Boosting Students' Self-development though Learning Community

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ABSTRAK

Learning is a social process that thrives in collaborative, inclusive, and supportive environments. This research explores the opinions of students who were being part of a learning community. A qualitative approach with structured interviews was carried out to find out the opinions of 5 students about their reasons for joining the learning community, and what they gained count of self-development for their present academic reason and the future. The results of this research indicated that the main reason the students participated to the learning community was because of teamwork, interest, and goals. In terms of self-development, they feel relationships, increasing skills, academic, better self-esteem and having more network. This research concludes that the learning community has contributed to academic and non-academic aspects for the students who determined to participate to the learning community.

Keywords: learning community, self-development, academic, non-formal education

INTRODUCTION

In academic point of view nothing more than to see students grow and reach their full potential in life. But this is not always feasible without a little help from related parties. Self-development plays an important role in helping students to build a strong and positive foundation for the future. Self-development can include everything from developing good study habits to strengthening inter-personal skills. As an important part of any student's life, a quality education is not merely getting good grades but much more to self-development. It is about encouraging the attitude of learning and growth, self-challenging, and meaningful relationship development. Students are environing themselves up for success both academically and in life, by putting in the effort to build the skills

One way to practice self-development is through self-reflection. Taking the time to analyze your strengths and weaknesses, and determine how to best use them in the future, is a great way to prepare for college and beyond. Self-reflection helps to create an understanding of one's purpose and how to create lasting success. Another important part of self-development is cooperation, having the same desires and ideals and being able to synergize with each other, feeling confident in your abilities and continuing to learn to increase and develop them so as to expand your network (Dingyloudi & Strijbos, 2020; Dzul et al., 2023; Ivaniuk et al., 2020). Students who have the ability to adapt to the demands of ever-changing situations and then respond wisely can make a big difference in a number of scenarios. The change scenario can start from creating friendly relationships with fellow students, then forming discussion groups starting from light everyday topics then moving on to more difficult topics as a long process and strengthening self-development on their journey towards adulthood. The importance of self-development in students' lives extends to their professional lives too. Skills such as time management, creativity, goal setting, and public speaking will all be valued in the workplace (Hur et al., 2021). Developing these abilities early on will make students have better self-esteem and prepared to handle the pressures of employment (Sekar et al., 2020; Supervía et al., 2023). At the end

of the day, self-development is all about becoming the best version of himself. With the right building blocks in place, anything is possible.

Self-development is a strategy to develop one's self-awareness, talents, potentials, skills and abilities. The main purpose of this process is to create a better person and their quality of life. Self development is the key to creating a better life, because it is important to always try to improve, change and develop himself. Self-development on each individual might be different because the values of life quality and the needs among them are different as well. There are lots of self-development quotes and words which support people to do better on social media.

Learning community is a small group teaching that increasingly implemented to improve the overall first-year students' academic performance. Learning community is intended to contribute to academic performance based on the social mechanisms that take place in the learning community (Sekar et al., 2020). Learning is considered as a socially situated process and optimized when students construct their knowledge actively together (Brouwer et al., 2022; Alpino Susanto, Khairiyah, et al., 2022). Learning community consist of formally implemented small peer groups with a focus on active and collaborative peer learning. The rationale behind the learning community is that through ongoing peer interaction in a relatively stable small group, students develop academic support relationships. Learning community can create a safe learning environment during the first semester or initial adaptation to a new campus environment and can also facilitate students to build new support networks after transitioning to the world of work after graduation (Brouwer et al., 2022; Dzul et al., 2023; Sekar et al., 2020; Alpino Susanto, Nuwrun, et al., 2022).

The learning is a process that people pass through to acquire new knowledge and skills, eventually influence their attitudes, decisions, and actions and continuous of life. All learning naturally occurs to adapt with the development of the times wherever the individual is located. The process can occur formally or informally (González Hernández, 2023). Higher education as a formal educational institution is an alternative for community to obtain learning. The Indonesia Higher Education database (PDDIKTI) shows that the number of students enrolled in state and private universities reached more than 6 milion students, and majority which 5 milin undergraduate level. This shows that awareness Indonesian society towards the importance of education is considered high. Pursuing higher education is a long process with a series of curricula that need to be taken, which often not all the necessary things and environments are fully available on campus. For example, students who want to master English may not fully get the learning they need on campus, which is only 2 to 4 credits, so they may need to go beyond. The English learning communities could be the option either within the campus or out of (Brouwer et al., 2022; Brown et al., 2020; Francesca et al., 2010).

