# Experiential Learning: A Reflective Study on the Implementation of Acceleration Model in Literacy Education Program

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Abstract: Since the 1970s in Indonesia, the illiteracy eradication program or movement has been and continues to be perceived as an international movement which only requires implementation at a national level. Because of such a perception, its implementation is still limited to certain aspects. This is due to the fact that not all elements of society have the same level of appreciation or understanding. The duration of learning is only two to three days (6-9 hours) a week, while the society's learning preparedness and capacity is more than that. The role of a tutor is concentrated on learning tasks in groups (the learning teaching process), therefore, it may not fit a learning strategy that optimizes the learning potential in the environment. The lesson itself did not consider the gap of experience and capability of the students. The achievement of the Literacy Competence Standard is still concentrated on the aspects of reading, writing, and numerics, instead of being projected to the realization of learning independence and sustainability. This study used a research and development method, which combined qualitative and quantitative approaches. Data collection maximized analysis on the model development documents as well as validation through interviews with students, tutors, school management, and the model developer's team.

**Keywords**: Acceleration model, experiential learning, reflection and literacy.

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

The learning paradigm of the 21<sup>st</sup> century affirms the view of learning as an essence of life, one of the human identities, and even a human right. In his macro view, Sutaryat Trisnamansyah (2008) asserts that education is equal with life itself. The educational activities (learning) no longer meant merely possessing some stocks of knowledge (an act of having); nowadays, learning activities focus on improving oneself (a process of being) through self-planning and self-directing. Sodik Kuntoro (2008) argues that the important thing is not only the essence of learning for human life, but also the style of learning or how the concept of learning is viewed.

Building on Paulo Freire's (1972) work, Andrias Harefa (2008) asserted his worries concerning the existence of education in his country (particularly the current schooling system), stating that schools and universities "succeeded" in one thing: producing growing older men, but never creating really growing up people.

In fact, if we looked at the natural essence of learning, there was no reason for humans not to be able and not to have time to learn. To put it more extremely, animals could learn. Rung Kaewdang (2001) explored an efficacious interpretation of learning by reflecting on the experiences of Guru Somporn of Thailand: we could learn from chimpanzees that learned freely and independently, that received attention and care from the teacher that affectionately, tolerantly, openly, imaginatively, innovatively, and creatively trained them.

From the juridical aspect, opinions of some nonformal education experts had been formulated in the preamble of the 1945 Constitution concerning the noble aspiration to educate the country. Education is a basic human right of each and every citizen. Law No. 20 of 2003, reinforced by its various juridical derivatives, provided the foundation of the guarantee for lifelong learning or education for Indonesian citizens.

Although the juridical guarantee of the concept was strict, the fact in the field showed that some people were still unable to get their educational rights, neglected, and illiterate due to various reasons. Sudjana (2002) asserted that illiteracy is a cause, as well as a result, of educational abandonment, poverty, and illness. Illiteracy is a phenomenon in which learning opportunities and potentials are neglected. Illiterate people are abandoned, forsaken, and isolated in the discussion of developmental resources. Illiteracy, no matter how small, has to be eradicated for the sake of human rights, equality, and justice through education for all and by all.

The issue of illiteracy had long been attracting the attention of UNESCO. The achievement of 50% literacy target for adults, particularly women, in 2015 was a realization of the world's determination on education for all as set in Jomtien, Thailand, in 1990. Zainudin Arief (2002) states that, historically, such a commitment first emerged in the Perpolis Declaration of 1975. The determination was then reasserted and reinforced in the Dakar Framework for Action on Education for All, in Senegal in 2000.

