

THE MANIFESTATION OF THE TEGAL LEARNING CENTER (TLC) COMMUNITY'S ROLE IN PROVIDING ACCESS TO HIGHER EDUCATION



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Abstract

Access to higher education is crucial for students. Examining how the Tegal Learning Center (TLC) community contributes to improving education in Tegal City by offering free higher education is the goal of this study. The concepts of inclusive education and role theory specifically, the manifest and latent functions proposed by Robert K. Merton are used to frame the study. The qualitative descriptive study design used eight informants: three TLC board members, three scholarship recipients who also volunteer for TLC, and two students who participate in TLC activities. In order to validate the data, source triangulation was employed in conjunction with observation, interviews, and documentation as data-gathering methods. The data were examined Through data reduction, display, and conclusion drafting. Findings from this study reveal that the TLC community plays multiple roles, including facilitator, educator, mentor, motivator, and evaluator. Among TLC's obvious functions are enhancing the caliber of human resources, offering scholarships, facilitating regional education and learning, and creating a forum for young people's goals and cooperation. Its latent purposes, meanwhile, include encouraging educational equality, boosting self-esteem, connecting people, and driving social change. These results advance our knowledge of how education, social structure, and social mobility interact, and they also help to build more inclusive, participative, and socially conscious community-based education.

Keywords: Access to Education, Community, Functional, Role

INTRODUCTION

Education plays a crucial role in society. Higher-order cognitive abilities are shaped by it (Suparno et al. 2023). People can grow and integrate into society with the help of educational institutions, which act as platforms for personal development. Critical thinking is developed through various active learning activities in higher education. How a person thinks affects their course, behavior, and level of achievement in life (Cahyani et al. 2024). Thus, younger generations should take the initiative to pursue higher education. Higher education also forms the cornerstone of the country's advancement. Education is an investment in creating a highly qualified workforce since the quality of Human Resources (HR) is directly impacted by the level of education (Yanti, Nurtati, and Misharni 2020).

Education is the key to a better future. However, access to it is not equally available to everyone. One major obstacle keeping high school students from seeking education is limited availability. The low Gross Enrollment Rate (GER) in higher education in Indonesia indicates this problem. Higher education's GER was just about 31.45% in 2024. This percentage is still below the 37.63% national goal. According to the data, people from poorer economic origins only participate at a rate of 13.38%, whereas people from wealthier economic backgrounds participate at a rate of 54.25%, indicating a participation gap (BPS 2024). This graphic illustrates the notable difference in access to higher education between those from high and low income households.

Education costs are a significant student barrier. The cost of education is a major barrier for students (Prodan et al. 2015). Higher education in Indonesia is mainly available to those with adequate financial resources due to the annual increases in tuition rates for both public and private higher education institutions (Rara and Trivena 2022). According to Jia and Ericson (2017), a person's socioeconomic situation significantly impacts their chances of getting accepted to college. The average cost of higher education in Indonesia was 14.47 million rupiahs, according to the 2021 National Socioeconomic Survey (BPS 2021). The entire expense of a senior high school education is almost doubled by this sum. The financial strain of pursuing higher education is further increased by other educational charges including living and transportation expenses.

Another contributing factor is the inability to obtain information about university life and campus selection. For example, it might be difficult for students to find advice on how to choose a university that fits their lifestyle and financial situation, deal with academic difficulties, and adjust to university life.

Academic access to learning resources is relatively high in the modern era. Through self-directed learning, students can obtain educational resources from websites, YouTube, and other social media outlets. However, these approaches have drawbacks because they do not support interactive, two-way communication. Students frequently use tutoring programs (*bimbingan belajar* or *bimbel*) to close this gap. According to Surya et al. (2023), specific tutoring programs have demonstrated remarkable efficacy in assisting students to gain postsecondary education admission. Two types of tutoring programs are paid (profit-oriented) and free (nonprofit). These programs fall into two categories: online and offline. Nowadays, more people are tutoring online via Zoom, live sessions, and specialized apps (Bahar, Raihani, and Nur'Aini 2022). In the meantime, students are less likely to use offline tutoring because of its comparatively more significant expenses. Depending on the package chosen, online tutoring can cost anywhere from IDR 160,000 to IDR 2 million, while offline coaching can cost anywhere from IDR 1 million to over IDR 10 million (Bahar et al. 2022). Despite being more cost-effective, online tutoring is still significant for underprivileged populations.

