



THE ASPECTS OF EDUCATION IN ANDREA HIRATA'S THE RAINBOW TROOPS

Rosa Maria Simamora¹, Sriviani Br Tarigan²

Fakultas Ilmu Budaya Universitas Katolik Santo Thomas

Email : rosasimamora1967@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study discusses the aspects of education in Andrea Hirata's *The Rainbow Troops*. The novel is seen as the portrait of education in some remote Indonesian areas. This is a library research, and its theory is mimetic proposed by Abrams saying that literature is the imitation of the real life. This study focuses on the discussion of the lack of the aspects of education in Indonesia particularly in the remote areas. It is traced through educator characters represented by Bu Mus who has high dedication and effort to sincerely motivates and educates the students towards perfection, Learners are represented by The Rainbow Troops students who really need to develop themselves psychologically and physically, educational method represented by Bu Mus and Pak Harlan who set specified curriculum to achieve educational goals, educational materials and tools are materials or media used in teaching and learning process, and educational environment is everything that is visible in natural world of life which always develops. In conclusion, Andrea Hirata in his novel *The Rainbow Troops* vividly portrays the condition of education in remote areas with inadequate aspects of education but shows exemplary teachers and students, intelligence, fighting spirit in educating children and achieving goals.

Keywords: educator, learners, educational methods, educational material and tools, educational environment.

1. INTRODUCTION

Andrea Hirata, a famous Indonesian novelist was born in Gantung, East Belitong, Bangka Belitong, on 24 October. He is the fifth child of the couple Seman Said Harun Hirata and Masturah and he was raised in the Islamic faith. While he was young, his parents changed his name seven times. They eventually settled on the name Andrea Hirata, while the name Hirata was given by his mother. He grew up in a poor family not far from a government owned mine. Andrea Hirata is active in education and literature development. He teaches as a volunteer. In Belitong, he opened a free school and the Andrea Hirata Kata Museum as the first literature museum in Indonesia. The Kata Museum was built in 2010, located at street Laskar Pelangi Number 10, Lenggang Gantong Village, and East Belitong Regency. Andrea Hirata was married in Belitong in 1998 with Roxana.

In 2000, Andrea filed for an annulment of the marriage at the Surabaya Religious Court on the grounds that her wife lied to him because at that time Roxana said she was single (biografi).

Hirata's career as a writer began with *The Rainbow Troops* in 2005. The novel has many fans and has been republished 14 times in the first two years it was published by Bentang Pustaka. He wrote the novel in six months, about his childhood experience in Belitong, as an irony about the lack of access to education for Belitong children, one of the richest islands in the world. The novel, according to him is a memoir, combined with fiction, packaged through literature and additional sociocultural background, so that it is called a tetralogy of his childhood memories. It attracted public attention and became a bestseller in Indonesia and Malaysia in 2006-2007. The novel also won the 'International Best



Seller' in Turkey, titled GokkusagiAskerleri edition. This status was achieved due to the high sales figures of the novel in several countries that have published *The Rainbow Troops*, namely Australia, New Zealand, America, China, Korea and Vietnam. This novel has also been translated into more than thirty languages and published in more than one hundred countries by publishers such as Farrar, Random House, Penguin, Hanser Berlin, Mercure de France, Sunmark Tokyo, Phonix China, and others (tribunnewswiki).

In 2008, the novel was adapted into a film with the same title. Which was directed by Riri Riza and produced by Miles Film and Mizan Production. The novel scenario writer is Salman Aristo who is assisted by Riri Riza and Mira Lesmana. The shooting location for the film *The Rainbow Troops* corresponds to the original setting in the novel namely Belitong Island.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Aspects of Education

In Roman language, education comes from the word 'educate' means to bring out something that is from within. Whereas in English education is termed the word 'to educate' which means improving morale and training intellectuals. The Germans see education as *Erziehung* which is equivalent to educate, namely awakening hidden strengths or activating children's strengths or potentials. In the Javanese language, education means *pelvicawentah* (processing), processing, changing the psyche, maturing feelings, thoughts, will and character, changing the personality of the child (Hidayat and Abdillah, 2019: 23).

Law No. 20/2003 Education is a conscious and planned effort to create a learning atmosphere and learning process in such a way that students actively develop their potential to develop religious

spiritual strength, self-control, personality, intelligence, noble character and skills and abilities necessary for themselves, society nation and country. Ahmadi and Uhbiyati argue that education is basically a conscious and intentional and responsible activity that adults do with children so that there is an interaction between the two so that the children reach the desired maturity and move on. It can be concluded that education is a conscious and planned effort to direct or help develop the physical and mental potential given to students by adults to mature and achieve goals, so that students can independently fulfill their life tasks (Hidayat and Abdillah, 2019: 24).

