

# **SOCIAL CRITICISM ON FORMAL EDUCATION SYSTEMS IN INDONESIA IN CHILDREN'S NOVEL SERIES *MATA*, OKKY MADASARI**

**Astri Andalusia<sup>1</sup>, Harris Effendi Thahar<sup>2</sup>, Ngusman Abdul Manaf<sup>3</sup>**  
{andalusiaastri@gmail.com<sup>1</sup>, harrispadang@fbs.unp.ac.id<sup>2</sup>, ngusman@fbs.unp.ac.id<sup>3</sup>}

<sup>1,2,3</sup>Faculty of Language and Art, Universitas Negeri Padang ( UNP), Jl. Prof. Dr. Hamka, Air Tawar Barat, Padang 25132, Indonesia

**Abstract.** This study aims to describe social problems in the educational context which are the focus of author's criticism in the children's novel series *Mata* by Okky Madasari. This study uses the sociology theory of literature as an approach. The children's novels are *Mata di Tanah Melus* (2018), *Mata and Secrets of Gapi Island* (2018), and *Mata and Manusia Laut* (2019). The results of data analysis are presented using descriptive analysis contents method. Research findings show that in children's stories, social criticism can still be voiced, especially social criticism of the education system. The result of this research was social issues in education which were the critical focus of the author in the children's novel series *Mata*. The educational issues in this novel series were: (1) Quality schools are expensive schools, a perception that is not always true; (2) School privatization and parents' ambitions; (3) Homeschooling answers to dissatisfaction with formal education; and (4) Relevance of the curriculum does not suit community needs.

**Keywords:** Social criticism, Children's novels, Sociology of literature.

## **1. Introduction**

Education becomes one of the important things in life because with education we process to develop ourselves to be able to live and carry on life. The process of developing ourselves to become educated individuals is very important to be able to produce qualified and intellectual human beings. The state aware of this and the State has set the rights of every Indonesian citizen to get education as a means of improving the quality of their life. This is stated in the Constitution on article 28 C in first paragraph and second paragraph and also in article 31 in first paragraph and second paragraph. For the sake of the regularity of the education system, the State also regulates the path of education that is traversed to develop self-potential in accordance with educational objectives. In the Constitution number 20 in 2003 article 13 first paragraph stated that the education pathway consists of formal education (educational institutions), informal education (family), and non-formal education (community environment).

Formal education (school/ institution) is the ultimate universe for the children today. This is inseparable from globalization in the field of education, especially concerning the results

that will be achieved from education. Now a day there has been a shift in the framework of ideas about the superiority of a country, from comparative advantage to competitive advantage. Comparative advantage relies on the wealth of natural resources, while competitive advantage rests on the possession of quality human resources [4].

In the context of shifting the point of view of the superiority of a country, national education will experience a very high competitive situation because it must deal with the power of global education, it is closely related to the fact that globalization of education actually gave birth to cosmopolitan-based education. On other hand, this system will be able to answer the challenge of becoming part of the international community with all the consequences of the joining of various cultures but if it is not responded wisely it will result in the blurring of values in the governance of Indonesian society. It is often happening in daily life, in a conversation, if the words "abroad" are tucked away, as an example when a mother tells others about her child who is attending school at an international level, this will give the impression that she will be one level higher than the other. Indirectly, national education caused of social imbalance in social relations.

The difference between public and private schools results in a negative image in the general public that denies the quality of private schools. A good quality schools are often identified with visual displays that brighten expectations. Luxurious facilities, elite uniforms, stately fenced and high rise school buildings are symbols of quality schools. Quality schools are expensive schools, this perception is not always true [8].

Inequality quality in schools and education cause a concept of favorite schools and non-favorite schools. The breadth effect of course has an impact on parents and students. Parents are competing to put their children in their favorite school. The majority of parents are now starting to lead to the tendency to provide expensive, prestigious, have a name, and have complete educational facilities for their children. Many parents end up forcing and pressuring their children to study harder to be accepted into favorite schools. Enforcing and pressure to learn for children will only have a negative impact on children's mental health because the child's tendency to suffer from stress and depression is wide open.

