

Developing Integrated Program To Empower Society In Supporting Children's Literacy Practices: An Overview From A Village In Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

Literacy skills of Indonesian students in every level are still low compared to other ASIAN countries. To overcome this problem, Indonesian government has developed many programs in improving literacy skills. However, the program has not given significant result since it is only done in formal school. Whereas current studies show that children developed the embryonic knowledge that leads to official literacy skills in their early childhood period at home and Early Childhood Education centre long before they enter formal school. Therefore, it is needed comprehend studies of early literacy development program in Indonesian setting involving the family and society to improve the literacy skills of the children. Therefore, this study describes strategies to strengthen literacy practices for children at home setting and society in one of Indonesian villages through Participatory Action Research (PAR) method. Focus group discussion (FGD) which involved 30 parents, 3 kindergarten teachers and 3 childrens as participants becomes the main technique in gathering the data. In addition, interview was also conducted to get deeper information from particular participant. Furthermore, based on FGD, there are some factors that could strengthening literacy practices for the children such as, good library facilities, varied and sustainable library programs, improving parents' skills on literacy stimulation techniques for children and providing literacy community at rural area level. Moreover, as a result of FGD activities, the participants and

facilitators developed a program called “Pohon Literasi (Literacy Tree).” Then, this program was implemented in three cycles. Each cycle took one week period of implementation. In conclusion, this program could increase reading interest of children and family members.

Keywords: children’s literacy practices, parents role in literacy development, society involvement in education

INTRODUCTION

Majority studies clearly propose that emergent literacy needs to be aggressively stimulated in the early years, if children are to have best probabilities of learning to read at school (Mclachla, Carvalho, de Lautour & Kumar, 2006). Majority of the people believe that literacy means the capability of reading and writing, to comprehend information, and to express ideas both concretely (Daley, 2003). Literacy practices provide children with values, attitudes, motivations, ways of interacting and perspectives, which together construct the primary identities that children acquire through early socialisation (Gee, 2004) in their families and communities.

Although there are more than 79368 kindergartens registered in Indonesia, there is very little study investigating how emergent literacy is promoted in these settings. In addition, the teachers' knowledge and their perspective of their roles also rarely to be the topic of comprehend studies. The situation is more problematic since the majority of the teachers are not having formal education in the major of ECE program or psychology which is the basic requirement of professional ECE teacher in Indonesia. The teacher’s knowledge of effective method of early literacy development is very crucial factor. It relates to pedagogical knowledge and content knowledge (Belo, McKenney, Voogt & Bradley, 2016).

Moreover, theory of social interaction view that literacy as community which has aspect of ownership for children and adults, as an inclusive process, and the role of thinking processes in the children’s evolving literacy involvement (Britsch & Meier, 1999). Literacy practices provide children with values, attitudes, motivations, and ways of interacting and perspectives, which together construct the primary identities which children acquire through early socialization in their families and communities (Nutbrown et.al, 2017). Home is the main community for the children, consequently, family literacy activities which are planned systematically will be able to encourage and maximize the potential for children’s engagement in those practices (Nutbrown et.al, 2017). The early parent–child relationship can contribute

significantly to children's engagement in literacy activities, such as reading books or reciting nursery rhymes (Duursma, 2014). Family literacy practices embrace the ordinary and everyday literacy events that take place (often with little or no conscious planning) in families, while family literacy programmes are planned systematically and specifically to encourage and maximise the potential for children's engagement in those practices Nutbrown et.al (2017).

In Indonesia, some literacy programs have been proposed either by the government or NGO. But the integrated literacy program which integrated the role of teachers, parents and society has not been developed yet. For that reason, this study will pictured the integrated literacy program to strengthen literacy practices for children by involving families, teachers and society. This program was held in Rancaekek Kencana, one of a village in Indonesia. Based on preliminary studies, literacy practices of children in this village is still low. Furthermore this village is where the main researcher lives so the easy access of information could support the conduction of this study.

Moreover, there are also general some reasons why this study focusses on rural area. It is based on the fact that 90 percent of Indonesia's population lives in rural areas. As a consequence of this, the development of Indonesian development must be focused on rural development. This has been realized by the government by passing the Village Law in early 2014, whose main content is to lay out a village-centered development strategy. This regulation needs to be supported by the existence of sufficiently qualified human resources in rural areas. Unfortunately, the Human Development Index (HDI) of rural communities is still low. This can be seen in the fact that there are still many Indonesians aged over 15 who are illiterate. In fact, the ability to read, write and count are basic skills that a person needs to have in order to be able to play a role in society properly. The large number of people who are illiterate can bring social problems such as unemployment, various crimes and fraud. This will impede village development.

