

Fairy Tales and Inspirational Stories as A Medium for Character Development for Elementary School Children

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the role of fables and inspirational stories as effective media in developing the character of elementary school children. An epistemological perspective is used as an analytical framework to understand how children construct knowledge and moral understanding through stories. This research employs a qualitative method with a case study approach. The research subjects are elementary school students in the lower grades. Data was collected through participant observation, in-depth interviews with teachers and students, and document analysis such as storybooks and learning activity notes. The research results show that fables and inspirational stories have great potential in shaping children's character. These stories not only provide entertainment but also teach important moral, social, and cultural values. Children learn about kindness, honesty, courage, cooperation, and empathy through the characters in the stories. In addition, stories also stimulate children's imagination, creativity, and critical thinking skills. From an epistemological perspective, children construct knowledge about morality through a process of social constructivism. They interact with stories, discuss with peers, and receive feedback from teachers. This process allows children to reflect on the actions of characters in the story and relate them to their own lives. This study suggests that fables and inspirational stories be integrated more systematically into the elementary school curriculum. Teachers can use stories as a starting point for class discussions, writing activities, or group projects. In addition, parents can also play an active role in reading stories to children at home and discussing the values contained therein.

Keywords: Fables, inspirational stories, character development, elementary school children, social constructivism.

1. Introduction

Education is a learning journey that never stops. Through education, we develop from curious children into mature, responsible and independent individuals. More than just understanding theories or formulas, education also plays an important role in shaping a person's personality, life principles, and perspective on the world.

National Education System Law no. 20 of 2003 Chapter II article 3 reads "National Education functions to develop abilities and shape the character and civilization of a dignified nation in order to educate the life of the nation, aiming to develop the potential of students to become human beings who believe in and are devoted to God Almighty, have noble character, healthy, knowledgeable, capable, creative, independent, and a democratic and responsible citizen." So, one of the main tasks of educators is to make the nation's life intelligent, by planting and cultivating character and passing on cultural values in life. In this regard, various methods must be taken so that the educational goals to be achieved and the national character that is expected can be developed in children's minds. (Cholifah Tur Rosidah, 2017)

Education for Early Childhood is very important to implement because education for Early Childhood is the initial foundation for the formation of complete human character. Therefore, character education is now very necessary not only at school, but also at home and in the community. So it really needs to be formed for the survival of this nation. "Character education is education for 237 million Indonesian population " However, character is the key to a person's success.

Character education is one of the efforts to realize character formation in children or the nation's generation with noble morals. It is very important to instill positive character in children from an early age, through words or actions that can be modeled by parents, teachers and people in the surrounding environment. This positive character cultivation must be done continuously. The results of cultivating these characters will not be seen quickly, but will take quite a long time. Therefore, character education must be carried out from an early age, so that when they grow up, children can become a generation with character. (Sri Jamilah, 2023)

Dr. Siti Fatimah Soenaryo said that the scope of character education includes thinking, exercise, heart and will. Thinking is intelligent, critical, creative, innovative, curious, open-minded, productive, science and technology oriented and reflective. Sports are clean and healthy, disciplined, sporty, tough, reliable, resilient, friendly, cooperative, determinative, competitive, cheerful and persistent. Exercise the heart, namely being faithful and devout, honest, trustworthy, fair, responsible, empathetic, brave to take risks, never give up, willing to make sacrifices, and have a patriotic spirit. Meanwhile, feelings are friendly, mutually respectful, tolerant, caring, willing to help, nationalistic, prioritizing the public interest, proud to use Indonesian language and products, dynamic, hard working and have a work ethic. (Siti Fatimah Sunaryo. 2011. PAUD as the Main Door to Building Character Nation. December 28, 2011)

Character education is not just about teaching what is right and what is wrong. More than that, according to Sarwiji Suwandi (2013:3) character education instills habits (habituation) about what is good so that students become understanding (cognitive) about what is right and wrong, able to feel (affective) good values and can do them (psychomotor). So character education emphasizes habits that are continuously practiced and the ultimate goal of character education is to increase goodness in students. (Suwandi, Sarwiji. 2013)

This makes us aware that instilling character education from an early age is an absolute necessity. Fairy tales are an alternative that can be taken to improve positive character in students. Fairy tales support students) to imagine interesting characters and plots, so that students tend to be inspired by the messages that fairy tales convey, thus forming students' characters. (Maulidia, 2024)

Apart from that, some of the benefits of storytelling are that it can increase children's intelligence because every child can imagine, increase intelligence, strengthen relationships, instill love, provide moral messages and new knowledge as a means of instilling character in children. Storytelling or storytelling activity is a natural cultural practice and is best given to children from an early age. Storytelling or telling about "something", can be done in many ways to make the story more interesting and lively, for example with sound animation through information technology applications or the help of traditional props. (Siti Fadiryana Fitroh, 2015)

2. Research Methods

The method for compiling research articles related to Character Development through Fairy Tales at SD Negeri 1 Semedo was prepared using qualitative methods. The initial step taken in preparing a research article is filling out a questionnaire. With the qualitative method, the first step begins with planning regarding the questionnaire design. In this step, the questionnaire is designed with structured questions that reflect character development through fairy tales in elementary schools. The next step is selecting appropriate respondents and planning logistics related to the process of filling out the questionnaire, including the School Principal and Teacher Staff. After the data is collected, the next step is qualitative data analysis. It involves grouping and categorizing the responses given by respondents.

