Langsajarot Learning Community as a Response to Local Education Needs in the Pandemic Era

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ABSTRACT

During the Covid-19 pandemic era, the world of education experienced a transformation from traditional to digital learning. Not all schools are ready to organize online learning, especially in villages. Langsajarot community in Magersari Village was formed as the response to the local education needs during this Covid-19 outbreak. Langsajarot community was formed to learn and prepare the children to adapt to digital learning. This study aims to obtain a detailed description of the learning management of the Langsajarot community so it can prepare the children for digital learning. Observation, documentation, and in-depth interview about the founding and learning activity of Langsajarot were carried out to obtain the research data. Observation and documentation were done for three months more. Founders, members, and the parents of members were interviewed. Data analysis was carried out through data condensation, data display, verification, and conclusion. The result shows that Langsajarot was formed to fill the free time of the children using positive activities and in managing the community during the pandemic era, there are three important factors. First, Langsajarot uses a constructivist approach to build the children's motivation. Second, Langsajarot uses an engagement strategy to build the interest and focus in learning, therefore, although the community is nonformal they have many attendees. Third, Langsajarot introduces and trains the member about how to use the internet as learning resources and make their learning video and channel.

Keywords: *Learning Community, Digital Learning, Pandemic Era.*

1. INTRODUCTION

In 1996, Owens & Wang said that Leaders in business, education, and community development today realize that school alone can't prepare our generation well for the future [1]. Why can it happen? Because many of our generation who study at school feel that what they learn are irrelevant to their daily life outside the school. Often they feel bored, unmotivated, and lack opportunities to apply their knowledge in daily life.

Then, in 2006, Melaville, Berg, & Blank said that community schools were a solution [2]. It would link between life and learn. A growing number of schools and community partners adjust with courses during the regular school day and after school-allow students to learn in their communities. Community-based learning or CBL exist to connect the student with their daily life, at least with themselves. Melaville et al. (2006) said that community schools provide a wide environment for learning far beyond the classroom walls [2]. And recently, there has been a strong effort of educators to raise awareness of the practice of CBL [3].

What is community-based learning and why is it important especially in this pandemic era? Owens and Wang (1996) define community-based learning as a set of learning or teaching strategies that gives an environment for young or adults to learn anything that they want from their community life [1]. It means that in the community, the members learn only what they want and it automatically will grow more motivation. Also, community schools offer a common sense approach to reconnect life and learning [2]. As Owens and Wang (1996) said that students in a regular school did not feel any meaningful relationship with the adults (teachers) and they feel unmotivated to learn [1]. Moreover, they saw education as a force and pressure from adults. But in the community, students

use time, attention, and effort with pleasure because their learning is meaningful and purposeful [2].

We have said that community is more motivating and connecting than an ordinary school. So what its relation with our nowadays reality? It is our fact, that since the end of March 2020, almost all schools along the country were "closed". "Closed" in this pandemic era means that schools change and transform from the face-to-face method into long-distance learning [4][5]. About 1.5 billion students over the world and 25 million students in Indonesia get the effect of this transformation [5][6]. Besides this long-distance learning, work from home, and social distancing are run to push down the spread of Covid-19 viruses [7].

Long-distance learning uses any digital media and is often called school from home. School from home uses the platform of online application or paper-based task, or both of them [4]. The term online learning is also used to describe learning in this pandemic era. Online learning or web-based learning is a kind of E-learning. Digital media such as computers and other devices are used in this method [8]. If we look around us, social media, WhatsApp, Google meet or zoom is used in this digital learning. The use of the platform is based on the skill and readiness of both the teachers and the students. Not only school but any conference or seminar is run online.

The transformation of the learning model from face-to-face to online learning, besides becoming a solution, also raises some problems. Moreover, this transform is happened by forced [9]. The fact is that many educational institutes are still struggling to adopt online learning [10]. In 2012, Kennedy & Archambault did research and showed that only 1.3% of teachers said it was important to do online learning [11]. It meant that generally, people like to do face-to-face learning. Then, Sutarto et al., (2020) said that although children feel happy they also feel sad and bored because of lacking togetherness [6]. The Task that given by teachers often unfinished because the child always seeks time and opportunity to play with their friend [6][12]. One most important thing that causes stress in the child in this online learning is the lack of technical skills. Then the increase of cost electricity, boredom, not independence in doing the task, less guidance from the teacher, and the adaptation can cause some stress and demotivation in child [13].

Children in Magersari Village, Patebon, Kendal, also undergo these kinds of problems because of the transformation from face-to-face learning to digital learning. Too much use gadget use, unfinished tasks, too much playing, boredom, too many school tasks, and less guidance when doing tasks cause some stress.

