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From Low Participation to High Engagement: Developing Extracurricular Programs to Optimize Students' Talents and Interests

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to develop extracurricular program guidelines to increase student participation and optimize talent and interest development in a rural Indonesian senior high school. Using a Research and Development (R&D) approach with the 4D model—Define, Design, Develop, Disseminate—the research involved 102 students, 10 extracurricular coaches, eight subject teachers, and the school principal at SMAN 11 Luwu Timur. Data were gathered through questionnaires, interviews, observations, and document reviews, with subsequent expert validation and practicality testing. Needs analysis revealed limited facilities, misalignment between programs and student interests, scheduling conflicts, and low parental support as the main barriers to participation. The guidelines addressed these challenges through clearly defined objectives, flexible scheduling, diverse and technology-based activities, and strategies for resource management and community involvement. Expert validation produced a high validity score of 76.88%, while practicality testing averaged 76.15%, indicating that the guidelines were easy to implement and adaptable to various activities. The framework aligns with the Pancasila Student Profile, Gardner's Multiple Intelligences Theory, and Self-Determination Theory, ensuring both theoretical robustness and contextual relevance. These findings suggest that well-designed, resource-efficient extracurricular programs can enhance student engagement even in resource-limited contexts. The guidelines offer a practical, scalable model for other schools with similar challenges, contributing to the promotion of equitable access to holistic education in rural settings.

INTRODUCTION

Extracurricular activities have long been recognized as an essential component of holistic education, contributing significantly to students' academic, social, and personal development. Globally, educational systems emphasize the integration of extracurricular programs to nurture talents, foster interests, and build competencies that are not fully addressed within the formal curriculum (Heaslip et al., 2021; Palou et al., 2024). These programs provide opportunities for students to engage in arts,

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sports, technology, and community service, thereby enhancing creativity, collaboration, leadership, and problem-solving skills, competencies essential for success in the 21st century.

In the Indonesian educational context, the role of extracurricular activities is reinforced by the *National Education System Law No. 20 of 2003*, which mandates the holistic development of students in cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains. Recent policies, such as the *Merdeka Curriculum*, further emphasize flexible learning environments and the cultivation of the *Pancasila Student Profile*, highlighting the need for extracurricular activities that align with students' unique talents and interests (Rizky Satria et al., 2022). Despite this policy emphasis, the actual implementation of extracurricular programs in many Indonesian schools, especially those in rural areas, faces persistent challenges, including limited resources, low student participation, and a lack of program diversity (Pratiwi et al., 2025; Zerlinda & Alam, 2025).

SMAN 11 Luwu Timur, a rural senior high school in South Sulawesi, exemplifies this challenge. While the school offers various extracurricular options such as sports, arts, scouting, and religious activities, student participation rates remain low, particularly in programs requiring sustained commitment. Factors contributing to this issue include limited facilities, insufficient parental support, high academic workloads, and the absence of programs that match students' emerging interests in fields such as technology and creative industries. Without effective program design and implementation, the potential benefits of extracurricular engagement, such as improved academic performance, enhanced self-confidence, and stronger social skills are not fully realized.

Research has consistently demonstrated that well-structured extracurricular activities can have a positive impact on students' cognitive and non-cognitive development. King et al. (2021) found that participation in extracurricular programs significantly increased students' intrinsic motivation and academic achievement, particularly when activities were aligned with their personal interests. Similarly, Wang & Ismail (2024) highlighted that systematic extracurricular management could enhance students' leadership, cooperation, and problem-solving skills. Another research emphasized the role of scouting programs in fostering character values consistent with the *Pancasila Student Profile*, such as discipline, responsibility, and mutual cooperation (Handayani et al., 2025). Furthermore, relevant studies demonstrated that creative and innovative extracurricular initiatives, such as visual arts and theater, could substantially boost students' creative thinking and problem-solving abilities (Brovchak et al., 2024; Stutesman et al., 2022). However, such programs require adequate facilities, skilled mentors, and sustained school–community partnerships, resources that are often scarce in rural settings (Fox et al., 2025; Willis et al., 2024). This underlines the need for development models that are adaptable, resource-efficient, and sensitive to local cultural contexts, ensuring that extracurricular activities remain both feasible and impactful for diverse school environments.

