Literacy Class Program Management at Taman Lentera School Semarang

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Received: 08 February 2023; Revised: 13 March 2023; Accepted: 20 March 2023

Abstract: Managing the Literacy Class Program at Taman Lentera School in Semarang is an urgent priority to enhance students' reading, writing, and critical thinking skills, which will directly impact the improvement of education quality and empowerment of the younger generation in the future. This study aims to reveal the implementation of the literacy class program at Taman Lentera School related to management, supporting, and inhibiting factors. The design used in this study is qualitative, using a case study approach. The subjects of the study are founders, alumni volunteers, and active volunteers. Data were collected through (1) observation, (2) interviews, and (3) documentation. The data validity technique used in this study is source and technique triangulation, with data analysis using data collection, reduction, presentation, and drawing conclusions. The results revealed that program management includes six functions: (a) planning, (b) organizing, (c) mobilizing, (d) coaching, (e) assessment, and (f) development. Volunteers, community leaders, youth, parents, and children are supporting factors. Meanwhile, the inhibiting factors are consistency, communication, and coordination of volunteers, which are still lacking, limited literature owned by Taman Lentera School, and the Covid-19 pandemic.

Keywords: classroom program management, literacy class program, lantern garden school, non-formal education

How to Cite: Shofwan, I, Denaya, A (2023). Literacy Class Program Management at Taman Lentera School Semarang. JPPM (Jurnal Pendidikan dan Pemberdayaan Masyarakat), 10(1), 61-70. doi: https://doi.org/10.21831/jppm.v10i1.59275

Introduction

Children are the next generation to have a vital role in the Indonesian nation's existence. Proper education is required to develop the child's cognitive, affective, psychomotor, and emotional intelligence to be optimally formed. In addition, their personalities also need to be built and shaped during the golden age of growth and development so that they are ready to face the challenges and changes that exist around them (Suhono & Utama, 2017). The acceleration of world development demands that society in the future must be seen as a knowledge-based environment with a global scope. To survive, each individual must have three basic characteristics: sensitivity, independence, and responsibility.

One of the abilities and skills that can support these characteristics is for a child to master literacy skills. Literacy is the ability to read and write and means technological literacy, politics, critical thinking, and sensitivity to the surrounding environment (Carmi et al., 2020; Fernando et al., 2022). Literacy awareness can support a person’s success in dealing with various life problems by documenting experiences that become references in the future (Irianto & Febrianti, 2017).
To promote these various forms of literacy, schools can implement multidisciplinary curricula that incorporate real-world issues and practical applications of knowledge. Parental involvement is also crucial in reinforcing literacy skills at home through activities like reading together, discussing current events, and engaging in hands-on learning experiences (Lau & Rao, 2011). Community-based initiatives like Taman Lentera School’s Blusukan Lantern Park can further support literacy development by involving children in projects that address local challenges and provide opportunities to apply their skills in meaningful ways. By working together, schools, parents, and communities can cultivate a generation of literate, critical, and engaged citizens prepared to navigate the complexities of the 21st century.

Despite its conventional concept as a set of reading, writing, and numeracy skills, according to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), literacy is now understood as a means of identification, understanding, interpretation, creation, and communication in an increasingly digital, information-rich world, as well as an increasingly fast-changing world (Wagner, 2011). There is six basic literacy that needs to be mastered by the community to face the era of the Industrial Revolution 4.0, namely (1) reading and writing literacy (language), (2) numeracy literacy, (3) science literacy, (4) digital literacy, (5) financial literacy, and (6) cultural literacy and citizenship (Affifah et al., 2020).

A report from The World’s Most Literate Nations (WMLN) study conducted by John W Miller, from Central Connecticut State University (CCSU), New Britain, Connecticut, United States, shows that Indonesia is ranked 60th out of 61 most literate countries. This number should be a warning as well as motivation for Indonesia. As stated by Miller, the literacy competence of a nation is one of the indicators for individuals of a nation to perform their role in the science-based economic arena, which will determine the future globally (Miller, 2016).

Based on a report on the results of a study conducted by the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) in 2018, released in December 2019, it was revealed that Indonesia was ranked 6th from the bottom for the reading category or 74. As for the mathematics category, it is ranked 73rd, and for the science performance category, it is ranked 71st. The 2018 study assessed 600,000 15-year-olds from 79 countries by comparing each child’s math, reading, and science performance. This figure shows a decrease in Indonesia’s performance compared to the results of the PISA study in 2015, where Indonesia was ranked 64th out of 72 countries surveyed (Tohir, 2019).

