

***Preliminary Finding:
The Role of Non-Formal Education in Developing Rural Youth Empowerment***

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Abstract

High unemployment levels remain a real concern for developing countries like Indonesia, where employment growth is much slower than population growth, with youth experiencing the highest unemployment rate and difficulties finding a place in the national workforce. This is often compounded by poverty which is an entrenched social and economic challenge. To support poverty reduction improve employment opportunities and facilitate empowerment for children and youth in rural Gianyar Bali, the non-formal education facility, the Slukat Learning Center, was established in 2007. With just over a decade of operation, and a number of seemingly positive student outcomes, it is arguably timely to reflect upon the nature of the Slukat curriculum, with the view to informing what has otherwise being a gap in the research literature between the theory and practices in non-formal education (Romi and Schmida, 2009). Aiming to contribute to the research in the field on youth empowerment through non-formal education, this paper draws on the work of Bourdieu's Social Reproduction Theory to explore how the Slukat Learning Centre curriculum has evolved to provide learning experiences that challenge poverty and facilitate employment. In particular this paper draws upon data collected from 18 SLC alumni to unpack their understanding and experience of the curriculum. Reading these data through the lens of Social Reproduction theory, preliminary analysis indicate that "SLC" comprises which is supportive of youth developing an new new habitus through access to and acquisition of a range of economic, cultural and social capitals.

Keywords: Non-Formal Education, Youth Empowerment, Social Reproduction Theory

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Introduction

As a developing country and the 4th most populous country in the world, Indonesia continues to face challenges in developing its human capital. Indonesia is ranked 74 out of 130 nations in terms of the Human Capital Index in 2016, which is a measurement of developing and deploying human capital potential. The highest rate of unemployment is associated with the 15-24 age group, comprising 21.8 million people or almost 10% of total population. Poverty is thus an entrenched social and economic challenge, which is interconnected with and compounded by unemployment (World Bank Indonesia Overview Report). Though 50% of Indonesian children and youth living in poverty are residing in Java and Bali (SMERU & UNICEF, 2012), the impacts of these national challenges can be observed at regional and local levels, such as in Gianyar, in (location) Bali. A review conducted in 2004-2005, which subsequently informed the establishment of SLC found that the number of people looking for employment over the age of 15 had increased by 28% from 13,135 to 18,475. Moreover, 83% of this cohort had only completed primary school level education, which limited their employment options (Gianyar Regency report in 2004-2005) In response to what appear to be an education related challenge to youth empowerment, the family of I Gusti Agung Rai and I Gusti Ayu Darsini, (local Balinese) established SLC to provide free, after school extra curriculum activities for the children and youth in Keramas Village, in Gianyar, Bali.

With just over a decade of operation, and a number of seemingly positive student outcomes emerging from the Slukat Learning Center, it is now arguably timely to reflect upon the nature of the Slukat curriculum, with the view to informing what has otherwise been a gap in the research literature between the theory and practices in non-formal education (Romi and Schmida, 2009), particularly in relation to the inclusion of disadvantaged and excluded communities (Hoopers, 2006, p.87), and in terms of sustainability in conditions of limited funding (Werquin, 2010).

Aiming to contribute to the research in the field on youth empowerment through non-formal education, this paper draws on the work of Bourdieu's Social Reproduction Theory to explore how the Slukat Learning Centre curriculum has evolved to provide learning experiences that challenge poverty and facilitate employment. In particular this paper draws upon data collected from 18 SLC alumni to unpack their understanding and experience of the curriculum. Reading these data through the lens of Social Reproduction theory, preliminary analysis indicates that SLC comprises which is supportive of youth developing new habitus through access to and acquisition of a range of economic, cultural and social capitals. We hope that the preliminary findings reported in this paper and indeed the findings of the larger research project from which this paper emerges, can be used as a reference not only in Indonesia but also other developing countries that encounter similar issues.

The Slukat Learning Center (SLC)

Slukat Learning Center(SLC) is a free, after school, non-formal education center. Its mission is to empower rural youth in Gianyar Bali, primarily through improving rural students' acceptance rates in quality schools, and provide improved education opportunities. Since opening in 2007 approximately one thousand students have participated in the SLC curriculum.

