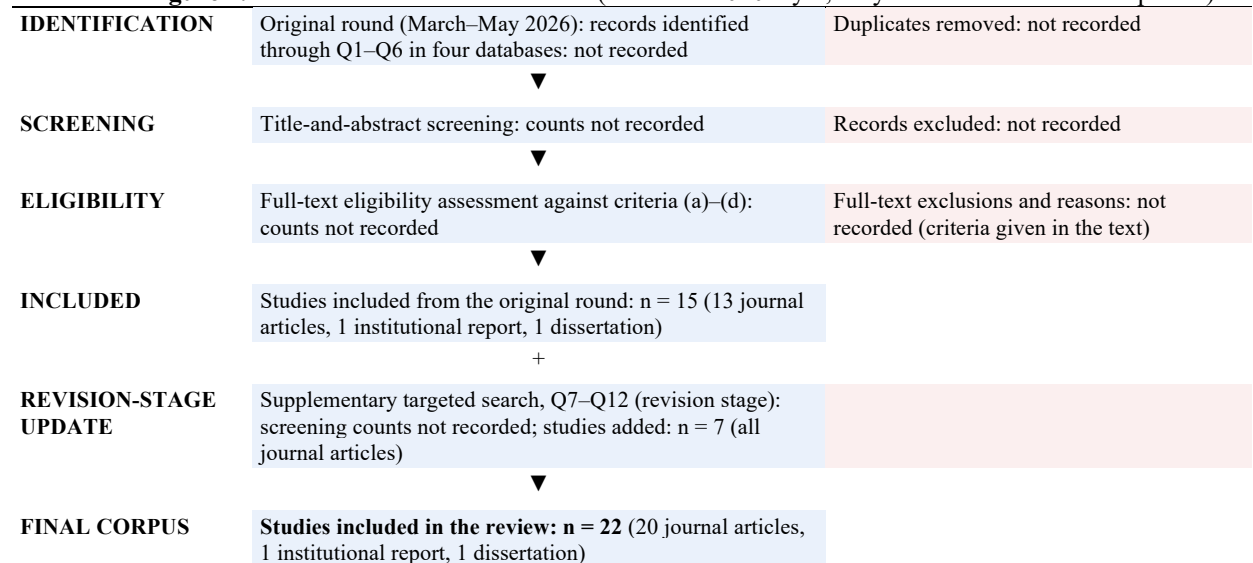
ID	Search string or focus (applied to title/abstract)	Source(s) searched
Q8	MBKM implementation in higher education	Web search engine; publisher and journal pages (revision stage)
Q9	Students as partners in curriculum design	Web search engine; publisher and journal pages (revision stage)
Q10	POAC applied in universities	Web search engine; publisher and journal pages (revision stage)
Q11	Student participation in university governance	Web search engine; publisher and journal pages (revision stage)
Q12	Participative leadership and lecturers	Web search engine; publisher and journal pages (revision stage)
Limits	2016–2026; English or Indonesian; peer-reviewed journal articles or recognised institutional publications; verifiable DOI	

Note. Record counts were not logged for any search and are therefore not reported.

Eligibility Criteria and Screening

Records were pooled, de-duplicated, and screened in two steps: title-and-abstract screening, then full-text eligibility assessment. Inclusion criteria were: (a) publication in a peer-reviewed journal, or by a recognised institutional publisher for policy-context material; (b) direct relevance to at least one of the three objectives; (c) publication within the last ten years, prioritising 2022–2026; and (d) a traceable, verifiable Digital Object Identifier (DOI) or equivalent persistent identifier and, for journal sources, verification against a publisher or indexing record (e.g., Scopus, DOAJ, or a Crossref-registered publisher). Records were excluded when they were opinion or commentary pieces without an empirical or conceptual contribution, fell outside the date window, could not be verified, or did not concern educational settings or participatory administration. One examined doctoral dissertation (Saksana, 2021) was admitted as a deliberate exception to criterion (a) because it documents an explicit, stage-wise sequence of participatory learning management built on Terry's functions; it is classified as a supporting, illustrative source and, as noted in the Introduction, was obtained directly from the author. Screening decisions were made by the first author; because screening counts and exclusion reasons were not logged, they are not reported. The final corpus comprises 22 sources: 15 from the original round and seven added at the revision stage to strengthen higher-education evidence (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Flow of sources into the review (PRISMA 2020-style; only verifiable counts are reported)



Note. "Not recorded" means the count was not logged during the search (see Limitations of the Review Procedure).

