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Empowering Future Leaders through Literacy: A Comprehensive Workshop for Elementary School Educators

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Abstract

Building students' literacy skills needs to be done as early as possible. Elementary school students are at the perfect age of getting much exposure to literacy. Therefore, teachers need to be able to do some activities in the classrooms that build literacy skills. However, not all teachers know and apply the teaching techniques proposed by the Ministry of Education and Culture in school literacy movement. This community service aimed to address the needs of elementary school teachers, members of *Bawana Alit* group, in Tembalang, Semarang, on literacy teaching techniques. The goal was to empower these members with practical skills in implementing literacy teaching techniques in their classroom, depending on their students' literacy levels. This workshop involved some stages, including preparation and implementation. The participants now have more effective literacy teaching strategies to be applied in their classrooms.

Keywords: literacy, teaching techniques, elementary school educators

INTRODUCTION

In 2018, Indonesian students aged 15 had literacy ratings below the average of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD); these ratings show not only students' reading, mathematics, and science skills, but also student's learning habits, family backgrounds, teaching methods, and other conditions (Kemdikbud, 2019). It also means students' literacy is still low. Being a writer means having the skills not only to be able to read, write, and speak, but also to understand and create meaning (Victoria State Government, 2021). However, this situation has become ironic because the government has been promoting a national literacy movement since 2015 (Kemdikbud, 2015).

With the launch of the program, schools are expected to host literacy programs in schools; for example, schools provide reading time 15 minutes before lessons begin (Mendikbud, 2015) (SDN Pekunden, n.d.). This program applies to all levels of school – from primary to secondary. Students are encouraged to read non-learning books to enhance their reading interests. Some schools also assign their students to make summaries or logbooks on their readings. However, the actual implementation of the program shows less satisfactory results (Safitri et al., 2019) as it is ranked 71st out of 79 countries (Puslitjak, 2021). Some factors such as the background of parental education, the age of the child, the learning guidance obtained, the family (level of family care) and the genes (descendance) (Saputri, 2017) and the intensity of parenting, socialization intensity, and mass media use intensity (Ferdiansyah, 2021) – can influence this condition.

As we all know together, Rome was not built in one night; it takes time to develop children's literacy skills. The literacy of 15-year-old students shows the results of literacy activities carried out by students since they were young. Their ability to understand text is influenced by three major factors (automatic word recognition, language understanding, and strategic knowledge) (McKenna & Stahl, 2015). These three dimensions must be developed from an early age. If a student's ability to recognize, understand language, and use reading strategies is low, then it can predict the same outcome (Amri & Rochmah, 2021). Therefore, literacy programs at an early age or in elementary school should be given more attention.

Along with promoting the national literacy movement, Indonesia Ministry of Education and Culture has also provided guidelines for teachers in schools to conduct or organize these literacy programs; different guidance is provided for different school levels (pusatstudiliterasi, 2018). However, the implementation of literacy activities in schools varies. Some schools plot 15 minutes before the lesson starts to read (Pujiati et al., 2022) (Lestari, 2019). However, not all schools provide advanced activities after the 15-minute reading activity. The role of the teacher is very important in literacy activities in this school. Reading stories for children is followed by some important activities to improve the vocabulary and critical thinking of students (Gramedia, 2023). Even for the junior class, teachers do not read stories to students to build student phonemic awareness that is one of the important foundations of early literacy (Alexander, 2022). It becomes a missing chain that clearly affects student literacy.

Because literacy skills need training, literacy activities need to be introduced to children from an early age. At the same time, reading these stories will have a positive impact on literacy (Diantari & Tirtayani, 2020). Teachers in the classroom have an important role in fostering motivation and developing literacy skills; teachers not only provide a place and time for reading, but also ensure that literacy activities are well conducted and meaningful (Arifin, 2020) (Dasor et al., 2022). Unfortunately, the role of teacher support is not always at its maximum.

To support the School Literacy Movement (*Gerakan Literasi Nasional - GLS*), schools in Kota Semarang, especially those who are members of *Bawana-Alit* teacher group, have provided reading corners in every classroom, and educational posters that are available in each classroom as well as around the school. Educational posters like posters of traditional musical instruments, names of heroes, flowers, buildings, etc. However, preliminary studies that have been conducted at this school show that the literacy movement has not been implemented under literacy guidelines. It causes the literacy that has been implemented to show no good results. This is because teachers have never received literacy-related training for elementary school students.

Based on the problems above, this community service was designed to improve the teachers' literacy teaching technique skills in *Bawana-Alit* teacher group, Mangunharjo, Tembalang, Semarang. This community service activity was conducted by providing training on literacy teaching techniques to 30 elementary school teachers. Hopefully, this activity can develop the teachers' literacy teaching skills and improve their students' literacy skills.

