

# The Quality of a ‘Local Values Based’ Functional Literacy Program: Its Contribution to the Improvement of the Learner’s Basic Competencies

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## Abstract

Literacy facilitators across the archipelago are currently faced with the challenge to integrate local values in functional literacy education programs, because its integration is a new aspect. This makes localized literacy content a hard thing to implement. Yet, if properly conducted, it can lead to improved learner’s basic competencies. In an effort to improve the learner’s competencies based on localized content, it is necessary to develop the facilitator’s competencies in regard to use of localized materials, as a measure to improve the quality of the learners. In this paper, the researcher aims to bring forward a model of functional literacy education based on local culture (values) for quality performance of the community learning centers within a learning society. The research reveals that literacy education based on local culture or local content can improve the quality of learning. The conclusion is that a model combining localized content, can enrich learning in this globalized world. Such a model can help learners to act locally, but with a globalized mind.

**Keywords:** service quality, local content, functional literacy, basic competencies

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Introduce the Problem

Through education, people gain knowledge, change in attitude and behavior plus skills. In other words, education generates hope. It is this hope which is the basic foundation of education (Abdulhak, 1990). All efforts made to improve the knowledge, behavior, and skills of an individual, must have an impact on one’s social well-being. In Indonesia, people’s awareness about the usefulness of education is evidenced in their efforts to educate children and also the government’s encouragement of communities to set-up community learning centers for alternative education (Wamaungo, 2011). Centers for learning in communities, support the administration of educational activities and services of every individual willing to gain new skills. Educational services for illiterates and semi-illiterates are implemented through functional literacy education programs or activities. The Indonesian government considers functional literacy as one of the ways to meet the basic rights of its citizens as pointed out in the 1945 constitution.

The eradication of adult illiteracy is one of the indicators of development. Illiteracy hinders development, it limits an individual’s ability to participate in activities that require either critical thinking or a solid base of literacy and numeracy skills (Cree, Kay, & Steward, 2012). Literacy enhances individual abilities and supports national development in all aspects. It is an appropriate approach to: the strengthening of human development and also a cheapest and fastest way to decrease the number of illiterates; improvement of a country’s literacy rate in regard to public health, nutrition, maternal and child health care, welfare, and life expectancy; and facilitate broad based awareness on human rights and the country’s legal system, whereas illiteracy is closely related to ignorance, backwardness, unemployment, and poverty that eventually causes low productivity among individuals (Sudjana, 2006).

In reference to the above, the author found it important to conduct a study focusing on the quality of local values or culture based functional literacy as an important component of development. The effectiveness and efficiency of learning depends on the management and quality control of a program. These are key components to determining the quality of literacy education. In the Indonesian context, which is comprised of a variety of

cultures, customs, different ethnic groups, religions and beliefs, it is impossible to implement a similar program on functional literacy. The programmers or facilitators of literacy programs have to implement a combination of learning activities integrated with culturally based values, making the content localized (Kusnadi, 2005). It is a must for literacy education programmers to consider cultural diversity in developing learning materials for different areas of the archipelago.

This is inline with the fact that to determinate a community's learning needs, characteristics of a given group should be taken in consideration. The values and norms selected must be related to universal values (Koentjaraningrat, 1979). Such values may include: 1) system of survival: equipments and infrastructure, 2) livelihood systems or income generating systems, 3) social system, 4) language: spoken and written for communication, 5) art, 6) knowledge system, and 7) religious and spiritual systems.

### *1.2 Explore Importance of the Problem*

In reference to the research background, functional literacy is a program that requires much attention. It is therefore necessary to develop a model that can facilitate the learning process which meets the demands of the learners. The present research aimed to establish an appropriate quality control, and local value or culture based functional literacy model for the local communities. In specific, the researcher summarized the research problem in four questions: 1) How is the empirical condition of functional literacy education? 2) How is the conceptual model of functional literacy education based on local values or culture? 3) How is the implementation of the model ? and 4) How effective is this model?

