

Implementation of Thematic Learning Model at Elementary Schools of Lima Puluh Kota Regency

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Abstract—Purpose of this study was to describe the implementation of thematic learning model at elementary schools. This research used a qualitative approach. It was conducted at three elementary schools located in Lima Puluh Kota Regency, West Sumatra. Technique of data collection used method of observation, interview, and documentation study. Technique of data analysis used method of triangulation (data reduction, data presentation, and making conclusion). Based on the results of data analysis, it is found that the implementation of thematic learning has not been fully implemented. Teachers still need to be accustomed in the delivery of material in an integrated manner and teachers tend to ignore the lesson plans in the implementation of learning in the classroom. In order for thematic learning to be carried out well by teachers on elementary schools, a good training needs to be implemented.

Keywords: *thematic learning, elementary school, Indonesian curriculum*

I. INTRODUCTION

One of the functions of education is to form intelligent, characterless, moral, and personality generations. Education system should be able to create a pleasant atmosphere and learning process, which gives each student the opportunity to develop optimally in line with their talent and ability.

Elementary school is a low level of education, which runs for 6 years. This level of education is very determined by the formation of student character. It is the beginning phase for students to get knowledge and also the building of character values that are useful for student future life.

Elementary school children see everything as a whole and understand the relationship between concepts simply. Thematic learning is seen effective in helping students to see and develop interrelated concepts. It is integrated learning using themes to link several materials, so that it can provide meaningful experiences for students [1]. This approach views learning activities holistically and reflects the real world interactively. In this type of learning, the teacher must develop existing learning materials, so that learning is in line with the conditions and situations respectively. Narti, et al state that “Thematic learning have an important role to improve attention, learning activities, and the students' understanding of the material. Since learning more student-centered, it provide hands on experience to students” [2]. Nurlaela, et al state that thematic instructional

model had a capacity in accommodating different learning styles and reading abilities [3].

Trianto states that “the way of teachers designing the packaging of learning experiences will greatly affect the meaningful experiences of students and make the learning process more effective and interesting [4]. According to Freeman and Sokoloff, “The understanding of thematic units we have developed enables teachers to move from teaching as a technical activity to teaching as a deeply personal and intellectual activity. It also enables students to experience learning that is active and deeply personal” [5]. Ain states that “in designing theme networks, teachers must connect each subject matter with sub-themes [6]. Teachers must develop students' abilities holistically in cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects in a balanced manner”. It is through exploring these themes that teachers and students can change their experiences.

Building the character values for elementary school students can be conducted into integrating culture into learning. Wuryani, Roemintoyo, and Yamtinah state that “The integration of the character education values in the textbook also increases students' encouragement to learn to people with good characters” [7]. Sardjiyo and Pannen said that culture-based learning is a learning approach model prioritizing student activities with a variety of own cultural backgrounds [8]. It is integrated in the learning process of certain fields of study, and in the assessment of learning outcomes, it can use a variety of forms of evaluation. Research of Kawuryan, Hastuti, and Supartinah found that “traditional game-based thematic learning models and scientific approach-oriented proven positive and significant effect on the creative thinking abilities of elementary students” [9].

Minangkabau culture of West Sumatra society have already conducted many studies of character learning as it can be seen from the carving of the Rumah Gadang, the woven bamboo pattern, also in the traditional game called Randai. The theme of elementary school learning taken from various Minangkabau cultures makes it possible for teachers and parents to work together in improving the character of elementary school students. Based on the description above, this study was to describe the implementation of the Minangkabau Culture-Based thematic learning model in elementary schools.

II. METHOD

This research was a qualitative evaluative study conducted on three elementary schools in Lima Puluh Kota Regency, Sumatera Barat. The selection of the elementary school as a research sample used purposive sampling. Characteristics of selected schools were based on schools that have used thematic learning models consistently so, that observation became more targeted. Those schools were SDN 03 Luak, SDN 04 Lareh Sago Halaban, and SDN 02 Taram. The research subjects involved teachers and first grade students from the three elementary schools. Data collection techniques used method of observation, interviews, and study documentation. Technique of analysing data used triangulation techniques, namely reducing data, presenting data and drawing conclusions [10]. According to Olsen "Triangulation means mixing approaches to get two or three viewpoints upon the things being studied [11]. The data analysis process is shown in figure 1.



Fig. 1. Qualitative data analysis.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The implementation of thematic learning model at elementary schools as a research sample was started from planning activities as outlined in the form of lesson plans. However, the implementation conducted by the teacher was not always in line with the lesson plan set. The difference was found on the allocation of time. Teachers needed more time in the presentation of material because students need more guidance in learning. According to the teacher, if the learning was adjusted to the lesson plan, the learning objectives could not be achieved as they should. In its application, the teacher was not guided by the lesson plan but it still referred to the curriculum, which was related to the sub-themes in the lesson plan.

