LITERACY COLLABORATION TO ENHANCE TEACHER AND STUDENT COMPETENCE IN BUILDING A LITERACY CULTURE AT SMP N 23 MEDAN

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Abstrak

Untuk meningkatkan kemampuan dan pengetahuan siswa di SMP N 23 Medan, optimalisasi budaya literasi sekolah sangatlah penting. Mengintegrasikan budaya literasi ke dalam kurikulum melalui beberapa kegiatan seperti membaca, menulis esai, dan diskusi dapat menjadi permulaan. Kegiatan literasi yang menarik dan menyenangkan dapat meningkatkan motivasi dan keterampilan belajar siswa. Peningkatan kapasitas bagi guru dan siswa melalui pelatihan dan lokakarya yang efektif juga sangat penting. Kolaborasi antara sekolah, orang tua, dan masyarakat adalah kunci untuk menumbuhkan kesadaran literasi dan menciptakan lingkungan yang mendukung pengembangan keterampilan membaca, menulis, dan berpikir kritis. Kegiatan kolaborasi literasi yang dilakukan di SMP N 23 Medan telah membuahkan hasil positif, dengan guru menjadi lebih mahir dalam strategi literasi dan siswa menunjukkan peningkatan keterampilan, yang dicontohkan oleh penampilan mendongeng seorang siswa tentang "Legenda Danau Toba dan Pulau Samosir." Hal ini menunjukkan efektivitas upaya kolaborasi literasi dalam meningkatkan kualitas pendidikan.
Kata kunci: Kolaborasi, Budaya Literasi, Sekolah.

Abstract

To enhance students' abilities and knowledge at SMP N 23 Medan, optimizing school literacy culture is very crucial. Integrating literacy culture into the curriculum through some activities like reading, essay writing, and discussions can be a starting point. Engaging and enjoyable some literacy activities can boost students' learning motivation and skills. Capacity building for both teachers and students through effective training and workshops is also very essential. Collaboration between the school, parents, and the community is the key to fostering literacy awareness and creating a supportive environment for developing reading, writing, and critical thinking skills. Literacy collaboration activities conducted at SMP N 23 Medan have already yielded positive outcomes, with teachers becoming more adept at literacy strategies and students showing improved skills, which exemplified by a student's storytelling performance of "The Legend of Lake Toba and Samosir Island." This demonstrates the effectiveness of collaborative literacy efforts in enhancing educational quality.
Keywords: Collaboration, Literacy Culture, School.

1. Introduction

Language is a very influential means of communication in interactions and also in the learning process (Hutagalung., et al., 2024). Language and literacy have a very close relationship. Language is the primary tool in literacy, as literacy involves the ability to read, write, and understand information conveyed through language. Literacy is a basic skill that plays a crucial role in elevating the quality of human resources. According to UNESCO literacy goes beyond basic reading and writing. It's the capacity to understand and utilize information across various aspects of life, empowering individuals to achieve their personal goals. In the context of education, literacy is an important aspect in improving students' ability to understand and process information.

SMP N 23 Medan, as a formal educational institution hold a significant responsibility in cultivating a literacy-rich environment for their students. To enhance the quality of education within schools, a key strategy involves strengthening the management of literacy culture. (Marmoah, et.al 2022). Education in literacy culture can be built through various activities that encourage students to read, write, and communicate their ideas. Therefore, it is necessary to improve the capacity of teachers and students in building a literacy culture.

Improving the capacity of teachers and students in literacy can be done through collaboration, including schools, teachers, students, and the community. According to Fullan (2016), collaboration is key to improving the quality of education and achieving learning objectives. In the context of literacy, collaborative efforts can significantly enhance both teachers' and students' abilities to comprehend and utilize literacy skills in their everyday experiences. According to Jong et. al. (2022), factors relating to the process of working and learning together (collaboration) are emphasized in sharing, experimenting, and designing categories. A strong literacy culture can help improve students' ability to understand and process information, and finally improve student achievement. According to Krashen (2004), reading is one of the best ways to improve students' literacy skills. Therefore, it's essential to implement initiatives that boost students' reading proficiency through diverse literacy engagements, including reading books, creative writing, book discussions, and summarizing exercises.

Teachers have an important role in building literacy culture in schools. Teachers can help improve students' literacy skills through various effective teaching strategies (Fisher & Frey, 2008). Therefore, it is necessary to improve teachers' capacity in understanding and applying literacy teaching strategies.

Students of SMP N 23 Medan have great potential to improve their literacy skills through various interesting and enjoyable activities. Interesting and enjoyable literacy activities can help increase students' motivation to learn and improve their literacy skills. Improving the capacity of teachers and students in literacy can be done through various effective training programs and workshops. According to Guskey (2000), Training programs and workshops can be valuable tools in enhancing both teachers' and students' comprehension and practical application of literacy skills in their daily routines.

A collaboration involving schools, educators, students, and the wider community can effectively boost students' literacy skills through a range of interconnected activities. According to Laal & Ghodsi (2012), benefits of collaborative learning are jn four categories of; social, psychological, academic, and assessment benefits. Epstein (2001) explains that collaboration between schools and the community can help improve students' ability to understand and apply literacy in daily life.

