Rural Youth 21st Century Workforce Ready

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Abstract

 The educational system in Indonesia is facing significant quality and access challenges, and unemployment remains a real concern. Indonesian youth struggle to find their place in the national workforce which is undergoing significant change as a consequence of the burgeoning of information communications technologies. In 2007, the non-formal education center, called the Slukat Learning Center (SLC), was established in rural Gianyar, Bali   to improve employment opportunities and facilitate empowerment by providing educational opportunities for rural children and youth. This paper reports early finding from a research project exploring how the curriculum at the learning center has been able to generate successful outcomes.Drawing upon data from interviews with the SLC Chairman and 18 SLC alumni, this paper focused upon how the curriculum has been able to empower rural Balinese youth in Gianyar, in ways that have enabled them to become future workforce ready. Aiming to contribute to the research in the field on youth empowerment through non-formal education, the data were analyzed using Bourdieu's Social Reproduction Theory. The preliminary analysis reported here indicates that SLC can be considered a field within which the curriculum facilitates youth empowerment through supporting the construction of a new habitus and acquisition of a range of economic, cultural and social capitals.

Keywords: Youth Empowerment, Non-formal Education, 21st Century Skills, Social Reproduction Theory, Bourdieu

Introduction

Indonesia is the fourth largest (by population) nation in the world. It is ranked 74 out of 130 globally and 6th out of the 10 member ASEAN countries for developing and deploying human capital potential, based on the World Economic Forum Human Capital Report 2016. This positioning indicates that Indonesia still has considerable areas for improvement in developing its human capital. One area of real concern remains unemployment. While the national unemployment rate is relatively low, at 6% (Human Capital Report, 2016) the rate of unemployment for those aged 15 and 24 is 21.58 million young people, nearly 10 % of the total population. It continues to increase by roughly 1.7 million per year (World Bank, 2017). The pace of employment growth is much slower than population growth and the high unemployment among those aged 15 to 24 indicates that graduates from Indonesian universities, vocational schools and secondary schools are encountering difficulties finding their place in the national workforce. Indonesia should have enjoyed the potential demographic dividend from this cohort. However, their failure to secure employment not only exacerbates their own, but also local, regional and national levels of poverty.

For Indonesia, along with unemployment, poverty is an entrenched social and economic challenge. Indonesia's current level of poverty sits at around 8.3% of the population, roughly equivalent to 21 million people. The World Bank defines this as comprising those "living in extreme poverty," or below US $1.90 per day. Furthermore, "approximately 40% of the entire population remains vulnerable to falling into poverty, as their income hovers only marginally above the national poverty line" as stated in the World Bank Indonesia Website.

The impact of the national challenges of both poverty and education can be observed at regional and local levels, particularly in Gianyar, in the mid-east coast of Bali. Bali is part of Indonesia and has been known as one of the top tourist destinations in the world. Bali was named as the World's Best Destination 2017 by the prestigious Trip Advisor Travelers' Choice Award. Even though the tourism industry is attracting millions of tourists, education and unemployment also remain a challenge (Tamatea & Pramitasari, 2018). This can be seen in a village called Keramas, Gianyar Bali which is located 40 kilometers east of the capital city of Bali. In 2004-2005, the number of people looking for employment in Gianyar over the age of 15 increased 28% from 13,135 to 18,475. 83% of these people had only completed primary levels of education. After observing this dilemma in 2007, the Slukat Learning Center (SLC), a free, after school, non-formal education center was established with the purpose to improve employment opportunities and facilitate empowerment for children and youth in rural Gianyar Bali.

Literature Review

The Impact of Digital Technology Upon the Future Workforce

Digital technologies have revolutionised how people work and live. According to the recent Accenture-New-Skills-Now-Report (2017), the rapid pace and scale of technological change has disrupted labour markets and created challenges for the future workforce. The report also indicated employment opportunities requiring digital skills will grow by 12 percent by 2024, along with the increasing rate of automation. Arguably those with lower levels of education will be increasingly disadvantaged by these digital trends.

The Future of Jobs Report 2018 from the World Economic Forum highlighted the top trending in-demand of skills by 2022. Analytical thinking and innovation were predicted to be in highest demand. Technology competency such as programming and technology design are employment areas continuously increasing in demand along with the need for skills around creativity, originality and initiative. It is predicted that there will be a continued fall in demand for manual skills and employment opportunities requiring physical abilities alone as stated in the Future of Job Report (2018).

