

The Integration of Literacy and Character Building in Islamic Education

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Abstract. The study aims at investigating the implementation of literacy integration and character building in Islamic Education. The study uses a qualitative approach in the form of a case study. Observation, documentation, and interview are used to collect the data. The result indicates that the integration of literacy and character building in Islamic Education start from the lesson preparation which accommodates learning activities through practices, development and learning phase in the introduction, main activities, and closing. The integration of literacy and character building seeks to inculcate values in students' character such as religiosity, discipline, creativity, independence, curiosity, reading habit, responsibility, environmental awareness, and care of other human beings.

Keywords: *literacy, learning, Islamic Education, character.*

INTRODUCTION

In the 2013 Curriculum, Islamic Education is a National subject which aims to develop the students' attitude through Islamic value practices. Thus, the subject of Islamic Education is taught since SD/MI (elementary school), SMP/ MTs (junior high school), SMA/MA (senior high schools), and SMK/MAK (vocational high schools) – the last four is at the same level of senior high school, both in the curriculum and extracurricular activities [1]. Entering the 21st century, the educational system in Indonesia faces a number of challenges which are different from the previous era, therefore it requires a number of skills, including character building which covers religious value, nationalist value, independent value, mutual cooperation value, and integrity value. In addition, other competencies such as 4C competencies which include critical thinking and problem-solving skills, collaborative skills, creativity skills, and communication skills are inevitably needed [2]. Besides, there is a basic literacy ability as a tool for students to use their knowledge obtained from schools and to foster noble characters in school, family, and community. [3], [4].

Literacy skills in junior high school students not only aim at gaining information but also sharpening their way of thinking more deeply. In fact, students nowadays are very interested in social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube since they could

facilitate the students' learning and communication to obtain quick information aside from reading books [5] - [8]. In spite of their positive impacts, social media can cause negative impacts when they are not used wisely, for instance, the spread of hoax news which may cause reducing the students' interest in studying. The capacity of students' literacy is strongly related to reading skills which ultimately aims at producing the capability to understand information critically, analytically, and reflectively [9] - [11]. Literacy is necessary because the current science and technology have developed rapidly. Therefore, a school may create literacy habit using the social environment as a model of communication and interaction, and then giving awards to acknowledge the students' achievement [12].

Literacy means the ability to access, understand, and use sources intelligently through various activities such as reading, watching, listening, writing, and speaking [13], [14]. The use of literacy in studying has the main goal as a tool to build students' understanding, writing skills, and communication skills. These three things will have a significant impact on character development and high-level thinking skills. Many believe that literacy could be found merely in language learning. However, this opinion is not entirely correct as literacy can also be developed in other fields such as mathematics, science, social sciences, engineering, art, sports, health, economics, religion, crafts, and so forth. [13]. The literacy movement in Islamic Education is intended to include the content of literacy in their subjects, thus it requires strategy and innovation among the teachers to support the literacy programs in their schools.

On the other hand, students' enthusiasm in learning mostly depends on how teachers deliver the learning, the role of parents, and the environment [15], [16]. However, the challenges in the current Islamic Education is the teachers' readiness to respond to the students' interest in the digital era. As a consequence, teachers have not implemented integrative learning yet in their schools [17]. Additionally, religious values are the most appeared aspect in Islamic Education since it is the basic competence. Further, this value is expected to integrate literacy to strengthen the character building as a learning strategy. The learning process also needs to be evaluated to achieve optimal results; hence, teachers are given more space to promote their creativities in teaching and learning process. They can develop an appropriate learning approach to create pleasant learning activities

and to achieve maximum results. Active and integrative learning that is built by the teacher can encourage students in their thinking process [1]. Thus, the current study aims at understanding the implementation of the integration of literacy and the strengthening of character building Islamic Education

METHOD

The researcher is eager to know the implementation of literacy integration and character building in the Islamic Education; therefore the research method used was a qualitative approach with a case study. The subjects of the study were the students of Al-Azhar Kediri Islamic Middle School academic year 2018/2019, Islamic Education teachers, and one school principal. The data are collected through observations, interviews, and documentation related to literacy activities in Islamic Education. The result shows the existence of understandings related to the integration of literacy and character building in Islamic Education. The data was analyzed by observing the final documents of literacy activities in Islamic Education and observations during the learning activities.

