



Providing Alternative Understandings of School Equivalency Trough Literacy and Storytelling

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Abstract

Omah Dongeng Marwah, a library community and school equivalency organizer, distinguishes itself from typical school equivalency institutions, which are often seen as mere diploma publishers. Through storytelling, book discussions, and nurturing students' talents, ODM offers an innovative outlook on literacy practices. This research explores the profound impact of ODM's immersive storytelling along with diverse literacy practices to give alternative understandings of school equivalency. Using qualitative research, I investigated why and how Omah Dongeng Marwah Kudus challenges the stigma associated with school equivalency through storytelling and literacy practices. Critical Discourse Analysis was employed to understand the social dimensions influencing ODM's implementation of these practices, challenging the dominant discourse in similar institutions. The findings of this research demonstrate that the utilization of storytelling and literacy practices at Omah Dongeng Marwah stems from the social and educational conditions in Indonesia, where the behind-the-scenes aspects of theoretical discoveries are often neglected. The effects observed include increased expressiveness among students, enhanced motivation for learning, and the exploration of their talents and interests. Furthermore, through their literacy practices, Omah Dongeng Marwah presents an alternative understanding of school equivalency, asserting that with the flexibility of curriculum development, educational institutions should prioritize meeting the individual needs of students.

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INTRODUCTION

School equivalency is one of the product of non-formal education designed for those individuals who aspire to learn but face barriers in accessing formal education. The introduction of school equivalency signifies a significant literacy event, stemming from President Soeharto's initiative to eradicate illiteracy, followed by government regulations enforcing 12 years of compulsory education (Shalihin, 2019). This form of education emphasizes the government's commitment to educating the nation's children through a tailored curriculum. However, in practice, the prevailing public discourse surrounding non-formal education, including school equivalency, often perceives it as a mere diploma provider for marginalized and disadvantaged groups, deeming it outdated (Ayu & Fatimah, 2015)

Amidst the negative stigma associated with school equivalency education, Omah Dongeng Marwah Kudus, established in 2014, distinguishes itself by offering innovative literacy practices. Through storytelling, book discussions, and the nurturing of students' talents and interests, Omah Dongeng Marwah challenges the prevailing perception of School Equivalency as a mere issuer of diplomas through its literacy activities. These literacy practices breathe new life into school equivalency field. Additionally, several graduates of Omah Dongeng Marwah have successfully gained admission to state universities in Indonesia, making it intriguing to study the effects of the literacy practices conducted by Omah Dongeng Marwah. Furthermore, understanding the alternative concept of school equivalency offered by Omah Dongeng Marwah through their literacy activities becomes crucial.

Originally regarded as a neutral and value-free practice, literacy has evolved into a social practice embedded with values. This implies that every literacy activity is influenced by an underlying ideology (Shalihin, 2019). In the 18th century, during the age of enlightenment, a transformative shift occurred in libraries and literacy. This era witnessed an increased interest

in reading and writing, recognizing them as crucial for knowledge acquisition (McGarry, 1991). Libraries became centers of knowledge, providing access to diverse literary materials, while literacy became intertwined with intellectual and cultural advancements. Brandt (2001) explains how devoutly reading the Gospel during the 19th century became a cornerstone of Sunday Schools. This exemplifies how literacy, initially, was not merely a pleasurable activity but an organized effort to shape desired behaviors within influential social groups. At that time, literacy was deeply intertwined with moral and religious objectives, with religious texts forming the core of educational practices.

In this study, the definition of literacy proposed by Heath (1983) and Shalihin (2019) conceives literacy as an activity involving texts, where participants interpret and derive meaning from them. Thus, literacy encompasses not only technical skills but also interpretation, analysis, and comprehension of written materials. Furthermore, it is essential to acknowledge that literacy practices extend beyond observable events. They encompass the values, behaviors, and cultural nuances exhibited by individuals engaged in literacy-related activities (Barton et al., 2000). Literacy is not confined to isolated acts of reading and writing; it permeates social, cultural, and historical contexts, profoundly shaping individuals and societies. The new literacy study aligns with the concept from Freire and D. Macedo (1987) that the act of learning to read and write has to start from a very comprehensive understanding of the act of reading the world, something which human beings do before reading the words.

