

The Gotong Royong Run: An Educational Game to Build the Spirit of Togetherness among Players

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Abstract: The spirit of togetherness and cooperation seems to be declining among some of Indonesian communities. The Independence Day celebration can be used as a momentum to strengthen the spirit through various competitions for children. Traditional games which are commonly played for competitions can potentially be developed into educational games. The Gotong Royong Run presented here has been developed and modified from a traditional game called Lari Memindahkan Bendera (Flag-moving Race). The game is intended for pre-school and elementary school children to train skills of working cooperatively.

Keywords: spirit of togetherness, educational games, the Gotong Royong Run.

Indonesia has long been known for its spirit of *gotong royong* (mutual cooperation) and togetherness. The spirit has been so influential that even for essential matters decision has to be made on the basis of agreement and consensus. At present, however, such a spirit seems to be declining among some of Indonesian communities, which is indicated by a number of social riots recently taking place in Kupang, Ambon, Sambas, Poso, and Tegal, regardless of whether there really exist provocators.

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In the old days, the spirit was indeed reflected in the way of life of most Indonesians. Among Javanese, for example, there were such traditions of mutual cooperation as *gugur gunung* or *kerja bakti*¹ for public purposes and *sambatan*² for personal purposes (Herusatoto, 1991). Although still present, these two are not practised as frequently as they were before 1960s. *Kerja bakti* is mainly done in the preparation of village or state celebration such as village contest, welcoming state guests/authorities, and the celebration of the Independence Day.

In celebrating the Independence Day, Indonesian families often do collective activities, which reflect a very strong spirit of togetherness and cooperation. The heads of the families are commonly involved in activities such as collecting funds for celebration expenses, taking part in various sports or arts competitions, and doing *kerja bakti* in the form of village clean-up or public-facility improvement. Additionally, the mothers are preparing for the ceremony and the feast called *tumpengan*³. Children are also involved in collective activities mainly in the form of competitions.

Almost all of the collective activities that children are engaged in are in the form of sports competitions and games, which surely offer fun to the players. In fact, the competitions and the games can potentially be developed into educational game, which provides the players with educational values. The games, for instance, can be used to make the players realize the importance of the spirit of togetherness and cooperation, and yet the basic nature of play, i.e. fun, is still to be there.

Educational game is designed to provide the players with learning experience; included here are traditional and modern games which are filled with educational and teaching values (Waseso, 1996). Based on this meaning, any play which is designed to give information or to develop a certain attitude or spirit, for example the spirit of togetherness and cooperation, can be categorized as educational game as the game offers cognitive and affective learning experiences to the players (Supriyono, 1994). Thus, the categorization of educational game can be either by design, i.e. the game is originally designed for educational purposes, or by utilization, i.e. traditional games which are utilized for educational purposes. The Gotong Royong Run (*Lari Gotong Royong*) presented here is specially developed to provide cognitive and affective learning experience and thus categorized as educational game.

The use of game in education, more specifically in teaching, has been common among educationists and teachers; even in play groups and kindergartens game is the central part of the teaching learning process. Various educational games and songs are played and sung by children of play groups and kindergartens under the supervision of the teacher at school or of the parents or brothers and sisters at home (Yudhaningsih, 1999; Hasanah, 1999).

Elementary school children also play a number of educational games. Many new educational games have been developed to introduce new concepts in mathematics, civics, biology, etc. (Waseso, 1996). In Physical Education, a game called *Gedrik* has been developed to improve basic locomotion skill (Asim, 1997). Another game called *Gandu Volleyball* is intended to better the physical health of elementary school students (Asim, 1999).

For older students, i.e. students of high schools and colleges, there are a number of variants of simulation games to play. Legislation Game, for instance, is meant to experience the duties of a legislator and Detective Game is to train skills to work cooperatively (Waseso, 1991). One variant of simulation games can even be utilized to practise counselling to arouse students' motivation (Hadis, 1997). Ali Imron has tried out a simulation game to teach Classroom Management class. The result shows that this method is better in terms of retention, learning achievement, and learning appeal (Imron, 1998). Another variant can be used to effectively socialize Pancasila values, which is popularly called *Permainan Simulasi P-4* (Supriyono, 1994).