RESULT

Based on the learning activities at Al-Azhar Kediri Islamic Middle School, literacy skills have been implemented in Islamic Education materials. To apply literacy to each subject, the school first fosters literacy culture with the following steps: preparation, implementation, monitoring, evaluation, and follow-up. At the preparation stage, the school holds a coordination meeting to discuss the purpose of the literacy movement in the school. The school principal and related teachers attended this coordination meeting. And then, the principal forms a team to run the school literacy program. The socialization of the school literacy program is important for teachers, students, school committees, and parents so that they are also aware of the existence of literacy programs. The school then arranges supporting facilities in the form of adequate infrastructure, for instance, providing complete reading resources in the school library, providing a comfortable reading corner in the school environment, providing fast internet connection that allows students to access reading resources, and providing banners and posters to support the growth of literacy culture.

At the implementation stage, the school starts from practices, development, and learning stages. In the learning strategy, Islamic Education applies cooperative learning, text-based, problem-based, inquiry, and scientific strategies. On the implementation, a lesson plan of Islamic Education includes literacy strategy which integrates with character building, starting from the selection of appropriate reading resources for Islamic Education. Literacy applied to the learning of Islamic Education in the practice stage reflected in the following

activities: 15-minute reading activity at the beginning to sharpen students' cognitive aspect in understanding and finding information from the text they read. Reading activities could be in the form of reading religious books such as *Fiqh* (Islamic Jurisprudence), *Qur'an Hadith*, *Akidah Akhlak* (Moral Theology), reviewing the translation books, and one day one *juz* (*Qur'an* chapter) activity which is a special activity to increase students' love toward *Qur'an*. Besides, there is also one book one-week activity by which learners are given a task to finish reading a book for one week at home. The books can be a pocket book about religious material, which is easy for students to understand.

At the stage of development, each student was asked to give respond or to state conclusions from what they have read and reported them in the form of writing, depending on the theme. Publication of their works can also be initiated through social media or school bulletin board so that it can be accessed by many people. Additionally, students are equipped with the skills to write insights about the material of Islamic Education based on their understanding. The existence of a 7-minute sermon is intended to hone the students' understanding of conveying ideas activity. In this activity, students are asked to provide a sermon in accordance with the material in the Islamic Education and to be able to grab the lessons/ values in it.

At the learning stage, each student seeks to synch their experiences with reading books so that they can stimulate themselves to continue the learning process. From their thoughts, then the teacher will ask the students to write in the form of a daily journal actively. In addition, the teacher gives a space of creativity to students to make posters or interesting writings related to the theme of Islamic Education, and then display all the works in class or other available spaces. Literacy in Islamic Education which integrates with the strengthening of character building is believed to be able to instill good character in students, such as religious, discipline, creativity, independence, curiosity, reading habit, responsibility, environmental awareness, and care of other human beings.

Religious character is reflected from the students' habit in reading *Qur'an* in which it is believed to help the students feel calmer and have a better way of thinking. Discipline character is exhibited through the students' consistency in carrying out the reading habits independently in their daily routine, either storybooks or religious books. Creative character is displayed in the students' activity to write their reading and experience in their own language. Independent character is shown in the students' willingness to read independently even though they are not supported by the teacher. Curiosity character is presented by how critical the students are in asking questions to the teacher about things that they have not known or the things they have just experienced. Like-reading and responsibility character are manifested by their eagerness to read books during recess and effective hours. Last, the character of caring for the environment and fellow human beings are exposed when

they could find lessons/ values in their reading activities and are able to apply those values in daily life.

CONCLUSION

The result of this study indicates that the integration of literacy and character building in Islamic Education is implemented in the learning activities stated in the lesson plan. Such integration has urgency as a means of strengthening the character building in schools, helping the students to understand the materials of Islamic Education, and practicing character values in everyday life. An innovation from Islamic Education teachers is necessary to design learning strategies for Islamic Education which cover the content of the integration of literacy and character building to attract the students. The synergy of the principal, teachers, students, and parents plays an important role in the successful integration of literacy and character building in Islamic Education.

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