Nonprofit tutoring programs serve as a solution for economically disadvantaged communities. Their availability is still restricted, though. Typically, different educational communities offer these programs. Prior research has investigated the role of nonprofit communities in offering students free education. On the other hand, most have concentrated on other elements, which fall into three primary trends. First, some communities focus on efforts to develop literacy skills (Aji and Kausan 2020; Fitrotunnisa 2022; Isnin 2018; Momuat, Boham, and Runtuwene 2021; Novrita et al. 2025). These projects include setting up village reading homes, mini-libraries, and community reading parks. Second, other communities place a strong emphasis on developing life skills like social awareness, clean living practices, and money management (Gultom and Jatiningsih 2019; Nurjanah and Rifqiawati 2023). Similar efforts have been observed in China's rural areas, where lifelong learning initiatives have been shown to enhance emotional stability and general well-being (Wang 2025). Third, some communities prioritize the development of soft skills, such as bolstering character education and fostering creativity (Marliah and Kartika 2018; Putri, Dewi, and Fitriana 2020). Although they mostly concentrate on student admissions through merit-based allocations (Doğan and Erdil 2025) and scholarship programs (Cosentino et al. 2019), studies have also looked into access to higher education.

According to prior research, there is no evidence of nonprofit tutoring programs within educational communities that expressly target access to learning for university entrance tests. The Tegal Learning Center (TLC) was established in Tegal City, a district in Central Java, to fill this information deficit. The main goal of TLC, a community established by young people in Tegal, is to give students pursuing higher education access to education. The presence of this community allows high school students to obtain a better grasp of universities for free.

The TLC community is a fascinating research subject. This research presents a fresh viewpoint by reorienting the focus of free education provision from educational institutions and government policies to community-driven initiatives. This study outlines how the TLC community contributes to higher education access. This analysis is undertaken through the lens of educational inclusion and uses role theory, notably Robert K. Merton's concepts of manifest and hidden functions, to delve deeper into the community's functions. This study contributes to educational sociology by improving understanding of the link between education, social structure, and mobility. It also emphasizes how community-driven education can promote social well-being, inclusion, and involvement.

METHODS

The study uses a qualitative method with a descriptive approach. This method examines and illustrates the community's part in the study. The Tegal Learning Center (TLC) community, a platform that offers free access to higher education, is the subject of the study carried out in Tegal City. The informants are chosen using a purposive sampling strategy to guarantee that participants have relevant knowledge and expertise with the research topic. Research informants are categorized as follows:

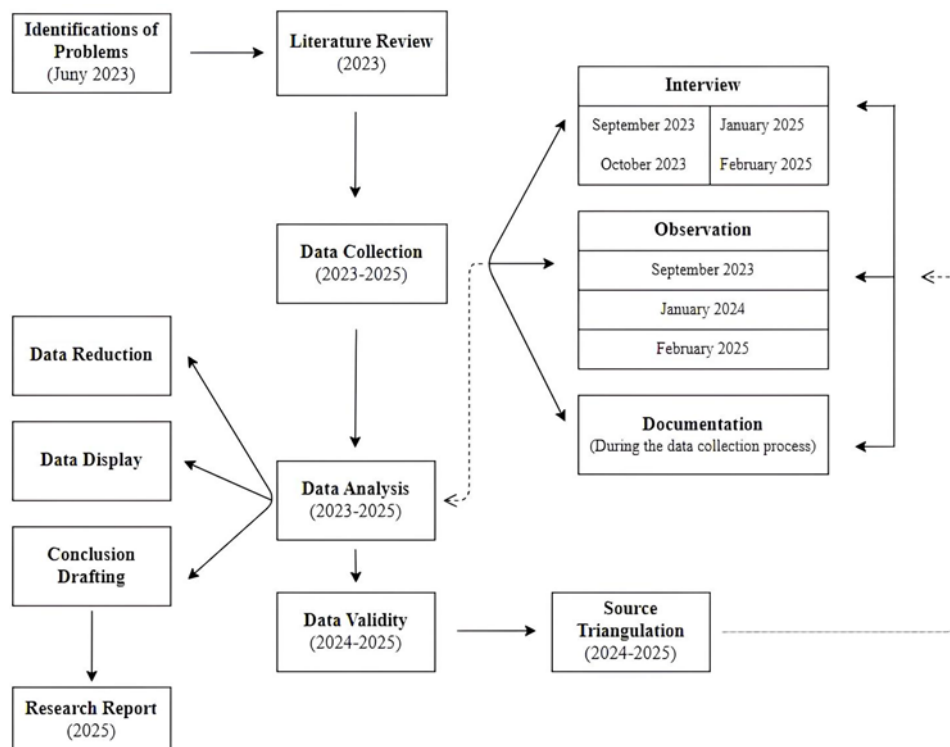
No.	Type of Informan	Inisial	Sex	Details
1.	Main Informant	• AAK	Male	Individuals with extensive experience of the TLC community, including scholarship winners who eventually became TLC volunteers.
		• CF		
		• SZ	Female	
		• AFL		
2.	Supporting Informant	• EP	Male	
		• FBA		
		• NKR	Female	
		• LLCM		

