

Implementation of AMURT Reading Book Program in an Effort to Instill Early Reading Literacy at Permata Bangsa Islamic Kindergarten Semarang

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Abstract: Literacy is defined as the ability to recognise written symbols and form meaningful sentences. To cultivate public interest in reading, the government has implemented a range of initiatives. One such initiative is the National Literacy Movement. As a non-governmental organisation engaged in social humanitarian work, AMURT participated in this effort by launching the Reading Book Programme to cultivate reading literacy. The present study aims to examine the program's implementation at Permata Bangsa Islamic Kindergarten in Semarang, as well as the factors that support or inhibit early reading literacy. The present study employed a qualitative descriptive method. A data set was collected from the principal, teaching staff, and the student guardians at Permata Bangsa Islamic Kindergarten. The data presented herein were collected through a combination of interviews, observations, and a documentary study. The interactive analysis technique pioneered by Miles and Huberman was utilised for the purposes of data analysis. The findings indicated that the AMURT Reading Book Programme is operationalised at Permata Bangsa Islamic Kindergarten through three activities: the lending of reading books, the utilisation of books as educational resources, and the establishment of reading corners. Supporting factors include various parties' support, strengthened governance, optimal utilization of facilities by the school, and both parties' commitment to maintaining the reading books.

Keywords: Early Childhood, Implementation, Program, Reading Literacy

INTRODUCTION

The National Education System Law No. 20 of 2003, Article 1, Paragraph 14, states that Early Childhood Education is defined as a coaching effort for children from birth to 6 years of age. This is carried out by providing educational stimuli to help physical and spiritual development and growth, with the objective being to better prepare children to enter further education. The existence of Early Childhood Education institutions has been regulated in Law of the Republic of Indonesia No. 20 of 2003, Chapter VI, Article 28, Paragraph 3-5, which states that (3) PAUD in the formal education pathway is in the form of TK/RA or other equivalent forms. As indicated in point 4, ECD is to be found in non-formal educational pathways, manifesting in the forms of KB, TPA, or other equivalent forms. The fifth point pertains to the utilisation of ECD in informal educational contexts, encompassing family education and educational programmes facilitated by the environment. The significance of early childhood education has been substantiated by numerous studies that have identified a particular period in early childhood development as a critical phase of cognitive and emotional development.

Sujiono (Sejarwo, 2016) posits that early childhood education encompasses all endeavors and actions undertaken by educators and parents in the process of care, nurturing, and education. The process

is characterized by the provision of opportunities for children to engage in exploration and experimentation. These opportunities are structured to facilitate the development of their potential and intelligence through observation, imitation, and repeated trials. The Indonesian government, particularly the Directorate General of Early Childhood Education, has developed standards to facilitate the attainment of developmental milestones at each age stage. These standards serve as a reference for educators and parents, providing a framework to understand the developmental changes that occur in children according to their age. The achievement standards in question are delineated in the Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia Number 137 of 2014 concerning Standards for Child Development Achievement Levels. The developmental scopes encompassed by the STPPA encompass religious and moral values, physical motor values, cognitive, language, and social emotions. All elements of development contained in STPPA are integrated into a cohesive whole, necessitating continuous execution throughout the development process.

Morrison in (Achmad Rifa'i, Engelbertus Nggalu Bali, 2016) states that all efforts made by adults must be by the nature of Early Childhood, because education is essentially an effort to provide help so that children can help themselves and can develop literacy skills early on. Literacy is defined by UNESCO as literacy, which means a series of abilities to use reading, writing, and arithmetic skills obtained and developed through the learning process applied in schools, families, and communities. The National Literacy Movement Roadmap book explains that literacy has a broad meaning and scope, namely, literacy as a series of skills in reading, writing, speaking, and accessing and using information. Literacy is also defined as a learning process with reading and writing activities as a medium to reflect on, investigate, question, and criticize the knowledge and ideas learned.

Wulan (2022) suggests that literacy has a big role in training children's basic abilities to read, write, and tell stories. Literacy trains children's reasoning, critical (cognitive), language, sensomotor, and affective. UNESCO states that Indonesia is a country with a very low literacy level. The percentage of people's interest in reading is only around 0.001%, which means 1:1000 people who like or have an interest in reading. This is also corroborated by the results of the Central Connecticut State University or CCSU survey (2016) in the World's Most Literate Nations Ranked on ranking literacy behavior and sources that support literacy in 61 countries, Indonesia is ranked 60th far below the other side of the illiteracy rate decreased quite significantly from 39.1% of the illiterate population in 1971, shrinking to 28.8% in 1980, then falling again to 15.9% in 1990 (Statistics 70 Years of Independent Indonesia, 2015). The success of illiteracy eradication was continued in the Reform era, which succeeded in reducing the illiteracy rate to 10.1% in 2000, 6.3% in 2010, 4.4% in 2014, and 3.56% in 2015.