To improve the Human Development Index (HDI) through education, the Directorate General of PNFI, which is now PAUDNI of Indonesia Ministry of Education and Culture, had a mission to promote the realization of a literacy education program that could develop literacy competence of all levels of adult illiterate citizens in a wide, fair, and equal state aiming to support the improvement of people's welfare and productivity. One of the ways to realize the mission was through the issuance of the Decree of Directorate General PNFI No. 258/E/MS/2009, dated 3 June 2009, which synchronizes with the Structure of Literacy Education Program, including the Elementary Level (SUKMA I), the Secondary Level (SUKMA II), and the Independent Level (SUKMA III) into the Basic Literacy Education Program and Independent Literacy Program (KUM).

The final goal of these concepts and policies would be formulated in the implementation of the learning program. Environmental scanning (ES), both the natural and social environment, and the ideology of education for all (EFA) were the foundation to develop the accelerated literacy education program. The managerial component of the accelerated literacy education program included various parties interested and involved in the program according to their own position and role, *i.e.* school management, tutor, students' families, social figure, and government official from the education office. The function of the program included optimization of the environment, process-based self-evaluation, and integrated monitoring involving related parties.

The exploratory analysis on the phenomena of the literacy education program in Indonesia, particularly in several regencies in West Java, revealed that the program implementation through optimization of Society's Learning Centre or other parties tended to use conventional patterns, and is yet to optimize the learning pattern oriented on students experiential learning potential, and is still weak in optimizing the learning resources from students' environment. These factors caused the program not to be sustainable, which in turn made the students prone to reverting to their original illiterate state, and made self-directed learning as well as continuous (unsustainable) learning undeveloped.

The wide range of problems of the literacy education program implementation is centred on the undeveloped idea of realizing students' independence and sustainability in learning. Therefore, the problem of this study is formulated as follows: (1) What are the characteristics of accelerated basic literacy education program?, (2) What are the stages of the basic literacy education program implementation in accelerating mastery of basic literacy competence?, (3) How is the implementation of experiential learning in accelerating the mastery of basic literacy competence as a foundation of realizing students' learning independence and sustainability?, (4) How is the overview of students' learning results in the literacy

education program using experiential learning to accelerate the mastery of basic literacy competence?, and (5) What factors support and hinder the experiential learning process in accelerating students' mastery of basic literacy competence?

#### **Theoretical Review**

One of the developed perspectives of learning concepts is based on Ahmad Sanusi's statement (1998) that a person learned not only to gain information, facts, or concepts, but also to develop understanding for himself, to improve his insight and interpretation, and to grow his personality. Sodik Kuntoro (2007), in his andragogy approach, argued that adults viewed education more as activities of cognitive changes, changes of self-realization that promote enrichment, where they see themselves and their lives with new perspectives.

Concerning literacy education, Kusnadi (2005) states that literacy is one of the building blocks of developing language, literature, communication, education, and even culture. One of the philosophical foundations of literacy is the ideological literacy philosophy, which suggested that for literacy education to eradicate illiteracy, it has to be relevant and in line with society's ideology and culture. Barton and Hamilton, in Rassol N (1999), state that literacy was defined as a social practice related with ideology, culture, and politics which involves people in deliberate and reflective action to face daily life situations. Suzana Kindervatter (1997) asserts that a society with these characteristics is an enriched society.

Zainudin Arief (1994) argues that change in the educational paradigm, from a process of knowledge transmission to a process of lifelong discovery of what one needs, indicates that literacy education is closely related to the realization of a country's developmental goals. Furthermore, Zainudin Arif (2002) summarized Fisher's study that investment in the illiteracy eradication program is not a waste; it can provide a good rate of return, particularly on the component of the human development index (HDI). It meant that literacy was one of the HDI indicators for the education variable.

At micro level, learning in literacy education could provide meaning to the lives of students if the learning is designed not only to achieve reading, writing, and numerical mastery, but also to explore experiences so that the students could be independent and self-directing in their learning. The concept of Self-Directed Learning (SDL) was explored by Knowles (1975), Hiemstra (1991), Gibbons (2002), Haris Mujiman (2007), and Hiemstra and Brockett (2012). When the foundations for learning independence had been formed, it was assumed that learning sustainability (continuous learning) could be guarranted.

