



Strengthening Literacy and Independence in Learning the Era of Independent Learning: A Multi-site Study on Homeschooling Sinta and Sumardiono Jakarta

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Abstract. This study aims to describe improving literacy skills and forming learning independence in two single *homeschooling*. This research uses qualitative methods with a phenomenological approach. Data collection methods are carried out through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation. The data validity in this study used triangulation of both sources and techniques. Data analysis and interactive models with the following steps: data reduction, data presentation, and concluding. The results of this study show that the formation of literacy skills in Sinta homeschooling and Sumardiono homeschooling is based on each child's unique and natural interests and curiosities. These two single *homeschoolers* also direct their children to write and create a portfolio of their work utilizing digital media as a form of reconceptualization of literacy and indicators of literacy ability. In building learning independence, parents carefully consider the uniqueness possessed by each child based on interests, learning styles, compound intelligence, time, availability of environmental carrying capacity, life experience, and the need for knowledge. The establishment of learning independence is also carried out systematically by instilling three aspects: learning culture, skills, and self-management.

Keywords: homeschooling · independent learning · literacy

1 Introduction

The eradication rate of illiteracy in Indonesia shows a significant improvement compared to a few decades ago; even data from the UN agency that deals with development issues, UNDP, noted that the literacy rate in the Indonesian population has reached 92.8% for the adult group, and 98.8% for the adolescent group [1].

From the data released by PISA 2016, it can be seen that in the category of reading comprehension or literacy, 50% of Indonesian children have not been able to explain the main thoughts in a discourse text, do not understand the relationship between paragraphs

and cannot explain the meaning contained in part of the reading text. And none reached level 6 on all three subjects tested by PISA [2].

Alternative education parents can choose is *homeschooling*, referred to as HS. HS is highly individualized, and HS can have a better influence on improving students' language and literacy skills. The literacy ability of children who follow HS can exceed the ability of children who attend formal schools. This can be seen from several national figures who are big and participate in running HS. Call it Buya Hamka and H. Agus Salim. Their and their children's literacy skills are above average. Although H. Agus Salim was educated and formally educated in his time, he was able to make well his children have high proficiency in language and literacy through HS [3].

High literacy skills significantly affect the acquisition of various information related to the business of living life [4]. With the literacy improvement research applied in HS, it is hoped that it can be an example for all parents and teachers who choose formal schools to improve children's language and literacy skills [5].

HS can also be one of the alternative answers to the philosophy of "Merdeka Belajar" and independence of learning. HS is an alternative education that is flexible, not rigid in the learning process; children feel comfortable in implementing learning and learning management that is highly adapted to the interests and talents of children as learners [6]. It is interesting to study how HS applies the philosophy of independent learning as a form of learning independence without neglecting the standards and quality of education.

This study focuses on the formation and improvement of literacy skills and learning independence carried out at HS Sinta and HS Sumardiono as an alternative education. This is certainly interesting to study further so that formal schools can also adapt essential things related to improving literacy skills and learning independence.

The basis for consideration of choosing two single HSs as research sites is because the children of these two HSs have literacy and learning independence abilities above the average formal schoolchildren. Researchers explored and further examined how the two single HSs improved their children's literacy and learning independence.

2 Method

The research method used in this research is Research This research is a research with a qualitative approach. With the discovery strategy using a phenomenological approach, researchers naturally observe phenomena that occur in the field. This approach also seeks to capture a thinking view that emphasizes human experiences and how humans interpret their experiences [7]. Researchers emphasize how a person interprets his experience in the world of HS. Researchers also try to understand and examine the phenomenon of forming and strengthening literacy and learning independence in two single HSs, namely HS Sinta and HS Sumardiono. The implementation of this research began from the end of 2020 to mid-2021.

Primary data in this study were collected through interview and observation techniques conducted by researchers on respondents in building literacy and independence. Secondary data in this study include: books, reviews in the mass media, scientific journals, papers, and writings on social media such as Twitter, Facebook, or Instagram created or related.

