

The Service of the Community Learning Center in Organizing Non-Formal Education for the Development of Village Community Potential

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Abstract

Background - In Indonesia, unequal access to formal education remains a persistent challenge, particularly for communities affected by economic, geographical, and socio-cultural barriers. In this context, non-formal education has become an important alternative for providing flexible and locally relevant learning opportunities that support both educational access and community development.

Research Urgency - Although Community Learning Centers (CLCs) are widely recognized as alternative educational institutions, their role is often discussed primarily in relation to equivalency education, with limited attention to their broader contribution to rural community empowerment through locally responsive skills training.

Research Objectives - This study aims to examine the role of CLC Aswaja in expanding access to education and empowering rural communities through equivalency programs and locally based skills training.

Research Method - This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation involving three CLC Aswaja administrators and two learners. The data were analysed thematically to identify the institution's educational and empowerment functions within the local community context.

Research Findings - The findings indicate that CLC Aswaja plays a significant role in widening access to education for individuals unable to participate in formal schooling. In addition to offering Package A, B, and C equivalency programs, the institution provides courses, vocational training, and practical skills education tailored to the needs and socio-economic conditions of the village community. These services enable learners not only to continue their education but also to develop competencies relevant to local livelihoods.

Research Conclusion - CLC Aswaja functions not merely as an alternative provider of equivalency education, but also as a community-based learning and empowerment center that supports the development of local human potential through flexible and context-sensitive educational services.

Research Novelty/Contribution - This study contributes to the literature on non-formal education by highlighting how a rural CLC integrates equivalency education with adaptive skills training to address both educational exclusion and community empowerment within a local socio-economic setting.

Keywords: community learning center; non-formal education; equivalency education; community empowerment; rural education

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INTRODUCTION

Education is a planned or unplanned learning process that can take place through formal, non-formal, or informal channels. This process lasts a lifetime and aims to develop and maximize the potential and abilities of each individual so that in the future they will be able to carry out their roles appropriately and responsibly in society (Mustopa, 2022). Non-formal education is carried out through an organized system. This shows that every effort to develop non-formal education requires structured and careful planning, including the development of a curriculum, program materials or content, the availability of facilities and infrastructure, the determination of learner targets, learning resources, and various other components that are interrelated and inseparable from one another in the implementation of non-formal education (Rofiudin et al., 2025).

Education should be viewed as part of the process of cultivating students. Thus, education should not only focus on imparting knowledge and skills, but also play a role in shaping and developing students' personalities so that they become civilized and cultured individuals (Syaparuddin & Elihami, 2020). The implementation of education in society today faces various obstacles and challenges that are quite concerning. Various problems have arisen in the world of education, particularly in educational units, which are becoming increasingly complex, such as rising dropout rates, cases of students repeating grades, low motivation to learn, limited numbers of tutors, and a lack of government support for services and programs run in non-formal education (Ahmad et al., 2023).

Community empowerment is a strategic step taken to improve the capabilities and independence of the community so that they have competitiveness and can play an active and productive role in various aspects of life, such as economic, social, and cultural fields (Lukman, 2021). One of the institutions that facilitates non-formal education is the Community Learning Center (CLC). The establishment of CLC is intended to provide broader opportunities for the community, especially for those who are less fortunate, to continue to develop their knowledge, skills, and mental attitude in order to increase their independence and economic capabilities. CLC plays a major role in facilitating the community, especially the underprivileged, to develop their potential through various non-formal education programs outside of school (Handayani & Ismanto, 2020). CLC is a community-based institution that serves as a lifelong learning vehicle for citizens to improve their knowledge, skills, and independent living attitudes. Non-formal education is a means that provides opportunities for every individual to expand their knowledge and master technology through a lifelong learning process. This education covers all forms of learning activities that take place outside the school environment in a planned and direct manner. In social life, every individual is also expected to have ethics and manners in interacting with others (Sulfasyah & Arifin, 2017).

According to Sisdiknas (2003) CLC aims to provide educational services for people who have not had the opportunity to attend formal education, either through equivalency education programs, skills training, literacy education, or various other empowerment activities. CLC Aswaja, located at Jl. Cemara Udang No. 36, Legung Barat, Batang-Batang District, Sumenep Regency, is one of the non-formal educational institutions that plays an active role in developing community potential through various educational and training programs. Based on initial observations, CLC Aswaja has organized various activities, including equivalency education, skills courses, and entrepreneurship training for village communities. However, the effectiveness of these programs in improving the potential of village communities has not been studied in depth.