Religious culture has been built by the teacher by getting the students used to pray before and after learning performed. Building the character values towards Minangkabau culture is carried out among others by explaining and giving examples of Minangkabau proverb "*Mandata Manurun Malereng Mandaki*". The purpose of this proverb is to teach everyone how to talk to people who are the same age, smaller than others, new people, and older people. By learning the proverb, students can understand how to speak and behave politely to others. The implementation of culture-based learning provides opportunities for teachers to teach students more about character education. Wuryani, Roemintoyo, and Yamtinah stated that character education in thematic learning can improve and train students' character strengthening [12].

Thematic learning model implemented by SDN 03 Mungo teacher explained more about learning by relating several materials into one theme. SDN 02 Taram teachers focused more on learning activities while playing with students. In these two schools, students were taught to read outside of

school hours. It was different from the condition at SDN 04 Bukik Sikumpa where the teacher taught students to read through the thematic learning process. Teacher invited students to recognize vowels and consonants and arranged them into meaningful words in line with the learning theme. Widyaningrum stated that the main activities in thematic learning of the early grades of elementary school should be focused on activities aimed at developing reading, writing and arithmetic skills [13].

Each course is linked by the teacher through students' experiences in daily life. Students can understand well the material being studied. Piaget's theory stated that "children construct their knowledge based on experience; they combine experiences to understand everything existing in this world". Implementation of thematic learning model, according to Winarsih, can improve student learning activities in the classroom [14]. Students, in the pilot class of this research, also respond positively to every learning activity carried out by the teacher. This condition can be seen from their enthusiasm on participating in every learning activity. In contrast to Chumdari, et al found that the thematic learning model in elementary schools can be carried out appropriately, but student learning activities are less than optimal because the learning methods used are centered on teachers who still emphasize the active role of teachers rather than students [15].

Interview results from teachers of the three schools related towards obstacles on the implementation of thematic learning show the similar answers. All three speakers felt difficulty in managing learning because students have different levels of understanding. Teacher also had difficulty in relating or making connections between subject matter/materials, as well as linking it with daily life. A limited teacher knowledge on designing thematic learning is considered to be the cause of teachers' difficulties in managing learning. Findings of this research are in line with Pratiwi and Widagdo research where the implementation of thematic learning is not optimal due to teachers' understanding of thematic learning [16]. Krissandi and Rusmawan found that "the constraints from the teachers included the development of teaching media, teachers' understanding, the integration of content from different subjects in the thematic teaching, and the IT literacy" [17].

Based on the results of data analysis, although thematic learning has been carried out well in three school samples, teachers must still be accustomed to conveying material in an integrated manner and teachers tend to ignore lesson plans regarding the application of learning in class. Istiningsih's research found that teacher empowerment in implementing thematic learning was not yet significant [18]. The results of Retnawati's research, et al show that teachers face obstacles in choosing problems and themes that are appropriate in thematic learning, as well as difficulties in creating instruments and formulating clear assessment criteria [19].

It is important to improve teacher competency in applying a thematic approach by providing regular training. Yusrina, Yamtinah, and Rintayati stated that "teachers need regular guidance on the implementation of thematic learning so that learning activities can be given to learners to the fullest" [20]. In order for thematic learning to be carried out well in primary

schools, training needs to be provided for teachers in managing learning according to the theme. John reveals that trained teacher candidates are more effective in meeting the needs of all students compared to untrained teacher candidates when implementing a new integrated and thematic curriculum [21].

In contrast to research findings on thematic implementation in Indonesia, Min, Rasyid, and Nasri found that ILS teachers in Malaysia have a high understanding of thematic learning and teachers often use a thematic approach in teaching [22]. The results of this study indicate that encouragement must be given to teachers in using a thematic approach to improve student achievement. The Ministry of Education and Culture Indonesia should provide more support and encouragement to teachers to use a thematic approach to their practice. It is very important for teachers to improve their understanding and habituation of thematic learning practices in the classroom.

IV. CONCLUSION

Implementation of thematic learning at the three samples of elementary schools on the research has been in line with the stages of thematic learning, even though there are number of activities not matching with the plans written on the lesson plan. There are some teachers who have not been correct in implementing the thematic learning model because the teacher's understanding of the thematic learning model is still limited. Reading and writing learning activities, which are supposed to be integrated in the learning process, are not well-implemented. Teachers get some obstacles in writing their plans of the lesson plan because of their limited knowledge and existing learning resources.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This research is a Higher Education Basic Research Grant (PDUPT) funded by DRPM Ristekdikti 2019. Therefore, the authors thank to DRPM Ristekdikti, President of STKIP PGRI Sumatera Barat, UP3M STKIP PGRI Sumatera Barat, LLDIKTI Region X, and Organization Committee of SORES 2019 of Bandung Islamic University.

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