

Developing the Students' Character through Literacy Activities in A Child-Friendly School Model

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Abstract

This case study aimed at investigating the implementation of literacy activities in developing the students' character of SD Negeri Secang 1 as one of child-friendly school models in Magelang Regency developed by Lund University, Sweden. This study described the practical guidance on literacy activities of child-friendly schools in developing the students' character through the literacy programs. Since it was a case study, the writer only focused on one school and the result could not be used to generalize to child friendly schools in Indonesia. Interview and observation were used in collecting the data of this study. The interview was used to gain information on how literacy activities were normally conducted at SD Negeri Secang 1 as a friendly school model and observation was used to see the real implementation of Literacy activities in developing the students' character. Based on the data analysis, it revealed that through literacy activities of a 15-minute reading activity, the students were able to develop their characters. By reading different topics, they could build their knowledge and values based on the topics they read.

Keywords: character building, child friendly school, literacy

A. Introduction

Reading is a great source of language learning: language can be acquired from reading as opposed to study directly (Pollard, 2008). Reading or writing is in preference to remember particular information (Ginting, 2017). Reading skill plays a very significant role in someone's life. Through reading, it will be easier for everyone to acquire knowledge and information. It is in line with Neuman, Kaefer and Pinkham's opinion (2014). They state that reading can build knowledge. Further, they state that reading about a lot of different topics and demonstrating breadth rather than depth in reading are typically the interpretation of wide reading. Since it is a

must for everyone to learn (acquire knowledge) from birth up to the niche, the Indonesian government declares the literacy program as early as possible. It is in line with the decision of the minister of education and culture number 25 of 2015. It is stated that to develop the students' character, one of the programs is through reading activity during fifteen minutes before the regular lessons start. The purpose of this activity is to develop the students' interest in reading. In addition, it is also to develop good learning experience of the students and improve their imagination as well. As one of the models in developing the students' character, literacy program needs to involve some elements; school, headmaster, teachers, students, and parents. It is in line with Wandasari's study (2017). That stated that the school literacy programs run well by involving the school community (learners, teachers, principals, education personnel, school supervisors, school committee, parents of learners), and stakeholders under the coordination of the Directorate General Primary and Secondary Education Ministry of Education and Culture.

Discussing literacy, it is stated by Kern (2000), literacy can be defined as the use of socially-, historically-, and culturally-situated practices of creating and interpreting meaning through texts. In addition to that, it is noted by Department of Education and Skills/DES, (2011) that literacy activities include the capacity to read, understand and critically appreciate various forms of communication including spoken language, printed text, broadcast media, and digital media. The ability to read and write is fundamental to full participation in society since almost all of the processes in the society life depend on the ability and the understanding of literacy. As Carnevale (1991) states that he development of technology into the daily lives of the society and the internationalization of the economic market place have raised the demand for a literate citizen to the highest levels ever. In addition, as it is also noted by National Literacy Assessments which state that levels of literacy attainment are not much better for eighth or 12th graders or even adults, which is not surprising, given that beginning literacy is highly predictive of later literacy attainment. Several research studies have demonstrated that early cognitive and linguistic development predict later achievement—even much later. Various measures administered at the preschool and kindergarten levels reveal that patterns of preschool learning are closely linked with reading achievement in the primary grades (Scarborough, 1998).

In line with the previous opinion, Scarborough (2001) states that young children who demonstrate oral language proficiency and early abilities in processing print do better in learning to read at first, second, and third grades. Parallel with Scarborough, Fletcher & Lyon (1998) argue that seventy-four percent of children who perform poorly in reading in third grade continue to do so into high school, further underlining the importance of preparing children to be ready to learn. Before children attend elementary school, they must develop many linguistic and cognitive skills that will make later academic learning possible. By the age of five, however, children differ markedly in their success in reaching these developmental goals (Entwisle & Alexander, 1993), and these early differences reverberate throughout a child's schooling, limiting or amplifying learning success. In addition, it is also mentioned that The National Assessment of Educational Progress reveals that 37 percent of U.S. fourth-graders fail to achieve basic levels of reading achievement. The incidence of reading failure is even higher within low-income families, ethnic minority groups, and English-language learners. Large-scale studies have shown that young children—those entering kindergarten and first-grade—vary greatly in their attainment of the early precursor skills that provide the launching pad for later literacy learning (West, Denton, & Germino-Hausken, 2000).

