

Literature Learning in the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum in Elementary Schools: Challenges and Solutions

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Abstract. The Merdeka Belajar Curriculum, introduced in Indonesia in 2022, aims to offer flexible and student-centered learning that encourages creativity and independence. This study examines the implementation of literature learning in elementary schools within this framework, focusing on preparation, implementation, and evaluation stages. Despite the curriculum's potential, challenges such as inadequate teaching materials, conventional methods, and insufficient formative assessment hinder effective literature learning. Through qualitative methods including observations, interviews, and documentation at a public elementary school in Sumedang Regency, this research identifies key obstacles and suggests improvements. Proposed solutions include developing creative teaching materials tailored to students' needs, incorporating diverse and modern learning media, and employing interactive teaching methods. Regular formative assessments with constructive feedback, teacher training on effective literature teaching strategies, and collaboration with libraries and literature communities are also recommended. These solutions aim to create a more dynamic and effective literature learning environment, ultimately improving the quality of literature education in elementary schools.

Keywords: Challenges of Literature Learning, Literature Learning, Merdeka Belajar Curriculum.

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INTRODUCTION

The education curriculum in Indonesia has undergone 12 changes starting from 1947 to 2013. Then in 2022, the Government implemented a new education curriculum, namely the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum. Merdeka Curriculum is a curriculum that offers a variety of learning subjects that are optimally organized, allowing students to have sufficient time to explore concepts and strengthen their skills (Hadi et al., 2023; Liana et al., 2023). The Merdeka Curriculum gives educators the freedom to design teaching materials and teaching techniques, spurring creativity and innovation to adapt to student needs (Asfiati, 2023). The purpose of the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum is to give students the freedom to determine the direction of their own learning according to their talents and interests. Thus, it is hoped that each student can develop their talents optimally and become an independent and qualified individual.

Indonesian language learning is an essential part of the education curriculum in elementary schools in Indonesia. Indonesian not only serves as a tool for communication, but also as a fundamental foundation for learning other subjects (Dewilenimastuti, 2020; Haryanto et al., 2016; Solikhah & Budiharso, 2020). Learning a language facilitates individuals to interact, share experiences, learn from each other, and improve their intellectual skills (Daulay & Nurmalina, 2021). Effective implementation of learning in Indonesian language in elementary schools has an important role in developing language skills, literacy, and cultural

understanding in students. In the Merdeka curriculum, one of the objectives of the Indonesian language subject is to assist students in developing literacy skills, which include language skills, understanding literature, and thinking critically and creatively, both in the learning process and in the work environment.

One part of Indonesian Language Learning at the elementary school level is learning literature appreciation which gives students the experience of recognizing literary works. A literary work is the result of an author's imagination, reflection, experience, knowledge, ideas, and ideas which are the author's creative expression based on human experience (Awalia et al., 2019; Muyassaroh, 2021). Literature allows students to connect their personal experiences with those of the author, which helps in the development of critical thinking (Ilyas & Afzal, 2021). Literary works establish a link between the past and the future, make an important contribution in the formation of national consciousness, and offer variable and transformative knowledge (Shokhayev et al., 2023).

Literature learning aims to improve students' capabilities in understanding, enjoying, and deeply experiencing literary works (Bachtiar & Sihes, 2016). Literary works are strategic media for inserting didactic messages, moral ethics, character and national culture (Handayani et al., 2023). Therefore, literature learning contributes to nurturing students' emotional intelligence, intellectual curiosity, spiritual dimension, and moral character. This has the potential to indirectly influence the development of expected attitudes and behaviors (Arimurti & Baadilla, 2023; Efendi & Nurjanah, 2019; Majid et al., 2021).

Teachers and students need to have an appropriate level of literary competence to be successful in literature. They need to be able to perceive and appreciate (aesthetic and stylistic competence), relate to and empathize with (empathic competence), and interpret the meaning (interpretive competence) of literary works. In addition, they also need to be able to analyze and comment on the cultural representations and discourses contained therein (cultural and discursive competence) (Alter & Ratheiser, 2019; Calafato, 2024). Therefore, literary experiences are important for children to develop thinking, communication, and knowledge skills by expanding their imagination (Prachagool, 2021). This is because literature contains moral values, ethics, imagination, and creativity (Harti et al., 2022).

Literature learning in Indonesia has not reached the expected level. Literature learning in schools still does not achieve appreciative and productive goals due to factors such as the lack of literature books, limited ICT, limited lesson time, and the lack of professional literature teachers (Ali Imron & Nugrahani, 2019). A literature teacher must realize the principle of literature as experience and language. The teaching of literature in schools must present new experiences that are meaningful to students (Sulaeman et al., 2018).