In the context of nonformal education, Mustofa Kamil (2007) asserted that independence is the main measure of each program development. Therefore, the curriculum of nonformal education specifically focuses on the growth and development of independency values of each student. Without such objectives, each nonformal education program would be meaningless and the education program would be aimless.

The andragogy assumption (Knowles, 2005), comprised of self-concept, experience, learning readiness, and learning orientation is an intrinsic foundation that strengthens the belief that students could learn acceleratedly. The conception became the pillar o developing experiential learning, as done by Weil and McGill, Kolb and Pray, in Jarvis (2004). It is also true for the concept underlying the implementation of adult learning strategies and methods, as stated by Ishak Abdulhak (1996). Concerning the family accompaniment as a learning environment, several analysis of social environment determinants in forming personality were referred to, including the concepts developed by Sargent S. (1968), Soekanto S. (2005), Djudju Sudjana (2010), and Setiadi and Kolip (2013).

#### 2. RESEARCH METHOD

At macro level, this study is designed in form of a qualitative study, as a critical reflection using the metaanalysis technique on the process and results of model development. The methodology of its development was the research and development design (R and D), with analysis and tests using the One-Group Pretest-Posttest Design), and did not use a control group. Sugiono (2007) asserted that this kind of research aims to answer specific questions concerning practical problems through applied research, which are used to improve educational practices.

This study is developed in the setting of the educational program implemented in Subang, Bandung Barat, and Cianjur Regencies of West Java Province, focusing on the cases of Basic Literacy Education Acceleration model implementation. The research subjects for this study included students, tutors, mentors, students' families and/or close relatives, social figures, related government officials, and the program management team. The data collection techniques included the study of the model development documents, and validation through interviews with informants involved in the development of the model.

#### 3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The Characteristics of the Learning Program in the Implementation of the Acceleration Model of Basic Literacy Education Program.

The findings of this study reveal that the accelerated basic literacy education program had unique characteristics based on the learning aspects, involving eight main components displayed in the following figure:

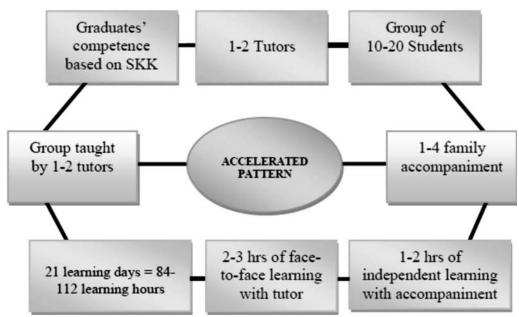


Figure 1: Characteristics of Accelerated Basic Literacy Education Program

The findings of the study are displayed in Figure 1, providing a schematic explanation related with the unique characteristics of accelerated basic literacy education program. First, graduates' competencies are based on the basic literacy competence standard (SKK). Second, the use of mother tongue (Sundanese) as the working language formed a strong foundation in learning and served as a facilitator in learning Indonesian. Gradually, the students were urged to use both languages in the context of lifelong learning. Third, the organizational pattern of the students was developed using groups, each group consisting of 10-20 students. Fourth, each group was taught by 1-2 tutors from the students' living environment. Fifth, each group was accompanied by 1-4 people from the families of the students, including the nuclear family and the extended family; i.e. husbands, wives, fathers, mothers, children, aunts, uncles, cousins, and even close neighbours of the students. Sixth, the duration of learning was 84-112 learning hours, totalling to 21 learning days. Seventh, the face-to-face learning pattern occurred for 2-3 hours a day, under the direction of the literacy tutors. Eight, the independent learning pattern occurred for 1-2 hours a day, facilitated by the accompaniments.

Stages of the Basic Literacy Education Program Implementation to Accelerate the Mastery of Literacy Competence.