The Role of Non- Formal Education in Empowering Youth

To minimize the risk of increased disadvantage and employment drop-out, rural youths arguably required educational opportunities providing access to the new skills required by the new 21 century workforce. SLC as a non-formal education provider aims to provide these skills so that its graduates can think critically and creatively to solve problems, communicate effectively, collaborate, find and assess information quickly, and effectively use technology (Soulé & Warrick, 2015). Moreover, (Souto-Otero, Ulicna, Schaepkens, & Bognar) stated:

> the purpose of non-formal education, youth organizations are to enhance the skills and competences that empower young people in their personal development - boosting their self-esteem and awareness of their identity-helping them to become responsible and active citizens in their communities and to access and stay in labor market (2013, p. 16)

This resonates with the founders' fundamental mission in establishing a non-formal education learning center.

According to empowerment theory, engaging youth in pro-social, meaningful, and community-enhancing activities enables youth to define and control their life, and helps them to gain vital skills, responsibilities, and the confidence necessary to become productive and healthy adults (Perkins & Zimmerman, 1995). These foci resonate with Blaak, Openjuru, and Zeelen (2013) view on the role of non-formal education, which is to provide practical empowerment. Practical empowerment would not only include acquiring marketable skills and business skills, but also decision-making skills, knowledge to make informed decisions, social skills to manage social support, awareness of one's position and rights in society in addition to the development of strong self-esteem and assertiveness.

Notwithstanding these perspectives, the Slukat Learning Center's approach to youth empowerment through the provision of non-formal education is particularly aligned with the work of Morton and Montgomery (2011) who argue that youth empowerment is a process by which a young person's social environment intentionally redefines his or her role as one of value, ability, autonomy, and contribution. Within this empowering environment, attitudes and behaviors change to reflect the redefined roles in which youth may find themselves (Morton & Montgomery, 2011). Non-formal education at SLC possibly creates 'bondedness' or social capital to access new ideas, skills, support, and resources that promote healthier communities and individual socio-economic mobility since its grounded by positive and trust-based interactions among all SLC stakeholders including staff and students.

Research Methodology

Research Aim

Over the period of a decade, more than 1000 students have participated in SLC programs, and while this may seem a lot, it should be noted that the total population of students aged 10 to 24 in Gianyar (Bali) alone is 103,474 (BPS Gianyar, 2014). Initial observations have indicated that some of the alumni who have completed the youth empowerment program have gained skills and increased self-confidence and motivation, which has led them to continue with further education and achieve improved employability.

The research paper aims to understand how SLC's curriculum facilitates rural youth empowerment in preparing them for the future workforce. To support this investigation of the curriculum, the project aims to answer the following research questions:

- How has the curriculum evolved over the past decade to meet the 21st century workforce?

- What are the skills acquired by students in SLC?
- How do the skills acquired at SLC impact the student's life?

Research Orientation

The research project is framed by a broadly qualitative research orientation. It aims to generate a rich in-depth description of the programs which comprise the SLC's curriculum in developing empowerment for rural youth (Mertens, 2005). Thus far, this research orientation and accompanying qualitative research methods have supported exploring students' lives, behaviors, and indeed their stories and meanings that are connected with their experience of non-formal education at SLC. The research project is framed by the critical paradigm which allows for a better understanding of how socio-economic factors may impact the students' relationship to the curriculum and learning experiences (Tamatea & Pramitasari, 2018).

Participants

The approach in recruiting the participants were conducted in two ways. The SLC Chairman, Mr. I Gusti Agung Rai was invited personally for an interview and the alumni invitation was posted in various communication channels including SLC's Facebook page, Instagram and the Alumni's Network Group. 18 SLC alumni who have since graduated from High School and are currently either continuing higher degree education, developing their own businesses or working in an institution/organization participated in the research. Their age ranged from 19 and 26 with the cohort comprising 9 males and 9 females.

Data Generation

Data were collected from a range of sources. The primary data were obtained from interviews and the secondary data were generated from reviews of documents, videos and the alumni's social media and scholarship application essay. The interview with the chairman was conducted 'face to face', while the interviews with the alumni were conducted online using WhatsApp as the alumni were located in different part of the world including: 4 are in different parts of Bali, Indonesia, one in Java, one in Kalimantan, Indonesia, one in the United Kingdom and one in New Zealand.

Data Analysis

The data collected through documents and semi-structured interviews were subject to a thorough process of data analysis. The audio recordings of the interviews were transcribed by a third party. The data analysis process aimed to identify key themes, based on Bourdieu's Social Reproduction theory (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990) with its emphasis upon the field, capital (economic, social and cultural) and habitus. According to Webb, Schirato and Danaher (2002), Bourdieu's Social Reproduction theory provides the most significant and successful attempt to make sense of the relationship between objective social structures (institutions, discourses, fields, ideologies) and everyday practices (what people do, and why they do it). The data were analyzed for common and differentiated themes related to research questions on how the curriculum has evolved to develop skills that meet the 21st century workforce ready, and the graduates' experience of this.