Theoretically, the design of extracurricular programs can be informed by models of holistic education and talent development. Howard Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences underscores the importance of accommodating diverse student strengths, ranging from linguistic and logical-mathematical abilities to musical, bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal, and intrapersonal intelligence (Cavas & Cavas, 2020; Gardner, 2015). Complementarily, Deci and Ryan's Self-Determination Theory suggests that programs that support autonomy, competence, and relatedness are more likely to sustain student motivation and engagement (Ryan & Deci, 2023). These perspectives indicate that extracurricular programs should not only address skill development but also create meaningful, enjoyable, and socially connected experiences.

Despite the proven benefits, existing literature reveals a gap in practical, context-specific guidelines for developing extracurricular programs in rural Indonesian schools. Most studies focus on evaluating outcomes rather than providing a replicable development framework that integrates needs assessment, program design, validation, and practicality testing. This study addresses that gap by applying the 4D model (Define, Design, Develop, Disseminate) to create extracurricular program guidelines tailored to the context of SMAN 11 Luwu Timur. By focusing on the transition from low participation to high engagement, this research contributes a practical, evidence-based framework for optimizing extracurricular programs in resource-limited school settings.

METHODS

Research Design

This study employed a Research and Development (R&D) approach using the 4D model, which consists of four stages: Define, Design, Develop, and Disseminate (Indaryanti et al., 2025). The model was selected for its systematic structure, allowing for the identification of program needs, the design of appropriate guidelines, and the validation and practicality testing of the developed product. The focus was on creating extracurricular program guidelines tailored to students' talents and interests, with the aim of improving participation and engagement.

Participants and Context

The study was conducted at SMAN 11 Luwu Timur, a public senior high school located in a rural area of South Sulawesi, Indonesia. Participants included 102 students from various grades, 10 extracurricular coaches, and 8 subject teachers, as well as the school principal. The selection of participants was based on purposive sampling (Robinson, 2023) to ensure the inclusion of stakeholders directly involved in extracurricular activities. The school was chosen due to its low participation rates in extracurricular programs despite offering a range of activities in sports, arts, scouting, and religious education.

Data Collection

Multiple data collection techniques were employed to ensure comprehensive findings. Questionnaires were distributed to students to assess their interests, talents, and perceptions of existing extracurricular programs. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with teachers, extracurricular coaches, and the school principal to identify challenges and resource constraints. Observations of ongoing extracurricular activities were carried out to document participation patterns and instructional practices. All instruments were developed based on the theoretical framework of talent and interest development, and were reviewed by two educational experts prior to use.

Instrument Development and Validation

The development of the extracurricular program guidelines was systematically carried out following the four stages of the 4D model: Define, Design, Develop, and Disseminate. In the Define stage, a needs analysis was conducted through a combination of surveys, interviews, and document reviews to identify gaps in the existing extracurricular programs at SMAN 11 Luwu Timur. This process revealed several issues, including limited program diversity, low participation rates, and the absence of structured guidelines aligned with students' talents and interests.

During the Design stage, the research team prepared a draft of the extracurricular program guidelines. This draft contained detailed descriptions of program objectives, activity structures, recommended scheduling formats, and implementation procedures. The design emphasized flexibility to accommodate the varied talents and interests of students while remaining feasible within the school's resource constraints. The content was aligned with the principles of holistic education and the national educational framework, particularly the *Pancasila Student Profile*.

The Develop stage involved validating the draft guidelines with the help of three senior educators specializing in curriculum development and extracurricular management. Expert validation was conducted using a structured evaluation instrument based on a Likert scale, assessing four key aspects: content relevance, clarity, feasibility, and alignment with educational goals. Experts provided both quantitative ratings and qualitative feedback, which informed several revisions, including the integration of technology-based activities and more flexible scheduling options.