Literature is a comfortable, exciting, challenging and exhilarating learning. Meanwhile, the situation of learning literature is still a daunting challenge for teachers (Harti et al., 2022). Teachers' limited ability to develop interesting literature materials is still a problem, which ultimately affects the quality of literature learning in the school environment (Nugrahani, 2017). The teaching of literature in formal educational institutions faces challenges due to the lack of appreciation for literature from teachers and students, which shows weaknesses in the process of learning literature (Rimang & Ulviani, 2023). Currently, students often feel afraid and tired when writing in literature lessons at school (Xu et al., 2022). Traditionally, literature teaching is often teacher-dominated, which often provides little space for students to express their ideas freely and creatively (Iqbal et al., 2021; Yanto et al., 2020).

Teachers have an important role in directing students towards achieving excellence in all subject areas (Hamzah et al., 2022). The main role of a teacher in teaching literature is to realize idealism in the process of learning literature (Roza & Syaefudin, 2018). Indonesian teachers' lack of preparation in literature can hinder the development of students' interest in literature (Durriyah, 2019). According to Rambe & Widiyarti (2018), there are three stages of literature learning in elementary schools that teachers must go through: preparation, implementation, and evaluation. The role of the teacher is very significant in creating a pleasant learning environment and motivating students to learn literature. Careful preparation before teaching is necessary to design interesting lessons. During the learning process, teachers need to use creative methods to actively engage students. Afterwards, an evaluation is conducted to understand the students' comprehension. Thus, the role of the teacher is crucial in shaping students' interest in literature and developing their creative potential.

This topic is important because literature learning not only helps students develop critical thinking skills and creativity, but also contributes to the formation of their character and emotional sensitivity. Although literature has great potential as an educational medium, its implementation in elementary schools still faces various obstacles. Therefore, it is important to evaluate the practice of literature learning in the Merdeka Curriculum and find solutions to optimize the role of literature in elementary education.

Based on the explanation that has been given, the purpose of this study is to analyze the implementation of three stages of literature learning in elementary schools and identify the obstacles faced by teachers at each stage. The research questions raised in this study include: 1) How is the implementation of the three stages of literature learning (preparation, implementation, and evaluation) in the Merdeka Curriculum in elementary schools? 2) What obstacles do teachers face in each stage of literature learning in elementary schools?

The novelty of this study lies in the analysis of the implementation of three stages of literature learning in the Merdeka Curriculum in elementary schools, which is still limited in the literature. This study also identifies the obstacles faced by teachers and proposes concrete strategies to overcome these challenges, contributing to the development of literature teaching methods in elementary schools. With a better understanding of the factors that influence the implementation of literature learning and the role of teachers in overcoming these obstacles, it is hoped that more effective solutions can be found to improve the quality of literature learning in elementary schools.

The benefits of this research are expected to provide meaningful insights for curriculum development, teaching methods, and the improvement of the quality of literature education at the elementary level. This study also aims to foster a better understanding of the challenges faced and effective strategies for enhancing literature learning in elementary schools.

METHODOLOGY

This study uses a qualitative approach through a descriptive method with the type of research, namely case study research. Case study is a method used to collect and analyze data related to a case (Hardani et al., 2020). Something is made into a case usually because of a problem, difficulty, obstacle, or deviation. However, case studies can also be conducted on things that are not problematic, for example to examine certain advantages or successes.

This study was conducted at a public elementary school located in Wado Subdistrict, Sumedang Regency. The research subjects consisted of 9 classroom teachers teaching Indonesian language subjects. The selection of subjects was based on the criteria of teachers who had implemented the Merdeka Curriculum in their teaching practices.

Data collection techniques used observation, interview, and documentation. The observation technique was used to see how the process of planning, implementation and evaluation of literature learning is carried out in elementary schools. The interview technique was used to explore teachers' views and attitudes about the implementation of literature learning and the challenges experienced. Meanwhile, documentation was used to collect data on literature learning administration tools that have been prepared by teachers, such as semester programs, teaching modules or lesson plans, and learning materials used.

The data analysis technique used in this study follows the method developed by Miles and Huberman (as cited in Hardani et al., 2020), consisting of three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. In the data reduction stage, information is simplified and focused on relevant aspects. Next, the reduced data is systematically presented to facilitate interpretation. The final stage is conclusion drawing, where patterns and relationships are

analyzed to produce valid conclusions. This technique enables researchers to manage and understand the data effectively.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal key aspects related to the implementation of literature learning in elementary schools in Sumedang Regency. Through observation and interviews with classroom teachers, three main stages were identified in the Indonesian language learning process, particularly in literature activities: planning, implementation, and evaluation. In this context, here are the findings from each of these stages.

