

Volunteering and Its Impact on Education: A Hybrid Model

By : Tiara Ayuwardani & Josephine Chitra

Why do we volunteer? The motives may vary. There are so many reasons on why someone would voluntarily sacrifice their time and effort in doing something without being paid. It might be the thirst of experience, the need to feel useful or just pure love and total dedication; God only knows what your reason to volunteer really is.

The act of volunteering has been an incredibly helpful source to many social movements. For short term events, the quantity of helping hands can do wonder. But for a longer commitment, such as education reform, can volunteerism still create an impact? Or to be more specific, a sustainable one?

As a citizen, a volunteer-based community opens up the opportunity to participate in mitigating the challenges in education sector. When a volunteering-community agrees to tap in the education sector, it needs to concede that the actions will bring long-term impact to the students' life.

The thing about purely volunteer-based community is the members enroll themselves based on their conscience while acknowledging the community does not have the obligation to pay any salary. Therefore, the commitment degree of the members may vary, which might lead to a high turnover of the members, whereas social worker-based community is a volunteering model which the structure and system is usually more rigid with appropriate sanctions and incentive. The members are hired as full-time professionals with clear recruitment procedure.

To attain sustainable programs in education reform, the later is seemingly more suitable because the competency of the members has been assured. But it will also require bigger budget for salary allocation, which not many social movement can afford.

Sekolah Kita Rumpin: A hybrid model of communities

Every Sunday morning, the kids in Rumpin, Cibitung, wake up early and walk in approximately 30-60 minutes distance to arrive at a small mushola where they will learn in Sekolah Kita Rumpin. Sekolah Kita Rumpin or SKR, is an alternative school for children in Cibitung who were victims of land eviction case.

At its first establishment, the founders of SKR has realized the unsustainable issue that often faced by volunteer-based community; therefore they agree to adopt a hybrid model of community – a fusion of the volunteer-based and the social worker-based community. There are some indications to prove the adoption of the hybrid model.

First: Clear core values as the curriculum

As any other firstly established community, things were chaotic. Teacher positions were filled by random volunteer and the teachers changed every week; no curriculum or even objective. Having realized the importance of education for Rumpin kids' lives, Ana Agustina consulted with Rara Sekar – who later then becomes the Head of Curriculum. After considering the necessity and the situation in Rumpin, finally they found four core values of Sekolah Kita Rumpin, which comprises of empathy, curiosity, creativity, and confidence. All teachers must adhere their teaching materials to these four core values.

Second: Clear supervision and check-and-balance on the teaching materials

Unlike other alternative schools which give lesson in school-given subjects, the teaching topics in SKR vary bimonthly, from paddy fields to history of technology. The teachers have to submit their materials to the Head of Curriculum no later than a week before the topic starts. After receiving feedbacks and approval, then they can implement the materials in their scheduled class.

They will also need to submit the online post-teaching evaluation form, to see how the class actually went and compare best practice from other classes. This system will help to ensure the teaching materials are in line with the core values and measure the objectives. In addition to that, SKR also has research division whose job task is to evaluate the impact for the kids in Rumpin as well as finding local's relative advantage that can be developed as entrepreneurships.

Third: Clear and fair recruitment procedure

SKR does not welcome any sudden volunteer who cannot commit for minimum of one year. The reason is because they do not want to have teachers who just go to the class once and disappear without any continuity. Therefore, any applicant will be rigorously examined through written test and interview like applications for professional social workers, but without the payment.

"In SKR, we need to maintain volunteerism both in quality and quantity because education is the root of everything. It will affect children forever. So, having pity or just want to add this as one of "social activity experience" in their CV is not enough. We need their ideas and commitment to achieve the sustainable impact for kids in Rumpin," explained the Head of Curriculum.

Fourth: Empowerment of local people to be self-reliant in the future

Sekolah Kita aims to move out from Rumpin by 2018 after accomplishing two main targets: independent financial capability among the society and teachers regeneration from its own local people. To pave the way until 2018, SKR has 5-years plan as organization's policy guideline. SKR also believes in entrepreneurship as a means to empower their financial capability. Stable entrepreneurship

program may result to increasing the revenue of Rumpin village. To regenerate the teachers, Curriculum Division and Teachers Division will also prepare the students who have graduated from vocational or high school to be the next teachers for SKR. Through this way, the sustainable impact can be maintained.