The problem that should be addressed is that parents should cooperate with teachers in instilling good values, such as independence, in children. Independence prevents children from being dependent on others, and the essential thing is cultivating children’s courage and motivation to continue exploring new knowledge (Purwanti, 2022). The problem of low literacy in Indonesia is inseparable from the various factors behind it, but reading habits are considered the primary and fundamental factor. Meanwhile, one of the efforts to improve the quality of human resources to adjust to global developments covering various aspects of life is to grow a reading society (Permatasari, 2015). Literacy cannot be ignored in the development of human resources in Indonesia. Increasing the literacy power of the nation should be a grand design that certainly cannot be done partially. Literacy needs to be built through an educational ecosystem that accommodates interaction between the government, the community, and literacy activists as actors to prepare sources of information.

Literacy skills are considered an essential part of improving the quality of Indonesian society so that they are involved in the educational process, both informally, formally, and non-formally. Based on Law No. 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System article 3, the National Education functions to develop self-abilities and form a dignified national disposition and civilization to educate the nation’s life. It aims to develop students’ potential to become human beings who have faith and devotion to God Almighty, has a noble character, healthy, knowledgeable, capable, creative, and independent, and become democratic and
responsible citizen (Sari, 2018). Therefore, literacy must be applied in various educational institutions, including the family, school, and community. Character education values will hold no significance if solely entrusted to teachers to impart them to children (Ishofwan et al., 2019). The involvement of parents and the community is crucial in cultivating these values and fostering a character-based education system (Purwati, et., al., 2021).

The government realized the urgency of solving the literacy crisis by developing the National Literacy Movement program in 2016. The Ministry of Education and Culture launches the program to implement the Minister of Education and Culture Regulation Number 23 of 2015 concerning the Growth of Ethics to build a literacy culture in all education areas (family, school, and community). The National Literacy Movement was developed in the School Literacy Movement, the Community Literacy Movement, and the Family Literacy Movement. The existence of this movement certainly requires support and contributions from various circles and expects an active role from the community (Kemendikbud, 2018: 11).

The implementation of educational programs requires management or management. The management process in organizing educational programs is expected to run well to achieve the desired goals (Kurniyawan et al., 2020). Education management is one of the essential factors in organizing the education and learning process so that improving the quality of education can be carried out. The existence of good and structured management in educational institutions will result in achieving maximum educational goals, so every educational institution requires good management or management (Musolin & Adz-Dzarai, 2019).

Various forms of literacy programs have emerged not only from the government but from the community or individuals from the community. The simple movement of these individuals can certainly be the main capital in nation-building. The formation of movements at the grass root level or society at the lower level is expected to foster the spirit of contribution to the nation’s progress and concern for issues around the community, especially regarding literacy (Kurnia & Astuti, 2017).

One of the community’s efforts at the lower level is establishing the Taman Lentera School in Semarang City. Taman Lentera School can be an alternative to help children from preschool/kindergarten to elementary school age to instill basic literacy skills and character building for children, sharpening their brains and empathy. The experience of childhood literacy at an early age is believed to form a strong foundation in children’s reading development (Levy et al., 2005). This non-formal school was initiated by the community consisting of volunteers. The concept of literacy at Taman Lentera School is carried out through the "Literacy Class” activity. This literacy class teaches language skills, hones mathematical logic, interprets images, and other primary means to communicate, understand, convey, and obtain helpful knowledge.

Research is required to examine more deeply the management of literacy class programs at Taman Lentera School Semarang by analyzing six management functions by Sudjana (2000), namely the functions of planning, organizing, mobilizing, coaching, assessing, and developing, as well as knowing the supporting and inhibiting factors in the implementation of the program.

This study examines the management of the literacy class program at Taman Lentera School in Semarang. It compares it with related research to highlight the novelty and relevance of this investigation. Unlike previous studies that generally focused on teaching strategies or the impact of literacy classes on student achievement, this research will delve deeper into the comprehensive management of the program, including the role of managers, facilitators, and support from the school.

For example, previous research by Purab et al. (2021) investigated the impact of a literacy program on elementary school students reading and writing skills but did not discuss aspects of program management in detail. Similarly, Sholahuddin (2022) study evaluated the
effectiveness of teaching methods in literacy classes but did not address the role of managers and school support.

The novelty of this research lies in its deeper focus on the management of the literacy class program, encompassing aspects of (a) planning, (b) organizing, (c) mobilizing, (d) coaching, (e) assessment, and (f) development. Furthermore, this study targets Taman Lentera School in Semarang as a case study, providing specific insights into how the literacy class program is managed and offering relevant recommendations for improving education quality at similar schools.

