



Innovation of Reading Corners as a Learning Medium to Enhance Students' Literacy and Creativity at SMK Negeri 1 Panyabungan

Syamsiah Depalina¹, Ainun Adilah Dly², Nurjamilah³, Aisyah Hairani Nst⁴, Nur Jannah Pulungan⁵

¹ Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam Negeri Mandailing Natal, Indonesia

² Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam Negeri Mandailing Natal, Indonesia

³ Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam Negeri Mandailing Natal, Indonesia

⁴ Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam Negeri Mandailing Natal, Indonesia

⁵ Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam Negeri Mandailing Natal, Indonesia

¹denar.pohan111@gmail.com, ²ainundly27112002@gmail.com, ³nurjamilah042000@gmail.com,

⁴aisyahhairani@gmail.com, ⁵nurjannah@gmail.com

Article Info

Article history:

Received 29-04-2025

Revised 05-06-2025

Accepted 17-06-2025

Keyword:

Reading Corner, Literacy, Creativity, Learning Innovation, SMK Negeri 1 Panyabungan.

ABSTRACT

Improving Students' Literacy and Creativity remains a significant challenge in the field of education, particularly in Vocational High Schools (SMK) that focus on practical skills development. One innovation that can be employed to address this challenge is the development of a Reading Corner as a learning medium. This study aims to examine the effectiveness of the Reading Corner in enhancing literacy and creativity among students at SMK Negeri 1 Panyabungan.

The research adopts a qualitative method with a case study approach. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation involving students and school personnel participating in the Reading Corner program. The findings indicate that the existence of the Reading Corner successfully increases students' interest in reading, broadens their knowledge, and encourages them to think and create more creatively. Moreover, innovations implemented in the Reading Corner—such as the use of digital books, interactive discussions, and creativity-based literacy projects—have a positive impact on the development of students' skills.

Students not only gain the ability to comprehend information from their reading materials but are also able to process it into innovative outputs such as articles, poems, graphic designs, and literacy-based entrepreneurship projects. The presence of the Reading Corner has transformed students' learning patterns to become more independent and explorative, thereby supporting the cultivation of a literacy culture within the school environment.

This study concludes that the Reading Corner innovation plays a significant role in enhancing students' literacy and creativity at SMK Negeri 1 Panyabungan. Therefore, the program is recommended for further development by incorporating collaborations with external parties such as literacy communities, as well as implementing a more systematic reading program. In this way, the Reading Corner can serve as a sustainable model for innovative learning in vocational education.



©2025 Authors. Published by PT Mukhlisina Revolution Center.. This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License. (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>)

INTRODUCTION

Education is a fundamental human necessity that serves as a means to transmit and transform values and knowledge. As a process, education plays a pivotal role in expanding, improving, enhancing, and altering individuals' knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviors, with the goal of improving quality of life through leadership and educational activities. The implementation of both theoretical and practical training requires a foundation and guidance to support sustainable learning. Education is also expected to foster the development of quality knowledge. This is achieved through

the reinforcement of a culture of reading and numeracy literacy, with reading being one of the primary ways to obtain information (Fauziyah, 2022).

Literacy is not merely limited to reading and writing skills, but also includes technological, political, critical thinking, and environmental awareness literacies. Kirsch & Jungeblut, in their book *Literacy: Profile of America's Young Adults*, define literacy as an individual's ability to utilize information to develop knowledge for the benefit of society. With adequate literacy, individuals can read and write according to the nation's needs, thereby helping Indonesia emerge from adversity, compete globally, and stand on equal footing with other nations (Irianto & Febrianti, 2017).

Awareness of the importance of literacy is a key factor in one's success in facing various challenges. Reading literacy not only enables individuals to access information but also helps document experiences that can be referenced in the future. Literacy is a life skill that allows individuals to contribute meaningfully to society. This ability is rooted in critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Furthermore, literacy serves as a form of expression in managing and appreciating culture. A society with a strong literacy culture can transmit positive values in the pursuit of self-realization, achieved through interpretation and the search for meaning in life—something made possible through strong reading skills.

The Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture (Kemendikbud) continues to promote reading interest, especially among students. One of the government's milestones is the issuance of Permendikbud No. 23 of 2015 concerning character development. This regulation mandates a compulsory reading program for students at the elementary, junior high, and senior high school levels. In addition, the Ministry has launched the School Literacy Movement (*Gerakan Literasi Sekolah - GLS*) as an effort to address the low reading interest among Indonesian students (Hamjah et al., 2017).

In the 25th century, all educational stakeholders—especially students—urgently require literacy skills. Students' literacy competencies are closely related to the need to understand information analytically, critically, and reflectively. However, to date, its application in school learning processes remains suboptimal. Therefore, there is a need to enhance the skills taught and guided in schools, particularly those that have not yet effectively developed basic competencies to support reading ability (Widayoko et al., 2018).

In general, literacy is often understood in a cognitive context, although the literacy culture extends beyond reading and writing abilities. The Education Development Center (EDC) emphasizes that literacy is the ability of individuals to utilize various opportunities and life skills to understand both words and the world around them. Reading proficiency encompasses listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills, which develop through habit. Various literacy activities can encourage students to enjoy the program, making literacy the foundation for lifelong learning and improving overall life quality.

The culture of literacy is strongly linked to education—some argue the two are inseparable. Literacy is a key indicator for improving the performance of younger generations and serves as the foundation for mastering various fields of study. If preschool-aged children lack early reading skills, they will struggle to grasp subjects at the next level of education. Therefore, it is concluded that literacy culture must be introduced from an early age, especially for elementary school students. Developing literacy habits early on is expected to serve as the main capital in forming an intelligent and civilized generation (Mariat et al.).

Fostering a literacy culture in Indonesia presents both challenges and opportunities to collaborate in advancing the nation's literacy goals. Various professions have continuously contributed to raising literacy awareness, which has long been synonymous with reading and writing literacy. This is also emphasized in the Qur'an—where the first revelation in Surah Al-'Alaq (verses 1–5) instructed the Prophet Muhammad SAW to "Iqra" or read. The command to read, repeated three times, underscores the fundamental importance of reading as part of literacy. The more frequently one reads, the broader one's knowledge becomes, and the easier it is to express ideas in writing (Khoirotin, 2022).

Reading is a fundamental literacy activity and serves as the key to educational advancement. It is like a window that opens access to diverse information. Educational success is not solely measured by the number of students achieving high scores, but also by how many develop a reading habit. Unfortunately, literacy culture, particularly reading habits, has not yet become an integral part of daily life for most Indonesians. While the country has made progress in reducing illiteracy—recording a literacy rate of 97.932%, according to data from Kemendikbud and a forecast by Statistics Finland (2018)—there remain approximately 2.068% or 3.474 million citizens who still cannot read. However, the core issue is not the inability to read, but rather the low interest in reading.

Based on a 2016 study by Central Connecticut State University, *World's Most Literate Nations*, Indonesia ranked 60th out of 61 countries in reading interest. UNESCO also reported in 2016 that only 1 in 1,000 Indonesians (0.001%) showed genuine reading interest (UNESCO, 2016).

Currently, Indonesia's national landscape shows that children's literacy levels remain low compared to those in other countries. Results from the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) between 2000 and 2012 show disappointing outcomes. In 2000, Indonesian students had an average reading score of 371—below the international average of 500—ranking 39th out of 41 countries. In 2003, the score slightly improved to 382 but still ranked 39th out of 40. By 2006, the score rose to 393, ranking 48th out of 56 countries. In 2009, Indonesia ranked 57th out of 65 with a score of 402, and in 2012, the score fell to 396, placing the country 64th out of 65. One of the causes of these low reading scores is the lack of reading habits, compounded by insufficient literacy development programs in formal education institutions.

A study by Taufiq Ismail in 1996 compared reading habits among high school students in different countries. German and Dutch students read an average of 32 books per year, Russian students 12, Japanese 15, Singaporean 6, Bruneian 7, while Indonesian students read 0 books annually. Multiple factors contribute to Indonesia's poor literacy culture, generally categorized into internal and external factors. Internal factors include lack of free time, preference for entertainment over books, low reading interest, and limited awareness of literacy's importance. External factors include inadequate library facilities, relatively high book prices, lack of parental support, and unsupportive environments (Mulasih & Hudhana, 2020).