The data sources used in this study included respondents, namely parents driving HS and children of HS participants. Taking into account the conditions of the Covid-19 pandemic, the source of this research data emphasizes in-depth interviews with informants through the communication channels of Whatsapp written messages, video conferences, and teleconferences based on communication tools. Secondary data is obtained by researchers from the results of literature studies, supporting books, electronic books, scientific research results, scientific publications and also data searches spread through the internet.

Peneliti uses non-participatory observation techniques. Meanwhile, the credibility of this study includes extended participation, diligent observation of podcast broadcasts and writings made by research sources and triangulation of sources and triangulation techniques by comparing the results of interviews with the results of observations and documentation obtained [8].

Data analysis in this study uses techniques from Miles and Huberman, a qualitative data analysis carried out interactively and continues until complete. The data analysis activity is carried out in three stages: a) data reduction, b) data presentation, and c) conclusion. To facilitate analysis, the data that is still very diverse and complex, researchers sort and select, and focus so that it is simpler and easier to process the following data.

After obtaining the essence of the research discussion, the researcher makes conclusions from the planning, implementation, and evaluation of activities to increase literacy and learning independence.

3 Result and Discussion

Literacy is an essential element in developing critical thinking skills. Although this is important, the literacy movement in the beloved country of Indonesia still encounters many obstacles, including low reading culture, lack of literacy support facilities, discrepancies in reading materials, and teachers who compile and evaluate literacy-based materials [9, 10]. These obstacles tend not to be found in HS-based education implemented by HS Sinta and Sumardiono. They are more flexible in shaping the reading culture, obtaining supporting facilities, adjusting reading materials, and evaluating literacy-based materials. Learning is not only done in class but can also be done anytime and anywhere [11].

The formation and improvement of literacy skills carried out in these two HSs is based on the interests and curiosities of children. Because naturally, every child has a huge curiosity about the world around him. This curiosity is what motivates each individual to learn new ideas, find information, and solve problems [12]. It is based on this natural curiosity that they carry out the learning of reading and understanding (literacy) to the environment. Factors that come from the teacher are the strategies or learning methods used and the readiness of the teacher to master the learning material [13].

The formation of literacy skills begins with forming a culture of literacy. This starts when their child is still young by adjusting the child's curiosity that grows over time and growth. The culture of literacy is built by cultivating a love for books. Books are a gift for every child's achievement and become what the child yearns for. Along the way,

loving this book is a very long communication process between parents and children, until the child has a natural love for books. One of Kevin Rua's concerns is that this language and writing ability becomes a communicative product between HS teachers and students, in this case, parents [14]. There are many limitations on teaching materials, learning experiences, and teaching approaches [15]. When children already love books, parents no longer need to tell their children to read and understand what is read. This is a sign that a culture of literacy has been established. The internet and technological advancement create boundless communication, which may lead to new problems [16]. The problem can have implications for the acceleration of educational processes and outcomes that still uphold human values as the ultimate goal of long-term education [17].

Furthermore, children in both HS are also encouraged to get used to writing down their ideas and thoughts in the form of writings on blogs and social media. These reviews of the books they read, works, ideas, and thoughts became part of the children's portfolio. The portfolio published on *blogs* and other internet media is one of the breakthroughs in the reconceptualization of literacy. The opinion regarding the Reconceptualization of literacy that enters the realm of digital literacy widely as well as the direct use of technology in the development of education, is expressed by David Buckingham in his paper, "*Digital Media Literacies: Rethinking media education in the age of the internet*" [18].

In general, the second HS applies the development of the meaning of "literacy" from its original meaning in the form of skills or competencies in processing and understanding information about written language or literacy into something broader following the development in today's millennial digital era. One of them is media literacy, which is understood as the ability to access, understand and create communication in various contexts. This includes the skills and competencies needed to find media content, using available technology and related software [18]. So that digital literacy, literacy using audio, visual, and audio-visual media, and media continues to grow rapidly in this millennial era. This is also reinforced by the results of research conducted by James Weld which states that print-based texts are no longer the main center of literacy today. The idea of literacy has changed and alternative literacy has been created, so a new skill has emerged that can be called multiliteration that involves an innovative spectrum of texts, media, technology, interaction, interpretation, and multimodal relationships [19, 20].

