

## Enhancing Elementary Literacy Through the 'Class Literacy Tree': A Strategic Case Study of the 'One Week One Book' Program

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**Abstract.** Creating a literate generation requires a sustained pedagogical process, a goal often challenged by resource limitations in formal education. This study addresses this gap by examining an innovative, low-cost strategy. Introduction: This research describes a literacy learning strategy using a 'Class Literacy Tree' (POLIKEL) to support the 'One Week One Book' (SAMI SAKU) program and its impact on the reading interest and literacy skills of fifth-grade elementary students. Method: A qualitative, descriptive case study design was employed at two elementary schools in Sumedang Regency, Indonesia. Data were collected via observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation analysis, then analyzed using an interactive model. Results: The 'Class Literacy Tree' strategy successfully creates a joyful, participatory, and goal-oriented learning environment. The program effectively fosters continuous reading and writing habits, with teachers acting as crucial facilitators. Students' consistent, tangible engagement with the 'tree' demonstrated marked improvement in reading interest, comprehension of intrinsic text elements, and basic writing skills. Discussion: The strategy's success is contingent on a supporting management cycle strong school leadership, validating the PDCA cycle as a framework for sustainable pedagogical innovation. This strategy serves as an effective, sustainable, and scalable alternative model to enhance foundational literacy in elementary education.

**Keywords:** Literacy Strategy, Class Literacy Tree, Reading Motivation, One Week One Book, Elementary Education

### 1 Introduction

The cultivation of foundational literacy is a cornerstone of global educational policy, recognized as the primary conduit for critical thinking, creative expression, and effective communication in the 21st century [1]. Literacy transcends the mere mechanics of decoding text; it encompasses the complex abilities to comprehend, critically evaluate, synthesize, and utilize information as a basis for lifelong learning and active citizenship [2]. In an era of rapid digital transformation, where individuals are inundated with information, the capacity to navigate this landscape adaptively is not merely an academic skill but a prerequisite for personal, social, and economic stability

Despite this global consensus, international assessments consistently reveal persistent challenges in achieving deep literacy. The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) results, for instance, highlight a significant literacy gap in many nations, including Indonesia, where a large cohort of students struggles to move beyond basic retrieval of information to the higher-order skills of interpretation and evaluation [3]. This challenge is often exacerbated in educational contexts contending with significant resource disparities, particularly in public primary schools. These schools frequently face a dual obstacle: limited access to diverse, high-interest reading materials and inadequate technological infrastructure, such as a lack of computers or reliable internet access, which are often posited as solutions for personalized learning [4]. This environment necessitates the development and validation of innovative, low-cost, and sustainable pedagogical strategies that can function effectively without heavy reliance on technology.

In response, the Indonesian education system has instituted broad policy frameworks aimed at fostering a robust literacy culture. Initiatives such as the School Literacy Movement (*Gerakan Literasi Sekolah* or GLS), mandated by the Ministry of Education and Culture (Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan Republik Indonesia, 2015), and the flexible *Kurikulum Merdeka* (Emancipated Curriculum) [5], signal a systemic shift. These policies emphasize literacy as a foundational competency underpinning all subjects, not just language arts. They explicitly encourage pedagogical creativity and the development of the 'Pancasila Student Profile', a holistic vision of student character that includes critical reasoning, creativity, and collaborative [6].

Within this supportive policy landscape, grassroots pedagogical innovations have emerged. Programs such as One Week One Book (*Satu Minggu Satu Buku* or SAMI SAKU) represent a practical strategy to operationalize these national goals, aiming to instill a consistent, habitual reading culture. This approach is strongly supported by decades of literacy research, most notably by Krashen [7], who has demonstrated that Free Voluntary Reading (FVR) is arguably the most powerful tool in a school's arsenal for developing vocabulary, reading comprehension, and a positive disposition toward reading.