Table 1. Classification of Research Informants Types

This study includes two types of informants: primary informants and supporting informants. The four main informants are the vice chairman of TLC batch 4-5 (AAK) and three scholarship recipients who subsequently joined TLC's internal team. These consist of a staff member of the Junior High School Program Director batch 3 (SZ) and the chairman and employees of the Learning House Department batch 5 (CF and AFL). Two TLC members who give a preliminary overview of the community—the chairman of Tegal Store Center batch 3 (EP) and the vice chairman of batch 5 (FBA)—as well as two high school students who attended the TLC Expo Campus event (NKR and LCCM), make up the supporting informants.

This study uses the following data collection techniques:

(a) Nonparticipant observation: The researcher watches community events through direct observation, such as social media analysis and the Expo Campus 2024 and Education Fair 2025. (b) Semi-structured interviews are carried out to obtain detailed information from the aforementioned informants. (c) the documentation contains notes, images, audio, and films about the TLC community to supplement the data.



Picture 1. Research Flow Chart

Source: Research Data, 2025

The research takes about nine months to complete. After being gathered, the data is examined and verified. The study uses the three-stage interactive analysis technique developed by Miles and Huberman (1992) for data analysis: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drafting. Triangulation of sources is used to guarantee the veracity of the data. This method confirms the accuracy of the research data by comparing identical information from several sources. Triangulation is accomplished by comparing the experiences of scholarship recipients and students who participated in TLC events with data supplied by TLC board members.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Profile of Tegal Learning Center (TLC)

Tegal Learning Center (TLC) is a learning community participating in social and economic activities. As a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO), TLC actively supports community development and empowerment via education. When planning initiatives to accomplish particular goals, NGOs operate independently of the government (Rakhman and Haryadi 2020). TLC is committed to empowering Tegal students by giving them free (nonprofit) access to higher education.

The Tegal Learning Center community was formed on August 17, 2020, and is developed and controlled by Tegal Students. A STAN student started this community. They created a free learning platform with other students who had trouble finding information about higher education because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

This community was formed in response to students' worries about learning challenges, the ineffectiveness of remote learning, and a lack of access to higher education material in the classroom. A study group was then formed. TLC was founded to help these students prepare for college entrance exams. The slogan "Ini Langkah Kita" transforms TLC into a platform for learning that enhances and advances regional education. This community aims to construct a learning home that will improve Tegal's youth's human resources via education. TLC has three missions: to serve as a forum for Tegal's youth aspirations and collaboration, to function as a regional educational media, and to grant scholarships to Tegal students.

This non-profit community works with various partners to implement its programs. TLC began as a gathering of young people and has since expanded into a community focused on improving education. This community is still active and has even increased

the scope of its initiatives since the outbreak. Through helpful, inventive, and creative activities, TLC offers Tegal High School students an alternative for enhancing their regional and personal quality.