At macro level, the study found that the implementation of the basic literacy education program to accelerate the mastery of literacy competence occurred in four main stages: the preparation (pre-condition) stage, the implementation (learning process) stage, the program monitoring and evaluation stage, and the follow up (strengthening and sustaining) stage.

# **Preparation (pre-condition) stage**

Activities in this stage included: (1) Internal Coordination of the development team, covered the implementation consolidation under the coordination of the developer, the collaboration between the researcher and supporting team, including the academic coordinator, administrative coordinator, and field coordinator, and the development of design and instruments of the program; (2) External Coordination, aimed to gain moral support (legitimation) for the program implementation from the regional government, regional education office, supervisors, regional officials, social figures, and related social institutions; (3) Tutor Recruitment, recruited tutors from the surrounding environment, considering that the learning was local-context based; (4) Accompaniment Recruitment, along with and/or by tutors; (5) Tutor Training and accompaniment orientation; (6) Student Verification and conditioning, conducted together with local officials (Head of RT, RW, Village, and other officials), social institution management, social figures, and students' families and/or neighbours, resulted in data and information concerning illiterate citizen and their characteristics; and (7) Facilitation of Supporting Elements, began with an environmental scanning (ES) process aimed to explore the problems and environmental potentials, to the pre-condition of the learning environment through meeting up with the students, families, and environmental elements to provide moral support and motivation for the students.

# Implementation (learning process) stage

*First*; it was facilitated by tutors and accompanying family members for 21 learning days and it included the following activities:

Learning design. Tutors and accompanying family members conducted an identification of students' interest, learning needs, and literacy competence; formulation of learning objectives, design, and contract; development of learning media and materials.

Learning implementation. The learning was conducted every day, 2-3 hours/day for 21 days. The thematic competence practice was conducted outside the 21 days learning schedule. The tutors with accompanying family members implemented varied learning methods, integrated writing, reading, and numerical learning with students' daily experience and problems, as an implementation of experiential learning. The tutors and accompanying family members used mother tongue to facilitate the students in comprehending materials in Indonesian language and in interacting with tutors.

The material delivered originated from students' experience, habits, or daily activities. The learning process centred on varied literacy competences, so the learning implemented individual guidance and peer learning. The implementation of the learning strategies included: (a) integrating reading, writing, and numerical learning with students' lives; (b) brainstorming; (c) practicing cooking recipes together; (d) giving homework (tasks); (e) deciding on learning media and materials together. The learning principles applied included: (a) local context, (b) local design, and (c) participative principles. The learning methods implemented were varied: (a) structure analysis and synthesis (SAS) method; (b) key words method; (c) association method; (d) global or key sentence method; and (e) alphabet method. The learning media was used thematically, adjusted with the environment. Some of the media were developed by tutors, including pictured-alphabet posters, white board, KTP, farming tools and equipment, family identification form, personal information form.

Learning evaluation. Pre-test, to reveal the initial competence of reading, writing, and numerical, was conducted during the learning contract. The process evaluation included the evaluation of individual progress and learning group progress. The aim of evaluation was to gain information concerning the

learning process, and to improve and fix the current learning process. Final evaluation (learning result/post-test) involved basic literacy competence test, translated into Sundanese. The aim of final evaluation was to gain information on the achievement or completion of reading, writing, and numerical competencies, including the basic literacy education components of reading, writing, and numerical.

Second; Independent Accompaniment by students' mentors for 1-2 hours a day. This activity was conducted outside the learning process; it was conducted in the students' house or in other places agreed by the students and the mentors.

## **Program Monitoring and Evaluation**

Monitoring was conducted by the program management, development team, and non-formal education supervisor official. Monitoring and evaluation aimed to monitor and revise the program.

# Follow Up (strengthening and sustaining)

The follow up program was designed through a life skills program focusing on vocational skills adjusted with the local natural resources and human resources potentials. It aimed to strengthen and maintain (sustain) the program so that the literate students do not revert to being illiterate. Several follow up programs related to sustaining the program were Independent Literacy Program (KUM), Society's Reading House (TBM), and other life skills programs.