Method

The qualitative design used in this study is the researcher as a human instrument. It functions to establish the focus of the research, choose informants as data sources, assess data quality, analyze data, interpret data, and make conclusions based on their findings. The research approach used is a case study, where this design is found in many fields, especially evaluation. According to Stake (1995), Yin (2009, 2012), in Creswell (2014), through case study research, researchers develop an in-depth analysis of a case, often in the form of programs, events, activities, processes, or one or more individuals.

Cases are limited by time and activity, and researchers collect detailed information using various data collection procedures over a period of time. A case can be an event, person, program, community, incident, and time. Case studies seek to describe units in depth, detail, context, and holistically (Welch et al., 2020). Case research aims to thoroughly understand a case that may be personal, social units, problems, past, and development (Muhadjir in Prastowo, 2011).

Research informants included five people: one Founder, two Alumni Volunteers, and two Active Volunteers. Data collection in qualitative research is carried out in natural conditions with primary data sources, data collection techniques are more on participant observation techniques, in-depth interview techniques, and documentation techniques (Sugiyono, 2017). This study’s main data collection technique was an in-depth interview with the research subject. In addition, to obtain complete results, the completeness of the data was deepened using participant observation techniques and tracing activity documents at the Taman Lentera School.

The method of data analysis, as disclosed by Miles & Huberman (1994), is carried out by (a) data collection, (b) data reduction, (c) data presentation, (d) drawing conclusions or verifying data. The data validity technique used in this study is the triangulation technique. Triangulation is defined as a data collection technique combining various data collection techniques and existing data sources. The data validity technique used in this study is source triangulation and technique. Source triangulation is the collection of data from various sources using the same method. Triangulation techniques are carried out by examining data through different techniques. This method is necessary because each data collection method has weaknesses and advantages (Sugiyono, 2005). Checking the correctness of data using triangulation techniques by 1) Comparing the data of the results of observations with the interview, 2) Comparing the data of the observation results with the documents, 3) Comparing the data from the interview with the document.

Result and Discussion

Taman Lentera School is a non-formal school initiated by the Small Initiatives Community. This volunteer-based community was formed in 2015 by Kunto Nurcahyoko and Ike Purwaningsih with the aim of; 1) Fostering awareness of caring for the earth, especially in the social, educational, and environmental fields, 2) Increasing the sensitivity and contribution of individuals in solving social, educational and environmental issues, 3) As a
A forum for expression for individuals who want to contribute to the social, educational, and environmental fields (Cortellazzo et al. 2019). The program owned by this community is the Education Service coordinated by Kunto in Kalimantan. In contrast, the Taman Lentera School is coordinated by Kak Ike in Central Java, precisely in Semarang.

Taman Lentera School was formed as an alternative to help children develop into jovial individuals, having a high sense of optimism and empathy. The name Lantern is interpreted as books, education, and experience. The primary mission of Taman Lentera School is to instill literacy and develop the child's basic character. Lanterns are interpreted as books, education, and experiences. The program is in the form of literacy classes to increase children's interest in reading or literacy and develop children's character. This program targets children from preschool to grade 6 elementary school. The volunteers volunteered to accompany and deliver materials to the children to learn and play in these classes through varied learning methods. Volunteers are recruited from various circles, from students to those with certain professions (aged 20-30 years). Later volunteers are tasked with conducting research, finding ideas and methods or the proper treatment to be applied to provide children with understanding about something.

At the beginning of the establishment of Taman Lentera School, activities were implemented every Sunday, at Kos Kak Ike in the Gang Kantil area, Banaran, Gunungpati, Semarang, in September 2016. Then since March 2017, it began to be active in two locations, namely in Santrendelik, Jl. Kalialang Lama IX No.44, Sukorejo, Gunungpati and Pakintelan Village RT / RW 05/05 Gunungpati, Semarang. The limited number of volunteers became the background for finally only activities in Santrendelik once a week on Saturdays. After two years of living in Santrendelik, Taman Lentera School chose to change the concept of traveling around Semarang City and Regency with the aim that the benefits of the program implemented to reach a wider target.

Since January 2020, Taman Lentera School has begun to design the concept of this activity under the name Taman Lentera Blusukan which will be carried out every one to two months from one village to another around the City and Regency of Semarang. The Blusukan Lantern Park Batch 1 program was held in February 2020. However, the COVID-19 pandemic during the year has impacted the delay in the Blusukan Lantern Park agenda in the following months. Despite the challenges posed by the pandemic, Taman Lentera School remained committed to realizing their vision of community engagement and empowerment. By adapting to the new normal and adhering to health protocols, the school started organizing virtual Blusukan events to continue their outreach efforts. These virtual events included webinars, online workshops, and community discussions, focusing on topics like education, health, and sustainable development.