However, the implementation of such programs is fraught with challenges. Simply mandating a reading program, while necessary, is often insufficient to cultivate sustained student motivation. The modern student's attention is a finite resource, fiercely competed for by the immediate, gamified feedback loops of digital media. The core pedagogical problem, therefore, is how to make the solitary, often invisible act of reading as engaging, visible, and intrinsically rewarding as its digital counterparts. As established by foundational reading motivation scholars, student engagement is a complex interplay of cognitive strategies (knowing *how* to read), conceptual knowledge (having *what* to read), and social motivation (having a *reason* to read) [8].

This study investigates a specific, low-cost pedagogical innovation designed to address this motivational and social component directly: the Class Literacy Tree (*Pohon Literasi Kelas* or POLIKEL). This strategy, observed in the case study schools, is a tangible, visually interactive medium, often co-created by students and teachers. In its typical application, a large tree is drawn or constructed on a classroom wall. When a student completes a book as part of the SAMI SAKU program, they write a brief review, summary, or analysis of its intrinsic elements on a paper leaf, which is then

physically added to the communal tree. This simple act transforms reading from a private, internal process into a collective, visible, and celebrated public achievement.

A growing body of practitioner-focused research has affirmed the motivational power of such visual interventions. Studies specifically on literacy trees, including those thematically linked to local culture, have demonstrated a marked increase in reading interest by creating a meaningful and context-proximate learning experience [9], [10]. These artifacts are effective because they tap into foundational theories of reading motivation, creating a literacy-rich classroom environment where progress is tangible, peer engagement is high, and the classroom's print environment becomes a dynamic record of student achievement [11]. Further studies confirm that the tool can serve as a synergistic motivator, engaging teachers, students, and parents, thereby fostering a sustainable, school-wide literacy culture [12], [13].

Despite this clear pedagogical validation, a significant and critical gap persists in the academic literature. Existing research focuses almost exclusively on the pedagogical and motivational *effects* of the Literacy Tree, treating it as a static, isolated intervention. There is a conspicuous lack of inquiry into the *managerial* and *strategic processes* required to implement such a program effectively and ensure its long-term sustainability. A pedagogical tool, no matter how innovative, is destined for failure if it is not supported by a robust, cyclical process of planning, implementation, evaluation, and continuous improvement [14]. This deficiency is particularly acute in public schools, where resources are finite and teacher time is overburdened; a strategy must be not only effective but also efficient and manageable [15].

This study explicitly addresses this gap by employing the Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) cycle, a cornerstone of Total Quality Management (TQM) pioneered by W. Edwards Deming, as its primary analytical framework. The PDCA cycle, also known as the Deming Wheel or Shewhart Cycle, provides a simple yet profound framework for analyzing a pedagogical strategy as a dynamic system rather than a one-time activity [16], [17]. This study posits that the *novelty* of the Literacy Tree strategy lies not only in the artifact itself but in its potential to be integrated into a strategic management cycle that fosters continuous improvement. This lens allows for an examination of how the program is conceived (Plan), how the tree is implemented as a learning tool (Do), how its impact on literacy is measured and evaluated (Check), and, most critically, how that data is used to refine the strategy (Act).

This research, therefore, moves beyond the simple question of Does the Literacy Tree work? to ask, What management strategies make the Literacy Tree work effectively and sustainably? By analyzing the implementation of the POLIKEL strategy within the SAMI SAKU program through the PDCA lens, this study aims to describe and analyze the strategic processes, enabling factors (such as supportive leadership and school culture), and barriers to implementation (such as resource gaps or a lack of an evaluation loop). The research seeks to provide a conceptual and practical model for strengthening a school's literacy culture that is directed, measurable, and sustainable, offering a significant contribution to both pedagogical practice and educational management theory.

## 2 Method

This study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive case study design. This methodology was selected for its strength in providing a deep, holistic, and context-rich understanding of a specific, bounded phenomenon—in this case, the implementation of the 'Class Literacy Tree' (POLIKEL) strategy within the 'One Week One Book' (SAMI SAKU) program. The case study approach allowed for an in-depth exploration of the how and why behind the program's processes, capturing the roles, strategies, and lived experiences of participants, as well as the emergent dynamics, barriers, and solutions within their specific school contexts [18].