SD Negeri Secang 1 is one of child-friendly school models in Magelang Regency developed by Lund University, Sweden as the representative of UNICEF (United Nations Children Fund). This school is the first pilot project of child-friendly school model in Magelang Regency. Child-Friendly School is making use of child-friendly concept as the ideology in facilitating safe, comfortable and protected school besides well-educated teachers, human resources, and good learning environment (Kementerian Pemberdayaan Perempuan dan Perlindungan Anak, 2015). Lund University of Sweden as the facilitator of the model accompanied this school and gave facilities for one semester. Besides as a child-friendly school model in Magelang Regency, this school is a state and public elementary school which is characterized as religious school. Among the students, 99.9% are Muslims and 0.1% Christian. As a religious school, this school requires the students to begin the classroom lesson by Islamic prayer, reciting *Asmaul Husna*, Koran (*Al-Quran*) and Islamic (religious) story books to support the literacy programs. In addition to that, as one of elementary schools in Magelang Regency, this school is also as the pilot project of school-based literacy.

By considering the above statements, this study describes the practical guidance on literacy activities of child-friendly school, and elaborates the role of school heads, teachers, pupils and parents in developing the students' character through the literacy programs. It is in line with Sutomo's opinion (2014) which states that the character education term seems to be a massive movement around the world as a concern to rise up a generation of children who have strong moral character. Character education is socialized by all primary and secondary educational institutions, including Indonesia since 2010. As Hendriana and Jacobus' study (2016) which reports that one of the ways to implement character education is by providing good models and making people accustomed. Providing good models here can be done by giving the students reading materials which contain moral education since the schools have responsibilities to teach the students good moral values. As stated by Ofong (2017), to be able to have good language patterns, it needs to do regular practice from recognizing letter, word, phrase, sentence and arranging sentences into meaningful thought. This can be done through literacy activities. Language and thought patterns will construct patterns of attitude and action. Good attitude and action can be shaped through literacy activities.

Apart from the terms of literacy and character education, the issues of child-friendly education cannot be neglected since nowadays the Indonesian government declares child-friendly city including child-friendly education and child-friendly school. As research conducted by wuryandani, et.al (2018) which reports that the purpose of child-friendly school is to fulfill the children's right. This can be done by making rigorous planning and instruction activities by considering student characteristics, developing teaching materials, setting class layout conducive to active learning, conducting joyful learning, outdoor activities, developing student potentials and interests, plotting time dedicated for playing, utilizing educative games, and caring environment, utilizing authentic assessment both on process and result of learning without comparing the results each other's (Wuryandani, et. al., 2018). In other words, child-friendly school gives the students opportunities to develop their abilities. They can develop their own potentials.

Based on the above statements, training the early students to do literacy activities will contribute to develop the students' character. Besides that, child-friendly school as one of the government programs becomes another interesting issue in this era. Therefore conducting research on developing the students' character through literacy activities at child-friendly school

is expected to be able to give important contribution to Indonesian educational system. It supports Lickona's statement (1991), education has two great goals, which are to guide the young generation to be smart and to guide them to be well behaved. The awareness of intelligent character and that of good behavior are not similar. Policymakers have enacted a policy regarding moral education that is intended to be a major part of school education. For instance, teach society character in line with intelligence education. They teach politeness in accordance with literacy education. They also teach good values in conformity with science education.

B. Literature Framework

1. Character and Character Education

In preparing human's excellent characters, education has been considered as the centre of excellence. This belief motivates every single person to be ready to face the global challenges (Rokhman, Syaifudin, and Yuliaty: 2013). Discussing the above topic, it cannot be separated from the enactment of the President of the Republic of Indonesia number 87 of 2017 on September 6, 2017, on Strengthening Character Education (*Penguatan Pendidikan Karakter*), abbreviated as *PPK*. The regulation states that *PPK* is implemented by applying *Pancasila* values in character education, especially among religious values, honesty, tolerance, discipline, hard work, independent creativity, democracy, curiosity, spirit of nationality, love of the country, respecting for achievement, communicative, peaceful, reading, caring, caring, and responsible. The Implementation of *PPK* in the Education Unit of the Formal Education can be integrated in the intra-curricular activities; Co-curricular; and Extracurricular. The need of character education in the Education Unit is in line with Islami's statement (2016). She states that the existence of a nation is more likely determined by its characters. The stronger its characters, the more civilized the nation will be. As the consequence, becoming a nation with strong and good characters are all people's expectation.