The government's success in eradicating illiteracy and expanding access to education should be followed by the growth of a reading or literacy culture. The National Literacy Movement is one of the government's efforts to strengthen synergies between actors in the country's literacy movement, with the aim that all levels of society can work together and develop all existing potential, and together foster a culture of literacy in Indonesia. In 2016, the Ministry of Education and Culture created a National Literacy Movement working group to coordinate various literacy activities managed by related work units. The Community Literacy Movement is also an example of a program developed by the Directorate General of Early Childhood Education and Community Education (Ditjen PAUD Dikmas), as a follow-up effort to the illiteracy eradication program that won the 2012 UNESCO award (literacy rate of 96.51%).

Unfortunately, the government still faces many obstacles in intensifying this national literacy movement. According to the Ministry of Education and Culture (2019), there are three such obstacles, including (1) a lack of access in schools, (2) a lack of community access, and (3) low reading behavior compared to the use of other media. The above data shows that national literacy cultivation is still a serious

problem that requires special attention. Solving this literacy problem requires synergy between all levels of society, especially stakeholders, including the business world, universities, communities, and social organizations, so that the problem can be handled immediately and thoroughly.

One of the social organizations that can serve as a strategic partner of the government is AMURT Indonesia. The AMURT Indonesia Foundation is a non-profit organization that engages in social and community affairs, upholding universal values, namely humanity, diversity, and the spirit of service. The AMURT Indonesia Foundation is an organization that aims to empower communities, governments, and the private sector. The foundation seeks to encourage the formation of a society that is both empowered and caring. AMURT's program has the potential to contribute to the resolution of the literacy problem in Indonesia. The program has been designated "Reading Program." The Reading Book Program is a developmental initiative that aims to cultivate a passion for reading from an early age by creating an environment conducive to reading, both in school and at home.

The various problems described above make researchers want to know the form of implementation of the Reading Book Program held at Permata Bangsa Islamic Kindergarten. The researcher chose the Reading Book Program as a research topic because this program can be a solution for parents who are less able to provide reading resources for children. Permata Bangsa Islamic Kindergarten is one of the AMURT-assisted schools designated as a model school.

Based on this background, the researcher set two problem formulations, namely (1) How is the implementation of AMURT's Reading Book Program in an effort to instill early reading literacy in Islamic Kindergarten Permata Bangsa Semarang?; (2) What are the supporting and inhibiting factors in the implementation of AMURT's Reading Book Program in an effort to instill early reading literacy in Islamic Kindergarten Permata Bangsa Semarang? The purpose of this study is to find out how the implementation of the Reading Book Program, organized by AMURT Indonesia in instilling early reading literacy in Islamic Kindergarten Permata Bangsa, and to find out what the supporting and inhibiting factors are experienced by the school during the implementation of the Reading Book Program.

METHODS

Based on the issues raised, this research uses a qualitative descriptive approach. The research was conducted from April to August 2023. This research was conducted at Permata Bangsa Islamic Kindergarten, Semarang. The data collection used in this research is interviews, observations, and documentation with data sources from the principal, two teachers, and one student guardian. The next process is data analysis, including the stages of data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Data validity techniques using source triangulation, time triangulation, and technique triangulation.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

a. Early Childhood Literacy

Kemendikbud (2015) explains that etymologically, the word literacy is taken from English literacy, which comes from Latin, *littera*, which means letters. Furthermore, according to the Language Development and Development Agency (Arsa, 2019) defines literacy is defined as the ability to read and write, or knowledge and skills in certain activities or fields. Justice, L.M. in (Wartomo, 2017) suggests that a child's literacy period starts from birth to six years of age. In this period, children acquire knowledge of reading and writing not by

teaching, but by observing and participating in simple behaviors related to reading and writing activities.

Barton (Nurgiantoro, 2018) literacy means being able to read and write, namely the ability to be able to read and write. In other words, literacy is the ability to recognize letters, followed by the ability to read and write. The introduction of literacy from an early age aims to foster children's literacy skills and enthusiasm from an early age. The following are the principles of literacy activities for children in the book "Literacy Learning Models for Pre-readers and Early Readers," released by KEMDIKBUD in 2019:

1. *Oral communication*

Communication is an important factor in pre-reading and early reader activities. Children who are skilled in speaking will easily communicate well and efficiently, and will also grow into good readers.

2. *Integrated with daily life*

Children's daily lives need to be aligned with literacy-related activities. Involvement of adults in the neighborhood

3. *The atmosphere of literacy activities*

Literacy activities in early childhood are natural and integrated with children's daily lives and are not forced.