The non-formal education has three work, to be specific as a complement, elective, and supplement. Non-formal education is considered a complement when formal education cannot be used its educational function. So, non-formal education as a complement is designed to complement what which should be fulfilled by formal education (Ivaniuk et al., 2020; UNIL, 2017). Learning communities are non-formal spaces that can be used to obtain learning addition. A learning community is an association where its members have learning goals the same and interact with each other to realize the learning goals. Because it has a purpose the same, then every member participates in every learning process in it (Hod et al., 2018; Ivaniuk et al., 2020; UNIL, 2017). Every Individuals can learn faster and have a good learning attitude in a good environment participative (Sekar et al., 2020). Apart from functioning as a place where students are involved in active learning activities and collaborative in the academic field, learning communities can also be a place for students to develop himself. Therefore, the learning community is tasked with facilitating its members who may lack the skills or confidence to learn independently giving them responsibility.

The given study is due to the human needs of mutual learning civilization to master the knowledge and skills so to apply them creatively in a rapidly changing world, as well as to multiply

new and useful ones for the professional growth. The researchers consider the problem in the context of providing favorable conditions for students in the teartiary level as well as the future professional. Therefore, the scientific research is devoted to the disclosure of self-development for the better growth of students at the beginning of their activities in the campus environment. What is a strong reason for students to take personal initiative to create or join a learning community within and outside campus? So what are the benefits in terms of self-development that they get from their involvement in the learning community? This is something that needs to be found out in terms of students' perceptions of the learning community phenomenon.

RESEARCH METHODS

Learning Community

A gather comprising of a few individuals who have comparative interface. As a rule communities are shaped since they have the same leisure activity, such as photography communities, huge motorbike community, etc. A learning community could be a bunch comprising of a few individuals who have interface and objectives that tend to be scholastic. A focused learning community on the group's vision by working together to share knowledge with academic goals (Brouwer et al., 2022; Soo Boon, 2021; A Susanto et al., 2024; Zhu & Baylen, 2005) It was further stated that learning communities, as a teaching and learning approach, providing an environment for students to gain knowledge and improve performance academic, where the teaching and learning process occurs between members who are generally colleagues they. So, in a learning community there is a teaching and learning process without using the terms teacher-student, tutor-student, and similar terms. Learning communities focus on the development of their group through four phases. There are four phases that occur in development of learning communities (Antinluoma et al., 2022; Francesca et al., 2010) The first phase is forming; the phase where the community begins based on enthusiasm and relationships. The second phase is storming; the phase to determine roles and responsibility in the community. The third phase is norming; the stage for determining the rules in the community. The final phase is performing; the phase where members can interact, share knowledge and make decisions.

Self-Development

Self-development according to includes increasing knowledge, awareness, self-confidence, and self-empowerment (Herrera et al., 2015; Hod et al., 2018). The relationships with other people is considered as the foundation for the formation of self-confidence. self-development is how a person can be understanding himself, understanding others, facing obstacles, managing time, as well control emotions (Brouwer et al., 2022; Cheung & Lai, 2013). Self-development is operationalized using indicators such as self-esteem, emotional development, communication skills, understanding of one's limits, goal setting and healthy risk-taking behavior (Lyz et al., 2020).

