

# Literacy Innovation in the Digital Era: Developing Teacher and Student Capabilities in Facing Technological Challenges

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## Abstract

**Background:** Exploring the integration of character education, the Merdeka Curriculum, and differentiated learning methods in Indonesian education is essential. Currently, education in Indonesia recognizes the importance of character education, the Merdeka Curriculum, and differentiation in the learning process. Character education aims to shape students' profiles, reflecting the values of Pancasila, which have professional and social implications.

**Aims:** The study aims to explore literacy innovation in the digital era by focusing on developing teachers' and students' capabilities in facing technological challenges.

**Methods:** The study employs a qualitative approach, utilizing reflective practice with educators and students to gather insights on current practices and challenges. The reflective practice stage begins with describing the challenges related to literacy in the school environment through interviews with relevant school elements, followed by implementing literacy activities for teachers and students (workshops, writing groups, and English clubs) ultimately, carrying out evaluations by analyzing the impact of activities.

**Results:** Language skills mentoring for students and teacher writing activities as literacy innovation have resulted in written works. Moreover, teachers produced essay frameworks reflecting their views on literacy and their awareness of the necessary use of technology.

**Conclusion:** Literacy innovation can motivate students and teachers to have awareness in literacy. At the end, the outcomes of these activities (books) can contribute to school accreditation scores.

## A. Introduction

Currently, education in Indonesia, especially when associated with the emancipated curriculum (Kahfi, 2022; Muslim, 2023; Siringoringo et al., 2023), character education (Naufal, 2021; Susilawati et al., 2021), and differentiation, is one of the elements that must continue to be developed in learning. The character education that is built focuses on developing the profile of Pancasila students, which is expected to have professional and social implications (Susilawati et al., 2021; Yonata, 2021). The development of this process is aligned with technological advances and the need for technological literacy (Heryani et al., 2022; Meinawati et al., 2020; Sentoso et al., 2021) owned by teachers or students as the main actors engaged in the world of education, which will always be closely related to the learning process and the flow of information transfer from teachers to students and then how students respond to this and interpret it into their learning activities. This learning interaction certainly requires a continuous joint process

through shared literacy awareness of literacy innovations in learning that is carried out. Literacy is the ability to read and write (Rezai et al., 2024; Naufal, 2021; Oktariani et al., 2022). In practice, this ability is the basis for someone to have the awareness to interpret the information received and related to their daily activities. Understanding and awareness of the importance of interpreting information related to the surrounding environment is very important for society in the world of education. This is because the community is the party that represents the school learning process and provides space for behavioral change.

In this community service proposal, the literacy innovation refers to activities based on digital media literacy and digital information literacy (Rinekso, 2021). Digital media and information play a role for both parties technically to achieve learning goals and contextually to develop their skills in various areas of life. This community service activity will be based on three references for literacy innovation, namely digital media literacy, digital information literacy, and creative and collaborative literacy.

This service activity will further facilitate the development of digital media literacy, which will focus on the understanding and skills needed to consume, analyze, and recognize digital media that is appropriate for learning. Meanwhile, digital information literacy can help individuals develop skills in searching, evaluating, and using information effectively in diverse digital environments (Irons, 2022). This includes teaching efficient, critical information search techniques and using online resources wisely. In both literacy activities, for example, it will be introduced how teachers are guided by the APPEAL principle (Author, Purposes, Publisher, Aims, and Latest) to recognize and ensure that the digital sources that teachers use are credible for teaching (Parr et al., 2021).

In addition, creative and collaborative literacy can encourage the use of digital technology for creative expression and collaboration in the development of group learning processes, especially to improve students' skills in English. For example, in schools English study groups will be formed that use video-based learning content that can be accessed from YouTube so that students get access to real information and motivate the development of creative thinking in learning activities to improve English skills (Zulaikha & Setyowati, 2021). Students who participate in the study group activities will be guided with a learning module so that they can search for the learning sources they expect from the keywords given in the module as a trigger for the next learning process in discussions, speeches, storytelling, or debates.