Quality Appraisal and Data Extraction

For each included source the following were extracted: country and institutional context, education level, design, data source, theme, and the finding relevant to the framework (Table 4). Each source was then appraised on two dimensions. Methodological transparency and rigour was rated Adequate, Partial, or Limited against five criteria adapted from the

general logic of the Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (Hong et al., 2018) and, for review-type sources, the SANRA items (Baethge et al., 2019): (i) clarity of aim; (ii) adequacy and description of the design; (iii) description of the data source or sample; (iv) coherence of the analysis; and (v) consistency between conclusions and evidence. A source was rated Adequate when at least four criteria were met, Partial when two or three were met, and Limited when fewer than two were met; Limited sources were to be excluded. Contextual relevance was rated Direct (higher-education setting with direct bearing on a participatory administrative function), Indirect (higher education but concerned with learning processes rather than administration, or a non-higher-education educational setting), or Cross-sectoral (non-educational organisations). Appraisal served to weight evidence rather than merely to admit it: a framework proposition is presented as supported only when at least one source of Direct relevance backs it, whereas Indirect and Cross-sectoral sources are used as analogical or contextual support and are labelled as such in the text. Appraisal was performed by the first author alone and is therefore provisional; no independent appraiser confirmed the ratings.

Coding, Theme Validation, and Synthesis

Coding followed a codebook-based thematic approach adapted from Braun and Clarke (2006) to document data. A codebook (Table 2) defined five themes with decision rules; each source received one primary theme, determined by its stated aim, and secondary themes were noted. Coding was carried out by a single author and was not independently verified by a second coder; this is a recognised source of subjectivity and is acknowledged as a limitation. To make the process as transparent and contestable as possible without independent verification, two safeguards were applied. First, the codebook decision rules (Table 2) and the source-level assignments (Table 4) are reported in full, so that readers can trace and challenge every theme and relevance assignment. Second, a disconfirming-evidence check was carried out: for each POAC function, sources that qualified or contradicted the proposed linkage (for example, evidence that participative leadership is attenuated in complex institutional environments) were deliberately sought and are reported in the Results and Discussion. Independent dual coding with a reported inter-coder agreement statistic (Cohen, 1960; McHugh, 2012) is recommended for any subsequent, more systematic iteration of this synthesis.

Table 2. Codebook used for thematic coding and POAC mapping

Code	Theme	Definition	Decision rule
T1	Participatory leadership and shared governance	Leadership styles, decision-sharing, and stakeholder representation in institutional governance.	Code here when the study asks who takes part in decisions or how leaders behave; not when it concerns only classroom technique.
T2	Participatory pedagogy and student engagement	Learner involvement in designing, conducting, or experiencing learning; determinants of engagement.	Code here when students' or staff-student roles in learning or curriculum are the focus.
T3	MBKM and national higher-education policy	Implementation, perception, or effects of MBKM or related national higher-education policy.	Code here when MBKM or national policy implementation is the object of study.
T4	Quality assurance and management functions	SPMI, accreditation, and POAC-based or academic-management functions.	Code here when management functions or quality systems are the object of study.
T5	Entrepreneurship and experiential learning	Experiential, project-based, or entrepreneurial learning approaches.	Code here when the aim is entrepreneurial or experiential competence development.
Rule	Primary theme and POAC mapping	Primary theme = best fit to the stated aim of the source; secondary themes recorded. Findings are then mapped to planning, organizing, actuating, or controlling.	A linkage is retained only if at least one Direct source offers an explicit or closely analogous claim.

In the conceptual-synthesis stage, the coded themes were mapped onto Terry's four functions to build the framework in Figure 2, and the six-stage model identified by Saksana (2021) was reinterpreted, stage by stage, for higher-education administration (Table 3). Because the method is interpretive rather than statistical, the resulting framework should be read as a set of theory-building propositions to be tested in future empirical work, not as a validated causal model. The remaining limitations of the review procedure are discussed in the Discussion section.

RESULTS

A Conceptual Framework for Participatory Educational Administration

Figure 2 presents the conceptual framework developed through the synthesis described in the Method section. The framework positions Terry's (1953, 1977) four administrative functions planning, organizing, actuating, and controlling as the operational core of educational administration, but reinterprets each function through a participatory lens rather than a purely hierarchical one. Planning, in this framework, is not confined to producing a syllabus document but extends to the collaborative design of curricula and MBKM learning contracts, in which students, lecturers, and external partners (industry, community organisations) jointly define learning pathways (Mahmud et al.,

2024; Salim & Wahidah, 2023). Staff–student partnership in curriculum design illustrates both the benefits of such co-design and the risks that staff and students perceive in it (Boyle, Buchanan, Ritchie, & Gamage, 2024; Mustafa, Gruda, & Sarris, 2025). Organizing distributes authority across student-representation bodies, study-program teams, and cross-unit MBKM coordination structures, echoing shared-governance arrangements in which faculty, staff, and students hold recognised decision-making roles (Becker et al., 2023; Lo, 2025).