“... Batch 1 lasted 6 months, whereas batch 2 lasted barely 3 months. Batch 4 lasted roughly six months, while Batch 3 lasted over a year.” (FBA, 2023).

According to an interview with FBA, this community's system uses batches for leadership transitions. Since the community has not yet created its Articles of Association and Bylaws (AD ART), the length of time for each batch has not yet been decided. As a result, the community varies the duration of leadership terms in each batch to test the efficacy of its initiatives.

TLC operates several projects in three primary areas: economic empowerment, social activities, and education. In education, TLC provides the TLC Scholarship, a flagship program aimed at helping high school students get ready for college. Other educational initiatives include TLC Class, TLC Kakak Mentor, Expo Campus, Tryout, Webinar, Olympiad, and Goes to School. TLC operates social programs such as TLC Berbagi, TLC Ramadhan, and Celengan Pendidikan. While TLC Ramadhan is a social project only implemented during the holy month of Ramadan, Celengan Pendidikan, as the name implies, is dedicated to supporting educational needs. TLC Berbagi is a social service event that occurs whenever a natural calamity strikes the Tegal community. The objective of all three programs is the same: to encourage and raise community social awareness.

During batch three, TLC conducted three projects in the area of economic empowerment: Tegal Techno Center, Tegal Store Center, and Startuppreneur Academy.

“... Startuppreneur has only recently launched, and its program is more business-oriented, with only three training sessions to date. But previously, a Sociopreneur program called Sociopreneur Tegal Learning Center concentrated on business units managing MSMEs' digitalization.” (EP, 2023).

According to an interview with EP, TLC manages the Startuppreneur Academy, which offers graphic design, website development, and copywriting courses. In keeping with the idea of Sociopreneurship, Tegal Store Center provides services to help MSMEs in Tegal through digital advertising. Tegal Techno Center, meanwhile, specializes in offering website development services.

Among the different activities undertaken by TLC, the community's primary focus and goal remain education—assisting high school students (or equivalents) in preparing for college entrance exams.

The Role of the TLC Community in Providing Access to Higher Education

A role is an expected behavior by someone in a particular social position. According to Soerjono Soekanto, a role is the dynamic component of status in which a person executes their rights and obligations (Soekanto 2014). He goes on to say that a role is an idea that establishes what people can do for society as a whole.

TLC impacts society as a whole. Community work duties fall into four categories: facilitative roles, instructional roles, representational roles, and technical responsibilities (Ife and Tesorieoro 2016). TLC embodies two roles: educator and facilitator. The TLC community also acts as an evaluator, motivator, and mentor.

Role	Description	Program
Facilitator	Provides facilities and infrastructure to support students in accessing various learning activities and obtaining information about higher education.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> TLC Scholarship TLC Expo Campus
Educator	Organizes academic activities that enhance students' learning process.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> TLC Class TLC Tryout
Mentor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Academic mentoring: Monitors, guides, and directs students to track their learning progress. Non-academic mentoring: Focuses on soft skills training. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> TLC Scholarship TLC Kakak Mentor
Motivator	Provides motivation, support, and encouragement to students to keep them enthusiastic and optimistic about continuing their education.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> TLC Scholarship TLC Expo Campus TLC Webinar
Evaluator	Assesses the outcomes of students' learning processes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> TLC Class TLC Scholarship

Table 2. The Role of the Tegal Learning Center Community in Providing Access to Higher Education

Facilities refer to assistance, infrastructure, and accessibility. Facilitation is the process of simplifying tasks or assisting others in doing them (Hardika 2022). For students in the 12th grade, TLC offers tangible and intangible help. TLC gives scholarship recipients access to Zoom platforms, shared study areas, and financial aid for tangible support. In the meantime, TLC plans activities to improve members' soft skills suited to their abilities and development to provide non-material support. Being a moderator for Instagram Live sessions is one such activity. Students connect with college students and senior mentors during these events by participating in Q&A sessions on higher education and interacting with guest speakers from different universities. Some TLC programs, such as the TLC Scholarship and Expo Campus, also feature community-provided amenities.

