

THE ROLE OF READING CORNER IN IMPROVING CREATIVITY AND INDEPENDENCE OF CLASS VIII STUDENTS AT MTs FUTUHIYYAH BANGOREJO

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ABSTRACT

The reading corner is one of the learning facilities in schools which aims to foster interest in reading so that it can have an impact on students' creativity and independence. The aim of this research is to determine the role of reading corners in increasing students' creativity and independence in class VIII MTs Futuhiyyah Bangorejo. This research is descriptive qualitative research that uses a phenomenological approach. The subjects in this research consisted of the principal, 9 teachers, and 20 students class VIII at MTs Futuhiyyah Bangorejo. Data collection uses interviews, observation, and documentation techniques. The data analysis technique uses 3 procedures; data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. The validity of the data in this research is through data triangulation technique. The research results show that reading corners play an important role in increasing students' creativity and independence. This can be seen from the results of the learning evaluation which shows students' creativity, being able to create short stories with their own imagination, being able to summarize reading books by paying attention to instructions and important points in the reading, and being able to create works of art from recycled materials. Meanwhile, in terms of independence, students are more confident in expressing opinions, can complete assignments on time, and are responsible for neatness and cleanliness of the reading corner.

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INTRODUCTION

The government is currently promoting a School Literacy Movement (GLS) program. GLS is a business or activity that is participatory in nature involving school members, academics, publishers, mass media and the community (Riswakhyuningsih, 2018) . GLS is an activity of reading, paying attention, writing and accommodating so that it can produce a work. The stages of implementing GLS can foster interest in reading, starting with 15 minutes of habitual reading, improving literacy skills by responding to enrichment books, and using enrichment books and reading strategies in all subjects (Basis, 2016) .

GLS is actualized by state and private schools in various aspects. One form of this is by providing a reading corner in the classroom as a means for students to get used to doing literacy activities. The reading corner is an important element

in each class. The reading corner is an extension of the function of the school library, namely bringing books closer to students. The books available in the reading corner are not only textbooks but also non-subject books. Through reading activities you will improve understanding of words and improve thinking skills, increase creativity and also get acquainted with new ideas (Afriati et al., 2021).

The existence of a reading corner can be used by students as the closest reading facility, as the closest reading material and also as a comfortable and attractive place to increase interest in reading (Nurazizah, 2023). The reading corner aims to introduce various reading sources to students as learning resources that provide a pleasant experience (Riswakhayuningsih, 2018). It is hoped that students' literacy skills can be honed with the presence of adequate reading corner facilities and infrastructure. One of the schools that carries out literacy activities by providing a reading corner is MTs Futuhiyyah Bangorejo, located in Banyuwangi Regency. MTs Futuhiyyah Bangorejo students, especially in class VIII, are still considered passive students and depend on the teacher. The preliminary study conducted showed that students were less active and less confident in expressing opinions due to their lack of insight. Students tend to be monotonous in completing assignments and cannot determine the direction and goals of their learning. This makes students' creativity and independence in learning very minimal.

Basically, every human being has their own level of creativity. Interacting can support the development of creativity, so that the level of student creativity depends on the learning environment they occupy (Setyowati & Widana, 2016). Apart from that, learning independence is also a necessity in learning so that students can complete assignments, believe in their own abilities, and not depend on other people (Nasution, 2008). Based on this explanation, the presence of a reading corner at MTs Futuhiyyah Bangorejo, especially in class VIII, is expected to increase students' creativity and independence.

The aim of this research is to find out and describe whether there is an effect of implementing a reading corner on increasing student creativity and independence. This research focuses on increasing students' creativity and independence through reading corners. Based on this background, the author is interested in conducting research with the title "The Role of the Reading Corner Room in Increasing the Creativity and Independence of Class VIII Students at MTs Futuhiyyah Bangorejo".

RESEARCH METHODS

This research is descriptive qualitative research, with a phenomenological approach. Phenomenology is an approach that views events with awareness and full of meaning so as to form an experience for individuals who seem to see and feel the reality of an object (Khasanah et al., 2023). This research aims to describe the experiences of research subjects regarding the role of reading corners in increasing students' creativity and independence. The object of this research was the reading corner in class VIII of MTs Futuhiyyah Bangorejo, while the subjects of this research were 20 class VIII students, along with the principal and 9 madrasa teachers of MTs Futuhiyyah Bangorejo.

Data collection techniques were carried out using interview techniques, observation techniques and documentation. The interview technique was carried out face to face between the researcher and the source and used a structured interview technique. The observation carried out is participant observation, where the researcher is involved and is in the midst of the research subject. Documentation was obtained from interactions with teachers and students who were directly involved in the research. The data obtained was analyzed using 3 data analysis procedures, namely: 1) data reduction, 2) data presentation, and 3) drawing conclusions. Validation of the data in this research through triangulation techniques. The triangulation technique is carried out by checking data from the same source with different techniques (Khasanah et al., 2023).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Madrasah Tsanawiyah is a formal education unit that provides general education equivalent to junior high school. MTs Futuhiyyah has a reading corner room program which was established in 2020. Those responsible for the existence of this reading corner room are of course all school personnel, including the madrasa head, teachers and students. The establishment of this reading corner was based on the fact that students were lazy about reading, students were encouraged

to be less creative, students were dependent, students did not respond to the teacher's explanations, apart from that, students were more likely to ask questions before reading even though what was being asked was already in the book.

