



# Folktales, Trans-locality and the Construction of Social Values by Children

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**Abstract:** Within the context of trans-locality, this paper will discuss two popular folktales shared amongst the Malay Archipelago, mainly Indonesian and Malaysia, Bawang Merah Bawang Putih (Shallots and Garlic) and the story of the cursed son known as Si Tanggung in Malaysia or Malin Kundang in Indonesia. This paper argues that although the stories may differ accordingly through the locality of the cultural adaptation, the ongoing process of acculturation and assimilation which influences community's perception, however, what remains relevant and binds these communities of the Malay Archipelago, especially Malaysia and Indonesia, is the social values. This study adopts an arts-based research method which includes the systematic use of the artistic process, the actual making of artistic expressions in all of the different forms of the arts as a primary way of understanding and examining cultural heritage experience. This paper further indicates that by presenting the children as actors and story-tellers through performative platforms, specifically, Wayang Kulit as in this research, they are not only able to present a better understanding of the social values from these different versions of the stories but also can re-contextualize these values to their daily lives. As a result, they acquire new skills and understanding in constructing new social values whilst drawing an analogical relationship between the trans-locality of the imagined situations in these folktales and their living realities.

**Keywords:** Folktales, children, translocality, social values

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## INTRODUCTION

This paper focuses on the inter-connectedness between three areas of study; folktales, translocality and children, leading the discussion as to how all three elements are triangulated to the construction of social values within the community. Folktales are part of an oral tradition passed down verbally from generation to generation. Most scholars believe that they could have originated in the era before literacy but now handed down even in written forms. Folktales include fairy tales, fables, trickster tales, “ghost stories”; stories of the past people. Thompson (2001) states that some of these stories have been re-modified as they are being “re-told”, “re-written” due to cultural adaptation, story-tellers and community's perceptions; resulting in various versions. These versions also believed to be part of diaspora activities enriching the stories further and allowing people from different localities to share and experience them within their own cultural contexts.

The idea of folktales has often been explored within a number of premises that belong to both the material and spiritual spheres. The narratives within folktales include, stories and customs of a given community, fairy tales, historical stories, and even ghost tales. The most distinctive feature that discerns folktales from other forms of

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communal narratives is the manner in which folktales are presented within a community. Folktales are essentially the oral history of a community, preserved through social memory and communicated through rote.

Translocality, on the other hand, is relatively a new area of study in the field of social sciences. Translocality is very much connected to migration, diaspora and the impact on both the migrating and host communities to the local settings. Translocality can be understood as a variety of enduring, open and non-linear processes which produce close interrelations between different people and places. According to [Peth \(2014\)](#), these interrelations and various forms of exchange are created through migration flows and network that are constantly challenged, re-worked and questioned. There are possibilities for translocality to take shape in a society due to emerging conditions such as migration, constant flow of information, goods and values.

Migration also causes social embeddedness of people at both place of origin and place of destination, further allowing for intense flow of information, culture and values which affect the way of living and lifestyles. Translocality further illustrates new relations which can connect and influence different localities and people at the same time, which means that conditions or events that happen at one place may or can have effect or impact on other connected places. This creates networks or networking, whereby people stay connected (migrants and non-migrants), share a common interest. These networking may range from business networking, to diaspora networking and even political networking. Translocality can be framed as a created and lived situation/condition experienced by millions of people in everyday life, including children who are also subjected to migration and diaspora activities.

Childhood or child as defined by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) is biologically the stage of human development from infancy to puberty. This definition is further supported by many other theories on childhood such as Rousseau & Locke (19th century), Freud & Piaget (mid 19th and early 20th century) & Vygotsky. The study on human development looks closely at learning development and how one starts to learn from as young as an infant. Scholars agree that children are active learners, draw on direct physical and social experience as well as culturally transmitted knowledge to construct their own understandings of the world around them.

The early Childhood Care and Education Association of Malaysia (NAECCEM) divides the development of childhood into three different categories; early childhood (from birth to six years old), middle childhood (seven to nine years old) and upper childhood (ten to twelve years old). This justification of child development within the specific age grouping could also be due to the educational level that a child is placed in. As this study focuses on ten-year old children (upper childhood) and folktales, it is important to recognize scholars' views on the cognitive abilities of this group of children. Scholars generally view this group of children as being able to comprehend and interpret stories as they have begun to closely associate with the fact of being human as they are also able to control their impulses and have gained the ability to reason and focus ([Angiers, 2007](#)). They too are able to distinguish between fantasy, imagination, facts and logic. Scientifically proven, this is the time when the brain has reached the adult size, therefore allowing the brain cells and brain domains to organize, analyse and communicate. This theory is further supported by [Campbell \(2011\)](#), an anthropologist from University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, in that, children of this age start to make sense and do tasks, therefore becoming economically valuable in some cultures.