The main activity of CLC is to educate the community through various out-of-school education programs. The establishment of CLC was inspired by the idea of community learning centers that have existed in various developed countries since the 1960s, as well as the policy on broad-based learning (Azizah, 2021). The success of non-formal education is greatly influenced by community participation, the suitability of programs to community needs, and the ability of institutions to design practical and useful activities. Thus, further research is needed to determine how non-formal education services at CLC Aswaja are designed, implemented, and accepted by the village community (Sudjana, 2004).

Education plays an important role in efforts to improve the quality of human resources as part of national life. Both the government and the community have a shared responsibility and a significant role in providing education that is accessible to all levels of society (Almaidah, 2017). This study aims to examine how the non-formal education services provided by CLC Aswaja play a role in developing the potential of the village community. This study focuses on efforts to understand the strategies implemented, the obstacles encountered, and the influence of non-formal education programs on improving the abilities of individuals and groups in the village community. Through this approach, the study is expected to contribute to the development of a more effective, inclusive, and sustainable non-formal education model, while also strengthening the role of CLC as a platform for community empowerment at the local level (Nelson & Nguyen, 2023).

This study contributes to efforts to understand the strategies implemented, the obstacles encountered, and the impact of non-formal education programs on improving the capacities of individuals and groups within village communities. Through this approach, the study is expected to contribute to the development of a more effective, inclusive, and sustainable non-formal education model, while also strengthening the role of PKBM as a platform for community empowerment at the local level. In addition, this article provides both theoretical and practical contributions. Theoretically, it enriches the body of knowledge on community-based non-formal education by presenting empirical evidence on how PKBM initiatives are implemented in rural contexts. Practically, the findings offer recommendations for policymakers, educators, and community stakeholders in designing programs that are responsive to local needs, optimizing community participation, and enhancing long-term social and economic development outcomes.

METHODS

This study is a descriptive study using a qualitative approach. Data used in qualitative research are presented through words, sentences, expressions, narratives, and images (Ramdhan, 2021). This study aims to understand phenomena by focusing on a complete picture of the phenomenon by examining in detail the phenomena of a problem in life based on holistic, complex, and detailed real-life conditions (Sulistiyo, 2023). The data analysis technique applied in this study uses an interactive analysis model. This model emphasizes a continuous analysis process between three main components, namely data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing or verification. By using this approach, researchers can understand the data more deeply through the process of filtering relevant information, organizing the data, and continuously testing conclusions throughout the research. This interactive approach allows data analysis to be carried out dynamically and reflectively, so that the research results are more valid and comprehensive (Miles et al., 2014).

This study examines the Aswaja Community Learning Center (CLC) in Sumenep Regency in providing non-formal education for the development of village community potential. The managers of CLC Aswaja who were involved were very supportive of the community as students at CLC Aswaja in developing their potential (Syaadah et al., 2022). This research was conducted at CLC Aswaja in Sumenep Regency by involving three informants who are CLC Aswaja managers in Sumenep Regency and two other informants who are CLC Aswaja participants to observe CLC Aswaja's services firsthand through interviews. Interviews are important in qualitative research to explore information so that feelings, empathy, intuition, and motivation can be obtained (Kristina, 2024).

CLC Aswaja has 3 services, namely the equivalency program, literacy program, and skills and training courses. CLC Aswaja has been established since 2016 under the auspices of the Ministry of Education and Culture. The equivalency program consists of package A, B, and C. The literacy program provides opportunities to learn reading, writing, and arithmetic. Finally, the skills and training courses offered at CLC Aswaja include screen printing, agriculture, and practical training that is useful for everyday life.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Education is an important factor in enlightening the nation and improving the quality of human resources. Improving the quality of human resources can be achieved not only through formal education but also through non-formal education. Non-formal education is a form of education outside of school that is planned and structured in stages to help the community meet their learning needs, develop skills, and improve their social and economic quality of life. This is in line with the provisions of Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System, Article 26 paragraph 1, which states that non-formal education has the function of replacing, supplementing, and/or complementing formal education to support lifelong education.