Preliminary Research Findings

Field

Tamatea and Pramitasari (as cited in Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p. 101) stated that field "is always inhabited by individuals in a relationship with others who are framed by its 'rules of the game' or *doxa*. Moreover, Ignatow and Robinson (2017, p. 95) assert:

> Bourdieu defines a field as a network or configuration of relations between social positions in which positions and their interrelations are determined by the distribution of economic, social, and cultural capital. Though the borders between fields are porous, each field is characterized by its own logic (the 'rules of the game').

SLC as Non-Formal Education

Based on the above understandings, the field of Slukat Learning Center (SLC) can be classified as a non-formal education according to Indonesian's Law no. 20 of 2003. This law states that educational paths consist of formal, non-formal and informal education. Article 26 explains that non-formal education is a form of education organized for citizens who need educational services that are substitutes, enhancements, and/or complementary to formal education, supporting lifelong education. Article 26 also explains the aim of non-formal education, which is to develop the potential of learners with emphasis on the acquisition of knowledge, functional skills and professional development. Expressed otherwise by Coombs and Ahmed (1974, p. 251) "non-formal education is simply any organized activity with educational purposes carried on outside the highly structured framework of formal education systems as they exist today". Arguably, SLC can thus be identified as an experimental and innovative non-formal education provider. It has significant independence from governments, and a capacity to respond to emerging learning needs that develop as societies evolve. It aims for rural youth in Keramas Village in overcoming their disadvantage by equipping them with skills, knowledge and behaviours to be ready for the workforce.

The Evolution of the Program

To achieve its mission, SLC's program is based on four pillars which comprise: character and leadership development, globalisation, information technology and local wisdom. These four pillars are integrated and they interconnect through various curriculum learning and teaching activities including the English and Computer Class which is supported by international volunteers. Student interaction with international volunteers helps them acquire intercultural and global understanding, which arguably improves their self-confidence and motivation. Local wisdom informs the curriculum through student participation in practicing yoga, learning Balinese dance and preparing Balinese offerings (Banten) and cuisine (*Dapur Bali*); activities that are facilitated by SLC's alumni and parents. Development of student character and leadership skills has occurred through establishment of the Slukat Student Organization (SSO) where students can apply, construct and implement an action learning project. To support rural youth readiness for the workforce, SLC has also conducted vocational workshops including those focused upon Hospitality, Tourism and Entrepreneurship. In December 2018, SLC launched a coding class for its students.

The Slukat Learning Centre overall program was designed to meet both academic and workforce requirements. Within a decade of its operation the program has evolved based on local, national and global trends with respect to workforce requirements. This journey of evolution and change is represented below.
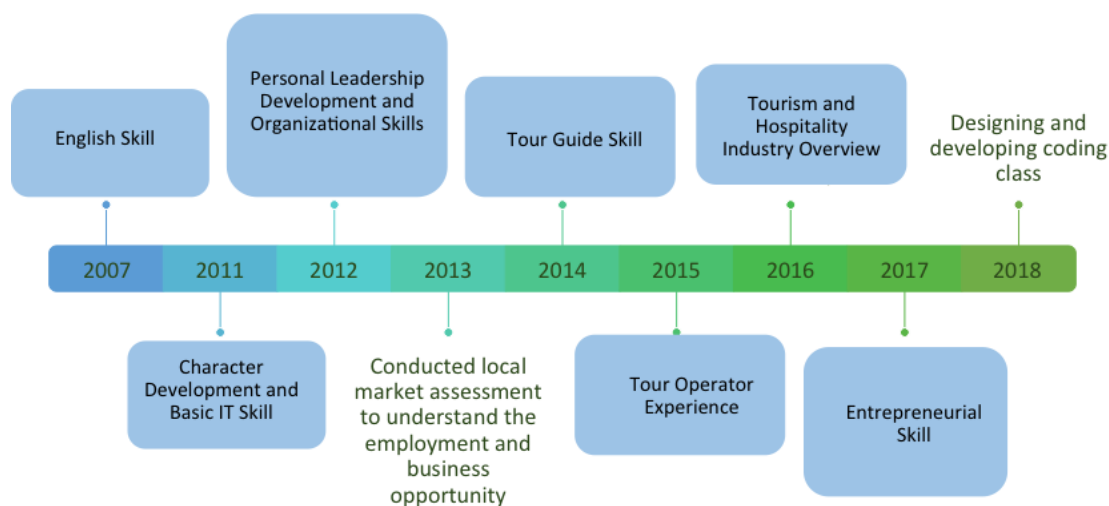
The rural youth English skills focused was set up   in 2007 with the understanding that the ability to speak English would provide rural youth with an advantage in relation to work in the tourism sector. After five years of operation, it was identified that the need to have basic IT skills and have a good character were also important to secure employability. Thus, character development and basic IT skills were added to the curriculum. This was followed by the establishment of Slukat Student Organisation to support the development of personal leadership skills and the development organizational skills in 2012.