Implementation of the Experiential Learning Pattern to Accelerate the Mastery of Basic Literacy Competence.

As revealed in the learning process stage, the implementation of experiential learning pattern to accelerate the students' mastery of basic literacy competence was analyzed based on the experiential learning cycle suggested by Kolb and Pray in Jarvis (2004). The steps of this process included:

# **Concrete stage**

Tutors aided students to explore life experiences in their daily lives, particularly those related to their working activities. The stimulated life became the building block for tutors in providing experiential learning treatment to students. Students responded to tutors' stimulations.

Based on the analysis on the tutors' activity records; in this stage they conditioned the students by coaching, directing, and talking heart to heart concerning the students' daily activities, results achieved, obstacles, problems they frequently found in their activities, interests, aspiration, and dreams they wanted to realize. In this stage, the tutor did not talk about learning or reading, writing, and numerical skills.

#### 4. OBSERVATIONS AND REFLECTIONS STAGE

Tutors enabled students to re-examine and reflect on the experiences in their daily lives. The students chose experiences and related them with tutors' simulations concerning the materials closely related with basic literacy education, including reading, writing, and numerical aspects.

# Formulation of Abstract Concepts and Generalization stage

Under the direction of tutors, the students developed the examination and reflection of experiences in a formulation of concept and even generalization. These concepts and generalization convinced the students that they possessed potentials to improve their reading, writing, and numerical competence. Through tutors' facilitation, the students became convinced that the reading, writing, and numerical competence were in fact a part of their daily activities, so that they would not have any difficulties to improve those skills based on the basic literacy competence standard.

#### The testing implications of concepts on new situations stage.

Through tutors' direction and facilitation, in this stage the students conducted reading, writing, and numerical learning activities as an attempt to test their conclusion and belief. Tutors provided simulations

of basic literacy competence based on the literacy learning stages and paid attention on the characteristics and initial competence of the students. As the study identified, tutors implemented the techniques of key words reading, basic writing, syllables, and other techniques in developing students' reading, writing, and numerical competence.

The Learning Result of literacy education program with accelerated experiential learning students.

The study found the development of basic students' competence from interviews and field notes from participative observation. From the interviews and field notes, there were several information and statements as follows: basic students had varied characteristics, both in their reading, writing, and numerical competence and in their socialization skills. Concerning literacy competence, several students could not read, write, and compute at all. Some students knew several letters and numbers, although they had problems with combining the letters into words and sentences. In socializing, some students were not skilful; among others because he felt inferior due to his inability to read, write, and compute, so that he closed himself from his surroundings.

Gradually, the condition changed to be better, particularly for the literacy competence. Each student had a significant improvement, from the state of not knowing letters to the state of being able to produce words and sentences according to the basic literacy competence standard (SKK). The researcher monitored this progress day by day, in which the students' writing became more eligible as they try harder to write neatly. Furthermore, students' reading ability also improved as they diligently practiced at home, never gave up, and always received motivation from tutors and their families.

In general, students' basic literacy competence improved well. It was revealed through analysis on each note in their writing book or portfolio, evaluation during the learning process, and the result of the post-test using basic literacy competence test. Students' social communication also developed because the tutors, using optimization process and students' basic experience, frequently create small groups to actively discuss the learning process. By doing so, tutors indirectly developed students' sense of social communication and sense of belonging. Students' who felt inferior received strong support and motivation from the tutors and their peers to compete and learn together. The students always help each other.

Tutors stated that students' enthusiasm in learning was high, as evident in their daily presence. Besides, during the learning process, the students paid full attention and focused on the learning. Students did not feel embarrassed or reluctant to correct anyone who made mistake.

