

Character Traits Oriented Learning Material Model as a Strategy to Strengthen the Character for Early Childhood

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Abstract

This research is motivated by the results of observations with teachers about the phenomenon of children's character building through story that is inconsistent with the development of children ages 5-6 years. It is assumed that the stories that have been used by the teacher do not contain character traits. Thus, this study aims to develop a story model for building early childhood characters. The focus of the character traits in the story being developed, among others: honesty; environmental care, and caring for others. This study uses a research and development model. The analysis process uses a qualitative descriptive analysis of the results of observations on teacher responses as users. The steps are: potential and problems, data collection, product design, design validation, design revision, product testing. This research resulted in a product in the form of 3 stories entitled: Janji Kardosi, Cerita dari Samudra, and Pipit dan Elang. Book eligibility uses 2 criteria, instructional criteria and presentation criteria. The validation is carried out by academics (media expert tests) and practitioners in the field of early childhood education. Meanwhile, the readability of the three stories was carried by 6 teachers at RA Al Marhamah and RA Annur Cimahi City.

Keywords: learning material model, character value, early childhood.

Introduction

Early childhood is the golden age, meaning that the child has a golden age to develop all his abilities and potential to the maximum. In other words, children become sensitive to receive various stimuli (Uyu Wahyudin dan Mubiar Agustin, 2011:6). During activities at school, children are cared for, educated and facilitated in playing by the teacher. Teachers are not just facilitators, but they are also required to introduce experiences to their students on good characters. This is the teacher's task, introducing examples of good behavior that are not just in theory. However, it is internalized by the child during his activity in school.

The introduction to these characters is packed with playing strategies. In other words, children who are being introduced to this good behavior will feel happy. Children are directly involved in fun activities. This is confirmed by Hudiyono (2012) which states that character education is not learning based on theory alone, especially if it is applied in early childhood. However, character learning must be planned so that students get to know, care about and internalize character traits.

Character education is carried out by habituating positive behaviors and avoiding negative behaviors. The Character Education Partnership compiles 11 principles of effective character education, namely: (1) promoting the values of a code of ethics based on positive characters; (2) comprehensively defines the character to think, feel and behave; (3) using an effective, comprehensive, intensive and proactive approach; (4) creating a caring school community; (5) provide opportunities for

students to perform and develop moral actions; (6) developing a challenging and meaningful curriculum to help all students achieve success; (7) arouse students' intrinsic motivation to learn and become good people in their environment; (8) recommending all teachers as a professional and moral community in the learning process; (9) stimulating the growth of transformational leadership to develop lifelong character education; (10) involving family and community members as partners in character education; (11) evaluating the character of school members to obtain information and designing further character education efforts (Lickona, Schaps, & Lewis: 2003).

Teachers can choose the right media or teaching materials according to their students' characteristics. Teachers creativity is needed, especially in using teaching materials on character values. Media or teaching materials are very effective, especially for children. There are so many insights that can be introduced to children through the media, one of which is through stories. With stories that tells about good behaviors, teachers will easily instill character values in children.

The packaging of the story will also determine the learning success. Interesting stories, both in content and appearance, is a determining factor for success in character building in early childhood. An interesting story can be an intermediary in conveying messages (Sanjaya, 2006: 163). Furthermore, the children are to these characters by bringing them closer to the real environment. Examples of good behavior from characters that are reinforced in themselves are part of their activities.

However, conditions in the Early Childhood Education Institution (PAUD) are still rare. The lack of teacher competence to write stories is also a contributing factor. Meanwhile, books circulating from bookstores or from other sources may not necessarily be appropriate to children's development. Due to this condition, the need arises (especially for teachers) in writing story books. The teacher realizes that character recognition in children is effective through stories. This is in accordance with the Suyra (2017) which states that character education is basically a conscious effort to empower and develop all the potential of students to form good characters.

Methodology

This research is a research and development type. Borg and Gall (in Setyosari 2010: 194) define research and development as a process used to develop and validate educational products. Furthermore, Sugiyono (2015: 407) defines this method for producing certain products and tests the effectiveness of these products. Thus, it can be stated that this research is a process of developing a new product or perfecting an existing product that can be justified.