There are several experts discussing on character and character education. Discussing them, Ryan and Bohlin (1999) in Sutomo (2014) define that character is knowing, loving and doing the good. In line with the previous concept, Koesoma (2011) in Budihardjo and Nihayah (2016) state that based on a Imam Ghozali's opinion, the term character is closer to the term of moral, i.e. the human spontaneity in the act, or acts that are fused in a man who does not need to think anymore when the attitude appears. Character is considered as part of psycho-social element which is related to the context surrounding (Koesoema, 2007: 79). Character can also be considered as behavioural element possessed by human being. From psychological perspective, character relates to the aspects of behaviour, attitude, manner and the quality following which differ one person to another or specific elements which may lead somebody to be more outstanding than others. Character is part of human specific element which covers their ability to face challenge and difficulties (Kemko Kesra 2010: 7).

Regarding the previous statement on character education, to strengthen the implementation of character education, there are eighteen character values that should be developed by the school, they are: (1) Religious, (2) honesty, (3) tolerance, (4) Discipline, (5) Hardworking ethos, (6) Creativity, (7) Independence, (8) Democratic citizenship, (9) Curiosity, (10) The spirit of nationality, (11) Love the country, (12) Rewarding Achievement, (13) Friendly / Communicative, (14) Love of Peace, (15) Reading Interest, (16) Care for the Environment, (17) Social Awareness, and (18) Responsibility (Curriculum of 2013).

2. Literacy

Commonly people defined that literacy is the ability to read or write. Discussing literacy, now in this 4.0 era, people are also required to master new concept of literacy. They are data, technology and human literacy. Data literacy is the ability in reading, analyzing and using information (big data) in digital era, technology literacy is the ability in understanding the coding, artificial intelligence, & engineering principles and human literacy is the person's ability to be a humanist (Ahmad, 2018).

In this 21st era, the ability of the students to be literate is closely related to the demand of reading skill in order to be able to comprehend the information analytically, critically and reflective. To respond this demand, *Direktorat Jenderal Pendidikan Dasar* designs and develops *Gerakan Literasi Sekolah* (GLS/ School Literacy Movement) in order to improve the students' literacy competence (Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 2016).

Based on the guidance of GLS (School Literacy Movement), school literacy in the context of GLS is the ability to access, understand, and use everything that is intelligent through various activities, including reading, seeing, listening, writing, and / or speaking. GLS is an effort to make schools as learning organization that is in accordance with the needs of public involvement. The general purpose of GLS is to develop the students' character through civilizing the school literacy ecosystem in the School Literacy Movement so that they become lifelong learners. The specific objectives of this program are to develop the literacy culture at schools and to increase the capacity of citizens and the school environment so that it is literate. Besides, it is also to make the school a fun and child-friendly learning park so that school people are able to manage knowledge and to maintain the continuity of learning by presenting various reading books and strategies (Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 2016).

The implementation of GLS can be done through the following stages. They are

- a. by growing interest in reading through a 15-minute reading activity (Permendikbud No. 23 of 2015)
- b. by improving literacy skills through activities to respond to enrichment books.
- c. by improving literacy skills in all subjects: using enrichment books and reading strategies in all subjects (Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 2016).

In fact, this GLS program was inspired by the research data of *Progress International Reading Literacy Study* (PIRLS) in 2011. This research showed that the ability of Indonesian students in understanding the texts was under the average of international student competence. By strengthening the literacy competence, especially basic literacy, the students are expected to use the information broadly. Based on the above consideration, it is better to teach basic literacy competence (listening, speaking, reading and writing) to the students from basic education. In addition to that, by this program, the students are expected to be able to differentiate the useful and useless information. Literacy helps the students in understanding the message that is realized in various texts (spoken, written and visual texts). In other words, Literacy is a skill that supports the teaching learning process. As stated by Geske & Ozola (2008), if the students' ability in literacy is low, it will make the students have low ability in understanding an object.