Critics of the education system have been widely expressed in seminars, media, etc. For authors, criticism can also be conveyed through works. Books are "machines to read" and readers who bring up concrete and imaginary objects, namely books written with reason [3]. The author is an ordinary person who's moral, intellectual, career, and emotional development can be reconstructed and judged according to certain standards. It is usually in the form of a system of ethical values and certain norms [10]. Author presents the point of view in accordance with the community that conditions it [9]. Ratna also said that factually the author clearly played an important and even decisive role. Without the author of literary works considered to be nothing. Without author social facts can only be seen from one side, on the surface. The author through his imagination sees facts multidimensionality, the symptoms behind the symptoms, which are metaphorically the author is considered to have a sixth sense. In traditional societies, for example, authors are regarded as writers and clergy. In contemporary society, authors are equated with scientists. In other words, both in traditional and modern societies, the author's social status includes the middle and upper classes [9].

Okky Madasari is an author known for works that voice social criticism. Okky is an award-winning Equator Literary Award and in three consecutive years her works have always been included in the top five awards. Her works have been translated into English, German and Arabic. The novels she wrote were Entrok (2010), 86 (2011), Maryam (2012), Pasung Jiwa (2013), and Last Crowd (2016). The Enduring and Perishing Slowly (2017) is a collection of short stories that he wrote in 1 decade.

In 2018, she returned to publish works in the form of children's novels. The reason that triggered Okky Madasari to write children's novels was due to the anxiety she felt about the lack of reading books for Indonesian children. Departing from that anxiety, it is encouraged her to write children's novels. This novel is written in the form of a tetralogy serial. Until now only three titles of children's novels have been published and marketed, namely *Mata di Tanah Melus* (2018), *Mata and rahasia pulau Gapi* (2018), and most recently *Mata Dan manusia Laut* (2019).

In these novels, she wrote adventures story that is included the tolerance values of pluralism, multiculturalism, and also ecological written in children's language. According to her, children's novels need to be filled with positive things that can be instilled as early as possible because all social issues and serious problems can be conveyed in the form of stories. For this reason, she continued to include social criticism, especially in the field of education, in the children's stories he wrote.

The purpose of this study also was to see how social criticism is portrayed in children's novels. In this phase, children's literature actually has a big role because through literature positive values can be instilled because the power of stories shapes one's awareness and self-awareness must be instilled in children from an early age. Unfortunately Indonesian children's literary works are very limited. For this reason it is important to see how children's literature can be innovate and create in conveying knowledge, not only for adults but also for children.

## **2. Methodology**

This research used descriptive analysis content method using the theory of sociological literature as an approach. According to Ratna, content in the content analysis method consists of two types, latent content and communication content. Latent content is the content contained in documents and manuscripts, while the communication content is the message contained as a result of the communication that occurs. Latent content is the content as intended by the author, while the communication content is the content as manifested in the manuscript relationship with consumers [9]. Wellek and Werren argue that the approach of literary sociology is clearly a relationship between literature and society so that it can be concluded that the approach of literary sociology is an approach to literary works by not leaving aspects of society [10]. The study of sociological elements of literary works, especially novels is also associated with social systems because in this system social interactions occur which tend to produce culture.

Descriptive analysis method is a method that is done by describing the facts which are then followed by analysis. The sociological approach to literature used is based on the opinion which states that literature is a reflection of social reality. According to Damono, this concept starts from a reason that states that literature is a mirror of it is day. Literature is considered as a direct mirror of various social structures, family relationships, class conflicts, and so forth [2].

## **3. Discussion**

Generally, these three novels that are analyzed are full of social criticisms, but this research will specifically discuss the critics of the author about the problems in the formal education system in Indonesia.

### **3.1 Quality schools are expensive schools, a perception that is not always true.**

Cosmopolitan education (cosmopolitan-based education) is a model of education that is growing rapidly in our society. One impact of this education system is the emergence of international minded in society. That everything that seems "foreign" and expensive becomes more prestige. If it is not addressed properly, of course, global culture will erode national social and cultural values.

"Mama made a loud voice at my school, in a meeting with my teacher and parents. It was all just because of our class plan for a vacation together to Disney Land in Hong Kong. Mama was the only person who disagreed with the plan. She said it wasn't educational, she said it was just a waste of money, she also said that all Disney characters were not worthy of being role models for children."