In practice, the development referred to in this study refers to Borg and Gall (in Sukmadinata, 2007: 169-170). The first stage begins with research and information collecting. Then gradually the next activity is develop a preliminary form of product, preliminary field testing, main product revision, main field testing , operational product revision, operational field testing, field product revision, and the final stage of dissemination and implementation. Based on these two opinions, in this study, the researcher made modifications into 6 stages which is explained below.

1. Potential and Problem

In this stage, researcher explore the potential and determine the problem of character building in early childhood. This is carried out through a questionnaire distributed to the TKIT At Taqwa Bandung to 3 people. This questionnaire is needed to analyze the problems that teachers face in instilling character. Furthermore, researcher also observed 20 children in this school to find information about story books.

2. Information Collecting

The information collecting stage was carried out by researchers to collect all the questionnaires as well as the results of the observations. Information from the questionnaire and observation is used as consideration to develop the story to build character in early childhood.

3. *Product Design*

The product of this research is 3 stories that will build character in early childhood. The three stories are in a form of a book which consist of the content, cover, and book anatomy. Principles of designing the book content: character, content and theme, image design, color and typography. Principles in preparing the book cover: title, color harmony, picture layout, and text layout. Meanwhile, book anatomy places more emphasis on the aspects of book format and size, number of pages, layout, typeface and type of cover paper.

4. *Design Validation*

In this stage, the book is validated by experts. This validation aims to improve the product to make it better. Validation is carried out by two elements, academics and practitioners.

5. *Design Revision*

After the design product is validated, researchers make improvements according to experts' recommendations. The goal is that the final product is better by focusing on the character value in the story. At this stage, the three stories have more specific character values, namely honesty, caring about the environment and caring for others.

6. *Product Testing*

The product which has been improved is then tested. The test is for the effectiveness of its use. The trials were carried out on 40 children ages 5-6 years in RA Marhamah, Cimahi and RA Nur-lu Aulia Cimahi.

Results and Discussion

A. *Story Development Process*

1. *Potential and Problem*

The initial stage of this research begins with needs analysis. Stimulation of character values should start at an early age. The early childhood level (0-6 years) is a golden age for early recognition of good behavior. Thus, especially in schools, teachers do not just deliver material. The teacher becomes the role model for introducing these good characters. However, there are several obstacles in the implementation process. One of the obstacles is the limited media and other learning infrastructure. In this process, the researcher notes the potential and problems.

2. *Information Collecting*

After noting the potential and problems, the researcher then collected information for needs analysis. Needs analysis information is obtained based on the questionnaire to 3 teachers and the results of observations of children's learning at TKIT At Taqwa Bandung City. The teacher's questionnaire was collected with the aim of analyzing the problem map in the introduction of character values to children. Meanwhile, the results of observations in children is to determine the interest in the story text that interest the children. Both information are then processed and analyzed for their needs.

3. *Result of teacher pre-research questionnaire*

Pre-research questionnaire is filled out by 3 teachers at TKIT At Taqwa Kota Bandung. The questionnaire was filled in 3-4 May 2018. The results of the pre-research questionnaire for the teachers are as follows:

a. The teacher's response to story book as a media for introducing character values. The

three teachers said it was very good. They claimed that story books are easier for children to accept. In addition, story books can also develop their imagination and creativity, foster children's interest in reading, and instill good character values in children's behavior.

b. Questions about the most urgent attitudes to teach the children. The attitudes most frequently mentioned by teachers are discipline, creative, independent, environmental care, caring, and responsibility.

c. The answer to the question about the contribution of story books to children's character building, all teachers (100%) answered yes. According to them, stories have a positive contribution in shaping children's character. The characters played by the story can stimulate their daily behavior.

d. Regarding the children's story books, 2 teachers prefer folk tales and animal stories. Whereas, 1 teacher chose the story about the prophet.

e. Questions about story characters in accordance with the child's development. All respondents answered with a suggestion that these figures should be animals. Animal figures, besides being preferred by children, also stimulate children's creativity.

f. Finally, questions regarding recommendations in storybook writing. All respondents enthusiastically answered to create new stories that children really like, spur children's creativity, and of course display good habits in everyday life.