METHODS

This community service program was carried out in several steps: the pre-training, the training, and the post-training. The pre-training phase was done to ensure that literacy training at *Bawana-Alit* teacher group runs well and significantly impacts student literacy development. This training is expected to change the literacy paradigm in schools and bring long-term benefits to basic education. The target of this community service was 30 elementary teachers who are included in *Bawana-Alit* group teachers joined the training.

After the program was settled, the training was done by having discussions with the head of the group to decide what needed to be delivered and done in the training. The training phase was done in several activities: lecturing, discussion, practice, and project-based learning. The program was started by having lecturing and discussion with the teachers. The trainers informed the theory and knowledge of literacy and literacy teaching techniques that can be applied to elementary school students. In this step, the information on how to apply literacy learning techniques at the elementary school level, for example, guided reading, loud reading, discussion, and other teaching techniques, was discussed. After the discussion, the participants were asked to do micro-teaching, applying literacy teaching techniques to get feedback from the trainees as improvements. Once the participants were equipped with insights and knowledge about the literacy teaching techniques in the micro-teaching sessions, the participants applied the techniques and videotaped their teaching in their respective classrooms.

The flowchart of the community service activities can be seen in the following figure:

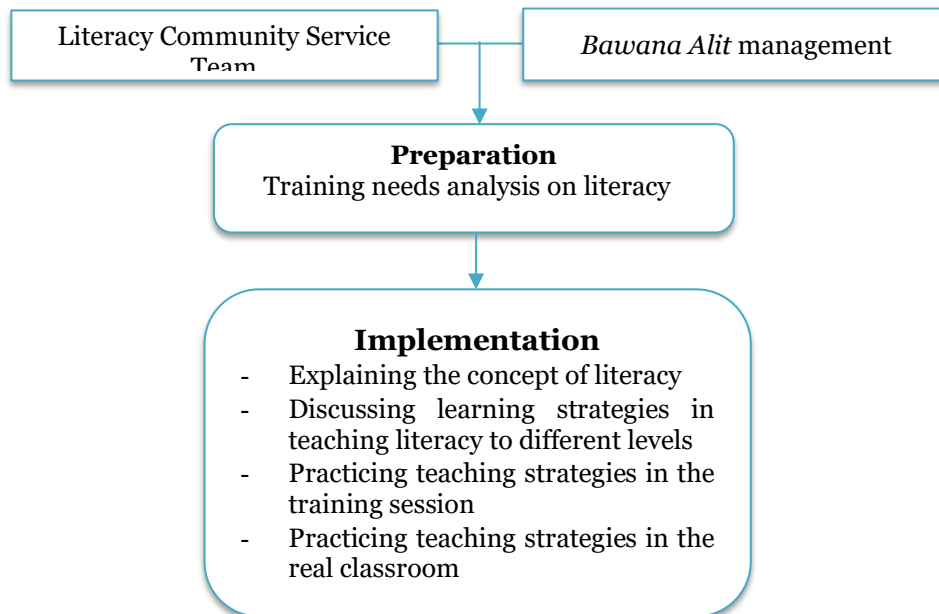


Figure 1. Flowchart of the Community Service Method

The target of the implemented community service stages are 30 Elementary school teachers under *Bawana Alit* group, who will be provided with literacy learning strategies. The outcome of this community service will yield teachers' skills in using learning strategies to improve the students' literacy.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This community service program aims to strengthen the literacy practice at elementary schools under *Bawana Alit* group, at Mangunharjo, Tembalang Kota Semarang. The community service activities are divided into several stages as explained as follows.

The first stage is the coordination phase. With careful planning and preparation during the critical pre-activity period of the community service intended for the elementary school teachers in *Bawana Alit* group, the service staff, which consists of knowledgeable professionals, has devoted itself to creating a thorough training program that covers every facet. The team worked along with the management of *Bawana Alit* group had a comprehensive need analysis study. In order to ensure a thorough grasp of both the demands of students in terms of literacy and the difficulties experienced by educators, this partnership sought to map out the specific requirements of teachers involved in literacy activities. Equipped with this understanding, the training is deliberately crafted to address the unique requirements of the attendees.