Outside schools, there are unlimited games that children can play. People can usually see these games played when there is a celebration of the Independence Day of the Republic of Indonesia. Some of the popular games are in-sack run race, cracker-eating race, stilt-riding race, carrying-marbles-in-spoon race, and flag-moving race. Some of the games are already educational and some can be modified to be educational. The writer has developed and modified the Flag-Moving Race (*Lari Memindahkan Bendera*)⁴ into The Gotong Royong Run (*Lari Gotong Royong*), which is intended to grow the spirit of togetherness and cooperation. The Gotong Royong Run was already applied in 35 kindergartens in Kotamadya Malang as the follow up of a training program held in November 1996

(Waseso, 1996; 1999). The following is a brief description of the Gotong Royong Run.

THE GOTONG ROYONG RUN RACE

The Gotong Royong Run is a group game in which the players have to choose certain pictures from a set of animal pictures and then put them in a container which was labelled with the same animal pictures chosen (for instance, a horse picture which is chosen should then be put in the container labelled with a horse picture). A player labelled with 'horse' should look for horse pictures only, a player labelled with 'cow' should also look for cow pictures only, and so forth until all pictures in the deposit container are moved into the labelled containers accordingly.

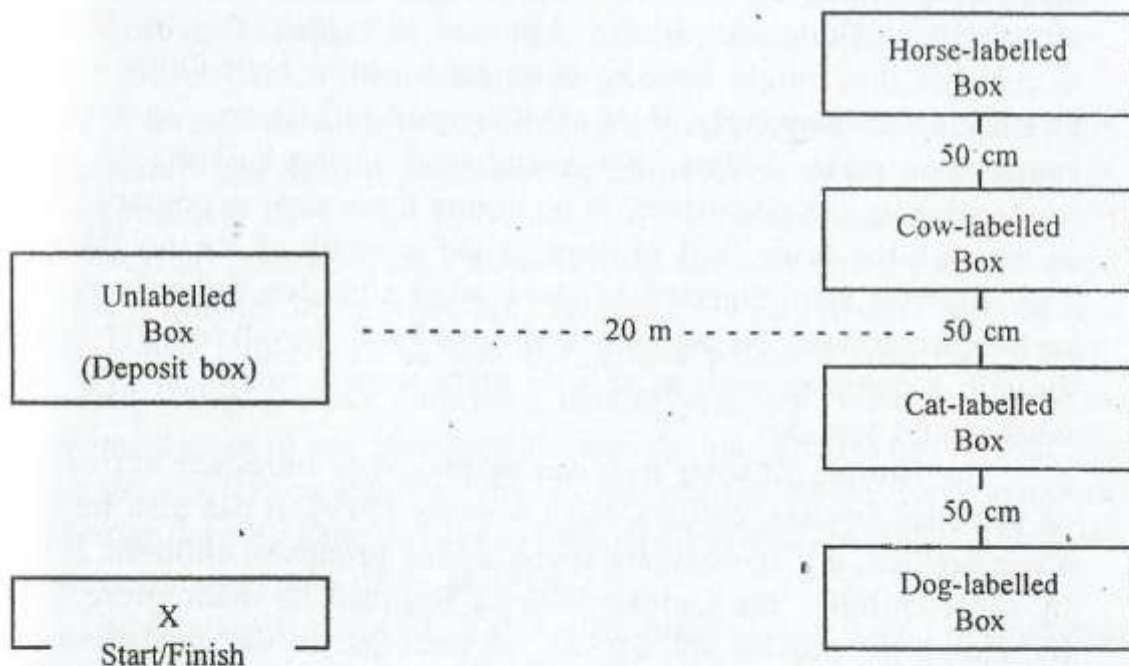
The Gotong Royong Run aims at training cooperation and self control and introducing various kinds of animals. The first objective teaches moral education because it trains the players to be able to put themselves in their life as social beings. The second objective teaches biology because it introduces children to various kinds of animals they see in their environment.

