The Role of Teaching Assistance in Enhancing the Learning Motivation of Twelfth-Grade Students in English Literature at SMAN 9 Toraja Utara

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Abstract

   This study aims to examine the role of teaching assistance programs in improving the learning motivation of twelfth-grade students in English Literature at SMAN 9 Toraja Utara. The program, part of the Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) initiative, involves university students assisting teaching activities in schools to support literacy, numeracy, technology adaptation, and administrative tasks. Using a descriptive qualitative approach, data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation over four months. The findings reveal that the teaching assistance program significantly enhances students' interest and enthusiasm in learning. The use of creative methods, such as learning through games and providing rewards, has proven effective in fostering a positive classroom environment and improving academic engagement. Furthermore, the program allows university students to develop essential skills, including leadership, collaboration, and empathy, while contributing to the improvement of teaching quality in schools. This research highlights the importance of innovative educational strategies to support student motivation and academic achievement.
Keywords: *teaching assistance, learning motivation, twelfth-grade students, English Literature, MBKM program*

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji peran program asistensi mengajar dalam meningkatkan motivasi belajar siswa kelas XII pada mata pelajaran Sastra Inggris di SMAN 9 Toraja Utara. Program ini, yang merupakan bagian dari inisiatif Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM), melibatkan mahasiswa dalam mendukung kegiatan pembelajaran di sekolah, termasuk literasi, numerasi, adaptasi teknologi, dan tugas administrasi. Dengan pendekatan deskriptif kualitatif, data dikumpulkan melalui observasi, wawancara, dan dokumentasi selama empat bulan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa program asistensi mengajar secara signifikan meningkatkan minat dan antusiasme siswa dalam belajar. Penggunaan metode kreatif, seperti pembelajaran berbasis permainan dan pemberian penghargaan, terbukti efektif dalam menciptakan lingkungan kelas yang positif dan meningkatkan keterlibatan akademik. Selain itu, program ini memungkinkan mahasiswa untuk mengembangkan keterampilan penting, termasuk kepemimpinan, kolaborasi, dan empati, sambil berkontribusi pada peningkatan kualitas pengajaran di sekolah. Penelitian ini menyoroti pentingnya strategi pendidikan inovatif untuk mendukung motivasi dan pencapaian akademik siswa.

Kata Kunci: *asistensi mengajar, motivasi belajar, siswa kelas XII, Sastra Inggris, program MBKM*

INTRODUCTION

Education plays a crucial role in shaping the future of a nation. In Indonesia, the government has introduced various innovative strategies to enhance the quality of education, one of which is the *Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka* (MBKM) program. This program aims to provide students and educators with greater autonomy in learning and teaching, fostering creativity, independence, and innovation. As part of this initiative, the Teaching Assistance Program was developed to bridge the gap between higher education and school-level education, encouraging university students to actively participate in teaching and mentoring at primary, secondary, and high school levels.The Teaching Assistance Program allows university students to gain practical teaching experience while simultaneously contributing to the improvement of learning outcomes in schools. By involving students in activities such as lesson planning, classroom teaching, and administrative tasks, the program not only benefits school students but also helps university students develop essential skills. Among these skills are leadership, communication, and adaptability, which are crucial for their future professional careers.

One of the critical goals of this program is to address challenges related to students' learning motivation. Learning motivation is a fundamental factor in academic success, as it drives students to engage actively in the learning process, persist in the face of difficulties, and strive to achieve their goals. Without adequate motivation, students are less likely to participate actively in lessons or achieve their full potential. Hence, programs that effectively boost motivation are essential in improving educational outcomes.

In the context of SMAN 9 Toraja Utara, the Teaching Assistance Program has been implemented to enhance students' engagement and enthusiasm in English Literature classes. English Literature, as a subject, plays a vital role in developing students' language skills, critical thinking, and cultural awareness. However, many students face challenges in this subject due to limited exposure, lack of confidence, or insufficient interest. The program aims to overcome these challenges by introducing innovative and student-centered teaching methods.During the implementation of the program, teaching assistants introduced creative activities such as learning through games, group discussions, and reward-based learning. These methods were designed to create a more enjoyable and interactive learning environment, making the subject matter more accessible and engaging for students. By providing immediate feedback and positive reinforcement, teaching assistants were able to build students' confidence and encourage active participation in class.Moreover, the program allowed teaching assistants to work closely with teachers and students, fostering a collaborative learning atmosphere. This collaboration not only enhanced the effectiveness of teaching strategies but also helped identify and address individual students' needs. The personalized approach to teaching and mentoring contributed to significant improvements in students' motivation and academic performance.