The Changing Socioeconomic Condition of Keramas Village

Meanwhile, the local socioeconomic environment of Keramas Village was also changing, from an agriculture focus to a tourism community. With Keramas beach being one of the best surfing spots in Bali, the impact of this was the increase in the number of hotels, restaurants and tourist attractions.

To respond to the changing environment, SLC - supported by the Accenture Skill to Succeed program - conducted a local market assessment to understand the employment and business opportunities. The findings of the assessment indicated that there was still a considerable demand for labour in the Tourism and Services sectors, however, labour skills need to be complimented with improved soft skills. It was noted that there was potential for youth to start a business to capitalize the growth in the Tourism and Services. The recommendation arising from the assessment was to build tourism and hospitality industry skills. Based on this recommendation, the SLC curriculum started to conduct tour guide skill in 2014 and tour operator experience facilitated by conducting an experiential learning program in 2015. An entrepreneurship workshop was conducted in 2017, and as the result of this two participants have since started their own business.

To anticipate the digital technology revolution, SLC launched a coding program in December 2018. The purpose of the coding class is to introduce rural youth for an increasingly in demand 21st century skill. It is hoped that acquiring coding skills will   advantage SLC graduates in finding jobs in this digital world.

SLC as a Non-formal education provider adjusts the overall program continuously. This is a consequence of seeking 'alignment' with the needs of the wider context including national and global economic, social and political structures. It is also adjusted in relation to local needs including those of the students. This approach resonates with Blaak et al. (2013) who recommended the need for a holistic review and implementation of development strategies, keeping in mind the needs of local communities.

Habitus

"Habitus is constituted in practice and is always oriented towards practical functions" Bourdieu (1990 p. 52), he further elaborates:

> the conditionings associated with a particular class of conditions of existence produce habitus, systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function a structuring structure, that is as principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them (p. 53).

Elsewhere, the habitus is described as "a concept that expresses, on the one hand, the way in which individuals 'become themselves'—develop attitudes and dispositions—and, on the other hand, the ways in which those individuals engage in practices" Webb et al. (2002, p. xi). Arguably SLC informs the student habitus in that facilitates the internalization of practices, perceptions and values which inform student behaviour. According to the Chairman, the curriculum is based on (habitus informing) philosophies which are interrelated and introduced sequentially. These include:

a. PICU to inspire the students to have self-worth and appreciation of the Balinese culture. Thus, the students will be accepted in the communities such as school, village or workplace
b. PACU to encourage students in facing the globalization by providing the ability to access information and knowledge. These skills can support their contribution in the society
c. PECUT to empower the student's self-efficacy for them to compete in the workplace or further study. This will help them to be a trusted leader.

The philosophies are represented in diagram below:

The PICU activities that SLC conducts are character building and personal leadership, Balinese local wisdom and saving the environment. Whereas, PACU activities are English and Basic IT classes, while PECUT's activities relate to action learning programs such as the Slukat Student Organization's events, hospitality industry training and the coding class.

      With this in mind, SLC activities aim to shape the possibilities, freedoms, necessities and opportunities that condition the student's perception of their self-efficacy and self-worth which will enhance their personal development to be ready for the workforce.

Capital

"Capital can be understood as the "energy" that drives the development of a field through time" Moore (2014, p.105). It is a generalized "resource" that can assume monetary and nonmonetary forms as well as tangible and intangible forms. Bourdieu (1986) distinguishes between three general types of capital: economic capital, cultural and social capital.

