

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 development through story media that is inconsistent with the development of children ages 5-6 years old. It is assumed that the stories used by the teacher does not contain character traits. Thus, this study aims to develop a story model for the strengthening of early childhood character traits. The focuses of the character values in the developed story are namely: honesty; environmental caring, and social caring. This study used a research and development model. The analysis process used a qualitative descriptive analysis of the results of observations on teacher responses as users. The steps were potential and issues, data collection, product design, design validation, design revision, product testing. This research resulted in a product in the form of three stories titles: "Janji Kardosi", "Kabar dari Samudra", and "Pipit dan Elang". Book eligibility uses two criteria, namely 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 storybook titles was carried out to six kindergarten teachers. Based on the learning criteria, the created storybook has honesty, environmental caring, and social caring character traits, while the performance criteria (illustrations) are able to explain the stories' sequences, settings, animations, and characters very well. In addition, based on the aspects of child development, the books created have a more dominant visual appearance compared to text and the type face in the storybooks possesses a good readability level for children.

Keywords: *Early childhood, character value, teaching material model*

1. INTRODUCTION

Early childhood is the period of the golden age, meaning that a child has a golden age to develop all his/her abilities and potential to the maximum. In other words, children have begun to be susceptible or sensitive to receive various stimuli (Wahyudin & Agustin, 2011). During school activities, children are cared for, educated, and facilitated in playing by the teacher. Not merely a facilitator, teachers are also required to introduce experiences to their students regarding good character traits. That is the task of the teacher, introducing examples of good behaviour that are not just theories. However, it is internalized as long as the child is active at school.

The introduction of these traits is compiled with playing strategies. In other words, children who are being introduced to this good behaviour will feel

happy. Children are directly involved in fun activities. This is confirmed by the opinion of Hudiyo (2012) which states that character education is not learning based on theory alone, especially as it will be applied by young children. However, character learning must be planned so that students get to know, care about and internalize character values.

Character education is carried out by habituating positive behaviour and avoiding negative behaviour. The Character Education Partnership compiles 11 principles of effective character education, namely: (1) promoting the values of a code of ethics based on positive character traits; (2) comprehensively defines the traits 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 community; (8) recommend all teachers as 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 the characteristics of their students. The teachers' creativity is needed, especially in using teaching materials that contain character traits. Media or teaching materials are highly effective, especially for children. There are so many insights that can be introduced to children through media, one of which is through stories. With stories that display good behaviours, teachers will easily instil character values in children.

The compilation of the story will also determine the success of learning. The attractiveness of the story, both in the content of the story and in its appearance, is one of the determining factors for success in strengthening character values in early childhood. An interesting story can be an intermediary in conveying messages (Sanjaya, 2006: 163). Furthermore, children are introduced by bringing them closer to the real environment. Examples of good behaviour from characters that are reinforced in themselves are part of the activities they do.

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 from bookstores or others may not necessarily be appropriate for children's development. Due to this condition, the need arises (especially for teachers) in creating storybooks. The teacher realizes that character traits recognition in children is effective through stories. This is in accordance with the opinion of Surya (2017) which states that character education is basically a conscious effort to empower and develop all of the students' potential to form good character traits.

2. METHOD

This research is a type of research and development. Borg and Gall (as cited in Silalahi, 2017: 2) state: "educational research and development (R & D) is a process used to develop and validate educational products". This study is used to contribute to improving teacher professionalism in learning and bringing about changes in "a specific educational setting". In the

teaching field, the emphasis tends to be on developmental research as an interactive, cyclical development process, and research in which theoretical ideas from the developer underlie the development of the product being tested in a classroom setting (Akker, 1999). 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.

The practical development referred to in this study refers to Borg and Gall (as cited in Sukmadinata, 2007). The first stage begins with research and data collection (research and information collecting). Then gradually the next activities are planning, developing a product draft (develop a preliminary form of product), preliminary field trials (preliminary field testing), revising the results of the trial (main product revision), field testing (main field testing), refinement of products from field trials (operational product revision), field implementation tests (operational field testing), refinement of the final product (field product revision), and the final stage of dissemination and implementation (dissemination and implementation). Based on these two opinions, in this study, the researcher made modifications into 6 stages. Here is the explanation.

