

Boosting Children’s Passion in Reading Through the Project “Learning Station Community”

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Abstract: The relevance of this study is due to the importance of expanding children’s passion in reading through the project “Learning Station Community” (LSC). It is important that children are motivated by a genuine desire or need to read. The reading process is done pleasurable and the books provided are the colorful books with an interesting story to attract the children desire to read. This study applied the qualitative method and the data collected based on a combination of field research and interviews with children. As the results, this study found that by providing a comfortable place to learn, creating a pleasant reading environment and talk to children about what they do and do not like to read can boost their desire to read. The children admitted that they were amused to read the book in the mini library provided by the Learning Station Community since the environment in the library is designed casually and comfortable to learn. Additionally, children argued that reading books with friends is a greater delight than reading alone at home. Hence, the project of Learning Station Community is a great project to create situational interest and to encourage children’s passion in reading.

Keywords: Learning Station Community (LSC), mini library, reading, children.

Introduction

Reading is the process of looking at the collection of written symbols and getting meaning from them. Reading is defined as a cognitive process that involves decoding symbols to arrive at meaning. Reading is an active process of constructing meanings of words. Wallace (2012) defined reading as interpreting means reacting to a written text as a piece of communication. It is one of the most frequent activities, especially for those who work in education and literature such as lecturers, teachers and writers. Reading is crucial for a variety of reasons, especially for children. By reading, children can discover new things and know how to develop a positive self-image and also it helps to expand the mind and develops the

imagination. In other words, reading develops the creative side of people. Hence,

reading is an essential activity to socialize from an early age. Reading skill for children is important to improve their communication and language skills and also to support them at school. Studies show that reading for pleasure makes a big difference to children’s educational performance.

Additionally, reading can be a fun and imaginative time for children, which open doors to all kinds of new worlds for them. Clearly, the purposes of people to read are different. For children, the form of reading with the word can be like showing a flash card with word by parents or teachers. Unfortunately, in Indonesia generally people from children to adults are less interested in reading. Low rates of interest in reading among Indonesians are something frequently referenced in news reports. The Jakarta Post in 2016 reported that Indonesia rank is the second-last of 61 countries in terms of reading interest. There are some factors

influence the interest of an individual to read such as enjoyment of reading, reading interest, time factor and influence of media and peers (Essays, 2013). Moreover, reading has lost ground nowadays since society dominated by mass-media which offers many temptations and seizes and reorients young people's interests, the importance given to reading has clearly diminished, as it is no longer favored by our pupils. (Hritchu & Scipor, 2013).

The most frequent situation in schools is that children who have the ability to read but lack the reading motivation (Clary, 1991, Turner, 1992, Moser & Morison, 1998). Moreover, the books at the school library usually inadequate book collection, library collection was mostly made up of books from government aid in the 1990s and the books were out of date. This condition makes students are bored in reading, not surprised if the result is underdeveloped reading interests among students. Hidi (1990) says that the interest is considered central in determining the ways to select information. Thus, the alternative of using situational interest seems to be a sufficiently productive way to enhance reading, as Hidi (2001) states that stimulating situational interest may be one way for schools to motivate those who do not have pre-existing individual interests in academic activities, content areas or topics, and to help them make academic gains. According to Stauffer (2007), many methods of developing children's interest in reading focused more on the books being read than on the act of reading. However, the researcher believes that to boost reading interest for children begins with making interesting books, fun and good books available to read.

Additionally, accompaniment of children in reading and support from the environment is also very important in growing children's reading interest. Krapp & Renninger (in Hritchu & Scipor, 2013) write two types of reading interest that are invoked in most studies; they are individual interest and

situational interest. Individual interest is conceptualized as a relatively stable predisposition that develops over time associated with the increased value, knowledge, and positive feelings, while situational interest represents a reaction to external stimuli (Harackiewicz et al., 2000 in Hritchu & Scipor, 2013). Therefore, one way to promote individual reading interest is by simulating situational interest.

In Indonesia, situational interest can be obtained from the presence of the reading communities. The existences of communities of readers in helping children to interest in reading have proven successful. The growth of these communities is massive in some areas in Indonesia, as readers reaching out to underrepresented and remote areas for example in Palopo. Through communities of readers, children seem a new window to read good books since the books provided at the communities usually up to date and interesting books.

Thus, this paper aims to promote the importance of communities of readers in encourage reading interest of children. Through the project "Learning Station Community" the researcher examined the effect of the project in boosting children passion in reading Moreover; this paper also describes the children's perceptions in reading activity through the project "Learning Station Community".

Learning Station Community (LSC)

The Learning Station Community is a social community which is focused on improving children's reading interest. This community is designed to support street children in the remote area in Palopo, South Sulawesi to have a genuine desire in reading. One of the programs is providing a mini library in neighborhoods. Through this project, the poor children have an opportunity to read the latest and interesting books in a fun way. It is important that children have a motivation, a genuine desire or need to read since reading can help them to discover new

things and know how to develop a positive self-image and also it helps to expand the mind and develops their creativity.