C. Research Methodology

Qualitative approach was used in this study. As Fauzan (2017) states that qualitative approach implied that data of this study were narrative in terms of facts, sentences, information,

artifacts, and statement the logics of which were linked to form evidences. A case study method as one of the types of qualitative approach was applied since the writer only focused on one school; *SD Negeri Secang 1* as one of child friendly school models in Magelang Regency developed by Lund University, Sweden and the result could not be used to generalize to child-friendly schools in Indonesia.

Since this study was aimed in describing the implementation of literacy activities in developing the students' character at *SD Negeri Secang 1*, the participants of this study were the students, teachers, and parents of *SD Negeri Secang 1* students. This study described the practical guidance on literacy activities at *SD Negeri Secang 1* as a child-friendly school. In additions, it also described the role of school heads, teachers, pupils and parents in developing the students' character through the literacy programs.

The observation and interview were used in collecting the research data. In order to collect the data on the participants' environment, the field notes were also used. What happened during the implementation of Literacy activities and during the teaching and learning activities became a great attention in this study.

To guarantee the validity within this study, triangulation was used. The writer collected data from field notes, observations and interviews. In analyzing the data, Milles and Hubberman's theory (1994) was used. The writer analyzed the data through data reduction, data display, conclusion and verification. Data reduction was done through the process of sorting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and transforming of the raw data. It was done continuously during the process of conducting qualitative research. The second stage of qualitative research data analysis was data display. In this step, the data can be displayed in the form of table, graphic, pictogram and other equivalent of them. By displaying the data, it would be easier for the researcher to understand and to analyze what was happening with the data presented. According to Miles and Huberman the last step in analysis of qualitative data was withdrawing conclusion and verification. Then, the results of analysis were tested for the trustworthiness through triangulation. This triangulation was done to check the truth of the data or information obtained by researchers from different perspectives as much as possible by reducing the bias that occurs during data collection and analysis. This process also involved other researcher to consult the findings.

D. Finding and Discussion

This study reveals that the implementation of literacy activities is able to develop the character of *SD Negeri Secang 1* students. Based on the observation, interview and field notes, the success of the implementation of literacy activities at *SD Secang 1* Magelang can be seen from the following indicators.

1. There is a daily reading activity.
2. There are some posters hanging on the wall as the results of reading activities.
3. The school tries to involve the society.
4. There is a convenient library with reading corners which make the students comfortable.
5. The headmaster, the teachers and all of the staffs have good commitment in in conducting and supporting the literacy activities.

1. The Daily Reading Activity

Based on the data, it can be inferred that all of the students of SD 1 Secang have to read books before the classes started. Fifteen minutes before the class is started, the students must read books. This activity has been conducted for around four years. Through reading activities, the students get some benefits. They are as follows.

a. Increasing the students' vocabulary.

The students learn as many words as possible so that it's easier to learn new words and gain meaning from stories (texts). It can be proved by the observation and interview results. It was stated by the classroom teachers that the students had to report orally or in written form after fifteen minute reading activity before the class was started. The topics of the books they read depend on the students' level or class. Below was the example of fifteen minutes literacy activity. The topic was about animal. The students were introduced to the kinds of animals. The steps of the literacy activities were reading individually, grouping activity and posting the reading activity results. Firstly, the students were asked to read books around 15 minutes. After they read the books individually, they had to work in groups. The reading tasks would be different based on the topics. The grouping activities can be in the form of think pair share, team game tournament, and other forms of grouping activities. The activities of grouping activities were based on the topics. The following picture is one of the examples of grouping activity results.

b. Increasing the story understanding

The students can understand what and why it is happening in a book, for example, why and how the thoughts and feelings of a character influence what they say or do. This involves the ability to read "between the lines" to figure out things that are not explicitly stated in the text. In other words, through reading or literacy activity, it can develop the students' character. From the observation and interview, it can be seen that these literacy activities help the students to understand and internalize about the character values. The examples of literacy activity that can increase the students' understanding are such as retelling the story the students read, mentioning the values in the texts, making the literacy tree of characters and so forth.

