



Assisting the Enhancement of Students' Reading Interest through Teaching Assistance Activities at SMKN 08 Pinrang

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Abstrak

The community service program at SMKN 8 Pinrang was conducted through the Teaching Assistance Program (PKKM), aiming to enhance students' reading interest and foster a strong literacy culture. This activity aligns with the Three Pillars of Higher Education (Tri Dharma Perguruan Tinggi) and provides students with a valuable opportunity to gain both learning and working experiences through teaching assistance at SMKN 8 Pinrang. Based on an assessment of student literacy at SMKN 8 Pinrang, the program leveraged the potential to refine and develop students' reading interests. The teaching assistance program was fully supported by the university and supervised by field advisors. Reading interest activities were carried out through wall magazines, short story and numeracy competitions, and engaging activities tailored to subject-based ice-breaking sessions. The results of this program demonstrated an increase in students' literacy and reading interest, highlighting the significant role of university students in teaching assistance. They not only motivated students to learn but also supported teachers in fulfilling their responsibilities effectively.

keyword: Teaching Assistance, Reading Interest, Numeracy

INTRODUCTION

Education is an essential aspect of life. It is crucial in shaping a generation that excels intellectually and possesses skills in various fields. With the advancement of time, new opportunities and challenges emerge in the educational landscape, requiring adaptations to the ongoing educational process. To address these challenges, the government has implemented initiatives to improve the quality of education, including the "Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka" (MBKM) program (Hafidza et al., 2024).

The implementation of the independent curriculum policy is closely linked to the MBKM programs, one of which is the "Kampus Mengajar" initiative. This program's activities are not merely to take over the role of teachers in teaching but to complement and enrich the learning materials and strategies for students in schools (Purnamawati et al., 2024). Ki Hajar Dewantara stated that education aims to develop children's character, mind, and body. Meanwhile, Law No. 20 of 2003 defines education as a conscious and planned effort to create a learning process that helps students develop spiritual potential, personality, intelligence, and skills for their own benefit and that of society, the nation, and the state. In general, education can be understood as a structured process for transmitting knowledge, skills, and values from one generation to the next (Mustafa & Suryadi, 2022).

In basic education, literacy and numeracy competencies have become the focus of learning and are established as the standard competencies students must possess. However, the literacy and numeracy competencies of Indonesian students remain low, and the education system has not developed as expected, leaving it far behind other countries (Noerbella, 2022). Education plays a

significant role in improving the quality of human resources in a country. The success of education determines the achievement of national development goals in education, namely to educate the nation's life. One effort to achieve this goal is to foster a culture of literacy and enhance students' reading interest (Sianturi et al., 2024).

Reading is an effective learning method to transform ignorance into knowledge. Moreover, reading is the best way for students to acquire information. However, the lack of interest in reading among students presents a challenge for teachers. Therefore, teachers must make reading activities engaging and routine by introducing the essence, benefits, and appropriate teaching methods for reading (Zubair et al., 2024).

Through reading, one can indirectly explore places or times they have never experienced. Its profound influence can open limitless horizons. As a gateway to knowledge, reading significantly impacts when applied in daily life (Prameswari et al., 2020).

Several factors contribute to students losing interest in reading, including an unsupportive school environment, lack of literacy programs, inadequate libraries, insufficient reading materials, lack of family support, as well as the influence of television and gadget addiction.

The government's "Kampus Mengajar" program aims to produce university graduates equipped with soft skills and mature expertise relevant to contemporary needs. At their assigned schools, students assist teachers in developing effective and interactive learning strategies, especially in literacy and numeracy education. Students are also expected to actively, creatively, and innovatively participate by exploring their knowledge, ultimately helping to improve the quality of education in Indonesia. This initiative also aims to reduce the unemployment rate among graduates in Indonesia.

The MBKM program seeks to broaden students' learning experiences, enhance their skills, and prepare them for the challenges of the workforce while contributing to society (Mahareka & Syofyan, 2024). Additionally, the program provides students with opportunities to gain teaching experience in schools and develop work programs that support improved learning quality in those schools (Anwar, 2021). Through MBKM activities, students become more motivated and active in the learning process as they are allowed to explore their interests and talents (Rahma et al., 2021).