Social values are important or lasting beliefs and shared ideas by members of a culture/society about what is good, bad, desirable & undesirable. Values account for the stability of social order. They provide the general guidelines for social conduct. Some examples of values such as honesty, patriotism, respect for human dignity, rationality, sacrifice, individuality, equality etc. guide our behaviour in many ways. Values are the criteria people use in assessing their daily lives; arrange their priorities and choose between alternative course of action. [Haralombos \(2008\)](#) connote that "A value is a belief that something is good and worthwhile. It defines what is worth having and worth striving".

According to [Peter \(1970\)](#), "Values are general conceptions of the good, ideas about the kind of ends that people should pursue throughout their lives and throughout the many different activities in which they engage". This paper looks at how heritage folktales transmit these social values to children through innovative medium of performing arts. Additionally, within the context of translocality, the paper also discusses how two popular folktales in the Malay archipelago, "Bawang Merah Bawang Putih" (Shallots and Garlic) and "Si Tanggang"/ Malin Kundang (story of the cursed son) position social values, which are shared among the communities in the Nusantara or Malay archipelago amidst some differences in their versions.

### **Problem Statement**

The last 50 years have brought dramatic changes to the lives of children as they confront shifting patterns in Malaysians lifestyles, leisure time as well as increasing competition from entertainment and recreation. Intriguingly, children today, are seeking new fixtures that offer newer and varied ways to communicate, learn and play where they can emerge as central actors in a shifting landscape that challenges our values and norms. For a long time, the life worlds of children have been largely shaped by folklores that carry social values and virtues we wish to imbibe in the new generations. However, in this new century, Malaysia is experiencing dramatic social and cultural changes that have witnessed the onslaught of heritage folktales and century old performance arts like the Wayang Kulit.

Generations of children are currently being “raised online” as they spend their time on new media technologies which now take on roles as new guardians that offer stories to shape ideas of their surrounding world. The sounds of heritage folklores transmitted by older generations in articulating social ideals, beliefs, values and philosophy seem to have fallen silent, even within the arena of performance arts. Attention must be drawn to the importance of folklore as an ingredient of Malaysian cultural identity that shapes ideas and actions of children in rapidly changing living settings today. Children should be encouraged to learn about the facets of life by actively engaging in the processes of creating, participating in/performing, and responding to quality arts experiences, adapting their voices and experiences in unveiling new understandings on heritage folktales in their daily lives. Children need interested adults and others to listen to their plans, respond to their ideas, and offer assistance and support for their explorations on heritage folktales in the Malaysian setting. This will enhance respect for Malaysian heritage folktales in productive ways.

The importance of folktales as an integral element of a child's holistic development is an area that has received significant attention within the academic world (Citraningtyas, 2017; Rahim, 2014; Shams, 2016). Folktales play an important role in shaping and developing a child's social and cultural awareness, as the stories of their parents and grandparents present an important feature in moulding their social and cultural identity within a given community. As this paper looks at translocality in folktales and its effects on children, the discussion in this paper focus on two popular stories within the Malay archipelago region; which are “Bawang Merah Bawang Putih” (Shallots and Garlic) and “Si Tanggung or Malin Kundang” (the cursed son) to present children as the new bearers of the new narratives that they have created and the contextualization of the social values in their daily lives.

