
STORY PROJECT IN THE CONTEXT OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION IN INDONESIA

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Abstract

The paper aims to describe the Indonesian story project as an implementation of the project-based learning in early childhood education. The story project is a series of activities to enhance children to be able to create their own stories. Descriptive qualitative research method is employed in the study. The research subjects are children in one of the kindergartens in Kabupaten Bandung. The result of the study shows that there are eight steps of the story project implementation and it is described as follows: 1) designing the learning activities, 2) selecting the story books, 3) developing the learning media, 4) designing the doodle book, 5) doing the storytelling, 6) introducing the doodle pages, 7) doing the story dictation, 8) revising the story, and 9) publishing the children's story.

Key words: project based learning, story project, early childhood education

INTRODUCTION

A more globalized world has proposed 21st century skills (Critical thinking, Creative, Communication and Collaboration skills) as the main educational goals (Trilling & Fadel, 2009). Consequently, learning activities should be focused in developing the 21st skills. Accordingly, conventional learning model in which only emphasis to develop knowledge should be revolutionized.

Project-based learning (PjBL) is one of the alternative learning models. In PjBL activities, children are involved to design a project, investigate and solve problems, as it is create and increase collaboration between children (Ahsan, 2005; Hung, Hwang & Huang, 2012; Turtyantana, 2013). Additionally, children are motivated to explore, evaluate, interpret and synthesize some information in producing learning outcome or products (Kemendikbud, 2014). Moreover, cognitive development of the children will also be stimulated very well through PjBL activities, since the children will have hands on experiences and targeted activities (Grant, 2002; Wrigley, 2003). It can be assumed that PjBL is one of the learning models that can be effective in developing the 21st

skills.

This paper is a part of a bigger study investigating the implementation of story project as a learning model in developing three languages skills of the children (Indonesian, English and Sundanese). The focus of this paper is the stages of story project implementation in developing Indonesian language skills of the children. This study was conducted in an Indonesian kindergarten. Every stage will be explained as well as its analysis.

Moreover, since the children was assumed have not writing ability yet, therefore, story dictation was chosen as the learning strategy. Story dictation is an activity in which the teacher facilitate the children to invent stories. In Indonesian context, kindergarten teachers could employ it very well in learning activities, even though they still deal with some challenges (Ananthia, Harun, Muliasari, Silawati, 2017). However, story dictation is an important part of any early childhood setting as it promotes children's language, literacy, and social and emotional development (Gadzikowski, 2007).

Project Based Learning in Kindergarten Setting

Project based learning has been implemented in many settings and different stages of educational institutions, from kindergarten to higher education. It is a students' center instruction arranged by students' independence, constructive inquiry, goal-setting, collaboration, communication and reflection in realistic condition (Kokotsaki, Menzies, Wiggins, 2016).

Some people believe that Pjbl only can be applied for STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics), but, it is possible in social studies and literacy development (Duke, Halvorsen & Strachan, 2006). Moreover, according in applying Pjbl in social studies and literacy, teachers should follow some principals, they are; (1) Identify needs or opportunities, (2) Determine standards you want to address (3) Consider real-life skills beyond standards, (4) Hone in on an authentic purpose and audience, (5) Meaningfully integrate social studies and literacy, (6) Make the project the core of the curriculum, and (7) Plan project sessions with a full toolkit.

Furthermore, there are six crucial references for successful adoption of Pbl approach in school setting, namely, (1) student support, (2) teacher support, (3) effective group work, (4) balancing didactic instruction with independent inquiry method work, (5) Assessment emphasis on reflection, self and peer evaluation, and (6) an element of student choice and autonomy throughout the PBL process (Kokotsaki, Menzies, Wiggins, 2016).

Story project is one of learning model that applies Pjbl approach. In story project activity, children create their own story guided by the teacher.

Story in Indonesian Kindergarten Learning

Story is considered as effective learning media in developing children's language skills (Paquette, 2007; Isbel, *et al.*, 2004; & Brewster, *et al.*, 2002). Moreover, some studies have been conducted in employing stories to develop children's literacy and critical thinking through stories (such as Roche, 2015; Stribling, 2014; Vasquez, 2014).

Most of recent studies in Indonesian Kindertartens context only focus on storytelling and story-reading activities (Groce, 2004; Ananthia, 2010; Harun & Ananthia, 2013; Yuliaratiningsih, Ananthia & Yanthi, 2013). In this study, children will create their own story through story dictation activity. Therefore, children not only act as loyal consumers or readers of a story, but they can also be creators of their own stories

(Christ, Wang & Chiu, 2011; Vasquez, 2014). Story is one of effective media in children's learning (Damayanti, 2007; Brewster, Ellis & Girard, 2002; Isbell, Sobol, Lindauer & Lowrance, 2004; Collins, 1999).