On the other hand, storytelling is a form of imaginative narrative conveying specific meanings. Oliver (2008) describes storytelling as artistic medium depicting real or imaginary events through visual or auditory means. Other sources suggest that storytelling represents life, encompassing concepts, beliefs, personal experiences, and insights conveyed through narratives. (Asfandiyar, 2007) asserts that storytelling is a narrative art used to instill values in children without resorting to admonishment.

(Smith et al., 2015) define storytelling as an activity where an individual orally imparts a message, information, or simply a captivating story to the listener. Storytelling, in itself, has benefits, such as facilitating the inculcation of values in children.

Fairy tale genre provides ways for children to receive important messages. Although there are some themes in fairytales that are unrealistic, the overall effect is positive and offers fundamental elements for children's development. (Johnson, 2016)

In Indonesia, research on literacy has been conducted with some different topics and discussion such as teaching media literacy strategies (Afrilyasanti et al., 2022), survey on critical literacy pedagogical approaches (Gustine, 2018), the effects of critical literacy using short stories (Halimah et al., 2020), alternative critical literacy practices in schools (Hendriani et al., 2018), and critical literacy strategies and challenges (Hidayat et al., 2020). However, none of these studies have addressed how literacy practices offer alternative understandings within an educational institution that implements them. The research that focused on literacy activities providing alternative discourses was conducted by Sakhiyya et al. (2023). Nevertheless, this study did not focus on educational institutions but instead explored literacy activities within feminist groups in Indonesia.

On the other hand, there are numerous studies that examine storytelling in the classroom and its effects on students. These studies have shown that storytelling enhances students' learning motivation (Mayasari et al., 2021; Hemmati et al., 2015), writing skills (Rahmawati, 2014), speaking abilities (Pratiwi, 2016; Patricia, 2021; Hwang et al., 2016), creativity, and critical thinking (Schmoelz, 2018). Additionally, there is evidence of improved teaching abilities among teachers (Starčič et al., 2016) due to the use of storytelling. While these studies demonstrate the positive effects of storytelling in student learning, none of them have specifically explored storytelling as a literacy practice offering alternative understandings within an educational institution, particularly in the context of school equivalency.

Therefore, this research aims to explore the literacy practices implemented by Omah Dongeng Marwah as a provider of school equivalency education. Additionally, this study seeks to uncover the alternative understanding that ODM presents for school equivalency, which has long been burdened with negative stigmas.

METHOD

This study adopted a qualitative research design to answer the question and reach the objectives of the research. Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough, 1992) was employed to comprehend the social dimensions influencing the implementation of literacy practices at Omah Dongeng Marwah Kudus (ODM) and challenging the dominant discourse in similar educational institutions. The research was conducted at Omah Dongeng Marwah Kudus, and the subjects included the school's head, the founder of ODM, along with tutors and 20 students of Package B and Package C at the school.

Data were collected through interviews, document analysis, and observations that I conducted in April – Mei 2023. The purpose of the observations was to examine the effects of literacy practices on the students, guided by Ur (1996) who explain theory of motivation, which outlines several characteristics of motivated learners, such as positive task orientation, ego-involvement, the need for achievement, high aspiration, goal orientation, and perseverance. The data analysis in this study follows the model proposed by Miles & Huberman (1994), involving data reduction, data display, and drawing or verifying conclusions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this study, three main points were discussed: the roles of storytelling as practiced by Omah Dongeng Marwah; literacy practices; and the effects, as well as alternative understandings of school equivalency provided by ODM.

The Roles of Storytelling as Practised by Omah Dongeng Marwah

In Omah Dongeng Marwah, storytelling sessions have become eagerly anticipated activities for the students. Every day, they enthusiastically participate in storytelling sessions, and each student even has a designated schedule to take turns telling stories to their classmates. The presence of storytelling in the learning process provides them with opportunities to share stories, develop their imagination, and gain a deeper understanding of various values and knowledge. Storytelling plays a significant role in igniting the students' enthusiasm for learning. When they engage in listening to stories, they feel more connected to the subject matter and become more motivated to learn. Storytelling goes beyond entertainment; it serves as a means to inspire, teach important values, and present situations that are relevant to their daily lives.