The development of literacy and professionalism skills is necessary for teachers to motivate students so that they are able to be creative and have literacy role models (Honkanen et al., 2020). This role model can be an opener for students' insights. English has a crucial role in the world of education as a bridge to global knowledge and career opportunities. As the dominant international language in scientific, technological, and business literature, the ability to master English provides wider access to educational resources and the latest information.

English is a universal language that contributes significantly to international connection and communication as well as the advancement and rivalry of globalization (Martínez-Álvarez et al., 2020). This means that students must be able to master English. Additionally, the requirement for applied English skills has increased to an urgent level in all spheres of society, meaning that universities and colleges must constantly enhance their English instruction. So that, many higher education institutions use English as the medium of instruction to prepare students for success at higher academic levels.

Taking part in English language competitions is an effective way to improve language skills. In this context, participants are not only faced with the challenge of communicating in English but are also given the opportunity to hone their writing, listening, and speaking skills. With competition, students can objectively understand their English level and ability, which can help students constantly learn from experience. Participating in English competitions often involves solving problems in a language context, which can train analytical skills and creative thinking. Thus, this experience not only provides immediate rewards in the form of achievements but also provides long-term benefits in the development of participants' English language skills. There are so many English competitions in the world, for example, the national practical English-speaking competition for higher vocational colleges in China. The purpose of this competition is to enhance the students' capacity to communicate orally and to utilize English fluently in a variety of professional contexts (Huang, 2021). Allowing more students to enter the competition is crucial to raising the standard of English instruction in higher vocational colleges and to helping all students' English proficiency, particularly in speaking and listening. Based on this, participating in various English language competitions can improve students' English language skills (Siahaan et al., 2023).

This study responds to the importance of mastering English for the entire community, including improving students' ability to take part in English language competitions. Seeing this opportunity, the school is working to establish a platform where students may effectively learn English. The after-school English Club is one of the resources for learning English at school. Extracurricular activities are those that take place after school hours and have a significant impact on students' personalities. Providing extracurricular mentoring, such as starting an English Club extracurricular activity (Handayani et al., 2023; Huda, 2022), is one strategy to raise awareness of the value of English language skills in schools. It is intended that extracurricular activities will provide pupils greater room to realize their own potential and will inspire them to be brave, innovative, and open-minded with their thoughts. In this club, students can actively participate in discussions, presentations, and other English activities that can enrich their speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills. It is an extracurricular activity that aims to develop students' abilities in the field of English. In the English Club extracurricular activities, students are trained to speak English both with their peers and in pronouncing objects around them. Thus, the existence of an English Club is important as a means of supporting students in developing their overall English language skills to achieve optimal performance, including in English language competitions.

However, the extracurricular English Club at schools faces several challenges, with one significant obstacle being the global Covid-19 pandemic. This unprecedented situation has severely limited extracurricular activities at the school level, leading to the suspension of face-to-face sessions, hampered training, and hindering the preparation for competitions. Apart from that, Huda (2022) found that the reason why English Club activities were not held at school was also because the extracurricular English club had not yet been effective, teachers' lack of knowledge about implementing English clubs, and students' lack of interest in English. Some of these problems are also felt by one of the junior high schools in Tasikmalaya, namely the Darul Mutaalimin Islamic Boarding School. From the results of observations and discussions with colleagues, a problem faced by the school is the inactivation of the extracurricular English club at the school since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic. This situation has created difficulties for the managers of the English Club extracurricular, which results in a lack of human resources, both in terms of accompanying teachers and students who are willing to participate in managing this extracurricular well. Moreover, this school is one of the schools that actively participate in various English language competitions, especially debate, speech, and storytelling competitions; it is imperative to introduce extracurricular activities focused on skill enhancement. Therefore, extracurricular activities that are skills upgrading need to be implemented in these schools to encourage students' English language skills again so that they improve better in preparing them for English language competitions.