2.2 Theory and Method

Mimetic theory proposed by Abram saying that literature is the explanation of art as essentially an imitation of aspects of the universe. The arts of painting, poetry, music, dancing, and sculpture, Socrates says, are all imitations. It is a relational term, signifying two items and some correspondence between them. But although in many later mimetic theories, the philosopher in the Platonic dialogues characteristically operates with three categories. The first category is that of the eternal and unchanging ideas; the second, reflecting this, is the world of sense, natural or artificial; and the third category, in turn reflecting the second, comprises such things as shadows, images in water and mirrors, and the fine arts. When a literary work is considered to be an imitation or a description of events that exist in the real world, it is called (Abrams, 1979: 9-10).

This is a library research where data are collected from some libraries online, author's website, journal and online resources. The primary source is the novel *The Rainbow Troops*. The secondary source is taken from various books and other relevant sources from the internet. After all secondary sources are collected,



the analysis was carried out by selecting the most crucial episodes and all data are taken together comprehensive and meaningful results for appreciation and literary interpretation (The Muse ejournal).

3. THE ANALYSIS

The Rainbow Troops, a novel of 470 pages written by Andrea Hirata is a story of ten underprivileged children, pursuing an education in limited conditions. The children never give up their dreams but have the fighting spirit to continue their education at Muhammadiyah Elementary School in Gantung village, Bangka Belitung Islands in spite of such conditions. Most of the ten children are the children of tin miners. The ten great children are named Rainbow Troops. They are lack of teachers and some students go to school without shoes and do not have uniforms. Even in the process of studying lessons, they use used books, sticks for counting tools, chalk bought from money donated by the people or borrowed. They have six small classes, in the morning for Muhammadiyah elementary school and in the afternoon for Muhammadiyah junior high school. Their school building is unfeasible with leaky roof which is troublesome during the rainy season, with wood walls that have to be supported by large logs so it is not collapsed instantly, with a dirty floor for it is also used to store livestock at night. When they take exam, they have to stay at another school. In spite of that conditions, there are Pak Harfan and Buk Mus as the real heroes for them. They are considered mentors, guardians, friends, teachers, and spiritual masters. Even though they lack of teaching staff, they get the same knowledge as other schools. They are taught many things about religion, hard working, and never giving up.

The main characters are Ikal, Lintang, Mahar, Sahara, Syahdan, Trapani, Harun, Kucai, Borek and A Kiong. Ikal is

a smart enough, loyal friend, and friendly. His intelligence is proven when he participates in a smart quiz competition with his two friends. He is Lintang's desk-mate who likes A Ling, A Kiong's cousin. When he grows up, he continues his studies and gets a European Union scholarship to France. He is always in second rank but is one of the smartest child in the Rainbow Troops. He has an interest in literature who loves to write poems or rhymes.

Lintang has a great interest in studying and a genius whose father works as a poor fisherman but has to support 14 family members. High spirits and genius lead the Muhammadiyah elementary school team to become champion in the quiz competition. He is active in class and aspires to become an expert in mathematics. Even though he is smart, he is forced to bury his dreams since his father died. He works hard to be able to support himself and his family.

Mahar is a handsome child with a thin body whose talent is in arts so Bu Mus appoints him to be the coordinator for the August 17th performance and won. He is an eccentric boy who always encourages Ikal when he is sad. With a radio always hanging around his neck, Mahar is always at the forefront of art matters. He is always cheerful and very good at singing with the right tempo, good vocal technique. As an adult, he is unemployed, couldn't go anywhere because his mother is sick. However, he is invited by high-ranking officials to make documentation of traditional children's games, after reading an article he published in a magazine. He manages to publish a novel with the theme of friendship.

Sahara is the only woman in the Rainbow Troops who is a caring, smart, never lie, honest, stubborn and opinionated girl but devotes to religion. She is a friendly girl except for A Kiong because since they entered school, he has wet it out



his water thermos. She thinks whatever A Kiong does is always wrong. Behind her tough character, she really loves Harun, the most special child in the school. She often teaches Harun to count and helps him to study outside school hours.