Teaching Assistance is one of the core programs under the Kampus Mengajar initiative, aimed at improving the quality of education in Indonesia through the active involvement of university students as teacher partners. Students are tasked with substituting for teachers when they are unavailable and assisting in teaching processes. They are also responsible for enhancing literacy, numeracy, and critical thinking skills among students. This program arose due to the limited number of teaching staff in schools. Addressing this situation, students take the initiative to implement their ideas into beneficial work programs, useful for all school members. As a result, this program has gained full support from the schools as it addresses the challenges they face.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

Education is a fundamental element in the development of human resources, serving as a foundation for intellectual growth and skill development. Ki Hajar Dewantara emphasized that education aims to nurture character, intelligence, and physical capabilities in children. Law No. 20 of 2003 also highlights education as a conscious and planned effort to facilitate

learning processes that empower individuals to develop their spiritual, intellectual, and social potential. Education, thus, is pivotal in shaping individuals to contribute to societal and national advancement (Mustafa & Suryadi, 2022). Despite its significance, education in Indonesia faces numerous challenges. Literacy and numeracy levels among students remain low compared to global standards (Noerbella, 2022). Factors such as inadequate infrastructure, insufficient resources, and low teacher-student ratios hinder the effective delivery of education. These challenges necessitate innovative approaches to reform and strengthen the educational system, particularly at the primary and secondary levels.

Literacy is a cornerstone of educational success, enabling individuals to acquire knowledge, think critically, and engage in lifelong learning. Reading is a critical skill that transforms ignorance into understanding and facilitates access to information (Zubair et al., 2024). However, many students in Indonesia struggle with low reading interest, influenced by factors like limited access to reading materials, lack of family support, and the prevalence of distractions such as gadgets and television (Prameswari et al., 2020). Efforts to improve literacy and numeracy skills are crucial for addressing educational disparities. Schools need to foster a supportive environment through engaging reading activities, adequate libraries, and structured literacy programs. Teachers play a vital role in creating innovative strategies to make learning enjoyable and impactful, addressing students' needs and interests (Sianturi et al., 2024).

The Indonesian government introduced the "Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka" (MBKM) program as a strategic initiative to enhance education quality. The MBKM initiative aims to provide students with practical experience, broaden their skills, and

prepare them for the workforce while contributing to societal development (Mahareka & Syofyan, 2024). One of its flagship programs, "Kampus Mengajar," focuses on improving literacy and numeracy competencies in schools through university students' active involvement. availability of teaching staff in schools. By integrating university students into classrooms, the program enriches teaching methodologies and supports teachers in managing workloads. Additionally, students introduce creative and interactive learning approaches, fostering literacy and numeracy skills among students (Purnamawati et al., 2024). The involvement of university students in schools through MBKM has proven effective in bridging gaps in the education system. Students serve as mentors, role models, and collaborators, helping teachers design engaging learning strategies. Their contributions extend beyond classroom teaching, as they also organize literacy events, storytelling competitions, and numeracy games, creating a vibrant and interactive learning environment (Rahma et al., 2021).

A culture of literacy is essential for fostering intellectual growth and critical thinking. Through initiatives like the MBKM program, the government seeks to instill reading habits among students and create a sustainable culture of literacy in schools. These efforts are expected to not only improve educational outcomes but also enhance students' motivation and curiosity, empowering them to become lifelong learners and productive members of society.

METHODOLOGY

The Teaching Assistance program at SMK 8 Pinrang employs a collaborative and participatory approach, involving five students from different study programs. This program aims to enhance

the quality of education in schools by focusing on strengthening literacy and numeracy. The activities were conducted over four months, from August to November 2024, targeting students in grades X and XI. The first phase, preparation, involved intensive training provided by the Kampus Mengajar Program Team. This training was designed to equip students with comprehensive knowledge of their upcoming duties in the field. With guidance from educational experts, the students were trained to develop work programs that addressed the specific needs of the partner schools. This preparation phase ensured the participants were well-prepared to adapt to the school environment and make meaningful contributions.

The second phase, implementation, began with direct observation in the school to identify the conditions, challenges, and needs present. The observations served as the foundation for designing relevant and effective activity plans. Students then created structured plans, consulted with supervising teachers and Field Supervisors (DPL), and obtained approval from the school principal. Once approval was granted, the students executed the work programs, which included innovative activities aimed at enhancing students' interest in reading and numeracy skills. During this phase, students also took responsibility for fostering an engaging and interactive learning environment. Activities such as literacy competitions, numeracy-based games, and class discussions were integral to the program's implementation.

