

USING FOLKTALES TO STRENGTHEN LITERACY IN PAPUA

Wigati Yektiningtyas-Modouw
Cenderawasih University, Papua

Sri R.W. Karna
UNICEF, Papua

ABSTRACT

Rural and remote Papua and West Papua are among the most important regions for Indonesia to achieve the second MDG on primary education with equity. Both provinces have gross, net enrolment and literacy rates which barely touch the national averages. Given the distinct political, socio-cultural, and geographical aspects of Papua and West Papua from the rest of the country, central government provides greater autonomy for local policies. In that light, Papua and West Papua have launched the Affirmative Education Policy Document which outlines key strategies to increase access and quality for indigenous Papuans and population in rural and remote areas.

A fundamental concern about the quality of education, acknowledged in the policy document is the high rate of illiteracy among indigenous Papuans and population in rural and remote areas. A number of recent reports confirm the high illiteracy levels and reiterate the concern that illiteracy rates are not only high among rural and remote out-of-school school children and youth but also among children enrolled in primary schools.

A number of factors have been identified as contributing to illiteracy rates and poor education attainment in basic education for children in Papua and West Papua. They include: low quality pre and in-service teacher trainings, acute teacher absenteeism, and infrequent and poor supervision of schools and teachers. An additional significant and challenging factor is the serious lack of teaching and learning materials that reflect indigenous Papuan realities or build on the local-context in the creation of primary school literacy programs. This last factor has been said to create an environment where children (new learners) feel alienated from the materials presented with low motivation to learn. Because the current literacy materials for the early grades are predominantly non indigenous and generically Indonesian many young indigenous Papuan children are becoming disengaged from early learning, dropping out or just moving through school classes but not mastering literacy (and numeracy skills) and never realizing their learning potential or their right to an education. More recent programmes generated through partnerships with different organization have recognized this significant gap in context appropriate materials and explored and implemented new models and approaches that show some potential for positive change.

One such initiative has been the development and distribution children books built around native and indigenous local folklores. This development although targeted to specific rural and remote areas has been warmly welcomed by teachers, community leaders, education department officials and children alike. The local books have helped teachers increase children motivation and more importantly their ability to read firstly through developing an appreciation of their own culture and local language. The development of these locally written and beautifully illustrated books is seen as a first step in developing little children's literacy first in their own language in line with the education literature. The inclusion of mother tongue books materials and approaches is intended to increase children's chance to become literate and skilled adults with a strong sense of identity and pride as both Papuan and Indonesian. Papua and West Papua have more than 270 local languages very rich in folklores that have been passed down verbally through generations. A move to an Indonesian only education early grade language programme would threaten not only years of tradition but the future

learning opportunities of many young Papuan children. With more systematic support from local and central governments and stakeholders, this more inclusive and innovative literacy work could lead into a larger movement that contributes significantly to improving literacy rate in Papua.

This paper explores a specific local literacy project and its broader implications for improving rural/remote literacy programs. The paper reviews and makes recommendation for how a more culturally and contextually appropriate literacy programme can be a key strategies to strengthen rural and remote Papuan literacy program as a fundamental requisite for quality primary education.

INTRODUCTION

One day, in 2010, when teaching, I asked one of my students to write something on the white board. Although I helped him with the spelling after five minutes, he had not been able to write anything. I was shocked as it struck me that he was illiterate. I wondered how did this university student make it to this level and still he could not read and write!

Such unfortunate experiences have also been shared by a number of my university colleagues including a story of a new student who could not fill the university admission form.

It is not the authors' intention in this paper to discuss or blame the system of university admission or blame the teaching-learning process in schools in Papua (elementary Schools, Junior High Schools, and Senior High Schools). Rather it is just to underline the significant challenge that Papua still faces with such a significant and wide spread problem of illiteracy.

The National Population Census 2010 shows that the number of illiterate population in Papua is almost one million. This is ironical since according to the census, the total population of Papua is less than three million hence illiteracy is a serious problem and it needs a serious solution. For individuals and institutions government and non-government to keep silent is unhelpful and shirks the responsibility to provide education to children in Papua. Helping illiteracy in Papua will help the next generation of Papuans from being alienated from outside world, knowledge, and technology.