Specifically, the overview of the experiential learning acceleration of basic literacy education program students' learning result included the development of reading, writing, and numerical competence in three weeks (21 days) could be presented in the following graphs. The first was the overview of reading competence development, in the following graph 1:

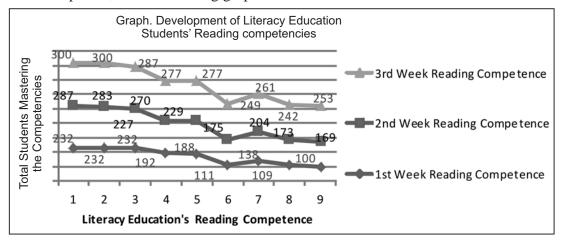


Figure 1

**Source:** Result of daily evaluation process, per week.

# Notes of Basic Literacy Education, Reading Competence:

- Able to recognize, read, and remember vowels (a, e, i, o, and u)
- Able to recognize, read, and remember consonants, except q, v, x, and z
- Able to combine letters into words without helps from others
- Sort words into syllables
- Sort syllables into letters
- Read one cooking recipe
- Read sentences he spoke and sort them into words
- Read simple text without help from others
- Read direction correctly and fluently

The horizontal variable (X) explained about the reading competence determined based on the basic literacy competence standard. The vertical variable (Y) depicted the number of students mastering the reading competence each week. The table presentation of the data could be seen on appendix.

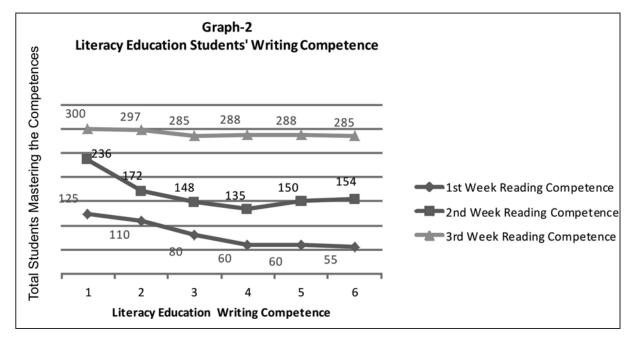


Figure 2

**Source:** Evaluation result of daily process, per week

# **Note on Literacy Education, Writing Competence:**

- Able to use writing utensils correctly without shaking
- Able to write own name and family members' name without help
- Able to write one complete cooking recipe
- Write sentences he spoke and sort them into words
- Write simple text without help from others
- Fill up a form correctly

The horizontal variable (X) explained about the writing competence determined based on the basic literacy competence standard. The vertical variable (Y) depicted the number of students mastering the writing competence each week. The table presentation of the data could be seen on appendix.

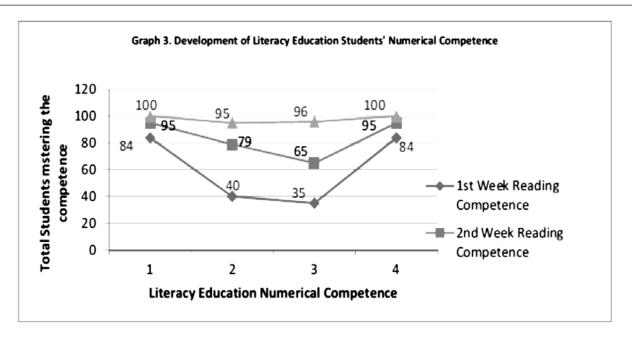


Figure 3

Source: Evaluation result of daily process, per week

#### **Notes on Literacy Education, Numerical Competence:**

- Count letters of words he wrote
- Know the concept of numbers and numerical symbols of 1-100
- Understand the concept of time
- Understand the concept of currency nominal

The horizontal variable (X) explained about the numerical competence determined based on the basic literacy competence standard. The vertical variable (Y) depicted the number of students mastering the numerical competence each week. The table presentation of the data could be seen on appendix.

The above graph showed the development of students' competence in 21 days. It depicted the number of students mastering the literacy competence each week. We could see from the graph the improvement of the number of students mastering basic literacy competence, from 300 people, almost 90% could be categorized as mastering basic literacy competence.