4. *Comprehensive development of children's skills through literacy.*

Comprehensive means thorough. Early childhood literacy activities need to be considered so that their application varies, so that all aspects of development can be achieved.

b. Reading Book Program

The Indonesian government in 2017 launched the "National Literacy Movement (GLN)" by implementing literacy activities in schools, families, and communities through reading literacy activities (Alibaca). Based on data from Alibaca, Indonesians fall into the 'low literacy activation' category with a score of $M=37.32$. In addition to this plan, in 2019, a literacy activity plan focusing on the family environment was also formulated, namely the National Movement for Parents to Read Books (Gernas Baku). This movement aims to increase the participation of families, especially parents and PAUD institutions, to foster a culture of reading to children from an early age (Guidelines for the Implementation of the National Movement of Parents Reading Books (GERNAS BAKU), 2019). The National Literacy Movement has five strategic aspects that have been determined, namely (1) Strengthening the Capacity of Facilitators, (2) Increasing the Number and Variety of Quality Reading Resources, (3) Expanding Access to Learning Resources and Coverage of Learners, (4) Increasing Public Involvement, and (5) Strengthening Governance.

The National Literacy Movement program requires the involvement of public participation, such as literacy activists, parents, community leaders, and professionals. AMURT Indonesia is one of the literacy activist institutions that initiated the Reading Book Program for early childhood. This program is expected to foster a love of reading in children from an early age through family and school. The implementation of this program is carried out in the family environment under the guidance of parents or adults around the child. Furthermore, when at school, the teacher will be able to ask the child to retell what the child has read and learned when at home.

The implementation of this program is in the form of lending reading books, one child is

provided or loaned a bag containing two books with different titles to be read by parents or other family members to the child at home. The child is given 1 week, and after that, the bag is brought back to school to be exchanged for another bag with a different book title. This book rotation is carried out every week, so it is hoped that all children will be able to read all the books in the collection. For this program, AMURT prepared 5,280 copies of books consisting of 440 titles. The books are then packaged into 2,601 bags and distributed to 49 PAUD institutions. The PAUD institutions are then responsible for the distribution process to the students, and together with the parents, cooperate in maintaining the Reading Book Program property. This program is expected to stimulate and instill in children the habit of reading and loving books.

c. Implementation of the AMURT Reading Book Program

Implementation of the AMURT Reading Book Program is carried out in activities, namely:

1. *Borrowing reading books*

The essence of this program is to lend a collection of reading books to children in rotation to take home and return according to a predetermined schedule. This program is intended to instill literacy in a wider and sustainable area, meaning that literacy cultivation is not only carried out at school but also in the home environment.

Suntrock (Ni Nyoman Padmadewi et al., 2018) suggests that families have an important role in the process of growing and developing children's literacy. The success of literacy development is also determined by the form of parenting applied by parents. Good parenting takes time and effort. Guo et al in (Hermawati & Sugito, 2021) explain that the home literacy environment is the practice of activities at home related to children's reading, writing, and language skills, accompanied by parents. The provision of adequate facilities is very important to note. This reading book lending program is a solution for parents who are less able to provide literacy resources for children. This program ensures that children always have a supply of books to read.

2. *Using books as learning media*

School is the right environment to introduce children to early literacy skills. Permata Bangsa Islamic Kindergarten also implements literacy-based learning at school through the Reading Book Program. Instilling literacy in children is also done by introducing environmental writing. The placement of writing on items close to the child, such as block cabinets, bookcases, tables, hand washing stations, stairs up and down, and others, creates a literacy-rich environment around them. This helps strengthen the connection between the physical environment and literacy learning. The school utilizes the books provided by AMURT as learning media. The books are used by the teachers during the learning process by reading the books, finding the core words from the books, and creating activities that are aligned with the material in the books.

The Reading Book Program run at Permata Bangsa Islamic Kindergarten actively involves children in various learning activities, especially in book reading activities. Amanda Putri et al. (2023) stated that a culture of literacy with literacy-based learning, such as habituation activities and developing interest in reading, can help shape student character. Through literacy activities, we can instill positive character values such as honesty, responsibility, and independence can also strengthen the characters that are essential for individual and community progress.

3. *Provision of Reading Corner*

The simplest formation of a literacy environment is to bring children closer to books that are appropriate for their age. At an early age, children usually prefer to read books that have lots of pictures in them. Furthermore, the books that have been collected can be arranged in a special place

so that children can access them more easily. The place is usually called a reading corner. Reading corners are usually used by schools that cannot provide a library room. Ni'matuthoyyibah et al. (2023) explained that the reading corner is a comfortable room for students to sit and read, where there are tables and shelves to put books.