In spite of the high illiteracy rate in Papua, the authors remain optimistic that things can be done to overcome the problem. In 2009, when in Wamena, Jayawijaya Regency, I had a nice talk with an elementary school student who sat on the floor of the school veranda while waiting for her teacher. She told me enthusiastically that she had walked for more than two hours to school to learn mathematics. A similar experience happened in Asologaima. A teacher told me that some of his students got up at 04:00 in the morning, while the parents still slept. They walked to their school for about 2 hours. Some of them did not have their breakfast others ate boiled sweet potato while walking to school. This vibrant energy and "fresh air for education" in Papuan students including their diligence, motivation, and enthusiasm to study at school is waiting to be tapped as one part of the solution to reduce the illiteracy problem in Papua.

Papua lies in the eastern part of Indonesia and consists of two provinces, Papua with Jayapura as the capital and West Papua with Manokwari as the capital. Difficult geography including thick forest, mountains, and big rivers, mean remote areas cannot be reached easily by transportation and walking can take weeks. These hindrances along with no teacher housing in remote areas contribute to high absenteeism rates in teachers those areas¹. The recent Papuan Teacher Absenteeism Report showed that some schools had 0 teachers in attendance while another schools had one teacher teaching six grades (grade 1 to grade 6) at the same time. On average the survey found that in remote and rural areas just under half, 49% of the teachers were absent. This was much higher than for urban areas where it was only 20 % or 1 in 5 teachers absent. Such findings begin to explain only a few of the reasons why illiteracy rate are so high in those rural remote areas.

¹Teacher Absenteeism Study Papua Education Office 2012



Papua is rich in nature and culture. Forest, mountains, beaches, rivers, flora, fauna, and minerals make up the richness of Papua. Tourists, both foreign and domestic come to Papua to see the beauty of Sentani Lake, islands and beaches in Raja Ampat, unique villages in Wamena, the highest mountain, Cartenz, in Puncak Jaya, and many others. Culturally, local languages and folklore offer invaluable heritage. Papua has around 270 local languages with many genres including verbal, partial verbal, and non-verbal folklore from hundreds of tribes. Some of the verbal folklore genre include folk speech, traditional expression, riddles, oral poems, folktales (myth, legend, fairy tales), and folksongs. Partly verbal folklore include traditional beliefs, traditional games, dances, traditional and ceremonies. Non-verbal folklore includes traditional architecture, carving, paintings, body paintings, traditional food, and traditional medicine (Danandjaja, 2002).

One of famous verbal folklore in Papua is folktale. In the past, folktales were passed down orally from the older generation to younger generation. Parents took time to tell folktales which were told in local languages to their children. Grandparents also did the same to their grandchildren. The elders used folktales as the media to teach moral lessons. Since the tales usually were told in the garden, on the beach, or in the yard, the moral teaching was delivered in a relaxed and friendly caring way. In other words, the children were not aware that they were “taught”.

Unfortunately, the tradition of telling folktales has decrease over the years for various reasons. Commonly people blame modernization and technology as the reasons. In towns and urban places, parents’ being busy working in the office is blamed for making the children busy watching television or playing games. In rural and remote areas, economic problems force parents to work harder in the sea/rivers, forest and garden as fishermen, hunters, and gardeners so that they do not have time to tell tales to their children.

The decrease in telling tradition tales has most unfortunately caused the extinction of some local languages. Many of the young generation cannot speak the local languages of their parents and grandparents anymore and some local languages have even been categorized as endangered languages (Purba, 1994). However he decrease in the tradition to telling does not mean that the children do not like to listen to the tales anymore. In fact the authors own research in 2010-2011 in Teluk Bintuni district , in the villages of Tanah Merah Baru, Onar, Saengga, Weriagar, and Mogotira clearly showed that children were happy to hear tales.

Indeed it is this interest and enjoyment shown by the children during the research that provides the promising signs and the local evidence that local tales and storytelling can be a powerful tool in

tacking literacy problems in Papua and West Papua. When sharing recorded tales, many children wanted to listen to the tales. With their happy faces and shiny eyes they listened seriously to the tales. When asked whether they liked to listen to tales and how often they listened to the tales, their answers were interesting. They said they liked the tales and wanted to listen to them every day. They suggested that they wanted to read books and learn stories about their own cultures² but their parents were busy working in the jungle, in the sea, in the river, or in the garden and there were no books about their tales. Interestingly, it was not only children liked to listen to folktales in those areas, but also the adults. They enjoyed and showed their interest in listening to the tales. It seems that the old and the young both enjoy listening to stories. Through using adults, parents and grandparents as story tellers there is a real opportunity to introduce a culture of language and of literacy of oral stories and reading books that can have an extremely powerful influence on the next generation of children. If the art of storytelling is bought alive again it may allow not only teachers but parents and community leaders to be the agents for change in literacy- rather than allowing the continuation of illiteracy.