“...it has many effects. For some children, they may lack confidence in speaking, especially in front of a larger audience. Speaking in front of many people can be intimidating. However, as they become more comfortable in the environment and become accustomed to storytelling, they start to explore how they can tell stories in front of others without feeling embarrassed or insecure. Initially, they may be hesitant to speak, even during their elementary school years, but here at PKBM, they gain the ability and courage to speak confidently in front of a larger audience. It helps develop their public speaking skills and boosts their self-confidence.” – Tutor of ODM

Omah Dongeng Marwah's decision to adopt storytelling as a prominent learning model for teaching literacy stems from its founder, Mr. Hasan Aoni's deep understanding of the power of narratives in education. By utilizing storytelling, this educational institution seeks to create a learning environment that is both captivating and impactful for its young learners.

Storytelling has proven to be a compelling tool in engaging children's curiosity and interest in various subjects. The magic of storytelling lies in its ability to transport children to different worlds, introduce them to diverse characters, and immerse them in exciting adventures. As a result,

students become enthusiastic participants in the learning process, eagerly absorbing the knowledge and wisdom hidden within these captivating tales.

Beyond captivating their interest, storytelling goes a step further by instilling essential values and life lessons in the minds of the young learners. By witnessing the struggles and triumphs of the characters, children are encouraged to reflect on their own lives and choices. They are motivated to embrace positive traits such as courage, honesty, empathy, and perseverance. These moral lessons provide a strong foundation for character development and the cultivation of empathy and compassion among the students.

“...children become more expressive through storytelling because they have to express themselves, for example, in choosing a story. Among the many stories available, they will choose the ones that can represent themselves. If the desired story doesn't exist, they are encouraged to create their own, and we assist them in the writing process. If books are limited, we provide the necessary resources. This expression is not just a matter of style; it is a way for them to convey what exists in their imagination.” - the Founder of ODM

Additionally, storytelling serves as a powerful instrument for fostering critical thinking skills in children. As they listen to the narratives, children are encouraged to analyze situations, interpret motives, and predict outcomes. This analytical approach nurtures their ability to think critically and make informed decisions in various aspects of their lives.

Moreover, storytelling also nurtures children's creativity and imagination. Through the magical world of stories, they are exposed to endless possibilities and encouraged to explore their creativity freely. As they connect with the characters and events in the tales, children are inspired to create their own narratives, fostering a sense of self-expression and artistic prowess. This creative engagement not only enhances their storytelling abilities but also contributes to overall cognitive development and self-confidence.

“Learning delivered through a story can motivate children to aspire to be like the characters in the narrative. For example, when a story portrays a

theory inventor as an ordinary child from their own environment, it can inspire children, particularly in Indonesian society, where self-deprecation is prevalent. Through such stories, they can find motivation and believe that they, too, have the potential to achieve similar feats." – The Founder of ODM

At Omah Dongeng Marwah, storytelling is not merely a passive experience for the students. Instead, it serves as an interactive platform that invites active participation. Children are encouraged to share their thoughts, emotions, and interpretations of the stories, enhancing their communication skills and self-confidence. This participatory approach empowers them to become active learners and creators, ultimately developing a strong sense of ownership and pride in their own creations. In this nurturing environment, children are encouraged to explore their potential and discover their unique talents and interests. By embracing the diverse world of storytelling, they are exposed to various subjects, themes, and genres, igniting their passion for learning and broadening their horizons.

Literacy Practices and the Effects

One of the literacy practices implemented is storytelling sessions by students, followed by discussions about the stories read. During these discussions, students are encouraged to reflect upon and explore the lessons and values embedded in the tales or stories. The tutors confirm that these activities are carried out with the aim of igniting students' enthusiasm for learning while preserving the storytelling tradition. Through literacy practices, particularly through storytelling, Tutors also recognize that children become more enthusiastic about learning and develop critical thinking skills. In the learning process, storytelling has the ability to nurture students' imagination and creativity. As they listen to or tell stories, they can visualize the narratives, depict the characters, and create new worlds in their minds. This stimulates critical thinking skills, problem-solving abilities, and unleashes their broad imagination. Through storytelling, students develop creative and flexible thinking abilities. Furthermore, storytelling activities provide students with

opportunities to become skilled storytellers themselves. By taking turns in telling stories, they learn to be active listeners, enhance skills, and utilize vocal expressions and gestures to bring the stories to life. This not only improves their communication skills but also builds their confidence in public speaking.

