The Role of Non-Formal Education in Building Community Literacy

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ABSTRACT

Education plays strategic roles in developing human civilization. Therefore, character-building of a nation and literate society can be achieved, particularly in shaping individual who has the will and ability to learn. Education path in Indonesia should not be underestimated, particularly in developing literacy community through the presence of non-formal education. This education system can substitute formal education since not every individual can access the latter. As a result, non-formal education provides various programs that directly address community learning needs with local wisdom-based approach. The results showed that those programs had positive impacts on literacy and learning development.

Keywords: Learning needs, Literacy, Non-formal education

1. INTRODUCTION

As a part of education system, non-formal education has a purpose in giving high quality services especially to non-formal education community. The target of non-formal education continues to expand in line with the development of science, technology, employment and culture of society itself. Therefore, non-formal education programs or activities are supposed to be widely spread correspond to people needs and conditions. Generally, the extension of non-formal education programs or activities should consider the new concept of learning.

The value of non-formal education is beneficial for formal education (school) and societies in solving the problems. According to Sudjana [1], the role of non-formal education is presented through how the societies deal with formal education, which is used as complement, supplement and alternative to formal education.

Literacy is fundamentally understood as be well-educated, well-mastered and comprehend well. Literacy education refers to the 21st century skills that every individual is required to master numeracy, science, information technology, finance, culture and nationality. Why is literacy important? John Miller, functionary of The World's Most Literate Nation, asserts that knowledge is always associated with influence, power and economic success. In order to achieve all of them, it requires mastery of qualified literacy. Science and literacy create power in the world. All the advantages, either financially or others, only belong to those who are able to read. They then acquire, organize and utilize that knowledge in their life or so-called as literacy.

The literacy society provides a new nuance and spirit of education in the midst of society. This condition is observed as a concrete form of lifelong educational model. This condition encourages the opening of opportunities for every person, organization and social institutions, industry and society to learn more broadly; the growth of spirit and motivation for independent learning to meet lifelong needs, and strengthen educability of the society to always educate themselves and society in their environment. It is a positive side of the birth of the concepts underlying non-formal education. Therefore, in this study, it is important to discuss: What is the role of non-formal education in building literacy society?

2. METHOD

The study of the role of non-formal education in building this literacy society used a qualitative approach. To answer that question, qualitative approach with grounded research were employed. Data were collected by depth interviews and observations. Grounded Theory research consists of three types of coding, namely open

coding; coding pivot (axial coding); and selective coding.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Non-formal education serves to develop learner's potential by emphasizing the mastery of knowledge and functional skills as well as the development of professional attitudes and personalities. Non-formal education in Indonesia includes life skill education, early childhood education, youth education, women's empowerment education, literacy education, vocational education and job training, equality education and other education aimed at developing learners' abilities [2].

Non-formal education programs that can build community literacy skills include literacy education, life skills education, and equivalent education. Non-formal education program that directly addresses community learning needs through a local wisdom-based approach is basic literacy program. The program focuses on the ability to read, write and count as an effort to improve literacy ability of low literate or illiterate adults at the age of 15-59 years old and above, so later they will able to support daily activities in family and society life. The basic literacy program provides an opportunity for citizens to change their behavior by learning, since Gagne [3] in The Conditions of Learning stated that learning is "a change in the disposition or ability of a person achieved through the person's efforts, and that change is not obtained directly from the natural growth process of himself." With this understanding, learning means a deliberate effort done by someone who aims to achieve learning goals.

Moreover, life skill education is personal skills or abilities to behave positively and adapt to the environment, enabling the person to be able to face various demands and challenges in his or her daily life effectively. Life skill education plays a role in solving unemployment issues that have an impact on reducing poverty and crime. Skills that can be categorized into life skills may vary greatly depending on the circumstances and culture of the local community. Then, equivalent education is a type non-formal education aimed for citizen who has no chance to get formal education in school. Equivalent education covers various study programs, including Package A that is equivalent to elementary school, Package B that is equivalent to junior high school and Package C that is equivalent to senior high school [4].

Kindervatter in [4] provided an explanation of non-formal education in the context of empowering process—that non-formal education is not only able to change individuals, but also groups, organizations and communities that include the improvement and change of human resources so it can build society and the environment. Non-formal education as a process of empowerment has a broad definition which includes raising knowledge, attitudes, skills and other capabilities development towards the independence of life.

Building a literacy community is important. Thus, people who have willingness and ability to learn can obtain education through non-formal education programs. Non-formal education programs aim to improve personal and life quality because in its learning process, each individual will acquire knowledge, skills, moral values, attitudes and understanding that are functional. In life, people will always learn to fulfill their learning needs and education needs, and thus literacy community who is always looking for something new and meaningful will be realized.

Literacy education is important to determine the future of our society. Literacy skills are not just the ability to read, write and count things, but it is also a challenge to be able to understand, explore and support new dimensions that are important in education. According to Ahmadi in [5], the new dimensions refer to self-directed learning, learning on demand, collaborative learning and organizational learning.

According to UNESCO as cited by Nasution [6], there are six categories of "the survival literacies" in the 21st century, they are:

(1) Basic Literacy; or also known as Functional Literacy, is a basic literacy skill or a conventional learning system such as how to read, write and perform numerical calculation and operate them, so every individual can function and has a chance to participate in the society, home, office and school.

(2) Computer Literacy; is a set of required skills, attitudes and knowledge in order to understand and operate basic function of information and communication technologies, including devices such as Personal Computer (PC), laptop, mobile phone, iPod, BlackBerry and many more. Computer Literacy is usually divided into hardware literacy and software literacy.

(3) Media Literacy; is a set of required skills, attitudes and knowledge in order to understand

and utilize various types of media and formats where information is communicated from sender to recipient, such as pictures, sounds and videos, and whether it is a transaction between individuals or as mass transaction between a single sender and multiple recipients, or vice versa.

(4) Distance Learning and E-Learning; is a term that refers to the modality of learning and training that use telecommunication networks, particularly World Wide Web and internet as a virtual classroom instead of the physical one. In distance learning and e-learning, both teachers and students do online interaction, so the students can complete their research and assignments from home or anywhere they have access to computer and telephone line.

(5) Cultural Literacy; means knowledge and understanding of a country, religion, ethnic group, belief, symbol, celebration, and traditional communication, creation, storage, handling, communication, preservation and archiving data, information and knowledge, as well as utilizing technology. An essential element in understanding information literacy is the awareness of how cultural factor affects both positively and negatively in utilizing modern information and communication technology.

(6) Information Literacy; is closely related to learning to learn and think critically which become the purposes of formal education. However, it is usually not integrated to the curriculum, syllabus and lesson plan. In addition, some countries often use the term "information competencies" or "information fluency" or other terms.

The role of non-formal education in realizing those six categories of "survival literacies" is by encouraging every individual in the society to keep developing their potentials to the maximum so each individual is able to adapt and/or control the changes around them.

Literacy community will be realized if every member of society always search and find both new and meaningful things, improve their abilities and develop themselves through learning activities. In addition, they can adjust themselves to all the challenges in their lives.

4. CONCLUSION

As a part of education system, non-formal education has its own duty to provides the best service to the society. The role of non-formal education in realizing literacy community is by providing various programs that directly address community learning needs through local wisdom-based approach. Non-formal education programs have positive impact on community literacy skills, thus encouraging the opening of opportunities more broadly. Furthermore, it also supports motivational growth to do independent learning in order to meet lifelong educational needs.

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