Finally, in the Disseminate stage, the revised guidelines were tested through small-scale implementation in selected extracurricular clubs. This trial aimed to evaluate the practicality of the guidelines from the perspectives of both teachers and students. Practicality assessments were conducted using feedback forms that examined ease of use, adaptability, and perceived benefits. The expert validation process resulted in a mean score of 76.88%, classified as highly valid, while the practicality test produced scores exceeding 75%, indicating that the guidelines were considered user-friendly and well-suited to the school context.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data from the validation and practicality tests were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including means and percentages, to determine the validity and practicality levels. Qualitative data from interviews and observations were analyzed through thematic analysis, allowing the identification of recurring themes related to program relevance, resource constraints, and student engagement. The integration of quantitative and qualitative findings provided a comprehensive understanding of the feasibility and potential impact of the developed guidelines.

RESULTS

The development of extracurricular program guidelines at SMAN 11 Luwu Timur was carried out through the 4D model stages, resulting in a set of structured, context-specific recommendations aimed at increasing student participation and optimizing talent and interest development.

Needs Analysis

The needs analysis stage identified significant gaps in the existing extracurricular program at SMAN 11 Luwu Timur. Although the school offered a range of activities—including sports (e.g., volleyball, badminton), arts (e.g., dance, music), scouting, and religious education—participation rates remained low. This condition was further clarified through survey data, which revealed the main factors contributing to low student participation. As illustrated in Figure 1:

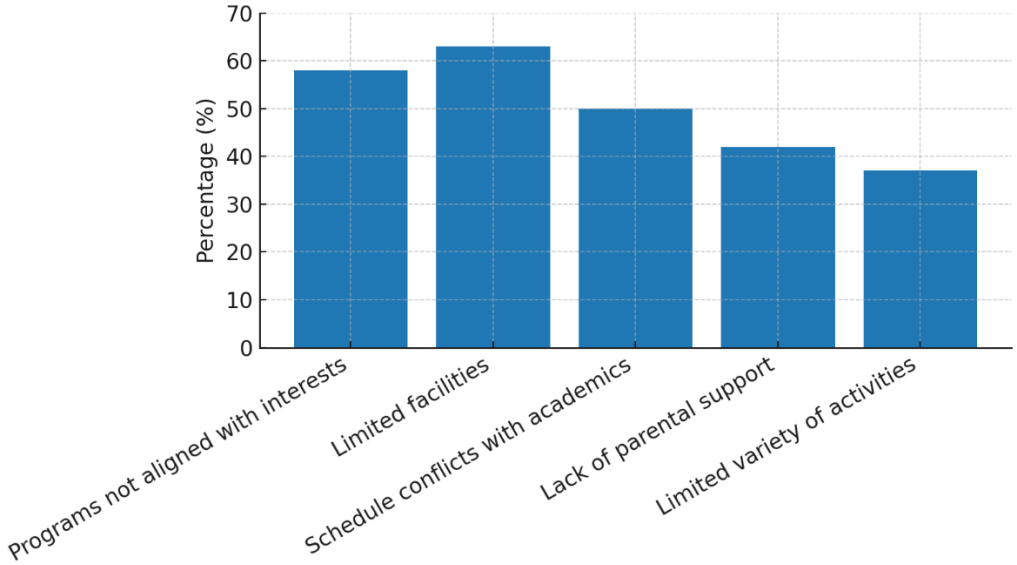

Figure 1. Reasons for Low Participation in Extracurricular Activities

Figure 1 shows that the most frequently cited reasons for low participation were limited facilities (63%) and the lack of alignment between available programs and students' personal interests (58%). Scheduling conflicts with academic activities (50%), insufficient parental support (42%), and limited variety of activities (37%) were also reported. Survey data from 102 students indicated a strong preference for technology-based activities such as robotics, digital media, and graphic design, which were not currently offered. Students also highlighted the shortage of adequate sports equipment, dedicated arts spaces, and technology resources as major obstacles. These findings underscore the urgency of redesigning extracurricular programs to better match students' talents and interests, diversify activity options, integrate technology-based components, optimize scheduling to avoid academic conflicts, and strengthen parental and community involvement.