The SLC's philosophies of PICU is perhaps a source of cultural capital which exists in various forms. It includes a focus upon long-standing dispositions and habits acquired in the socialization process, the accumulation of valued cultural and formal educational qualifications and training. The students seem to have acquired politeness and courteousness, developed self-confidence to interact with other people from different nationalities and have gained effective communication skills to interact with different type of nationalities in different settings (school, workplace, conference, organization). Whereas PACU is a source of economic capital, which Bourdieu refers as monetary income as well as other financial resources and assets. The students seem to have gained skills that enable them to generate monetary income such as English skills, Basic IT Skills and Leadership and organizational skills. Lastly PECUT can possibly be associated with social capital which Bourdieu defined as the sum of the actual and potential resources that can be mobilized through membership in social networks of actors and organizations (Bourdieu, 1986). Analysis of the data indicates that the students valued the local, national and international social networks which support their employment opportunities, education funding opportunities, and socio-economic project funding opportunities.

The Alumni reported that because of their participation in the SLC curriculum, they have acquired the following beneficial capabilities:

1. English Skills and Basic IT Skills;
2. A mindset of becoming visionary, creative, innovative, resilience and courage;
3. An understanding and belief in the value of trustworthiness, integrity, courtesy and patience.
4. Personal leadership through the increase and improvement in self-confidence, motivation, discipline and time management;
5. Organizational skills in collaboration, leading others and effective communication.

A number of the above capabilities which the alumni have acquired are skills that are important for job success such as communication, collaboration, creativity and innovation (Soulé & Warrick, 2015).

Evidence of Youth Empowerment

These acquired capabilities have arguably empowered SLC graduates to change their habitus from one initially framed by low motivation, expectations and self-belief, to one sufficiently confident to pursue their dreams; indeed, sufficiently confident to begin to dream. These alumni have since gone on to achieve outcomes that would have arguably been beyond their expectations upon initially joining SLC. These have included:

- Being awarded an overseas and domestic bachelor and master degree Scholarship (UK, New Zealand, US and Indonesia)
- Participation in International Exchange Programs in Japan, Singapore and US.
- Pursuing a 'dream job' in hospitality industry, military and nursing
- Becoming an entrepreneur in the creative industry, as a web developer, professional dancer, and video and photography professional.
- Continuing into a higher education degree.
- Financially supporting themselves and their family.
- Mentoring and inspiring other students.

- Becoming leaders in their school and communities.
- Creating a social movement to save environment and improve public health

An illustration of how the alumni have arguably been empowered is the life journey of a financially disadvantaged, shy and low self-esteem girl at the time joining SLC. Within has five years, subsequently obtained a scholarship to continue her Bachelor degree in Public Health at the University of Udayana, Bali and has been awarded as one of the Most Outstanding Student. Moreover, she has since been selected to participate in a Youth Leadership Program in Japan, Thailand and Singapore and has conducted the Let's Share (*Mari Berbagi*) Movement to increase rural youth's knowledge and broaden their horizons.

Another example is that of a young man who attended SLC at the age of 13 years old when he was feeling hopeless and lacked motivation due to his disadvantaged family background. At the age of 19, he became a founder and CEO of a web development company and has since taught web design and web programming to rural youth. Arguably, both of these SLC graduates have not only enhanced their self-efficacy and self-worth, they have created a better livelihood for themselves. What's more, they are now in the position to inspire other students to do the same. By engaging young people as valued contributors, empowering programs aim to improve young people's beliefs in their own abilities to achieve tasks and overcome obstacles (Jennings, Parra-Medina, Hilfinger-Messias, & McLoughlin, 2006). Consequently, data obtained from SLC alumni, such as those in the examples above, strongly suggest that SLC students acquire empowerment by "doing and being educated." They have seemingly acquired capabilities and the freedom to enjoy 'capital' related opportunities "to improve the quality of their lives" (Seeberg, 2014).

Conclusion

SLC has been operating for more than a decade and can be identified as an experimental and innovative non-formal education provider. It has significant independence from governments, and a capacity to respond to emerging learning needs that develop as societies evolve. However, SLC is small and may become unsustainable due to limited resources. Some of the program and quality of learning delivery are inconsistent since these often depend upon sponsorship and volunteers. There is also decline in student participation due to the Government's initiatives of conducting full day school programs, which prevent students coming to the learning centre.

In conclusion, however, these preliminary research findings indicate "SLC" seems to contribute to student empowerment through the provision of a range of capital which have a positive impact upon the student habitus. Importantly the data show that English, basic IT usage, a new mindset, leadership and organizational skills have empowered them to both seek and obtain improved employability or continuing education opportunities that hopefully will lead them to a better livelihood. This conclusion, however, is based upon early and preliminary findings generated from a cohort of alumni. The research project will now begin to generate data from a range of other sources including current students, parents and head of communities to provide a more complete (if not complex) mapping of how the Slukat Learning Center curriculum supports rural Balinese youth to be ready for the 21st century workforce.

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