"By listening the story, students can play with their imagination, and motivated by the actor in the story, so they can be more spirit in learning" - The Founder of ODM

"...they become accustomed to storytelling, they start to explore how they can tell stories in front of others without feeling embarrassed or insecure. Initially, they may be hesitant to speak, even during their elementary school years, but here at PKBM, they gain the ability and courage to speak confidently in front of a larger audience" – The Tutor of ODM

After the completion of module-based learning activities, literacy practices continue from 10:00 AM to 12:00 PM. During this period, students are given the freedom to read books, explore websites, or watch educational content on YouTube to delve deeper into their individual interests and talents. For example, students inclined towards graphic design will focus on learning graphic design, while those interested in literature and language will concentrate on language learning. Mentors are available to assist students if they encounter difficulties or have questions related to their chosen subjects. In its implementation, the tutor I interviewed acknowledges that through these activities, students become more relaxed and enjoy learning because they can freely explore topics they are interested in. Similarly, according to the Headmaster, children become more directed in their learning based on their chosen passions.

"They are enthusiastic, so when it's their turn to tell a story, they will definitely prepare beforehand. Today, who will be the storyteller? They will surely send a message to the group chat saying, "Today, I will be telling this story," and everyone will eagerly listen." – Tutor of ODM

Outside the classroom, literacy practices are also offered to students through book discussions. Here, students exchange perspectives on a book that is thoroughly analyzed under the

guidance of mentors or tutors. Mr. Hasan explains that the purpose of book discussions as a literacy practice is to prevent students from being confined to their own perspectives. In other words, students remain in control of expressing their opinions but are empowered within the framework of book discussions. In this activity, Mr. Hasan emphasizes that students can learn to accept the opinions of others, even when they read the same book.

“.....”. *“Children, after expressing themselves, They need to explore their perspectives extensively. They will exchange viewpoints with others. If they don't have a platform like that, they will engage in pointless arguments.”* – The Founder of ODM

Through these practices, Omah Dongeng Marwah endeavors to create a stimulating and enriching learning environment where literacy serves as a gateway to exploration, critical thinking, and embracing diverse viewpoints. By integrating literacy activities into the learning process, students are encouraged to cultivate a love for reading, expand their knowledge, and actively participate in their own educational journey. The varied literacy practices offered at Omah Dongeng Marwah aim to nurture a lifelong passion for learning and empower students to become well-rounded individuals who value the transformative power of stories, language, and the exchange of ideas.

Regarding the statements made by the founder, the headmaster, and tutors at ODM, stating that the literacy practices implemented at Omah Dongeng Marwah have a positive impact on students, I can confirm the truth of these statements through the observations I conducted during the learning activities. These observations revealed the fact that the students at Omah Dongeng Marwah genuinely demonstrate high enthusiasm and motivation in their learning process along with the literacy practices. When observing the students in English module lessons, the students deeply engaged they were in every activity provided. They displayed genuine excitement when learning new materials, completing assigned exercises, and interacting with their peers in group discussions. There were no signs of them feeling pressured or burdened by

the tasks given; instead, they embraced challenges with high spirits and enthusiasm. Furthermore, when students were given freedom in their independent literacy practices, they showed a strong interest in exploring their individual interests and talents. Some students were drawn to graphic design, while others preferred to deepen their knowledge of literature and language. They enthusiastically read books, explored websites, or watched educational content on YouTube. The observations also indicated that the students felt comfortable seeking assistance from tutors or mentors when facing difficulties or having questions related to their learning pursuits.

The overall results of the observations consistently align with the statements made by the founder, the headmaster and the tutors at ODM. The literacy practices at Omah Dongeng Marwah undeniably have a positive impact on students, encompassing their enthusiasm for learning, joyfulness, critical thinking abilities, and comfort in the learning process. The students actively engage in their learning and find fulfillment in developing their interests and talents through the provided literacy practices. The observation table I compiled further reinforces these conclusions and serves as tangible evidence that the literacy practices at Omah Dongeng Marwah indeed offer significant benefits to students' development.