These findings encouraged the writers to use or reuse folktales as an alternative media or tool to teach reading and writing and to provide an alternative vehicle to enhance literacy and reduce the illiteracy problems in Papua. The authors argue that using folktales can help the learners to learn (relearn) local languages and local values implied in the tales. Since the highest rate of illiteracy happens in remote and rural areas the author identified remote rural districts of Pegunungan Bintang Regency and Jayawijaya Regency (Papua) and Teluk Bintuni Regency (West Papua).

DISCUSSION

Literacy in Papua

Literacy rate at roughly 65% is currently putting Papua at the lowest in the country. 35% population is illiterate, and the highest illiterate rate is among population living in highlands which is the most difficult to reach by government and non-governmental programs. There have been efforts promoted by local government, NGOs, community based organizations and the international communities. Among the key efforts include:

1. *Community learning centres for adults as well as children*

The community learning centres are non-formal education institutions that exist both in urban as well as rural and remote areas. Most funding comes from government block grant, but the more successful centres usually support their own programs through other funding sources like through CSR programs with the private sectors, individual donations, etc. The centres provide a number of learning programs including functional literacy for adults. In functional literacy, adults learn how to read, write, and count, and implement these skills in entrepreneurial based trainings that may improve their livelihoods as well. The centres may also organize Package A equivalency education program that may be attended by children below the age of 18. The equivalency programs offers similar program to that of formal schooling, but with much more flexibility in terms of learning time and venues. The equivalency education programs have helped prevent more children especially the most at risk to fall into state of illiteracy.

2. *Community reading centres*

Community reading centre is another form non-formal education institution, established and run by the community, and may receive funding from different sources including government, private sectors, and NGOs. The centres serve as community library where members of the community including children can come to read different types of books, magazines. Unfortunately, most of the materials are from outside of Papua and not relevant to the lives of the local indigenous communities. Maintenance, increasing collection relevant to rural and remote Papua, as well as creating relevant

² The children's dream to read their own folktales came true after 5 books on Sebyar and Sumuri folktales had been published in 2011.

activities to keep motivation for reading are among the key issues surrounding community reading centres.

3. *Development of books by concerned organizations and individuals*

Organization including UNICEF Papua, World Vision, and the British Petroleum have recognized the importance of literacy in bringing out indigenous Papuans out of poverty, and have led the development of books that are relevant for children. Over 30 books have been produced focusing on Papua stories.

4. *Early grade teaching supported in remote areas, working together with AusAID*

In partnership with AusAID and UNICEF, the government has been focusing on improving the quality of early grade teaching and learning in rural and remote areas. Early grade teaching focuses on reading, writing and arithmetic. Strengthening quality of early grade teaching and learning is a key to preventing illiteracy and drop out.

At the centre of effective efforts above to combat illiteracy is the existence of materials that are locally contextual. One of these contextual materials suitable for children is local folktales.

Folktale and Its Function

Folktale is the most popular verbal folklore in Papua. In the past, folktales were told orally by the elders to the children. Dutch researchers collected folktales from various places in Papua as they recognized the importance within the culture (*c.f.* Kamma, 1974). Some informants suggested that since some Papuan are not straight forward people, folktales were used as media to teach mythology, philosophy, moral teaching, indigenous knowledge, local wisdom, and pedagogy. In the field, it can also be observed that giving advice or moral teaching using folktales is more effective and preferred rather than when it is given directly.

Commonly, Papuan folktales are classified into four types. They are legend, myth, fable, and fairy tales. From the way of telling tales, Papuan folktales can be categorized into four levels. First is taboo tales. These tales contain high secret that can be told only among tribal chiefs. The second is specific adult tales. The tales are told among male adults. Usually the topics are about traditional leadership, tribal affairs, tribal war strategy and other male issues. The third is general adult tales. The tales can be told both for male and female adults. The fourth is children tales. The tales are specially told to children. Anyway, anybody can hear this type of tales (Yektiningtyas-Modouw, 2011).