The objectives of this study are to look at:

1. The similarities and differences in the construction of these stories
2. The ‘body of shared moral values’ amongst the people of the Malay Archipelago transmitted through these folktales
3. How these shared moral values have a positive impact on Malaysian children exposed to these stories.
4. How children acquire new skills and understanding in constructing new social values whilst drawing an analogical relationship between the trans-locality of the imagined situations in these folktales and their living realities? As such, the study focuses on three main areas:
  - Heritage folktales, translocality and children
  - Wayang Kulit as performative tool and platform for children to interpret and translate these stories
  - Construction of social values through these folktales by children

### **THE FOLKTALES**

#### ***Bawang Merah, Bawang Putih (Shallot & Garlic)***

This story is believed to be originated from Riau, Java and the island of Sunda. The central characters are Bawang Merah (shallot) & Bawang Putih (garlic). There are two versions to this story; i) magical pumpkin, ii) magical fish and swing. Both versions are well known to Indonesians and Malaysians and the children who participated in the research. The story surrounds two half - sisters (one bad, one good) and an unjust step-mother. Bawang Merah is vindictive, Bawang Putih is kind hearted. Putih is always bullied by Merah and the step mother. But the story has a happy ending and moral values; good always prevails. Merah and step mother realize their wrong doings and ask forgiveness from Putih. In both versions, Putih lives happily ever after. Bawang Merah Bawang Putih is part of popular culture in Indonesia and Malaysia as it has been made into movies both by Malaysian and Indonesian filmmakers, animation movie by Malaysian company, tele-serial by Indonesian company but also aired in Malaysia.

Table 1 *Two Versions of the Folk Tale*

Version 1	Version 2
<p>Putih is asked to perform chores. While washing clothes by the river, step mothers dress is washed away by the current. Afraid of being scolded, Putih goes searching for the dress along the river.</p> <p>She meets an old woman who happens to know the whereabouts of her dress. She is willing to give her dress but asks Putih to help her clean her cave and cook for her. Putih agrees and being satisfied with Putihs work, the old woman gives her the dress and asks her to choose a pumpkin as a gift. Putih chooses the small pumpkin and leaves the big one for the old woman.</p> <p>Upon returning home, her step mother and Merah scold her for being late. Putih tells them what happens and shows them the pumpkin. The mother takes the pumpkin and throws it down. It cracks open and to their surprise, the pumpkin is filled with gold and jeweleries.</p> <p>Despite the gold, step mother is still angry with Putih for not bringing back the bigger pumpkin. Due to her greed, she sends Merah now to bring back the bigger pumpkin. Merah goes in search for the old woman and sees her. The old woman asks Merah to clean her house. She agrees but does a lazy job at it. Merah then asks the old woman for the pumpkin, the old woman asks her to choose, Merah chooses the bigger pumpkin. Returning home, step mother and Merah cut open the pumpkin but to their shock, out jumps venomous snakes and bite both of them. They plead for forgiveness from Putih for all their wrong doings.</p>	<p>In a village, lived a man who had two wives, each had a daughter. Upon the mans death, the younger wife and her daughter (Merah) takes over the house hold and bully both the older wife and her daughter Putih. Putihs mother is killed by Merahs mother and Putih is left alone at the mercy of her half-sister and step mother.</p> <p>One day, while washing dishes near a pond, a fish surfaces and tells Putih that it's her mother. Putih goes to the pond regularly to talk to her fish-mother; Merah discovers her secret. Merah lures the fish, catches it, cooks it and gives to Putih to eat. After eating the fish, Merah tells her that she ate her mother! Putih is so saddened, collects the fish bones and buries them under a tree.</p> <p>The next day, a magical swing appears from branches of the tree. As Putih sits on the swing and sings a lullaby taught by her mother, the swing magically swings to and fro.</p> <p>A Prince riding by hears her singing and is enchanted. Putih runs away. The prince follows her and comes to Merahs house. The step mother comes out and says that Merah is the girl that the prince is looking for. The prince asks Merah to sit on the swing and sing. But Merah is unable to sing. This angers the prince and he threaten to kill the step mother if she lies once more. She calls for Putih and Putih sings for the prince. The prince is so happy and asks Putih to marry him. She agrees. Merah and the step mother asks for her forgiveness. Putih lives happily ever after.</p>

Table 2 *Similarities and Differences between both Versions Literature*

Similarities	Differences
1. Title name of the folktale	1. The magical elements
2. Name of central characters	2. The singing of the lullaby
3. Traits of characters	3. The meeting of the prince
4. Magical elements leading to justice & giving hope	4. Putih marries the prince
5. Good versus evil. Good prevails	
6. Remorseful	
7. Happy ending	

### ***Si Tanggang/ Malin Kundang***

This folktale finds its roots and origin in Indonesia, Malaysia and Brunei. The central character is Si Tanggang (Malaysia) or Malin Kundang (Indonesia) or Nahkoda Manis (Brunei). Interestingly, research shows that Si Tanggang has been re-recorded and re-written by Walter William Skeat in 1900 in the book "The Malay Magic", published by

