

Promoting Literacy Culture and Character Education to form High-Level Thinking Students in Elementary School

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Abstract:- Literacy culture and character are important for students as an asset for concept understanding and critical thinking. This qualitative research was aimed to describe the literacy culture and character education for high-level thinking students in state elementary school Kleco 1 Surakarta. The data were collected through interviews, observations, and documentation. The data analysis used an interactive model. The results of the study show that the implementation of the learning emphasized literacy culture (literacy, digital, and technology) by integrating the values of religiosity, tolerance, discipline, high curiosity, and hard work. There were obstacles in the process including social/economic disparity, limited infrastructure, and limited allotted time. The teacher's efforts in coping with the problems included 1) providing a literacy corner, 2) developing the potential and personality of the students, and 3) instilling the good values in life.

Keywords:- Literacy Culture, Critical Thinking, Character Education

I. INTRODUCTION

The development of culture towards 21st Century skills learning, among others, directs students to develop the character of their skills in mastering technology and literacy in the context of career development, both at the level of higher education and careers in the community. On this ground, students are better prepared to have the quality of character following the demands of 21st Century skills. As a guideline for implementation of 21st-century skills, Education and Culture Minister Regulation No. 20/2016 has competencies on the dimensions of thinking and acting skills, namely creative, productive, critical, independent, collaborative and communicative. This century is an integration of literacy, knowledge, skills, and attitudes, as well as mastery of technology (Education and Culture Ministry, 2017).

At present, Indonesia is re-experiencing the literacy crisis. Based on a study by the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), in 2012, Indonesia's literacy culture ranked 64 out of the 65 participating countries (Stacey, et al., 2015). This achievement is considered low

with almost all Indonesian students in this survey were only able to reach level three (OECD, 2016: 5). PISA aims to measure basic literacy for life and the character competencies of students which are relevant to 21st-century skills. Therefore, literacy culture is not necessarily directly given to students but through various integrated activity programs in learning oriented towards critical thinking skills to create positive learning activities and effective learning outcomes. The effective student's learning outcomes referred to in the 2013 curriculum are HOTS (Higher Order Thinking Skills)-based learning outcomes.

Students who have a strong character are likely to maximally develop talents, interests, potentials and higher thinking skills (HOTS) and are indispensable in preparing for global challenges. HOTS-based critical thinking skills have an important role in building a culture of literacy because it supports the development of the 2013 curriculum. Three important things that are the focus in the implementation of the 2013 curriculum include strengthening character education, strengthening literacy, and 21st-century learning. The shift of 21st-century learning has become a foothold in developing human resources to develop creative thinking that can improve the ability of students as an effort to master the subject matters. Thinking critically in learning becomes a habit/culture that requires a strengthening process to become a part of one's identity (characterization).

A study by Zurqoni, Retnawati, Apino, & Anazifa (2018) uncover the impact of the implementation of character education and teacher's challenges and strategies in implementing character education. To realize the quality of 21st-century character, in the manual of 21st-century skill implementation in the 2013 curriculum (Senior High School Development Directorate, Directorate General of Primary and Secondary Education, 2017), character values develop the values of religiosity, nationalism, independence, cooperation, and integrity (the five main values). 21st-century skills are synonymous with the use of information technology that aims to free individual intelligence as an innovator. Concerning the development of students' character values, 21st-century literacy culture has an active and creative role, namely to encourage students to participate in planning, implementing and evaluating by using learning technology. According to

Wulandari (2016), learning is part of a culture which is applied and used to innovatively analyze as a paradigm of thinking skills and tools to develop superior culture.