Good communication is essential, and the service team has actively included partners in order to share important details about how the training is being implemented. This covers goals, schedules, and expected returns. Such cooperation creates a solid basis for the literacy training program to succeed. During this stage, the team found out that the literacy activities are already conducted at some schools. However, the literacy activities have not run as the literacy guidelines provided by the government. This happened because the teachers did not know that the guideline existed. The teachers simply provided reading corners in the classrooms and provided reading time for the students without having follow-up activities. The result of this stage is that both parties agree to provide literacy training for the teachers, especially on the teaching strategies that must be applied to improve the students' literacy skills. The training will deal with strengthening the teachers' knowledge of literacy and equipping the teachers with literacy teaching strategies. In addition, the service team has painstakingly described the goals and purposes of the training, offering a path for developing schedules, materials, and assessment techniques. The length and frequency of the training sessions have been carefully thought out to match the needs of both teachers and students perfectly. This pre-activity phase's main objective is to ensure that the literacy training program not only goes off without a hitch but also has a

long-lasting, beneficial effect on students' literacy development. It is hoped that this training will help bring about a paradigm shift in literacy in the classroom, which will have long-term positive effects on basic education.

The "Strengthening School Literacy Movement in *Bawana Alit* group, Mangunharjo Tembalang" literacy training program is implemented in three carefully planned sessions, each with a unique goal and instructional approach. During the first session, participants are introduced to core literacy principles and successful teaching practices that are specifically designed for kids with special needs through lectures and discussions. Using PowerPoint presentations and pre-made modules, the service team makes sure that participants understand the value of literacy in basic education and acquire knowledge about effective teaching methods for developing students' reading abilities.



Figure 2. The introduction on the training design

The second session is when practical application takes center stage. Trainers give practical examples of how to apply the literacy learning strategies that have been previously taught in primary schools. Through practical exercises, participants hone critical abilities like read-aloud sessions, guided reading, and productive conversations. The incorporation of "micro teaching" sessions presents a fantastic chance for participants to improve their teaching ability by allowing them to teach and receive constructive feedback from trainers actively.



Figure 3. Building the trainee knowledge on literacy

The third and last session builds on the previous materials and activities by implementing a Project-Based Learning (PBL) approach. Following their microteaching sessions, participants are given project tasks to complete once they have developed understanding and expertise of various teaching methodologies. For these assignments, students must record their classroom literacy instruction on video. In addition to enabling participants to put what they have learned into practice, this project-based approach promotes peers exchanging best practices.



Figure 4. Discussing the literacy teaching strategies

The literacy workshop guarantees that participants not only gain a thorough understanding of literacy but also receive practical experience in using these teaching strategies in actual classroom settings by combining these three different approaches. In order to guarantee that the training has a long-lasting beneficial effect on students' literacy and the general standard of basic education, this all-encompassing strategy is essential. In order to maintain the progress achieved throughout the sessions, post-training exercises are essential. The importance of teamwork, practical application, mentoring, and observation is highlighted as a necessary follow-up ability. The goal of the service team is to turn the training into a continuous endeavor to enhance teachers' methods and students' literacy. The next steps involve gathering images or videos showing how literacy exercises are implemented in the participating schools and asking instructors to rate the training's efficacy using Google Forms. The service staff can evaluate data, pinpoint areas for development, and continuously improve the literacy training program thanks to this feedback loop.

The literacy training has produced impressive results that make everyone happy. The improvement of instructors' abilities in a variety of reading strategies that can be applied to more productive literacy activities is a noteworthy accomplishment of the training. The trainees are now better equipped to help their students develop their writing, reading, speaking, and listening abilities because they have a stronger understanding of literacy ideas and use more effective teaching techniques. Significant improvements in student literacy result from the influence that goes beyond the teachers. The curriculum at the elementary schools has significantly enhanced the reading and writing abilities of the students by introducing more effective teaching strategies and literacy learning approaches. Their overall academic progress has been greatly aided by this encouraging trend.

Additionally, the curriculum has inspired pupils to read with renewed vigor. Students find the subject more appealing as teachers become more skilled at teaching reading skills, turning it into an enjoyable and interesting activity. This increased excitement for literacy-related activities promotes collaborative learning between teachers and students and enhances the school's learning environment. A useful learning community where ideas, lessons learned, and tools for teaching literacy are shared is produced by increased collaboration.

CONCLUSION

The program has an effect on the trainees' school program's overall quality. The program has been significant in raising the bar for basic education in the school by providing teachers with improved literacy teaching strategies and students with increased literacy competency. The program's cooperative efforts and emphasis on literacy have established the groundwork for a supportive learning environment that improves the quality of education as a whole.

It is expected that the program will have a significant long-term impact. It is anticipated that students who acquire a solid literacy foundation in elementary school will take this advantage in their future activities, laying the groundwork for success in advanced academic programs and in their lifetimes. The initiative literacy workshop is proof of the positive changes that may be brought about by working together and focusing on literacy. It represents the first stages in a journey to develop a generation capable of meeting the modern era's literacy standards, while also being more talented and fuller of potential.

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