Restrictions on telling the tales are highly maintained. There are myths that spread among the society about what can happen when tales are wrongly told. For example when the taboo tales are told, the teller has to make sure that there are no strangers or unwanted listeners present. The violators will take the consequences, like sickness or death. When the adults want to tell the tales, they have to make sure that there are no children around. If the children happen to overhear the tales, they will get sick, the house will burn down, or the family experience even more serious risks. Thus, the tales are always told in secluded places like in an initiation house that can only be entered by special people like tribal chiefs and their men. Adults told the stories at night after making sure that the children are asleep. In communities particularly those in rural and remote areas or tribal communities, this practice continues to prevail today. The modernization still cannot erase the current social and traditional segregation of powers. These communities still believe certain people have special relation with super natural power, whereas some others do not. In order to protect those who cannot protect themselves from supernatural power emanating from the stories, the tribal chiefs and 'special' people remain cautious about sharing some stories to children.

METHOD

The documentation of folktale that occurred as part of this action research programme was concentrated on Pegunungan Bintang: illiteracy rate is 62%; Jayawijaya illiteracy 49.3% and Teluk Bintuni with a10.4% illiteracy rate.

As a non-Papuan and female researcher, sometimes it is not easy to collect folktales. Since Papua is a patriarchal society, women cannot move freely. There are some restrictions that I have to obey. But since my husband is a Papuan (Sentani tribe) and he is also a tribal chief, I have some "special rights" to collect some tales that are forbidden to be heard by others. Interestingly, even though my husband is from Sentani, I have the "immunity" to collect folktales in other places in Papua like Biak, Sorong, Nabire, Serui, Wamena, Timika, and some places in Teluk Bintuni Bay. Of course I use this good opportunity to collect the tales as many as possible and rewrite them as a kind of preservation. In the end, I "return" their tales in various forms (picture books, anthology, CD) so they and their children can read and listen to their own tales.

In the past, usually parents or grandparents (mostly mothers or grandmothers) told the tales in local language. They told them at home after dinner or before sleeping. Sometimes they also told them in the garden at the break of working to teach moral values. Some teachings are about loving and respecting the elders, working hard and having good cooperation, helping others, loving nature (the mountain, the lake, the sea, the land, the river, the jungle), and having self-pride. Besides, some prohibition to do bad things was also taught like stealing, telling lies, being lazy, hurting, and killing without strong reasons. Interestingly, the children were enthusiastic in hearing the tales and unconsciously learning the lessons implied in the tales.

In life, they implemented the teaching they had learnt from tales told by the elders. For example, in Sentani, they respected nature by not harming the river, the lake or illegal logging. They also worked hard in the garden since folktale stated "*heke a riyae-riyae maye-maye*" (work hard in the garden). In another expression "*obo wanem yoku wanem makare yubaunge hiraugae, nariyane menelembonemo yarombe anembe*", they were also taught not to be selfish. By metaphorizing a selfish person to a pig (*obo*) and to a dog (*yoku*), the message reminds children (and adults) to help others. In folklore life is watched by god (*hu*) "*hu joko erele*" God is watching. They also believed that truth is truth and it cannot be confused with fake things. "*Hu waisa eketei, nauka mengeten*" means the sun never rises in the west) It was believed by elders that such teachings led them to be honest, helpful, cooperative, sensible, and hardworking people.

The old generation tries to follow the moral lessons from their elders and pass them on to the young. A big tribal chief in Sentani once said that compared to "modern children", the older generation of Papuan are tougher, more confident, respectful, and have stronger character and personality. They could also manage their emotion well. He assumed that the tale telling tradition had shaped them to have those qualities.

In Pegunungan Bintang Regency, Jayawijaya Regency, and Teluk Bintuni Regency, from various folktales collected the functions of telling folktales can be explained as follows: the dominant function of folktales is pedagogy (*c.f.* Bascom in Dundes, 1984). For example, a tale from Oksibil, Pegunungan Bintang Regency entitled "Buneng" tells about hardworking, loving nature (the jungle, the rivers, the hills), loving and respecting family. There are also some prohibitions to steal and to tell lies. "The Legend of Natural Lake" in Wamena, Jayawijaya Regency teaches about hardworking and loving others (Yektiningtyas-Modouw, 2012). Everybody will harvest their deeds, both good and bad deeds. A tale from Teluk Bintuni Regency entitled "the Mangrove and Massoia Tree" tells about solidarity and respecting others (Yektiningtyas-Modouw, 2011).