"...in 2020, there were three award categories: Achievement award, Activist Scholarship, and Welfare Scholarship. Based on their names, the categories were Welfare Scholarship for students from disadvantaged backgrounds, Achievement Scholarship for academic excellence, and Activist Scholarship for students active in organizations. ... The next year, it was renamed Rumah Belajar and maintained its scholarship program. Subsequently, we also launched the Universal Scholarship, which was the same but concentrated on UTBK, giving Tegal students priority financial aid for preparation and exam accommodation."

According to CF, students can apply for four scholarships depending on specific requirements. The Welfare Scholarship is designed for students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Students must write an essay on their financial circumstances to fulfill several standards demonstrating their need for money. Students with academic or extracurricular accomplishments, at least at the city or district level, are eligible for the Achievement Scholarship. Students with prior involvement in committees or organizations are eligible for the Activist Scholarship. The UTBK or SNBT Scholarship was created by TLC the following year to help with the costs of housing and university entrance exam preparation.

TLC Expo Campus is a series of events that includes an educational chat program, a university exposition, and an SNBT exam tryout. The program's goal is to acquaint and prepare high school students for college life. TLC invites public, private, and vocational

universities from different parts of Java. Hundreds of students actively participate in this flagship program, which is held annually.



Picture 2. TLC Campus Expo 2024

Source: Research Data, 2024



Picture 3. Tegal Education Fair 2025

Source: Research Data, 2025

“Batch 1 was around 30-50, batch 2 was 100, batch 3 was around 172. Each batch, the members always-, if not up, it’s always consistent at 100.” (AAK, 2023).

According to an interview with the vice chairman of TLC Batch 4-5, the number of students participating in the Expo Campus event and registering as members of TLC has grown each year. About 50 people participated in Batch 1, 100 in Batch 2, and 172 in Batch 3. The number of participants increased to about 500 in 2024. This suggests that pupils and the local community notice the community’s existence

1. Educator

The next role is that of an educator or educational professional. According to Sudjana, the primary responsibility of education is to organize the surroundings to establish a learning system (Prastiyo, Hendrawijaya, and Purnamawati 2021). Teaching

is a situation where knowledge is transferred and given to a person. Nur stated that imparting knowledge, comprehension, and instruction is the process of the educational role (Prastiyo et al. 2021). Based on these viewpoints, education entails sharing knowledge to educate or provide education-related understanding.

The TLC community has provided educational value through the TLC Class learning experience. TLC Class is a volunteer-led program that provides materials and discussions around university entrance exam problems.

"There are separate sessions for UTBK and government institution entrance exams. Students thus study SKD and UTBK materials independently. Every week, the schedule also changes. While UTBK will be the focus for some weeks, SKD will be the focus for others. Additionally, the tryouts are extensive and include both SKD and UTBK tryouts, and registration is free for both." (AAK, 2023).

According to AAK's interview, TLC's learning activities include not only university admission examinations in Science and Technology (Saintek), Social and Humanities (Soshum), and Scholastic Potential Tests (TPS) but also preparation for government institution entrance exams. The training sessions are held online through Zoom and physically at the TLC secretariat. Google Forms is also used to offer post-tests to gauge students' comprehension.

Ife and Tesorieoro (2016) describe one of the educational tasks as creating awareness, disseminating information, and conducting training. To increase awareness, TLC encourages students who might still be apprehensive to be hopeful about pursuing their education by providing them with information and support. Students can obtain all the knowledge they require to seek higher education from the community. Before disseminating information, TLC's Learning House Department studies university passing grades, keeps abreast of Ministry of Education SNBP and SNBT schedules, and examines curricula to develop educational resources for TLC Class participants. In addition to academic information, TLC offers non-academic instruction that focuses on developing soft skills, such as critical thinking, problem-solving, leadership, and self-management training.

1. Mentor

A mentor is a title for a guide or advisor. According to Maulida, Widjanarko, and Nuryanti (2023), mentors evaluate the abilities and potential of mentees (those being guided) during their learning process and deliver materials or instructions based on a curriculum created by facilitators. Under the Learning House Department, TLC has a

special division called the mentoring division that is committed to helping pupils. A mentor guarantees the students have a disciplined and focused study strategy; the mentoring division is intended to track and direct their learning progress. This divide makes it easier and more efficient to track students' development.