4. *Result of children pre-research questionnaire*

The second pre-research questionnaire was distributed to 20 children aged 5-6 years (TK B) at TKIT At Taqwa Bandung. Instrument filling took place on May 3-4 2018. Filling out instruments for this child was assisted by the teacher. Children simply answer the questions that the teacher reads. The results are as follows.

a. In general, children love stories, whether they are read to or read by themselves.

b. Based on the type of story, 55% of children like fables. Children prefer animal story. Meanwhile, the other 45% like comics.

c. Children prefer stories that the teacher reads at school. Out of 20 children, 12 children prefer this. While 8 children prefer stories that their parents read at home.

d. The children's impression of the stories that the teachers read at school, the children responded with funny stories, stories about animals, stories of prophets, and fairy tales.

e. Children prefer the good advice in the content of the story. Some of the behaviors mentioned by children after listening to the stories were joy, pleasure, good deeds, and fear of making mistakes.

5. *Result of media expert validation of the three stories*

a. Cover and content pages should choose a bright color to attract children's attention.

b. There should be a regularity in determining the character's costume to make it easier for children to recognize and distinguish each character.

c. The letter color in the story content should be clear and not similar to the illustration color or background.

d. Paper size should not be too large so that it is easy for children to hold.

e. Pay attention to the text, use of punctuation between direct and indirect sentences.

6. *User readability test*

User readability test in this research were conducted at RA Annur Cimahi dan RA Al-Marhamah Cimahi, with respondents (teachers). The level of readability of the three stories that the researcher has compiled, is examined/validated by respondents with the following indicators:

- a. Paragraph
 - 1) Number of paragraphs
 - 2) Number of sentences per paragraph
- b. Sentence
 - 1) Sentence length (average number of words per sentence)
 - 2) Compound sentence
 - 3) Passive sentence
- c. Word
 - 1) Number of words per sentence
 - 2) Uncommon word
 - 3) Terminology
 - 4) Words absorb from other language
 - 5) Conjunction
 - 6) Compound word
- d. Appropriate letter selection
 - 1) Text/illustration layout
 - 2) Letter size

B. *Story Model Development for Children's Character Building*

This research is motivated by the need for teachers to provide story books to develop character values for early childhood. The results of the preliminary research study indicate that the teacher's response to stories as a means of developing children's character was very positive. The teachers gave a positive response with a story development plan that reinforces early childhood character values. Therefore, researchers are motivated to carry out story development research to build character in early childhood.

Story scripts that show examples of good behavior can help teachers provide teaching materials to build children's character. This is in accordance with Mitchell's (in Nugiyantoro, 2015) which states that stories can teach children behavior and attitude, verbal and nonverbally, which are correct in accordance with the demands of the socio-cultural life of society. The introduction of good behavior contained in the content of the story is able to shape children's characters. Slowly, children will imitate and internalize these values in their daily lives.

Based on the results of the validation from the academic team and early childhood education practitioners, the story books are feasible to be tested on children ages 5-6 years. The explanation of the feasibility of the storybooks to build character in early childhood is as follows:

1. *Story Book Content on Children's Character*

The compilation of the story books is based on the identification of the needs of teachers who states that characters that need to be built in children are honesty, caring for the environment and caring for others. The contents of the stories contained in these 3 books are written by the researcher. The titles of the 3 stories are: "Janji Kardosi", "Kabar dari Samudra", and "Pipit Elang". The results of the validation of the team of early childhood education academics and practitioners indicate that the three storybooks are easy for children to understand. As stated by Mansoor (1994) that the content of a story which is easy to understand by readers, inviting readers to understand the life of the story, choosing the right words, then that book is successful in luring readers to continue to follow their thoughts, the climax of the story until the end of the story, and the story is not wordy or boring.

The three story books compiled by researchers can build early childhood character. Building the value of honesty in the story entitled "Janji Kardosi" contains examples of the characters'

behaviors such as obedience and keeping a promise. Honesty is the initial capital for the child's life in their future social life. The character who cares for the environment, is featured in the story "Kabar dari Samudera". The story whose setting is in the coastal area, presents examples of behavior for children, how they should act and speak in their environment. The direct speech style displayed by the characters can stimulate children to be able to care for their environment. In addition, other reinforced characters are behavior that reflects independence, behavior that reflects an aesthetic attitude, and behavior that reflects an attitude of cooperation. Meanwhile, the theme of care for others is packaged in the story of "Pipit dan Elang". The core competencies in this story, namely: believing in god through His creation; respect yourself and others and the environment as gratitude to God. This is in accordance with Minister of Education and Culture Law Number 146 of 2014 concerning the 2013 ECE Curriculum. Through learning the story of "Pipit dan Elang", it is hoped that children will have a healthy lifestyle, curiosity, creative and aesthetic, confident, disciplined, independent, caring, able to work together, able to adapt, honest and polite in interacting with family, educators and / or caregivers, and friends.