Students' interest and literacy skills support the creation of a reading or literacy culture; therefore, education requires real activities or actions that can attract and foster reading interest and literacy skills (Hartati, A., et al., 2024). A strong literacy culture can help improve students' ability to understand and process information, thereby improving student achievement. Literacy culture has a very important role in improving students' abilities and knowledge. Literacy extends beyond just reading and writing; it also encompasses the crucial abilities to think critically, analyze information effectively, and generate creative ideas. The benefits of a literacy culture for students are as follows:

   a) A literacy culture can help students improve their academic abilities in various subjects.
   b) A literacy culture can help students develop critical and analytical thinking skills, so they can understand and analyze information better.
   c) A literacy culture can help students improve their communication skills, both orally and in writing.
   d) A literacy culture can help students develop independent learning skills, so they can search for and find the information they need.

Haji (2020) defines implementation as the process of putting ideas, concepts, policies, or innovations into practice, resulting in tangible effects such as changes in knowledge, skills, or values and attitudes. The implementation of a literacy culture in schools must be optimized to improve students' abilities and knowledge. Schools can start by integrating literacy activities into the curriculum, such as reading books, writing essays, and group discussions. In addition, schools can also provide adequate literacy resources, such as a complete library and access to

digital resources. Thus, students can develop their literacy skills and improve their academic abilities. The achievement of implementing a literacy culture can be realized through collaboration between schools and parents or the community. The goal is to raise awareness about the significance of a literacy-rich environment. Through effective collaboration, schools can foster a setting that encourages the growth of a literacy culture and enhances students' reading, writing, and critical thinking skills.

2. Research Method

This literacy collaboration activity was conducted on April 22, 2025, at SMP Negeri 23 Medan, located on Jalan Raya Medan Tenggara Ujung, Binjai, Medan Denai District, Medan City, North Sumatra Province. The activity aimed to introduce and promote the concept of literacy and the importance of cultivating a school-wide literacy culture.

The target participants included teachers from various subject areas and 30 female junior high school students. The session began with the delivery of literacy-related material, followed by an interactive question-and-answer segment to encourage active participation and personal reflection.

To support data collection, several qualitative instruments were used:
a) Google Forms (GForms): to distribute questionnaires and gather students' personal experiences and perceptions related to literacy.
b) Observation sheets: to record student behavior and engagement throughout the session.

An exploratory analysis strategy was employed to interpret the collected data. The focus was placed on students' personal reflections, written responses, and observable participation to understand how they internalized the literacy concepts and how they perceived literacy's role in their learning process.

The research method refers to a systematic procedure or scientific approach used to obtain data for specific research objectives (Tarigan, Wuriyani, & Hutagalung, 2024).

3. Results and Discussion

The collaborative literacy efforts undertaken by the lecturers of the State University of Medan at SMP N 23 Medan represent a significant form of community service. This collaborative activity was conducted to develop effective literacy learning strategies. This is necessary to enhance students' literacy skills and create a learning environment that supports literacy development. Through collaboration among lecturers, teachers, and students, this activity aimed to promote a strong literacy culture within the school, enabling students to

become more effective learners with the ability to understand and utilize information in various forms. Moreover, these kinds of activities can also fuel students' motivation to learn and continuously develop their literacy abilities.

The Ministry of Education and Culture (Kemendikbud, 2017) defines literacy as the ability to access, understand, and use something intelligently through various activities such as reading, viewing, listening, writing, and speaking. As stated in Pasal 31 ayat (1), which stipulates that "Every citizen has the right to education," and Pasal 31 ayat (2), which states that "Every citizen is obliged to attend basic education, and the government is obliged to finance 1 it," this is a form of interpretation of the 1945 Constitution as a foundation for promoting a literacy culture. Moreover, the 1945 Constitution also guarantees the basic rights of citizens, including the right to obtain information and education. Therefore, a literacy culture can be interpreted as one way to fulfill these fundamental rights.

In the context of education, a literacy culture is very important for enhancing students' ability to understand and use information, as well as developing critical and analytical thinking skills. Therefore, the government and educational institutions can promote a literacy culture through various educational policies and programs.

Improving the capacity of teachers and students in building a literacy culture is a very important effort to enhance literacy skills in schools. Teachers who possess strong literacy skills are instrumental in fostering their students' literacy development, empowering them to become more effective learners capable of understanding and utilizing information across diverse formats. Meanwhile, students with good literacy capacity can improve their abilities in reading, writing, and critical thinking, allowing them to become more knowledgeable citizens who actively participate in society. Thus, improving the capacity of teachers and students in building a literacy culture can help enhance the quality of education and create a better learning environment.