For that reason, considering the challenge above, English Club must be reactivated as a solution that can broaden students' knowledge and improve their English skills for preparing for competition, particularly in terms of debate, speech, and storytelling. Participation in English Club activities can enrich students' linguistic competence, especially in the context of storytelling competitions. Likewise, English Club activities nurture students' talents and interests in English speaking, such as improving communication ability and understanding vocabulary. On the other hand, it has enhanced students' speaking and writing skills by providing engaging and enjoyable ways to study the English language. Therefore, reactivating the English club can help students regrow and sharpen their English language skills so they can take part in English competitions. Despite that, very little published research exists on the contribution of English club to language skills to support students to compete in debate, speech, and storytelling. This study employed a descriptive qualitative method using reflective journal for data collection. Thus, this study will answer this objective as new insights regarding the implementation of the English Club extracurricular.

The purpose of this community service activity is to equip teachers and students to develop literacy innovations in the digital era through seminars, workshops, and English study groups. The location of this community service will be implemented at the Darul Mutaalimin Integrated School located on Jl. Bantarsari Lewosari, Bantarsari, Bungursari District, Tasikmalaya City, West Java, with a postal code of 46151. This school is under the auspices of the Darul Mutaalimin Islamic Boarding School, which has been established since 1901. With the existence of qualified experience in educating students, this activity can support the gap in strengthening the abilities of teachers and students to work in the world of education and also to contribute positively to the government program regarding key performance indicators, where lecturers are also required to work outside the campus.

Based on the previous studies mentioned above, to address the gap in the existing research, it is imperative to conduct a study to investigate the impact of reactivating the English Club on the language

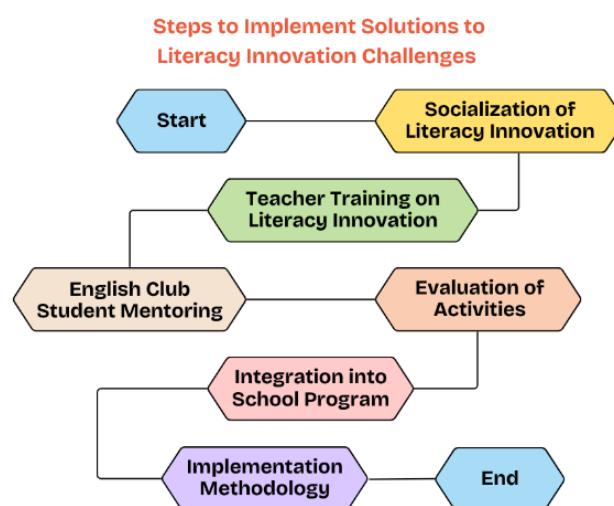
skills of students at Darul Mutaalimin Islamic Boarding at Middle and High School, particularly in preparing them for English competitions, such as debate, speech, and storytelling. This study aims to scrutinize and contribute to the understanding of the advantages of the English Club, which not only enhances language skills but also engages students in various English language competitions. Hence, the research question explored in this study aligns with its objective: What are the implications of the English Club on the language skills of students at Darul Mutaalimin Islamic Boarding in Middle and High School in their preparation for English competitions?

## B. Methods

The study adopts a qualitative approach, incorporating reflective practice (Chien, 2023; Dugas & Chien, 2023; Lefebvre et al., 2023) with educators and students to gain insights into existing practices and challenges. The reflective practice process starts by outlining the challenges associated with literacy in the school setting through interview descriptions of relevant school components. This is followed by implementing literacy activities for both teachers and students, such as workshops, writing groups, and English clubs. Finally, the evaluation of these activities involves analyzing their impact, leading to the conclusion that these initiatives can enhance school accreditation scores through the literacy products (books) generated.