This game is intended for pre-school and elementary school children who are learning to know various kinds of animals, especially animals frequently found in their surrounding. The game is played in teams of four. Each player is called with the name of an animal going to be played, such as 'Horse' for the first player, 'Cow' for the second player, 'Cat' for the third player, and 'Dog' for the fourth player. The other children who do not get their turn to play become the spectators.

The Gotong Royong Run needs some equipment, such as: (a) Four cardboard boxes, each is labelled with a picture of a certain animal, e.g. a horse, a cow, a cat, and a dog. These boxes function as the places to keep the animals (i.e. the stalls); (b) One cardboard box, which is not labelled. This box is used to keep the pictures of all animals available (It is suggested that there be 10 kinds of animals, including the four kinds being introduced); (c) Pictures of horses, cows, cats, and dogs on stiff paper (cardboard) of 20cm x 20cm size, five pictures for each kind of the animals; (d) Pictures of a rooster, a mouse, a goat, a rabbit, a duck, a bird, and a zebra on cardboard of 20cm x 20cm size, one picture for each kind of the animals.

Before the game starts, the leader of the game introduces all kinds of the animals above to the participants, explaining briefly what the characteristics of the animals are and where they are likely to be found. The leader also needs to explain that there are useful animals (e.g. horses, cows, cats, and dogs) and there are useless ones (e.g. mice). Children are then told that they are invited to join the Gotong Royong Run race in order to better know some animals and to learn to work cooperatively.

The leader then prepares the equipment and the place as follows: (a) Four boxes labelled with the animal pictures are parallelly placed in front of the players. The distance from one box to another is around 50 cms; (b) One box which is not labelled is placed about 20 meters opposite the four boxes; (c) All animal pictures (around 10 kinds of animals, including the pictures of the four animals being introduced) are kept in an unlabelled box. Picture 1 describes the position of the boxes and the players in the 'start' and 'finish' steps.



Picture 1 The Gotong Royong Run Track

In the next step, the leader of the game appoints 4 children to be the players. The first player is called 'Horse', the second 'Cow', the third 'Cat', and the fourth 'Dog'. The leader has to explain the players'

job, i.e. to select horse, cow, cat and dog pictures from the deposit box, run and put the pictures in the labelled boxes accordingly. The rule is as follows: (a) the 'horse' player takes the horse pictures only, the 'cow' player cow pictures, the 'cat' player cat pictures, and the 'dog' player dog pictures only; (b) In choosing the picture from the unlabelled box and putting it in the box, the players have to in turn run while imitating the sound produced by the animal they are acting as; (c) Players have to work as quickly as possible until all the pictures they are seeking are not there anymore in the unlabelled box; (d) The game is considered over when in the unlabelled box there is no more picture of the animal to introduce (i.e. horses, cows, cats, and dogs). The next turn can be given to other children.

After the game, the leader of the game explains that choosing and collecting the pictures will be much easier if the players did them by themselves. However, in this game, they are asked to work cooperatively with friends. The leader is also supposed to explain that in other tasks in real life they might have to co-operate with others. Other examples of working cooperatively, things that frequently happen around children, can also be given to them, e.g. social work in the building of a house, in cleaning up the ditch/river, in arranging the house, in preparing meals, in mowing the lawn, and in keeping the security of the neighborhood. The leader is also expected to show what attitudes and actions should be adopted toward the animals that have been introduced, for instance, through a question such as this: If there were a mouse in your house, what would you do?

The Gotong Royong Run can be played to introduce various kinds of vehicles, flowers, clothes, etc. (Waseso, 1999). It can also be used as a competition, e.g. to compare speed among groups of children. If played by older children, the Gotong Royong Run can be made more difficult by adding the number of 'deposit' pictures put in the unlabelled box.

LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE GOTONG ROYONG RUN

As said before, this game would be much easier and faster to do individually than in groups. However, the players are to work cooperatively with the others so that, in order to achieve the objective of the game, the role of one player is dependent upon the roles of the others (Supriyono, 1994). Every person, who is represented as the individual player in the

Gotong Royong Run, is allowed to have individual goals, motives, and needs, and yet togetherness and cooperation are required in achieving the collective goals (Herusatoto, 1991). This is the miniature of the life of Indonesian society, which requires all components to work together and support each other.