The findings from this study highlight the importance of integrating teaching assistance programs into the broader educational framework. By empowering university students to take an active role in school education, the program serves as a bridge between theory and practice, benefitting both teaching assistants and school students. It also demonstrates the value of innovative and interactive teaching strategies in overcoming learning barriers and fostering a positive attitude towards education.This paper aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the role of teaching assistance in enhancing students' learning motivation in English Literature at SMAN 9 Toraja Utara. It explores the challenges faced by students, the strategies employed to address these challenges, and the impact of the program on students' engagement and academic performance. The findings of this study have significant implications for educational policy and practice, offering insights into how similar

programs can be implemented and improved in other educational settings.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design to explore the role of the Teaching Assistance Program in enhancing students' learning motivation, specifically in English Literature at SMAN 9 Toraja Utara. Descriptive qualitative research is a methodological approach that seeks to provide a detailed and systematic description of a phenomenon based on empirical data. This approach was selected to capture the nuances and dynamics of the teaching and learning process, as well as the interactions between teaching assistants, students, and teachers.

The study was conducted over four months, during which data were collected using multiple techniques: observation, interviews, and documentation. Observations were carried out in the classroom to understand the teaching strategies employed by the teaching assistants and their impact on students' engagement and motivation. These observations provided real-time insights into classroom interactions, learning activities, and students' responses to various teaching methods.

Interviews were conducted with key stakeholders, including teaching assistants, subject teachers, and students. These interviews aimed to gather in-depth perspectives on the effectiveness of the Teaching Assistance Program. The questions focused on the challenges faced by students in learning English Literature, the strategies implemented by teaching assistants, and the perceived outcomes of the program. Both structured and semi-structured interviews were used to allow flexibility in exploring relevant topics.

In addition to observations and interviews, documentation was utilized to complement and verify the findings. Documents such as lesson plans, students' assignments, and teaching assistants' reports were analyzed to gain a comprehensive understanding of the teaching activities and their alignment with the program's objectives. This triangulation of data collection methods ensured the reliability and validity of the findings.

The participants in this study included 25 twelfth-grade students, 5 teaching assistants, and the English Literature teacher at SMAN 9 Toraja Utara. The students were selected as the primary focus because they represented the target group benefiting from the program. The teaching assistants and the teacher were included to provide a broader perspective on the implementation and outcomes of the initiative. Ethical considerations were addressed by obtaining informed consent from all participants and ensuring confidentiality in data handling.

Data analysis was conducted in several stages, beginning with data organization and coding. Thematic analysis was employed to identify patterns and themes related to the research objectives, such as the factors influencing students' motivation and the effectiveness of specific teaching strategies. The results were interpreted in the context of existing literature on learning motivation and innovative teaching practices, providing both theoretical and practical implications. The methodological rigor ensured that the findings of this study accurately reflected the real-world impact of the Teaching Assistance Program.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study highlight the significant role of the Teaching Assistance Program in enhancing the learning motivation of twelfth-grade students in English Literature at SMAN 9 Toraja Utara. Through a combination of innovative teaching methods, active engagement strategies, and personalized attention, the program succeeded in creating a conducive learning environment that encouraged student participation and enthusiasm. This section discusses the main findings in relation to the program's implementation, its impact on students' motivation, and its broader implications.

The initial phase of the program involved preparatory activities by the teaching assistants, including classroom observations and lesson planning. These activities allowed the teaching assistants to understand the learning needs of the students and adapt their teaching strategies accordingly. The collaboration with the English Literature teacher was crucial in aligning the program with the curriculum and ensuring that the teaching methods were effective and relevant. This initial preparation laid a strong foundation for the program's success.