One of the non-formal education facilities is the Community Learning Center (CLC). CLC not only acts as an educational institution but also as a forum for community empowerment so that they can recognize local potential and develop it into economic and social assets. Through non-formal education, CLC can equip the community with practical skills that are in line with their needs, such as entrepreneurship training, work competencies, and basic literacy improvement (Suparlan, 2005). One example of non-formal education that actively develops community potential through education and training programs is CLC Aswaja, located at Jl. Cemara Udang no. 36, Legung Barat, Batang-Batang District, Sumenep Regency. CLC Aswaja has been established since 2016, and in the last 3 years, CLC Aswaja has had 228 students (Prasetyo et al., 2024).

Table 1. Number of Learners at CLC Aswaja for the 2022–2024 Academic Years

Academic Year	Number of Students
2022/2023	58
2023/2024	120
2024/2025	110

Based on Table 1, the number of students at CLC Aswaja from 2022 to 2024 has increased and decreased, showing that local community interest in CLC is still inconsistent. High-quality human resources are a key factor in driving accelerated growth and progress. Conversely, low quality can hinder this process. Therefore, society has a very strategic role in determining the success of a country's development (Setiawati & Shofwan, 2023; Ilyas et al., 2025). Non-formal education plays an important role as a complement, supplement, and even substitute for formal education. Its implementation is highly contextual and directly related to real life, thus opening up opportunities for the development of non-formal education programs that are strategic, functional, and able to respond effectively to the needs of society (Ivanov & Zviagintsev, 2023).

In many areas, especially in villages, CLCs serve as centers for social change. These institutions not only offer various educational programs but also serve as places for the community to gather, communicate, and collaborate. The success of the community empowerment process depends on the active involvement of residents in developing, implementing, and evaluating each program carried out (Pratama et al., 2024). CLC is an institution established and managed by the community to meet the learning needs of its citizens, while still operating in accordance with government regulations. According to Permendikbud No. 81 of 2004, CLC has the task of providing the following services: Literacy education, Equivalency education (Packages A, B, C), Life skills education, Entrepreneurship education, Women's and family empowerment education, Environmental, legal, and health education.

CLC Aswaja has also complied with the Ministry of Education and Culture Regulation by providing three services, namely equivalency education, literacy education, and entrepreneurship education. Equity education is organized with the aim of ensuring that the learning rights and needs of every member of society are fulfilled, so that they have equal opportunities to access educational services and continue to develop their

knowledge and life skills. In addition, this program aims to help individuals who need academic education and practical skills to improve their standard of living, improve their welfare, and actualize themselves more independently and flexibly (Syaputra & Shomedran, 2023). The community is encouraged to recognize and develop their potential so that they can determine the appropriate resources, increase productivity and income, carry out their roles as citizens, take advantage of access to education, maintain environmental health, and build cooperation with various parties for mutual progress (Purnomo et al., 2024).

The services provided by CLC Aswaja, namely equivalency education, were initially formed using self-help funds from the community with the idea that many people in the surrounding community had dropped out of school and did not receive education through formal channels. The Education Office of Sumenep Regency, East Java, recorded that the number of out-of-school children reached 13,095 in 2025. The phenomenon of school dropouts is influenced by two types of factors. Internal factors include learning interest, willingness, and the level of self-confidence of students. Meanwhile, external factors include family conditions, school environment, community environment, economic conditions, and parents' understanding of the importance of education and compulsory learning as stipulated in the 2003 National Education System Law (Toha et al., 2023; Luluk et al., 2025). CLC Aswaja offers package A, B, and C programs for students from the community around CLC Aswaja of varying ages. Equivalency education has several important objectives. First, it ensures that children from disadvantaged backgrounds, such as those who have dropped out of school, never attended school, come from minority groups, live in underdeveloped village areas, are poor, face social problems, or live in remote areas with limited access, can complete a quality basic education (Rizka et al., 2018).

The learning conducted at CLC Aswaja is adapted to local wisdom, reinforced by the findings of Saepudin & Mulyono (2018) which show that community-based learning is more effective than a uniform approach for all participants. The use of religious activities as a medium in literacy programs is also an innovation that is appropriate to the local community context. CLC Aswaja emphasizes flexibility based on social and religious values, while the model in Thailand focuses on flexibility from an economic perspective. These differences show that the effectiveness of a method is greatly influenced by the local culture. Thus, CLC Aswaja has proven that an approach tailored to local needs can overcome barriers to participation, including those related to age and mindset (Koswara, 2018). The equivalency education program (Packages A, B, and C) has succeeded in increasing social mobility, as evidenced by the fact that alumni have become permanent employees and have successfully continued their education at the Islamic University of Malang (UNISMA).