"TLC gives tailored coaching to scholarship applicants by continuously monitoring their development and educational interests. For instance, the program places a high priority on preparing students for the possibility of enrolling at STAN. TLC mentors assist students in discussing their alternatives, determining their academic interests, and setting reasonable goals. For example, students who want to attend ITB are told to receive a passing grade and are urged to meet the minimal tryout score. Mentors help individuals look into other possibilities if they cannot reach the goal." (AFL, 2025).

"... So first, we were divided into groups, and each group had a mentor. Then, there was a group chat where we could consult, like, 'I want to take this major, do you think it suits me?' That was the first thing—we could interact with the mentor and ask for advice, even simple questions like, 'How is this university?' After the groups were assigned, whenever we had a Zoom session, the mentor would guide us. Each group had a schedule, and on certain days, we had specific materials to study." (SZ, 2025).

Interviews with AFL and SZ revealed that TLC acts as a mentor, advising on monitoring and mentoring. Recipients of TLC scholarships are supported until they can make an informed decision about attending college based on their skills and interests. Mentors assist students in choosing alternative possibilities and establishing priorities for their majors, study programs, and colleges. Additionally, based on students' Tryout results, they offer information on universities and passing grades.

2. Motivator

TLC takes on the role of a motivator in several activities. A motivator is someone who encourages others to take action toward a specific goal. Motivation drives individuals to stay enthusiastic and work optimally to achieve their objectives (Widodo and Yandi 2022). his motivation is provided throughout various activities, especially in mentoring sessions and soft skills development programs scheduled weekly. Other activities include Instagram live sessions, university entrance tips sharing, and educational talk shows. Through these initiatives, TLC provides motivation, support, and broader perspectives to students in Tegal, helping them pursue higher education

"Like, We are grateful to be here, despite getting caught in the rain earlier. We also

formed new relationships and friendships. As it happens, a lot of us from the same school came here and became acquainted. Then you realize that university life is much more expansive. Consequently, we gain a deeper comprehension of the surroundings there. (NKR, 2025).

"In my opinion, we learn new things. Furthermore, we no longer feel perplexed. We get more self-assured, so we don't need to listen to what other people think if we want to pursue anything." (LLCM, 2025).

Interviews with two TLC Expo Campus participants highlighted that this community provided them with complete support and encouragement to follow their aspirations and earn admission to higher education.

3. Evaluator

TLC's following function is that of an assessor. Someone who performs assessments or evaluations is known as an evaluator. Measuring the goals attained following program implementation is the core of evaluation. It is used in educational evaluation to evaluate the degree to which the syllabus's or curriculum's objectives and goals have been met (Devi, Hidayanthi, and Fitria 2022).

"...in the middle of the matrix and at the end of the matrix, we conduct two tryouts to evaluate the scholarship recipients' abilities and see how far they have progressed." (AFL, 2025).

TLC assesses students' academic achievement, especially those who receive scholarships. Students' abilities are evaluated through a series of tryouts, and their scores are then evaluated. Six out of ten scholarship recipients were admitted into universities in batch 3, the TLC community's highest success rate in granting college access.

These results diverge from other studies that explain the function of other sources of educational access. The government or educational institutions frequently play a role in increasing access to higher education. According to Doğan and Erdil (2025), UK educational institutions use a merit-based admissions approach to increase university access. This strategy expands university admission opportunities by guaranteeing that students from low-income households can participate in a selection process based on academic performance. Scholarship programs are another strategy for increasing access to education, as demonstrated in Africa. It has been demonstrated that scholarships

improve access for those who are economically disadvantaged, allowing them to pursue higher education both domestically and abroad (Cosentino et al. 2019). These findings emphasize the relevance of community-driven activities in increasing access to education, even though governments and educational institutions explicitly grant education quotas.

Discussion

Integration of the Concept of Inclusive Education in the Role of the TLC Community

An educational system that allows pupils to engage in the same learning process without distinction or discrimination is known as inclusive education (Phytanza et al. 2023). According to Parmigiani et al. (2023), inclusive education respects individual differences, gives people the flexibility to pursue equal learning opportunities, and offers services to all students based on their requirements. Acceptance, variety, and every student's full involvement in the educational process are the main focuses of inclusive education. Thanks to this idea, people can freely pursue their right to education.