The research was conducted from January to April 2025 at two public elementary schools in Sumedang Regency, West Java, Indonesia: SDN Ciluluk 1 (Tanjungsari District) and SDN Citali (Pamulihan District). These sites were purposefully selected as they were both actively implementing the POLIKEL and SAMI SAKU programs, providing a rich context for comparative analysis. Key participants included three fifth-grade teachers directly involved in the program, one headmaster from each school, and the fifth-grade students (observed as a group).

Data were collected using a triangulation of three primary techniques [19]: (1) in-depth, semi-structured interviews with teachers and headmasters to explore their planning processes, implementation experiences, evaluation methods, and perceived impacts; (2) direct, non-participant observation of classroom literacy activities, focusing on student-teacher and student-tree interactions, and school-wide literacy habits; and (3) documentation analysis of relevant artifacts, including lesson plans (RPP), school strategic plans (RKS), student-generated leaves from the trees, photographs of the classroom environment, and teacher evaluation notes.

Data analysis followed the interactive model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña [20]. This process involved three concurrent streams: (1) data condensation (reducing, selecting, and focusing data from field notes, interview transcripts, and documents), (2) data display (organizing the condensed data into matrices structured around the PDCA framework for each school), and (3) conclusion drawing and verification (interpreting the displayed data to identify patterns, contrasts, and a tacit theory of implementation). To ensure trustworthiness, credibility was established through persistent observation, prolonged engagement, and member-checking, where key informants reviewed interview transcripts and preliminary interpretations to confirm their accuracy.

## 3 Result

### 3.1 Planning (Plan): Strategic Foresight as a Precondition for Success

The *Planning* (Plan) phase was found to be the most significant point of divergence between the two case-study schools, establishing a foundational trajectory that directly predicted the program's subsequent efficacy. The findings show a stark contrast between a *proactive, integrated strategic model* and a *reactive, routine-based operational model*.

At SDN Ciluluk 1, the planning phase was characterized by a proactive, participatory, and deeply integrated strategic approach. Documentary analysis of the School Work Plan (RKS) and the School Activity and Budget Plan (RKAS), triangulated with headmaster interviews, revealed that the literacy program was not a standalone add-on. Instead, it was a core, embedded component of a multi-year, school-wide positive culture initiative. This initiative was itself the product of a formal needs analysis conducted at the beginning of the academic year, which actively solicited input from all key stakeholders: teachers, the school committee, and, crucially, parents. This collaborative process ensured buy-in from the outset and aligned the program with the community's perceived needs. The Headmaster of SDN Ciluluk 1 (Interview, 2025) stated, Every new academic year, we hold a major planning session. All teachers, coaches, and even parent representatives are involved. Their suggestions are recorded... All are integrated with the school's vision so that the activities are genuinely relevant to the children's needs. This participatory planning directly aligns with strategic management principles, which posit that stakeholder integration is essential for effective resource allocation and long-term goal alignment [15], [21].

This strategic integration was most evident in the formulation of *specific, measurable, and resourced goals*. The RKS and RKAS documents from SDN Ciluluk 1 showed that the literacy program (SAMI SAKU) and its visual tool (POLIKEL) were linked to clear key performance indicators (KPIs), such as participation in inter-school arts and literacy competitions (FLS2N). This transformed the program from a mere habituation activity into a goal-oriented strategy. The arts coach (Interview, 2025) explained, Habituation activities are always included in the annual program, with the target of performing at the arts festival. We have a clear training schedule and support from parents. So, it's not just routine practice; it's directed toward a specific achievement. This foresight had tangible results, as school records confirmed SDN Ciluluk 1 had won first place in a district-level speech competition for three consecutive years, an outcome the headmaster directly attributed to the confidence and skills fostered by the literacy program. This proactive, data-driven, and goal-oriented planning exemplifies the *Plan* stage as Deming [22] intended: a deep analysis of the system, its goals, and its resources, designed to predict and prevent problems before they occur.