Syahdan, a fisherman's son, is cheerful but never stands out. If anything happens, he will definitely be the least noticed. For example, when playing a play, he is only found to be a female fan repairman and even then he still makes many mistakes. He owns side income as a boat putty and witness to Ikal's first love. He and Ikal are in charge of buying lime at the Sinar Harapan Shop since Ikal has fallen in love with A Ling. By working hard, in the end, he becomes a real actor, even though he only gets a small role like a 'tuyul' or a genie. Feeling bored, he takes computer courses. Afterwards, he is succeeded in becoming a network designer.

Trapani is a smart and kind hearted handsome child, close to his mother, very perfectionist and always clean, rather quiet, has a good brain, and is always in third place. Whatever he does he must always be accompanied by his mother: he doesn't want to perform the band if his mother doesn't watch him. He is the only male among five other siblings. He aspires to become a teacher who teaches in remote areas to advance the education of inland Malays.

Harun is a mentally retarded child, since in elementary school when he was 15 years old with X legs, but he is always neat compared to his friends. He is described as smiling, polite, quiet child whose hair is like Chairil Anwar and good friend to Sahara. Her hobby is chewing tamarind candy and has difficulty in understanding the lessons taught by Bu Mus. In every lesson, he will raise hand, asks the same question every day and repeatedly tells Sahara about his striped cat. During art class in sixth grade, he only deposits three

bottles of soy sauce and always gets a special report card.

Kucai who has been the class president for years always complains about asking to be replaced. He is a child who has prestige, is sweet-faced, spoiled, but slow in studying. He were malnourished as a child, so he is nearsighted. Besides, his eyes are not focused, deviated by about twnty degrees. He is very smart only in the field of politics, is optimistic, populist, opportunistic, big mouthed, with lots of theory and pretentious.

Borek is a muscle-mad big guy who always maintains his image as a muscular man, is nicknamed Samson and obsessed with body building. Even when he grows up, he becomes a coolie in Sahara and A Kiong's shop. He is naughty, difficult to manage, but he is also consistent in what he wants to achieve.

A Kiong is a Hokkien child of Chinese descent, a true follower of Mahar from the first grade. He thinks Mahar is a noble master. As for this tiny man, he has a strong and high spirit of friendship, is kind-hearted, and helps others with the exception of Sahara. Even though they often fight, in fact A Kiong and Sahara love each other.

Bu Mus is determined to continue her father's aspirations as a pioneer of the Muhammadiyah School. She is a teacher who does not give up easily, and does not like skipping classes. The nearly collapse school building does not make her feel despaired and her enthusiasm does not subside. She takes care of poor children even though the salary she earns does not worth her hard work. She only graduates from vocational education, and in teaching, she treats students equally.

Pak Harfan, the principal of a Muhammadiyah school, is a kind and patient person although at first, the students are afraid of seing him. Unfortunately, he died on his bench due to an illness he has suffered for a long time.



Floriana is a tomboy child who comes from a rich family. She is a transfer student from a wealthy PN school and at the same time the last character to appear as part of the Rainbow army. The first time she enters school, she has caused chaos by taking over Trapani's seat so that poor Trapani has to be evicted. She does it on the grounds that she wants to sit next to Mahar. She is a girl who is interested in the mystical world, and eventually becomes close friends with Mahar who is also interested in mystical things.

A Ling is a girl of Chinese descent who is beautiful with skin and slanted eyes, A Kiong's cousin and Ikal's first love. At first, Ikal fell in love with her when he bought chalk at a grocery store. Ikal is only able to meet her when there is a family event at A Kiong's house. A Ling, who is beautiful and strict, is forced to part with Ikal because she has to accompany her aunt who lives alone.

3.1 Educators

Educators are professionals whose job is to plan and carry out the learning process, assess learning outcomes, conduct mentoring and training, and conduct research and community service, especially for educators at tertiary institutions. The Author starts with the struggle of two teachers, Pak Harfan and Bu Mus. They want to get ten new students to maintain the existence of Muhammadiyah elementary school in Belitong. The author creates character Bu Mus and Pak Harfan to represent teachers who have high dedication in the world of education with their efforts and sincerity. They both succeed in advancing education in Gantong village.

Bu Mus is a strict and disciplined teacher in educating her students, this is proved when Mahar behaves and acts strangely with what is ordered in carrying out his duties. She is angry and firm in dealing with problems because Mahar

violates the rules of submitting homeworks, Mahar's scores is slightly reduced.

"This time, I didn't give you the best score in order to teach you a lesson," said Bu Mus to an apathetic Mahar

"It is not because your work lacked quality; no matter what kind of work we do, we must have discipline.

Talented people with a bad attitude are useless (155).