TLC's involvement in providing a free learning platform supports inclusive education. This community promotes equality regardless of social class and embraces the ideal of inclusion. By promoting social inclusion, TLC ensures that Tegal students have equal access to and authority over meeting their fundamental educational requirements. Additionally, TLC guarantees that all students who sign up as learning members, including those from marginalized groups or with special needs, have equal access to education in the same setting.

The TLC community's role is consistent with inclusive education's tenets, which include respect for diversity, equality and non-discrimination, accessibility for everyone, and student-centered learning. By implementing inclusion, a community can promote healthy social attitudes, expand educational possibilities, and enhance a more equitable educational system.

The Manifest and Latent Functions of the TLC Community in Providing Access to Higher Education

Robert K. Merton first presented the functionalism theory, which is comprised of two ideas: hidden functions and visible functions. According to Merton, function is the effect that an observed phenomenon has on a system. He states that manifest functions

are a well-established organization's observable results, seeming purposes, or goals (Rose 1968; Turner 2012, 2014). Manifest functions are purposefully created and are the main justifications for an institution's creation.

Conversely, hidden functions are the unexpected or invisible results of an institution's operations (Poloma 2007; Ritzer 2014; Turner 2009). External observers who unbiasedly examine the ongoing consequences of an institution's operations rather than just its stated aims are frequently able to comprehend latent functions (Rose 1968). According to Rose (1968), latent functions are seen as concealed cultural aspects since, even when an institution's members know its functions, they do not express them directly. Every action has both anticipated and unforeseen repercussions. Unintended consequences give birth to these functions (Putri 2022). Therefore, because latent functions are inherently somewhat hidden, they are more challenging to identify, demonstrate, and debate.

The functionalist theory viewpoint, which holds that every structure serves a variety of interconnected purposes, includes the TLC community's role in facilitating access to higher education. The vision and mission statements that were planned from the start of this community's formation clearly state its manifest function. In the meantime, the latent function manifests itself in tandem with the community's continuing activities. The process starts with the execution of activities, which are followed by unforeseen consequences that the society finally recognizes and adjusts. Administrators, volunteers, and children participating in the events can all profit from these hidden functionalities thanks to the ingenuity of TLC administrators. The following is an explanation of the TLC community's overt and covert roles in facilitating educational access:

1. Manifest Function

a. Improving the Quality of Human Resources (HR)

Enhancing human resources (HR) quality is one way education aims to improve the country's intellectual life. A better life can result from education if one has the necessary information, abilities, and skills (Lestari and Nuryanti 2022). Through education, people can reach their full potential and improve the quality of human resources. The TLC community contributes to improving human resource quality by fostering a positive learning environment, fostering skill development, offering scholarships, and assisting students in pursuing higher education. The quality of human resources will rise due to free learning centers and the large number of students pursuing higher education.

b. Tegal Youth Aspiration and Collaboration Forum

The original purpose of the TLC community was to provide a forum for cooperative teaching and learning exercises. University students came together to give 12th graders more in-depth knowledge about higher education. As time passed, more college students came forward to offer support and share their goals. The young people of Tegal expressed their opinions, exchanged ideas, and contributed in various areas within this group. TLC became a platform for youth aspiration and collaboration in Tegal when various parties formed partnerships to execute programs based on their goals.

c. Providing Scholarship

TLC is critical in improving educational access for low-income pupils. The community supports academic and professional development through its scholarship programs by offering social networks, training, mentorship, and financial aid. This community allows talented but impoverished people to further their education to contribute to the country's growth.

d. Regional Education and Learning Media

The TLC community wants to give Tegal pupils access to free educational materials. It functions as a comprehensive mechanism to increase regional educational access. All instruments used to convey knowledge to students and aid their comprehension are considered learning media (Hasan et al. 2021; Saleh et al. 2023; Wulandari et al. 2023). TLC is a regional learning platform that improves educational access through a carefully thought-out and integrated system. The community gives students the tools, knowledge, and inspiration to meet their learning objectives.