2.1. Potentials and Issues

At this stage, the researcher explores the potential and determines the issues of strengthening character values in early childhood. The way to obtain this is through a questionnaire distributed to three kindergarten teachers. The questionnaire in question is needed to analyse the problems that teachers find in instilling character traits. Furthermore, researchers also observed 20 children from the school, to find information about storybooks.

2.2. Data Collection

The data collection stage conducted by the researcher to collect all the questionnaires that had been distributed. Also, the results of observations in those three schools. The information from the questionnaire and observations is used as consideration for planning of the development of story products to strengthen the character of young children.

2.3. Product Design

The product of this research is three stories to strengthen the character of young children. The three stories are in the form of books consisting of book contents, book covers, and book anatomy. The principles of compiling book contents are characters, story content and themes, picture design, colour, and typography. The principles in preparing a book cover are book title, colour harmony, picture arrangement,

and writing arrangement. Meanwhile, book anatomy places more emphasis on the format and size of the book, number of pages, layout, typeface, and type of cover paper.

2.4. Design Validation

At the design validation stage, the books that have been created are then validated by experts. This validation aims to improve the product to make it even better. Validation is carried out by two elements, namely academics and practitioners.

2.5. Design Revision

After the design product is validated, researchers make improvements according to expert recommendations. The goal is that the resulting story is better by focusing the character value on the story. At this stage, the three stories have more specific character values, namely honest, environmental caring, and social caring.

2.6. Product Trial

The children's story products that have been revised are then put-on trial. This test is for the effectiveness of its use. The trial was conducted on 40 children ages 5-6 years old.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Story Development Process

Potentials and Issues. The initial stage of this research begins with needs analysis. Stimulation of character values should start at an early age. The PAUD level (0-6 years) is a golden age for early recognition of good behaviour. Thus, especially in schools, teachers do not just deliver material. The teacher becomes the rule model for introducing these good character traits. 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 issues.

Data collection. After noting the potential and issues, the researchers then collected data for needs analysis. Needs analysis data obtained based on a questionnaire to 3 teachers and the results of observations of children's learning in kindergarten. The teacher's questionnaire was collected with the aim of analysing the issues map in the introduction of character values to children. Meanwhile, the results of observations in children were to determine the attraction in the story text that the child was interested in. Both data are then processed and analysed for their needs.

Results of the teacher's pre-research questionnaire. The pre-research questionnaire was filled in by three kindergarten teachers. The questionnaire was filled on 3-4 May 2018. The results of the pre-research questionnaire for this teacher resulted in: 1) teacher responses to storybooks as a medium for introducing character values. The three teachers remarked they are incredibly good. According to them, storybooks are easier for children to accept. In addition, stories can also hone imagination and creativity, foster children's reading interest, and instil good character values in children's behaviour; 2) Questions about the most urgent behaviour to be taught to children. The behaviour most frequently mentioned by teachers are disciplined, creative, independent, environmental caring, social caring, and responsibility; 3) The answer to the question about the contribution of storybooks 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 behaviour; 4) Regarding the children's storybooks, 2 teachers prefer folk tales and animal stories. Meanwhile, 1 other teacher chose the story about prophets; 5) Questions about the characters in the story in accordance with the child's development. All respondents answered with a suggestion that these figures should be animals. Animal characters, besides being liked by children, also stimulate children's creativity; and 6) lastly, 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.

Results of the children's pre-study questionnaire. The second pre-study questionnaire was distributed to 20 children ages 5-6 years old. Instrument filling took place on May 3-4, 2018. The practice of filling out instruments for this child was assisted by the teacher. Children simply answer the questions that the teacher reads. The results were: 1) in general, the children liked stories, whether they were read or read by themselves; 2) Based on the type, 55% of children like stories that are fable. Children prefer storylines that are acted out by animals. Meanwhile, the other 45% like stories that are like comics; 3) The children prefer the stories that the teacher read at school. From 20 children, 12 children liked this. Meanwhile, 8 other children liked the stories their parents read at home; 4) The impression of the story that the teacher read at school, the children responded with funny stories, stories about animals, stories of prophets, and tales around where they live; and 5) Children prefer good advice in the content of the story. Some of the behaviours mentioned by children after listening to the stories were joy, pleasure, good deeds, and fear of making mistakes.