In stark contrast, SDN Citali demonstrated a *reactive and routine-based* planning model. Interviews with the fifth-grade teacher (2025) and analysis of their programmatic documents indicated that planning was largely an administrative formality, focused on *fulfilling reporting requirements* rather than *strategic design*. The literacy program was continued because it was done last year, not because a new needs analysis had reaffirmed its efficacy. The teacher noted, For now, the literacy habituation is not limited to just reading storybooks, but also religious, artistic, and language literacy in rotation so the children don't get bored... but because of limited learning time, sometimes it isn't documented or we don't add new programs (Interview, 2025). This quote is revealing: the plan was simply to continue existing activities, and the strategy was to change the name (literacy was varied) rather than the method or the resources.

This superficial planning phase resulted in a critical, unaddressed systemic failure: a severe shortage of reading materials. While the POLIKEL strategy was planned, the prerequisite *resource* (i.e., books for the One Week One Book program) was overlooked. The school library was described as *kurang variatif* (lacking variety), and the plan to mitigate this—instructing students to bring books from home—was an

abdication of systemic responsibility, placing the burden on individual families and guaranteeing inequitable access. This failure to identify and address a predictable bottleneck in the *Plan* phase rendered the subsequent *Do* phase (implementation) critically vulnerable. Where SDN Ciluluk 1's planning was an act of *design*, SDN Citali's was an act of *repetition*. This fundamental difference in the *Plan* phase was the single greatest predictor of the divergent outcomes observed.

### 3.2. Implementation (Do): Pedagogy, Participation, and the Lived Experience

The *Implementation* (Do) phase, where the plan is executed, revealed how the foundational strengths and weaknesses of the *Plan* phase translated into lived pedagogical reality. This phase focuses on the *process* of interaction—with the texts, the teacher, and the POLIKEL artifact itself—and the resulting student engagement.

The core pedagogical process, as observed in both schools, was constructivist in nature and remarkably effective when implemented with high fidelity. It transformed the passive act of reading into an active, multi-step process of meaning-making: (a) students read a book, (b) they analyzed it by writing down its intrinsic elements (e.g., characters, plot, setting), (c) they identified and articulated the moral message, (d) they transcribed this analysis onto a paper leaf, (e.g) they physically attached their leaf to the communal tree, and (f) the teacher then facilitated a discussion linking these moral messages to the formal curriculum. This process aligns perfectly with constructivist learning theories (Piaget, 1970; Vygotsky, 1978), where learning is an active process of organizing new information and a social process of negotiating meaning. The POLIKEL artifact itself functions as a scaffold and a Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), as students can observe and learn from the leaves posted by their peers. Furthermore, it transforms the *invisible cognitive process* of reading comprehension into a *visible, tangible artifact* (the leaf).

At SDN Ciluluk 1, the implementation was executed with high fidelity, consistency, and enthusiasm. Observation data showed student participation rates consistently above 80%. This success was a direct result of the *Plan* phase: the literacy program (dubbed SERASI - *Selasa Literasi*) was given a dedicated, protected time slot in the school schedule every Tuesday. Because it was an official, school-wide event, it was prioritized by both teachers and students. The teacher (Observation, 2025) actively *facilitated* the interaction, dedicating time for students to complete their leaves and present them to the class before adding them to the tree. This created a powerful, gamified feedback loop. The tree became a living document, a visual record of collective achievement. Students were observed (Observation, 2025) checking the tree, comparing their number of leaves with peers, and expressing a desire to make the tree 'rimbun' (lush). This created positive peer pressure and tapped directly into intrinsic motivators of mastery, autonomy, and social relatedness [8], [23]. The teacher's role was not to police reading, but to act as a facilitator and motivator, celebrating each new leaf. This high-fidelity implementation, supported by strong planning, created a literacy-rich environment where reading was socially valued, visible, and rewarding [11].