1. The Curriculum

The curriculum is grounded in four pillars comprising: 1. globalisation, 2. information technology, 3. local wisdom and 4. character and leadership development. These four pillars are integrated and interconnected through the various teaching and learning activities that included for example: the English and Computer Class. Components of the curriculum have often been constructed and taught by international volunteers who provided students with access to aspects of globalization and internationalization, which arguably facilitates in the students the development of self-confidence and motivation. Local wisdom informs the curriculum through student participation in practicing yoga, learning Balinese dance and engagement in activities associated with Balinese culture and religion such as 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 construct and implement an action-learning project. These projects' have variously incorporated activities associated with leadership and motivational workshops, coaching and mentoring, local wisdom, spirituality and values in order to mitigate what are often seen in Bali as the negative impacts of globalization in Bali (L. Tamatea, 2011).

2. Youth Empowerment Program

Most families in the broad area 'serviced by SLC can be categorized as living in conditions framed by disadvantage; observable from low family income, decreased wealth, and low levels of parental education. The significance of this in terms of SLC's mission and curriculum is that the "absence of parental guidance, nourishment, and encouragement is the most damaging condition for child development" (Kautz, Heckman, Diris, Ter Weel, & Borghans, 2014, pp. 5-6). Moreover, (Kautz, Heckman, Diris, Ter Weel, & Borghans, 2014, pp. 5-6) explain that:

Quality parenting—stimulation, attachment, encouragement, and support—comprise valuable indicators of child advantage, which are not always so well captured by the 'traditional' measures of poverty commonly used in policy discussions.

Informal observations over the ten-year period since SLC was established reveal that many students initially engage the SLC curriculum from a position framed by little family encouragement for 'academic' achievement and consequent low levels of self-worth and motivation. In response, the SLC curriculum aims to empower often-vulnerable students from disadvantaged backgrounds by developing their agency (Mohajer & Earnest, 2009). Here, we draw upon Bowman (2010, p. 4), referencing Sen, to understand that agency is

"the capacity to act and bring about change", such "agency is important in evaluating 'what a person is free to do and achieve in pursuit of whatever goals or values he or she regards as important'"

Though we understand that choices are always limited, the SLC youth empowerment program is grounded upon making more choices available to its disadvantaged

students that may have previously been available to them, to foster improved social inclusion and economic and social mobility (Heckman, 2000).

Our approach to youth empowerment through the provision of non-formal education is thus 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 so as to reflect the redefined roles in which youth may find themselves Morton and Montgomery (2011).

3. Non-Formal Education

Souto-Otero, Ulicna, Schaepkens, & Bognar, (2013) argue that the purpose of non-formal education youth organisations is to:

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 (16).

This view resonates with SLC's founder mission in establishing SLC. According to the SLC website, the founders in taking the opportunity to give back to their community believed that village children could have a better future if only they had the appropriate opportunity. And in this, they viewed education as being central - through provision of a conduit to help disadvantaged students better negotiate the local and the global.

Research Methodology

1. Research purpose

The purpose of the research project from which this discussion paper emerges has been to explore how the SLC non-formal education curriculum supports rural youth empowerment. To support this investigation of the curriculum, the project aims to answer the following research questions:

- What are the capitals manifest at SLC?
- How do these capitals facilitate rural youth empowerment?

2. Research Orientation

In exploring how SLC supports rural youth empowerment 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 curriculum as a whole at the Slukat Learning Centre in so far as this concerns the empowerment of 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).

3. Participants

Invitation to participate in the research project were posted in various communication channels including SLC's Facebook page, Instagram and the Alumni's Network Group. 18 SLC alumni who were SLC students between 2007- 2016 agreed to participate in the research. Their age ranged between 19 and 26 with the cohort comprising 9 males and 9 females. All alumni have since graduated from High School and are currently either continuing higher degree education, developing their own businesses or working in an institution/organization.

4. Data Generation

Data were collected from a number of sources. These included semi-structured one on one interviews with the alumni and reviews of their personal stories through available on Facebook, in blogs, in Instagram, and in LinkedIn. Data were also generated through accessing videos created by Alumni and various scholarship application documents. Interviews were conducted online using WhatsApp as the alumni were located in different part of the world including:

- 14 are in different parts of Bali, Indonesia.
- 1 in Java and 1 Kalimantan, Indonesia.
- 1 in the United Kingdom and 1 in New Zealand.

5. Data Interpretation

The research project from which this discussion paper emerges is guided by Bourdieu's Social Reproduction theory (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990) with its emphasis upon capital (economic, social and cultural) the field, and habitus. Bourdieu's social reproduction theory comprises, according to Webb, Schirato and Danaher (2002, p. 1):

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).