RESEARCH METHOD

This research is conducted using descriptive qualitative design, dealt with planning and applying story project in Indonesian Kindergarten setting. The paper is written as a part of a bigger on-going research on the implementation of story project in Indonesian kindergarten context. The research subjects are children in one of the kindergarten in Kabupaten Bandung.

The data gathered through observation, field note and interview. Row data was classified to identify the pattern in order to get the category and the theme of the certain pattern (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). The data were then analysed qualitatively by given coding until the themes and key concepts were indentified.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

There were eight stages of the learning process at a kindergarten in Kabupaten Bandung with story project learning model, namely, 1) Planning the learning activities, 2) Developing the learning media, 3) Planning the doodle book, 4) Storytelling, 5) Introducing doodle page, 6) Story dictation, 7) Story revision and 8) Story publication. The stages are analysed from the research, and will be elaborated in the following paragraphs.

Planning the learning activities

In this first stage, the teacher designed the lesson plan for the learning activities in the research. Lesson plan is very crucial in kindergarten learning since it can confirm holistically of all developmental aspects in every daily activities through students' active participation (Curtis & O'Hagan, 2003).

The design was started with selecting a learning theme to develop the story project. The theme should be close to children world. *Myself* was chosen as the learning theme because it is suitable for the children as they begin the kindergarten school year. (kemendikbud, 2014). Before it was implemented, the lecturers evaluated it and gave feedback. According to the evaluation, the lesson plan had good quality since those described clearly the aims of experiences and

learning, list of materials, learning activities and learning assessment (Seefeldt & Wasik, 2008).

Selecting story book

Selecting story book was the second stage of the project. This story would be used in the exposure activity to give the children inspiration and example of the story that would be wrote with them. The teacher should choose the book not only interesting physically for children, but also contently. A fable story book entitled “*Kamera baru mimi hamster*” (“Mimi hamster’s new camera”) was chosen. Before the teacher read the story to the children, the book was modified first to that could be suitable with the students’ characteristics in the kindergarten.

Developing the learning media

The third stage of the activity was learning media development. As soon as the teacher finished with redesigning the story entitled “*Kamera baru mimi hamster*”, she prepared some objects as learning media related to the story. They were a hamster, a rabbit, some colourful balloons, a painting, and a camera. Those learning media were the real ones and the children could hold or touch them. Therefore the children could easily understand the story and get new experience. (Zaman & Eliawati, 2010).

Planning the doodle book design

The fourth stage was planning doodle book design. Doodle book are set of unfinished pictures that should be completed (Ananthia, Harun, Muliastari, Silawati, 2017). The teacher drew similar background with the background in the “*Kamera baru Mimi hamster*” on peaces of paper, and prepared some pictures to be sticked on the papers. They were pictures of hamster, rabbit, birthday cake, tree, etc. for the children to be chosen and sticked on the background papers. This step is aimed to let children **develop their own interest and imagination toward the story**. It is also could give context and stimulate children’s imagination, fluency and originality of thinking (Dziedziewics, Oledzka & Karwowski, 2013)

Storytelling

The fifth stage was storytelling. The teacher read the story of “*Kamera baru mimi hamster*” to the children. They looked so

enthusiastic about hearing the story told by the teacher in storytelling. They also eager to answer the questions about the story and responded happily to the teacher’s comments on the story.



Figure 1. Teacher told the story to the children

Introducing doodle page

The teacher introduced doodle pages to the children was the sixth stage of the project. She told them that they could colour the doodle pages and stick the pictures on the pages. They were free to choose any picture they wanted. It was arranged so that the children could **have initiative to decide something**. The teacher then divided the children into two groups, and explained to the children what to do. Each group was going to make a copy of story book, and the story should have one plot. It means that the story written by each of them should relate to one another’s. The next activity was about the “author” of the story, the “title”, and the “pages” as the first thing to know. The teacher told the children about them. They were very enthusiastic since they knew that they were going to be writers and create their own story. Finally, the children made the doodle in groups.



Figure 2. Teacher introduced doodle page

Story dictation

The teacher prepared some activities to make the children busy doing an activity. The children were doing the activity while one of them in turn told the story to the teacher individually. The activity was related to the story “*Kamera Baru Mimi Hamster*”, for example coloring the pictures of hamster, stringing, collaging, and playing dough. The teacher’s colleague was guiding the children in the activities, while the teacher wrote down the

story told by each of the children.