"Nobody agrees with what Mama said. Mama doesn't care. I was the only child who did not go to Disney Land. It also repeated again when I went up to class and returned on a vacation trip together to close the school year. A vacation to Singapore, to Korea, or to Japan. I have nothing to follow" [5].

In the quotation above, the author includes her criticism of the educational system which is inclined towards capitalists and the bourgeoisie. It is too much for elementary school children to spend the end of school holidays with a trip abroad. In addition to being expensive and a waste of money, it is likely that children will be less aware of the varying levels of social life in society. The world in their eyes will be uniform, with the upper middle class as the main color.

If it is just for a walk, there are also many cities in Indonesia that can be explored. In addition, it is for teaching children to love the country more and their own culture, it can also be used as a means to foster children's empathy for the surrounding environment.

Expensive school activities can also cause new problems. It is called social jealousy that occurs in the community. It is ironic that in the midst of a society's condition that has deteriorated due to economic instability and many other children who have not been touched by education. The phenomenon of elite schools with expensive fees is actually growing.

### **3.2 School privatization and parents' ambitions**

In the novel *Mata and rahasia Pulau Gapi*, the author flicks out how parents tend to force and set targets so that their children enter favorite schools, which in turn has a negative impact on the child's psychological as well as the psychological of the parents. It can be seen in the quote below:

"The Mama came home crying hysterically. Not accepted at a favorite school is one of the most embarrassing disgraces of this age. How is it that the only child, whom she loved and proud since childhood, which she has given everything, who has taken various tutoring classes, failed to be accepted at a favorite junior high school? For her, this failure was not only a Mataras failure, but also a failure as his parents" [6].

"What about Matara? Of course she was sad and ashamed. Is she really that stupid? She felt the most foolish among his closest friends. Two close friends, who always compete to get good grades at school are accepted at the school. While Matara who has never lost the competition this time had to fail. There is no place for fools in this world, she thought. Matara did not want to get

out of his room. She doesn't want to see his parents; she doesn't want to see everyone he knows" [6].

The tight competition to enter favorite schools makes parents feel the need to prepare more education for their children. This is supported by the caste of schools that caused disparities such as the emergence of International Standard School Pilot Projects (RSBI), National Standard Schools (SSN), Featured Schools and favorite schools. School A has a different quality and is better than school B so that it leads to the high cost of education at school A.

The desire to send children to a quality place is certainly not a fault. This can then develop into a problem if parents' motivation to send their children to favorite schools is excessive. Besides that the community stigma assumes that children who take education in excellent schools must be smart while children who do not graduate to excellent schools must be stupid. This was emphasized by the author in the sentence "The Mama returned home crying hysterically. Not being accepted at a favorite school is one of the most embarrassing disgraces of this age."

Another sentence that also voiced criticism of the wrong and growing stigma in society about education is "Then what about Matara? Of course she was sad and ashamed. Is she really that stupid? She feels the most foolish among his close friends." the psychological development of a child can be disrupted, the child will be easily stressed and depressed because failure to enter the flagship school becomes a terrible scourge.

### **3.3 Homeschooling answers to dissatisfaction with formal education**

"He will teach his own children. He will make his child the smartest. He will reciprocate the failure of his child accepted at a favorite school in his way. He was sure, his son was not a foolish child, as easy as it was said "failed" and "did not pass". For a long time he always felt dissatisfied with his child's school. Now is the time he will make his own school for his children. Here in this house" [6].

Parents disappointment to the formal education system which eventually gave them another educational choice, namely 'home schooling'. The name homeschooling is a phenomenal alternative education model that is widely discussed by the community, parents, and education practitioners, including relating to the socialization of children when studying at home, the role of parents will be able to totally monitor and assist children, both in ways learning, evaluation process [1].

According to Simbolon, homeschooling spread in Indonesia as a result of distrust of formal schools because the curriculum keeps changing (changing curriculum change material) and is felt as burden to the students [1]. There is also the notion of children as objects not subjects, blocking creativity and intelligence of children, both in terms of emotional, moral, and spiritual. If we explored further, many factors can affect the transition of children from the formal school system to homeschooling, among which is no less important is the parents' dissatisfaction with the formal school system.