### *1.3 Describe Relevant Scholarship*

Theoretically, the findings of this research will contribute to the cultivation of knowledge in the field of non-formal education, especially in regard to functional literacy education. It will also act as a guide for literacy programs or activities developed to meet the demands of local communities. The growing demands of education have led to the acceptance of functional literacy education. These demands have led to a warm welcome of nonformal approaches to learning for people who either have not had access to formal schooling or whose formal education has proved insufficient (Srinivasan, 1977; Wamaungo, 2011). Those who might have cut short their high school regret for such a big mistake and embrace literacy programs as a crucial second chance to gain required skills (Boyle, 1981). They see literacy as a chance to develop needed abilities missed during the early days of life, and perceive it as way to aquire advanced set of skills, knowledge, and strategies necessary to live a happy life.

Though literacy education is very important and at a rising demand, the current problem literacy education faces is the low quality of the services offered to communities. The cause being the limited infrastructure and facilities, inadequate skills of the administrators in creating innovative education programs or activities for the learner. This is evident in the quality of programs deemed inappropriate and leading to lack of interest among participants, leading to another form of education dropout, but this time, less call it "continuing education or literacy education dropout", hence causing further stagnation in functional literacy for all (FLFA). In such a situation, the quality of services and the learning needs should be in line with community demands. The only way is to embrace education programs which meet the most important issues arising from the very community. It is a proper way of providing effective and useful literacy programs. Illich calls for a cultural revolution, while holding a belief that mere revision of the formal school system can not result into the society the community needs (Srinivasan, 1977; Wamaungo, 2011). Meaning that culture is an important component to consider while developing efficient literacy programs.

Hufad (2004), states that the social impact of literacy is a guiding principle for public investment in literacy education. The social aspect may vary from one nation to another nation; nevertheless, the essential meaning remains the same. Those who obtain knowledge of how to read and write can functionally use it where necessary by practicing what they have learnt in their daily-life.

Local culture or values can be used as a basis or foundation for the development of education models on (in development of teaching materials, teaching strategies, media of teaching, and evaluation instruments). However, cultural issues can be obtained in two ways, namely: 1) by referring to the literature reviewed, it means one has considered the different communities (Parasuraman, 1994), 2) by referring to the field studies carried out by researchers and their references on culture, and philosophy (Kamil, 2002; Sudjana, 2006), it will provide elements necessary to develop a literacy curriculum that considers cultural values and science cultural values which greatly affect literacy programs.

The quality of literacy education programs has to satisfy the participants and should meet the set standard of

service quality (Parasuraman, 1985). Parasuraman states that the indicators of good service quality are: 1) tangible: focuses on the infrastructures and facility for learning; 2) empathy: refers to being decisive, critical, and or have feeling for others; 3) responsiveness: the ability of the administrators and tutors to facilitate and provide better services as well as able to understand learner needs; 4) reliability: the ability to provide trustworthy services; and 5) assurance: the ability to guarantee and or being hospitable to the others, including: administrators, tutors, and stakeholders.

## 2. Method

The present research used a qualitative method as an approach to the research and later on a developed a model which in education, if applied, it generates an educational product (Sugiyono, 2007). There were seven steps in developing this model, they included: conducting pilot study, organizing conceptual model, validating conceptual model, revising conceptual model, testing the model, completing the model, and disseminating the final product.