Media expert validation. The results of the media expert's validation on the three story titles, the results are: 1) on the cover and content page, it is necessary to choose a brighter colour to attract more of the children's interest; 2) consistent in determining the character's costume, to make it easier for children to recognize and distinguish each character; 3) the colour of the letters in the story's content should be clear and not too similar to the colour of the illustration or background; 4) the paper size is made not too large so that it is easy for the child to hold; and 5) pay attention to the writing, use of punctuation marks between direct sentences and indirect sentences.

User Readability Trials. The user readability test conducted in this study was conducted at the kindergarten education unit, with 3 respondents (teachers) each. The level of readability of the three stories that have been compiled by the researcher was observed / validated by respondents using indicators: paragraph (number of paragraphs and number of sentences per paragraph); sentence (sentence length, compound sentence, and passive sentence); words (number of words, terms, conjunctions and compound words); and suitability of font options (text / image layout and font size).

3.2. Story Model Development to Strengthen Children's Character

This research was motivated by the need for teachers to provide story books to develop early childhood character values. The results of the preliminary research study showed that the teacher's response to stories as a means of developing children's character traits was extremely 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 strengthen the character values in young children.

Story books are effective in children's character development. Its use as a children's reading source can be a fun means of playing. This is reinforced by Davis (1997) that the story as an educational tool is very interesting to use because the story: (a) built in a desire to learn through comics; (b) easy accessibility in daily newspaper and bookstand; (c) the novel and ingenious way in which this authentic medium depicts real-life language and very facet of people and society; and (d) the variety of visual and linguistic element and codes that appeal to students with different learning styles. This statement means that the reasons for the story being used as an attractive educational tool are: (a) encouraging the enthusiasm for learning; (b) easily found in newspapers and bookstores; (c) contains stories about everyday life; and (d) provides learning styles which varies.

Story scripts that display examples of good behaviour can help teachers provide teaching materials to strengthen children's character values. This is in accordance with Mitchell's opinion (as cited in Nurgiyantoro, 1995) which states that stories can teach children to behave and comport themselves, verbally and nonverbally, correctly in accordance with the demands of the socio-cultural life of society. The introduction of good behaviour contained in the content of the story is able to shape children's characters. This opinion is strengthened by the results of Putry's research (2018) which states that conscious and planned efforts to internalize character values so that these traits can be understood, lived and implemented in everyday life by students.

Based on the validation results from the academic team and early childhood education practitioners, the story books that have been made are feasible to be tested on children ages 5-6 years old. The explanation of the feasibility of a storybook that is able to strengthen the character values of young children is as follows.

3.2.1. Storybook with Children's Character Values

The compilation of storybooks is based on the identification of the needs of the teacher who states that the character traits that need to be strengthened in children are honest, environmental caring, and social caring. The contents of the stories contained in these 3 books are the researcher's writings. The three stories are titled "Janji Kardosi" (Kardosi's Promise), "Kabar dari Samudera" (A Story from the Ocean), and "Pipit dan Elang" (The Eagle and Sparrow). The results of the validation by a team of PAUD academics and practitioners, the three storybooks were easy for children to understand. This is in line with the opinion of Mansoor (1994) which states that the contents of the story are made easy to understand by readers, inviting readers to know the life of the story, choosing the right words, books are successful in luring readers to continue to follow their thoughts, the peak or climax of the story until the end of the story, and the story does not seem wordy and boring.

The three storybooks compiled by researchers can strengthen the character values of young children. The strengthening of the honest trait in the story titled "Janji Kardosi" contains examples of behaviour from the characters in disobedience, obedience, and keeping the promises they have made. The honest character trait will be an initial asset for the child's life in their future social life. The environmental caring trait is featured in the story "Kabar dari Samudra". The story, which is set in the life of the community in the coastal / fishing area, shows examples of behaviour 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 strengthened traits are behaviour that reflects independence, behaviour that reflects an aesthetic attitude, and behaviour that reflects an attitude of cooperation. Meanwhile, the theme of social caring is compiled in the story of "Pipit dan Elang". The core competencies in this story, is namely: believing in a god through His creation; respect yourself and others and the environment as gratitude to God. This is in accordance with the Minister of Education and Culture Regulation Number 146 of 2014 concerning the 2013 PAUD Curriculum. Through learning the story of "Pipit dan Elang", it is hoped that children will have a healthy lifestyle, curiosity, be 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.

