



27 – 28 October 2015

Reinventing Childhood Education

Seminar Book



Primary School Teacher Education Study Programme
SANATA DHARMA UNIVERSITY

Story Book as a Possible Tool for Parents and Teachers to Internalize Values

Irine Kurniastuti

Abstract

The focus of this article is to discuss story book as a possible tool to internalize values. Particular attention is given to collaboration between teachers and parents in internalizing values. The view of children to story books, the possibility to use storybooks as a tool to internalize values, the values that should be internalized to children in parent's view, and guide lines where the implementation of story books for parents and teachers are discussed.

Keywords: story book, children, parents, teachers, values

Introduction

The writing of this article emerges from a big question, do story books can be used as a tool to internalize values to children? If it does, how can we use it and what kind of values should be internalized? These questions emerge after reflecting some personal experiences and other people's experiences who have had an insight after reading books (Lucas & Soares, 2013).

There are so many stories about the effect of books. Books not only keep memories but also give an influencing inspiration to the reader. There are many historical records showing people's reaction led by the fear facing the power of books, such as the prohibition of one of Voltaire's books entitled *Lettres Philosophiques* due to assumptions that this book inspire bad influence to religions; the prohibition of Denis Diderot's work because it allegedly contains atheism; the demolition of books by Nazi known as *bibliocauste*; and the prohibition of books teaching Marxism and Leninism in some countries (Baez, 2013). These events confirm the power of books more than just a reading but could also bring fear which could led to the prohibition of the books.

Book is something so powerful in life and affects and could lead the way of life. Book is a tool to create a space for reflection, interpretation, and dialogue. Reading books trains people to think and making decision, taking action as a reaction, and finding meaningful things from a situation. Reading is not only important for adults but also children, especially to develop their emotional, social, and cognitif skills. Reading boks could also be used as guidance for children to thinking, forming attitude, and helping them solving problems. Reading books can help children processing a situation and gaining knowledge in a fun way and free from pressure (Rosa'rio, 2004, in Lucas & Soares, 2013).

Nevertheless, is it true that children's books have significant effects to children the same way books affect the adults? Kimmel (1970) has been questioning and conducting research about this matter and in a review of his article, Kimmel achieve a result that

books might have a significant effect in shaping and reshaping an individual's thinking; yet the means by which they do this and the total significance of their role are matters still determined largely by the observer's intuitions. Narvaez (2002) also doubted that could books with moral lesson develop children's character? This question was based on, firstly, a research in text comprehension showed that readers failed to understand the context of the reading due to the limitation of the children's ability in reading and their knowledge. Secondly, a research about moral comprehension indicated that moral arguments are understood differently based on differences in moral schema development. Third, moral texts (e.g., that contain embedded moral reasoning) are understood and distorted differently by readers with different moral schemas. Fourth, children do not extract moral story themes as intended by the writer.

Up until now, reading books with moral story is believed to be a way to internalize moral education. An Indonesian character development institution, Indonesia Heritage Foundation (IHF), has been using story books as a tool to develop character. IHF also has been publishing hundreds of story books to develop children's character. IHF also urges the collaboration between the school and parents in developing character including requiring the parents to read the books that have been selected. Therefore, a study is needed to support the idea of how children's story books can be implemented properly and become a tool to help internalizing values and developing good characters.

Book as a tool to internalize values

Character development can be done through various way. One of them is to give the children readings that have been selected. In bibliotherapy principal, books that have been selected according to the children's problem have been known to give therapeutic effect to the children. Children experiencing attitude and psychological problems such as being excluded by his friends, feeling not confidence, and other self adaptation problems can be solved by reading the selected books according to the problem. In the books, the children is invited to identify the characters in the story, their characters and their role, feel the situation, and emotionally involved in the story, and find the insight to solve the problems in the story (Parker, 2005).

The use of books as a therapeutic media is also a strategy that allows teachers to teach good characters to the students. The benefits of using books as a media is that it will not disturb students' study time. Teachers can teach character education through reading (Parker, 2005).

The role of teachers and parents in affirming values

Schools have an important role in developing children's social and emotional skill. Educator should find ways to develop characters and insert it into curriculum (McElmeel, 2002). One way that can be used by teachers is to invite children to read books with good

moral and character. The effectiveness of giving good reading materials to children is still questioned just like Narvaez (2002) doubted. Narvaez questioned whether children would be able to understand the content of the reading and whether the content is understood in the same way of its purpose. Therefore, adults, parents, or teachers need to guide the children to understand the story. Almerico (2014) suggested a way to present the story to develop the children's character by giving a summary at the end of the story. Teachers can guide the children finding the moral message from the story read through discussion or talking circle.