Story dictation was done three times in three days. At the first day each child told only a few sentences to the teacher, and the teacher had to do some stimulation, such as asking questions before each of them told their own story to the teacher (Gadzikowski, 2007). The teacher asked the child, "What is the rabbit doing?" And then the child would answer word by word or in incomplete sentences. However, there are two children who were very confident and told their story right away to the teacher.

At the second time of story dictation, the children were mostly consistent with their own story from the first day. The difference was seen in telling the story to the teacher. **They were more confident and experienced.** At the last or the third day, the teacher asked the children to tell their story in formal Indonesia language. Some of them understood that the meaning was the same, but some of them thought that some words were not allowed to change into the formal term. The point is that **the children were more confident** in telling their own story in the third day. They were able to relate their own story to their daily activities, such using the word "bunda" in the sentence "*Bunda, ini kupu-kupunya datang, soalnya ada bunga. Kupu-kupu suka bunga, aku tahu dari film.*" ("Mom, the butterfly is coming because there is a flower here. Butterflies like flowers, I know from the film."). However, since the doodle background story distributed to the children was almost similar to "*Kamera baru Mimi hamster*", the story created by the children was hardly different with the story told by the teacher.



Figure 3. Story dictation activity

Story revision

The seventh stage was story revision. There are three steps in this stage, namely, arranging pages of the story, determining title of the story and drawing the cover. In first step the teacher called the children by their group names, i.e. "the first group book writer", and the second group book writer". The teacher called the first

group to come forward and check the story for the last chance, while the other group was guided by the teacher's colleague. The teacher let the first group writer to sit down on the carpet and make a circle, put each of their own story written on a piece of paper in front of them. Then the teacher asked again about "the writer", "the title of the book", and "the pages", which had been discussed the previous day. The teacher let the students to arrange the pages to become a complete story and create a book. The teacher had already read each own story of the children. **They looked embarrass yet proud of their own achievement when the teacher read their story one by one.** Then the teacher asked them, "Whose story do think is suitable to be the first page of the book?" All of them rised their hand and answered, "My story! My story!" Then the teacher asked the children to consider which part of the story that will be the first page. Then, there was a child who said, "It is B's Bun, it'll be great to be the first page." Then, the teacher requested to read the chosen page. After that, the teacher invited children to re-read the chosen page, formerly children said "agree...great...". The revision process was continued until the last page. At the end, children could understood and able to conclude the story. After finishing book revision, the teacher read the story. Children look very proud of their work.

After finished with the first group, the teacher then asked the second group to have the same activity. There was an interesting moment when one of the children could comprehend that the main character of the story should be consistent. So she asked other children to naming the character. Then, the group agreed to choose "Cika" as the main character of the story.

The next step was determining the title of the story. The teacher asked the second group first to have the activity while the first group had alternative activity with other teacher. Guru asked the children to give title of their story. **There were sharing ideas and discussion among the children.** They also learn to evaluate and give comment to others opinion.

The last step was making the cover story. The children made their cover in group. Collaboration is reflected in this activity. This activity also developed leadership skill of the children. There was a boy who looked very dominant and led the project. He gave other children some duties to do, "Hey you draw a hamster ok...I'll draw a star...and you draw a hat", said him. Those happen without teacher's

intervention. After the children finish made the cover, then the teacher bundled all part of the book. Finally, the book story has been done.



Figure 4. Children arranged the story

Story publication

The last stage of the project was story publication. The teacher and each group showed of the story book in front of the class and read it. Every child looked **proud of their work and called themselves as “a writer”**. Story publication is one of the important stages in Pbl to share the project to other students and children (Duke, Halvorsen, Strachan, 2006).



Figure 5. A child presented his story

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

The stages of story project namely, 1) designing the learning activities, 2) selecting the story books, 3) developing the learning media, 4) designing the doodle book, 5) doing the storytelling, 6) introducing the doodle pages, 7) doing the story dictation, 8) revising the story, and 9) publishing the children’s story.

Moreover, in the implementation, children looked enthusiastic and motivated since the activity **develop their own interest and imagination toward the story and the children have initiative to decide something**. The skills of collaboration, leadership, and creativity and communication art also reflected through story revision activity. **There was sharing ideas and discussion among the children**. Furthermore, the children were also observed to be more confident in the stage of story

dictation and story publication. They looked **proud of their work and called themselves as “a writer.”**

Based on the findings, it is suggested to kindergarten teachers and parents to apply this learning model whether at school or at home.

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