METHODOLOGY

This research adopts a qualitative approach because it relates tostudents' opinions about the learning community they experience outside campus. This research aims to find out the feelings and opinions of students who join the learning community and what they feel in terms of their self-development after joining the learning community. To obtain data, interviews were conducted with respondents such assuggested by Kothari (2004). There are five sub-sections of methods considered, namely (1) ethical, (2) the process of getting respondents from the same study group, (3) structured interviews,(4) interview procedures, and (5) data analysis (Kothari, 2004; Sugiyono, 2016). From the sideEthical considerations are the process of collecting research data, the position of the researchers is neutral. The researchers contacted via WhatsApp and met directly with a brief explanation of the reasons and aims of the research. for Kothari (2004). Interviews were conducted in an non-formal atmosphere and asked questions as openly as possible and as intimately as possible. Because the

respondents were students from the same university, the meeting schedule was held when they were gathered to study together at a mutually agreed time. The researchers have carried out various comparisons with several existing study groups and finally found study groups that regularly meet and study both on campus and outside campus.

Table 1. Respondent Profile

Respondent	Field of study	Gender	Remark
A	Engineering	male	2nd year student
B	Social Science	male	2nd year student
C	Engineeering	male	2nd year student
D	Engineering	male	2nd year student
E	Law	male	2nd year student

Structured Interview

Structured interviews are used to reduce bias and help researchers to get the right answers and an efficient and objective use of time because each is asked the same set of questions and responses recorded and grouped (Gubrium & Holstein, 2012). There were five students interviewed. Interviews as a method are often used inqualitative research because of its efficiency in accessing thoughts, opinions,experiences, and feelings towards a topic (Kothari, 2004; Snyder, 2019). In preparation for the interview, the researchersprepare a list of questions as follows:

Questions to Respondents
What major are you in?
What semester are you in?
What university are you studying in?
Are you joining a learning community?
If yes, what is the reason for you joining the learning community?
In terms of self-development, what do you feel about joining this learning community?

The list of questions is prepared carefully, built in relation to the objectives of this research. The first three questions are closed-ended. It is used at the beginning of an interview to gather information about the respondent. The next two questions are open-ended. Researchers did not direct respondents to the preferred answer. Students as respondents can answer questions based on informal sentences and expressions that they usually use every day. Interviews were conducted in Indonesian and then translated into English for research purposes.

Interview Procedure

The researcher explained that the interviews conducted were for research purposes. Interviews were conducted randomly and naturally based on prepared questions. The researchers also requested permission to record the interviews. The recording is greatimportant to ensure the validity of the interview (Gubrium & Holstein, 2012; Kothari, 2004; Alpino Susanto et al., 2020). Besides that, recording would allow the researchers to analyze and interpret the respondent's answers as the expression used by the respondent is informal and in a discussion atmosphere. All interview activities were carried out in the same place and attended by all respondents, answering in turn and some answers tended to confirm their peers' answers. The overall duration of the interview was 65 minutes, interspersed with general conversation and small talk.

Data analysis

The researcher listened to the recording and took notes when the respondent said itsomething interesting or relevant to the research. After the interview, researcherAnalyze notes and group sentences/words in patterns to organize analysis. The researchersthen compare the interview notes and recordings, then move them into the table according to the categories. The researcher only transcribes the parts of the sentences that are relevant to the research.Separate relevant discussion comments, listen carefully, and take notesmultiple notes will save a lot of time and be efficient according to research objectives (Kothari, 2004; McKinley & Rose, 2019) . The researchers saw the limited information that respondents might provide regarding learning community activities, such as the background to its formation, the routine schedule for the activities carried out. This is because the learning community in question is formed from friendships with each other, regional origin, and gender similarities. However, researchers did not include demographic and socio-educational factors as things studied.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The results of interviews with five community members are reported in this section. Depicted in the table 2 are the reasons why students join the English Youth Community learning community. The results above show 3 general things that motivate students where each student can give more than one reason. Three students answered that the content taught was their motivation to join the learning community. Two students answered because they were interested in the way of learning and its members. Two students answered that the learning community they participated in suited their careers and goals.

Table 2. Reasons for joining a learning community

Main Reason	Number of respondent	Respondent code
Teamwork	3 students	A, C, D
Interest	4 students	B, C, D, E
Goal/Career	3 students	A, B, D

Table 3 shows the values that influence students' self-development after joining a learning community where each respondent may provide more than one answer. All samples answered that they had made new friends through the learning community, four of them even admitted that their closest friends were friends from their community. Two members answered that through the learning community they could improve their skills and confidence, especially in English speaking skill. Two community members responded that the community also helped them improve their academic knowledge on campus. Two group members stated that networking was something they got from the learning community. Four community members answered that by holding various events with the learning community, they could increase their networking through collaboration with various parties.