The second service provided by CLC Aswaja is a literacy program. In its early days, this CLC was greatly needed by local residents due to the high demand for literacy programs. Most of the participants in these activities were housewives and elderly residents. Through this program, CLC Aswaja strives to provide opportunities for the community to improve their reading, writing, and arithmetic skills. However, this institution faces challenges in attracting residents to participate. Many people prioritize work, making it difficult for them to find time to study. In addition, age is also a barrier due to declining vision (Mukhlis et al., 2023). The literacy rate data for Sumenep Regency can be seen on the table below.

Table 2. Literacy Rate Data of Sumenep Regency for the Years 2022–2024

Year	Literacy Rate (Persen)
2022	88
2023	88
2024	93

Based on Table 2, according to BPS data for 2022-2024, the literacy rate in Sumenep Regency reached 93%. This makes Sumenep the region with the second-lowest literacy rate in East Java Province. Given this

situation, the need for a Literacy Service Program is urgent. This program is implemented extensively by involving the community and the government as a form of shared responsibility in overcoming illiteracy. The progress of the times requires every individual to be able to adapt to various changes. Education, as one of the important subsystems in improving the welfare of the nation, is now considered to face various obstacles in its system and implementation. This shows that the dropout rate in the community is still high, which ultimately increases the risk of illiteracy (Rulyansah et al., 2022).

The development of village potential cannot be separated from improving the quality of community education. These efforts need to be accompanied by a process of transforming the values that have developed in the community, so that their mindset and perspective can adapt to development needs. In addition, institutional support from the grassroots level is also an important factor, because the existence of strong local institutions will encourage community participation and ensure that every village development program runs more effectively and sustainably (La Patilaiya et al., 2022; Saripah et al., 2025). To increase students' interest in joining the equivalency program, various strategic steps need to be taken. These include strengthening the quality of the implementing institutions, both in terms of management and service, as well as improving the quality of learning programs to make them more relevant and attractive. In addition, the dissemination of information to the public must also be optimized through various media and approaches, so that the public becomes more familiar with, understands, and is interested in utilizing the equivalency program (Destiani et al., 2023; Shofwan et al., 2026).

The manager of CLC Aswaja explained that in the planning and curriculum development stages, the learning materials are not only aimed at mastering basic literacy skills. The content of the learning is also tailored to the real needs of the community, such as how to read medicine labels, keep simple financial records, or calculate in buying and selling activities. With this approach, learning becomes more relevant, easy to apply, and provides direct benefits to participants in their daily lives. This is consistent with UNESCO (2018) research, which shows that literacy programs have a positive impact on the empowerment of individuals and families. To achieve the learning objectives at CLC, educators who act as facilitators need to choose approaches, strategies, methods, and media that are in line with the material, the characteristics of the learning community, and their environmental conditions. The approach applied should encourage the active involvement of the learning community directly. Thus, the learning process is more centered on the participants' activeness, while teachers play a role in providing guidance and motivation during the learning activities (Putri, 2023; Shofwan et al., 2024).

The last service at CLC Aswaja is skills courses and training. CLC Aswaja organizes various skills courses and training programs, such as making young coconut ice cream, making manure, producing tofu and tempeh, raising native chickens, and bridal makeup. In carrying out its training activities, CLC certainly collaborates with industry partners who have experience in their respective fields. As with the training at PKBM Aswaja, which provides funding for training in manure production, PKBM Aswaja partners with Gapoktan, while training in tofu and tempeh production is conducted in collaboration with the producer UD. Nikmat. In practice, the education process is always closely related to the aspect of financing or funding. Every educational activity, from program planning and implementation to evaluation, requires financial support in order to run optimally. These funding sources can come from various parties, such as the government through state or regional budgets, community participation, or contributions from the parents of students. Thus, the sustainability and quality of education are greatly influenced by how this funding aspect is planned, managed, and utilized effectively and responsibly (Nurfutriani et al., 2024; Khan et al., 2023).

The products are then marketed through online media, community organizations, and a direct marketing system from house to house. This program is one of the initial steps taken by the community to improve their quality of life and well-being. Through skills courses and training programs, the community acquires various skills and abilities that can help them improve their living conditions and resume their social functions more optimally (Putricia & Prathama, 2023). The following are the skills courses and training programs offered at CLC Aswaja.