Promoting a literacy culture requires awareness campaigns and active efforts within schools. Parents play a vital role in introducing reading habits to children from an early age. Childhood is a golden period when memory retention is strong, and adolescence provides a valuable opportunity for learning—often referred to as the “golden age.” From an early age, children tend to show strong curiosity about their surroundings (Sulistiyani, 2015).

According to Locke, an individual's development is influenced by temperament and environment, both of which shape one's way of thinking. Child development begins in early childhood, where infants can be shaped by parental influence and their surroundings. If a child grows up in a reading-oriented family and environment, they are likely to become part of a generation that supports literacy movements. Therefore, early childhood is the right time for parents to introduce literacy habits in the family environment. Literacy programs are national initiatives that should be implemented from an early age, including in elementary education. These programs are integral to the education system and aim to improve the quality of school-based learning. Thus, literacy development programs in schools should receive special attention so that all students can benefit from them optimally.

The School Literacy Movement (*Gerakan Literasi Sekolah - GLS*) is a holistic approach to transforming schools through community participation, enabling them to become learning organizations where members possess lifelong literacy skills (Hamjah et al., 2017).

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a descriptive qualitative method. Qualitative research focuses on understanding social phenomena or facts that occur in the field. In this method, data collection is not solely oriented toward theory but emphasizes facts discovered directly through fieldwork. The

qualitative approach allows for findings that may not be attainable through quantitative procedures or other measurement methods. It places greater emphasis on processes and the interpretation of meaning. In general, this method is used to study community life, history, behavior, social phenomena, and a wide range of other issues.

The subject of this research is the Head of the Service and Development Division at the Library of SMKN 1 Panyabungan. The research techniques applied include library research and field research, which encompass observations and interviews with students.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The utilization of Reading Corners plays a vital role in improving the literacy and creativity of students, particularly those whose skills in these areas remain limited. With the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, the Reading Corner has become increasingly valuable, especially for vocational schools that lack adequate library facilities. The existence of the Reading Corner supports students in enhancing literacy, filling free time or breaks with reading activities, and developing projects within the Pancasila Student Profile (P5) framework.

This aligns with Rahayuningsih (2022), who stated that the Pancasila Student Profile represents the character and skills nurtured through daily experiences, reflected in various aspects of school life—both within and beyond the curriculum. The profile consists of six main dimensions: faith and devotion to God Almighty and noble character, global diversity, collaboration, independence, creativity, and critical thinking.

Students who understand the Pancasila Student Profile are expected to become graduates with strong character and relevant skills across various fields, while upholding cultural values and being capable of managing and utilizing available resources. One of the critical aspects of the profile is mastery of literacy and creativity, which are core factors in education. The Merdeka Curriculum aims to create learners who are literate, creative, independent, civilized, and morally upright. Additionally, the Merdeka Belajar (Freedom to Learn) concept seeks to transform passive learning systems into more active ones for both students and teachers.

This is supported by Safitri, Wulandari, and Herlambang (2022), who stated that in student-centered learning approaches, the teacher's role shifts toward that of a facilitator, connector, and guide in the learning process. Students are provided with a variety of reading materials that function not only as learning tools and sources of knowledge but also as a means of providing enjoyable reading experiences. The Reading Corner helps students acquire knowledge through reading activities. Beyond broadening perspectives, it also enhances literacy, creativity, and critical thinking skills. Therefore, it is crucial to design Reading Corners creatively to attract student interest.

Steps in Developing a Reading Corner Include:

1. Allocating space in classrooms to house book collections.
2. Designing the layout with adequate air circulation and lighting for student comfort and safety.
3. Adjusting bookshelf height to student reachability.
4. Creatively decorating the Reading Corner to attract student interest.
5. Categorizing and organizing books by genre or type.

Based on interviews, it was found that Reading Corners have long been implemented at SMK Negeri 1 Panyabungan. Each class from Grade 10 to 12 has its own Reading Corner, functioning as a mini-library, making books more accessible and fostering reading habits. To optimize the Reading Corner, effective management by teachers and school authorities is essential.

