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Cultivating a Sustainable Loving Nature Culture through INLA Informal Education: A Case Study at Maitreyawira High School

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the role of informal education provided by the International Nature Loving Association (INLA) in building sustainable nature-loving character at SMA Maitreyawira Batam. Using a qualitative descriptive method, the research seeks to provide a deep understanding of how informal education activities can complement the formal education system. Data were collected through interviews with the school principal, students, and parents, as well as through observation and literature studies. The results indicate that INLA activities, particularly through music and dance, serve as a medium for moral education that enhances students' emotional regulation, social skills, and environmental awareness. The study concludes that integrating the "One World One Family" principle through informal approaches is effective in fostering humanist values and a profound love for nature.

1. Introduction

Educational philosophy emphasizes the development of humanist individuals. Education serves a fundamental function in shaping 'educated' persons through the refinement of cognitive, practical, and technical skills. Such a role illustrates that human existence is inherently inseparable from the educational process. Education is not merely about cognitive training in formal institutions like schools and universities, but it is also deeply rooted in social, family, and extracurricular environments.

In Indonesia, according to Law No. 30 of 2003, the national education system consists of three paths: **formal, non-formal, and informal education**. While formal education provides a structured curriculum, non-formal education found in society and informal education primarily found in the family — both also serve as the final determinant of an individual's success in social interaction. Indonesians are expected to engage in diverse educational pathways—encompassing formal, non-formal, and informal education—to enhance the quality of human resources. Formal environments provide individuals with foundational guidelines and humanistic moral ethics essential for social interaction. The third environment, which serves as a critical determinant of an individual's success, is the family community (informal); this sphere necessitates the practical application of knowledge acquired from both the family and formal institutions (Raudatus Syaadah, 2022).

Given the significant role of informal education within the educational system, learning processes outside the formal curriculum—which flourish within a harmonious family

environment—serve as a crucial complement to an individual's diverse educational background. Consequently, there is a need for efforts to explore, disseminate, and examine informal education (within the family) regarding local values rooted from cultural and religious traditions. INLA (The International Nature Loving Association), established in 2006 (formerly known as PERKASI, Perhimpunan Kasih Semesta International Indonesia), is a non-profit organization dedicated to global nature conservation.

Its mission is to instill a culture of loving nature through cultural activities. Maitreyawira School Batam is an educational institution operating under the auspices of the Pancaran Maitri Foundation in Batam City. The institution provides a comprehensive range of education, spanning from early childhood to secondary levels, including Maitreyawira Senior High School (SMA) located in the Sungai Panas sub-district. As a private secondary school, SMA Maitreyawira Batam offers a universal education curriculum that emphasizes the core values of universality, kindness, and compassion. Furthermore, the school integrates the International Nature Loving Association (INLA) mission into its pedagogical framework to foster these principles within its students. At SMA Maitreyawira Batam, INLA's mission is integrated to support the school's commitment to universal values, kindness, and love.

2. Method

This research utilizes a qualitative methodology, producing knowledge-rich descriptive findings. Qualitative inquiry facilitates a substantive comprehension of the phenomenon under study. Accordingly, the study preserves objectivity by ensuring that the findings extend beyond the researcher's subjective intent to provide a more comprehensive and in-depth analysis. The systematic process of this research includes data retrieval, collection, processing, and analysis. Adopting a descriptive research design, this study aims to resolve current problems through data-driven evidence (Sofaer, 1999).

Primary data were elicited through interviews with key participants at SMA Maitreyawira, including the principal, students, and parents. To ensure robust data collection, this qualitative study integrated multiple techniques: observation, visual analysis, literature review, and individual or group interviews (Gill, 2008). The resulting data were then synthesized and analyzed to derive the final research conclusions

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 The Nature of Informal Education

Informal education refers to the educational pathway within family and social environments, manifested through conscious and accountable independent learning. The outcome of informal education is formally recognized once the individual has completed formal or non-formal education and met national education standards. This educational informal mode is primarily situated within the family, where parents and other family members play central roles. The family is defined as the oldest and most fundamental informal educational institution—the primary environment experienced by an individual. It serves as a natural institution where parents bear the responsibility of nurturing, protecting, and educating the child to ensure optimal development. Essentially, the family is the first collective living unit known to an individual, hence its designation as the "primary community."