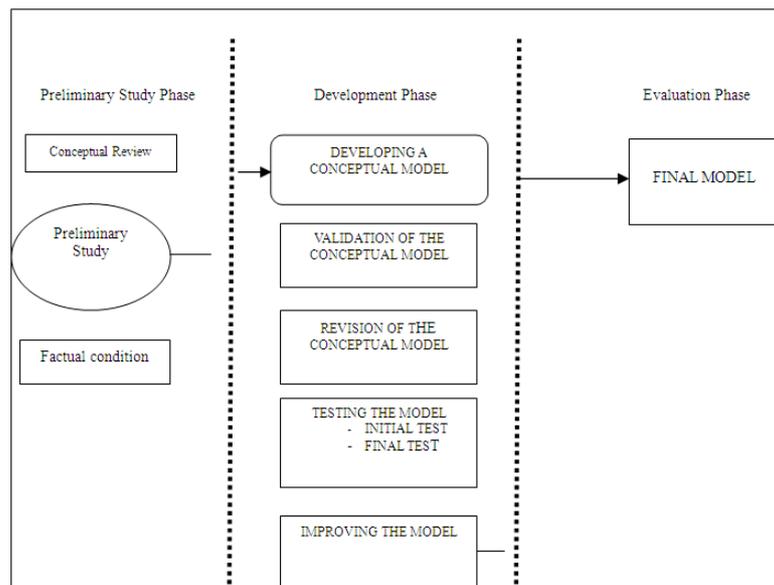


Figure 1. The plot of model development

### 2.1 Instruments and Research Techniques

The instruments and research techniques for data collection were: 1) document analysis; (2) structured interview; 3) observations; and 4) questionnaire. These instruments were employed to gather empirical data on literacy activities, the elements of local culture in the community learning centers, the characteristics of learners, tutors, administrators, and community leaders. On the other hand, questionnaires were applied to obtain data on learners' literacy competencies.

### 2.2 Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted using both qualitative and quantitative methods. Qualitative data analysis was done by organizing the data gathered, elaborating and coding the data into units, arranging them into patterns, positioning the data, and establishing conclusions. A quantitative data analysis was employed to support qualitative data and to attain a general picture regarding the basic competencies of learners.

## 3. Results of the Study—Empirical Condition of Literacy Education

Local government of Subang regency (especially The Office of Education) had been implementing national policy, especially in the education sector related to the eradication of illiteracy. It can be seen from the principle of *Gotong-Royong* or cooperative principle, which is the major characteristic of the society of Subang. The cooperativeness of Subang people in the process of illiteracy eradication is indicated or seen from different perspectives: (1) data collection from respondents, that involved all parties pertinent to the program; (2) gradual training of the tutors for functional literacy program; (3) accomplishing of functional literacy program that

involves all bodies/organizations pertinent to literacy education; (4) establishing cooperation with related bodies, such as universities (UPI and UGM), and Non-Formal and Informal Education Development Center (NFIEDP) Region I Jayagiri, West Java; and (5) providing infrastructures and facilities with the assistance of the government and the local society.

Tutors' experiences in the establishment of functional literacy education program were: First, there were four ways in identifying learning needs: (1) noticing local potentialities; (2) discussing those potentialities with the learners; (3) prioritizing learning needs based on the learners' input; and (4) providing stimulations, for example, asking for the learners' daily activities. Second, there was no particular ways in formulating learning objectives. Learning objectives were adapted from learning priority. Third, the teaching materials tend to be used as a supplement, which were not specifically used in the teaching-learning process. Fourth, by means of inducements, the learners could tell everything related to the learning topics that were going to be explained in the teaching-learning process. Fifth, the teaching materials were not specifically prepared. The tutors, therefore, encountered some difficulties in the teaching process. Sixth, the media used in the teaching-learning process were the things existed around the learners, such as identity card, family card, money, or other things. Seventh, evaluation of the learning results were carried out simultaneously by correcting the writing and the reading of the learners.

### *3.1 The Model of Service Quality in Literacy Education*

Quality in literacy education is promoted through two things: the curriculum in this case a curriculum of literacy education based on local culture and management of learning centers. A literacy curriculum developed based on local culture is comprised of: 1) teaching strategies, such as learning objectives, teaching materials, learners' involvement, time allotment, and facility; 2) with teaching materials-it means the development of curriculum content, determining teaching direction or learning goals, and the content of teaching materials; 3) the media of instruction basically consists of learning equipments or aids, or materials that simplify the process of teaching and learning; and 4) learning evaluation is conducted during the process of learning and through reading tests, writing tests, and arithmetic.

### *3.2 Teaching Strategies in Literacy Education*

The selection and determination of teaching strategies could not be separated from other components in the learning system. For instance strategies used were: 1) Target: the predisposition of the learners. Teaching strategies that focus on the learners needs to be involved in a second chance education program. Ideally, this method looks at the learner as key to the teaching and learning processes. On the other hand, tutors acted as a guide during learning. 2) Teaching methodology: the methodology employed by the tutors varied, for examples: 1) Structure Analysis Synthesis (SAS): learners would recognize that a sentence consists of words, syllables, letters, and punctuation marks; 2) key words: one of the techniques used was by presenting pictures that portrays real-life situations; 3) syllable: the learners tried to learn the syllables of varied words with the principles of replaying, memorizing, and practicing all the letters either the vowels and the consonants; (4) alphabet poster: the tutors utilized, which were attached based on the appropriate alphabet on the poster. 3) Learners' groupings: teaching strategy related to the learners' grouping was more or less influenced by the number and characteristic of the learners themselves. By this grouping it was expected that a cooperative, competitive, and independent teaching-learning condition will flourish. The various teaching strategies presented here were only some of the strategies chosen by the tutors to facilitate teaching-learning process.

