JSE
Vol. 7, No. 1.1, (2026), pp. 1-15
ISSN: 2745-5351
https://doi.org/10.58905/jse.v7i1.1.801

Innovative Learning Management in Improving Elementary School Students' Literacy: A Case Study at SDN Rancaerang and SDN Pasirnagara

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Abstract. Indonesian students read more than before, yet their reading comprehension remains low, a paradox that calls for systematic learning management rather than isolated literacy activities. This study describes and analyzes innovative learning management for improving student literacy at SDN Rancaerang in Sukabumi Regency and SDN Pasirnagara in Cianjur Regency, covering planning, organizing, implementation, evaluation, obstacles, and solutions. A qualitative multi-site case study collected data from fourteen informants through in-depth interviews, observation, and document study. The data were analyzed with the interactive model of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing, and trustworthiness was established through source and technique triangulation, member checking, and an audit trail. Planning used the National Education Report as a diagnostic baseline for literacy-based modules. Organizing relied on Literacy Teams validated by principal decree and on grouping students by reading competency. Implementation combined Project-Based Learning and interactive reading corners, delivered through digital acceleration at Pasirnagara and local wisdom contextualization at Rancaerang. Evaluation used formative assessment and student portfolios. Constraints in infrastructure, human resources, and funding were addressed through material rotation, teacher capacity building, and the mobilization of external social capital. Both schools, however, set activity plans rather than comprehension indicators, which left the evaluation without a baseline. The study concludes that the managerial logic of literacy improvement is consistent across both sites while the delivery channel varies with geography and resources, and that the main remaining task is to define measurable comprehension targets at the planning stage.

Keywords: Elementary School, Innovative Learning, Learning Management, Reading Comprehension, Student Literacy.

1 Introduction

Education is a foundational pillar of national development, the quality of which is substantially determined by the basic literacy skills of elementary school students. Literacy is no longer defined merely as the mechanical ability to read and write; it has

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ISSN: 2745-5351
https://doi.org/10.58905/jse.v7i1.1.801

come to denote a composite capability encompassing critical thinking, problem-solving, and the analysis of information across contexts. Indonesia nevertheless faces a literacy paradox. On one hand, the national Reading Fondness Level (Tingkat Gemar Membaca) published by the National Library rose to 72.44 in 2024 [1], indicating considerable enthusiasm for reading material. On the other hand, the quality of reading comprehension has declined, as reflected in the 2022 Programme for International Student Assessment, in which Indonesia's reading score fell to 359 [2]. This indicates that while students read more frequently, they struggle to understand, synthesize, and critically evaluate what they read. Learning loss following the pandemic and the persistently low dimension of access to quality non-textbook material constitute structural barriers that require systematic intervention through learning management.

To address these challenges, innovative learning management based on the POAC framework of planning, organizing, actuating, and controlling, as developed by George R. Terry, offers a systematic approach that ensures educational goals are not only formulated but executed and monitored [3], [4]. Pedagogically, such management must be anchored in theories of cognitive development. Vygotsky's social constructivism emphasizes the role of social interaction, scaffolding, and the zone of proximal development in building student cognition [5], while Piaget's account of cognitive development holds that children in the concrete operational stage require tangible and relatable material in order to process abstract textual information [6]. Read together, these two frameworks explain why literacy improvement depends on both the social organization of reading and the concreteness of the material, and they provide the criteria against which the schools' instructional choices are assessed in this study.

The implementation of such management is also mandated by national regulation, including Law No. 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System [7], Ministry of Education and Culture Regulation No. 23 of 2015 on the Cultivation of Character, which launched the School Literacy Movement [8], and the technical standards in Permendikbudristek No. 32 of 2022 [9]. The shift toward the Independent Learning Curriculum further requires transformative education emphasizing 21st-century competencies, which demands that schools move from rote memorization toward meaningful literacy [10]–[12].

Despite these theoretical and regulatory frameworks, empirical conditions reveal obstacles in the application of innovative learning in elementary schools. There remains a dependency on conventional, teacher-centered methods. Many educators continue to rely on the lecture method and treat literacy instruction as the responsibility of Indonesian Language teachers rather than as a cross-curricular obligation. Infrastructural disparities compound the problem: access to enrichment books and non-textbook material in school libraries is limited, particularly in rural and socio-economically disadvantaged areas. The demands of digital administrative tasks also consume teachers' time, leaving limited capacity for developing literacy-oriented instructional strategies. Supervision by principals and regional supervisors frequently becomes an administrative formality, so that quality assurance at school level rarely addresses students' reading comprehension substantively [13].

Previous studies indicate the potential of systemic reform. Research on phenomenon-based learning in Finland demonstrates how literacy can be integrated

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https://doi.org/10.58905/jse.v7i1.1.801

into multidisciplinary, real-world topics, so that students conduct literacy-based inquiry in order to address complex problems rather than reading texts only within language lessons; the reported effect is on critical thinking and deep comprehension rather than on technical reading skill [14]. In the national context, Baguna et al. found that a literacy culture must be established early and requires the combined support of parents, educators, and the community [15]. The development of deep learning-based planning models has likewise proven important in creating structured environments in which complex cognitive skills can develop [16].

The novelty of this research lies in its departure from studies that focus on the effectiveness of a single teaching method or digital application. Instead, it examines the holistic integration of learning management as a response to the Indonesian paradox of high reading interest and low comprehension. The study explores how school management at the micro level can detect literacy barriers within instructional processes and address the gap in reading access, and how educational leaders navigate systemic constraints through organizational resilience [17], [18]. It is guided by four questions: how is innovative literacy learning planned, organized, implemented, and evaluated at the two sites; what obstacles arise; what solutions are adopted; and which elements of the management are consistent across sites as opposed to contingent on local conditions.