21st-century skills of students are conditioned in an atmosphere of learning that can develop critical thinking skills and problem-solving, creativity and innovation, and collaboration and communication. In addition to these four skills, students also need to master content or scientific knowledge and possess literacy skills (Redhana, 2019). Students are expected to become a qualified generation and realize the learning goals by integrating literacy culture into the character of critical thinking skills and problem-solving. This is in line with Hidayat & Basuki (2018) who reveal that literacy movement has a positive impact on students' reading culture which aims to increase insight, increase knowledge, practice critical thinking, and think and solve problems. Literacy culture can improve students' critical thinking and ultimately refer to HOTS (Higher Order Thinking Skills)-based learning. And vice versa, critical thinking skills can improve the reading culture of students.

II. METHOD

This research was qualitative research. This research emphasized the openness and those lead to contextual and social aspects which implied a view or perception of both individuals and groups and involved the human element as an instrument (Sutama, 2019: 106). This research is a case study that promotes literacy culture and strengthens character education by focusing on the implementation of learning in the state elementary school SDN Kleco 1 Surakarta, Central Java.

The data collection techniques were observations, interviews, and documentation. In the observations, as a non-participant, the researcher observed the research subjects. This study employed in-depth interviews that were conducted face-to-face, individually and unstructured, where the questions were asked to some informants about literacy culture and character education. The documentation was intended to collect the secondary data relevant to its implementation.

The data analysis was done using an interactive model (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014), including data collection, data reduction and data presentation to make the data more focused, and verification and conclusion drawing.

III. RESEARCH RESULTS

The results of this study include instilling the literacy culture character values, factors inhibiting the students to think critically, and the teachers' efforts in implementing literacy culture to foster the students' critical thinking. The results are explained briefly in table 1.

No	Category	Description
1.	Literacy Culture	• Reading and writing literacy
		• Digital literacy
		• Technology literacy
2.	Character Values	• Religiosity
		• Tolerance
		• Discipline
		• Curiosity
		• Hard work
3.	Problems	• Social / economic inequality
		• Limited infrastructure
		• Limited time
4.	Teacher's Efforts	• Provide literacy corners
		• Develop students' potential and personality
		• Instill good values in life

Table 1:- Summary of Indicators of Research Results

The results show that literacy culture at state elementary school SDN Kleco 1 consisted of character education and literacy culture of reading and writing literacy, digital literacy and technological literacy. Literacy culture focused on sub-aspects of instilling religious attitudes and disciplines by saying a prayer before the class began, sing national songs, respect teachers and ended on reading and writing literacy that aimed to improve attitudes and abilities in critical thinking (understanding concepts, solving problems, and drawing conclusions) as well as instilling the character to the students. On these grounds, it can be concluded that the culture of integrating the character of critical thinking skills had been applied in the learning. This means that it has become a joint commitment and responsibility to create students who think critically to realize superior schools. At this stage, students have added knowledge/insight; have an attitude of responsibility, discipline, and integrity in activities.

Digital literacy culture is focused on the communication among students and with the teachers on the sub-aspects of interpersonal communication and high curiosity. At this stage, the students explored their knowledge in various types of direct or indirect communication (using facilities/mobile phones). Digital literacy culture makes it easy to communicate well; with that, the students were more interested in learning and it made their curiosity increase. At this stage, students were in accordance with the vision of the school that was well-established communication and having the character of curiosity and discipline so students with the ability to

communicate in accordance with the demands of the 21st century were formed. Among the examples was sharing activities (exchanging ideas) among the students by the formation of peer tutors.

The culture of technology literacy was focused on classroom learning media on active, creative, and innovative sub-aspects to participate in the learning process. The culture of the use of instructional media has been applied in this school. For example, the production of teaching aids, the use of software (PowerPoint), and so on, depends on the needs, the creativity, and innovation of the teachers and the increase in the student's concentration. Creative and innovative learning skills refer to the use of electronic media (laptops), teaching aids as the media to stimulate students to be creative and interested in learning. This is the most appropriate stage to prepare the students' creativity and achievement in the students' daily activities plan at school.

The success of education depends on the integrity of the education components which includes the intake of students, teachers, processes, environmental factors, instrumental factors, and output. These are illustrated in Figure 1.