The evaluation phase followed the completion of each activity, assessing the effectiveness of the implemented programs. This evaluation involved analyzing the program's success based on feedback from students, teachers, and school administrators. The findings were used to develop recommendations for improving similar programs in the future.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on observations conducted at SMKN 8 Pinrang, it was found that students' literacy and numeracy skills still require



significant improvement. Additionally, the lack of supporting facilities in the school poses a challenge to the learning process. Therefore, the Teaching Assistance Program students designed several work programs aimed at improving students' literacy and numeracy. These programs were developed to address existing barriers and maximize students' learning potential. Below are the implemented programs.

The bulletin board, or "Majalah Dinding" (Mading), serves as a simple mass communication medium for students. Previously underutilized, the bulletin board was revitalized with more engaging designs and educational content, including articles, book excerpts, quotes, and simple infographics. This initiative, carried out collaboratively by students and teachers, encouraged active student participation in filling the board with motivational words and creative ideas. This activity aimed to improve students' writing skills, boost their confidence, and broaden their knowledge. Short story writing (Cerpen) was introduced as a creative competition during free periods, involving students from the APHP and TKJ departments. Collaborating with Indonesian

language teachers, students received direct guidance on proper writing techniques, correct spelling, and appropriate intonation for reading their stories aloud. This activity aimed to develop students' creative writing abilities, imagination, and language skills. The competition, themed around everyday life topics, provided a platform for self-expression and creative reflection, which was well-received by students for its innovative approach. Ice breaking sessions were designed to create a comfortable and engaging classroom environment. These sessions incorporated educational games such as numeracy-based quizzes, logic puzzles, and simple strategy games. Such activities proved effective in re-engaging students, enhancing their focus, and sparking enthusiasm for learning. These interactive methods helped increase student interest in numeracy while making the learning process enjoyable





Discussion

Observations revealed that students at SMKN 8 Pinrang exhibit low reading interest due to environmental factors, lack of parental support, and reliance on gadgets. The school's limited literacy programs and inadequate library resources further hinder students' reading habits. Financial constraints also played a role, with insufficient textbooks and learning materials impacting the quality of education. Additionally, the limited availability of technology, such as projectors, slowed the integration of digital learning in the classroom.

Despite these challenges, the implemented programs significantly improved students' literacy and numeracy skills. Students gained language proficiency, critical thinking skills, and exposure to technological tools. With the guidance of university students, the school adopted more interactive teaching methods, such as using Canva for creating presentations and Quizizz for interactive learning and evaluation.

The program also contributed to

addressing technological skill gaps among students, who were taught basic design skills and digital presentation techniques. These initiatives not only enhanced academic capabilities but also equipped students with essential skills for the digital era. This holistic approach has been recognized as an effective way to support students and teachers in overcoming educational challenges and preparing for future demands.

CONCLUSION

The implementation of the Teaching Assistance Program at SMKN 8 Pinrang leads to several conclusions. Although the program has significantly advanced efforts to enhance students' reading interest, several challenges remain, such as economic factors and limited access to technology. Addressing these economic issues could involve collaboration with external stakeholders to provide supplementary books for students in need.

Improving access to technology, such as increasing the availability of projectors and conducting training on the use of technology, can help overcome barriers in applying modern learning media. Additionally, integrating literacy and numeracy programs with technology can make learning more engaging and effective. These efforts aim not only to improve academic and technological skills but also to provide students with interactive, creative, and future-oriented learning experiences.

Overall, the Teaching Assistance Program has made a positive contribution to the development of students at SMKN 8 Pinrang. It has fostered a shift in students' perceptions of literacy and numeracy, making them no longer see these skills as difficult but instead as engaging and enjoyable. This work program has built a strong literacy culture among students. Through interactive methods and approaches tailored to students' needs, they have become more motivated to read and comprehend learning materials.

This demonstrates the strategic role of teaching assistance in supporting broader educational goals, particularly in fostering a generation with a strong literacy culture. However, to achieve greater progress, addressing existing challenges and enhancing cooperation among schools, parents, and related parties is crucial to reaching shared objectives in improving students' literacy and numeracy.

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