As the situation began to improve in 2022, with vaccination rates increasing and COVID-19 cases decreasing, Taman Lentera School resumed their in-person Blusukan events with additional safety measures in place. The school ensured that all participants were vaccinated and followed strict hygiene protocols, such as wearing masks, maintaining physical distance, and using hand sanitizers regularly. In an effort to maximize the positive impact of Blusukan activities, Taman Lentera School began collaborating with more local organizations, including local governments, NGOs, and the private sector. This cooperation allowed the school to access more resources, knowledge, and skills that could assist in achieving Blusukan’s objectives. Additionally, Taman Lentera School continued to explore the potential of technology in supporting Blusukan activities. For example, they combined face-to-face activities with digital platforms to facilitate discussions, information sharing, and coordination among participants and other stakeholders. This enabled a more inclusive and flexible learning process, as well as provided opportunities for individuals who could not attend in person to remain involved in the activities.
Literacy classes are organized in the form of fun learning and are adapted to the age stages of child development because this is very important. Preparing education oriented towards child development implies preparing children to become learners who can learn perfectly. Educators are required to understand how to present new materials for child development. Experiences involving sight (color, shape, and size), hearing (sound, rhythm, and rhythm), taste, and feeling must be adapted to the child’s development stage. The combination of the whole experience will strengthen and strengthen learning outcomes. The Literacy Class consists of a Reading Class, a Fairy Tale Class, an Experimental Class (Science and Art), and a Dolanan Class. Each of these classes has a variety of literacy activities that aim to provide a stimulus so that children can master literacy skills, develop character and hone empathy, and channel their ideas and creativity (Purwaningsih, 2017).

Children are allowed to choose for themselves the favorite reading book for them to read. Meanwhile, children who cannot read will be assisted by accompanying volunteers to read books. In addition to reading books, children will be invited to “read” their surroundings or be trained in environmental sensitivity. Simulation and role-playing are also methods used in reading classes. It is done to hone the child’s ability to respond to a specific condition or situation and foster awareness that each individual has a role in any situation.

Children not only listen to the fairy tales of the accompanying volunteers but also learn storytelling. The media used is not limited to storybooks but also uses other media such as hand puppets, pictures, movies, or puppets. The methods used also vary, with the priority of moral messages or knowledge can be conveyed appropriately to children.

Experimental classes consist of various types of material ranging from physics and biology to chemistry, delivered in fun and easy-to-understand ways through simple experiments to make the learning experience more memorable and interpretable. In addition, children also learn art, from music, and fine arts, to dance. They will learn to create their artwork, then be directed by accompanying volunteers who master the materials.

Dolanan classes consist of games ranging from traditional to modern to play with children. Games can be in the form of traditional games, namely bekelan, dakon, gobag sodor, betengan, jamuran and others. Children are trained to play and have fun by taking advantage of the surrounding environment without spending certain expenses to buy toys. This method will stimulate children to think creatively and more actively express their ideas. In addition to traditional games, it is also combined with modern/new games.

Management is a process of designed, organized, and coordinated activities involving human resources (HR) and the utilization of existing resources to achieve specific goals that are effective and efficient. Educators in non-formal education must have a professional attitude to meet the needs of students or learning citizens and to achieve a desired goal. The management of the literacy class program is how the Taman Lentera School organizes the program to accomplish the program objectives. Volunteers, including six functions, carry out the implementation of the literacy class program management: (a) planning, (b) organizing, (c) mobilizing, (d) coaching, (e) assessment, and (f) development. During the Covid-19 pandemic, the implementation of the literacy class program was delayed because it avoided risks that would be difficult to minimize, considering that the program involved crowds of children and volunteers.

Planning is defined as the entire process of estimating and determining carefully the things that will be worked on in the educational program for the future to achieve predetermined educational goals. Program planning must be implemented effectively and efficiently (Ramadhan, 2019). The planning function in the management of the literacy class program includes the following elements: (a) Formulation of goals, (b) Determination of managers and procedures for recruiting volunteers, (c) Determination of responsible persons, (d) Determination of target locations and timing of program implementation, (e)
Determination of materials, methods, and media, (f) Preparation of program schedules and (g) Determination of evaluation methods compiled in rundowns and syllabuses.

Activities integrating educational resources in education management focus on predetermined goals (Ginting & Shofwan, 2021). The managers of institutions become interrelated parts in carrying out the process, cooperation occurs, division of duties and obligations, and different authorities (Wisdom, 2009). The existence of program managers and implementers at Taman Lentera School is an essential aspect of management. The administrators at this school are core volunteers consisting of founders, alumni volunteers, and active volunteers. Alumni volunteers are people who have been active volunteers who used to be regularly involved in the entire program. Still, for some reason, they are no longer fully engaged during the program.