The Gotong Royong Run offers a lesson that members of a society very often have to put the society's needs before their own. This is reflected in the requirement that the players should not reach for their own supremacy but that of their group (Waseso, 1996). In a broader sense, this means that in some cases members of a society acting as the actors in the stage of 'social life theater' are demanded to reach for the supremacy of their society rather than their own. Therefore, the individuals involved in a social life like in the Gotong Royong Run will consider the society's 'failure' as their own and the society's success as their own. In other words, to use the terminology from the theater, the players participating in the Gotong Royong Run will feel that they are pursuing the 'ending' not for themselves but more for their group.

The hidden mission in the Gotong Royong Run which requires the participants to put the group's interest before others also carries the message that they should have high self-control. This can be seen from the fact that the group members, who have various abilities, should do the same activities, whether or not they are 'sprinters'. A player who can run fast must control himself so as not to overtake a friend who runs slowly (Waseso, 1999). It's not surprising that players with good ability often show impatience to see 'the slow runner' do his part. However, this can evoke the realization that humans, as represented by the participants of the Gotong Royong Run, do have individual differences in physical abilities (such as running) and other abilities.

The Gotong Royong Run also introduces certain kinds of animals, such as horses, cows, cats, and dogs. Those animals are probably quite familiar to children of pre-school and elementary-school ages, but the facilitator of the game should not stop at the introduction of physical appearance of the animals. The facilitator should go further into the explanation of the usefulness (and perhaps the uselessness) of the animals for human beings, and the attitude and actions that should be adopted toward the animals (Waseso, 1996). For instance, the facilitator can de-

scribe the usefulness of a cow (its strength, meat, hide, faeces, and others) for humans. The participants can even be given explanation that horses, cows, cats, and dogs can 'co-operate' with humans by giving their strength, meat, hide and faeces, etc. for humans' benefit. Thus, it is perfectly reasonable that humans should be useful for other humans. That is the essence of living in a society.

In the Gotong Royong Run, the participants are required to do some tasks while running. Running is the core of sports (Asim, 1997), and sports is the golden bridge to health. In health, people can do various activities optimally. When the participants are in good health, they can go to school, study, do the scout exercises, go to parties, etc. A healthy body will enable them to play and work with their friends in doing school assignments. On the other hand, an unhealthy body will give the participants difficulties to do their activities. In addition, if they are unhealthy, they will lose their chances of playing and working with their peers, doing their homework, and other assignments, tasks from their parents, school/student organizations, the society, and the country. In short, there are so many activities that require health that children will benefit from sports (such as running) to maintain their health.

FINAL REMARKS

As a closing statement it is worth mentioning that educational games are just tools to achieve educational objectives. The treatment after the game should receive more importance than the Gotong Royong Run itself. Without the after-game treatment, the Gotong Royong Run will not be more than just entertainment, without its educational mission.

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NOTES

- ¹ *Gugur gunung or kerja bakti* is a group activity done by a community at the level of RT (the neighborhood), RW (suburb), or Kelurahan (district) for the benefit of the public, in the form of village clean-up, the building of village hall, the preparation of village celebration, etc., without fee. This tradition is still flourishing.
- ² *Sambatan* is a mutual-aid activity done by members of a community to help complete other members' duties, especially in the building of a house or cultivating the field, for free. Before the Independence there was a collective activity done by a community to cultivate the field of a village leader. This tradition, called *ngudur*, was once compulsory for each family (head of the family), but nowadays it no longer exists.
- ³ *Tumpengan* is a communal meal done for a certain purpose, on a certain event, in which the menu and manners are characteristically *tumpeng*. The

main staple is rice with its various dishes. The rice is shaped into a cone, placed on a tray (This is what is called the *tumpeng*), while the dishes are arranged around the rice-cone. The meal is opened with speeches and prayers.

- 4 *Flag-Moving Race (Lari Memindahkan Bendera)* is a running competition in which the participants run while moving a flag from one place to another (usually bottles), usually opposite each other. The distance from one bottle to the next is approximately 25 metres, while the number of flags to be moved is around 4-5 flags.