One of the most significant findings was the effectiveness of interactive teaching methods in boosting students' interest in English Literature. Teaching assistants employed strategies such as learning through games, group discussions, and role-playing activities to make lessons more engaging. For instance, students were divided into teams to solve literature-based challenges, which not only increased their motivation but also fostered teamwork and critical thinking. The use of games and rewards, such as small prizes or verbal praise, proved particularly impactful in sustaining students' enthusiasm.

The teaching assistants also provided individualized support to students, especially those struggling with the subject. Personalized attention, including one-on-one mentoring and additional explanations of difficult concepts, helped students overcome their learning barriers. Many students reported feeling more confident and motivated to participate in class discussions and activities as a result of this support. This finding aligns with the idea that a supportive learning environment can significantly enhance motivation and engagement.

Another notable outcome was the positive shift in classroom dynamics. The presence of teaching assistants introduced a collaborative and lively atmosphere, where students felt comfortable expressing their ideas and asking questions. The teaching assistants' youthful approach and relatability made it easier for students to connect with them, bridging the gap between traditional teaching methods and modern learning preferences. This shift not only improved student-teacher relationships but also contributed to a more vibrant and inclusive learning environment.

The impact of the program extended beyond the classroom. Students demonstrated improved academic performance and a deeper interest in English Literature topics. For example, students were more proactive in completing assignments and participating in extracurricular activities related to literature. This suggests that the increased motivation fostered by the program had a ripple effect on their overall academic behavior. Teachers also observed a notable improvement in students' critical thinking and problem-solving skills, which are essential for their future educational pursuits.

The program also had a transformative effect on the teaching assistants themselves. By taking on teaching responsibilities, they developed valuable skills such as leadership, communication, and classroom management. These experiences not only enhanced their professional readiness but also deepened their understanding of the challenges and rewards of teaching. The dual benefit for both students and teaching assistants highlights the reciprocal nature of the program's success.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that the Teaching Assistance Program serves as an effective strategy for enhancing student motivation and academic outcomes. The use of innovative and interactive methods, coupled with personalized support, proved instrumental in addressing the challenges faced by students in English Literature. This program also underscores the potential of collaborative learning approaches in fostering a positive and inclusive educational experience. Future initiatives should build on these findings, incorporating additional elements such as technology integration and expanded collaboration with teachers to further optimize the program's impact.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study underline the pivotal role of the Teaching Assistance Program in enhancing the learning motivation of twelfth-grade students in English Literature at SMAN 9 Toraja Utara. Through a well-structured implementation that emphasized interactive teaching methods, personalized support, and a collaborative learning environment, the program successfully addressed key challenges in student engagement and academic performance.

The innovative strategies employed, such as learning through games, group discussions, and reward-based activities, significantly improved students' interest and active participation in English Literature classes. The individualized attention provided by teaching assistants further helped struggling students overcome their learning barriers, boosting their confidence and fostering a sense of accomplishment. These approaches not only enhanced students' motivation but also positively influenced their overall academic behavior and performance.

The program's impact extended beyond the immediate classroom setting, contributing to the personal and professional growth of the teaching assistants. By taking on teaching responsibilities and interacting closely with students, the teaching assistants developed essential skills such as leadership, communication, and empathy. This reciprocal benefit underscores the value of the Teaching Assistance Program as a mutually enriching experience for both students and university participants.

Additionally, the program demonstrated the importance of collaboration between teaching assistants and subject teachers in aligning teaching strategies with curriculum goals. This partnership ensured the relevance and effectiveness of the program, resulting in improved classroom dynamics and a more inclusive learning environment.

The success of this initiative highlights the potential of integrating innovative educational programs into the broader educational framework. By addressing students' motivational needs and fostering a positive learning atmosphere, such programs can contribute significantly to improving educational outcomes and preparing students for future challenges.

Based on these findings, it is recommended that similar teaching assistance programs be expanded and refined, incorporating elements such as technology integration and a broader scope of subjects. Further research could explore the long-term effects of these programs on students' academic and personal development, providing valuable insights for policymakers and educators seeking to enhance the quality of education.

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