To distinguish it from formal and non-formal systems, the characteristics of informal education are outlined as follows:

1. It is specifically conducted within the family and immediate social environment.
2. It does not require specific academic prerequisites.
3. It does not necessitate participation in standardized examinations.

4. The family and social surroundings are the primary drivers of the educational process.
5. It does not follow a structured curriculum.
6. There are no hierarchical levels or grades of education.
7. It is conducted without spatial or temporal constraints.
8. Parents serve as the primary educators or "teachers."
9. It doesn't have a structured management system
10. It does not require formal certification or diplomas (Raudatus Syaadah, 2022).

Based on the aforementioned characteristics, informal education encompasses character building (called "budi pekerti"), etiquette, moral and ethical guidance, religious education, and social integration. This underscores that informal education is pivotal in developing an individual's character in both communication and action. Behavior is inherently aligned with an individual's internal character; for instance, a positive character inclines one toward positive conduct, such as when parents model a forgiving attitude for their children to internalize.

In this framework, parents serve as primary role models, demonstrating virtuous character for their children to emulate—analogous to how a teacher inspires students or an accomplished elder sibling serves as an example. Informal education relies on relational proximity and intimacy to facilitate learning development. Furthermore, the pedagogical methods are diverse, ranging from fostering hobbies like music and dance to instilling a sense of compassion for animals and nature. Consequently, informal education provides children with opportunities to develop emotional intelligence, build robust character, and cultivate deep-seated passions. Thus, it functions as an essential complement to formal and non-formal education within the Indonesian national education system.

3.2 INLA and Sustainable Nature-Loving Culture

INLA expresses its mission through artistic performances, such as the INLA dance, which involves 10 to 50 dancers moving in harmony. One prominent piece, "One Family," conveys a message of global harmony—World One Family—emphasizing that all humans are one family regardless of race, religion, or skin color. Furthermore, the INLA dance does not neglect the aesthetic aspects of humanity. In addition to articulating a noble mission, it consistently produces beauty through choreographic expressions and movements that mesmerize the spectators. The choreography itself manifests as meaningful aesthetic gestures (Widyanarto, 2024).

In the present study, the author performed semi-structured interviews with students at Maitreyawira Senior High School involved in the INLA program. The inquiries addressed various aspects of INLA activities, with the findings subsequently synthesized into a thematic paragraph. The primary participant is Charles, a 17-year-old male student residing in Batam and attending the aforementioned institution. The objective of the interview was to elicit the subjective experiences of high schoolers regarding their involvement in the International Nature Loving Association (INLA) dance, specifically examining its influence on emotional regulation, stress management, cognition, behavior, and overall life outlook. As a movement, INLA aims to propagate moral ethics, life values, and universal culture through art and education, serving as a catalyst for actualizing peace and happiness within families, communities, and the global society (Cyntia Ingrid, 2023).

Findings from the interview reveal that the participant's initial encounter with INLA occurred during the new student orientation program. INLA is differentiated from conventional physical exercise of *Senam Kesegaran Jasmani* by its lyrical content, which is imbued with moral themes and humanistic values, specifically emphasizing a profound love for nature and humanity. Consequently, INLA is conceptualized not only as a physical exercise but also as a vehicle for character and value education. Regarding the frequency of engagement, INLA is practiced routinely once a week for approximately two hours, with training intensity increasing

ahead of performances. Participation arises from a synergy between institutional mandates and intrinsic motivation, the latter of which evolves through continued engagement within the INLA collectively. Furthermore, the participant displayed an advanced comprehension of the INLA philosophy, asserting that the alignment of choreography with the lyrics' narrative facilitates the effective internalization of moral and emotional values.