According to Puspitasari et al. (2021), there are four stages in managing a Reading Corner:

1. Planning Reading Corner activities
2. Organizing Reading Corner activities
3. Implementing Reading Corner activities
4. Monitoring Reading Corner activities

These stages are necessary to ensure effective and efficient use of the Reading Corner, especially considering that textbooks alone are not sufficient to develop students' critical thinking skills. The Reading Corner serves as an additional platform for expanding knowledge. Teachers also play a role in nurturing critical thinking by encouraging discussions and group problem-solving. Adinda (2016) supports this by stating that individuals with high literacy can draw conclusions from acquired knowledge, use data to solve problems, and seek relevant information sources.

Benefits of the Reading Corner at SMK Negeri 1 Panyabungan Include:

1. Reducing students' habit of loitering outside the classroom
2. Providing a favorite space within the classroom
3. Increasing reading interest and literacy
4. Broadening students' knowledge

Students are free to read during breaks or before lessons begin. Teachers evaluate their understanding by asking about the contents of books they've read or their favorite books. To encourage participation from students less interested in reading, teachers assign reading, writing, and speaking tasks without placing excessive burden, allowing evaluation of Reading Corner utilization and literacy development.

Supporting Factors Include:

1. A variety of book types—stories, short stories, encyclopedias, and general reading
2. An attractive and colorful design with creative decorations

Arsil (2019) notes that the Reading Corner differs from a traditional library because it is embedded within the classroom, making it an integral part of the learning environment. Thus, book collections should be regularly updated.

Challenges in Enhancing Literacy and Creativity Through the Reading Corner Include:

1. Difficulty motivating students to enjoy reading
2. Damaged books
3. Disruptions from peers while reading
4. Books not returned after use

Students' literacy and creativity are closely tied to their cognitive abilities and knowledge base. Yuriza et al. (2018) assert that literacy improves when individuals acquire new information, store it in memory, and connect it with prior knowledge—enabling them to understand complex situations. Therefore, Reading Corners must be designed to be comfortable, creative, and attractive.

1. Solutions Taken by SMK N 1 Panyabungan Include:
2. Emphasizing the importance of taking care of books
3. Redesigning the Reading Corner to be more appealing and comfortable

Creativity in designing the Reading Corner aligns with the Pancasila Student Profile, which highlights innovation and originality (Ismail, 2020). At SMK N 1 Panyabungan, each classroom features a unique Reading Corner designed collaboratively by homeroom teachers and students. However, effective communication between school management and teachers remains essential to ensure program sustainability and success.

Based on observations and student interviews, it was found that Reading Corner innovation is reflected in how students actively respond to the information provided. To enhance literacy and creativity, teachers can adopt diverse teaching methods that encourage students to use the Reading Corner. Certain subjects, especially Bahasa Indonesia, often require students to seek folk tales, articles, or other reading materials. Therefore, Reading Corners should be made as engaging and creative as possible to become students' favorite reading and learning spaces.

Upper-grade students shared that storybooks are their most frequently read materials. In addition to school-provided books, students are encouraged to bring their own reading materials based on mutual agreements. Students also expressed that they appreciate having a variety of books to choose from according to their interests. To enhance comfort, the school provides features like carpets, allowing students to read in a relaxed setting.

The Reading Corner—also known as a reading nook—is a literacy initiative introduced by the school to cultivate reading habits. This aligns with Nayren & Hidayat (2021), who state that the Reading Corner serves as a learning resource located within the classroom, equipped with bookshelves and a variety of engaging reading materials. Its function mirrors that of a library in offering a wide selection of books to students. The presence of a Reading Corner supports the development of students' reading habits. This can be achieved if it is attractively designed with colorful, illustrated, and neatly arranged books.

The primary goal of this initiative is to enhance literacy and creativity among students at SMK Negeri 1 Panyabungan.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that the utilization of the Reading Corner at SMK Negeri 1 Panyabungan plays a significant role in enhancing students' literacy and creativity. In addition to serving as a reading space during free time or breaks, the Reading Corner also supports the development of the Pancasila Student Profile (P5) projects. Its presence not only improves literacy skills but also sharpens students' critical thinking abilities. Other observed benefits include a reduction in students' tendency to loiter outside the classroom, increased enthusiasm for reading, and an expansion of students' knowledge and understanding.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article. All opinions, interpretations, and conclusions expressed are solely those of the authors and are presented with academic independence. The funding sponsor had no role in the design of the study; in the collection, analysis, or interpretation of data; in the writing of the manuscript; or in the decision to publish the results.