Method

To obtain the data of internalizing values through story books, we use open-ended questionnaire. The questionnaire is set to reveal some of these basic matters: Questions for children are do they like story books, how does the reading activities have been done, what are messages from the stories they remember, and how do they act after reading the stories. Questions for parents and teachers are what is their response to story books as a tool to internalize values, how does the reading activities applied to children, what values are the most important to children nowadays.

Respondents

This research is a preliminary study and is not intended to obtain a representative condition of a certain population, instead, to obtain preliminary information of the possibility of story books as a tool to internalize values. Therefore, the respondents in this research is still limited. The respondents are 97 elementary students ranging from grade 2 to 4 which consist of 52 female students (53.61%) and 45 male students (46.39%). The range of the respondents age is between 6 to 11 year old with the average of 8.45 year old. The adult respondents consist of 2 elementary teachers and 14 parents.

Data Analysis

The data is analyzed by giving code to the same emerging theme. Based on the code from the determined category, we analyze the data with a simple statistic technic, i.e. descriptive statistic, especially frequency table. Some of the data were analyzed based on the response or answers (multiresponses), the other data were analyzed based on the number of respondents.

Result and Discussion

Children's perception of story books

The data showed that 95.88% of student respondents say that they like story books and only 4.12% say they do not like story books. From the data, the researcher started to questioning whether the children understand the meaning of "story books". In Cambridge

Dictionary (2008), story is defined as a description, either true or imagined, of a connected series of events. Storybook itself can be defined as a book containing a collection of stories, usually for children. The sample of story book mentioned by the respondents as the story book they like can answer the question of whether they understand the meaning of story book. The types of story book mentioned by the respondents as the story book they like are folklore, fable, fairy tales, religious story, comic, transportation, history and natural resources. The books consist of fiction and non-fiction, true story and imagination. From the types of story books mentioned by the students, it showed that the students understand the meaning of “story book”.

The average of respondents state that they read story books four times a week. Most of the respondents state that they like reading story book independently (73.20%). The reason is because reading story books is fun. Besides, they like reading independently because they can enjoy the pictures, read repeatedly to understand, and help them reading fluently. However, some students state that they like hearing stories rather than reading them independently (14.43%). The reasons are because the story teller can tell the story very well, “*I like hearing stories from my grandma because she can tell the story very well*” (R-91), can think while hearing, and can be heard as a lullaby. 4.12% respondents like both, either the reading or listening the story because both have their own advantages.

Respondents state that their reading habit is mostly done at home, usually they read it at home together with their friends, parents, brothers, sisters, or alone. The place where they usually use to read is around the sittingroom, living room, and bedroom. Besides home, the other place where they usually read is at school especially library and during reading activity in the classroom. The reading activity reported by the respondents is mostly done with friends and alone, though there are also reports state that together with father, mother, siblings such as brother and sister, the percentage is relatively smaller than reading alone and with friends.

Table 1. Places to read story books

| No. | Place | Frequency | Percentage |
|-----|------------|-----------|------------|
| 1 | Home | 55 | 49.11 |
| 2 | Library | 26 | 23.21 |
| 3 | Bedroom | 20 | 17.86 |
| 4 | School | 8 | 7.14 |
| 5 | Everywhere | 2 | 1.79 |
| 6 | Missing | 1 | 0.89 |
| | Total | 112 | 100.00 |

Table 2. Reading mate

| No. | Reading mate | Frequency | Percentage |
|-----|--------------|-----------|------------|
|-----|--------------|-----------|------------|

| | | | |
|---|----------------|-----|--------|
| 1 | Friends | 38 | 33.63 |
| 2 | Alone | 26 | 23.01 |
| 3 | Brother/Sister | 22 | 19.47 |
| 4 | Mother | 15 | 13.27 |
| 5 | Father | 11 | 9.73 |
| 6 | Missing | 1 | 0.88 |
| | Total | 113 | 100.00 |

The data above indicate that school and home are very crucial place for children to do activities. In line with Bronfenbrenner theory (Santrock, 2011) that microsystem becomes the dominating place where the children develop. Children do not develop alone. Parents, family members, friends, and teachers also take part in their development. For the children, these agents effects their daily life, including the reading activity.

The possibility of using story book to internalize values

Stories remembered by respondents of parents and teachers are relatively the same, i.e. stories about animals, mousedeer, folklore “Keong Mas”, and stories from the bible. An interesting fact is that the story of mousedeer was mentioned a lot of times by the respondents though they have different parents. If the respondents state the same story due to they have the same teachers or parents it would be acceptable because the students would have the same source or teacher. However, if the same answer come from respondents with different parents or teachers, it raises another question. Does it mean the story of mousedeer is very popular and remembered by most of the respondents?