In the aspects of emotion regulation and stress management, INLA plays a significant role as an outlet for alleviating academic pressure. The participant reported that the activities of dancing, singing, and listening to INLA music effectively reduce stress, boost morale, and provide a sense of physical and emotional satisfaction despite physical fatigue. Furthermore, INLA is voluntarily utilized as an emotion regulation strategy to cope with sadness or anxiety, with the lyrics offering a sense of life purpose, self-appreciation, and empathy toward others. Intensive involvement in INLA also contributes to a reduction in excessive gadget use due to a more structured daily schedule. On the cognitive and behavioral dimensions, participation in INLA fosters an increase in environmental awareness. This shift is reinforced through collective experiences in annual INLA events, direct education on environmental hygiene, and exposure to educational media regarding climate change. Additionally, INLA contributes to the participant's social development, particularly in enhancing socialization skills, teamwork, and interpersonal communication. Participants who formerly exhibited introverted tendencies reported increased self-confidence and openness in social interactions

Furthermore, INLA significantly shapes the participant's cognitive framework and existential outlook, manifesting in heightened optimism, an inclination toward altruistic joy, and active participation in social and voluntary initiatives within scholastic and religious contexts. Emerging positive habits include enhanced time management, familial solicitude, and consistent prosocial conduct in everyday life. In the summative evaluation, the participant identified the core value of INLA in fostering a more optimistic, empathetic, and purposeful life perspective. Furthermore, the participant exhibited considerable enthusiasm for the strategic expansion of the INLA program, specifically regarding thematic diversification and the reinforcement of extracurricular frameworks. Overall, INLA is conceptualized as an effective arts- and movement-based intervention that bolsters the psychological, social, and moral well-being of adolescent students.

3.3 Informal Education of INLA in SMA Maitreyawira

According to the Principal of Maitreyawira High School, Mrs. Mariati, S.Pd., M.Pd., INLA activities have been implemented at the school since its establishment in 2009. Initially, the program was part of an extracurricular activity known as *Eskul Senam Kasih Semesta*, which focused on routine weekly training. Over time, the program evolved into an informal initiative titled 'INLA go to School.' Through this program, students acquire more than just practical gymnastic skills; it has become a platform where they practice core INLA values, including cherishing life, loving life and glorifying life. The activity fosters intrinsic motivation among students, emphasizing that INLA is not merely a physical exercise but a means of bringing happiness to others.

Figure 1

Students of Maitreyawira High School Batam participating in the 'INLA Go to School' festival (Personal Documentation).



The aforementioned study elucidates that INLA facilitates personal character development while instilling a deep-seated affinity for the natural environment. These findings are further supported by interview data from a parental perspective. The participant, Ana (female, aged 43), who is the mother of the primary participant (Charles), observed a significant transformation in her son's conduct, notably improving parent-child interpersonal dynamics. The parent learned of her son's involvement through his own initiative after the school's promotional efforts. The student exhibited intrinsic motivation, voluntarily requesting permission to participate. From the outset, the parent did not regard INLA as an impediment to academic focus; instead, it was conceptualized as a constructive platform for socialization. Despite the fluctuating intensity of the rehearsal schedule prior to public exhibitions, the parent acknowledged that such rigor was essential for fostering collective harmony and aesthetic quality. According to parental reports, the child's emotional disposition regarding INLA was predominantly positive, manifesting as heightened enthusiasm and spirited engagement.

The Indonesian education system comprises formal, non-formal, and informal education. This study aims to complement the national education framework by highlighting the role of informal education, which occurs within the family—the smallest unit of the social strata. In this context, the concept of family does not merely refer to a physical location or traditional parental roles; rather, it represents a 'family principle.' INLA provides a clear vision and mission to love nature through the principle of 'The World as One Family.' This principle serves as the universal foundation for INLA to foster a culture of loving nature within the broader society. Informal education is an essential element in the holistic development of an individual within the education system. Thus, INLA is implemented at Maitreyawira High School as an effort to cultivate student character to be more humanistic and deeply connected to nature.

4. Conclusion

Based on the discussion above, the following conclusions can be drawn: Informal education is an educational system inherently linked to humanistic dimensions, occurring within the family and facilitated by parents or family members. INLA contributes significantly to students' social development, particularly in enhancing socialization skills, teamwork, and interpersonal communication. The student participant from Maitreyawira High School, who previously exhibited introverted tendencies, reported an increase in self-confidence and social openness. Furthermore, parents do not perceive INLA as an activity that detracts from academic study time,

but rather as a positive endeavor that supports the child's socialization. The concept of family in this context does not merely denote a physical location or specific roles (father and mother) but represents a family principle. INLA provides a clear vision and mission to love nature through the 'World as One Family' principle. This principle serves as the universal foundation for INLA to disseminate a nature-loving culture to the broader community. Ultimately, informal education is a vital element in shaping the whole person within a continuous educational system.

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