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The implementation of School Literature Movement in West Lombok Regency, West Nusa Tenggara Province – Indonesia: an Exploratory Study

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ABSTRACT

Responding to students' low-ranking achievements in the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), Minister of Education and Culture of Indonesia introduced a School Literacy Movement (SLM) to schools in an effort to improve students' reading competence. Despite such an effort, the implementation of SLM in schools still undergoes hurdles. The present study aims to (a) investigate how SLM is implemented in junior high schools in West Lombok Regency; (b) identify the good practice of SLM; (c) promote models of evaluation that supports the implementation of SLM. The research employed a qualitative research method. Data were collected through interviews, observations and questionnaires from 10 junior high state schools in West Lombok Regency. Results of the study show thin schools employed different approaches to the implementation of SLM due to unavailability of clear guidance to run SLM. Also, schools did not have evaluation tools to assess students' reading competence.

Keywords: *Reading Competence. PISA, School Literacy Movement*

Introduction

In developed countries, success in education is often associated with how well children and youth can understand the sources of knowledge through literacy activities. It is assumed that if the reading activity in schools is better encouraged, in the long run students will develop positive habits in searching and finding information independently (D'Angiulli et al., 2004). Thus, ultimately students' independent reading habits will bring about a positive impact on their study achievement and social conditions as well.

Responding to the above issues, the Indonesian government, in this case the Ministry of Education and Culture, has introduced the school literacy movement (SLM) as an effort to improve students' reading competence at various levels, from elementary school, junior high to school high school. This is a strategic and systematic step made by the Government of Indonesia (GOI) to foster students' reading interests and skills (Depdikbud 2016). Although the school literacy program has run for one year, its implementation has not been evaluated yet. Consequently, the progress of literacy program in schools in Indonesia is not much known yet. For this reason, the present research aims to (1) reveal patterns of implementation of school literacy movement

in West Lombok Regency, (2) account for good practice of literacy program in the research site, and ultimately (3) promote models of assessment suitable for school literacy program in the research site.

In general, the School Literacy Movement (SLM) in Indonesia aims to equip learners in schools to be able to search, select, sort, evaluate and use information from reading resources. Thus, it is hoped that they will be able to solve problems they may face in the future. The purpose of SLM is in line with Kern & Schultz's views (2005), i.e. students' habits of reading literacy materials is an important social action for the formation of a nation's social identity. Through literacy reading, they say, one will deal with a constant learning atmosphere of new values, new norms, and new ways of looking at oneself and the world around them.

As a movement, the literacy program is expected to foster students' positive habits in reading various sources of knowledge. Consequently, students' reading interests and skills will grow and develop optimally. Through this program, students are challenged to obtain information and reading resources independently, beyond the learning materials available in school. In addition, through SLM students will be able to take the gist of the values and local wisdoms from the reading resources they access in schools. According to Bourdieu (1986) these values play a vital role as social capital to deal with changes in the global world today..

According to White et al. (2005), literacy is defined as one's ability to use printed and electronic information to achieve certain goals, develop knowledge and skills, and maximize one's potential. Literacy reading skills in this context refers to the ability not only to read learning resources but also to select, understand, assess and interpret reading texts coming from various types of social media sources available. As expressed by Kern & Schultz (2005), the essence of the literacy movement is the effort to equip the community of learners with analytical and critical thinking skills and to prepare them with future ideological challenges. From the above definition it can be concluded that the movement of literacy is an important vehicle to develop the spirit of lifelong learning in order to achieve the educational excellence of a nation.

In the study of Literacy Teaching Program for Early Childhood (known as the HELP program) in the USA, Begeny et al. (2012) reveal the positive impact of the HELP literacy teaching model on the reading ability of Hispanic children who migrated to the United States. The subjects of this study consisted of 21 students of 7 and 8 years. After being exposed to the mainstream sources of American cultural reading for 5 months, the subject of this study was tested with a literacy instrument known as the Gray Oral Reading Test (GORT). This group of researchers found that the learning strategy of HELP program significantly improved the reading ability of the research subjects. Tentatively, these findings suggest that instruments such as GORT are positively needed to measure the success of literacy programs.

Similarly, Neuman & Cunningham (2009) reported that to run literacy programs, teachers' skills and knowledge will not improve sufficiently if they rely on professional development training alone. Teachers, therefore, need special education in the field of literacy in the long term. These authors concluded that collaboration was needed by school teachers and other institutions to cater for literacy programs.

Another study relevant to this study is the study of Beginner Teachers' Perceptions Readiness on teaching literacy programs at

Australian schools reported by Louden & Rohl (2006). Results of this study reveal that the educational background of teachers and their basic skills in teaching literacy played an important role in shaping their confidence.