Figure 1.1 The Team Presenting Material

In the Collaborative Literacy activity: Enhancing the Capacity of Junior High School Teachers and Students in Building a Literacy Culture at SMP N 23 Medan, the initial activity began with the presentation of material on the theme "*Cerdas Berkarya, Melek Budaya*"/ "Smart in Creation, Culturally Literate." The speaker explained the importance of literacy,

current literacy challenges, the future of literacy, and the roles of teachers, schools, and students in literacy. The material was presented with the aid of an InFocus projector displaying the content in PowerPoint format. The content of the speaker's presentation was as follows:

Literacy is a very important skill in daily life, as it enables individuals to understand and use information in various forms to achieve life goals. Arista (2020) explains that cultural literacy equips students with the skills to engage respectfully with diverse cultural norms, fostering ethical attitudes and good character. However, current literacy challenges are very complex, such as a lack of basic literacy skills and rapid technological changes. Therefore, it is important for teachers, schools, and students to play an active role in improving literacy skills. Teachers can help enhance students' literacy skills through effective learning strategies, while schools can provide adequate literacy resources and a supportive learning environment. Students themselves must also actively participate in improving their literacy skills by reading, writing, and thinking critically. With good cooperation between teachers, schools, and students, it is hoped that literacy skills can improve and help individuals achieve their life goals. In the future, literacy will become increasingly important in facing global challenges and enhancing individuals' ability to participate actively in society.

Figure 1.2 Student Representatives Answering Questions

After delivering the material, the speaker gives questions to the students regarding literacy activities within their school environment. One student responded and explained that there are literacy activities that guide students to read books related to culture, history, and noble values. Additionally, students can write stories about personal experiences or the experiences of others related to culture, students can present art performances related to culture, such as dance, music, or theater, students can create literacy projects related to culture, such as paintings, students can read texts related to culture, such as folk tales or legends, and students can discuss noble values related to culture, such as honesty, hard work, and mutual cooperation.

Figure 1.3 Discussion Session with Teachers

The understanding gained through this collaborative literacy activity has provided new insights for teachers and students in implementing the integration of cultural literacy. Teachers who are able to instill a positive mindset and build healthy communication will be more effective in shaping strong student character. "As a teacher at this school, I am very impressed with the cultural literacy collaboration activity that we have participated in today. This activity has not only improved students' literacy skills but also enriched their knowledge of culture and noble values. I have seen my students become more enthusiastic and engaged in the learning process, as well as more confident in expressing their opinions and ideas. I hope that activities like this can continue to be carried out in the future, so that our students can become a generation that is not only intelligent but also has a strong cultural awareness and can be positive agents of change in society. "I also hope this collaborative literacy initiative can serve as a model for other schools seeking to enhance their educational quality and foster cultural awareness among their students," the teacher added. emphasized the teacher representative at SMP N 23 Medan during the discussion session.

Thus, the collaborative literacy activity that has been carried out at SMP N 23 Medan has shown positive results in increasing the capacity of teachers and students in building a literacy culture. Teachers have become more skilled in developing effective literacy learning strategies, while students have shown significant improvement in their literacy skills, such as the storytelling performance by one student who presented the story "The Legend of Lake Toba and Samosir Island." This highlights how collaborative literacy initiatives can be a potent strategy for elevating the quality of education in schools. Furthermore, education's role in shaping a child's character underscores the importance of instilling it from an early age (Lusianti, 2024).

Muchtar & Suryani (2019) state that the quality of education is the result of the interaction of various components in the educational process, such as curriculum, educators, facilities and infrastructure, and the learning environment. The quality of education can be seen from the output produced by the education system. Therefore, the quality of education has a very close relationship with cultural literacy. Cultural literacy involves the capacity to

understand, value, and integrate the cultural norms and values prevalent within a society. Good quality education can help improve students' cultural literacy by providing diverse and contextual learning experiences. Through quality education, students can gain in-depth knowledge and understanding of the culture, history, and noble values contained within society. Thus, students can become more knowledgeable and well-rounded citizens with a strong cultural awareness. Therefore, improving the quality of education is one way to enhance students' cultural literacy and promote cultural awareness within the community.

4. Conclusion

Through this collaborative activity, there was a noticeable increase in enthusiasm from the teachers in understanding and developing cultural literacy and communication as important parts of the learning process. Teachers not only gained conceptual material but also practical strategies for building a literacy culture that is inclusive and adaptive to changing times. Students also responded positively to this activity, especially when they were directly involved in discussion sessions that stimulated critical thinking and appreciation for cultural diversity. This community service activity successfully fostered awareness of the importance of literacy collaboration between teachers and students at SMP N 23 Medan. Strengthening cultural literacy and communication becomes an important foundation in shaping students with competitive and integrity-based character. This activity also demonstrates that synergy between various elements in the school environment is key to the success of building a sustainable literacy ecosystem.

The integration of cultural literacy and communication plays a strategic role in strengthening the character of teachers and students. Through a deeper understanding of culture and effective communication skills, educators can instill strong character values in the learning process. This activity not only improves teachers' competence in guiding students but also shapes a more ethical and cultured educational environment. Thus, increasing the capacity of teachers and students in building a literacy culture becomes a continuous effort in creating quality and competitive human resources.

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