Second function of folktale is promoting a group's feeling of solidarity (*c.f.* Dundes, 1980). This can be seen in "Buneng" and "The Origin of Sweet Potato" that tell about people of Oksibil and Wamena in working hard together to build their villages and gardens (Yektiningtyas-Modouw, 2012). The function of feeling superior to other individuals can also be followed in "The Legend of Kampung Weriagar" (from Sebyar, Teluk Bintuni Regency) that tells about one tribe who helped another tribe in a tribal war. Another tale, "Matirete" tells about a brave boy from a tribe in Sebyar who helped another tribe catching men to be made slaves. Another common function of folktales in those regencies is as media to escape from boredom and daily routines. Usually fairy tales and fables were told, like "The Origins of Ocean Waves", "The Search of Mairi Land" and "The Bird of Paradise and the Crow", etc. (Yektiningtyas-Modouw, 2012).

Seeing the various themes of folktales, professional judgement of a researcher is needed. Tales about tribal war, killing, or slavery are not wise to be discussed or used as media to teach reading and

writing since it will move negative sentiments like hatred and revenge. Likewise, tales about helping others, loving nature, hard work are better to be used since they can become the vehicles to promote love, peace, and harmony among the learners.

When using tales as teaching and literacy tools some adjustment should be made for the need of the learners. The language of the tales should be simple because complicated sentences will discourage the learners to start learning. The length of the tales should be considered as well. Commonly, the tales told by the informants are long and not systematic. It is the teachers' responsibility to rewrite the tales. Research shows that not many teachers can write or rewrite tales well. Accordingly, the teachers may ask others who can write to help them. While the ideal length of a tale can be changed a writer is not supposed to destroy the plot, the whole essence, and the message of the tales. The experiences in the field reveal that for a tale of 30 words – 200 words is ideal. However it can depend on the level and need of the learners as well. If possible recording and rewriting tales in local language is preferable. In homogeneous community like in Puncak Jaya Regency, Jayawijaya Regency, and Teluk Bintuni Regency, local languages can be taught to the learners. This is important to help the learners to keep speaking their local language besides the Indonesian as the *lingua franca* in Papua. While in a heterogeneous community like Jayapura, local languages (Sentani, Tobati, Kayu Pulau, Kemtuk, Tabla, etc.) are recorded as the preservation and waiting for the proper time to teach them to the learners. But the experience also says that there are some people in Jayapura who silently relearn their local language from the written tales.

The Use of Folktales to Enhance Literacy in Papua

Listening to and or reading about folktales can help children with their integration and implementation of crucial pre-literacy and literacy skills: to discriminate, identify, and pronounce sounds (phonemic awareness), words (graphic awareness), and phrases (phonological awareness).

Folktales also enable children to explore and strengthen a variety of language learning strategies such as identification of basic concepts, cross-curricular integration from other content areas, observation, imagery and symbolism, interpretation of facts vs. the identification of opinions, cause and effect, sequencing, comparing and contrasting of materials, brainstorming to explore related concepts, and problem solving (Pedersen 1993; Zúñiga 1992 in Olson 2010).

Emotional connections between the children and the tales are good vehicle to motivate and encourage them to learn reading and writing. Motivation will help the children to focus on the reading materials and become more ready to learn alphabet, syllables, words, and sentences. A cheerful atmosphere helps the children not to be burdened by the teaching-learning process.

Below are examples of how some folktales can support the integration and implementation of crucial pre-literacy and literacy skills, as well as life skills using some folktales.

A fairy tale from Sumuri community, Teluk Bintuni district:

Long time ago, mangi-mangi (the mangrove) and the masoi, a kind of tree with unpleasant smell were close friends. They lived together along a coast

The Mangrove roots spread everywhere. The Masoi felt unhappy. He told the Mangrove, "You have too many roots. They go everywhere. You take a lot of space. I do not have enough to stand."

The Mangrove was just silent. He could not say anything. He realized that he got so many twisted roots and took a lot of space.

Because the Mangrove did not say anything, the Masoi was angry and said again, "Mangrove, you stand very close to me. You have so many roots. You take a lot of space. I do not have enough space for myself to stand."