The implications of these findings are consistent with that of Neuman&Cunningham (2009): if school administrators want to succeed in literacy movements, they should allocate some of their management time for strengthening teachers' capacity to run the activities. In line with this, Tobin and Mc Innes (2009) reported that a student-based literacy program was successfully implemented in a number of schools observed because of the flexibility of the learning method used. This flexible method allows each student to choose literacy materials according to their interests and thus they will develop their self-confidence in the decision making process.

Given such great benefits of the literacy movement, it is justified that reading habits beyond the textbooks should be cultivated as early as possible in the community. To maintain the sustainability of this movement, cooperation among stakeholders is imperative. The long-term benefit of such a program is the formation of positive reading habits in society. One of the great potentials of this literacy movement is the availability of opportunities for students to channel their talents through reading and to form a spirit of continuous learning in order to understand new values, new norms, and ways of changing the worldview (w*eltanschauung*).

Methodology

The current study employed a qualitative research method. The population of the study consisted of all principals and teachers. Out of the total population, 10 principals and 20 teachers were taken purposively as samples of the study. In-depth individual interviews were conducted with these participants in order to get their insights pertaining to the implementation of school literacy movement in the research site. For this purpose, semi-structured interviews were used by the researchers to capture the intended data the best they could.

Types of data required in this study include: (a) initial data concerning patterns/ models of implementation of literacy programs in schools; (b) recorded documents on the implementation of literacy movement and (c) samples of assessment of school literacy programs. These data were collected from various sources: (a) observation (b) in-depth interviews with school principals and teachers in schools, and (c) document studies related to literacy implementation in schools. All of these data sources were triangulated to improve the trustworthiness of the study.

Observations were conducted to see the patterns of implementation of literacy program activities in schools. Interviews with principals and teachers aimed to reveal how the literacy program in schools was conducted; how schools allocated time and funds; and how they solved obstacles encountered, etc. Furthermore, interview results were transcribed to find and map problems related to the implementation of literacy in schools. Document studies were intended to compare literacy implementation in other schools and to obtain information and examples of good practice conducted at various schools in the study sites. The data from this study were analyzed using qualitative analysis suggested by Miles and Huberman (2005). Data analysis activities include data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions and verification.

Result and Discussion

Patterns of Implementation of School Literacy Movement in West Lombok Regency

The data analysis revealed four major themes, i.e. (1) diverse responses to the literacy movement, (2) shortage of literacy materials and funding, (3) lack of support, and (4) absence of assessment. Each of these themes is discussed below.

1. Diverse responses to the literacy movement. The results of data analysis show that the implementation of the school literacy movement varied from school to school. Most schools allocated time about 10 to 15 minutes per week for reading literacy activities. This activity was done independently before the class began. Field observations indicate that students participating in this activity were busy making notes and summaries within 15 minutes. The researchers found that the literacy activities ran passively and students participated apathetically. After the reading activities had finished, they were asked to collect their reading summaries and put them into folders.

In line with this, the researchers found some schools implemented literacy reading policies with a focus on reciting the Qur'an. Principals of these schools perceived that the literacy movement aimed to help students read, recite and understand the content of the Holy Qur'an. Thus, the movement was identical to the strengthening of character education. Conversely, some other schools concentrated only on the activities of reading supplemental textbooks as suggested by the Minister of Education and Culture.

A number of teachers acknowledged that these discrepancies appeared due the absence of clear operational procedures to run the literacy movement. One of the participants affirmed "Our school carries out the movement on a perfunctory basis". According

to this participant, the reverberation of school literacy movement was very remarkable but in reality the implementation was far from the expectation.

A number of principals and teachers conceded that they were still confused with the implementation of the literacy movement as they had no clear instructions or steps for undertaking the program from the Ministry of Education and Culture. All these justify why the implementation of the literacy movement varied from school to school.

*2, Shortage of literacy materials and funding.*Results of document studies and observations in the field show that most of the schools investigated did not have adequate numbers of books that supported literacy movement. Libraries were filled with a great number of student text books, such as math, social sciences, English, Indonesian, and so forth. However, they lacked non-textbook resources. Obviously the schools needed supplies of books other than student textbooks. In addition, some schools lacked reading spaces. As the capacity of the libraries was inadequate to provide reading rooms for students, teachers allowed students to read outside the classrooms.

A number of principals remarked thin schools did not have adequate funds to buy new books because they were not allowed to raise funds from the community. These principals felt distressed as they were afraid of being accused of committing corruption when they sought funding from the community. "We are afraid of being sent to jail by the anti-corruption squad (*Saber Pungli*)" said one of the principals. "Since we are only allowed to use a maximum of 20% of the school operational assistance fund (known as Dana BOS), our ability to provide variety of reading resources is quite limited" said another principal. Furthermore, almost all schools visited did not have an internet connection.

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Thus, students experienced literacy reading only from books available at libraries and did not have access to online materials.