No one knows when this long-distance learning will be applied in education. So the children need some help to reduce stress and to prepare them to face this digital era in education. As the result, the Langsajarot Magersari community was formed to help children to adapt to this pandemic era. Why does it take the form of community-based learning? As mentioned before, CBL gives an environment to children to learn what they want to learn, without feeling under pressure or being forced.

Langsajarot Magersari Community has been running for 5 months. It takes English learning as the main subject. Its members are 50 children. *Langgar* or *musala* Roudlotul Mutaalimin is the center of location for its activities. The members join the community voluntarily. The members and the facilitators discussed the matter that the children want to study. The community does the activity face to face for limited members and does the health protocol. Langsajarot community uses any digital media that is possible to be used for learning so the members can step by step adapt to digital learning. This paper aims at obtaining a detailed description of the learning management of the Langsajarot community so it can prepare for digital learning.

2. METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study method. The case study method is used because (1) the research question is "how", (2) there is no control over behavioral events, and (3) the focus of the study is a contemporary phenomenon — a "case". Case studies allow researchers to focus deeply on the "case" and to maintain a real and comprehensive perspective [14]. This research took place in Langsajarot community in Magersari Village, Patebon District, Kendal Regency. This study focuses on the management of the Langsajarot community in response to the need for education during the pandemic.

Research data collection uses in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation. Sources of research data are members of the Langsajarot community, founders of the Langsajarot community, and parents of members of the Langsajarot community. Interviews were conducted to explore data about planning, organizing, implementing, and evaluating the teaching and learning activities at Langsajarot. Interviews were conducted by developing interview guidelines.

The purpose of this study was to find out in detail the management of learning that occurred at Langsajarot so they can learn and prepare for digital

learning in response to community needs during the pandemic. The community in this context is elementary school children in the village of Magersari. During the pandemic, children in this village did paper assignment-based distance learning. This research focuses on how Langsajarot plans, organizes, acts, and controls their activity so the members can learn and prepare for digital learning. The basecamp of this community is a *langgar* that also becomes the center of social and religious activities in Magersari. This research will contribute to the community so that it can help to provide ideas for the community in dealing with children's education problems during the pandemic.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Langsajarot Magersari: From the Musala for Children in Pandemic Era

The children of Magersari Village build a community named Langsajarot. From the little street, Raden Patah, near the little alley, a *musala* was transformed from only religious activity into unlimited happiness learning of children. The *musala* named Roudlotul Mutaalimin means "the park of learners". *Langsa* means *tunas* or shoot and *jarot* means *kuat* or strong. Langsajarot means the strong shoot.

The founder of *musala* wished that it can be something like a learning center. Initially, the *musala* is the place for religious matters such as *maulidan, selapanan, quranan*, etc. But at this pandemic era, the *musala* transform to be wider in learning matters that is English learning. The use of *musala* nearly the same as the concept surau that also use according to the need of society. For example, *surau* in Minangkabau besides used to pray also used to learn about manners or self-defense, and for the single man or boy teenager to stay overnight [15]. With 10 meters in length and 6 meters wide, the *musala* can be filled by 10-16 children who live around the *musala*. It has enough hand wash facility because the water is always available for the *wudu*. So it is not difficult to do the health protocol, mainly hand washing. With the limited number of attendees, the facilitators always remind and train the child to keep a safe distance from others. It is also important to remind the children to wear masks properly.

What do they learn? The member of Langsajarot mainly learns English with a fun method. Why English? Because the founders of Langsajarot try to fit the learning activity with the future vision of the village head i.e. to build the village as a tourism village. How do they learn? Because of the Covid-19

pandemic, the home setting is an essential place for students to learn online [16]. The children are in the adaptation of the change from face to face to long-distance learning. So Langsajarot helps the member to adapt by train the children to use the internet for learning. Besides using the internet to learn, the facilitators also try to use the constructivist view in the learning process. Facilitators and members should try to make a two-way discussion to find any idea about what the members want to learn.

3.2 Reason: Why was This Community Formed?

In March 2020, schools closed for face-to-face learning and switched it into distant learning in response to Covid-19 [4]. Time has passed and the days went by. The Covid-19 smoothly had been our daily issue. After the schools had been closed for a period, in Magersari village, the school seemed to be started again. But it was like a new model of school. Sometimes the children went to school to study for an hour a day or twice a week. Another time, they went to school to take and submit a paper-based assignment. At the other time, the children did not go to school and got no information. The main problem is it was an irregular phase of school. No one knows when this condition will end.