Table 3. Self-development through learning communities

Self-development	Number of respondent	Respondent code
Relationship	4	A, C, D, E,
Skill	2	C, D
Academic	2	C, E
Self-esteem	2	D, E
Network	4	A, B, C, E

Based on interview findings, respondents stated that in the world of work, adjusting individual abilities requires looking at many things, such as the ability to collaborate and make friends. The learning process can be carried out in many places other than campus as well as outside campus. A learning community is something that creates emotional bonds and close friendships and satisfaction in learning and sharing. Even though the respondents are students who have just studied at tertiary

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level, 4 of them are already working and currently they need formalities that can support their future careers. All of them stated that forming a learning community was their own awareness and desire to continue learning and fighting. The following is an excerpt from an interview with them.

Exceprt 1:
> *"Dari kami ada beberapa yang pintar, jadi dia bantu kami buat presentasi, belajar bahasa Inggris juga".* (*Mahasiswa A*)
> "There are some of us who are smart, so they helped us make presentations, learn English too". (Student D).

Exceprt 2:
> *"Semua kerja sambil kuliah, hampir tak ada waktu, tapi sempat ngumpul gini belajar dikit2 asik juga..".* (*Mahasiswa B*)
> We are all working students, we hardly have free time, but when we have time to get together and study it's fun too...". (Student B).

Exceprt 3:
> *"Kakak kelas yang sudah lulus sarannya buat kelompok begini, biar ada skill yang diasah dan punya tujuan kuliah sambil kerja..".* (*Mahasiswa D*)
> "An advice of students who have graduated is to have such a group dicussion, therefore we can
>
> hone skills and have the goal as a working student.". (Student D).

Exceprt 4:
> *"menjalin hubungan pertemanan dengan rekan sefrekwensi*". (*Mahasiswa A*)
> "build friendships with peers". (Student A)

Exceprt 5:
> *"Rekan-rekan saya ini memiliki kemampuan berbicara bahasa Inggris yang baik, dan juga jago gambar". (Mahasiswa C).*
> "My colleagues have good English speaking skills and are also good at drawing". (Student C).

Exceprt 6:
> *"Kalau mengerjakan PR bersama, kami jadi mau belajar"(Mahasiswa D).*
> "If we do homework together, we become willing to learn". (Student D).

Exceprt 7:
> *"Di grup kami tidak ada sunkan, jadi bebas saja, belajar berani presentasilah". (Mahasiswa E).*
> In our group there is no shame, so just be free, learn to be brave in presenting..". (Student E).

Exceprt 8:
> *"Sebenarnya kami ramai, hanya karena shift kerja mereka bergiliran". (Mahasiswa B).*
> "Actually, we have a lot of members, just because of their rotating shifts".(Student B).

Discussion

Learning communities are an example of a non-formal space that can facilitate students in gaining additional knowledge. Based on the results above, there are three other reasons why someone joins a learning community. (1) Teamwork in learning community: teamwork is such a collaboration activities in learning community as part of active learning strategies to accomplish their goals. The effective collaboration among them is considered important to the learning process. (2) Interest; interest in a learning community is sustained through a combination of social interaction, shared goals, engaging content, accessible technology, and continual adaptation. These elements work together to create a dynamic and supportive atmosphere that encourages ongoing learning and participation. For example, when the respondent said that most of them were busy working, but there

was an interesting side to studying together as if ignoring the fatigue of working while studying. This can be a motivation for others to join the learning community. This interest could also be in the form of interest in activities carried out by the community where someone thinks that the activity is fun to do. for many students, the motivation to take part in a particular activity is because they think it is fun and useful (Brown et al., 2020; Dziubinski, 2014). (3) Goal/Career; the current position as well as the future can be the reason someone joins a learning community. Someone who aspires to become a teacher or someone who has the status of an education student might join a learning community that can facilitate them to develop their knowledge and skills in teaching or sharing knowledge that a learning community is a place that provides learning for students who feel weak in certain skills or lack self-confidence (Dziubinski, 2014).