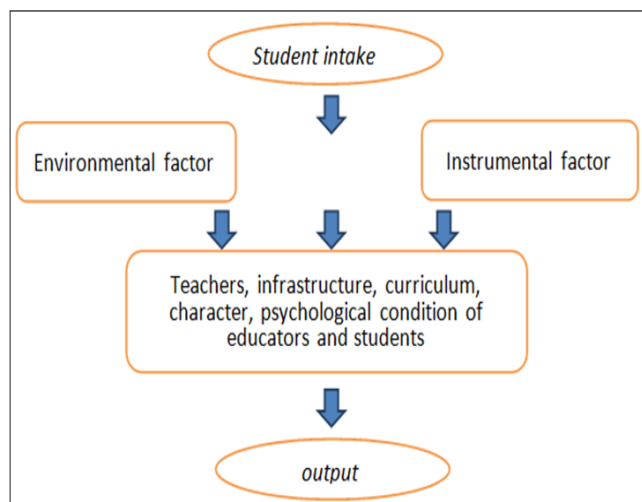


Fig 1:- Educational Components

Components that support the implementation of character education and literacy culture in schools include potential inputs (teachers and education staff), school curricula and instrumental inputs for character education, adequate facilities and infrastructure, and a comfortable and attractive learning process.

Implementation of character education and literacy culture has an important role in the learning process. Students who have a strong character are likely to maximally develop their talents, interests, potential and higher order thinking skills (HOTS). Likewise, the character of performance is one of the characters that must be emphasized, especially in upholding character (inner strength, character), mind in learning. Similarly, learning innovation is very dependent on what the teacher thinks and does. In relation to student character education,

literacy culture has an active and creative role, which is to encourage students take part in planning, implementing, and evaluating using learning technology.

Factors that hinder the literacy culture for critical thinking in elementary school SDN Kleco 1 were related to various gaps in terms of economic background, efficiency and effectiveness in time management, lack of infrastructure, potential, intelligence and talent of students. The results of interviews about the constraints of efficiency and effectiveness in the implementation of literacy culture (read-write, digital, technology) at elementary school SDN Kleco 1 revealed that schools were only able to provide literacy and academic activities for 6 hours after which students interacted with the environment outside the school.

The use of electronic media infrastructure (laptops) and teaching aids as the medium was to stimulate students to be creative and interested in learning. With that, students had higher curiosity and creativity according to their ideas. However, there are still shortcomings (lack of LCD) on the application in the learning. The school only had 3 LCDs which were used interchangeably every day.

Problems that hinder the students' input were also related to the condition of the family environment that affected the morality and level of thinking of the students. The high level of heterogeneity among students had also become an obstacle to the process of literacy for higher thinking because the level of intelligence of one student to another experienced differences. A teacher, in a school, serves a dual role: as educators and guardians for students. Problems that arose among the students were more social-psychological problems. Barriers in the social environment were greatly influenced by the role of parents because of ideas and understanding of different school education concepts.

The aspects that supported the culture of literacy and character education in state elementary school SDN Kleco 1 were its characterized school system and its mastery of science and technology. This school gained the trust of the community to be one of the superior schools in the city of Surakarta. These aspects can be elaborated as follows.

The implementation of the literacy culture and character education in state elementary school SDN Kleco 1 was combined with a school system that had character and mastered science and technology in accordance with its vision. In its implementation, students were required to know their own characteristics with extensive knowledge, insightful, high work ethic, responsibility and respect for themselves or others. As stated in the Strengthening of Character Education, to develop character values is very necessary for preparing for global challenges. They are also demanded in digital skills and communication technology.

Also, the teachers made efforts to educate, train, and guide the students in their character and literary

development, both individually and in groups. For example, the teacher gave a problem according to the experience of the students; they were required to answer and relate it to the daily character they encountered. Students were expected to be able to explore the idea of creativity and attitude of responsibility as students in reflecting it into classroom learning and outside the classroom.