3. Results and Discussion

Student Characters at SDN 1 Semedo

Semedo Village is located to the west of Pekuncen sub-district. The area is mountainous, most of the population are farmers and brown sugar makers. The natural mountain environment and far from the hustle and bustle of the city has a good impact on the character of the students here. However, as time goes by, gadgets are starting to influence the character of children who were previously innocent and honest, helpful, polite and well-mannered, now they are starting to turn into selfish individuals, their manners are starting to wane. There are even some children who start acting naughty towards their friends.

As initial data, researchers conducted interviews first. The interview guide carried out by the researcher is to ask questions about character education which is currently less ingrained in children, as well as to parents who will later be asked for responses about their children at home. The interview used in this research is a semi-structured interview or the researcher uses an interview question guide, but the scope of the material will expand when the interview takes place with the source without having to adhere to the interview guide.

The study uses a qualitative approach. Sampling used purposive sampling research sampling. in engineering Location of SD Negeri 1 Semedo, Korwilcam Dindik Pekuncen. (W Wahyuni, 2019).

Fairy tales and Inspirational Stories as a Method of Character Development.

Observations were carried out by distributing a questionnaire in the form of a Google Form link to respondents in the form of 4 question items with alternative answers in the form of YES or NO. The respondents specifically selected were the principal and teaching staff at SD Negeri 1 Semedo. The results obtained from the respondents' answers are as follows.

Table 1 Questions about Trust

Respondents	Yes	No
8	6	2

Table 2 Questions about Benefits

Respondents	Yes	No
8	8	0

Table 3 Questions about the Mandate

Respondents	Yes	No
8	8	0

Table 4 Question about Effectiveness

Respondents	Yes	No
8	5	3

Based on table 1, the results of observations from 8 respondents, 6 respondents answered "Yes" to questions related to the level of belief that character development can be done and can be formed through fairy tales. Storytelling activities are often carried out, especially in lower grades. Various stories can be told to students, especially fairy tales with values that students can emulate. Basically, character formation in students cannot be done in a short time because proper techniques are needed to form it.

Fairy tales are a fun way to build children's character. Having a message or moral message is a core component of fairy tales, according to the Language Center (2003:167). Fairy tales have moral values that students can learn, so they can be used as a means to shape their character. There are many benefits that can be obtained from fairy tales, including: (1) providing teaching about good character to students (2) instilling reading habits in students (3) developing imagination in students.

Based on table 2, the results of observations from 8 respondents, overall

answered "Yes" to the question regarding the benefits of fairy tales in providing students with an understanding of moral values, developing empathy, and understanding the difference between good and bad actions. . By telling stories, teachers can instill moral values in students. When students listen to or read stories, including folk tales, they can learn from the behavior of the characters in them, thereby helping them understand the difference between good and bad actions and develop a sense of empathy towards other people. This activity is effective in forming children's morality through the examples in the story. To start a good life, students need to have the ability to empathize. Their social-emotional development is greatly influenced by the extent to which they can empathize. This ability is important for their future, because it helps students understand and appreciate differences in wider social life. Empathy is the ability to feel or understand what other people feel, and to put oneself as if they were in someone else's situation. One way to foster a sense of empathy is through fables. Instilling the value of empathy in students from elementary school is very important so that they can develop and carry this value to the next level of education. Fables play an important role in instilling moral principles that will influence student behavior in the future.

Based on table 3, the results of observations from 8 respondents, overall answered "Yes" to the question regarding the mandate of fairy tales as a means of teaching students life values.

Fairy tales are an effective way to teach life values to students. This is because fairy tales are able to convey values and beauty through the moral messages contained in them (Habsari, 2017). By listening to advice directly through stories, students are invited to reflect, learn lessons, and understand positive moral messages. The messages in fairy tales function as a means of conveying moral values that can help students understand and appreciate important principles in life. Fairy tales can also teach values such as respecting parents, honesty, patience and sincerity. In this way, fairy tales play a role in forming better characters and helping students become more moral individuals in society.

Based on table 4, the results of observations from 8 respondents, there were 5 respondents who answered "Yes" and 3 respondents answered "No" to the question regarding the level of effectiveness of the fairy tale method in character development. Thus, it can be said that 3 out of 8 respondents think that there are more effective methods in developing children's character. However, using fairy tales to shape children's characters has also proven to be quite effective because it can shape their personalities through the understanding gained from the stories. By absorbing the knowledge and moral messages contained in fairy tales, children can increase their understanding of moral values, broaden their knowledge horizons, and internalize good attitudes and behavior.

4. Conclusion

Character education has an important role in preventing bad influences that can threaten the nation's shared values and morality. The use of fairy tales as a method of character development at SDN 1 Samedo shows positive results. Most respondents, including school principals and teachers, agreed that fairy tales are an effective tool for teaching moral values, developing empathy, and distinguishing between good and bad actions. Even though there are other methods that are considered more efficient, fairy tales are still seen as a fun and inspiring approach in forming students' characters. Fairy tales also help students absorb positive values and build a moral personality.

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