3. Lack of supports. It was found out thin schools did not get support from teachers due to several reasons. First, school principals generally involved only language teachers and homeroom teachers in literacy activities. Thus, the rest did not feel obliged to take part in the movement. Second, schools did not provide incentive for teachers who were involved in the literacy movement. As a result many of the teachers felt thin school literacy activities were just additional burdensome workloads. With such thoughts, they restrained themselves from participating in the literacy movement.

Participants from all schools visited admitted that in running the literacy movement they did not receivead equate supports from the local government, parents and the community. There was no professional development training provided by the local government to run the literacy movement. Correspondingly, there was no community fund raising allowed due to legal issues. As a result, schools had to work alone to run the movement the best they could since they did not gain substantial assistance from the hierarchical structure above them.

4. The absence of assessment. Interview with principles revealed that on average they had attended only 1workshop about literacy movement at the national level. A number of teachers alsostated similarly. According to these participants, the authority of the literacy movementat the national level didnot allow them to give literacy tests to students as the purpose of the movement was only to encourage students to read text resources for the sake of building reading habits. Manyof the teachers complained that at present they could not keep track of students' reading progress as they were not allowed to conduct

any assessment or test. This finding is contrary to the study conducted by Begeny et al. (2012). Eventually, teachers did not know students' reading success as the assessment was excluded from the literacy movement.

Good practice of School Literacy Movement in Junior High Schools in West Lombok Regency

Despite hurdles discussed previously, the current study reveals a number of common potential elements that sustain the successful undertaking of literacy movement. From all schools visited, the researchers have identified four components that are essential for the best practice of literacy movement: (1) clear instructions for undertaking school literacy movement, (2) adequate time and resources that support literacy activities, (3) positive collaboration between schools and parents, (4) clear models of assessment that measure students' learning progress. Overall, these four components represent the most important school efforts to sustain school literacy movement.

Component number (1) recommends that teachers should be familiarized with the objectives of the literacy movement and good communication with all stakeholders to avoid misunderstanding and misinterpretation. As revealed by this study, communication among stakeholders did not arrive at shared understanding of the movement because schools had different ways in responding the policy.

Component number (2) suggests that the implementation of school literacy movement will yield positive outcomes if school authorities provide students with adequate time and resources that support their activities. To change the current implementation of literacy movement, schools need to extend the learning time.

Also,teachers should encourage students to express what they read through various channels, such as storytelling, school wall magazines, drama performance, portfolios and the like.

Component number (3) advocates that the key to successful collaboration between schools, parents and the community lies in mutual team work. Schools should keep parents informed about the progress of literacy reading in schools through regular parent-teacher meetings. Some teachers in this study organized a special event to meet parents to report their children's learning progress in literacy movement. By engaging this collaboratively, both parents and teachers can support one another to keep track students' learning progress and lead them to reach success.

Component number (4) highlights that schools should have models of literacy assessment to keep track students' reading progress. Teachers can cultivate their creativity to assess students' reading progress through various interactive engagements, such as story sharing, presentations, and portfolios. To prevent teachers from subjective evaluation, their assessment tools should be completed with rubrics and criteria standards that determine the accomplishments of students' literacy reading.

Proposed Model of Assessment Suitable for School Literacy

The current investigation on the literacy movement in schools shows that several principals and school teachers had developed an embryo of teacher-made assessment in the form of weekly summary writing. Although this self-initiative was still in its infancy, it was worth appreciating. The good thing about this kind of assessment is that the teacher can keep track every learning progress students make. As mentioned previously, the weakness

of this particular assessment model is that there are no standards and/or rubrics that can be used to assess students' learning progress. The absence of these instruments may result in teachers' subjective evaluation and thus results of assessment in one school cannot be reliably compared to the other schools.

Obviously, there is a need for education authorities in West Lombok Regency to develop an objective standardised assessment that can be applied to all schools. Using the same instruments and methods of assessment, teachers will keep track of students' literacy reading progress. By doing so, the literacy movement will yield substantial results that support the goal of the school literacy movement in Indonesia, i.e. to boost the position of Indonesia's ranking in Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). To document students' portfolios, every result of assessment should therefore be accompanied with a clear description of what students have gained in the literacy reading at a certain period of time.

For future direction, the researchers therefore propose thin schools employ both methods of assessment, i.e. teacher-made and standardized assessments, in the school literacy movement. Teacher-made assessment aims to record every process of students' literacy reading development whereas standardized assessment is used to measure students' overall achievement in literacy reading within certain period of time. This combined assessment will help school teachers tofind out important information about phases of students' progress and how much knowledge they have gained from the literacy movement.

Conclusion

The present study shows that the implementation of the School Literacy

Movement (SLM) experienced difficulties due to 4 factors, i.e. (1) diverse school response to the movement policy, shortage of literacy materials and funding, (3) lack of support, and (4) absence of assessment. This paper concludes that the government of Indonesia, in this case MONE, should conduct an evaluation of the movement and develop assessment for students' literacy reading competence. Thus, the benefit of the movement can be assured.

Acknowledgement

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