During the planning stage, teachers prepare administrative materials for instruction, including semester programs, teaching modules or lesson plans, and learning resources. However, in preparing for the lessons, teachers do not introduce specific teaching materials or learning media dedicated to literature. The learning resources prepared are limited to textbook packages and student worksheets included within the textbook. Additionally, there is no effort from teachers to develop literature teaching materials before the implementation of lessons.

During the implementation stage, teachers instruct students to open their textbook packages or student worksheets as the learning materials for that session. Teachers begin the lesson with initial activities such as greetings, checking students' health conditions, taking attendance, and conducting prayers. Following this, teachers introduce the learning activities planned for the day. The teaching methods used tend to be limited to conventional approaches like lectures, where the teacher primarily delivers information and students act as recipients. The limited variety in teaching methods results in reduced active participation of students in the learning process and diminishes opportunities for creativity development.

In the evaluation stage, students are only asked to complete exercises in the student worksheets by the end of the lesson period. Additionally, there is no provision for formative assessment because teachers believe that the limited evaluation method of completing exercises in student worksheets is adequate to measure students' understanding of the taught material.

Quality learning is defined by its ability to provide opportunities for students to actively engage in the learning process, foster critical and creative thinking, and stimulate high interest and motivation for learning. Additionally, quality learning creates an inclusive learning environment and supports all students, facilitating the holistic development of various skills and potentials. It also offers constructive feedback to help students enhance their understanding and performance.

1. Preparation

In the preparation stage, teachers have compiled semester programs and teaching modules or literature lesson plans based on the curriculum. The role of teachers in designing meaningful classroom dynamics is very important in the field of literature teaching pedagogy (Iskhak et al., 2020). In any situation, teachers are obliged to prepare lessons to achieve the learning objectives that have been set (Herwin et al., 2021). However, in practice, it appears that teachers do not prepare literature learning materials and media, and only rely on textbooks and student worksheet for learning resources. Teachers never develop special teaching materials for literature learning activities that will be held. In fact, teacher creativity is needed in designing and developing interesting learning materials to ensure that the learning process runs effectively and optimally (Nugrahani, 2017).

The successful implementation of learning is due to effective planning (Nurtanto et al., 2021). In order for learning to be optimized and student participation to be increased, teaching activities must follow a clear structure and should be ideally planned (Diggele et al., 2020). However, in the implementation of learning, teaching modules are only considered as a complement in the administration of learning activities in schools. Teaching modules are only prepared as a precautionary measure if the school supervisor comes to visit. For teachers, the teaching module has not become the main guideline in implementing learning.

The interview results also show that teachers never develop literature learning materials in accordance with the abilities that must be achieved, but only follow what has been provided in the package books used by the school. Teachers do not consider whether the material is in accordance with the characteristics of the students and the context of their environment or not.

One of the challenges for teachers in lesson planning is the adaptation of planning elements to the needs of the learning group (König et al., 2020). Thus, teachers should select and adapt literature materials in lessons according to the characteristics of their students.

Then in choosing learning media, teachers tend not to consider the variety and effectiveness of media that can enrich students' learning experience. Learning media must be used by teachers in the learning process to facilitate students in understanding the information provided (Nurani & Mahendra, 2019). However, the learning media used are still limited to textbooks and student worksheet, without exploration of modern or diverse media such as audiovisual, interactive multimedia, or technology that can increase students' participation and broaden their understanding of literature materials.

Furthermore, it was found that some teaching modules used by teachers had been prepared by other teachers and were complete for one semester. This was confirmed through interview results indicating that teachers' lack of ability to compile teaching modules was the cause. The differences between learning modules in the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum and lesson plans in the previous curriculum contribute to this challenge. Teachers are not accustomed to or do not fully understand the new approach emphasized in the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum, which emphasizes flexibility, diversity, and student empowerment in the learning process. As a result, they struggle to adapt literature materials into module formats suitable for this new approach

2. Implementation

In the ongoing learning stage, the teacher only asks students to open the textbook or student worksheet which is the learning material at that time. The teacher starts the lesson by greeting the students, asking about their health condition, and whether anyone is absent that day. After that, they continue with a prayer before introducing the topic or material that will be learned in that learning session.

The presence of teachers in the classroom has an important and strategic value in the learning process. The teacher not only acts as the main focus of learning, but also as a facilitator and motivator (Arief & Isnain, 2020). In observing literature learning in Indonesian, the learning objectives listed in the teaching module are not clearly achieved during the learning process. Learning is often dominated by the role of the teacher, so efforts to explore and expand students' potential are not clearly visible in accordance with the actual purpose of learning literature. The learning process needs to inspire students to actively participate and purposefully guide and engage them in achieving the set learning objectives (Diggele et al., 2020).