Finally because he could not stand anymore, the Mangrove told the Masoi, "Masoi, do you realize that you smell very bad? You bother me with your bad smell. But, I have never said anything to you because you are my friend."

The Masoi was surprised. He was embarrassed. Then the Masoi silently left the Mangrove. He went to the jungle and stayed there.

The masoi trees have been growing in the jungle since then. The mangroves are now found along the coast.

From the story, "The Mangrove and the Massioa Tree" that was taken from Teluk Bintuni Regency and given to the children in Tanah Merah Baru, Saengga, and Onar, I learnt something children were attracted by the characters of the story, "the Mangrove" and "the Massioa". Those two trees were very familiar to them since they live among the jungle of mangrove and massioa. In their local language, Sumuri people differentiate kinds of mangrove. One of them is *mangi-mangi* (a kind of mangrove with very long and twisted roots) that becomes one of the characters in the tale. The children's interest in the characters of the tale motivated them to start reading.

Since the children read something about their own natural environment, the trees (*mangi-mangi*/mangrove and massioa), coast, jungle, the story was motivating for them. They enjoyed reading the tale and learnt the lesson. They were not bothered with terminologies that they did not know. They knew more about mangrove and massioa rather than pine. They had the emotional ties with the story they had read and they were proud to read their own story about their own life. The story is bridging the actual life of children and their learning in the classroom. They are experiencing the language itself; therefore meaning is established into their learning. Their familiarity with the names of the characters supports their graphic awareness of the words such 'masoi', 'mangi-mangi' and other words of

The most significant problem dealing with literacy in Papua and West Papua is that children do not like reading. Various reasons are reported for children not liking reading including children do not like the themes of the reading materials and or they are unfamiliar with examples from the materials. For example, a child from Wamena will have difficulties in understanding the word "sea" since they live in the mountain. The child in Oksibil cannot imagine "an apple" since they never see it. The child in Weriagar cannot understand easily the concept of "the train" because they have never seen one. Their learning is disconnected from their daily reality, thus identification and understanding of sounds and symbols become more difficult. Thereby learning is to a certain degree discouraged.

In Weriagar and Mogotira, Teluk Bintuni Regency, the children's response to picture books on folktales, "Matirete" and "Konaminno" was surprising. Some children who could read sat under a tree and started reading loudly. Other children who could not read listened to them happily. They laughed after finishing reading. Interestingly, some younger children who were not able to read yet watched the pictures and created "their own stories" based on the pictures. In early 2012, a friend who lived there told me that the books had helped the children to learn to read. He explained that the younger children were motivated to learn the alphabet and words so in the end they could read the books. He also informed me that adults also read the books. This further strengthens the argument that local folktales enhance pre-literacy skills, in this particular case, in terms of building sound and graphic awareness.

Another experience in Wamena in 2010 proved similar things. I went to a crowd of elementary school students who sat while playing something under a big tree. After talking for a while, I read them their folktales, "The Origin of Wamena" and "The origin of Sweet Potato" that I had recorded from an informant. They listened to the tales enthusiastically. They even asked many things about the tales that I could not answer them all. They were motivated to know more about their own tales: their own life, nature, people, and culture. Some elders and informants in some villages said that the children were enthusiastic to listen or read the tales about their kampongs, their people or their surroundings because they could see themselves in the stories. They were proud to listen or read about "themselves" as it gives them a sense that their identity is recognized, something that Papuans have been deprived of.

Teachers' creativity plays an important role in exploring the tales. For example, from "the Mangrove and the Massioa", a teacher can ask the learners to mention the names of trees found in their village. They can be asked to draw the trees. The atmosphere is satisfying. The learners can easily draw the pictures of trees they are familiar with. Sometimes, they also "compete" with others to create the best pictures. As an appreciation, the teacher can give a small gift to those who can create good pictures. The teacher can use the picture of trees to teach counting as well. And since every learner usually creates various numbers of trees, the learners can learn to count differently. From the trees the

learners have drawn, the teacher can ask them to make simple sentences using the name of trees. The learners can be asked to mention parts of trees, like trunk, branch, twig, roots, flower, fruit, etc. Then the teacher can jump to other vocabularies found in the tales. For example, the teacher asks the learners to mention or draw the things they can find on the coast and in the jungle. For higher level learners, they can be asked to discuss the character of the tales, the mangrove and the massioa. They can also discuss what the characters have to do to maintain their friendship.