Alternative Understandings of School Equivalency

Omah Dongeng Marwah maintains the belief that inclusive and relevant education can be achieved through the implementation of a more flexible curriculum within the framework of school equivalency. Embracing the notion that freedom is the key to such an educational approach, Omah Dongeng Marwah asserts that school equivalency should be capable of catering to the individual needs of students. Given that each student possesses distinct backgrounds, interests, and potentials, a one-size-fits-all approach is deemed inadequate.

“As an alternative education institution, school equivalency should have the flexibility to develop

learning models that truly meet the needs of students.”

– The Founder of ODM

“...school equivalency should actually focus on enhancing the abilities and skills in the field they specialize in. In my opinion, true education lies in school equivalency. – The Founder of ODM

In striving to realize a more dynamic and contextual education, Omah Dongeng Marwah introduces storytelling as a tool for teaching various concepts and values. Through the medium of storytelling, they offer an alternative understanding that education should not confine itself solely to the consumption of theory, but should also unveil the "behind the scenes" aspect of discoveries. By presenting the other side of a discovery, for instance, through captivating stories and vibrant characters, Omah Dongeng Marwah endeavors to foster a deeper comprehension of the processes, challenges, and creativity involved in an achievement or breakthrough. They educate students to perceive science, technology, and innovation from a broader perspective, thereby igniting their curiosity, critical thinking, and exploratory spirit.

“...education should actually teach the behind-the-scenes so that people know the history of some findings” – The Founder of ODM

Through that approach, with value of *Nata Bersama*, Omah Dongeng Marwah strives to create a stimulating and inspirational educational environment for students of school equivalency. Their aim is for students not only to passively acquire concepts but also to apply them with a profound understanding in their daily lives.

“...there is a shared value called Nata Bersama, which means not being extravagant, polite, creation, sharing and independent.”...”. “..... Children should learn to be polite, humble, sharing, and be autonomous. These are the values we cultivate in our storytelling approach.” – The Founder of ODM

Omah Dongeng Marwah's endeavors serve as evidence that school equivalency holds significant potential in contributing to the development and success of students. By providing education tailored to the students' needs and imparting values through storytelling

and unveiling the "behind the scenes" of discoveries, Omah Dongeng Marwah fosters the formation of a generation that is creative, critically thinking, and enthusiastic in exploring the realm of knowledge.

How Omah Dongeng Marwah applies storytelling within its educational system is truly inspiring and innovative. First and foremost, it is important to discuss how storytelling was chosen as the instructional model for the school, to the extent that it became the name of the equivalency school itself. Through the interviews I conducted, it was revealed that the establishment of PKBM Omah Dongeng Marwah was driven by the founder's belief in the importance of preserving valuable heritage from ancestors. This principle of heritage preservation became the final component of the name PKBM Omah Dongeng Marwah, where Marwah is *“masyarakat reko warisan berharga”* which means a community that is willing to preserve valuable heritage." (Interview with the Founder of ODM, 2023).

During the interview, the school's founder explained that one of the elements considered as heritage is storytelling. According to him, the tradition of storytelling has waned both within families and schools. However, he believed that storytelling is an effective method as it educates children about the processes behind various discoveries. As an example, he mentioned that narrating the story of numbers, the discovery of numbers, would make children more interested in learning numbers and help them understand the history of numbers. This exemplifies how storytelling, in his perspective, enables children to become individuals who do not merely consume others' theories. This aligns with the viewpoint presented by Mr. Hasan, the founder of Omah Dongeng Marwah, and is consistent with the perspective put forth by Johnson (2016). Both emphasize the significance of storytelling in education and its ability to foster deeper understanding and engagement among learners.

Fairytales provide ways for children to receive important messages. Although there are some themes in fairytales that are unrealistic, the overall effect is positive and offers fundamental elements for children's development (Johnson, 2016).