Mac Millan Company, New York. Subsequently it was re-printed by the Journal of Malay Branch Royal of Asiatic Studies (JMBRAS) in 2005. The places that are connected to the story of Si Tanggang are; Batu Caves (Malaysia), Jong Batu, Sungei Brunei (Brunei) and Batu Malin Kundang, Pantai Air Manis in Padang, Sumatera. Si Tanggang has also been adapted to movies by Malaysian and Indonesian filmmakers, TV drama, re-written into a book by Abdul Samad Ahmad in 1960 titled, *Nahkoda Tanggang: Anak Derhaka* and Muhammad Haji Salleh titled “The travel journals of Si Tanggang”, 1979. There are various versions with regards to names of characters and places but the main story line remains almost the same.

### ***Synopsis of the Si Tanggang***

Tanggang is born into a poor family. His father dies leaving behind young Tanggang to take care of his sickly mother. Tanggang is ambitious and wants to be rich. One day, a big vessel docks at the port near his village. He gets permission from his mother to work on the ship and promises to return rich. Tanggang gets a job on the ship and works very hard. He is liked by the captain who is the owner of the ship too. Soon Tanggang is promoted as the captain and he is married to the owners daughter. After many years, Tanggangs ship docks at the port of his village. His mother learns about his arrival, she goes to meet him but Tanggang not only has forgotten her, but is rude, ungrateful and disowns her. He is too embarrassed to say she is his mother. Feeling disheartened by Tanggangs behaviour, she curses him to turn into a stone. By Gods willingness, Tanggang and all onboard are turned into a huge stone.

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This study adopts an arts-based research method which includes the systematic use of the artistic process, the actual making of artistic expressions in all of the different forms of the arts, as a primary way of understanding and examining cultural heritage experience. Arts Based methodology here which is child-centered will focus on the role of cultural heritage and arts in childrens lives to better understand the world around us in new and valuable ways (Knowles & Cole, 2008; Springgay, Irwin, & Gouzouasis, 2008) as quoted in *The Routledge Companion to Research in the Arts* (Michael & Karlsson, 2011). This study anchors the premise that creativity is an innovative human capacity that can be nurtured and cultivated through artful thinking, doing and making. Arts Based methodology reclaims creativity, art, artistic practice, artful behaviours, and the arts, in the service of human and cultural heritage flourishing. It involves promoting creativity and imagination in learning, offering alternative aesthetic forms of knowledge production as well as personal and collective transformation and emancipation. This methodology encompasses five creative processes: Discovery, Interpretation, Ideation, Experimentation and Evolution which challenge conventional inquiry and of children making sense of the surrounding world through heritage folktales and performance.

This study utilizes both quantitative and qualitative methods and data sources. The study includes surveys, observations and group discussions with children (aged 10 years old) as well as hands-on engagement with theatre making processes of the Wayang Kulit performance. Questionnaires and focus group discussions were used to examine childrens views on heritage folktales and opinions on the practice of Wayang Kulit. The questionnaires were distributed to the school children with prior consent from the school authorities and parents. The questionnaires address issues of demographic (age, gender, race, family background and lifestyles), geographical locations and prior knowledge of heritage folktales and Wayang Kulit to understand childrens experiences.

The study focused only on three states in the northern region of Malaysia; Penang, Kedah and Perlis. The children chosen were from both urban and sub urban schools from these three states as they were the targeted areas within the 11th Malaysia plan as growth catalyst cities in order to maximise benefits for the residents and to stimulate national development. There were five phases to this study and each phase went through the appropriate sessions with the children in order to get the data.

Phase one focused on Discovery. Childrens lifeworld experiences, their views on heritage folktales and the Wayang Kulit experience were explored through quantitative and qualitative methods. Researchers carried out the first session by giving out questionnaires about folktales and Wayang Kulit performance to 30 children from 6 selected schools from the above- mentioned states. Knowledge on folktales, relevance to their everyday lives, the pleasures, anxieties as well as difficulties they confronted with understanding the folktales and Wayang Kulit were also examined.