Using folktales as teaching media is not only about teaching alphabet, syllables, words, and sentences, or writing. Since there is local wisdom implied in the tales, the learners can learn some good things and develop life skills that can be beneficial for their future life. For example, in the tale "Buneng" from Oksibil, Puncak Jaya Regency, it is told explicitly how the character of the tale built a new village and a new garden. The learners can follow the way the character fell some trees down to build *honai* (traditional house of Oksibil people). He did it wisely. He accurately chose the trees that could be cut down. This can be compared to the recent phenomena happens in Papua where people do illegal logging for the commercial purpose. The way the character maintain the water is also interesting. He advised his sister not to harm the river by cleaning the dirty dishes in the river. From the tale, the learners can learn how to respect nature, the relationship between causes and effects of cutting down trees unsustainably, and learn about a skill in problem solving.

Folktales are a unique way to educate the whole person. From hard work, diligence, toughness, strength, self-respect of the characters of the tales, learners can learn those qualities without being directly taught. Folktales can be used as character and identity building. Being honest, helpful, loving and respecting other, and working hard are the identities exemplified by the elders of Papua through the tales that had been passed down from generation to generation. Using folktales as teaching media is a means to revitalize the values and spread them to young generation. Learning recording, re telling and engaging children in folktales, is one part of an approach to tackling the illiteracy problem in Papua.

Hopefully this paper provides insights to teachers in remote and rural areas, stake holders in Papua, and committed individuals to use more creative media to teach reading and writing. Besides, the writing invites some agents of change and thinkers like teachers, lecturers, researchers or committed ones to collect folktales from various places in Papua, rewrite and socialize them by retelling and publishing them. By doing this, they will also help avoiding folktales and local languages from extinction.

CONCLUSION

From the discussion, it can be concluded that Papua still faces the problem of illiteracy. The high rate of illiteracy in Pegunungan Bintang Regency, Puncak Jaya Regency, and Teluk Bintuni Regency are the examples. This problem has to be overcome. The writing proposes one of alternatives in enhancing literacy in Papua that is using folktales. Since Papua is rich with folktales, the proposal is handy to execute. From the experiences in those three regencies, it can be concluded that Papuan folktales are interesting media to teach reading and writing to children and adults as well. There are some reasons as the background. Folktales are motivating media for children or even adult learners to learn reading and writing since they have emotional ties with the tales that explicitly or implicitly depict their socio-cultural background. Thus, reading the tale is learning about children themselves. The feeling of pride to read their own tales also contributes to their motivation to learn. Emotional ties and motivation lead the learners' enthusiasm to learn words, syllables, alphabets and sentences. Motivation build happy atmosphere of the teaching-learning process so that the learners are not burdened. They can learn relaxedly. Using folktale as teaching media is not only about teaching how to read and to write. Folktales that also represent socio-culture, local wisdom and moral lesson shape and sharpen the learners' character and identity. Folktales can educate the whole person in a different way. Besides, written tales in local language will help the languages from extinction. Thus the dream of building identity, love, peace and harmony in Papua will come to reality.

All folktales the subject of this paper are the result of field research conducted from 2008-2012. Some of the tales have been published in other various forms, i.e. anthology, illustrated books (some are in three languages - Indonesian, local languages, and English), and folksongs. The latest form is a new

and contemporary form to adjust to the new trend of teenagers in towns who like listening to CD or MP3 players. They are not circulated in remote/rural areas due to the lack of electricity and other technical devices. World Relief is using MP3's to provide sexuality education HIV prevention and Life skills in Jayawijaya.

RECOMMENDATION

Literacy in Papua is not only the responsibility of the department of education. Indeed literacy is a skills and a need that cuts across so many areas as outline in this paper. Teaching, collecting tales, writing tales, rewriting tales, translating tales, illustrating, providing finance to publish the tales are all contributions that can be made to literacy and learning for children. Accordingly, this paper recommends that the use of folktales as media to enhance literacy in Papua should be supported and that folktales should be more widely used to teach reading and writing in remote and rural areas especially where indigenous students are living and learning.