In addition, it was important for the students to uphold honesty and discipline in the use of time to work on class activities so that their behavior could be imitated by other students and the surrounding community. However, there were still obstacles in these efforts, for example students who had lazy characters tended to be dishonest when doing group work; they did not participate in doing the tasks, just stayed quiet. After being observed and conducted, it was revealed that the student experienced psychological conditions that were not comfortable due to the disharmony and busyness of their parents.

Therefore, school institutions have made efforts to maximally build the students' character and literacy. This means that the school has made a comprehensive effort to build the character and culture of excellent literacy in the students. Then, it was the role of the parents at home to also help improve the quality of the children in their daily lives as students who excel, have character and integrity in each lesson and outside of class hours.

IV. DISCUSSION

A culture of literacy and the strengthening of character education was identified through previous literature reviews (Sitorus, Siswandari & Christian 2019; Warigan, et al 2019; Barus, 2015; Guire, 2015; Narmaditya, Wulandari & Sekarji, 2018). Chalkiadaki (2018) identifies that in primary, education most emphasized literacy with the conditions of the development of information and communication technology on the basis of changing educational conditions in 21st-century competencies. This is in line with the results of research in elementary school SDN Kleco 1 which emphasize a culture of literacy aimed at shaping the students' critical thinking.

Character education at state elementary school SDN Kleco 1 was formed so that students become the students who have strong character and integrity at school and outside school. The results show that the character education that the school wanted to develop consisted of religiosity, tolerance, discipline, curiosity, and hard work. Focusing on discipline, discipline is one of the most popular alternative content about character education in schools (Wuryandani, et al., 2014; Hartini, 2017; Chomsatun, 2017; Nuriyatun, 2016). The aim of character education is to ensure that the process of character education is in accordance with the values of the education system through a culture of literacy program to improve cognitive, affective and psychomotor aspects (Oktarina, 2018).

Research findings suggest some factors that support the process of character and culture education namely student intake, instrument inputs, and environmental inputs. Schools must pay close attention to these components. Supporting components of character education programs in schools has a major impact on the minds, speech, and behavior of students (Wiliandani, Bambang & Yusuf, 2016). According to Lee, Pan, Liao, Chen, & Walters (2013), profiles of students can explain the success of character education in schools. Hughes (2013) reports that school environment helps to realize a character education program in the classroom.

A culture of literacy and the reinforcement of successful character education require a supporting component in its implementation. There were three supporting components found in the field, namely teacher commitment, integrated curriculum, and environment. Teacher commitment in carrying out the role influences the effectiveness of character education and school literacy (Andiarini & Imron, 2018). The school environment and family environment greatly affect the character education of students (Suarto, 2017). Character education and literacy culture are strongly influenced by the environment. On this ground, the school environment and family environment are expected to work hand in hand to shape the students' character in critical thinking. As one of the supporting factors in strengthening the character and culture of literacy, the school environment is the most effective way to control and supervise students in the field. Meanwhile, the later was effective for maintaining a positive character for them.

V. CONCLUSION

Promoting literacy and character building was done by the school by focusing on achieving their goals, forming the highly-qualified and thinking students by applying the character of religiosity, tolerance, discipline, high curiosity, and hard work. To implement the culture of literacy and the formation of character in accordance with the educational goals, it involved all parties in the school. This was done by considering the components of the education system such as students, resources, environment, educational processes, and results.

Literacy culture and character education were applied in the school environment in accordance with the demands of education. Literacy culture and character education were implemented in integrated activities which included teaching, training, nurturing, and guiding in the school environment. The implementation of the literacy culture and character education took place from the moment of student acceptance until they graduated from the school.

Constraints that hinder the process came from infrastructure, differences in the conditions of the students, limited allotted time, and family environment. The implementation of the literacy culture and character education in state elementary school SDN Kleco 1 was aimed to form high-level thinking students and character

building for students, in terms of educational output that included affective, cognitive, and psychomotor skills, as well as qualified education graduates.

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