2. Laten Function

a. Movement for Change

The movement for change in this context refers to the impact of TLC students who continue to become volunteers. Recognizing this, TLC provides a space for individuals to drive change in education and social fields. Anthony Giddens defines a movement for change as an organized effort to alter or maintain social order through planned collective action (Ritzer 2014). As agents of change, youth possess strong characteristics to initiate such movements (Sahendra et al. 2023). TLC provides a platform for contributing to the surrounding environment by aiding students and encouraging them to give back via social awareness.

b. Social Networking

A *social network* refers to social links or patterns of connections that entail interactions within individual or group relationships (Hidayaturrahman et al. 2020). A community acts as an excellent platform for growing connections and sharing knowledge. Students can establish relationships with peers from other schools, connect with university students, and exchange experiences through the TLC network. Additionally, university students can form new connections with people from other campuses. The social network inside this group also stimulates collaboration with numerous external parties, broadening social links. Social networks in the community give access to important information and fresh perspectives while enhancing social support. Consequently, a community serves as a catalyst for both professional and personal development in addition to being a networking site.

c. A Means of Self Value Enhancement

Individuals join an organization or community to gain experience. Every program offers qualities individuals can learn from, such as teamwork, responsibility, leadership, decision-making, collaborative problem-solving, and conquering hurdles. Interacting with people from diverse backgrounds also helps in personal development. TLC offers tutors and volunteers the chance to obtain an electronic certificate. By participating in the community, individuals gain valuable experiences that can be added to their Curriculum Vitae (CV), making them more prepared for social life and the professional world.

d. Enhancing Educational Equality

The idea of educational equality highlights that everyone, regardless of background, should have equal access to education. In order to provide equitable educational opportunities, the government has pushed educational equality through the 12-year compulsory education program (Margiyanti and Maulia 2023). Ensuring access to educational opportunities is a crucial strategy for accomplishing this aim (Zafitri et al. 2024). The TLC community supports this endeavor by offering facilities, training programs, scholarships, and educational opportunities. By encouraging students to seek higher education, these programs improve educational equality for all people.

In the sustainability of a program, the application of Robert K. Merton's theory of manifest and latent functions can explain how a program can endure and develop in the

long term. Manifest functions refer to the intended effects of a program. Therefore, sustaining a community program can enhance societal well-being through educational services, improve community capacity with training and education for greater independence, and encourage public participation and collaboration in building a better education system. Latent functions also play a role in program sustainability by strengthening social networks. Community programs often bring together various individuals and groups, eventually forming social connections that can support future programs. The meaningful role and function of the community allow similar programs to be applied to other educational communities.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that the Tegal Learning Center (TLC), a nonprofit community, serves as an educational and learning platform in Tegal. TLC provides free access to education by acting as a facilitator, educator, mentor, motivator, and evaluator. These roles align with inclusive education, ensuring all students have equal learning opportunities, regardless of social status or discrimination. Through these five roles, TLC helps guide students toward higher education.

This community also serves a role for all concerned parties. The TLC community has direct and indirect impacts based on Robert K. Merton's manifest and latent functions principles. These two roles work in tandem to shape the dynamics of the community. Enhancing human resources, giving young people a platform for collaboration and aspirations in Tegal, providing scholarships, and acting as an educational medium are all examples of its manifest function, a purposefully planned objective. Meanwhile, fostering social change, enabling networking, raising self-esteem, and advancing educational equality are all part of the latent function, which is the term for unintended effects. As a result, the TLC community influences people and the environment more broadly, offering obvious and palpable advantages.

To encourage more students to pursue higher education, the TLC community should develop an online application that would enable students to access learning materials at any time and from any location. In addition, schools, particularly high schools, should improve their role as a platform for information and access to higher education. Finally, the government can work with the community to support its growth and address issues related to educational access in various regions.

Based on the collected data, this study contributes to understanding the relationship between education, social structure, social mobility, and community development through more inclusive, participatory, and socially-oriented education. However, this research is limited to examining the roles and functions of the community, leaving other perspectives to be explored, for instance, the long-term impact of community programs on social mobility and economic well-being, how these programs influence students' lives, or how graduates from community education programs compare to regular students' academic and career achievements. Further research is recommended to explore the broader implications of community education in students' lives.

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