This project is built on the members' love of children, books and their aspiration to share. Enthusiasm and idealism to build a community to contribute and support the growth of literacy of children is the basic reasons of the runners start this project. The members of the Learning Station Community are volunteers who consist of lecturers, college students, craftsmen, artists and the public. Moreover, the government has given a positive response to this project, as proved by the funding given to this community at the beginning of its establishment, in this case is the Ministry of Research, Technology and Higher Education of the Republic of Indonesia through its community service grant.

The main program of the Learning Station Community is providing a mini library for poor children. The library is designed interesting with various up to date books, puzzles, and education cards. The lecturers and the students of Cokroaminoto Palopo University are invited to become the trainers and the fellow workers in this program. They run this project two times a week that is every weekend. Whereas the participants who join this program mostly are the poor children around Palopo area who have limitedness facilities and fund to buy new books. These kids also have less interest in reading, most of them argued that they never read a book and do not like reading activity at all. Moreover, they said it is fun to watching television or playing online games than stay at home and read a book. This phenomenon then becomes a challenge for the community to handle.

Method

This study was designed as qualitative research. The targeted population of this study refers to the children who participate in the 'Learning Station Community' in

Palopo, South Sulawesi, Indonesia. The children who selected as the respondents are them who are able to read fluently. The age of the respondents between seven to fourteen years old and they are elementary students. The data is collected through direct observation. The period of data collection was from February to May 2018. Besides that, the researcher also organized an individual interview to obtain the children's perceptions of reading activity through the project Learning Station Community (LSC).

Results

To answer the research question about the children interest in reading through the project Learning Station Community, the researcher conducted direct observation for three months that was from February to May 2018. The observation is conducted at the mini library of the Learning Station Community in Palopo, South Sulawesi Indonesia. This library provided many children books such as short story, sciences, religion, art, math, language and many more. The books in this library are newest and interesting books for children and those are prepared both in Bahasa Indonesia and English. Three times a week children come to the library to read books, their age between seven to fourteen years old and most of them are the elementary students from the nearest publish school. In pre-observations, the researcher found children spent their free time every day by watching television or playing, they admitted that they have less time to read books both at school and home due to the lack of books they have. It was reasonable because most of them come from poor family.

The children then introduced to the project of the Learning Station Community, the volunteers of this community asked children to come and read interesting books at the mini library located around their residents. In the beginning, there were nine enthusiastic children came to read, they read two until four short story books.

Unfortunately, none of the children read the sciences books. When the researcher asked them to read one of science books, they saw uninteresting face due to the cover of the book similar to the book at their school library. One of the kids said that they saw the same book at their school library and admitted that they do not read the book yet. It is valuable to know that children's interest in books based on the interesting cover and figures in the book.

Children actively come to the mini library and invited one or two new children to join. Thus, after three months of the program, there are twenty-two children come to read books. This phenomenon indicated that boosting children interest in reading is not a complicated thing, as long as parents, teachers and environments consistent to direct and prepare interesting materials for them to read. The researcher expects that school library can prepare up to date books for students. The School has to eliminate the old books from the library and start buying the newest books in order to boost the students' interest in reading. Moreover, a reading environment should be created at school and home or what is call situational interest, it represents a reaction to external stimuli.

According to Hidi (2001), stimulating situational interest may be one way for schools to motivate those who do not have pre-existing individual interests in academic activities, content areas or topics, and to help them make academic gains. Additionally, Hritchu & Schipor (2013) wrote that the determining factors for human development are considered to be heredity, environment and education. While Cucos (2009) also says that each of these factors plays its role in the human development, a balance of their contributions being necessary, though the leading part is given to education, as the essence of all activities dedicated to the human development.

To find out the children's perceptions toward reading activity through the project

"Learning Station Community", the researcher organized an individual interview with the children. In the interview session, the researcher asked about children's opinion related to reading activity at the mini library. Overall, children perception results indicate that the project "Learning Station Community" positively impacts the children's motivation to read books. In addition, this project can boost children's interest in reading.

However, the interview result shows that the majority of children do not realize reading as an important activity; most of them admitted that they come to the mini library because their friends asked them to join. Additionally, children argued that reading books with friends is a greater delight than reading alone at home. Besides that, the comfortable place to read also becomes the reason why they come to read books at the mini library which is prepared by the community. Moreover, young age children said that listen to adult reading a book for them is fun and interesting than reading it by themselves. While the older children stated that reading books in library usually make monotonous, thus they rarely stay for an hour at the library. On the other hand, they said that the design of the mini library by the Learning Station Community is attractive and delightful, so they feel comfortable. However, most of the respondents argued that reading is not their favorite activity. All of them said that they favor other activities instead of reading such as playing football or playing games. While the other said that interesting and attractive books with colorful image will attract them to read.

Conclusion

From the obtained results the researcher can draw the conclusion that the project "Learning Station Community" is successful in boosting children's passion reading. Children show their enthusiastic about reading books at the mini library which is designed attractive and comfortable. From

the interview the researcher found some factors which can influence children desire to read, such as interesting and attractive books, comfortable place, family habit, and creating a pleasant reading environment and talk to children about what they do and do not like to read can boost their desire to read. It enables to create situational interest for children, however promoting individual interest in students reading may be a time-consuming task.

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