3.2.2. Storybook Design in Accordance with Children's Character Traits

The stories developed in this study consisted of 3 storybooks. The three stories are titled: "Janji Kardosi", "Kabar dari Samudera", and "Pipit dan Elang". All three, are given titles that are quite simple, and easy for children to understand. This is in accordance with Effendy, Bangsa, and Yudani's (2013) opinion which the title of the storybook used is short and concise, attracts attention, and describes the outline (core) of the story. The three storybooks are equipped with illustrations that match the text of the story. With these illustrations, children will be more stimulated by their imagination in following the story line. In addition to attracting children, illustrations will also strengthen their imagination.

The plot depiction in the three stories is varied. Through the depiction of each character, children are not bored. Furthermore, the characters that are displayed are quite varied, such as: creative, helpful, diligent, lazy, obedient, forgiving, and intelligent. Meanwhile, the introduction of good behaviour is also compiled in a quite 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 enables to clarify the stories' sequences, settings, animations, and characters very well. This is also in accordance with the opinion of Rothlein and Meinbach (1991) which states that the illustrated images contained in the story are able to clarify the setting and are able to help children identify characters and be able to clarify the stories' sequences.

3.2.3. Storybooks Are Designed in Accordance with Children's Development

As the golden age (golden age), early childhood can be called the most appropriate time to be introduced to reading activities. In this context, what is meant by reading, does not mean reading like adults. Children are not required to be able to read fluently. However, reading activities have begun to be introduced, so that he/she will be interested and stimulated by interest in reading. On this basis, the learning environment requires appropriate media or learning materials. The presence of storybooks is a strategic alternative as a solution. However, not only entertaining, storybooks also display character values that can be internalized in children in their daily lives. Following is the design of each developed story title.

The storybook "Janji Kardosi" consists of 20 pages, in addition to the front cover and back cover page. The story depicts the tale of a thief who later realized his mistake, emphasizing the value of being honest and helping others. On the back cover, it is clearly written that this story instils the value of being honest, understanding differences, standing up for what is right, and helping one another. Based on the results of the media expert team's validation, the number of pages is very well suited for children's reading ability (not too long and not too short). This story book is for children ages 5-6 years old.

The story book "Kabar dari Samudera" consists of 21 pages, in addition to the front and back cover pages. The story depicts the tale of the struggle of the fish in helping the fishermen from the pirates who often destroy the ocean. The tale that is built in this story is children are introduced to the atmosphere of the beach or the sea. This story emphasizes the value of the characters helping one another and caring for the environment. On the back cover, it is clearly written that this story instils the value of caring for others and the environment, understanding differences, standing up for what is right, and helping one another. Based on the results of the media expert team's validation, the number of pages is very well suited for the children's reading ability (not too long and not too short). This story book is for children ages 5-6 years old.

The story book "Pipit dan Elang" consists of 21 pages, in addition to the front cover and back cover pages. A story that describes the tale of a bird who is arrogant and evil. However, the bird was able to be defeated by a small and clever sparrow. This story emphasizes the character trait of helping one another and social caring. On the back cover, it is clearly written that this story instils values of caring for others, courage and ingenuity, and a behaviour of helping one another.

Based on the results of the media expert team's validation, the number of pages is very well suited for children's reading ability (not too long and not too short). This story book is for children aged 5-6 years old. In terms of layout, the typeface used in the three storybooks is Kristen ITC with a size of 16 pt. With this typeface, children are able to read it easily and the design possesses sufficient attraction for the children's reading interest. The layout of the story text is approximately 25% and the illustrations are approximately 75% on each page. The results of the validation by the academic and practitioner teams show that the layout of the pictures and writing are proportional. The books that were created already has a visual appearance that is more dominant in pictures than text and the typeface in the storybooks has a good readability for children.

4. CONCLUSION

The product of this research is in the form of three storybooks that are able to strengthen the character traits of young children. The most dominant character traits of the three storybook titles are honest, environmental caring, and social caring. In its development, the analysis aspect of this research is seen from two indicators, namely: learning criteria and performance criteria. The learning criteria places more emphasis on the aspects of core competencies regarding the character values developed in children. Meanwhile, the performance criteria are focused on picture illustrations and storybook formats. Both criteria are adjusted to the development of children ages 5-6 years old. The determination of these two criteria is validated through the test of media experts and the legibility of the user (teacher) readability test. These three storybooks have only been tested on a limited basis in 2 schools. The trial results show that the use of the storybook can increase children's reading motivation and strengthen the character of young children.

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