

Chapter 9

Empowering Rural Area Students Through Education: Youth in Metaverse

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ABSTRACT

The sweet and curious gaze of the kids in the village touched the author's heart deeply, and it even felt like they have waited for this team's appearance for a long time although they had not known of it yet. To be educated means we have a chance to change and elevate our life better, and to have a choice to pursue our dreams. In order to achieve that, in 2019, the author and two friends built a non-profit organization called Wonogiri Youth Alliance. This is a nonprofit organization that provides education programs to reduce educational inequality, especially in rural areas of Wonogiri. As a multicultural country, Indonesia has many potential conflicts, such as religion, ethnicity, race, and inequality in development (Kurniawan & Miftah, 2021). One of the most crucial life provisions is a good education.

For some people, Indonesia is known as a country with ethnic and cultural diversity. And this is justified by the fact that Indonesia is ranked 4th as the country with the largest population in the world. However, for us Indonesians, it is not enough just to be labeled the country with the largest population. We are not only “large” in terms of population but also have abundant natural resources. With this fact, there are values that we as Indonesians expect, especially regarding human resources in it. We extremely believe that natural and cultural wealth can only be managed properly if Indonesia has good human resources.

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In the formation of these human resources, education is the most important and foremost pillar. However, Indonesia faces several challenges in realizing a brilliant education. As an archipelagic country with a very wide distribution of islands, access and affordability are the challenges. The quality of education in remote villages is not as good as education in big cities. Therefore, it is not enough for Indonesia to just rely on the role of the government, but it needs good cooperation from all levels of society to synergize in educating the community.

These things made me contribute to helping the government in developing education by going to remote villages, specifically in my area called Wonogiri Regency. I am Grace Aprilydia Sinaga, a 21-year-old Indonesian girl who is passionate about empowering a community through the vigor of education. My passion for educating and empowering the grass-root level led to a strong conviction that education is the key to opening the sea of knowledge. For me, to be educated even eradicate means we have a chance to change and elevate our life better, and to have a choice to pursue our dreams.

Unfortunately, Indonesia is also still facing difficulties regarding the meaning of a quality and safe school for its students. For me personally, going to school means surrounding myself with passionate people who have different or sometimes similar missions to me. Going to school means finding my interests, knowing where I am best and bad at, and most importantly finding a safe place for dreaming. But nowadays, it seems so hard to get those, even in school.

When I read an article titled “Is college merely helping those who need help least?” by Tara Westover, my jaw dropped for a while. She said in her writing that “whether you graduate from college is largely determined by parent’s income.” I reckon that it was her long contemplation that finally spilled in an article. I got inspired to also share my voice. We are expecting to find a safe place, but some teachers choose to judge their students because they lack skills. Sorry not sorry for being so honest in telling this. I discussed a lot of my circumstances, and surprisingly they had their own pathetic story regarding these uncomfortable issues. Some of them even made me frown. These days, schools could not a safe place for students who are so diverse, even worse schools are trying to generalize their students. Instead of saying what mistakes the students made, some teachers choose to vilify the student. Instead of motivating the students if they got bad marks, some teachers choose to judge them. I really understand that it does not occur in some schools. But let us be honest, we have found these problems almost in every school, the place that is supposed to be a safe place. One of the most successful entrepreneurs has ever said that **the greatest successes come from having the freedom to fail**. I was told that if I got bad marks, I had to learn more. But the fact is the opposite of it, that some teachers told other teachers about how bad I am in her subject and it made me so freaking insecure. I was going frantic and scared, and so were my friends who deal with the same problem as me.

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