Table 3 The most impressive story from parents

| No. | Most impressive story | Freq. | (%) |
|-----|---------------------------------|-------|-------|
| 1 | Mousedeer | 23 | 23,71 |
| 2 | Fable stories besides Mousedeer | 14 | 14,43 |
| 3 | Folklore | 9 | 9,28 |
| 4 | None | 9 | 9,28 |
| 5 | Religious story | 8 | 8,25 |
| 6 | Childhood story | 8 | 8,25 |
| 7 | Story of human | 6 | 6,19 |
| 8 | Blank | 6 | 6,19 |

| | | | |
|----|-------------------------------|----|--------|
| 9 | Story of a princess | 5 | 5,15 |
| 10 | Forget | 4 | 4,12 |
| 11 | Others | 2 | 2,06 |
| 12 | Comic | 2 | 2,06 |
| 13 | Story of transportation tools | 1 | 1,03 |
| | Total | 97 | 100,00 |

Table 4 Attitude after reading story

| No. | Attitude after reading | Freq. | (%) |
|-----|---|-------|--------|
| 1 | Happy | 31 | 31,96 |
| 2 | Do as the story message | 16 | 16,49 |
| 3 | Growing intention to do the story message | 13 | 13,40 |
| 4 | Increasing knowledge | 11 | 11,34 |
| 5 | Become better (from the previous condition) | 11 | 11,34 |
| 6 | Imitating | 8 | 8,25 |
| 7 | Others | 4 | 4,12 |
| 8 | None | 2 | 2,06 |
| 9 | Forget | 1 | 1,03 |
| | Total | 97 | 100,00 |

This article will not looking for the answer why the mousedeer story is very popular. However, this article invites the reader the find out the message or advice the respondents remember from the reading activity. From the questionnaire collected, the most remembered advices from the stories are: helping each other our, respecting and helping parents, message of the good and the bad, message for self-control, taking care of own self, achiving good result and aspiration, praying diligently, grateful, sharing, listening, humble, honest, preserve the environment, and being friendly with everyone. The most respond mentioned is the message to helping each other out, respecting parents, message of the good and the bad, and message for self-control such as being a good children, being a good listener, well-behave, and obeying the rules.

The attitude reported happened to the respondents after reading or listening the message from the story book is as follows: the respond that is mostly mentioned is feeling happy, followed by the act of doing what is advised, growing intention to do as advised, increasing knowledge, become better from the previous condition, and imitating the attitude of the character in the story. The data mainly shows that there is an effect from

the content of the story which directs the attitude of children. Firstly, the psychological effect acquired from reading the story is feeling happy though it is not explained in detail how the dynamics of the happy feeling emerges from. Secondly, the effect of listening or reading the message of the story could raise intention to do something. Some of the respondents state that they directly do what is advised in the story, some of them also imitating what is pictured in the story, there are also respondents who keep the message as information or advice which affect them to do something in the future, inspiring or giving insight to do better things.

These respondents' expressions giving changes to parents and teachers to internalize something through story as a tool to invites the children to do something. This is the same with the bibliotherapy practice to help someone solving their problem through reading book which have been adjusted to their problems. Bibliotherapy itself can be used in clinical situation but in this case, the definition of bibliotherapy is taken from the definition from Russell and Shrodes (1950) who were supporting the developmental bibliotherapy.

A process of dynamic interaction between the reader and literature -- interaction which may be utilized for personality assessment, adjustment, and growth. This definition suggests that bibliotherapy is not a strange, esoteric activity but one that lies within the province of every teacher of literature working with every child in a group. It does not assume that the teacher must be a skilled therapist nor the child a seriously maladjusted individual needing clinical treatment. Rather it conveys the idea that all teachers must be aware of the effect of reading on children, and must realize that, through literature, most children can be helped to solve the developmental problems of adjustment which they face (Russel & Shrodes, 1950:335)

From the definition above, supported by the respondents experience in reading story books, it is possible to use book as a tool to internalize a value. In this case, parents or teachers do not have to be a skillful therapist and the problems faced do not have to be clinical problems but also daily life problems to internalize values into children. As stated by Seefeldt (2013), "developmental bibliotherapy" may be used by teachers, librarians or lay helpers to facilitate normal development.

How do parents and teachers use the story books?

Knowing that story books can be used to affirming values, the next question is how these story books can be used to deliver the values? The data collected shows various responds such as the students feel happy after reading without following the attitude and that it affect the attitude in the future. The attitude of feeling happy itself must be carefully interpreted because the effect of happy does not mean that the story books fail to deliver a message. The feeling of happy felt by the readers show that reading story books affects the mood, i.e. making the reader become happy.