### *3.3 Teaching Materials*

Teaching materials were developed based on local features. They were later grouped into five categories: (1) Subang local values or culture; (2) traditional medicines; (3) characteristics and habits of the society; (4) traditional art; (5) housing system; (6) transportation; and (7) fish farming. The chosen topics were then further developed into literacy teaching materials: (1) these teaching materials were developed based on the existing local materials of Subang; (2) learning materials were made easier for learners since, they were developed based on the language and the already known values of the community; (3) teaching materials were developed based on the learner's needs; (4) both the learners and tutors participated in the development of the learning materials; (5) materials for learning were identified by both the learners and tutors; (6) teaching materials were designed in such a way that they do not contradict religion and the customs of society; and (7) the materials were developed based on the local condition.

### *3.4 The Media of Teaching*

The selection of the media of teaching was relied on: (1) the suitability between the media and the learning

objectives, (2) the suitability between the media and the teaching-learning process, (3) the suitability between the media and learners' characteristics, (4) the suitability between the media and tutors' skills and teaching styles, (5) the suitability between the media and the condition of environment, facilities, and time allocated for the teaching-learning process, and (6) the suitability between the media and the characteristics of local culture.

### *3.5 Evaluation of the Process and the Results of Literacy Education*

The evaluation during program implementation was evaluation of learning progress of the individual learners, and the evaluation of the progress of learning groups. The first aspect of evaluation employed the appraisal of the learning process of reading, writing, and math as well as the appraisal of the learning process of functional skills. The second aspect was evaluation through tutor notes and the report on teaching-learning process. The evaluation of learning process was employed to understand the effectiveness of teaching programs, whereas the evaluation of learning results was carried out as a feedback for the completion of the teaching program.

### *3.6 Implementation of Learning*

This stage was basically for a quality model development with a focus on local culture. This model involves learning programs that contain instructional strategies, learning materials, instructional media, and evaluation of learning, and learning management. In its implementation, this model is strongly influenced by the ability of tutors, managers, and students learned during the learning process. Stages of treatment are developed based on four aspects of development, namely aspects of input, process, evaluation, and output. First, the input components include (1) the learners, (2) learning materials, (3) infrastructure, (4) tutor, and (5) literacy education curriculum. Second, the components of the process include: (1) relevant learning strategies, (2) instructional media used, (3) teaching strategies of tutor, (4) how the learning society learn, and (5) manager/organizer. Third, the output components include (1) the acquisition of knowledge achieved by the learners, (2) society's mastery of skills; and (3) control the attitude of the learners. Fourth, the evaluation components include (1) evaluation of the learning process, (2) evaluation of the functional literacy program.

### *3.7 The Process of Learning Reading*

The steps in the learning of reading cover several steps. (1) The tutor asked the learning society to express their experiences in their daily life. (2) The tutor selects and sorts out expressions of the learning society that contains material associated with the practical elements of the local culture of learners. (3) The tutor writes the material on a board. (4) The tutor asks the learners to copy the material into a notebook. (5) The tutor reads the reading material and the learning society repeats after by viewing to the board. (6) The tutor trains the learners to read repeatedly. (7) The tutor requests the learners to read simultaneously by looking at the results of their writings in the notebook. (8) The tutor trains the learners to read each writing in turn/random. (9) The tutor helps the learning society to have confidence and to feel happy that they can read, and gives encouragement to the learning society of helping others.

### *3.8 The Process of Learning Writing*

The steps in the learning of writing covered several steps: (1) writing related to the elements of culture, (3) concrete writing and (4) writing letters, words, and sentences. Further, efforts to improve writing skills of tutor and learners included (1) helping learners to write, (2) analyzing their writings, and (3) helping learners to learn how to read the results of their own writings. The tutor helps the learning participants to improve their writing, namely (a) helping learners to learn from their mistakes, (b) helping learners learn to correct their own mistakes; (c) re-writing after finding and correcting errors.