Because of the school's irregular schedule, children had much free time. The children were seemed to play with their friends or played gadgets and sometimes their task is unfinished. Parents or other family members also become significant persons for the children's education. Parents, caretakers, and other family members were pulled and forced to care more about education because home learning is the only place for education [16]. But in fact, the family member could not always be proxy teachers, because of their lack of knowledge, busy schedule, etc. This condition might cause stress in both family members and the children.

On the other side, the sudden transformation of traditional into long-distance digital learning causes a fast adaptation, not only for the children but also the school. Children in Magersari try to adapt to long-distance learning and to learn digital learning. Teacher, students, and a whole school is accustomed to doing the online learning. It was not easy because this is a new culture in the crisis of the pandemic era.

Because of this condition, the Langsajarot Learning Community was formed. At first, the purpose of the founding is to fill the village children's free time with positive activities. Second, the purpose

is to build collective awareness as a Magersari villager. Third, the community was introduced to learn English. Why English? Because English learning is something new, fresh, and there was no learning center for English in the village thus it will increase and attract the children's interest. Besides, English is used as a tool to introduce global citizenship.

3.3 Community: Constructivism & Engagement

Building community learning in the pandemic era was a kind of solution but also challenging. The condition is that we should keep the distance, sometimes doing self-isolation at home while making a face-to-face group. Though in small numbers, health protocol should always be implemented. At glance, children in Magersari seem happy because of the abundant free time. But the fact is that the children are caught by some boredom and stress because of this unclear period. Therefore, Langsajarot as a learning community tries to make different learning processes. As a community, Langsajarot wants to make the child learn but without feeling forced.

The learning process in Langsajarot is done by constructivism. By this philosophy, the community always tries to build two-way communication. For example, communication between member and facilitator to decide what to learn, what to do besides learning English, the learning method, etc. Communication built by the parents of members and the facilitator is also two-way. By using this type of communication and philosophy, it is hoped that the member will never feel forced to join and learn in the community.

Learning processes in Langsajarot maintain the engagement aspect. The engagement between the members and facilitators in the learning process is important to build the focus of the members toward the learning matter. The engagement is an effort to the member always pay attention to the facilitator and the learning matter. The engagement is built through the use of games, music, story-telling, role play, apperception, or digging potential and interest of each student. According to Melaville et al., (2006) engagement is a process of psychological interest, investment of time and energy, student effort like pay attention in the work of learning [2]. We know that members in our community are engaged in the learning activity if they stay on task, improve their concentration, as well as school attendance.

To make Langsajarot solid, engagement and constructivism philosophy should be practiced and improved continuously. The most important thing that was built in Langsajarot is that the facilitator

encourages the sense of belongingness of the members. In Langsajarot there are some activities aimed to build belongingness, they were:

a) Sharing ideas for the future, for example, the facilitators share the idea about building a library and opening donations from all members. Because of this activity, the members are motivated and hopeful about a better learning place.

b) Opening question about what to learn and what to do, for example, the members are asked to have routine jogging and to learn about animals, the world, sports, etc.

Praying Duha and reciting *asmaul husna* so the members can pray for their parents. Whatever the community does should relate to their personal lives and listen to their opinion also agreement.

3.4 Try to Learn Digital Learning

One of the most significant activities in this pandemic era is digital learning. Children in Magersari especially members of Langsajarot did the long-distance learning with the minimum capability of digital technology use. The paper-based task is the main activity. Information about the task is delivered to children through the WhatsApp group. By getting information shared on WhatsApp, the children will do the task. Their skill to use the meeting online platform on the internet is very limited.

Knowing that the condition of the children's digital literacy is very low, thus, the founders of Langsajarot try to improve it. Children in Langsajarot are prepared to be ready to face digital learning. How are they prepared? They do the following things to know, learn, and prepare for digital learning. First, they use WhatsApp group to share and deliver learning matter. Facilitators usually send some videos to the children so they learn the content. Second, Langsajarot introduces and trains the members on how to use the internet as a learning resource. Third, Langsajarot trains the members to make their learning videos and channel. These three activities will give benefit the children so they not only use the gadget for gaming but also learning. Then, the process of making their video and uploading it to the internet will build self-confidence, global citizenship awareness, and more engagement with the learning matter.

4. CONCLUSION

Community is a form of learning institution. Within the community, children learn to decide what and how they will learn. They will not get bored and

be forced to study. Also in this community, the members are limited in number and only in one village so it is more secure in this pandemic era. The engagement that is built in the community is important to keep the children motivated. The constructivist mindset makes the children more comfortable and independent in learning.

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