What values can be gained by joining a learning community? This research suggests five values related to individual self-development. (1) Relationships; the community consists of members who are generally the same age and facilitates its members collaborating to achieve learning goals. It has become a general opinion that one will go along with congenial society (Asemota, 2015; Brown et al., 2020). The same goals and mindset as well as active participation open up opportunities for members to communicate with each other and build friendships.

Learning communities provide a context in which, through collaboration and communal interaction, new ideas and strategies are developed (Sari et al., 2022). This shows that in a learning community collaboration and interaction between members is important because it is those relationships that will create and develop learning ideas within it (Fatimah et al., 2020). Relationships in a learning community can be established because of interaction, whether in sharing interests or in solving problems in the community (Lindenwood University, 2024; Sari et al., 2022). Because of this interaction, community members can respect each other's opinions so that friendship or even camaraderie develops within them. One of the basic reasons someone joins a community is because of the interesting new things they might get (Brown et al., 2020). Aforementioned, engaging with others who share similar interests can also offer opportunities for collaboration, mentorship, and networking, all of which are valuable for personal and professional growth. Whether individuals can learn what they want or not. In a learning community, new knowledge can be obtained through other people or self-education.

Community members can share their expertise and knowledge through informal discussion. The nonformal discussions among community members are valuable for knowledge that allowing them to ask questions, share experiences, and collaboratively solve problems, fostering a deeper understanding and diverse viewpoints. Meanwhile, self-education is obtained through experiential learning or hand-on learning, such as preparing learning materials, planning activities, or sharing knowledge with community members.

Skill development within a learning community involves the continuous acquisition and enhancement of abilities through various collaborative and educational activities. The key aspects of skill development in the context of a learning community such as (1) Collaborative Learning; members work together on projects, participate in discussions, and share feedback, which helps develop teamwork, communication, and problem-solving skills. Then (2) Exposure to diverse perspectives; Interacting with individuals from different backgrounds and expertise levels broadens one's understanding and encourages critical thinking and adaptability. (3) Access to expert Knowledge; Learning from experienced members and guest speakers provides insights and advanced knowledge, aiding the development of specialized skills. (4) Mentorship and coaching; Experienced members often mentor newcomers, providing guidance, support, and practical advice, which is crucial for skill refinement and professional growth. (5)Practical Experience; Communities often engage in hands-on activities, workshops, and real-world projects that allow members to apply theoretical knowledge, thereby enhancing practical skills. (6) Continuous Feedback; Regular feedback from peers and mentors helps individuals identify areas for improvement and track their progress over time. (7) Networking Opportunities; Building connections with other members can lead to collaborative

opportunities, internships, and job placements, facilitating career development. (8) Resource Sharing; Access to shared resources such as books, articles, tools, and software helps members learn and practice new skills effectively. In summary, a learning community provides a supportive and resource-rich environment that promotes the development of both soft and hard skills through active participation, collaboration, and continuous learning.

CONCLUSIONS

Learning communities are one of the non-formal forums that students use as a complement to their education at university. A learning community is a place to gain academic knowledge and develop themselves for its members. There are three main reasons someone joins a learning community, namely based on interest, the content being taught, and its connection to a future career. Apart from that, members of the learning community can also gain many things in order to develop themselves and their knowledge, such as creating new relationships with other people, acquiring new knowledge, developing skills, self-confidence, and networking. A learning community fosters a dynamic environment where individuals come together to share knowledge, skills, and experiences. The learning community is also a valuable platform for continuous education, professional development, and personal enrichment through collective engagement and knowledge sharing therefore students are more likely to explore class topics outside the classroom with peers. From this research, the researchers concluded that learning communities have positive sides from academic and non-academic aspects. Even though there may be negative aspects that can arise from associations between students, the researchers see the positive side for the good of students who form study groups like the object of this research which is much better.

This research is still a pilot, with research objects limited to 5 students, short research time, and homogeneity of research objects. The further research can explore various backgrounds and expertise, fostering an environment rich in diverse ideas and perspectives, or to expose to different viewpoints enhances critical thinking and broadens understanding of complex topics.

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