

Strengthening Digital Learning for Archipelago Teachers in Letti Island

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ABSTRACT

Program pengabdian masyarakat bertajuk "Penguatan Pembelajaran Digital bagi Guru Kepulauan di Pulau Letti" ini dilaksanakan untuk memberdayakan guru bahasa Inggris di Pulau Letti dengan pengetahuan dan keterampilan yang dibutuhkan untuk mengintegrasikan perangkat digital ke dalam praktik mengajar mereka. Pulau Letti, yang terletak di Kabupaten Maluku Barat Daya, menghadapi tantangan signifikan dalam aksesibilitas internet, yang berdampak pada kualitas dan pemerataan pendidikan. Program ini melibatkan lokakarya satu hari dengan presentasi, pelatihan digital praktis, diskusi kelompok, dan kegiatan kolaboratif. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pengalaman tersebut memotivasi dan mencerahkan semua guru yang berpartisipasi. Meskipun keterbatasan infrastruktur, mereka menyatakan antusiasme yang kuat untuk menerapkan apa yang telah mereka pelajari di kelas mereka. Inisiatif ini menyoroti pentingnya pengembangan profesional berkelanjutan bagi para pendidik di daerah pedesaan dan menunjukkan perlunya perhatian pemerintah yang lebih besar untuk meningkatkan akses ke sumber daya digital. Program-program masa depan seperti ini didorong untuk mempertahankan dan memperluas dampak positif pada pengajaran dan pembelajaran di masyarakat pulau terpencil.

This community service program titled "Strengthening Digital Learning for Archipelago Teachers in Letti Island" was carried out to empower English teachers in Letti Island with the knowledge and skills needed to integrate digital tools into their teaching practices. Letti Island, located in Southwest Maluku Regency, faces significant challenges in internet accessibility, impacting education quality and equity. The program involved a one-day workshop with presentations, practical digital training, group discussions, and collaborative activities. The results indicated that the experience motivated and enlightened all participating teachers. Despite infrastructural limitations, they expressed strong enthusiasm to apply what they had learned in their classrooms. This initiative highlights the importance of continuous professional development for educators in rural areas and suggests the need for greater government attention to improving access to digital resources. Future programs of this nature are encouraged to sustain and expand the positive impact on teaching and learning in remote island communities.



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INTRODUCTION

Digital learning refers to the use of digital tools, technologies, and platforms to facilitate and enhance the educational process. Lin (2017) defines digital learning as “an instructional approach that integrates technology to deliver content, provide real-time feedback, and engage learners in interactive experiences beyond the constraints of traditional classrooms.” Lin emphasizes that digital learning is not merely about digitizing textbooks or uploading materials online but about transforming pedagogy

to be more adaptive, student-centered, and data-informed. Similarly, Walker (2024), in his book *Digital Learning: How Modern Technology is Changing Education*, conceptualizes digital learning as “a dynamic and evolving educational model where technology acts as both a medium and a catalyst for personalized, accessible, and collaborative learning.” Walker highlights the increasing role of artificial intelligence, cloud-based platforms, and mobile applications in reshaping how students interact with content, peers, and instructors. For Walker, digital learning is not just a tool but a shift in educational culture, aiming to democratize learning and bridge geographic, economic, and social barriers.

Both Lin and Walker discuss the purpose of digital learning, which centers on improving access to quality education, enhancing learner engagement, and fostering autonomy. Lin (2017) argues that digital learning supports differentiated instruction by catering to diverse learning styles and paces, thus allowing educators to address individual student needs more effectively. Walker (2024) extends this view by highlighting the goal of creating lifelong learners who are digitally literate, adaptable, and capable of navigating a rapidly changing knowledge economy. The significance of digital learning lies in its potential to revolutionize traditional educational models. According to Lin (2017), digital learning breaks down the physical boundaries of the classroom and allows for flexible, asynchronous learning opportunities, particularly beneficial in remote or underserved regions. Walker (2024) underscores its role in promoting equity, inclusion, and collaboration. He posits that digital learning environments can foster global dialogues, support multilingual learners, and provide immediate access to a wealth of online resources and open educational content. The overarching purpose of digital learning, as emphasized by both scholars, is to democratize education by enhancing access, promoting equity, and cultivating digital competence among learners and educators alike. These insights are especially relevant in the context of Letti Island, a remote area in the Southwest Maluku Regency of Eastern Indonesia, where limited internet infrastructure and scarce access to digital resources pose significant obstacles to educational progress. It is the place where the English Education Study Program, Off-Campus Study Program (PSDKU) of Pattimura University–Southwest Maluku (MBD) did the community service to address the gap.

Letti Island, located in the Southwest Maluku Regency of Maluku Province, is one of the many remote and rural islands in Eastern Indonesia. This region's geographical isolation contributes significantly to limited infrastructure, particularly in terms of internet connectivity and access to digital resources. These challenges pose significant barriers to the advancement of education, especially in embracing digital learning, which has become increasingly vital in today's educational landscape.

Despite these limitations, the right to quality education remains universal and should be equally accessible to students and teachers regardless of location. The disparity in digital access between urban and rural areas such as Letti Island highlights the urgent need for targeted educational support and capacity-building initiatives. As academic professionals based in the Southwest Maluku Regency, we are responsible for extending support and empowering educators throughout the archipelago to ensure no teacher or student is left behind.