Moreover, several studies have also mentioned the same, where students become more motivated to learn (Staric, 2015; Mayasari et al., 2021; Hemmati et al., 2015). However, there is scarce research that explicitly explores why using storytelling in education can enhance students' interest in learning. Through the interview I conducted, the Founder of ODM mentioned that children are drawn to be more enthusiastic about learning because storytelling sparks their individual imaginations. (Interview with ODM, 2023). Additionally, characters in stories can express what the child feels, making learning through storytelling effective. Even in sacred texts, moral and ethical values are often conveyed through stories. The founder's explanation aligns with Smith et al., (2015) assertion, which explains how storytelling can be an effective medium for teaching. Firstly, stories are generally more memorable than pure advice, thus leaving a lasting impression in human memory. The stories we hear in our childhood can still be recalled in their entirety decades later. Secondly, storytelling allows individuals to extract wisdom without feeling preached to.

In practice, Omah Dongeng Marwah has established a tradition of inviting students to engage in storytelling during each session's opening, which occurs before the start of formal learning. The children are given designated time for storytelling according to a predetermined schedule. Through interviews and observation I conducted, this storytelling habit has a positive impact on the students. In the interview session, Mr. Hasan explained that through storytelling, children realize the need to express themselves and not be shy about presenting in front of others. This courage to perform brings them to the awareness that sentence structure must be considered when conveying their thoughts. In other words, through this habitual practice, children indirectly learn about grammar. Besides grammar learning, the most important aspect is that children become confident in speaking up and expressing their ideas. Storytelling is not only limited to the opening session; it is often incorporated in explaining learning materials. This demonstrates how closely Omah Dongeng

Marwah is connected to storytelling. The students themselves show enthusiasm, indicating that storytelling has a positive effect on their motivation to learn. This finding is consistent with Mayasari et al. (2021), which found that storytelling significantly contributes to students' motivation.

Overall, storytelling sessions in Omah Dongeng Marwah are more than just routine activities; they have a profound positive impact on students' enthusiasm for learning. Storytelling goes beyond entertainment, becoming an effective tool for inspiring, nurturing imagination, and deepening understanding. Through engaging storytelling activities, students learn with zeal, discover their love for reading, and develop critical thinking and creativity, propelling them to higher levels in their educational journey.

In the findings of this research, there are at least three literacy practices carried out by Omah Dongeng Marwah in managing both Package B and Package C of School Equivalency. Literacy practice, defined as an activity that creates interaction between text and participants (Heath, 1983), is implemented by Omah Dongeng Marwah through storytelling, providing free time for children to explore literature aligned with their passions, and engaging in book discussions. Firstly, the use of storytelling at Omah Dongeng Marwah can be interpreted as a literacy practice. Children are encouraged to interact with the text of the story and subsequently derive meaning from it. This has a positive impact on them, as they become more expressive and develop strong linguistic abilities, including reading, writing, and speaking skills. However, literacy as a social practice cannot be detached from the underlying ideology. Through the interview I conducted, the founder of ODM explained the reason why storytelling was chosen as the dominant learning method for teaching literacy at Omah Dongeng Marwah. The founder believed that storytelling has waned in both families and school environments (Interview with the Founder of ODM, 2023). However, they considered storytelling to be highly effective and the right way to convey a discovery because every

discovery has a behind-the-scenes aspect. In other words, through storytelling, Omah Dongeng Marwah invites students to understand something through the behind-the-scenes or the process of the discovery. Consequently, children are expected to become individuals who are not consumptive and have a deep understanding of history. The founder's statements represent the ideology that underlies the implementation of storytelling as a literacy practice at ODM.

Secondly, providing free time where children are allowed to study whatever they want after completing the learning modules from the education department aims to provide students with ample space for their interests and talents. Through this activity, children feel more enthusiastic about learning because they can pursue what they enjoy. Importantly, there is no requirement for them to study a specific discipline. The founder's remarks during the interview suggest that Omah Dongeng Marwah aims to encourage students to delve into their interests. They are not confined to subjects they dislike. The notion that formal schools restrict students and hinder their creativity forms the background for this practice. According to the founder, children should be motivated rather than being water tanks always filled by teachers. In other words, the literacy practice carried out by ODM during free time activities is rooted in the social condition where schools generally do not provide opportunities for students to develop their talents and interests. Instead, schools steer students towards becoming what the school desires, rather than what the students themselves desire.