RESEARCH METHOD

Participatory action research (PAR) is employed in this study. PAR is a method of a study that is organized in a situation where diverse participants cooperating to accomplish trustworthy outcomes (College, 2016; James, Milenkiewicz & Bucknam, 2008). The study is conducted with the participatory of 30 parents, 3 kindergarten teachers, 30 children under 8 years and 3 representatives of local government of Rancaekek Kencana, a village in Bandung

district, Indonesia. Rancaekek Kencana is my hometown and where I have most access to participants. Furthermore, as a lecturer of Early Childhood Teacher Education Study Program at Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, it gives me access to some associations of Indonesian kindergarten teachers. Through these organizations, I could identify prospective participants. Information about the study, a consent form for participation was given to prospective subjects. Subjects who consent to participate in the study was contacted and visited for in-depth interviews. The confidentiality of the participants respected in every step of data collection.

Moreover, some techniques were used to gather research data. Firstly was questionnaires used to get general information such as age, educational background and teaching experience. In addition it was also used to ask some questions related to habitual literacy practices of the children at home and school. Secondly was FGD to discuss issues faced by parents and teachers in managing literacy practices of children. This event also facilitate the participants and facilitator to formulate the solutions and develop the integrated program to overcome the issue. Lastly was in-depth interview conducted in gathering information from children about the integrated program, whether the children enjoy the program or not and what should be done to improve the program in their perspectives. The interview was held by the parents in order to get the naturalistic settings so the children can be more open and relax. Interview process was taped and made transcript.

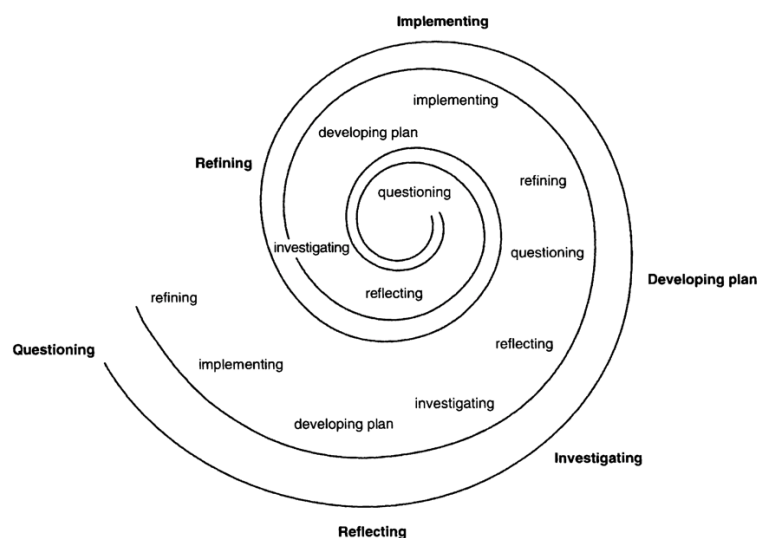


Figure 1.1 The Recursive Process of PAR

Furthermore, the procedures of the study are: (1) Questioning a particular issue, (2) Reflecting upon and investigating the issue, (3) Developing an action plan and (4) Implementing and refining said plan (McIntyre, 2008). Below is the illustration of PAR process.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

1. *Questioning Literacy Habitual Activities*

First stage of this study is investigating literacy habitual activities in each family of parents and literacy activities which manages by the teachers at kindergartens. Since there are two categories of participant namely, parents and teachers, hence the questions made in two points of view. For the parents, they were asked 6 questions such as: (1) period time of reading with children, (2) particular time of reading with children, (3) difficulties faced by the parents in managing literacy practices with children, (4) children's and parents favorite books, (5) periodic time of children's individual reading activities, (6) Parents role and (7) give example to children to be a good readers. The information was gathered through open and close questionnaire. All the parents filled in the questionnaire. The data gathered was presented in the table below.

Table 1. Literacy Habitual

No	Questions	Answers	Frequency
1	Period time of reading with children	everyday	
		Two days a week	
		Once a week	
		Once a moth	
		Other	
2	Particular time of reading with children	Never	
		Morning	
		Afternoon	
		Evening	
		Before bed	
3	Difficulties faced by the parents in managing literacy practices with children	Other	
		Lack of books	
		No time since the parents are work	
		No time since the children get tired	
		Time management	

		Lack motivation of parents	
		Children rather play gadget than reading the books	
		Parents feel that they do not have skills to read with children	
4	Children's and parents' favorite books	Fabel	
		Fairy tales	
		Animal stories	
		Comics	
		Concept books	
5	Periodic time of children's individual reading activities	Often	
		Seldom	
		Rarely	
		Never	
6	Parents' roles	Mother	
		Father	
7	Give example to children to be a good reader	Often	
		Seldom	
		Rarely	
		Never	

Beside parents, teachers were also asked to fill in the questionnaire of literacy practices at school.