For a project aiming to understand how the curriculum supports rural youth empowerment, Bourdieu's Social Reproduction Theory, with its emphasis upon the relationship between social, cultural and economic informants of behavior would seem to offer a value set of tools for understanding not only the students' initial response to the SLC curriculum, but how the curriculum might facilitate a change in such a response.

Key concepts from Bourdieu's social reproduction theory are explored in brief below.

Field

For Bourdieu a field “is always inhabited by individuals in a relationship with others who are framed by its rules of the game or doxa (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p. 101)”. 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’).

Based on the above understanding of the field, we argue that the field in this research project comprises the context of the Slukat Learning Centre. This is a context within which students are in a relationship with others (such as other students, volunteers and program support staff) where in there are rules of the game or doxa. The research project will explore more precisely what these rules of the game and doxa are.

Habitus

According to Bourdieu, the habitus is “tied to the ‘perception and appreciation of practices, cognitive and evaluative structures which are acquired through the lasting experience of a social position” (1989 p.19). Working with this understanding of the habitus, the research project explored the alumni’s pre-SLC dispositions and those which had emerge presumably as a result of participation in the SLC context and curriculum.

Capital

Anheier, Gerhards, and Romo (1995, p. 862) assert that:

Bourdieu's concept of "capital" is broader than the monetary notion of capital nonmonetary as well as tangible and intangible forms. Bourdieu (1986, p. 243) distinguishes between three general types of capital, which may assume field-specific contents:

- a) Economic capital refers to monetary income as well as other financial resources and assets and finds its institutional expression in property rights.
- b) Cultural capital exists in various forms. It includes long-standing dispositions and habits acquired in the socialization process, the accumulation of valued cultural and formal educational qualifications and training.
- c) Social capital is the sum of the actual and potential resources that can be mobilized through membership in social networks of actors and organizations.

Based on the above understanding, the research investigated the most valuable learning/experience alumni gained in SLC that impacted their life.

Preliminary Research Findings

Working with Bourdieu's Social Reproduction Theory to interpret the participant (Alumni) responses, it appears (at this early stage) that SLC curriculum supports student access to a range of capitals. These capitals are identified in Table. 1. Below:

Table 1

Economic Capital	Cultural Capital	Social Capital
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • English skills • Basic IT Skills • Leadership and organizational skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acquired politeness and courteousness • Developed self- confidence to interact with other people from different nationalities and culture • Gained effective communication skills to interact with different type of nationalities and (school, workplace, conference, organization) 	Local, national and international social networks supporting: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • employment opportunities • Education funding opportunities • Socio-economic project funding opportunities

The data show that the alumni valued their participation in the SLC curriculum for a number of reasons. These included the:

- fun and happy learning environments;
- curriculum openness and flexibility;
- guidance and encouragement from the founders' family;
- mentoring from volunteers, staffs and alumni;
- international cultural interaction
- sharing of information and knowledge between SLC members;
- action leaning projects such as event organization and excursion

The Alumni report that as a consequence of their participation in the SLC curriculum they have acquired increased confidence, motivation, creativity, innovation, courage and resilience. Arguably these reported outcomes point to a change in student habitus, from one initially framed by low motivation, expectations and self-belief, to one sufficiently confident to pursue dreams:

The alumni in this participate group 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, India and Indonesia)
- Participation in International Exchange Programs in Japan, Singapore and US.

- Pursuing a ‘dream job’ in hospitality industry, military and medicine
- Becoming an entrepreneur in the creative industry, as a web developer, professional dancer, and video and photography professional.
- Continuing on 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.

Conclusion

The SLC curriculum is firmly grounded in the specific context of Balinese local wisdom; a location which it leverages to attract international volunteers, inform the utilization information technology and develop the student’s character, and leadership as forms of capital to be used to overcome disadvantage. Grandstaff (1976) argues that in the context of specific development programs (such as at SLC), non-formal learning is often the most appropriate educational strategy and thus a better choice than formal education.

These preliminary research findings indicate “SLC” comprises that makes available access to a range of capitals that seem to have a positive impact upon students’ dispositions or habitus. More importantly the data show the SLC curriculum provides opportunities for the empowerment of rural youth. These, however, are 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, to provide a more complete (if not complex) mapping of how the range of capitals associated with the curriculum interact.

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