Mantu (2021) states that the existence of a reading corner in the school environment helps in fostering a culture of literacy in students at school, and the existence of a reading corner in the school environment provides a new color or new atmosphere for students, so that students are motivated to read. Kurniawan Agung Rimba et al., (2020) also explained that the reading corner in the classroom has a role in fostering students' interest in reading, namely as a literacy facility that helps children to continue reading in the classroom, providing nearby reading materials in which there are various types of books, and a comfortable and attractive place for children to linger with books. The type and diversity of books certainly affect the students' interest in the reading corner. A variety of books certainly makes children less easily bored to continue reading.

Permata Bangsa Islamic Kindergarten also provides a reading corner, which is a program to provide mini library facilities aimed at supporting the development of a literacy atmosphere in the school environment. The books provided in the reading corner are also the same as the book series used for the book loan program and those used for learning. The results of the research found that the reading corner at Permata Bangsa Islamic Kindergarten has not been maximally utilized in the effort to instill literacy in children. The density of activities is the main reason why the reading corner has not been fully utilized. In addition, the books in the reading corner are also the same as the books used for learning, so the school prefers to focus on using books as learning media.

d. Supporting and Hindering Factors for the Implementation of the Reading Book Program

1. Supporting Factors

The Reading Book program implemented in Permata Bangsa Islamic Kindergarten has so far received support from various parties concerned. (Ilmi et al., 2021) suggest that the active role of all school members, support, and motivation provided by various parties can encourage students to be enthusiastic in carrying out literacy activities at school. Teachers as the main facilitators of program implementation at school, and parents as supporting facilitators who carry out the continuation of the program in the home environment, and the student committee acts as a liaison between the school and parents. This shows the cooperation between the school, parents, and student committees. Strengthening governance is a form of maintenance so that the program can have a long life.

Permata Bangsa Islamic Kindergarten gives the responsibility of managing these reading resources to one teacher. The teacher is appointed as the party responsible for the management of existing resources. The duties and functions of the teacher are to organize the rotation of books loaned to children and ensure that the books return intact and undamaged, so that the books are maintained and suitable for lending. In addition, the teacher in charge also collaborates with the homeroom teacher to ensure that the distribution of books is carried out properly. This cooperation shows an effort to maintain order and smoothness in the process of distributing learning resources.

Luthfiyana & Rifqi (2022) explain that there are six strategies in developing a culture of literacy, one of which is the importance of strengthening governance. Strengthening governance must be considered to realize a more focused literacy culture development. Strengthening governance can be done through literacy culture needs analysis, program scheduling, budget allocation, literacy team formation, policy development, and building a literacy-rich environment. The school also agreed with parents regarding book maintenance procedures. If a book is lost or damaged, parents are obliged to

replace it with a children's story book according to the standards applied by the school. This agreement is a form of parents' participation and commitment in safeguarding and maintaining learning resources. By implementing good governance, schools can better manage learning resources for the sustainability of the Reading Book Program.

2. Inhibiting Factors

The many supporting factors for the implementation of the Reading Book Program do not necessarily implement the program will run without obstacles. There are at least three obstacles that researchers found in this Reading Book Program, namely:

- 1) The slowing down of book turnover this occurs due to untimely returns or books returning in bad condition, but for this problem, the school has anticipated by making a commitment with parents to replace books in the event of damage or even loss.

This commitment is important for the longevity of the Reading Book Program. This is an effort to maintain the available infrastructure. Adequate facilities and infrastructure will help support the successful implementation of the school program (Luthfiyana & Rifqi, 2022).

- 2) There is no specific communication medium between parents and teachers to evaluate the implementation of the Reading Book Program.

This also causes schools to be less able to monitor how parents utilize this book for children's literacy activities at home. Communication is an important thing that must be built into various activities, communication is also one of the keys to a successful program. Simamora et al. (2024) explained that communication plays a very close role in building literacy awareness in the community. Communication has the aim of changing attitudes, changing opinions, changing behavior, and also social change. These changes are expected to bring an idea to a much better direction.

- 3) The provision of reading corners is not running optimally.

This happens because the school is more focused on the use of books as the main medium of learning, and the many activities carried out by the school make the reading corner not too priority. For this reason, schools need to set aside special time for children to do activities in the reading corner.

CONCLUSION

Based on research on the implementation of the AMURT Reading Book Program in an effort to instill early reading literacy at Permata Bangsa Islamic Kindergarten Semarang, it can be concluded that:

The implementation of the AMURT Indonesia Reading Book Program at Permata Bangsa Islamic Kindergarten is carried out in 3 activities, namely borrowing reading books, using books as learning media, and providing a reading corner. Factors that support the implementation of the AMURT Reading Book Program at Permata Bangsa Islamic Kindergarten Semarang are the involvement of parents in the implementation of the Program, strengthening governance and optimal use of facilities, and commitment from both parties to maintain infrastructure. In addition, there are also inhibiting factors in the implementation of the program, including the slowing down of book circulation, the absence of a special communication forum in the implementation of the Reading Book Program, and the non-optimal utilization of the reading corner.

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