If we compare the development of the above meaning of literacy, then the above meaning of literacy includes part of the basic literacy (foundational literacies) that are part of the three a large group of skills millennials need to master. The three major groups of skills that need to be learned according to the *21st-century* framework developed by the World Economic Forum (WEF) are (1) Foundational *Literacies*, (2) Competencies, (3) *Character Qualities*. Basic literacy or *foundation literacies* are skills related to the child's ability to apply core skills in daily tasks, including: (1) *literacy* related to text and language. (2) *numeracy* skills related to numbers; (3) *scientific literacy* related to scientific thinking; (4) *ICT literacy* skills related to the use of information technology; (5) *financial literacy*, which is a skill related to decision-making regarding personal finance; (6) cultural and *civic literacy* i.e. skills related to cultural understanding and rights as citizens.

The inclusion of multimedia in forming literacy skills has become commonplace in the millennial generation. This is in line with the statement that Lehtonen researchers say is the *Google* generation [21]. The way millennials read and write today is shifting from just reading printed books to reading and writing digitally. Even though it uses digital media, the basic understanding of text and language literacy remains in the understanding of literacy with four language skills. The main difference is in the media used. The current generation tends to use digital media, while previously used the media of books or other printed objects. These *homeschooled* children's ideas and thoughts illustrate their literacy skills and are well documented digitally. So this is a breakthrough in understanding literacy as a reconceptualization of literacy, which is no longer limited to printed books, but is more likely in the form of various digital media.

Apart from forming and improving literacy skills, HS Sinta and Sumardiono carried out absolute freedom of learning. They prioritize cultivating learning independence as one of the processes of forming independence in life. According to Basir, learning independence is a learning process that occurs in a person, and in an effort to achieve these learning goals, a child is required to be active individually and not depend on others including friends, parents, and teachers (Basir, 2010). A person's learning independence can be seen from his attitudes, opinions, and behavior [22]. Meanwhile, parents in this case carry out their role to build awareness of independent learning of their children.

The formation of learning independence cannot be separated from the attention of parents to the tendency of the child's learning style. Because every child certainly has a unique and different learning style. Differences in learning styles or also known as *different learning styles* such as visual-audio-kinesthetic [23]. Both parents of the organizers of both HS are very concerned about the uniqueness of the differences in their children's learning styles. They do not apply the same pattern to each of their children in the formation of learning independence. And it is supposed to build a learning program according to the individual of each student. An educator is obliged to pay attention to the uniqueness of each child, because a child excels in his own field (gifted individually) [24].

In forming learning independence, HS Sinta and HS Sumardiono, do not apply special times as time to study at home. Learning is always carried out wherever and whenever, not limited by time and space becomes a learning philosophy that is closely held by the organizers of these two HS. Everything encountered can be used as a means of learning. The scope of learning is also no longer limited to academic matters, but covers all aspects of life. That way, students can learn consistently, so it can be said that educators, in this case, parents, only need to inspire their children as learners to be able to explore learning opportunities and form learning situations around them [24].

With the development of the meaning and scope of this learning, learning independence becomes easier to do and implement [25]. The independence of learning becomes an awareness of science and a gratification of curiosity for knowledge that is directly correlated with human life. Because basically, every human child has *Epistemic Curiosity*, which is the desire to acquire new knowledge capable of producing positive intellectual experiences [12].