Table 3. Skills Courses and Training Programs at CLC Aswaja

Programe Name
Coconut Ice Cream Making
Organic Manure Production
Tofu–Tempeh Production
Free-Range Chicken Farming
Bridal Makeup Artistry

Table 3. These are the programs that have been implemented at CLC Aswaja to provide training to the community. The success of these skills and training courses can be seen from the emergence of various small businesses in the community that contribute to the economic independence of the village. The products produced by the participants are not only marketed directly but also through digital platforms, thereby fostering an entrepreneurial spirit and driving the local economy. In addition, this program has been able to expand the community's economic network and open up new job opportunities thanks to collaboration with local industry partners such as *Gapoktan*, tofu and tempeh producers, and other business actors. CLC is defined as a non-formal educational institution that was created by the community and is managed by the community, functioning as a learning center and source of information. CLC focuses on developing local potential to improve the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of the community in economic, social, and cultural aspects (Suryana, 2017; Solfema et al., 2025). The collaboration between CLC and the Sumenep Regency Job Training Center is carried out so that CLC participants become more focused because they are trained by experts in their fields. The collaboration program between CLC Sumenep Regency and the Job Training Center is as follows.

Table 4. Collaboration Program between CLC Sumenep Regency and the Job Training Center (BLK)

Programe Name
Computer training
Pastry and bakery
Makeup Artistry

Table 4 states that there are three skills covered in the collaboration with the Sumenep Regency Vocational Training Center. On October 11, 2025, the Sumenep Regency Education Office held skills training for 240 CLC students to encourage community economic independence and strengthen their commitment to producing skilled, independent, and competitive human resources. The training was conducted in collaboration with the Sumenep District Vocational Training Center, offering training in three main skill areas: computers, cake and bread making, and makeup artistry. This program is designed to provide students with practical skills and entrepreneurial opportunities that are in line with the economic needs of the local community. In general, communities need entrepreneurial skills because through their business activities they can create new jobs that have an impact on improving the economy of the surrounding community. Strengthening entrepreneurial skills is very important in non-formal education, because through entrepreneurship, communities are encouraged to think creatively and innovatively in finding new opportunities. CLC, as a form of non-formal education institution, exists to support the improvement of the community's economic conditions (Baharudin et al., 2023).

Each program implemented at CLC Aswaja has different functions according to its objectives. The Equivalency Education Program is the main and mandatory program, which serves as an alternative to formal education. Meanwhile, Literacy Education is a strategic program, but it is not always a flagship program because its implementation is tailored to the needs of the region. Skills courses and training programs are the

flagship programs of CLC Aswaja because they can improve the economic independence of the community, provide quick results, are practical and applicable, relevant to human resource development and unemployment reduction, and can be adapted to local potential. Thus, skills courses and training have become CLC's flagship programs, while Equivalency Education and Literacy Education remain basic and strategic programs that serve as support (Septiani et al., 2024). The growth of non-formal education has brought a new perspective on its role in improving the quality of society, especially among adults.

This type of education is not only intended for those who did not have the opportunity to receive formal education, but also for individuals who believe that formal education does not fully meet their needs in life, job requirements, or current social and technological developments. The success of development is greatly influenced by the involvement of adults who have adequate knowledge and skills (Burns, 2020). In conclusion, CLC Aswaja demonstrates that non-formal education functions not only as an alternative pathway for those excluded from formal schooling, but also as a strategic instrument for community empowerment through flexible, need-based, and locally relevant educational programs.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research results, it can be concluded that CLC Aswaja plays an important role in expanding access to education for village communities in Batang-Batang District, Sumenep Regency, especially for those who do not have the opportunity to attend formal education. Through its equivalency programs (Packages A, B, and C) and various skills training and vocational courses, CLC Aswaja has succeeded in becoming an alternative education provider and a forum for community empowerment to develop their potential. The programs implemented have been proven to increase the capacity and independence of the community, both in terms of academics, life skills, and character building based on social and religious values. The impact can be seen from the increased awareness of the importance of lifelong education and the active participation of residents in sustainable village development. CLC Aswaja implements adaptive and contextual learning methods by integrating local wisdom, culture, and community-based approaches, making learning more relevant to the needs of students. Despite facing obstacles such as limited facilities, funding, and policy support, the commitment of the management, teaching staff, and community support has enabled CLC Aswaja to continue to exist and develop. Overall, CLC Aswaja functions not only as a non-formal educational institution but also as a center for village community empowerment that contributes to capacity building, character strengthening, and optimization of local potential.

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