Conversely, the implementation at SDN Citali was characterized by inconsistency, low fidelity, and systemic friction. The failures of the *Plan* phase manifested immediately in the *Do* phase. The fifth-grade teacher (Interview, 2025) lamented, Literacy is implemented after the habituation period outside... many children are already tired. Of the 30 students present, sometimes only 15 bring a reading book from home. This single

quote reveals a cascade of failures. First, poor *planning* (scheduling) meant the program was implemented when students were already fatigued. Second, the *resource failure* (book shortage) meant that even motivated students could not participate. Observation data confirmed this: Children actually enjoy reading; they exchange books... but because not everyone brings a book, some students get bored waiting for their friends to finish... as a result, the time to interact with the class literacy tree is not optimal (Observation, 2025).

At SDN Citali, the POLIKEL artifact existed on the wall, but the *pedagogical interaction with it* was broken. The multi-step constructivist process (read, analyze, write leaf, post) could not be completed because the first step (reading) was systematically undermined. The teacher's role, therefore, shifted from facilitator to crisis manager, spending their time trying to find books for students or manage the boredom of non-participants rather than facilitating comprehension. This finding is critical: it demonstrates that the pedagogical tool (the tree) is powerless when the system supporting it is flawed. The Do phase at SDN Ciluluk 1 was a virtuous cycle of motivation and engagement, while at SDN Citali, it was a vicious cycle of resource scarcity and disengagement, perfectly illustrating the path-dependent nature of strategic implementation.

### 3.3. Evaluation (Check): The Mismatch Between Formal and Informal Assessment

The *Evaluation* (Check) phase of the PDCA cycle is the brain of the operation—the point at which the organization systematically asks, Is our plan working, and how do we know? This phase, like the *Plan* phase, revealed a profound difference in managerial maturity between the two schools, specifically in their ability to use data for improvement.

SDN Ciluluk 1 demonstrated a robust, multi-layered evaluation system that operated at both the *macro* (administrative) and *micro* (pedagogical) levels. At the macro level, the *Plan* phase had already established a formal *Check* mechanism. The headmaster (Interview, 2025) confirmed, At the end of each semester, we evaluate all activities. Both extracurriculars and student habituation... For example, the arts literacy habituation succeeded in winning a competition; that is recorded as a success. But there are also notes on shortcomings, such as the sports activities being less popular. This formal, bi-annual review, which included activity reports, photographic documentation, and coaching meetings, provided a systemic loop for evaluating the program against its stated goals (e.g., winning the FLS2N).

More importantly, the POLIKEL strategy *itself* functioned as a powerful, real-time *micro-level* evaluation tool for the classroom teacher. This was an emergent finding not explicitly stated by the participants but overwhelmingly evident from observation. The tree, with its collection of leaves, served as a dynamic, visual, formative assessment dashboard. With a single glance, the teacher could check critical literacy data: Quantity and Participation: Who is reading? Who is not? How many books has each student completed? [24]. This provided immediate data on student *motivation* and *engagement*. Quality and Comprehension: What is the *quality* of the analysis on the leaves? Are students able to identify intrinsic elements, or are they only writing superficial summaries? Is their writing improving over time? This provided longitudinal data on student *comprehension* and *writing skills*. The teacher at SDN Ciluluk 1 was observed

using this data formatively—praising students who were prolific and quietly checking in with students whose leaves were absent. The tree, therefore, was not just a motivational tool; it was a *data-gathering tool* that made student learning, which is often invisible, visible and trackable [9].

SDN Citali, in contrast, demonstrated an almost complete absence of a formal *Check* phase. Evaluation was conflated with *administrative reporting*. The teacher (Interview, 2025) admitted, We usually just make a report on the number of activities. If there are shortcomings, we talk about them briefly. There is no special forum to discuss evaluations in detail. This is a critical distinction: SDN Ciluluk 1 *evaluated performance*, while SDN Citali *reported compliance*. The consequence of this missing loop was stated plainly by the teacher: So, the problem often repeats from year to year (Interview, 2025).

Because the systemic failures (book shortage, poor scheduling) were never *formally evaluated* (Checked), they were never *systematically addressed* in the next *Plan* phase. The organization itself was incapable of learning from its mistakes. While the teacher at SDN Citali also had a POLIKEL artifact, the data it provided was not being systematically used. The teacher was too consumed by the failures of the *Do* phase (managing bored, bookless students) to have the capacity to step back and engage in the reflective, data-driven *Check* phase. This finding demonstrates that without a dedicated, formal Check mechanism, any pedagogical innovation, no matter its potential, will stagnate and fail to produce sustainable results. The repetition of the problem was not an accident; it was the inevitable outcome of a broken management cycle.