2. *Reflecting*

Second stage of this study was reflecting process through FGD. In this stage, the participants were divided into three group of 10 parents and a group of three teachers in order to make effective FDG. Each group discussed the data of habitual literacy practices and developed integrated program based on the data to booths literacy practices of children. The result of reflecting process was summarized on the table below:

Table 2. The Result of Reflecting Process

Strength	Weaknesses	Solution Proposed
1. Actually, parents really want to have literacy activities with children even though they still	1. Parents rarely reading with children 2. Lack of books at home and schools	1. Optimizing local library by sharing books between families 2. Manage home literacy activities.

<p>confuse how to manage it.</p> <p>2. Economically, the majority of parents afford to buy books for children.</p> <p>3. The existing of local library</p> <p>4. Majority of parents like reading</p>	<p>3. No time since the parents are work</p> <p>4. No time since the children get tired</p> <p>5. Time management</p> <p>6. Lack motivation of parents</p> <p>7. Children rather play gadget than reading the books</p> <p>8. Parents feel that they do not have skills to read with children</p> <p>9. Mothers has bigger majority than fathers</p> <p>10. Teachers knowledge on literacy learning methods still limited.</p>	<p>3. Manage community literacy activities.</p> <p>4. Held a seminar discussed the importance of literacy practices for children and the strategies of literacy practices for children</p> <p>5. Involving fathers in literacy activities with children</p>
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3. Developing an Action Plan

Based on the data of reflecting process, the participants agreed to make an integrated program that involve families, school and society to enhance literacy practices of children. This stage done through FDG forum in four times of meetings. The participants delivered a lot of ideas and agreed to develop a program called “My Literacy Tree”. in short, it is a program in which motivate every family who become the participant to have some literacy activities at home and public library. The program divided into two main activities: Family literacy activities and community activities.

This program called “Pohon Literasi” (Literacy Tree Program). In short, this program use media of a picture of tree without leaves (we called it as Literacy Tree) that hang on a wall of each families’ house. Each family have to have reading time with the children in some periodic time (minimum once a week). Every book that has been read by the parents and children, should summarized and write down on a leaf shape paper and stick it on the literacy tree. the facilitator will give score for each family. The more the leaves stick on the literacy tree, the more they get the score. This activity also done at school. Every children who read a picture book (individually) will put his/her name on a literacy tree and get score for every book that they read. In the end of the program, the facilitator will give some present (of course the present is some books) for the family.

Moreover, in order to motivate the continuity of reading habit, local library become the centre of this program. Every Saturday there were a story reading and storytelling activity that could be followed by the children. Besides that parents also have a discussion session with variety of topics. In this event children could borrow some books to read at home.

Furthermore, the facilitator also guide the parents and teachers and head of library to develop literacy practices curriculum. Below is the outline.

Integrated Literacy Program

	At Home	At Public Library	At School
Literacy Activities	Reading a book (part of a book) every day before bed for 15 minutes	Story reading and storytelling every Saturday	Teachers read a book (using picture book or big book) 3 times in a week
	Parents read a book in front of the children minimum 3 times in a week (to give good role model)	Parents Forum (discuss varied topics) every Saturday	Children have individual reading session 2 times in a week

4. Implementing and Refining Said Plan

a. Family Activities

In family activities, the participant of the program will have a picture of tree without leaves which is called as “Literacy Tree”. Every member of the family who have read a book or part of a book should write the title and some interesting points that he/she got from the books on a leave sticky note then put it on the literacy tree. The more they have literacy activities, the more literacy tree got leaves. To motivate the participant every month there is a competition. The family who got full leaves on the literacy tree will be the winner.

b. Community Activities

Besides family activities the participants and facilitator also make a plan for community program. Every Saturday they will arrange a story reading event that can be followed by all the families. But since this research conducted in pandemic Covid-19

era, so the participants are limited. This activity to give continuity of motivation for the children and parents to keep in touch with books. Beside story reading activity there are also a program called “Books Barter”, it is an event where each family can exchange books. So each family should prepare minimum 1 book to be loaned to other family. This activity can be the solution of books limitation that faced by some of families, since some of the families could not afford to buy good quality books. They can return the books in the next meeting of the event. Moreover, parents also will have discussion forum in this event. They will have some recent parenting topics or other particular issues related to some books which they have read.

c. School Activities

Furthermore, children also will have some literacy activities guide by the teachers. They will have reading story session by using an interesting media called “A Big Book” which is a colourful picture book with huge size. In this activity teacher also can manage discussion session with the children after reading session. Besides story reading, other activities that will be conducted is individual reading session. Each children could choose his/her favourite books based on their ages and have their private time to explore the books. Since the children have not been able to read yet, so they just have picture books.

CONCLUSION

Moreover, as a result of FGD activities, the participants and facilitators developed a program called “Pohon Literasi (Literacy Tree).” Then, this program was implemented in three cycles. Each cycle took one week period of implementation. In conclusion, this program could increase reading interest of children and family members.

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