Some guiding principles for consideration in expanding the use of folktales especially as a literacy tool might include: (1) stake holders to give priority of using Papuan folktales as teaching materials; (2) The use of more creative and innovative teaching media like Papuan folktales be encouraged through teachers in elementary schools, community learning centres, and literacy centres; (3) lecturers, researchers and student teachers to collect more Papuan folktales; (4) Writers and journalists be encouraged and supported to rewrite Papuan folktales for specific purposes; (5) committed individuals to take responsibility based on their capability; (6) tribal chiefs to give more opportunity to researchers to do research or collect folktales in their areas; (7) Papuan elders who can speak local languages to help the researchers to translate the tales into the local languages; (8) donors and local government to provide finance to publish folktales. Last but not least, the paper underlines the importance of agents of change in Papua to work creatively and innovatively. By involving various people as a big team to work in literacy in Papua, it is hoped that the problem of illiteracy in Papua can be reduced.

REFERENCES

- Bapeda Tingkat II dan BPS. (2000). Jayapura Regency in Figures 1998. Jayapura.
- Danandaja, J. (2002). *Folklor Indonesia: Ilmu Gosip, Dongeng, dan lain-lain*. Jakarta: Pustaka Utama Grafiti.
- Direktorat Pembinaan Pendidikan Masyarakat, Direktorat Jendral Pendidikan Usia Dini, Nonformal dan Informal. Jakarta.
- Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan. 2012. Hasil Sensus Penduduk 2010. Sebaran Tuna Aksara Usia Dewasa.
- Dorson, Richard M. (ed.). (1972). *Folklore and Folk life*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Dundes, Alan. (1980). *Interpreting Folklore*. Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press.
- Dundes, Alan (ed). (1984). *Sacred Narrative: Readings in the Theory of Myth*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Kamma, F.C. (1975). *Religious Text of the Oral Tradition form Western New Guinea (Irian Jaya) Part A: The Origin and Sources of Life*. Leiden: E.J. Brill.
- Ong, W.J. (1982). *Orality and Literacy. The Technologizing of the Word*. London: Routledge.
- Purba, Th.T. (1994). "A Brief Description of Irian Jaya Languages" in Afeu, *Bulletin of Language*. Year V No. 6. Jayapura: Cenderawasih University.
- Yektiningtyas-Modouw, Wigati. (2008). *Helaehili dan Ehabla: Fungsinya dan Peran Perempuan dalam Masyarakat Sentani Papua*. Yogyakarta: Adicita Karya Nusa.
- Yektiningtyas-Modouw, Wigati. (2007). "Ehabla: Antara Ada dan Tiada" dalam *Bahasa dan Sastra Austronesia*. Denpasar: Universitas Udayana.
- (2007). "Fungsi Ehabla dalam Masyarakat Sentani Papua" dalam *Atavisme: Jurnal Ilmiah Kajian Sastra* Vol. 10. Surabaya: Balai Bahasa.
- (2008). *Helaehili dan Ehabla: Fungsinya dan Peran Perempuan dalam Masyarakat Sentani, Papua*. Yogyakarta: Penerbit Adicita Karya Nusa.
- (2009). "Menjaga Lingkungan Hidup Ala Masyarakat Sentani Lama: Menyelisik Mitologi Keselarasan Hidup melalui Ehabla dalam Loa". Samarinda: Balai Bahasa.
- (2011). *Pohon Mangi-mangi dan Pohon Masoi*. Yogyakarta: Laiqa Aksara
- (2011). *Matirete*. Yogyakarta: Laiqa Aksara
- (2011). *Burung Cenderawasih dan Burung Gagak*. Yogyakarta: Laiqa Aksara
- (2011). *Konamino: Asal Mula Anjing di Kampung Weriagar*. Yogyakarta: Laiqa Aksara
- (2011). *Kumpulan Cerita Rakyat Sebyar dan Sumuri, Teluk Bintuni, Papua: Sebuah Persembahan bagi Generasi Penerus*. Yogyakarta: Laiqa Aksara
- (2012). *Pelangi Papua: Antologi Cerita Rakyat Papua dalam Tiga Bahasa*. Jayapura: Universitas Cenderawasih.
- Yulaelawati, Ella. 2012. "Policy, Legislation and Implementation of Community Learning Centers in Indonesia". A Seminar papers on International Seminar of Community Learning Centers in Jakarta.
- Olson, A.(2010). *Breaking Through Cultural Barriers: Using Latin American Folktales in Literacy and Library Programming*. <http://morpholiteracy.com> . (Accessed 20 January 2013)