Supporting and hindering factors of experiential learning implementation to accelerate students' basic literacy competence mastery

#### **Supporting factors**

Some aspects considered supporting factors included: (1) the awareness and need of learning in the students' part, indicated by their not feeling ashamed learning with tutors; (2) big support from families for the students to have great motivation to learn; (3) students felt confident and comfortable in learning; (4) students did not have to wait for tutors when facing difficulties in learning because there were family accompaniments; (5) students were not reluctant to ask mentors because the mentors were their close relatives; (6) the availability of reading materials from family accompaniments; (7) through collaboration of tutors and family members, the learning achievement became optimum; (8) students could explore themselves and their own knowledge as learning stimulation; (9) with the achieved literacy competence, students' confidence increased; (19) the insights of family accompaniment increased through their interacting with students in the learning process; (11) family accompaniment had strong motivation to improve knowledge, as they were challenged by students.

#### **Hindering Factors**

The hindering factors included: (1) tendency of tiredness and boredom of the tutor in helping students; (2) tutors' emotional state was not positive as they often felt angry when students had difficulties understanding the material; (3) some students were initially ashamed and not confident; (4) there was no reward system for tutors, management, or family accompaniment.

#### 5. CONCLUSION

The accelerated basic literacy education program revealed eight main characteristics: 1) the graduates' competencies referred to the basic Literacy Competence Standard (SKK), 2) the use of mother tongue (Sundanese) as the working language formed a strong foundation in learning and served as a facilitator in learning Indonesian language and basic literacy competence, 3) students were organized in groups of 10-20 people, 4) each group was taught by 1-2 tutors from the students' home environment, 5) each group was accompanied by 1-4 mentors from the students' families, 6) the duration of learning was 84-112 learning hours or equal to 21 days, 7) the pattern of face-to-face learning was 2-3 hours per day with tutors' guidance, 8) the pattern of independent learning was 1-2 hours per day with family accompaniment.

The implementation of basic literacy education program to accelerate the mastery of literacy competences was through the stages of: 1) Preparation (pre-condition stage), including internal coordination of the development team, external coordination, tutor recruitment, accompaniment recruitment with and/or by tutor, tutor training, verification and pre-condition of students, facilitation and advocating of supporting elements in the students' environment; 2) Implementation (learning process), comprised of facilitation by tutor and accompaniment for 21 learning days, involving main activities, planning, implementation, and evaluation, as well as accompanied independent learning for 1-2 hours per day; 3) Monitoring and Evaluation of Accelerated Program; and 4) Follow Up (strengthening and sustaining).

The Implementation of Experiential Learning Pattern in Accelerating the Mastery of Basic Literacy Competence occurred in, and reflected, four stages: the concrete stage (real experience exploration and daily life activities), the observation and reflection stage, the formulation of abstract concepts and generalization stage, and the testing implication of concepts on new situation stage.

The result of students' learning was identified through two aspects: the learning result related with (1) motivation and learning style and the learning result related with (2) achievement of basic literacy competence. Concerning the motivation and learning style, there were changes in terms of stronger motivation and learning style that indicated a shift towards being independent students. Meanwhile, concerning the achievement of literacy competence, a significant change occurred in terms of the mastery of basic literacy competence.

Several factors were considered instrumental in the implementation of accelerated program. The dominant factors comprised three big aspects: (1) the aspect of internal characteristics of students; (2) the aspect of learning environment, particularly the characteristics of families, availability and roles of management, tutor, and accompaniment, involvement of social figure and government official related with the program; and (3) the aspect of management, concerned with the functions of management, particularly the functions of planning, organization or coordination, monitoring, development, evaluation, and follow up. The accelerated implementation of basic literacy education program was significantly effective in improving students' basic literacy competence (SKK) mastery. It could be assumed to be the foundation to develop students' learning independency and sustainability.

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