Actuating, the function most directly concerned with motivation and leadership style, is where the participatory character of administration becomes most visible. In higher education, a survey of lecturers at an Indonesian college found that participatory leadership significantly affected lecturer performance, although it did not operate indirectly through organisational commitment (Irnawati & Nuryani, 2023); in school settings, participatory leadership has likewise been linked to teacher performance (Junaris, 2023). Cross-sectoral evidence from non-educational organisations points in the same direction (Riana Dewi, Nafiudin, & Sunaryo, 2025) but also shows that the relationship is contingent: a cross-sectional study of 347 participants drawn from all managerial levels in the United Arab Emirates found that higher institutional complexity weakened the link between participative leadership and outcomes such as employee loyalty and job performance (Khassawneh & Elrehail, 2022). Because these two studies were conducted outside education, they are treated as analogical support only. Consistent with this contingency, in politically charged university environments participatory structures can become sites of tension rather than trust (Lo, 2025). Controlling, finally, is operationalised in Indonesian HEIs chiefly through the internal quality-assurance system (Sistem Penjaminan Mutu Internal, SPMI), whose planning-implementation-evaluation cycle mirrors the POAC logic at an institutional scale and feeds into national accreditation (BAN-PT/LAM) processes (Fauzi et al., 2024; Mahmud et al., 2024).

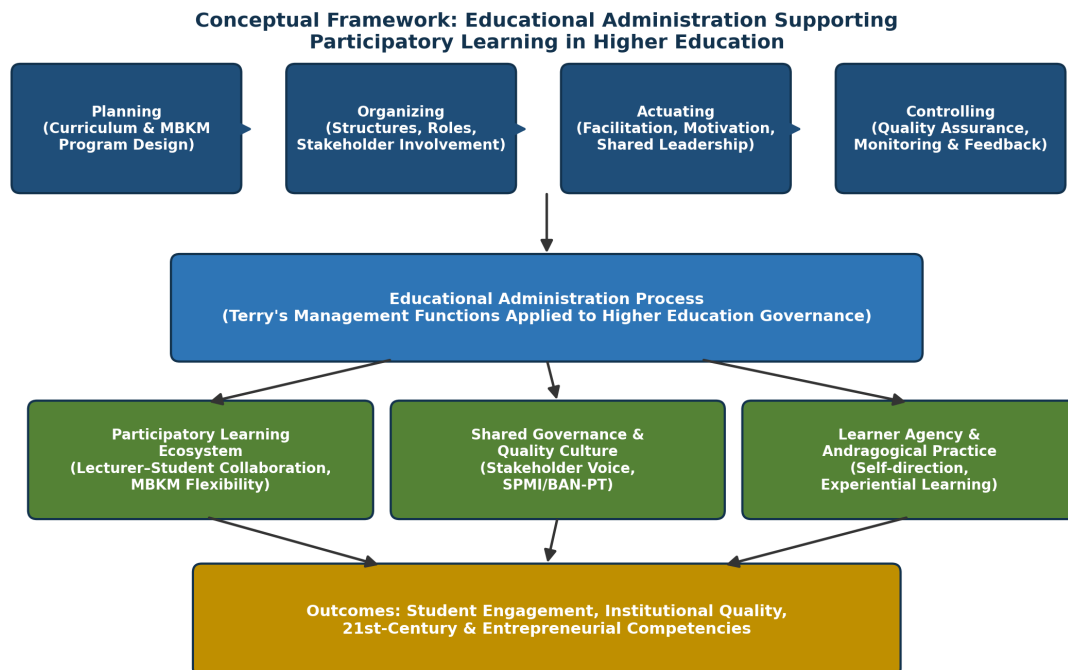


Figure 2. Conceptual framework linking educational administration functions, enabling conditions, and outcomes of participatory learning in higher education. The arrows represent interpretive propositions derived from the literature synthesis, not empirically demonstrated causal paths. Source: authors' synthesis, adapted from Terry's (1953, 1977) management-function theory, the reviewed higher-education literature, and Saksana (2021)

As proposed in Figure 2, these four functions are conceptualised as converging on an intermediate 'educational administration process' layer, which in turn is hypothesised to enable three interdependent conditions: a participatory learning ecosystem characterised by lecturer–student collaboration and MBKM flexibility; a shared-governance and quality culture in which stakeholder voice is embedded in formal quality mechanisms; and andragogically grounded learner agency, in which students exercise self-direction and learn experientially rather than passively (Park & Su, 2026). These three conditions are proposed to jointly shape the outcomes of interest student engagement, institutional quality, and 21st-century and entrepreneurial competencies a proposition consistent with, though not directly tested by, meta-analytic evidence that engagement is shaped by a constellation of relational, motivational, and environmental factors rather than any single administrative lever (Li & Xue, 2023).

The strength of evidence behind these linkages is uneven. Planning and organizing are each supported by several Direct higher-education sources; controlling by two Indonesian institutional studies of quality assurance (Fauzi et al., 2024; Mahmud et al., 2024); and actuating by a single Indonesian higher-education survey (Irnawati & Nuryani, 2023), supplemented by analogical school-level and cross-sectoral evidence. No source in the corpus tests the full chain from administrative functions through the three enabling conditions to student, institutional, and graduate outcomes; the arrows in Figure 2 therefore remain propositions.