The activity involves teachers at Darul Mutaalimin Integrated Junior and Senior High Schools in Tasikmalaya City, as well as students from both institutions who are recommended by teachers or who have an interest in literacy and English clubs. The population of teachers was 25, and there were around 500 students. The number of teachers involved was 25, and the number of students involved was 15 for each activity, and the students were selected based on the teachers' recommendation. The students were selected based on the teachers' recommendation. The 15 students involved and selected to participate in the writing guidance and English club activities were assessed by teachers as students who had an interest and concentration in writing activities. They were observed by teachers to be actively producing poetry and short stories in their learning activities. As for those participating in the English club, they were students who demonstrated active participation and proficiency in English, as observed by teachers during classroom instruction. The realization of the reflective practice process technique began with interviews with the principal and vice principal for academic affairs to explore challenges in literacy. After exploring and revealing these challenges, activities were carried out with the following steps.

The steps to implement solutions to problems faced by partners related to teachers and students in literacy innovation:



**Figure 1.** Flowchart of Steps to Implement Solutions to Literacy Innovation Challenges

1. Socialization of literacy innovation will be carried out through seminar activities involving teachers in partner high schools and junior high schools. The seminar will present material on the concept of literacy, the APPEAL concept, and understanding the types of literacy. The community service team will coordinate with the school for the implementation time. In addition to speakers from the community service team, speakers involved can also be speakers from outside, such as practitioners

and experts in their fields. The implementation time of the socialization will be realized in 1-2 meetings.

2. Literacy innovation training will involve all partner high school and junior high school teachers in workshop activities to practice the APPEAL concept, namely how teachers recognize sources of information that are appropriate with their context. This practice is guided by a worksheet that serves as a guideline for selecting reference sources that will be used in everyday life practices. This training is also equipped with a practice of writing critical reflections as an output of practice. This training will also implement the practice of compiling teaching materials that utilize AI technology (Chat GPT, etc.) so that teachers have an initial idea to compile the materials for teaching needs. The implementation time of this training is planned to be carried out in 2-3 meetings by adjusting the activities of teachers and the community service team.
3. Mentoring student English learning groups through the English Club. The community service team coordinates with the school to prepare the implementation schedule. This study group will be divided into two according to its level, namely a study group that focuses on speech and storytelling skills in English (storytelling), this group is for junior high school students and a debate group for high school students. Participants who take part in the activity are participants who are recommended by teachers to take part in the activity and are prepared to take part in the related competition. This activity is planned to be scheduled for 12 meetings for each group. The meeting activities will be guided by four instructors, with two instructors from each student group. This study group activity will also be accompanied by a lecturer from the community service team for each group.
4. Evaluation of the implementation of activities will be obtained through a survey of the participants of the activities, both students and teachers, which is given after all activities have been completed.
5. The English learning group (English club) is used as an extracurricular activity for junior and senior high school students of Darul Mutaalimin, and the literacy innovation activities that are designed will be aligned with activities that will have an impact on the school accreditation assessment, for example, as evidence of good habits from teachers in learning. In this section, explain how the community service was conducted. The main points of this section are (1) population and the methods of sampling; (2) instrumentation (sample of questions, scoring method, and psychometric properties (validity and reliability)); (3) procedures and, if relevant, the time frame; (4) analysis plan (describe statistical tests and the comparisons made; ordinary statistical methods should be used without comment; advanced or unusual methods may require a literature citation); (5) Scope and/or limitations of the methodology you used.

### **C. Results and Discussion**

The research results and discussion explain the implementation of literacy innovation activities carried out at SMP and SMA Terpadu Darul Mutaalimin in Tasikmalaya. The research data was obtained through interviews, classroom observations, and reflective practices that describe the main problems faced by teachers and students in developing their literacy competencies, particularly in the context of English language learning and digital adaptation. The findings highlight institutional challenges, such as the lack of structured training, limited access to digital tools, and low student motivation due to insufficient practice and exposure.