Phase two focused on Interpretation. Childrens interpretation and meanings about the folktales and Wayang Kulit act as presentations that refer to texts, oral, kinesthetics and gestural modes. Researchers carried out session 2 whereby 10 children from each school participated in a focus group discussion about folktales and Wayang Kulit. An analysis of



childrens interpretation of these art forms will pave pathways for engaging and imaginative discourses in constructing stories and innovations in the endeavour to re-vision the Wayang Kulit experience.

Phase three focused on Ideation. The session here involves children re-creating the characters in the stories, designing the story board, narrating the stories, creating dialogues and constructing the moral values. 20 children (10 from focus group, 10 from questionnaire group) participated in activities such as i) story-telling, ii) designing story board, iii) designing characters, iv) creating dialogues, v) acting out the story and vi) constructing moral values.



Figure 1 *Children Creating Characters and Personalities in the Folklores during the Workshop Sessions.* Source: *Fundamental Research Grant Scheme (2017)*

Phase four focused on Experimentation. The sessions carried out here by researchers involved 20 children from 3 schools who participated in a 2 days workshop of acting, narrating/ story- telling, puppetry techniques, playing the gamelan music and re-iterating the social values that they had constructed. This phase examined children as musicians, puppeteers, actors and story-tellers. With the input and feedback from researchers, the children were given the special opportunity to play the role of little master directors who will be able to recreate and re-enact the tales and local stories of folktales with values that are relevant to present social realities. As such this study is believed to advance childrens views on Malaysian heritage folktales that will present a renewed meaning to the local narratives and culture of the community.



Figure 2 *Children Designing the Story Board for the Performance of the Folktales via Wayang Kulit Performance Techniques.*  
 Source: *Fundamental Research Grant Scheme (2017)*

Phase five focused on Evolution. The children were given an opportunity to perform their full-length workshop performance at the end of their workshop. The performances of these children will be documented as evolving children's arts in Malaysia. Various stakeholders in the arts scene were invited to witness these performances and to chart the social futures of children's arts, heritage folktales and the Wayang Kulit in collaboration with the children who led these performances. The conversations of children with the stakeholders will also be documented to give insights into the process as well as the production and participation experiences.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of the study can be divided to five sections respectively; a) Origin of the folktales, b) Designing the story board, c) Staging the Performance, d) Drawing relationship between the translocality of the imagined situations in these folktales and their living realities and e) construction of social values. These five sections address the new skills and understanding children had acquired through folktales, Wayang Kult performance and the construction of social values whilst drawing an analogical relationship between the translocality of the imagined situations in these folktales and their living realities.

### *Origin of the Folktales*

Findings show that children had no issues or problems with the origin of the folktales. The fact that the folktales were from Indonesia as well as Malaysia, did not affect the children at all. This is also due to they were already familiar with Bawang Putih Bawang Merah (Shallots and Garlic) and Si Tanggang/Malin Kundang. Children were also familiar with the different versions of the stories. Conversations with children also revealed that there was a deep sense of shared ownership over the stories as they had heard them from their family members, teachers, friends, read them from books and watched them on TV, YouTube.

### *Designing the Story Board*

Findings show that group discussions allowed room and space for thinking, re-collecting memories and strategizing the story. These opportunities allowed children to explore the stories, setting of place, location and time. Through these sessions, we also witnessed children being creative by constructing characters and personalities for the folktales. The session of creating dialogues between characters became so lively as children kept trying and developing lively and logical dialogues.

### ***Staging the Performance***

Findings show that children were involved in four creative parts; children as story-tellers/narrators, children as musicians, children as puppeteers, children as actors and becoming the characters. The first session gave equal opportunities for all children to try out all the creative roles available. Children were introduced to the musical instruments of gamelan/ Wayang Kulit, the preparatory methods for actors, story-telling and puppeteering- techniques. Among some of the instruments are the gong, gendang, kesi and canang. In the puppeteering techniques, children were trained to move the puppets accordingly to the flow of the story line. As narrators and actors, children were exposed to acting methods. Then children were asked to choose the parts or roles that they were comfortable or wanted to play. The study reveals that the children were able to play the music taught to them with the right tempo, rhythm and beat, become the convincing narrator, act the characters well and move the puppets accordingly, further indicating that they were fast and active learners, highly imaginative and eager to try and develop new skills.