Translating a Secondary-Education Model into a Higher-Education Register

Table 3 presents the six-stage participatory learning management model identified by Saksana (2021) alongside a conceptual translation of each stage into a higher-education administrative equivalent. This translation is an interpretive proposition of the present article: it is intended to show how a participatory administrative logic, first documented in a secondary-school setting, could plausibly be reconstructed for a university context, and it should be tested empirically in future higher-education research rather than treated as an established finding.

Table 3. Conceptual translation of Saksana's (2021) six-stage participatory learning management model from a secondary-education to a higher-education administrative context

Stage (Saksana, 2021)	Original Secondary-Education Focus	Conceptual Translation to Higher Education Administration
1. Planning analysis (syllabus / lesson-plan review)	Review of syllabus and Rencana Pelaksanaan Pembelajaran (RPP)	Collaborative design of course syllabi and MBKM learning contracts involving lecturers, students, and industry partners
2. Organizing	Division of teaching tasks and classroom resources	Establishment of study-program teams, student representation bodies, and cross-unit MBKM coordination structures
3. Actuating (enjoyable/participative implementation)	Implementation of engaging classroom activities	Facilitation of student-centred, project- and problem-based learning; lecturers as facilitators rather than sole authorities
4. Authentic assessment	Performance-based assessment of student work	Portfolio- and competency-based assessment aligned with Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) and MBKM recognition credits
5. Identification of obstacles	Barriers faced by school leaders	Institutional barriers such as rigid bureaucracy, resource constraints, and lecturer readiness for participatory pedagogy
6. Solution-seeking / improvement	Corrective strategies by teachers and principals	Continuous-improvement cycles embedded in internal quality assurance (SPMI) and shared-governance feedback loops

Note. The translation is an interpretive proposition. Each higher-education equivalent is supported by the higher-education sources cited in the text, not by Saksana (2021), which is used only to illustrate the sequence.

Characteristics, Quality, and Thematic Distribution of the Reviewed Literature

Figure 3 summarises the thematic distribution of the 22 sources in the final corpus (the selection flow is shown in Figure 1), and Table 4 reports the characteristics and appraisal of each source. Participatory leadership and governance form the largest cluster (seven sources), followed by participatory pedagogy and student engagement (six), and MBKM/national policy, quality assurance and management functions, and entrepreneurship and experiential learning (three each). Sixteen of the 22 sources concern higher education, seven of them Indonesian higher education; four concern school-level or early-childhood education, including the Saksana (2021) dissertation; and two come from non-educational organisations. Eleven sources were rated as bearing directly on participatory administration in higher education, nine indirectly, and two cross-sectorally. Methodologically, the corpus comprises ten qualitative case- or interview-based studies, five quantitative surveys, one mixed-methods study, four reviews or literature studies (including one meta-analysis and one systematic review), one policy report, and one descriptive analysis whose design details remain to be verified.

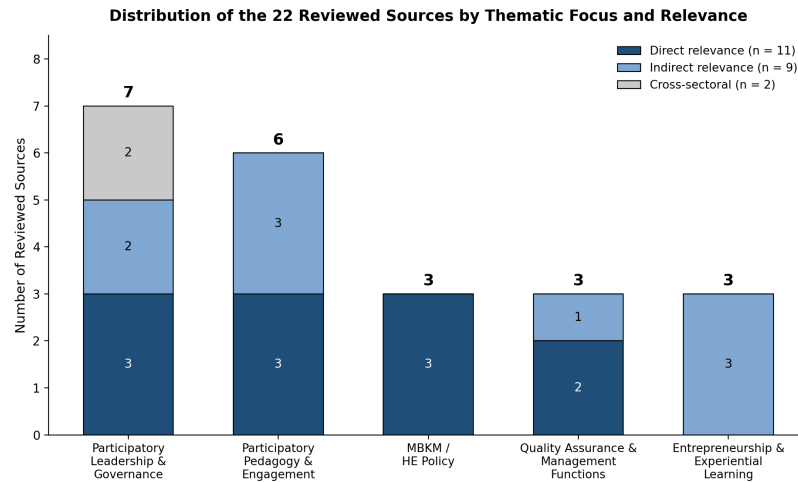


Figure 3. Distribution of the 22 reviewed sources (2021–2026) by thematic focus and by relevance to participatory administration in higher education. This figure describes the composition of the literature corpus and is not itself a research finding. Source: authors' coding, described in the Method section (Table 2) and Table 4.

Ten sources were rated Adequate and twelve Partial on methodological transparency, and none was rated Limited. This distribution describes the composition of the reviewed corpus rather than a substantive empirical finding, and should not be read as evidence of the relative importance of each theme to participatory administration in practice. Two patterns matter for interpreting the framework. First, the evidence is thinnest where the framework is most ambitious: only two Direct sources are quantitative studies of Indonesian higher education (Arjanto, Antariksa, Mustiningsih, & Timan, 2022; Irnawati & Nuryani, 2023), and most of the remainder are single-institution qualitative cases, reviews, or non-Indonesian studies. Second, evidence on participative leadership and performance comes largely from school and non-educational settings, so its transfer to university administration remains an inference.