In relation with the students which are moved to do an action, attention or control is needed to the understanding of the students. That respondents also stated that they read the book alone or along with their friends could be a message that they could not understand the message of the story, or the message of the story is not accepted the way it should be or the readers might wrongly interpreting the message of the story. Thus it is needed an effort to optimized the function of story books to deliver the message, such as creating a guideline for parents and teachers to select the story to children or help them understanding the message from the story, a reflection between the children and the parents or teachers at the end of the story, and supporting questions or clues to discuss the message of the story.

An inspiration obtained from bibliotherapy, which is basically helping through books (Seefeldt, 2013), is to use the four stages of developmental bibliotherapy, i.e.: 1. Identification, process by which reader identifies with a character in the book. Book characters can be very real to children and text to self connection. 2. Surfacing of Emotions (the Catharsis). Occurs as reader follows the character through a difficult situation to a successful resolution. 3. Insight. Reader develops an awareness of the character's situation to their own life. Reflects on the story and makes an awareness transfer which fosters self, understanding, and can lead to changed attitudes and hopefully changed behavior. 4. Universalization. Child can identify with the character presented in the text/story/picture book. Child can relate to how the story character handled a situation and can see relationships in their own life.

The most urgent values to be internalized nowadays

After knowing that children like stories and how to deliver stories, it is important to think about what should be internalized by parents or teachers through stories. The first thing to be done by parents is to select the book which is appropriate and is according to the children's need or their social desirability. Parents need to know exactly the attitude or values to be internalized to avoid misconception and the purpose of reading can be achieved.

For the next research, i.e. the development of the story book script, the researcher asked the parents and teachers about the most urgent values to be internalized to the children nowadays. From the values mentioned, five of the most values mentioned are empathy, respect, confidence, creativity and tolerance. From the small survey to the respondents in this research, it can be seen that parents and teachers have different definition concerning the adjectives mentioned, such as the word "creative". The following are the examples of creativity mentioned by the respondents:

"creating new creation in every task given by teachers (for example, crafting)" (R-7)

"able to create various pictures, without imitating the teacher's examples" (R-6)

"finding solution of a problem" (R-5)

“knowing what to do when something does not run well” (R-13)

“creating bulletin, planting flowers to beautify the school, creating art from secondhand things” (R-12)

From the responses above, an adjustment is needed to the context of attitude to be internalized. This requires contextual story books because not all of story books have the message wanted by parents and teachers. Therefore, inputs from parents and teachers are very important to the educators who are willing to create story books with character or moral education.

Besides the contents of the story have to be contextual, a good collaboration between teachers and parents in internalizing values is needed. If teachers and parents agree to internalize the same value, the students will find consistency in learning either in school or home. Teachers can give tasks related to the development of a value or character and parents can help implementing the values taught from the school at home.

Reference

- Almerico, G.M. (2014). Building character through literacy with children’s literature. *Research in Higher Education Journal*, 26, 1-13.
- Baez, F. (2013). *Penghancuran buku dari masa ke masa*. Tangerang: Marjin Kiri.
- Kimmel, E.A. (1970). Can children’s books change children’s values?. *Educational Leadership*, 28, 209-214.
- Lucas, C.V. & Soares, L. (2013). Bibliotherapy: a tool to promote children’s psychological well-being. *Journal of Poetry Therapy*, 26 (3), 137-147. DOI:10.1080/08893675.2013.823310.
- McElmeel, S.L. (2002). *Character education: A book guide of teachers, librarians, and parents*. Greenwood Village, CO: Teacher Ideas Press.
- Megawangi, R. (2010). *Pengembangan program pendidikan karakter di sekolah: pengalaman sekolah karakter*. Diunduh dari <http://pustaka.ut.ac.id/pdfartikel/TIG101.pdf> tanggal 7 Oktober 2015.
- Narvaez, D. (2002). Does reading moral stories build character? *Educational Psychology Review*, 14, 2, 155-170.
- Parker, K.L. (2005). Reading for character: principles of bibliotherapy applied to children’s literature. Liberty University. Diunduh dari http://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1001&context=ed_uc_fac_pubs tanggal 20 September 2015.
- Russell DH, Shrodes C. (1950). Contributions of research in bibliotherapy to the language arts program. *School Review*, 50:335.
- Santrock, J.W. (2011). *Life-span development, thirteenth edition*. New York: McGraw Hill.

Seefeldt, A. (2013). Books building character: using picture books to support children's social and emotional development. Diunduh dari <http://www.nkad.org/files/SE-3053-2-03-13-2/Books%20Building%20Character%20NKAD.pdf> pada tanggal 22 Oktober 2015.

About Writer

Irine Kurniastuti, M.Psi. is a lecturer at Elementary School Teacher Education Study Program of Universitas Sanata Dharma. Her research interest includes Educational Psychology Themes, Parenting, Montessori Methods, and Learning Difficulties in Children.