The purpose of innovative learning methods is to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the learning process (Toharudin et al., 2021). However, the learning methods that are often used tend to stick to conventional approaches such as lectures, where the teacher's role is dominant as a contributor of information while students only act as recipients. The limited variety in learning methods results in a low level of active student involvement in the learning process, so that the potential for developing their creativity is hampered. This shows the need for variations in learning methods to stimulate students' participation and enhance their creativity.

Literature learning actually focuses on depicting life that brings about openness, cooperation, and joy. All relevant material related to students' lives should be included to keep them interested. Teachers should utilize various tools to create a supportive and

enjoyable learning environment, according to students' needs, and to encourage their active participation. Creating a pleasant atmosphere is closely related to determining the steps of learning activities, learning methods, and learning media that will be chosen (Arifin et al., 2022).

Learning media is one of the components that makes learning more lively and meaningful (Nugraheni et al., 2022). The appropriate use of learning media helps to stimulate students' interest, enhance their understanding, and encourage active participation in the learning process. However, when teachers pay less attention to incorporating learning media in their lessons, students may become less interested and disengaged from the subject matter. This lack of engagement often leads to passive learning, where students are less likely to explore, ask questions, or develop critical thinking skills. As a result, the learning experience becomes less interactive and fails to inspire students to actively participate. Without the proper use of learning media, students may struggle to maintain motivation, reducing their enthusiasm and involvement in classroom activities. Therefore, the integration of well-designed and effective learning media is crucial to fostering an interactive and dynamic learning environment.

The interview results revealed that teachers experience difficulties in teaching literature. They feel confused about how to conduct the literature teaching process, especially in the context of Indonesian language learning. These difficulties are related to the complexity of the literature material and the challenge of presenting it in an engaging and relevant way for students.

3. Evaluation

Evaluation is an activity carried out to assess the extent of students' progress or development after they have undergone the learning process at a certain time. Formative assessment provides feedback and diagnostic information to adaptively improve teaching (Bleckmann & Friege, 2023). The success of formative assessment depends on how teachers perceive and implement formative assessment activities in the classroom (Yan et al., 2021). In the observation process, the teacher only gave instructions to students to do the exercises contained in the LKS until the lesson time ended and there was no follow-up evaluation of student learning outcomes. An evaluation that can improve the quality of learning is an evaluation that is always followed up if several shortcomings and weaknesses are found during the learning process (Sutarto et al., 2020). Every evaluation result must be followed up so that it has consequences for both teachers and students.

During the interview, it was found that evaluation questions were never created because teachers believe that evaluation methods limited to exercises in the student worksheets are sufficient to assess students' understanding of the material taught. Teachers believe that

through doing the exercises in the worksheets, they can assess the extent to which students understand the material without the need to make evaluation and assessment questions. This is because teachers believe that direct practice with the provided material is effective enough in measuring students' overall understanding. This contrasts with the opinion that assessment is an integral component of the learning process and should be utilized as a tool to support teaching and learning (Leenknecht et al., 2021; Yan & Brown, 2021).

By implementing formative assessment, teachers have the opportunity to provide continuous feedback to their students. This allows students to actively engage in the learning process and improve their ability to self-evaluate, which in turn will improve their understanding of the thinking process (Ismail et al., 2022). So, by planning and implementing formative evaluation, it is hoped that students will feel confident that they can all improve their learning and achieve success (Buza et al., 2024)

CONCLUSION

The implementation of literature learning in elementary schools in Sumedang Regency faces challenges in planning, implementation and evaluation. At the planning stage, the lack of preparation in preparing interesting teaching materials and utilizing appropriate learning media is one of the main obstacles. Furthermore, at the implementation stage, learning methods that tend to be conventional and lack of variety in learning activities lead to limited student involvement. Finally, at the evaluation stage, the lack of adequate use of formative assessment and the lack of follow-up on evaluation results are also issues that need attention.

Efforts are needed from teachers to improve the quality of literature learning in elementary schools by developing interesting lesson planning skills, applying innovative methods, and using appropriate learning media. In addition, effective formative assessment and follow-up are also very important in helping to improve students' understanding of literature materials.

To improve literature learning, relevant curriculum development and teacher training for innovative methods are needed. Procurement of interesting reading books, technological media, regular formative assessment and effective follow-up are essential. Collaboration with libraries and literature communities will enrich students' learning experience. Thus, this research provides valuable insights for curriculum development and literature learning in elementary schools, emphasizing the improvement of the quality of literature education through understanding challenges and effective strategies. It aims to make literature learning more effective and meaningful for students.

This study opens opportunities for further research on the implementation of literature learning in elementary schools, focusing on the development of more varied methods and the utilization of learning technology. Future research could explore in more depth the impact of using digital media to enhance student engagement and the effectiveness of formative assessments. Additionally, research is needed on the development of a more contextual literature curriculum that meets the needs of students in specific regions, as well as ongoing teacher training to enhance their competence in teaching literature.

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