Table 4 lists, for each source, its context, design, theme, relevance to participatory administration in higher education, and methodological rating. Table 5 then groups the sources by theme, summarises the key contribution of each theme, and states the strength of the supporting evidence.

Table 4. Characteristics and provisional appraisal of the 22 reviewed sources

Nu.	Source	Context and education level	Design	Theme	Relevance	Rating
1	Ali et al. (2024)	Malaysia; higher education (diploma entrepreneurship students)	Qualitative; semi-structured interviews	T5	Indirect	Partial
2	Arjanto et al. (2022)	Indonesia; higher education (one university, students)	Quantitative descriptive survey	T3	Direct	Partial
3	Becker et al. (2023)	United States; faculty at one university	Mixed methods	T1	Direct	Adequate
4	Boyle et al. (2024)	United Kingdom; undergraduate programme (higher education)	Case study; staff–student partnership, developmental evaluation	T2	Direct	Adequate
5	Fahmi et al. (2025)	Indonesia; early-childhood education institution (PIAUD, UIN Raden Fatah)	Case study†	T4	Indirect	Partial†
6	Fauzi et al. (2024)	Indonesia; higher education (IAIN Kediri)	Qualitative case study; observation, documents, interviews	T4	Direct	Adequate
7	Gashoot & Mohamed (2022)	Higher education; design-studio module	Single-module case study	T2	Indirect	Partial
8	Harjatanaya et al. (2025)	Indonesia; higher education (one private university)	Case study†	T2	Direct	Adequate†
9	Irnawati & Nuryani (2023)	Indonesia; higher education (one college; lecturers)	Quantitative explanatory survey; PLS-SEM	T1	Direct	Partial
10	Junaris (2023)	Indonesia; teachers (school level)†	Quantitative survey†	T1	Indirect	Partial†

Nu.	Source	Context and education level	Design	Theme	Relevance	Rating
11	Khairina et al. (2024)	Indonesia; school teachers and school leadership	Institutional (World Bank) policy report	T1	Indirect	Adequate
12	Khassawneh & Elrehail (2022)	United Arab Emirates; managerial-level employees of non-educational organisations	Quantitative cross-sectional survey (n = 347)	T1	Cross-sectoral	Adequate
13	Li & Xue (2023)	Higher education students (international)	Meta-analysis	T2	Indirect	Adequate
14	Lo (2025)	Taiwan and Hong Kong; university governance	Qualitative; interviews with council members and student leaders	T1	Direct	Adequate
15	Mahmud et al. (2024)	Indonesia; Islamic religious colleges (PTKI)	Qualitative multi-case study	T3	Direct	Adequate
16	Mustafa et al. (2025)	Kosovo; higher education (five MA students)	Longitudinal qualitative study	T2	Direct	Partial
17	Park & Su (2026)	Adult learners in higher education (international)	Systematic review	T2	Indirect	Adequate
18	Riana Dewi et al. (2025)	Indonesia; one manufacturing company (n = 99)	Quantitative; PLS-SEM	T1	Cross-sectoral	Partial
19	Rodrigues (2023)	Higher education; entrepreneurship pedagogy (international)	Literature review†	T5	Indirect	Partial†
20	Saksana (2021)	Indonesia; two senior high schools, Jakarta	Qualitative descriptive; doctoral dissertation	T5	Indirect	Partial
21	Salam et al. (2023)	Indonesia; Islamic higher education	Literature study (conceptual)	T4	Direct	Partial
22	Salim & Wahidah (2023)	Indonesia; state higher education, Kalimantan	Descriptive analysis†	T3	Direct	Partial†

Note. Themes: T1 participatory leadership and governance; T2 participatory pedagogy and engagement; T3 MBKM and policy; T4 quality assurance and management functions; T5 entrepreneurship and experiential learning. Rating = methodological transparency and rigour (Adequate/Partial; no source was rated Limited). † Detail taken from title or abstract information; full-text verification is recommended. Ratings are the author's provisional appraisal.

Table 5. Thematic summary of the reviewed literature underpinning the conceptual framework