Qualitative data from interviews with 10 extracurricular coaches and 8 teachers highlighted several structural issues. Program planning was often ad-hoc, relying heavily on the availability and personal interest of individual coaches rather than a school-wide strategic plan. Coaches noted that extracurricular scheduling frequently conflicted with students' academic obligations, reducing

attendance and long-term commitment. Teachers also reported that parental support for extracurricular participation was inconsistent, with some parents prioritizing academic performance over skill development outside the classroom.

Observations of ongoing activities further confirmed these issues. Attendance records showed fluctuating participation, especially in sports clubs that required regular practice. Arts-based programs had stronger initial enrollment but suffered from low retention due to the absence of performance opportunities and limited materials. The scouting program remained the most consistently attended, primarily because it was mandatory for certain grade levels, though student engagement varied depending on the activity format.

Overall, the needs analysis underscored the urgency of redesigning extracurricular programs to better match students' talents and interests, diversify activity options, integrate technology-based components, optimize scheduling to avoid academic conflicts, and strengthen parental and community involvement. These findings directly informed the design stage of the guideline development process.

Guideline Design

The extracurricular program guidelines were designed to directly address the issues identified in the needs analysis. The guidelines were structured into four key components as illustrated below:

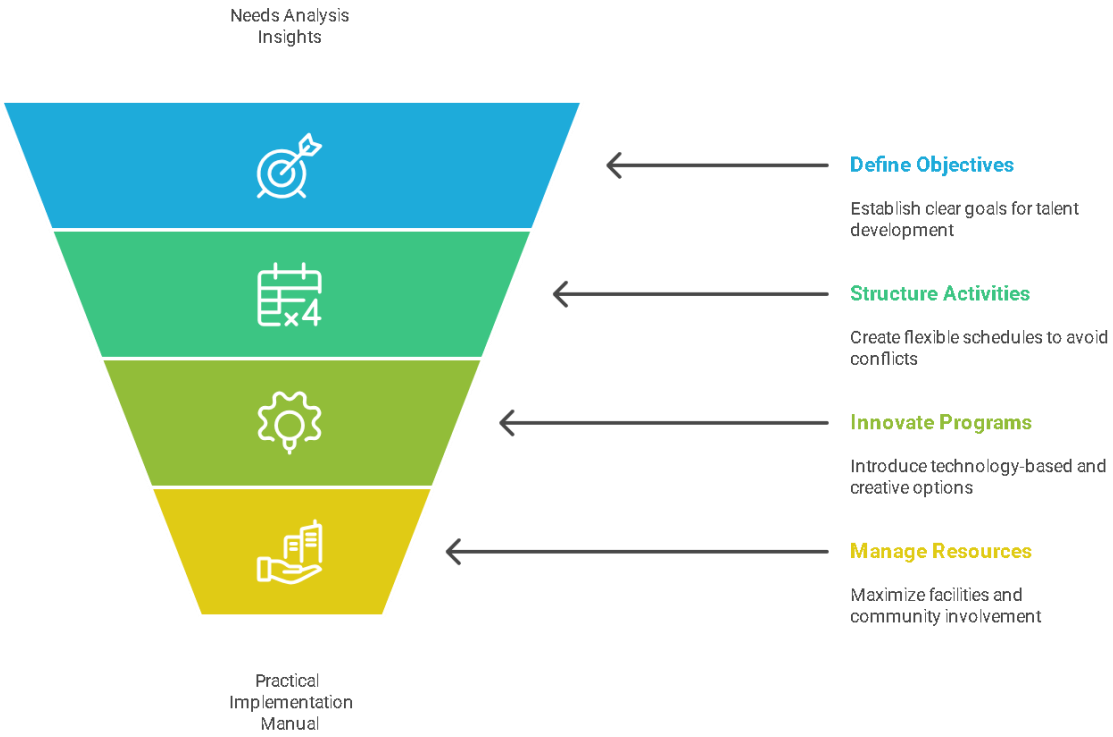

Figure 2. Guideline Design Structure

The four key components of Figure 2 are first, clearly defined objectives were formulated to ensure that each program explicitly targeted the development of students' talents and interests, aligning with the *Pancasila Student Profile* and the holistic education framework. These objectives provided a reference point for both coaches and students, ensuring that activities were goal-oriented and measurable. Second, structured activity plans with flexible scheduling were developed to reduce conflicts with academic timetables and improve attendance consistency. The plans included both weekly and monthly schedules, allowing adaptation to different club needs while ensuring sufficient practice or preparation time. Third, the guidelines incorporated diverse and innovative activity options, particularly technology-based and creative programs such as robotics, digital media, and graphic design. These additions responded directly to students' expressed preferences and aimed to increase motivation and sustained participation. Fourth, resource management and community involvement