The author in his article highlights the phenomenon that is starting to develop at this time which leads to a form of public distrust of the educational process in the formal school system to change the quality of life. The process that occurs in schools is considered a formality but needs to be done to get official recognition from the government in the form of a diploma.

### 3.4 Relevance of the Curriculum does not suit Community Needs

In the novel *Mata dan Manusia Laut*, the author questions how education is being equalized by everyone throughout Indonesia regardless of their background, regardless of their needs. Examples of Bajo people who are daily at sea, for what and how they might undergo an education system whose orientation does not pay attention to marine life and is not in line with the days they pass. Finally, Bajo children become lazy in school because they feel the education provided by the school is irrelevant to what they are doing and goes through everyday.

"Why do you have to learn about plants that live on land if they only see fish everyday? Why do you have to learn about events that occur in cities in Java, they have never and never need to leave the sea? Why do they have to learn to make various handicrafts if what they need is fishing skills?" [7].

"Why doesn't the school teach him how to catch fish like his father? Why doesn't the school teach him how to fish, how to sail, how to sell the fish? That is also what is often complained of by Mr and Mrs Bambulo, as well as all parents in the same village.

Why not teach them how to survive in the sea? Then what is school for?" [7].

Through his writings, the author provides a critique of one of the problems of education, the curriculum taught in schools does not have sociological relevance to students. The curriculum should be relevant to the demands of the needs and development of the community, which prepares students to live and work in the community. For example, students who live in urban areas need to be introduced to life in the city environment, such as crowds and traffic signs; post office service procedures, etc. Likewise for schools in coastal areas, it is necessary to introduce life in the sea, life on the beach, the life of fishermen, how to market fish, shrimp breeding, etc.

## 4. Conclusion

Children's novels by Okky Madasari from the perspective of literary sociology indeed show criticism of the education system in Indonesia, as follow;

- 1) Stigma that develops in society that quality education is expensive education, so that it can cause new problems in the form of social jealousy;
- 2) school castration which results in quality disparities between schools;
- 3) Homeschooling which is the effect of parental disappointment on formal education;
- 4) curriculum relevance that is not yet in accordance with the needs of the community.

Overall Okky Madasari clearly illustrates the social criticisms in her novel this time especially the criticism of the education system as a form of his concern as a parent which she poured in his work. Okky Madasari also continued to add moral values that could be picked by the readers so that they could be useful for the social life of the community in the future.

## References

- [1] Ariefianto, L. (2017). Homeschooling : Persepsi, Latar Belakang dan Problematikanya (Studi Kasus pada Peserta Didik di Homeschooling Kabupaten Jember). *Jurnal Edukasi*. <https://doi.org/10.19184/jukasi.v4i2.5205>
- [2] Damono, D. S. 1978. *Sosiologi Sastra: Sebuah Pengantar Ringkas*. Jakarta: Pusat Pembinaan dan Pengembangan Bahasa Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan.
- [3] Escarpit, R. 2005. *Sosiologi Sastra*. Jakarta: Yayasan Obor Indonesia.

- [4] Kuntowijoyo. 2001. *Muslim Tanpa Masjid: Esai- Esai Agama, Budaya, dan Politik dalam Bingkai Strukturalisme Transedental*. Bandung: Mizan.
- [5] Madasari, O. 2018. *Mata di Tanah Melus*. Jakarta: Gramedia.
- [6] Madasari, O. 2018. *Mata dan Rahasia Pulau Gapi*. Jakarta: Gramedia.
- [7] Madasari, O. 2019. *Mata dan Manusia Laut*. Jakarta: Gramedia.
- [8] Martono, N. (2010). Kritik Sosial Terhadap Praktik Pendidikan Dalam Film “Laskar Pelangi.” *Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Kebudayaan*. <https://doi.org/10.24832/jpnk.v16i3.466>
- [9] Ratna, N. K. 2008. *Teori, Metode, dan Teknik Penelitian Sastra*. Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar.
- [10] Wellek, R dan Austin, W. 1989. *Teori Kesusastraan* (diterjemahkan oleh Melani Budianta). Jakarta: Gramedia.