**Figure 2.** Workshop Session

## 1. Results

The problems faced by teachers and students at SMP IBS Darul Mutaalimin and SMA Terpadu Darul Mutaalimin in developing their competencies and skills are that teachers still need support facilities and mentoring to improve literacy competencies because so far there have not really been any means of self-actualization for this development process. They may lack of adequate training in effective literacy instruction, limiting their ability to engage students. Additionally, schools often face resource shortages, such as quality reading materials and technology, hampering teaching efforts. Low digital literacy awareness among teachers further restricts the integration of digital tools in the classroom (Hasanah & Sukri, 2023). Meanwhile, for teachers, they need to always be aware that in class they will often encounter real problems that they must resolve according to the conditions faced and are required to be professional in following developments in the world of education in the current digital era. This condition directs teachers to be technology literate in learning so that it is hoped that they can motivate their students in the learning process (Purwaningtyas, 2017). Moreover, so far there have been no special training activities intended for teachers to be more technology literate. This information was obtained from an interview with the head of the community service team and the vice principal of curriculum at the school some time ago. The division of rooms between male and female students is a challenge in the learning process, including motivating teachers to always be literate with various learning methods that are developing rapidly, and teachers need various references to literacy media for this purpose and understand the right way to use them in learning with specific contexts such as those that occur in schools.

The problem faced from the students' perspective is that they feel they lack literacy skills in writing and reading, especially in English. In fact, English is currently a global communication tool to access various types of information needed to improve self-capacity and develop creativity. For example, many sources of information accessed on social media are presented in English. They struggle with literacy skills due to ineffective teaching methods and insufficient materials. Low motivation often stems from uninteresting learning experiences. Furthermore, a lack of supportive environments, such as limited access to books and family encouragement, exacerbates these challenges, hindering literacy development. Therefore, English language skills become an important element as a symbol of existence in a global environment. This can be caused by a lack of practice and training in writing and reading in English, as well as a lack of mastery of English grammar and vocabulary, and they often have difficulty finding a supportive environment to develop their English language skills. On the other hand, schools need a vehicle to realize their vision and mission through motivating supporting activities. In addition, low motivation, interest, and confidence in learning English can be obstacles for students in achieving good English skills. This can be caused by various factors, such as a lack of interest in English or bad experiences learning English in the past, for example, English learning that is boring and considered difficult. Students have challenges in maintaining motivation and commitment with an integrated system, where school learning is aligned with the hours of Islamic boarding school activities. Based on this explanation, there needs to be a new form of learning atmosphere that can complement their competencies and develop their skills by involving the use of technology as a stimulation of enthusiasm in learning.

## 2. Discussion

Seminars, workshops, and English clubs are effective solutions for enhancing literacy skills by providing interactive learning environments that foster collaboration and engagement. These platforms encourage peer learning and offer practical experiences. Research shows that such activities improve motivation and confidence in language use. Additionally, media like YouTube play a crucial role in supporting digital literacy and English language learning (Alkathiri, 2019; Lestari, 2017; Syaputra et al., 2023). It offers diverse content, allowing learners to engage with authentic materials and improve listening skills. Visual and auditory resources cater to various learning styles, making language acquisition more accessible and enjoyable, ultimately enhancing overall literacy outcomes.

### 2.1. Implications

The solution is based on several previous studies. These studies imply that the problem of the gap in teachers' self-actualization to develop literacy innovations that have an impact on their professional competence is by participating in seminars and mentoring in literacy innovation workshops in the digital era as a form of real steps in committing to improving their competence and skills in teaching. By participating in these seminars and workshops, teachers can be empowered through professional development that provides the time, resources, and collaboration needed to transform their literacy teaching methods and assist them in integrating digital tools into their pedagogical approaches (Kerkhoff & Makubuya, 2022). Not only that, by participating in seminars and workshops on literacy innovation in the digital era, teachers are expected to be able to develop their abilities in various communication, transaction, production, distribution, and learning activities that currently involve the use of technology, including the internet, which has become an important part of everyday life. This is a concern for teachers due to the urgent need for them to understand and be involved in digital literacy throughout the educational process (Frisnoiry & Chairad, 2024; Gayatri et al., 2023).