Active volunteers are volunteers who are fully involved in the management and implementation of the program. One of these volunteers is chosen to be a coordinator to build communication and coordination between founders, alumni volunteers, fellow active volunteers, and volunteers or freelance. The implementers of the literacy class program are core volunteers, then supplemented by freelance volunteers or temporary volunteers who are recruited. The volunteer recruitment process is carried out through the manager’s procedures. The recruitment procedure consists of preparing a timeline, determining volunteer criteria and requirements, preparing online registration forms, publishing pamphlets on social media, file selection, interview selection, announcements, and Technical Meetings.

Organizing an out-of-school education program can be interpreted as integrating the necessary humane and non-human resources into a unit to carry out activities to achieve the goals planned and set in advance. In simple terms, organizing can be defined as the process of managerial activities to form an organization that carries out a predetermined plan to achieve organizational goals (Sudjana, 2000). Organizing includes dividing the duties and responsibilities of volunteers, preparing for facility management in the form of equipment for program needs, and budget management.

The purpose of driving the management of out-of-school education programs is to provide encouragement or arouse the desire of a person or group in an organization that organizes or implements the program so that it can implement the program to achieve the organizational goals set (Sudjana, 2000). The mobilization is carried out by the management of the Taman Lentera School to foster the motivation and commitment of volunteers to continue contributing to each program that will be held entirely. This program is aimed at active volunteers at Taman Lentera School. In addition to fostering commitment, this mobilization activity seeks to promote a sense of family and familiarity among volunteers and share experiences and knowledge between volunteers through upgrading activities and motivation during the evaluation process.

Coaching is carried out to determine, analyze and improve the efficiency and effectiveness of implementing activities, including supervision, supervision, and monitoring activities. This effort is made to maintain activities to be following those that have been planned (Sudjana, 2000). The coaching process carried out is supervision carried out by coordinators, founders, and alumni volunteers and also responsible for activities on the performance of volunteers during the preparation and implementation of the program.

Program assessment or evaluation is a systematic activity of collecting, processing, analyzing, and presenting data as input in decision-making about the program (Yusiyaka, 2016). The assessment is carried out to identify the results, obstacles, supporters, shortcomings, and advantages of the programs that have been implemented. The evaluation carried out is to assess how the program is going and whether it is following the planning and objectives of the program. Then the volunteers’ assessment, the volunteers’ activeness when researching, the foresight of volunteers to capture the material to be presented, execution at the time of program implementation, and how volunteers communicate and apply the
material. In addition, it also assesses how children respond during or after getting the material, whether they are enthusiastic or passive during the literacy class program. The evaluation results are recorded and used as input for further program planning.

Program development is a series of steps that must be taken to produce programs that are truly capable of providing optimal benefits (Sulfemi, 2018). Development is intended to expand and enhance educational activities that have been or are being carried out. The development includes re-implementing academic activities from planning to assessment to improve activities’ quality (Sudjana, 2000) sustainably. The literacy class program is developed to improve quality and provide more comprehensive benefits (Tohani & Shofwan, 2022). Program improvement is carried out based on the results of the program evaluation record by improving all aspects that need to be enhanced through discussions during future activity planning meetings. In addition, efforts to innovate and modify the program are also carried out through research following the results of program improvement, development of issues and technology, and target needs.

**Conclusion**

Taman Lentera School is a non-formal school initiated by a volunteer-based community, Small Initiatives. This school was formed as an alternative to help children increase their interest in reading or literacy and develop children’s character. The form of the program carried out in activities at Taman Lentera School is a literacy class consisting of four classes: the Reading Class, Fairy Tale Class, Experimental Class, and Dolanan Class. The management of the literacy class program at Taman Lentera School is carried out by collaborating all the resources while still paying attention to the management function. It targets children with literacy problems to foster reading interest or literacy and develop children’s essential character. The literacy class program management includes planning, organizing, mobilizing, coaching, assessing, and developing activities. Planning consists of the formulation of objectives, the determination of managers and procedures for recruiting volunteers, the determination of responsible persons, the determination of the location of targets and the timing of program implementation, the determination of materials, methods, and media, the preparation of program schedules and the determination of evaluation methods compiled in the rundown and syllabus. Organizing consists of preparing managers, facilities, and budget management. Mobilization is carried out through upgrading activities. Coaching includes supervision, assessment through evaluation of how the program takes place, assessment of volunteers, as well as assessing the response of children during or after obtaining materials and program development through improvement, innovation, and modification of the program.

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