Theme	Representative source(s)	Key contribution	Evidence (D / I / C)
Participatory leadership and shared governance (n = 7)	Becker et al. (2023); Irnawati & Nuryani (2023); Lo (2025); Junaris (2023); Khairina et al. (2024); Khassawneh & Elrehail (2022); Riana Dewi et al. (2025)	Participative leadership is associated with performance among lecturers and teachers, and analogous cross-sectoral evidence points the same way, but the effect is contingent on institutional complexity and socio-political context; shared-governance arrangements depend on trust and on links between participation and actual decisions.	3 / 2 / 2
Participatory pedagogy and student engagement (n = 6)	Boyle et al. (2024); Harjatanaya et al. (2025); Mustafa et al. (2025); Gashoot & Mohamed (2022); Li & Xue (2023); Park & Su (2026)	Participatory, student-centred, and partnership-based approaches are linked to engagement and richer curriculum design, but the evidence is largely case-based, engagement is multi-determined, and partnership carries perceived risks for staff and students.	3 / 3 / 0
MBKM and national policy (n = 3)	Salim & Wahidah (2023); Mahmud et al. (2024); Arjanto et al. (2022)	MBKM institutionalises flexible, participatory learning pathways; implementation involves curriculum overhaul and adaptation, is assessed largely through single-institution studies, and faces uneven institutional readiness.	3 / 0 / 0
Quality assurance and management functions (n = 3)	Fauzi et al. (2024); Salam et al. (2023); Fahmi et al. (2025)	Planning-organizing-actuating-controlling cycles and SPMI are the main management vehicles for quality in Indonesian HEIs; SPMI implementation is constrained by leadership time, human resources, and data alignment.	2 / 1 / 0

Theme	Representative source(s)	Key contribution	Evidence (D / I / C)
Entrepreneurship and experiential learning (n = 3)	Ali et al. (2024); Rodrigues (2023); Saksana (2021)	Experiential and project-based approaches are reported to foster entrepreneurial competencies; Saksana's (2021) six-stage model offers one illustrative administrative sequence from secondary education.	0 / 3 / 0

Note. D = Direct, I = Indirect, C = Cross-sectoral relevance (see Method).

DISCUSSION

Administration as an Active Enabler, Not a Neutral Backdrop

The results suggest that educational administration functions are not merely a bureaucratic backdrop against which participatory learning happens to occur; they help determine whether participation is possible at all. Planning decisions about curriculum flexibility set the outer boundary of what MBKM activities a student may pursue (Mahmud et al., 2024; Salim & Wahidah, 2023); organizing decisions about committee membership determine whose voice reaches institutional decision-makers (Becker et al., 2023; Lo, 2025); actuating choices about leadership style shape whether lecturers experience participation as empowering or as an additional unfunded mandate an interpretation consistent with, but not directly tested by, the reviewed studies (Irnawati & Nuryani, 2023; Khassawneh & Elrehail, 2022); and controlling mechanisms influence whether participatory pilots are sustained, refined, or quietly abandoned once external attention moves elsewhere (Fauzi et al., 2024). This reading is consistent with international shared-governance scholarship, which frames university governance not as a fixed structure but as a continually renegotiated balance of trust and authority among administrators, faculty, and students (Becker et al., 2023; Lo, 2025).

Aligning Administration with the MBKM Agenda

Indonesia's MBKM policy provides the most concrete national impetus for participatory administration in higher education. By granting students a formal right to spend part of their studies outside the home study program, the policy effectively requires HEIs to redesign planning and organizing functions: curriculum committees must recognise external and cross-program learning; academic administration must track and validate credit for internships, exchanges, and independent projects; and quality-assurance units must extend their monitoring scope beyond the traditional classroom (Salim & Wahidah, 2023). Multi-case evidence from Islamic religious colleges indicates that institutions respond through curriculum overhaul and adaptation and monitor MBKM through internal quality audits and external accreditation (Mahmud et al., 2024), while students' perceptions of implementation have been assessed at single universities (Arjanto et al., 2022). Yet implementation research shows this alignment is uneven: institutional readiness, resource availability, and faculty understanding of MBKM's underlying philosophy vary considerably across Indonesian HEIs (Salim & Wahidah, 2023). This unevenness is plausibly an administrative, not merely a pedagogical, problem it may reflect differences in planning capacity, organizational maturity, and control-mechanism sophistication across institutions rather than differences in individual lecturers' goodwill although the reviewed studies do not isolate these factors.

The Double-Edged Nature of Participative Leadership

A second discussion point concerns the double-edged character of participative leadership identified in the literature. On one hand, participatory leadership is associated with stronger performance among lecturers in an Indonesian college (Irnawati & Nuryani, 2023) and teachers in school settings (Junaris, 2023), and cross-sectoral studies report similar associations with performance and satisfaction (Riana Dewi et al., 2025). The higher-education evidence is nonetheless nuanced: in the lecturer survey, participatory leadership did not act indirectly through organisational commitment (Irnawati & Nuryani, 2023). On the other hand, participative leadership does not operate independently of institutional context: its positive effects are attenuated in institutionally complex environments, where the distance between leaders and subordinates can widen even as participative styles are introduced (Khassawneh & Elrehail, 2022), although that study was conducted outside education. Lo's (2025) study of shared governance amid student activism in Taiwan and Hong Kong offers a cautionary higher-education parallel: participatory structures created in good faith can become sites of tension rather than trust when broader socio-political pressures are not acknowledged and actively managed. For Indonesian HEI administrators, this implies that introducing participatory mechanisms (student representation on committees, open curriculum-design forums) is necessary but probably not sufficient; sustained trust-building, transparent communication, and realistic resourcing of participatory processes are likely to matter as well (Becker et al., 2023; Lo, 2025).