2. *Design Story Book Appropriate with Child's Character*

The stories developed in this study consist of 3 storybooks. The three stories are entitled: "Janji Kardosi", "Cerita dari Samudra", and "Pipit dan Elang". All three are given titles that are simple, and easy for children to understand. This is as stated by Effendy (in Nation & Yudani, 2013) which states that the title of a storybook is short and concise, attracts attention, and describes the outline (core) of the story. The three story books are equipped with illustrations that match the text of the story. With this illustration, children will be more stimulated by their imagination in following the storyline. In addition to attracting children, illustrations will also enhance their imagination.

The plot depiction in the three stories is varied. Through the depiction of each character, children are not bored. Furthermore, the characters displayed are quite varied, such as: creative, helpful, diligent, lazy, obedient, forgiving, and intelligent. Meanwhile, the introduction of good behavior is also packaged in a fairly complex atmosphere, such as happy, sad, and tense.

Validation from a team of academics and practitioners, the existence of illustrations contained in the contents of the story can explain the series of stories, settings, animations, and characters very well. As stated by Rothlein (1991) which states that the illustrated images contained in a story are able to clarify the setting and help children identify characters and clarify the series of stories.

3. *Design Storybook Appropriate with the Child's Development*

The golden age in early childhood can be called as the most appropriate period to introduce reading activities. In this context, what is meant by reading is not the same as reading as adults. Children are not required to read fluently. However, reading activities should be introduced so children will become interested and stimulated to read. On this basis, the learning environment demands appropriate media or learning material. The presence of story books is a strategic alternative as a solution. However, not just entertaining, story books also display character values that can be internalized in children in their daily lives. The next section will explain the is the design of each story.

"Janji Kardosi" consists of 20 pages, excluding the cover page and back cover. This book is a story of a thief who later realizes his mistake, emphasizing the value of honesty and helping other. On the back cover, it is clearly written that this story instills values of honesty, understanding differences, being brave because it is the right thing to do, and helping one another. Based on the results of the media expert team's validation, the number of pages is suitable for children's reading ability (not too long and not too short). This story book is for children ages 5-6 years.

"Kabar dari Samudera" consist of 21 pages, excluding cover page and back cover. This is a

story of the struggle of a fish in helping a fisherman from pirates who often destroy the sea. In this story, children are introduced to the atmosphere of the beach or the sea. This story emphasizes the value of the characters helping each other and caring for the environment. On the back cover, it is clearly written that this story instills the value of caring for others and the environment, understanding differences, being brave because it is the right thing to do, and helping one another. Based on the results of the media expert team's validation, the number of pages is suitable for children's reading ability (not too long and not too short). This story book is for children ages 5-6 years.

"Pipit dan Elang" consist of 21 pages, excluding cover page and back page. This is a story of an arrogant and evil bird. However, the bird was defeated by a small and clever sparrow. This story emphasizes the values of helping and caring. On the back cover it is clearly written that this story instills values of caring for others, courage and ingenuity, and helping others. Based on the results of the media expert team's validation, the number of pages is suitable for children's reading ability (not too long and not too short). This story book is for children ages 5-6 years.

In the layout aspect, the type of letter used in the story book is 16 pt Kristen ITC. This type of letter is easy for the children to read and its shape is attractive for children to read. The layout is 25% text and 75% illustration in each page. The validation result of the academics and practitioners indicate that the illustration and text layout is proportional. The book's visual appearance is dominantly illustration than text and the book's typography is readable for children.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The product of this research is three storybooks that are able to build early childhood character. The most dominant character values of the three story titles are honesty, caring about the environment, and caring for others. In its development, the analysis aspect of this research is seen from two indicators: learning criteria and performance criteria. Learning criteria emphasize more on aspects of core competencies regarding the character values developed in children. Meanwhile, the performance criteria focus on picture illustrations and storybook format. Both criteria are adjusted to the development of children ages 5-6 years. The determination of these two criteria is validated through the test of media experts and the readability of the user (teacher) readability test. These three story books have only been tested on a limited basis in 2 schools. The trial results show that the use of this story book can increase children's reading motivation and strengthen early childhood character.

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