As a teacher she is responsible for the students' education who must make a firm decision to restore and return the right path to improve Mahar's plummeting grades. Mahar's interest in studying decreases because he believes in shamanism. Bu Mus' assertiveness makes him feel guilty but he seems to convince at once that he is defending right argument in his own version. As a result, she tries hard to restrain her emotions and immediately leaves the room to calm herself down.

The Author then presents Pak Harfan who approaches and shakes hands with the students' parents, standing in front of the parents sadly is ready to give his final speech with a look of despair on his face. He has served the Muhammadiyah School for decades almost without any compensation. He supports his family by plot of garden in his yard, but he has high passion teaching. Through humble words, as powerful as raindrops, he brings to the students the very essence of the simple life's righteousness. He inspires them to study and dazzles them with advice to never surrender in the face of difficulties. The first lesson from him is about standing firmly with conviction and a strong desire to reach dreams. He convinces them that life could be happy even in property, so long as, with spirit, one gives, rather than take, as much as one could.

Pak Harfan's ability to plan, control, and drive the school affects the smooth running of the organization which is



conducive and comfortable and is the main task of the school principal. He has responsibility to advance school quality, such as improving the professional quality of teachers in the teaching and learning process in the classroom, and various school-related activities.

3.2 Learners

The author creates ten Rainbow Troops characters who have goals in life, from small things to big dreams whether studying, working, exercising, or doing other things. They need motivation which makes them excite to try and start things to achieve goals. Ikal is someone who is motivated by his own teachers and friends because they are extraordinary and exemplary. He is described as a student who studies hard and can achieve his dreams through studying. He is proud of Lintang:

All this because of Lintang. If there were no Lintang, maybe we wouldn't have the courage to dream. What was in our heads, and the heads of every Belitong village child, was that when we finished high school or high school we would register as langkong workers (lower-ranking employee candidates at the tin PN) and would work for years as miners and then retire as coolies. However, Lintang shows an extraordinary ability that bewitches others' confidence. He opens their horizons to see the possibility of being someone else even though they have limitations. Lintang himself becomes a mathematician: If this is achieved, he will be the first Malay to become a mathematician (344).

As a student, Ikal already knows where to go to reach his goals. His curiosity which refers to attitudes and actions aimed at gaining deeper knowledge, gives him broad insight. He is

portrayed as a student who has alternative plan for his future.

But I can't bear to imagine a plan B in my life because other than badminton and writing I have no other skills. In fact, there is one but it really can't be accounted for, namely the ability to fantasize and dream, I'm a little embarrassed to admit this. I don't have intelligence like Lintang and no artistic talent like Mahar. I thought hard about formulating a plan B. But very fortunately, after weeks of contemplation I finally accidentally got the inspiration to formulate a plan B that was extraordinary (345).

The author creates Lintang who has demonstrated a highly cognitive complex qualification by developing his own techniques for localizing difficulties, analyzing, and solving them considering that he is only in the second grade of elementary school. In addition, he has also demonstrated the quality of a high level of quantitative reasoning, and often looks concentrating on looking at the numbers. He knows the light of knowledge who has been able to contemplate how numbers react to each other in a mathematical operation. These contemplations apparently giving birth to the magic recipe.

3.3 Educational Methods

Educational method is one of the educational components that can create an effective and efficient education. By using methods the paths and techniques used by teachers in the teaching and learning process, students can achieve certain educational goals or competencies that are formulated in the curriculum, syllabus and subjects. The educational method is one of the things that needs to be applied to support the smooth learning process.

The author creates characters Pak Harfan and Buk Mus as facilitators and motivators who take care of the emotions



and hearts of the students. Some of the educational methods used by Mrs. Muslimah and Mr. Harfan in teaching are the discourse, question and answer, discussion, demonstration or experiment methods. One example of the methods used by Pak Harfan is the discourse method by telling a mesmerizing story of a historical war during the time of the Prophet in which the forces were comprised of priests, not soldiers: the Badar War Just 313 Muslim troops defeated thousands of evil, well-armed Quraisy troops.

"Let it be known, family of Ghudar! You will fall to your deaths within the next 30 days!" Pak Harfan shouted dearly while looking intently through the classroom window at the sky, yelling out the dreams of a Meccan prophesying the destruction of Quraisy in the great Badar War (25).

Pak Harfan is an exemplary figure in teaching who does not just lect but figure the story lively. He raises and lowers intonation, presses both ends of the table while emphasizing certain words, and raises both hands like a person praying for rain.