### ***Drawing Relationship between the Translocality of the Imagined Situations in these Folktales and their Living Realities***

Findings show that the action and participatory based research gave opportunities for children to rework the settings of the locality in the folktales such as place and time and re-set them to current realities; example; looking at villages then and now, vessels then and now, cave was changed into an old hut. There were also opportunities for children to re-create new narratives by re-doing the dialogues; applying current dialect and words which makes sense to them; example, children from Penang used Penang dialect and those from Kedah used Kedah dialect. Others used standard normal Malay language. Similarly, there were also opportunities to present the stories in either English or Malay languages respectively. This allowed children as actors/ performer to further explore the story, characters, characteristics, personalities, dialogues. Consequently, children in their (current realities) are able to voice out their thoughts and feelings as affected characters (past/imagined), therefore, bridging a strong connection between the past and the current. Children were made to believe that they were Bawang Merah/Si Tanggang and so how would they act/react?



Figure 3 *Children Becoming the Musicians during the Wayang Kulit Workshop Performance.* Source: [Fundamental Research Grant Scheme \(2017\)](#)

### ***Construction of Social Values***

Findings show that children were able to construct social values which they could relate to as they had also learnt some of these values from home, school and other avenues. These social values were constructed based on general social values, values learnt from characterization, values learnt from the process of staging the performance and



additional values that children added on based from their group discussions. The table below shows the constructed values by the children accordingly.

Table 3 *Top Ten Risks Identified from the Literature*

Bawang Merah Bawang Putih	Malin Kundang/Si Tanggang
<p>A. General Social Values</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Be kind to family members and friends</li> <li>● Do a chore wholeheartedly without expectations</li> <li>● Complete a task given. Focus on the task/job.</li> <li>● Be honest and responsible</li> <li>● Magical elements (justice &amp; hope)</li> </ul> <p>B. Values learnt from characterization</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Bawang Putih-Respect, patience, never give up, obedience, kind, forgiving.</li> <li>● Bawang Merah- repent, remorse</li> </ul> <p>C. Values learnt from Staging the Performance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Team work, cooperative, respecting the feelings of others</li> <li>● Responsibility, punctual.</li> <li>● Working as individual and as one in a group.</li> <li>● Being resourceful especially with costumes, props.</li> <li>● Respecting performance time</li> <li>● Cleaning up performance space for other groups to perform</li> </ul> <p>D. Values added on by the Children</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Change all negative to positive, eg: dont be rude to be respectful</li> <li>● Bawang Putih should stand up for herself. Be brave</li> <li>● Say no to Bully!</li> <li>● Have faith and be compassionate</li> </ul>	<p>A. General Social Values</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Be kind to family members and friends</li> <li>● Do a chore wholeheartedly without expectations</li> <li>● Work hard and you will be rewarded</li> <li>● Be honest and responsible</li> <li>● Magical elements (justice &amp; hope)</li> </ul> <p>B. Values learnt from characterization</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Si Tanggang- Good traits of Tanggang</li> <li>● Hardworking, not giving up easily, ambitious</li> <li>● Si Tanggang- How to be better</li> <li>● Be loving, be grateful, never forget your roots</li> </ul> <p>C. Values Learnt from Staging the Performance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Team work, cooperative, respecting the feelings of others</li> <li>● Responsibility, punctual.</li> <li>● Working as individual and as one in a group.</li> <li>● Being resourceful especially with costumes, props</li> <li>● Respecting performance time</li> <li>● Cleaning up performance space for other groups to perform</li> </ul> <p>D. Values added on by the Children</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Change all negative to positive, eg: dont be rude to be respectful</li> <li>● Si Tanggang must always remember his roots</li> <li>● Love your parents no matter what</li> <li>● Be compassionate</li> </ul>

This paper would like to point out that the field of performance art enables children to explore their thoughts and construct the social values in a much more expanded way. Children learnt values by exploring the characters and characteristics of each character in the folktales. They obtained good values from the theatre-staging process such as team-work, being responsible, respective of each others feelings and being punctual. They also learnt to be resourceful as they had to think about costumes and props for their characters. Children were also exposed to problem solving such as if the actors were to forget their lines, what could they do? To solve this issue, they actually wrote out the dialogues in a manila card and pasted them at the side wings of the stage. This is known as cue sheets in theatre. Each actor playing the character would have a look first at the lines before he/she goes out to the stage. They also planted a prompter in the front row of the audience.