strategies were outlined to maximize the use of existing school facilities, encourage parental engagement, and develop partnerships with local organizations or industries. This approach was intended to address resource limitations while strengthening the sustainability of the programs. The final product was presented in the form of a written manual containing program descriptions, scheduling templates, suggested activities, and implementation checklists. This format was chosen to ensure that the guidelines were practical, easy to follow, and adaptable to other schools with similar contexts.

Expert Validation

Validation by three senior educators produced a mean score of 76.88%, categorized as *high validity*. Table 1 presents the detailed validation results, showing that content relevance scored the highest at 80%, followed by clarity (77%), feasibility (75%), and alignment with educational goals (75%). Expert feedback highlighted the strength of the guidelines in addressing diverse student needs, while recommending improvements in technology integration and scheduling flexibility.

Table 1. Expert Validation Results of the Developed Guidelines

Aspect	Mean Score (%)	Category
Content relevance	80.00	High
Clarity	77.00	High
Feasibility	75.00	High
Alignment with educational goals	75.00	High
Average	**76.88**	**High**

Practicality Test

The practicality test involved extracurricular coaches and students during a small-scale trial. The results indicated a mean practicality score above 75%, suggesting that the guidelines were considered easy to implement, adaptable to different club activities, and beneficial for improving participation. Teachers noted that the structured scheduling reduced conflicts with academic workloads, while students reported that the inclusion of creative and technology-oriented activities increased their motivation to join extracurricular programs.

Table 2. Practicality Test Results

Respondent Group	Mean Score (%)	Category
Extracurricular coaches	76.50	Practical
Students	75.80	Practical
Average	**76.15**	**Practical**

Overall, the findings demonstrate that the developed guidelines meet both validity and practicality criteria, making them feasible for implementation in SMAN 11 Luwu Timur and potentially adaptable for other schools with similar contexts.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that the extracurricular program guidelines developed through the 4D model achieved high levels of both validity (76.88%) and practicality (76.15%). These results indicate that the guidelines are not only theoretically sound but also feasible for implementation within the school's specific context. The emphasis on aligning programs with students' talents and interests directly addresses the low participation rates identified in the needs analysis, which is consistent with Deci and Ryan's Self-Determination Theory that highlights the importance of autonomy, competence, and relatedness in sustaining motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2023).

The strong scores in content relevance and clarity suggest that the guidelines successfully bridge the gap between policy and practice. Previous studies have shown that extracurricular activities aligned with student interests significantly enhance motivation and performance (Garcia, 2022; King et al., 2021; Tawakkal et al., 2025). The present study reinforces these findings, providing a structured, validated framework that can be directly applied by schools. Unlike earlier works that primarily evaluated existing programs, this research contributes a replicable development model tailored to rural school contexts, where resource constraints and program diversity limitations are common challenges.

The integration of technology-based and creative activities in the guidelines marks a noteworthy innovation. While previous research emphasized the positive impact of creative extracurricular programs on students' problem-solving abilities, such activities have often been absent in rural schools due to limited facilities (Kosarikov & Davydova, 2022; Wang & Ismail, 2024). By including adaptable, low-cost technology and creative projects, the developed guidelines respond to students' expressed preferences while maintaining feasibility within existing resource limitations (Brown et al., 2021; Novak et al., 2021). This aligns with Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences, particularly in addressing logical-mathematical, spatial, and interpersonal domains that are often underserved in traditional extracurricular offerings (Cavas & Cavas, 2020; Gardner, 2015).