Based on the interview with the classroom teacher, it can be inferred that the first step the students did in literacy activities was asking the students to read book. After they read book, the teacher asked them to mention and write one good character in the plan paper and made literacy tree of character. The last, they posted the results on the wall. Making such literacy tree of characters is one of the favorite activities that the students did. This literacy tree of character here was written by the students of SD 1 Secang to memorize words they read. In these activities, the students were asked to make a mind mapping of characters based on the texts they read. Since this school was characterized as religious school, the school firstly introduced the students with Islamic story books, such as comics of Abu Nawas, prophet stories and other important religious figure stories. The levels of the story difficulties depended on the grade levels of the students. After reading the books, the classroom teachers asked the student individually to retell the story and also asked some questions related to the moral values found in the story randomly. Finally the students worked in groups to make a mind mapping of moral values or character found in the story. From those kinds of activities, the classroom teacher taught the moral values and character to the students and they could learn and recognize the values. Since the school belongs to child-friendly school model, the emphasis is on joyful learning and also how the students get moral values or character education based on joyful learning they do. In addition to that, the grouping activities the students do in literacy activities

train the students to be able to work in groups, to be discipline, to have hardworking ethos, to be creative, independent, have curiosity, and to be friendly or communicative. The moral values or characters mentioned above are the moral values or characters taught by Prophet Muhammad as Islamic characters. As stated by Sutomo (2014), a specific term “akhlaq education” is used in Islamic world. Further he states that the implementation of akhlaq education at schools let students comprehend a peaceful life. Based on the above statements, it can be inferred that the implementation of literacy activities at *SD 1 Secang* as a child-friendly school trains the students to have good *akhlak* or good character.

2. Some Posters Hanging on the Wall as the Results of Reading Activities

By reading and understanding what was happening in a book, the students wrote some notes related to what they have read. They could infer and write what they should and they should not do based on the story or someone described in the books. Finally they posted the results on the wall. In other words, literacy activities can give good contribution in shaping the students’ character. The examples of the students’ poster are such as the literacy tree of characters, the literacy tree of musical instruments and others.

3. The Involvement of the Society

The societies in this case the students’ parents or school committee plays a key role in literacy activities. They actively involved in the program. The parents have to facilitate their children by providing books for them. Although there is a school library at SD Secang 1 and this can be categorized as superior library, the parents have to motivate them and give attention to this literacy activity. They have to motivate their children to learn to read. Based on the interview, it could be seen that the society in this case the students’ parents give high contribution in facilitating the literacy activities (programs).

4. Convenient Library with Reading Corners

To succeed the literacy program, SD Secang 1 is already facilitated with convenient library. SD Secang 1 school library can be categorized as superior library. This library has some rooms; such as reading corner, reference room, book store, and some media that can be used in teaching-learning process.

5. The Good Commitment of the Headmaster, Teachers and Staff

The headmaster, the teachers and all of the staffs have good commitment in conducting and supporting the literacy activities. It can be proved by facilitating the students with the programs, providing books and so on.

Based on the above research results, it can be inferred that implementing the literacy activities in this case through daily reading activity especially for elementary school students give some benefits. It can be proved by the improvement of the students’ reading skill besides it can also give contribution in shaping the students’ character. This can be seen from the steps the students and the classroom teacher do in literacy activities every day. By joyful learning in grouping activities, it trains the students to be able to work together in groups, to be discipline, to have hardworking ethos, to be creative, independent, have curiosity, and to be friendly or communicative. Those are what the prophet Muhammad taught as Islamic characters or *akhlak*. This is also similar with Mariani’s research (2016). It is mentioned that the forming of linguistic

politeness in English can develop the students' intelligent characters from the beginning to the end of the learning activities. The students also become accustomed to employing polite vocabulary or expression in English that can improve their spiritual and emotional development, the aim of which is to lead to intelligence, primarily emotional intelligence.

E. Conclusion

It has been concluded that School Literacy Movement (*GLS/Gerakan Literasi Sekolah*) at SD Negeri 1 Secang as one of child friendly school models was done through a 15-minute reading activity. This literacy activity was done based on Permendikbud No. 23 of 2015. Referring to the observation and interview data, it can be summarized that by these literacy activities such as reading the stories of Islamic characters, mentioning the characters, retelling the stories individually and grouping activities in making mind mapping of the characters can help the students to develop their characters. The students would learn from what they read and implemented it in their daily lives. In addition to that, it can be inferred that the steps of literacy activities at *SD Negeri 1 Secang* as a child-friendly school were reading and retelling the story individually, grouping activity and posting the reading activity results

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