Performance art also helps children to add on their own values which they would have learnt from parents, siblings, teachers, friends and so on. These values were brought into these workshops through performance and discussions. Children playing the role of characters had the opportunity to give their own voice and thoughts to a situation. For example; Putih was asked to stand up and not submit to the bullies of Merah! Children also felt it was important to be compassionate and forgive someone. Below is a chart that the children came up with post production. This chart will be designed into pocket cards for all children to have them in their purses. The chart can also be designed into a A3 posters to be placed in schools and classrooms for teaching and learning purposes.

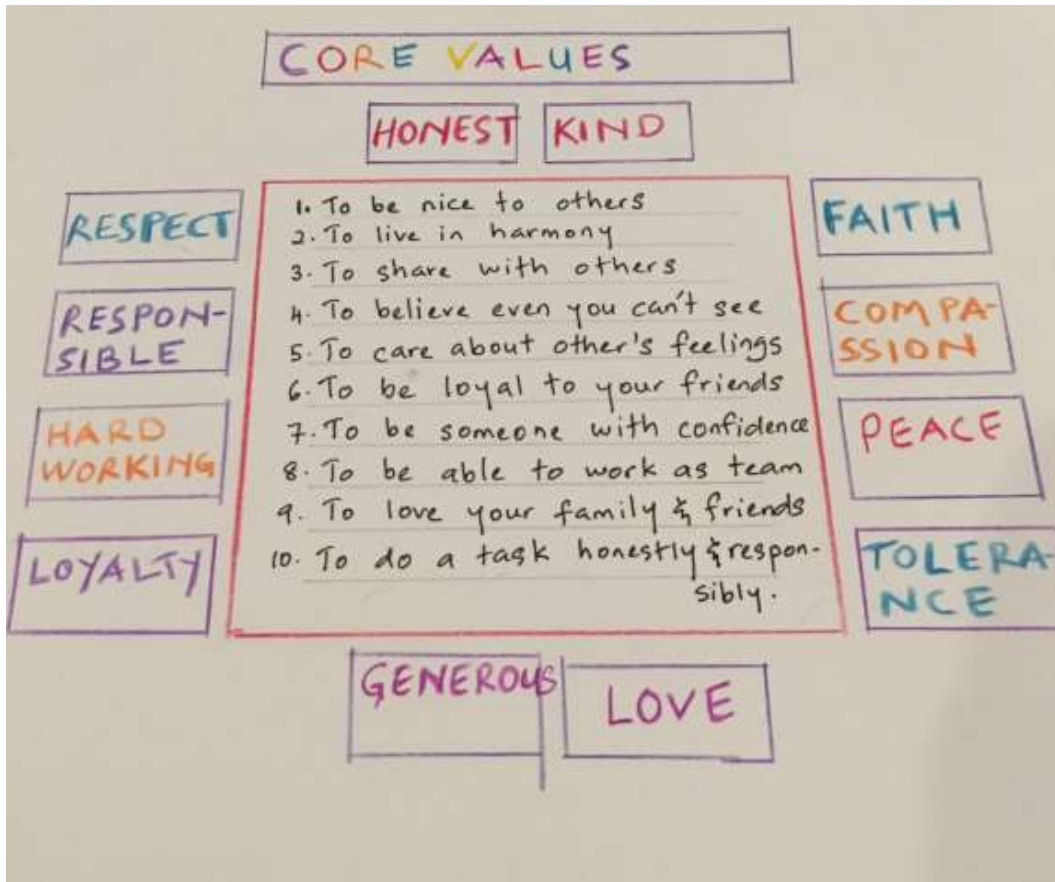


Figure 4 Source: *Fundamental Research Grant Scheme* (2017)

## CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This study concludes by highlighting three major processes that the children went through this research. Through this research, children were able to chart their knowledge on heritage folktales; namely two popular folktales from the Malay Archipelago. The question of origin of the folktales did not affect the children as they had learnt of these stories before either at home, school or other platforms. Some of these children were also of different ethnicities (Indian and Chinese) but together with their Malay friends, went on to chart their knowledge in these stories without much difficulties. The children also gave their voices to the narration of the stories, created the character dialogues, acted and embodied the characters of the stories. Children were able to appropriate the Wayang Kulit experience as a performative tool to enhance their knowledge in puppeteering-techniques, music playing and the whole experience of theatre staging process. Last but not least, through this research, children had learnt to understand the meanings of these folktales to construct social values that they could relate to their present realities, therefore bridging the past with the present.

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