This community service initiative focuses on strengthening digital literacy and pedagogical skills for junior high school English teachers in Letti Island. By equipping local teachers with practical tools and strategies for digital learning, we aim to foster more inclusive, effective, and engaging English language instruction. Although our intervention represents a modest effort, it is a meaningful step toward bridging the digital divide and supporting the professional growth of educators in remote areas.

METODE

The community service activity was conducted at SMP Negeri 1 Letti on December 11, 2024, involving approximately 10 English teachers from various junior high schools across Letti Island. The techniques employed in this program included presentations, workshops, hands-on digital training, group discussions, and question-and-answer sessions focused on enhancing digital teaching skills and integrating technology into English language instruction.



Picture 1. The stages of Community Service

The implementation of this service followed a three-stage process, which included preparation, implementation, and evaluation.

1. Preparation Stage

The initial stage involved coordination with the Principal of SMP Negeri 1 Letti and representatives of the English teachers' forum (MGMP Bahasa Inggris) in Letti Island. During this coordination phase, we discussed official permissions, arranged the training schedule, identified key topics based on the teachers' needs, and clearly explained the objectives and benefits of digital learning for language education in remote settings.

2. Implementation Stage

The implementation was carried out using several methods: interactive presentations, group workshops, guided digital tool practice, and collaborative discussions. The day was structured around specific themes related to digital learning:

a. Session 1: Digital Awareness and Accessibility

This session introduced the concept of digital literacy, explored challenges faced by rural teachers, and provided an overview of accessible tools and platforms such as Google Classroom, Canva for Education, and YouTube.

b. Session 2: Integrating Technology in English Teaching

The second session focused on practical applications, where participants learned to design engaging digital materials, create interactive quizzes using Kahoot and Quizizz, and incorporate audio-visual aids into lesson plans.

3. Evaluation Stage

The evaluation stage was conducted after the implementation and involved collecting participant feedback through questionnaires and focus group discussions. The results were analyzed to assess the program's effectiveness and identify areas for future improvement. A final report and publication were prepared to document the community service's process, outcomes, and impact.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Implementing the "Strengthening Digital Learning for Archipelago Teachers in Letti Island" community service activity yielded highly positive outcomes. The program strengthened and empowered all participating Junior High School English teachers. The discussions and hands-on sessions gave them new insights, practical skills, and motivation to integrate digital tools into their teaching practices despite the ongoing limitations in internet connectivity and infrastructure in their region.



Picture 2. Photo session of some English teacher with the lecturers

A baseline survey at the beginning of the program revealed that only 35% of teachers reported confidence in using basic educational technologies such as presentation software, online dictionaries, or simple learning platforms. Moreover, fewer than 20% had engaged with interactive digital tools like Kahoot, Quizizz, or Google Classroom. These findings echoed the general challenges Nugroho and Mutiarani (2022) highlighted, who emphasized that teachers in remote areas often require more tailored, sustained digital training to build confidence and capacity.

Throughout the intervention, the interactive nature of the sessions—particularly the group discussions and collaborative project work—became a key strength of the program. Many teachers highlighted that these collaborative activities provided a strong sense of support and solidarity. All the teachers are required to share their experiences in dealing with the teaching and learning process in rural areas. The exchange of ideas and strategies contributed to a shared vision of enhancing English language teaching through creative, adaptable digital approaches suited to rural contexts. This aligns with Sari et al. (2023), who argue that localized and culturally sensitive digital literacy programs significantly improve teachers' willingness to innovate in their classrooms.



Picture 2. The teacher, during the discussion

As the program progressed, hands-on exposure to accessible tools such as Canva, Quizizz, and Google Slides empowered the teachers to create digital teaching materials. A follow-up survey conducted at the end of the program showed a remarkable shift: over 80% of the teachers expressed confidence in applying at least two new digital tools in their classrooms. Several teachers initiated independent projects, such as designing vocabulary quizzes, preparing multimedia-enhanced presentations, and experimenting with online collaborative exercises for students, even in areas where offline functionality was crucial.

Moreover, the teachers were enthusiastic to implement the knowledge and skills they had gained in their teaching practices. Their commitment to maximizing available resources reflects a resilient spirit and dedication to improving student learning experiences, even in under-resourced settings. One participant remarked, "Before this program, I thought technology was difficult and only for young people. I can teach it too, and I want to keep trying."



Picture 3. Photo session of some English teacher with the lecturers

As a follow-up, we recommend that the local government and relevant educational authorities pay closer attention to the ongoing challenges faced by educators in remote islands such as Letti. Improving internet access and providing continuous, context-appropriate professional development for teachers is essential to ensuring equitable access to quality education across all regions. The success of

this community service initiative serves as compelling evidence that, with the proper support and guidance, teachers in rural areas are ready and eager to embrace digital transformation in education.

CONCLUSION

The community service program "*Strengthening Digital Learning for Archipelago Teachers in Letti Island*" has demonstrated the importance and impact of supporting educators in remote areas through relevant and practical digital training. Through interactive sessions, hands-on activities, and collaborative discussions, English teachers from Letti Island gained valuable knowledge, skills, and motivation to incorporate digital tools into their teaching practices.

Despite the limitations in infrastructure and internet access, the teachers showed strong enthusiasm and commitment to applying what they had learned to benefit their students. This initiative empowered the participants and highlighted the need for continued support and attention from stakeholders, particularly the government, to bridge the digital divide in rural education.

This activity marks a meaningful step in the journey toward educational equity and digital inclusion. Looking ahead, we hope to conduct further enhancement programs to uplift, inspire, and equip teachers across the archipelago with the tools they need to succeed in the digital era.

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