#### 3.4. Improvement (Act): Closing the Loop for Sustainable, Iterative Growth

The *Act* (Act or Adjust) phase is the final, and most critical, component of the PDCA cycle. It represents the organization's ability to *do something* with the data gathered in the *Check* phase to *improve* the next *Plan* phase. This is what transforms a static project into a dynamic, self-improving *process*. The findings showed that SDN Ciluluk 1 had successfully closed the loop, while SDN Citali's loop remained wide open.

At SDN Ciluluk 1, the *Act* phase was visible at both the macro and micro levels. At the *macro* (school leadership) level, the data from the formal, bi-annual *Check* phase was directly fed back into the next planning cycle. The headmaster provided a concrete example: From this evaluation, we follow up. For example, [we might] change the coaching method [for the less popular sports activity] (Interview, 2025). This demonstrates a mature, adaptive organization that uses data to make informed strategic changes, aligning with the core principles of TQM and effective educational management [21]. This iterative improvement cycle was the reason for their sustained, multi-year success in competitions.

More impressively, the *Act* phase was functioning at the *micro* (classroom) level, driven by the formative data from the POLIKEL. Both schools, including SDN Citali, reported that the *Act* phase, in the form of pedagogical differentiation, was occurring. This was the one area of similarity. Teachers from both schools described their follow-up strategies: (a) Remedial and Reinforcement for students who have difficulty reading long texts... (b) Variation of methods so that students who get bored quickly remain motivated... (c) Monitoring and evaluation of progress (Interview, 2025). This shows that the teachers themselves, as reflective practitioners, were *acting* on their



observations. They were providing remedial support, differentiating their methods, and exploring creative extensions. This confirms the POLIKEL's utility as a *formative assessment* tool that triggers pedagogical action [12].

However, the crucial difference lies in the *type* of problem being Acted upon. At SDN Ciluluk 1, the teacher was free to *Act* on *pedagogical* problems (e.g., student comprehension, motivation) because the *systemic* problems (resources, scheduling) had already been solved by the macro-level PDCA cycle. The system *supported* her. At SDN Citali, the teacher was also *Acting*, but her actions were limited to *pedagogical* workarounds for *systemic* failures. She was attempting to remedy students who were bored because they didn't have books—a problem no pedagogical strategy can fix. Her *Act* phase was a heroic but unsustainable effort to compensate for a broken system.

This final finding synthesizes the entire study: the *Act* phase at SDN Ciluluk 1 was a *system-wide* process of continuous improvement, which is sustainable and scalable. The *Act* phase at SDN Citali was an *individual* teacher's effort, which is unsustainable and leads to teacher burnout and program stagnation. The data from both schools clearly demonstrate that the POLIKEL strategy is a powerful pedagogical tool, but its true potential is only unlocked when it is embedded within a complete, high-fidelity Plan-Do-Check-Act management cycle driven by reflective, data-driven, and supportive school leadership [25].

#### 4 Discussion

The findings of this research offer significant theoretical and practical implications for the fields of literacy education and educational management. By analyzing the 'Class Literacy Tree' (POLIKEL) strategy through the Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) framework, this study moves beyond a simple evaluation of a pedagogical tool and instead provides a model for understanding the *systemic conditions* required for its sustainable success. The stark contrast between the two case study schools—one a model of strategic, iterative improvement, the other a case of well-intentioned stagnation—validates the central thesis: pedagogical innovation, without a supporting managerial framework, is insufficient.