From Compliance to Culture: Quality Assurance as Participatory Infrastructure

The controlling function, typically the least discussed in participatory-learning literature, emerges from this synthesis as a potential enabler rather than a mere compliance exercise. Indonesia's SPMI framework, when implemented as intended, embeds a continuous planning-implementation-evaluation cycle that could, in principle, formalise participatory feedback from students and lecturers into institutional decision-making (Fauzi et al., 2024; Mahmud et al., 2024). In practice, however, a case study of SPMI implementation at a state Islamic institute identifies constraints such as limited leadership time, suboptimal human resources in the quality-assurance unit, and data that did not align with the central template, and reports auditor training as one response (Fauzi et al., 2024). This suggests that the technical existence of a quality-assurance system does not automatically translate into participatory practice; whether administrators design SPMI instruments (surveys, audit protocols, feedback forums) to capture and act upon student and lecturer voice, rather than treating SPMI purely as a documentation exercise for external accreditors, is an open empirical question that the reviewed studies do not answer.

Pedagogical and Andragogical Foundations

At the classroom level, the shift from didactic, teacher-centred instruction toward participatory, student-centred pedagogy is supported by a growing but largely case-based body of evidence: a single-module case study suggests that mobile-technology-enabled participatory learning can shift a design module from teacher-centred to student-centred delivery (Gashoot & Mohamed, 2022); staff-student partnership in curriculum design yields rewards from diverse perspectives alongside perceived risks (Boyle et al., 2024); and a meta-analysis spanning over 93,000 participants indicates that student engagement in higher education is shaped by an interacting set of emotional, relational, and environmental factors, including positive teacher-student partnership (Li & Xue, 2023). Because most Indonesian university students are adult or near-adult learners, andragogical principles self-direction, the integration of prior experience, and problem-centred learning provide a complementary theoretical lens: adult learners engage more fully in higher education when institutions accommodate their need for autonomy and relevance, though systematic evidence also shows this participation is shaped by structural determinants and barriers beyond the individual learner's control, such as institutional flexibility and support systems (Park & Su, 2026). Entrepreneurship-oriented, experiential learning constitutes a particularly clear illustration of these principles in action: structured internships, start-up incubators, and project-based curricula are reported to foster innovation and entrepreneurial competency (Ali et al., 2024; Rodrigues, 2023), echoing the very outcome entrepreneurial behaviour that motivated Saksana's (2021) original secondary-education study.

Limitations of the Conceptual Translation

A central limitation of this article, acknowledged from the outset, concerns the illustrative source on which the six-stage translation is built: the Saksana (2021) dissertation was conducted among senior high school students and school leaders, not university students or academic administrators. Secondary and higher education differ in governance structure (school-principal authority versus multi-layered university governance), in learner characteristics (adolescents versus adult/andragogical learners), and in accountability regimes (regional education offices versus BAN-PT/LAM national accreditation). The six-stage translation offered in Table 3 is therefore explicitly conceptual and hypothetical: it demonstrates administrative plausibility, not empirical confirmation, and should be read as a set of propositions for future higher-education fieldwork for example, comparative case studies of MBKM implementation across university types rather than as a validated model of Indonesian higher-education administration. Because each proposition is backed by at least one Direct higher-education source, the framework does not depend on the dissertation for its empirical support. Beyond this, the framework itself should be read critically rather than as a confirmed account. An institutional-theory reading offers a plausible alternative explanation for the same surface phenomena: participatory structures such as student-representation seats or consultative committees may sometimes be adopted for legitimacy or compliance reasons to satisfy MBKM reporting requirements or accreditation expectations without altering underlying decision-making authority, a decoupling between formal structure and actual practice that the shared-governance literature warns against (Becker et al., 2023; Lo, 2025). Where this is the case, the relationships proposed in Figure 2 would not hold: administrative functions could be formally reorganised around participatory language while enabling conditions and outcomes remain largely unchanged. The boundary conditions under which the framework is more or less likely to hold are also only partially specified by the reviewed literature. Evidence on participative leadership suggests the relationship is attenuated in institutionally complex environments (Khassawneh & Elrehail, 2022) and can be strained in politically charged ones (Lo, 2025), and evidence on Indonesian teacher and school-leadership capacity indicates that administrative reforms presuppose a baseline of leadership skill and institutional capacity that is unevenly distributed across the country (Khairina et al., 2024) conditions that plausibly extend to higher-education administrators managing MBKM implementation, although this extension is itself an

inference rather than a directly evidenced claim. The framework is therefore best understood as describing conditions under which participatory administration is more likely to translate into the proposed outcomes, rather than as a general mechanism that operates uniformly across all Indonesian HEIs.