Technology and the internet are closely related to each other, so that using the internet without technology is impossible. Therefore, it is important to have digital literacy in facing the rapid development of technology and the internet, especially for teachers. The reason is that teachers need digital literacy to adapt to the changes in their roles because of the development of technology and the internet (Vaskov et al., 2021). Thus, teachers play a key role in education and are the main factor in creating a quality generation, not only in terms of intellectual intelligence, but also in spiritual and moral aspects. Consequently, teachers need to continue to improve their professionalism as competent educators. Teachers must meet competency standards in carrying out their professional duties.

### 2.2. Research Contribution

Solutions for students in developing literacy innovations are focused on study groups. Focused study groups were conducted as a solution because it provides a social environment that stimulates students to share their perceptions and ideas with each other, which allows them to gain more information and new knowledge (O.Nyumba et al., 2018). In the implementation of the activity, students are assisted in English study groups (English clubs) which will open opportunities for them to access various kinds of digital-based reference sources, especially YouTube. These media can be a stimulant for students to learn English in their groups.

These literacy innovation activities carried out by both teachers and students will also be supported using activity modules as a reference for the implementation process of development activities. One of platforms that can be used to facilitate digital learning is YouTube. YouTube is a very popular website that provides various types of videos. Through the use of YouTube, teachers have a new teaching tool that is suited to their students' learning styles. As a result, YouTube is able to support students in becoming more accustomed to using technology in learning activities (Dewi et al., 2021; Mirza, 2020; Wicagsono et al., 2023; Yaacob et al., 2021). However, the videos themselves are not ready-to-use learning materials. With careful planning in accordance with learning objectives, integrating videos available on YouTube as a supporting medium can increase the effectiveness of learning because it is in accordance with the learning styles and interests of the digital generation. According to a survey, around 100,000 videos are watched every day on YouTube, and every 24 hours there are 65,000 new videos uploaded. YouTube is also visited by around 20 million viewers every month, with most of them aged between 12 and 17 years. Although YouTube was not originally an educational platform, in 2009, YouTube launched a special service for education known as YouTube Edu. This service immediately received a positive response from users.

### 2.3. Limitations

Limitations of this study are related to the timing of implementation. This because the research process was scheduled, which meant that there was limited time to maximize the number of ideal training sessions for teachers and students to improve their competencies. Because this study was scheduled with a deadline for the output report, no training was conducted, especially more intensive training for teachers.

### 2.4. Suggestions

Given the limitations of this study, the researchers suggest that this service activity needs to be further followed up with research on service activities, which will allow for the scheduling of additions and improvements related to the intensity of teacher's training, as well as the repetition of simulations and practical exercises to improve teacher competence in the field of literacy innovation.

## D. Conclusion

Innovation and literacy are important for maximizing the role of teachers in the education system. Innovation for teachers is not just about change but also includes development, renewal, and capacity building as educators. Meanwhile, literacy involves reading and writing activities that are essential for increasing understanding and awareness of their role in society. Both processes are crucial in supporting the success of education in Indonesia. Teachers have a central role in the advancement of education, serving as the spearhead that determines the direction and quality of learning. A dedicated professional teacher can make a significant contribution to the advancement of national education. By committing to physical and mental health, as well as developing teaching skills, teachers can maximize their role as effective educators. Moreover, the evaluation of literacy activities may focus on short-term outcomes, potentially overlooking long-term impacts on the capabilities of both students and teachers. Variability in access to technology among different schools may also affect the implementation and effectiveness of the literacy innovations explored in the study. Furthermore, the potential resistance from educators or institutions regarding changes in educational practices may not have been fully addressed. Therefore, the study might not consider external factors, such as socioeconomic influences or policy changes that could impact literacy development in the digital era. Acknowledging these limitations is essential for a comprehensive understanding of the study's findings and implications.

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## F. Author Contribution Statement

AA, as a leader, was tasked with coordinating the implementation of the service activities and developing the service concept. CN was tasked with coordinating the technical aspects of scheduling activities and logistics. DR was tasked with coordinating the running of the event. FS and DS were tasked as event assistants. SA, RM, and SS were tasked as English Club assistant instructors and documenting the activities.

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