Thirdly, the book discussion activities conducted by ODM are based on ODM's concern for providing a platform for students to exchange perspectives and engage in discussions. The statement "children need a platform to exchange ideas to avoid bullying each other" suggests that the book discussion activities are fundamentally rooted in ODM's rejection of bullying behavior on social media, which often stems from the lack of platforms for exchanging opinions. Literacy activities should indeed be organized beyond the confines of the school itself. Pahl and Rowsell

(2005) emphasize the importance of the connection between home and school, as literacy does not solely begin when students enter the classroom to learn. What Omah Dongeng Marwah does is a realization that students cannot be forced to solely focus on the school curriculum but that schools should also consider the relevance of their activities in the students' home environment.

From these three literacy practices, it is evident that they cannot be viewed as value-neutral activities. All three are organized and implemented based on the social context in which they operate. Therefore, what takes place at ODM aligns with the viewpoints expressed by Shalihin (2019), Dewayani and Retnaningdyah (2017), Barton, Hamilton, and Ivanic (2000), who assume that literacy encompasses the values, behaviors, and cultural nuances exhibited by individuals engaged in literacy-related activities.

The common understanding of School Equivalency is that it is seen as a diploma publisher for those who desire an equivalent diploma from elementary to high school with various motives. Mr. Hasan himself, in the interview I conducted with him, explained the existence of negative stigmas surrounding the School Equivalency he manages. Firstly, the small number of students leads to the school being underestimated. Even at the establishment of Omah Dongeng Marwah, the relevant education department also looked down upon it and showed a lack of appreciation (Interview with The Founder of ODM, 2023). Another dominant stigma mentioned by Mr. Hasan is that School Equivalency is perceived solely as a diploma factory. However, he believes that the true essence of education lies in School Equivalency (Interview with The Founder of ODM, 2023). In School Equivalency, he considers himself freer to develop students' interests and talents. Furthermore, in School Equivalency, the curriculum is not tightly bound by department regulations, allowing individuals to choose what they want to learn.

Through this approach, with value of *Nata Bersama*, Omah Dongeng Marwah strives to create a stimulating and inspirational educational

environment for students of school equivalency (Interview with The Founder of ODM, 2023). Their aim is for students not only to passively acquire concepts but also to apply them with a profound understanding in their daily lives.

Omah Dongeng Marwah's endeavors serve as evidence that school equivalency holds significant potential in contributing to the development and success of students. By providing education tailored to the students' needs and imparting values through storytelling and unveiling the "behind the scenes" of discoveries, Omah Dongeng Marwah fosters the formation of a generation that is creative, critically thinking, and enthusiastic in exploring the realm of knowledge.

The statement from the founder of ODM aligns with the opinion of Dewayani and Retnaningdyah (2017), who believes that School Equivalency has more opportunities to develop its curriculum compared to formal education. This implies that Omah Dongeng Marwah provides an alternative understanding that, as an educational institution, School Equivalency has greater potential to build an education system that caters to students' interests and talents. Moreover, through the headmaster' statement that the government supports School Equivalency through supervision, Bos funds, and the Dapodik system (Interview with The Headmaster of ODM, 2023) challenge the stigma that School Equivalency is only a place to obtain a quick diploma should no longer exist because students are required to follow the education program based on the corresponding academic year.

CONCLUSION

Omah Dongeng Marwah demonstrates a profound integration of literacy practices within its educational milieu. This integration entails captivating storytelling activities and affords students the freedom to explore their interests and talents during unstructured periods. Additionally, extracurricular pursuits such as book discussions contribute significantly to the development of literacy skills. The observed literacy practices at

ODM illuminate the concept that literacy encompasses a multifaceted social practice that extends beyond mere reading and writing. Various interrelated social factors within ODM's educational framework synergistically shape and influence the cultivation of literacy endeavors. Through the strategic utilization of storytelling and literacy practices, Omah Dongeng Marwah presents a distinctive and alternative conception of School Equivalency. Central to this perspective is the recognition that learning within the realm of School Equivalency necessitates customization to cater to the unique learning needs of individual students. ODM provides ample opportunities for students to explore and deepen their interests and talents, effectively challenging the prevailing perception that School Equivalency solely functions as a diploma-granting institution. In the ODM context, School Equivalency is regarded as an equitable platform vis-à-vis formal education, enabling students to pursue their passions and unleash their fullest potential.

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