Theoretically, this study provides a critical bridge between the practitioner-focused literature on literacy artifacts [9], [13] and the high-level principles of Total Quality Management (TQM) [22]. Much of the existing literature on interventions like the POLIKEL is enthusiastic but methodologically thin, focusing on the *what* (the tool) and its immediate effect (motivation) without analyzing the *how* (the long-term strategic process). This study addresses that gap, demonstrating that the tool's success is not inherent in its visual appeal but in its integration into a *process*. The POLIKEL, when used effectively, is not just a *motivational* artifact; it is a *data-gathering* artifact. It is the physical manifestation of the *Check* phase, transforming the invisible, cognitive work of reading into a visible, public, and *trackable* dataset. This dataset (the number, quality, and frequency of leaves) allows a reflective practitioner to *Check* engagement and comprehension in real-time, and then *Act* upon that data through pedagogical differentiation (e.g., remedial support, enrichment activities). SDN Ciluluk 1 institutionalized this process, while SDN Citali treated the tree as mere decoration.

This research also extends constructivist learning theory [26], [27] into the realm of classroom management. The observed pedagogical process—reading, analyzing, writing the leaf, and social-sharing—is a powerful constructivist cycle. The student is not a passive receiver of information but an active *constructor* of meaning. The leaf is a *scaffold* that externalizes their internal comprehension. The tree itself becomes a Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), where students can learn from and be motivated by the work of their peers. This study's findings confirm that this constructivist engine only runs if the *system* provides the fuel (books) and the time (a protected schedule). The failure at SDN Citali was not a failure of constructivism, but a failure of the *system* that must support it.

Practically, this study offers a scalable, low-cost model for public schools that face resource and technology deficits. The POLIKEL strategy's elegance lies in its simplicity and its analog nature. In an environment lacking digital infrastructure [4], the POLIKEL serves as an effective, non-technical platform for gamification, social motivation, and formative assessment. It aligns perfectly with the creative and student-centered ethos of *Kurikulum Merdeka* [5] and the goals of the Pancasila Student Profile [6] by fostering critical reasoning (analyzing the text), creativity (designing the leaf), and collaboration (*gotong-royong*, or mutual effort, in building the tree).

The most critical implication, however, is for school leadership [25], [28]. The headmaster at SDN Ciluluk 1 demonstrated *strategic leadership*: they facilitated a participatory *Plan*, protected the *Do* phase through resource and schedule allocation, institutionalized the *Check* phase with formal reviews, and led the *Act* phase by using data to improve the next plan. The leadership at SDN Citali, by contrast, appeared to be in a mode of *administrative management*, focusing on compliance and reporting rather than systemic improvement. This research provides clear evidence that for a grassroots innovation (like a teacher's POLIKEL) to become a sustainable *program*, it requires top-down strategic support [29], [30]. Schools seeking to replicate this program's success must replicate its *management cycle*, not just its *visual artifact*.

## 5 Conclusion

This qualitative case study investigated the implementation of the 'Class Literacy Tree' (POLIKEL) strategy within the 'One Week One Book' (SAMI SAKU) program at two elementary schools. The research confirms that the POLIKEL is a highly effective, low-cost, and sustainable pedagogical tool that successfully enhances student motivation, comprehension, and writing skills by transforming reading into a visible, tangible, and socially-celebrated act.

However, the study's central finding, derived from a Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) analysis, is that the *tool itself is not enough*. The vast difference in outcomes between the two schools was not due to the tool, but to the quality of the strategic management cycle supporting it. The successful school (SDN Ciluluk 1) embedded the strategy within a robust, iterative PDCA loop characterized by participatory planning, high-fidelity implementation, systematic data-driven evaluation, and continuous improvement. The struggling school (SDN Citali) suffered from a broken cycle: superficial planning led to critical resource failures during implementation, which, due to a non-existent evaluation phase, were never corrected, leading to program stagnation.

The novelty of this research lies in its synthesis of grassroots pedagogical innovation with formal management theory. It provides a practical model for school leaders, demonstrating that the sustainability of any educational program—especially in resource-constrained public schools—is contingent on a leader's ability to foster a *process* of continuous improvement, not just to approve a *project*. For educators seeking to enhance literacy, the 'Class Literacy Tree' is a powerful strategy, but only when it is rooted in the fertile ground of a complete, data-driven, and supportive management cycle.

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