REFERENCES

- Adinda, A. (2016). Berfikir kritis dalam pembelajaran matematika. *Logaritma: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Pendidikan Dan Sains*, 4(01)
- Arsil, A. (2019). Implementasi model problem based learning berbantuan multimedia di sekolah dasar. *Jurnal Gentala Pendidikan Dasar*, 4(1)
- Data UNESCO 2016. 2018. Lihat juga di Abidin dan Hana Yunansah, *Pembelajaran Literasi: Strategi Meningkatkan Kemampuan Literasi Matematika, Sains, Membaca, dan Menulis*. Jakarta: Bumi Aksara
- Fauziyah, Litsa Nailul. 2022. “Pengaruh Pemanfaatan Pojok Baca Terhadap Pembiasaan Budaya Literasi Di Kelas VA MIN 3 Jember Tahun Pelajaran 2021”. Vol. 1
- Hamjah, Mukti Dkk. 2017. “Jurnal Pengembangan Program Literasi Sekolah Untuk Meningkatkan Kualitas Pendidikan Dasar Tingkat Sekolah Menengah Pertama Negeri di Kota Medan”. *Jurnal Pembangunan Perkotaan*, Vol. 5, No. 2
- Irianto, Putri Oviolanda. 2017. “Lifia Yola Febrianti, Pentingnya Penguasaan Literasi Bagi Generasi Muda Dalam Menghadapi MEA”

- Ismail, S., Suhana, S., & Zakiah, Q. Y. (2020). Analisis kebijakan penguatan pendidikan karakter dalam mewujudkan pelajar pancasila di sekolah. *Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Dan Ilmu Sosial*, 2(1)
- Khoirotin, Nur. 2022. *Menumbuhkan Budaya Literasi Dimasa Pandemi*. Sukabumi: Haura Publishing
- Mariat, Ni Putu Ayu Mirah, dkk. "Inovasi Pembelajaran Literasi Program Kampus Mengajar Angkatan 2 Di Sd Negeri 15 Pemecutan". *Jurnal PKM*. Vol.2 No. 2
- Mulasih, Winda Dwi Hudhana. 2020. "Urgensi Budaya Literasi dan Upaya Menumbuhkan Minat Baca, Lingua Rima" *Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa dan sastra Indoensia*. Vol. 9 No. 2
- Nayren, J., & Hidayat, H. (2021). Pengaruh nilai-nilai estetika pada penataan pojok baca terhadap minat baca anak usia dini. *Al-Abyadh*, IV(2)
- Puspitasari, I, Imron, A., & Juharyanto, J. (2021). Pengelolaan sudut baca kelas pada jenjang sekolah dasar untuk meningkatkan minat baca peserta didik. *Jurnal Pembelajaran, Bimbingan, Dan Pengelolaan Pendidikan*, I(10)
- Rahayuningsih, F. (2022). Internalisasi filosofi pendidikan ki hajar dewantara dalam mewujudkan profil pelajar pancasila. *SOSIAL: Jurnal Inovasi Pendidikan IPS*, I(3)
- Safitri, A., Wulandari, D., & Herlambang, Y. T. (2022). Proyek penguatan profil pelajar pancasila: sebuah orientasi baru pendidikan dalam meningkatkan karakter siswa indonesia. *Jurnal Basicedu*, 6(4)
- Sulistiyani, Anggraeni Mashinta. 2015. "Pengenalan Sains bagi Anak Usia Dini Menggunakan Metode Permainan, Jurnal Insania" *Jurnal Pendidikan, Fakultas Tarbiyah dan Ilmu Keguruan. Institut Agama Islam Negeri Purwokerto*. Vol 20 No 1
- Widayoko, Agus, Dkk. 2018. "Jurnal Analisis Program Implementasi Gerakan Literasi Sekolah (GLS) Dengan Pendekatan Goal-Based Evaluation". *Jurnal Tatsqif Jurnal Pemikiran dan Penelitian Pendidikan*, Vol. 16, No. 1
- Yuriza, P. E., Adisyahputra, A., & Sigit, D. V. (2018). Correlation between higher-order thinking skills and level of intelligence with scientific literacy on junior high school students. *Biosfer: Jurnal Pendidikan Biologi*, 11(1)