3.4 Educational Materials and Tools

The Muhammadiyah school subjects must be got by every student. The curriculum basically adheres to Islamic values as understood by K. A. Abdul Hamid as the pioneer of Muhammadiyah in Belitong. This subject is included in the School curriculum and is the hallmark of the school. They have teachers like Bu Mus and Pak Harfan who determine the spirit of discipline to be a solid foundation for the shape of moral values in facing the hardships of life. In this regard, Andrea writes:

At this school I understand the meaning of sincerity, struggle and integrity. More than that, the

pioneers of this school have left invaluable lessons about the great noble ideas of Islam, the courage to realize these ideas even though they are constantly plagued by difficulties, and the concept of living life with the idea of providing maximum benefit to others through sacrifice selfless (84).

The curriculum implemented by the school is the formal one, namely the curriculum that is approved by the authorities and presented as a formal curriculum document. The curriculum consists of goals, materials (the largest part) and general guidelines for its implementation. It is narrated:

He compiled his own ethics syllabus and taught us from an early age the basic views of morality, democracy, law, justice, and human rights – long before people are now fussing about materialism versus spiritual development in education (30).

What Bu Mus and Pak Harfan practice in this novel is the application of the teaching curriculum, that is the transformation of the formal curriculum into learning concepts. Meanwhile, the meaning of learning experience that is internalized or in-depth mastery that takes place through coaching the members of Rainbow Troops is an experiential lesson, namely, the impact of changing the way students think and behave.

3.5 Educational Environment

Educational environment is everything that exists around humans, whether in the form of inanimate objects, living things or events that occur including the conditions of society that can have an impact on individuals. Educational environment is the school environment which is a building or institution for learning and teaching as well as a place for receiving and giving lessons. The place where they study only has six small



classes, in the morning is for a Muhammadiyah elementary school and in the afternoon is for a Muhammadiyah junior high school. It has dirt floor and when it rains they get wet because of the leaky roof. Such conditions of the school environment hinder the growth and development of children who are not enthusiastic in the teaching and learning process. It is described:

Imagine the worst possible problems for an elementary school classroom: a roof with leaks so large that students see planes flying in the sky and have to hold umbrella's while studying on rainy days; a cement floor continually decomposing into sand, strong winds that rattle the nerves of the students and shake their souls with the fear of their school collapsing, and students who want to enter the class but first have to usher goats out of the room (21).

The community's environment as an educational environment is important outside the family and school environments because it can affect the mental development of the students. Community educational environment is often invisible, but actually can effect students to study diligently and be able to excel, or they can let themselves influence by bad community environment. In this novel the author character Mahar who entrusts his examinations to shamanism and fairy tales. He convinces his friends that all the answers of the question materials will be given by the fairy without studying if they go to 'Lanun Island' to get the answer key. What Bu Mus has to do is to change the students' perspective that it is just through studying and reading books, they will get succeed.

4. CONCLUSION

The Rainbow Troops, novel written by Andrea Hirata reflects the aspect of

education. There are five aspects of education found in the novel, they are educators, learners, educational methods, educational materials and tools, and educational environment. Educators are people who carry out activities in the field of education. In a broad sense, educators are all people or anyone who tries and influences the development of other people (students) so that their potential grows and develops towards perfection. Learners try to develop their potential through the learning process available at certain paths, levels and types of education. Educational methods must consider the needs, interests, characteristics and seriousness of students and must also provide opportunities to develop their intellectual strengths. It can be said that learning materials (instructional materials) are the knowledge, skills and attitudes that students must master in order to meet the competency standards set and tools are not only devices in the form of objects, for example teaching aids that support teaching and learning activities. Educational environments affect the students' mental and educational developments. In conclusion, the author conveys some schools particularly in Indonesian remote or rural areas still suffer from inaccessible facilitation in the aspects of education.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abram, M. H. 1979. *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Hidayat, Rahmat and Abdillah. 2019. *Ilmu Pendidikan Konsep, Teori dan Aplikasinya*. Lembaga Peduli Pengembangan Pendidikan Indonesia (LPPPI).
- Hirata, Andrea. 2009. *The Rainbow Troops*. Indonesia: Bentang Pustaka
- Biography andreahirata,



<https://haloedukasi.com/biografi-andrea-hirata/amp>
Hirata's education and career,
<https://www.tribunnewswiki.com/2019/06/28/andrea-hirata>

Simamora, Rosa and Silaban, Yolanda.
2022. MUSE: Journal of Art. Medan:
Catholic University of Saint Thomas
LPPM. <http://ejournal.ust.ac.id/index.php/MUSE/issue/view/249>