### *3.9 The Process of Learning Arithmetic*

The tutor helps the learners in learning arithmetic based on the familiarized activities. For instance, the learners can learn about money nominals, the number of livestock owned, the number of children, neighborhood and the community, and measurements. The learning materials are in the local language (Sundanese) by discussing the topics that are close to the daily life activities of the learning society. Evaluation Phase: The success of functional literacy program is measured by the level of achievement of the objectives of the program. However, the program cannot be looked at only by the success of its goals. It should be seen from the components of input, process, and output. First, the component inputs include: 1) the learning society (number, age, interests, cooperation, attitude, readiness to learn, and the completion of the task); 2) learning materials (learning material compliance with requirements, easiness in understanding the learning material, easiness in obtaining the materials, and attractiveness), 3) Facilities and infrastructure (which supports the teaching and learning process, easiness in obtaining/making, and availability), 4) Tutors who teach (skilled in teaching, master the learning material, and authoritative), 5) literacy education curriculum. Second, the components that are evaluated include:

1) relevant learning strategies (the use of the most appropriate learning strategies to be implemented), 2) instructional media used (utilizing a variety of media that exist in the learning environment), 3) how the tutor teach (the mastery of learning materials and the use of learning methods), 4) how the learning society learn (perseverance, motivation, and creativity), 5) manager/organizer (data of learners and tutors). Third, the components of output evaluated include: 1) the acquisition of knowledge achieved by the learners (mastery of learning materials), 2) mastery of the skills that people learn (mastery of functional skills), 3) control the attitude of the learning society (the learners feel that learning is a necessity).

The development of local based function literacy program covered several aspects, namely: 1) learner responsiveness, 2) values and the views of learners, 3) learning outcomes, 4) expectations of learners, 5) learning needs, 6) concepts, instructions, and theory in use, 7) measures and means of doing things, and 8) learning resources and activities.

#### **4. Conclusion**

A functional literacy education model designed in relation to local values can empirically improve the mastery of the basic competencies of learners. An element of local values integrated in a functional literacy education curriculum, as well as the evaluation tools of learning can help to improve the learner's basic competencies. Although all components of the model were presented in Sundanese language, were design refered to the national literacy standard competencies. Local culture appears in the mixture of components of learning where all attachments refer to the culture of learners. The model of service delivery in functional literacy education based on local values focused on learning programs (curriculum) and learning management as two major elements that influence the ability of tutors, managers.

The quality of a literacy program of literacy will affect the program either positively or negatively. The quality of service, management of learning, either partially or simultaneously, is of significant effect on the mastery of basic competencies in functional literacy. The increase in the competencies of a learning society in functional literacy is largely caused by the quality of the management of learning and the quality of services.

The development of literacy education activities based on local values is positive contribution to the improvement of the learner's literacy basic competencies. Integration of local values in literacy curriculum development which include: setting learning objectives, esigning learning materials, determining learning strategies, media for learning, and evaluation is of importance in the implementation of quality literacy education within a local setting.

#### **5. Recommendations**

##### *5.1 Reconstruction of Literacy Education*

In an effort to reconstruct literacy education, the expansion of literacy activities should not only be oriented toward the institutions that are known to be organizers of such programs, butt should also focus on efforts to diversify the learning objectives, learning materials, media, and instructional strategies and evaluation tools which are more appropriate and support integration of local values.

##### *5.2 Government (Policy Maker)*

This study is fundamental for the promotion requirements for mastery of basic competencies of the learners in regard to local values of society. The central government, together with the provincial and the district administration, should develop contextual, locally designed learning materials, media for learning and evaluation instruments through workshops/seminars, trainings and ongoing facilitation of tutors and managers of literacy education programs.

##### *5.3 Practitioners*

The implementation of literacy education model in regard to local culture practically requires managerial commitment from program managers, and tutors as key stakeholder in the whole phase of (1) planning, (2) organization, (3) leadership, (4) monitoring and evaluation; (5) establish individual and institutional partnerships.

##### *5.4 Further Research*

To validate the results of this study, similar studies are needed in order to socialize and diffuse the model, this study did not reach the level of broad-based implementation. Thus, it needs a broader feasibility testing.

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