The practicality test results further confirm that the guidelines can be smoothly integrated into school routines without disrupting academic schedules. This finding is consistent with relevant research, who highlighted the importance of balancing extracurricular engagement with academic demands to sustain participation over time (De Sisto et al., 2022; Winstone et al., 2020). The structured scheduling component in the developed guidelines directly addresses scheduling conflicts—identified by 50% of surveyed students—thus removing a significant barrier to involvement.

Beyond its immediate context, the success of the developed guidelines underscores the importance of participatory design in educational program development. Involving students, teachers, and extracurricular coaches during the Define and Design stages ensured that the final product was not only relevant but also reflective of the community's unique needs. This participatory approach mirrors the findings of relevan research, who reported that programs designed with direct stakeholder involvement tend to have higher acceptance rates and long-term sustainability (Hoang et al., 2025; Otaki et al., 2022). By embedding such collaborative processes into the guideline development, this study adds practical evidence to the argument that educational interventions are more effective when they are co-created with their intended beneficiaries.

Another significant implication of this research lies in its capacity to address equity in educational opportunities. Rural schools in Indonesia, such as SMAN 11 Luwu Timur, often face systemic challenges that limit students' access to diverse and high-quality extracurricular programs. The guidelines developed here intentionally incorporate resource-efficient strategies, enabling schools with limited budgets to still provide enriching activities. This approach resonates with global calls for inclusive education, as articulated by UNESCO, which advocate for the removal of participation barriers based on geographic, economic, or infrastructural constraints (Team, 2020). By demonstrating that innovative program design can overcome these limitations, this study contributes to the discourse on equitable access to holistic education.

Finally, the alignment of the guidelines with both national and theoretical frameworks enhances their potential for scalability. The focus on the *Pancasila Student Profile* ensures that the guidelines remain consistent with Indonesia's current educational priorities, while the integration of theories such as Multiple Intelligences and Self-Determination provides a robust conceptual foundation (Gardner, 2015; Ryan & Deci, 2023). This dual alignment makes the guidelines adaptable not only across different schools within Indonesia but also in other countries facing similar rural education challenges. Future research could expand on this study by conducting longitudinal evaluations of the guidelines' impact on student outcomes, such as academic achievement, leadership skills, and long-term engagement in extracurricular activities.

CONCLUSION

This study developed and validated extracurricular program guidelines using the 4D model to address low student participation and optimize talent and interest development in a rural Indonesian senior high school. The guidelines demonstrated high validity (76.88%) and practicality (76.15%),

indicating that they are both theoretically sound and operationally feasible. By incorporating structured objectives, flexible scheduling, diverse activity options, and resource management strategies, the guidelines provide a comprehensive framework that directly responds to the specific needs identified in the school context.

The integration of technology-based and creative activities represents a significant innovation, particularly for rural schools with limited access to such programs. This approach not only aligns with student preferences but also supports the development of a broader range of competencies, consistent with the *Pancasila Student Profile* and established educational theories such as Multiple Intelligences and Self-Determination. Furthermore, the participatory development process—engaging students, teachers, and extracurricular coaches—ensured that the guidelines were contextually relevant and more likely to be adopted in practice.

From a practical standpoint, the guidelines offer school administrators and policymakers a ready-to-use model that can be adapted to other schools facing similar challenges, both in Indonesia and internationally. The resource-efficient strategies outlined in the guidelines provide a pathway for schools with budgetary or infrastructural constraints to still deliver engaging and meaningful extracurricular experiences. On a broader scale, the study contributes to the discourse on equitable access to holistic education, demonstrating that innovative, context-sensitive program design can overcome systemic barriers to participation.

Future research should focus on longitudinal implementation to assess the sustained impact of the guidelines on student outcomes, including academic performance, leadership skills, creativity, and lifelong learning attitudes. Comparative studies across different regions and school types would also be valuable in refining the model and identifying best practices for scaling. By continuing to innovate in the design and delivery of extracurricular programs, educators can ensure that students not only excel academically but also develop the diverse skills and character traits needed to thrive in an increasingly complex and interconnected world.

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The authors declare no funding and conflicts of interest for this research.

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