Building learning independence is closely related to building awareness. Awareness of their learning needs, goals for learning what they love, and how they can gain knowledge. This awareness arises from life experiences that are constantly unearthed and scrutinized in each period of the child's life. The first child in HS Sinta gained this awareness when he noticed the teacher who taught cosmetology; he found himself interested in the world of entertainment and cosmetology. She then gained consciousness independently and learned a single thing from cosmetology from a variety of sources. HS's second child gained this awareness when she followed her mother to visit schools in Malaysia and saw how fun it was to teach, interact and educate early childhood (TK/PAUD), so she found her happiness by studying early childhood education. HS Sumardiono's first child became interested in writing based on experiences he always wrote about on blogs. The second child gained awareness thanks to an enjoyable experience by creating without limits in the online class "kreasita" he built. Meanwhile, HS Sumardiono's third child gained awareness of the world he would live in by playing chess, obtained initially online. Currently, he continues to hone his independence and make achievements in the field of chess.

This arising learning independence makes every previous life experience challenging and fun. The life experiences he has gained then make children want to explore the knowledge they have gained. So he independently and passionately explores new experiences in learning, because this is an essential part of learning [12].

The establishment of learning independence needs to be carried out systematically and not initially. In general, both HS have the same principle in applying learning independence: the absence of time limits and places where children learn. The whole episode of everyday life becomes part of the learning itself. Moreover, there are three aspects that HS parents need to hone to their children, namely: (1) learning culture, (2) skills, (3) *self-management*. This is in line with Cormier's thinking that posits the importance of self-management. Cormier added that to grow self-management, it is necessary to carry out a stage of self-management exercises that can be divided into 3 parts, namely (1) self-monitoring, (2) control of stimuli or stimulus-control, (3) self-esteem or *self-reward* [26]. This independent learning approach in the form of self-management is constructive for children or students to control their learning activities independently.

Both HSs make learning their daily culture. Learning is no longer just an obligation that must be carried out, but has been improved into a habit, culture, and attitude of daily life. This thinking of learning has become a culture that is part of the patterned and repeated lifestyles, ways of thinking, feelings, and actions characteristic of a society [27].

The role of HS parents in this study is in line with the role performed by teachers in schools as supporters of the establishment of learning independence, as research conducted by Thomas Howard Morris puts teacher support in a way that (1) helps with appropriate sources of information (2) assumes a part of control in directing the learning process (determining learning goals and means) (3) is involved in the process of building the meaning of learning itself [28]. So that children or learners can achieve awareness and independence of learning. It can also be said that before parents apply a culture of learning independence to their children, these parents must first cultivate learning independence in themselves.

4 Conclusion

Based on data from the results of this study, it can be concluded that: (1) The formation of literacy skills carried out by HS Sinta and Sumardiono tends to be more flexible and personal than the formation of literacy skills by formal schools. Formation of literacy skills based on children's natural interests and curiosities, carried out without coercion, paying attention to children's interests and uniqueness, and including digital media to cause children's love and culture for reading and write literacy (2) Both HS direct children to write resumes or reviews of books already read, works, and also ideas that are in their minds in various forms of the portfolio. The portfolio becomes the leading indicator of the successful formation of literacy. This portfolio is processed using digital media as a form of literacy reconceptualization. Literacy is no longer limited to printed products but has expanded and involves the direct use of the latest digital technology in the development of educational technology. (3) The learning independence formed by these two HSs is primarily determined by the role and pattern of parents building awareness of learning independently for their children early on. Parents who intend to shape their children into independent learners should also apply themselves as life-long learners. (4) In shaping learning independence, parents carefully consider each child's uniqueness. This uniqueness includes interests, learning styles, compound intelligence, time, and the availability of environmental carrying capacity at the time the child learns. The formation of awareness of learning independence also takes into account life experiences and the need for knowledge felt by each child. Because every human child has the desire to acquire new knowledge capable of producing positive intellectual experiences (epistemic curiosity). (5) The establishment of learning independence is also carried out systematically by instilling three aspects: learning culture, skills, and self-management. For further research, it is hoped that it can strengthen this research with quantitative research that shows the relationship between the use of digital media and strengthening literacy.

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