Literacy activities that take place in the class VIII reading corner include reading the Asmaul Husna, getting used to reading 15 minutes before class starts, returning books to their places, exchanging books from class to class and renewing books from the library, and decorating the reading corner as attractively as possible. The reading corner is also used by teachers in several tasks such as students writing short stories, *summarizing* books, making paintings, calligraphy and collages from recycled materials, the results of which are used as reading corner decorations as a form of *reward* for students. Literacy activities that are short, but frequent and periodic are more effective than long periods that are rarely carried out (Budiharto et al., 2018) .

According to Sitepu (2019) stated that creative students have five cognitive characteristics, namely;

- a) the ability to think fluently (*fluency*); the ability to generate many ideas, express many alternative answers, many problem solutions, many insights, and many questions fluently.
- b) Ability to think flexibly (*flexibility*); Able to provide an interpretation of an image, story or problem. Providing thoughts from a different point of view.
- c) The ability to think original (*originality*); the ability to generate ideas to create something new and unique that no one else has thought of.
- d) Ability to assess (*evaluation*); the ability to give consideration to one's own views and determine one's own opinion regarding a matter.
- e) Deep ability (*elaboration*) is the ability to develop an idea so that it not only becomes better but becomes more interesting.

The results of interviews with school principals and 9 Madrasah teachers showed that a reading corner in class VIII can increase students' creativity because the presence of a reading corner creates a high level of curiosity, has initiative in learning, and makes students' imaginations expand, thereby increasing understanding in reading and increasing knowledge. This is in line with the opinion of 20 students who stated that the existence of a reading corner room can increase vocabulary, improve the ability to speak more fluently, be able to think critically, imagine lots of ideas, improve writing skills, and increase concentration . This is in line with what Patiung (2016) said. that a reading corner can increase insight and knowledge, increase focus and concentration, practice writing well, increase vocabulary, improve social relations, and can help us connect with the outside world .

The results of the learning evaluation carried out by the teacher by giving the task of writing a short story and *summarizing* the learning also showed good results. The teacher assigns students to write a short story about a royal fantasy story, where the assessment indicators are the plot of the story, writing vocabulary, the theme of the story, and the uniqueness of the short story. The results showed that 75% of students were able to write short stories and even retell the storyline with good, standard and clear vocabulary. This shows that students have the ability to think original, create unique new stories based on their imagination according to the cognitive characteristics of creative students proposed by Sitepu (2019) .

resume activity in the class VIII reading corner, most teachers stated that students were able to *summarize* the books they read by paying attention to the important points that had been instructed. Students are able to put forward other examples of what they have learned, and practice the results of *the resume* that has been carried out. Pinatih & Putra (2021) , stated that the task of making *a resume* or short story from the books they read can increase students' creativity because students are free to argue about the books they read and can develop critical thinking.

Teachers also stimulate students' creativity by giving assignments to make paintings, calligraphy and collages from used goods or recycled materials, references for which students can find in the class VIII reading corner provided. As a result, 85% of students obtained a score above kkm 75 where the assessment was taken into consideration from the aspects of neatness of the final result, harmony of the colors used, and conformity of the results with the instructions

given by the teacher. Mustain et al. (2023) , said that increasing students' creativity can be supported by creating product creations from recycled lime or waste.

In the aspect of independence, according to Pratiwi & Laksmiwati (2016) , students are said to be independent if they can manage their own study time, do not depend on other people, can regulate themselves when asking for help from others and when they do not need help from others in learning. This statement is in line with that made by Laia et al. (2022) , independence is a character that students have to have more confidence in themselves and try not to depend on other people. Based on this explanation, it can be concluded that students are said to be independent if they are able to complete assignments without the help of others, are on time in collecting, and are confident in their abilities.

Literacy activities that take place in the reading corner have a role in increasing student independence. Most of the teachers said that students have a sense of responsibility for the books they have read , students are more confident in their abilities , dare to make decisions, do assignments without dependence on friends and complete assignments on time . Students also feel that having a reading corner fosters an attitude of responsibility by returning books that have been read to their original place, doing assignments independently and on time. In line with the opinion of Nurhayati (2020) , students are said to be independent if they are able to come to school on time and can complete assignments according to the time given.

The results of the learning evaluation conducted by the teacher also showed that the majority of students were able to complete assignments independently without the help of others. Students carry out their obligations without waiting for instructions from the teacher. This can be seen from students who get used to reading for 15 minutes without instructions and tidy up the reading corner after use. Students also use the reading corner to complete assignments during free time so that assignments given by the teacher can be completed on time.

CLOSING

1. Student creativity and independence in the classroom is an important element in learning activities. Students' creativity and independence can be fostered by utilizing the reading corner space in the classroom. The reading corner can be a comfortable and easy-to-reach place for students to look for *references* , find new ideas or insights in completing assignments, and increase their knowledge from various available reading sources.
2. The reading corner space in class VIII MTs Futuhiyyah Bangorejo is well utilized by teachers and students to stimulate students' creativity and independence. This can be seen from the results of the learning evaluation which shows students' creativity, being able to create short stories with their own imagination, being able to *summarize* reading books by paying attention to instructions and important points in the reading, and being able to create works of art from recycled materials. Meanwhile, in terms of independence, students are more confident in expressing opinions, can complete assignments on time, and are responsible for the neatness and cleanliness of the reading corner.
3. The advice that researchers can give to schools is that good cooperation and coordination is needed between the policies of school principals, teachers and students in the use of reading corner rooms so that the existence of reading corner rooms can be widely utilized and the number of students regenerate afterwards. Schools can also collaborate with regional libraries so that the availability of reading books is more varied.

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