Limitations of the Review Procedure

The review procedure has its own limitations. First, the search log of the original round was not kept, so the numbers of records identified, screened, and excluded are not reported and the selection cannot be exactly reproduced; the seven sources added at the revision stage were identified through targeted, non-exhaustive topical searches and may reflect the selectivity of the search engines and platforms used. Second, the corpus of 22 sources is modest for a review claiming integrative and original contributions, was restricted to English- and Indonesian-language publications, and depends on database coverage; relevant studies in other languages or in grey literature may have been missed, and publication bias toward positive associations cannot be excluded. Third, many Direct sources are single-institution cases or perception studies, which limits the strength of any generalisation. Fourth, the appraisal rubric is an adaptation rather than a validated instrument, and screening, coding, and appraisal were performed by a single author without independent verification, so selection bias and subjectivity in the thematic synthesis cannot be excluded. Finally, the review protocol was not registered in advance. These limits reinforce the reading of the framework as a set of propositions for empirical testing rather than as an established model.

Practical Implications for Institutional Leaders

Translating the framework in Figure 2 into day-to-day institutional practice suggests several concrete priorities for rectors, deans, and heads of study programs. First, planning processes should build in a recurring, scheduled channel not merely an annual ad hoc survey through which students and lecturers can propose adjustments to MBKM pathways and course design; the literature on shared governance suggests that structures perceived as episodic or symbolic tend to generate distrust rather than genuine participation (Lo, 2025). Second, organizing decisions should ensure that student-representation bodies and lecturer forums have a documented, traceable link to actual decision points (curriculum committees, budget allocations for MBKM activities) rather than serving a purely consultative or advisory function with no visible follow-through. Third, actuating requires investment in leadership development specifically oriented toward participative styles; simply appointing a leader is insufficient, since the disposition to delegate, consult, and build human relations must be cultivated and, where necessary, incentivised (Irnawati & Nuryani, 2023; Junaris, 2023). Fourth, controlling mechanisms embedded in SPMI cycles should incorporate explicit, disaggregated indicators of participation itself (for example, the proportion of curriculum revisions originating from student or lecturer proposals), so that participatory practice becomes something the institution measures and improves, rather than an unmeasured aspiration (Fauzi et al., 2024).

These priorities are mutually reinforcing rather than sequential: an institution that strengthens organizing structures without a corresponding actuating investment in leadership style risks creating participatory bodies that meet but do not meaningfully influence decisions; conversely, participative leaders operating without organizational channels for their consultative instincts may rely on informal, personality-dependent practices that do not survive leadership transitions. The framework developed in this article is intended precisely to make this interdependence explicit, so that reform efforts whether initiated by a single rector, a ministry directive, or an accreditation cycle address administrative functions as an integrated system rather than as isolated interventions.

CONCLUSION

This article has argued that educational administration, when deliberately reoriented around participatory principles, is proposed to function as an active enabler of participatory learning in Indonesian higher education rather than as a neutral administrative backdrop. Synthesising a corpus of 22 sources 20 peer-reviewed journal articles, one institutional report, and a conceptual, illustrative reading of one secondary-education dissertation the article proposed an integrative framework, grounded in Terry's (1953, 1977) POAC functions, in which planning, organizing, actuating, and controlling functions are proposed to influence three enabling conditions a participatory learning ecosystem, shared governance and quality culture, and andragogically grounded learner agency which are, in turn, hypothesised to relate to student engagement, institutional quality, and graduate competencies. The discussion highlighted that Indonesia's MBKM policy provides strong impetus but uneven implementation capacity; that participative leadership carries real but context-contingent benefits; that internal quality assurance (SPMI) can become genuinely participatory infrastructure only through deliberate design; and that andragogical, experiential approaches to entrepreneurship and other competency domains depend on administrative support at the institutional level.

For HEI leaders, the practical implication is that strengthening participatory learning requires simultaneous attention to all four administrative functions rather than isolated pedagogical reform: curriculum planning must build in genuine flexibility; organizational structures must formally seat student and lecturer voice; leadership development must cultivate participative, trust-building styles suited to each institution's specific socio-political context; and quality-assurance instruments must be designed to capture, rather than merely document, participatory feedback. For policymakers, the implication is that MBKM's success depends on parallel investment in institutional administrative capacity, not only in student mobility schemes themselves.

This article is limited by its conceptual-analytical method: it does not present new primary data from Indonesian higher-education institutions, and its central illustrative case originates from secondary education. Future research should test the proposed framework empirically through comparative case studies, surveys of lecturers and students across different types of Indonesian HEIs, or mixed-methods evaluations of MBKM implementation to determine which elements of participatory educational administration most strongly predict engagement, quality, and competency outcomes in practice. A further limitation is the modest size of the literature corpus, its dependence on database coverage, and the absence of a recorded search log and of independent coding (see the Method and Discussion sections); future iterations of this review would benefit from a pre-registered protocol, a larger and more systematically documented search including full database logs and screening counts, and independent dual coding and appraisal to strengthen the credibility of the thematic synthesis.

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