The selection of research locations was based on purposive sampling for a comparative case study. SDN Pasirnagara in Cianjur Regency and SDN Rancaerang in Tegalbuleud, Sukabumi Regency, were chosen because they possess relevant yet contrasting characteristics in geography, infrastructure, and strategic approach to the Independent Curriculum, which allows the contextual factors influencing innovative learning management to be identified. The study therefore aims to analyze the innovative learning management models adopted, the obstacles encountered, and the solutions implemented to improve students' literacy in these contrasting settings.

2 Methods

2.1 Research Design and Sites

This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive-analytical multi-site case study method. The approach was selected because it is suited to exploring the experiences, practices, and meanings that emerge within the complexity of innovative learning management, and the case study design allows phenomena to be examined intensively within their real-life contexts. A case study is an appropriate strategy for answering how and why questions about contemporary phenomena where the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident, and the multiple-case variant allows each school to be analyzed as a complete case before a cross-case synthesis is developed [19]. The design is summarized in Fig. 1.

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https://doi.org/10.58905/jse.v7i1.1.801

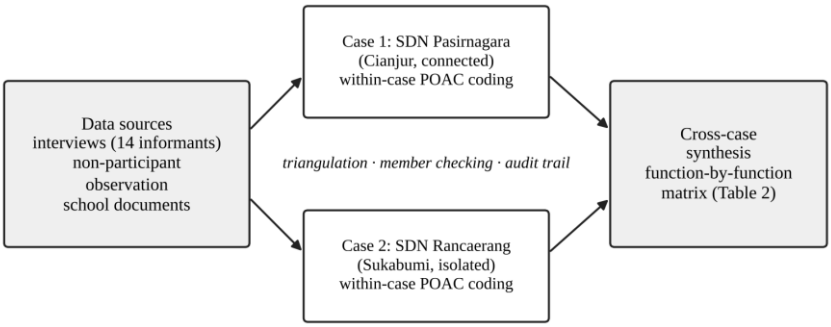


Fig. 1. Multi-site case study design: within-case POAC analysis of each school followed by a function-by-function cross-case synthesis.

The study focuses on SDN Pasirnagara in Cianjur Regency and SDN Rancaerang in Sukabumi Regency, two schools with distinctly different resource characteristics operating within the same provincial administrative environment. SDN Pasirnagara has comparatively better telecommunications access, which makes digitally mediated literacy activity feasible. SDN Rancaerang is more geographically isolated with intermittent internet access, which obliges it to rely on physical media and the local environment. Holding the curriculum policy constant while varying these conditions constitutes the comparative logic of the study.

2.2 Informants

The primary subjects of this research are teachers and students as the main actors in the innovative learning process. Principals served as key informants owing to their role as instructional leaders and managers, while students were positioned as the subjects who directly experience the effect of learning management on their literacy. Informants were selected using purposive sampling, with the requirement that they had direct involvement and sustained experience in the school's literacy programs. A total of fourteen informants participated (Table 1).

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Table 1. Distribution of research informants

Informant	SDN Pasirnagara	SDN Rancaerang	Data focus
Principal	1	1	Planning, Literacy Team decrees, external collaboration
Teachers	(n)	(n)	Teaching modules, grouping, implementation, assessment
Students	(n)	(n)	Experience of literacy activities (interviewed in pairs)
Total	(n)	(n)	14 informants

2.3 Data Collection

Data collection techniques were triangulated through in-depth interviews, non-participatory observation, and documentation study. Observation was used to examine the practical application of innovative learning management across the stages of planning, organizing, actuating, and controlling, and was distributed across different days so that both the daily morning literacy routine and the weekly literacy session could be captured. In-depth interviews explored the reasoning, experiences, and perceptions of principals, teachers, and students regarding the literacy initiatives, with student interviews conducted in pairs and in familiar settings in order to reduce the asymmetry between adult researcher and young respondent.

Documentation study involved analysis of school records including the Educational Unit Operational Curriculum (KOSP), the principal's work programs, teachers' teaching modules, Literacy Team decrees, reading logs, and student assessment portfolios. The three techniques were combined so that statements made in interviews could be tested against observed practice and against written records, which mattered particularly for the organizing and controlling functions, where accounts of how students were grouped and how progress was tracked could only be assessed by inspecting the corresponding documents.

2.4 Data Analysis and Trustworthiness

Data analysis was conducted continuously and interactively using the model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, encompassing data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing or verification [20]. Coding proceeded deductively from the four management functions, with sub-codes emerging inductively for themes such as local contextualization, peer tutoring, and resource constraint. Terry's POAC framework was employed as the primary analytical lens for mapping the managerial functions executed by school leadership [3], while the pedagogical theories of Piaget and Vygotsky were used to assess the instructional quality of what the management produced.

Trustworthiness was established through the four criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability [21]. Credibility was pursued through source triangulation among principals, teachers, and students and through technique

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https://doi.org/10.58905/jse.v7i1.1.801

triangulation across interview, observation, and documentation, supported by prolonged engagement at both sites and member checking of interview summaries with key informants. Transferability was addressed through thick description of each school's context, dependability through an audit trail of instruments, transcripts, and coding decisions, and confirmability through peer debriefing with colleagues in educational management not involved in the fieldwork.

2.5 Research Ethics

Research ethics were observed throughout. Permission was obtained from the relevant education offices and from both schools before fieldwork began; informants were informed of the purpose of the research and of their right to withdraw; consent was obtained from teachers, and parental consent was secured before any student was interviewed. The identities of individual teachers and students are not disclosed, and records containing personal student data were examined on school premises without being copied.

3 Results

3.1 Planning of Innovative Literacy Learning

The findings at SDN Pasirnagara and SDN Rancaerang indicate that planning has been executed systematically, reflecting adherence to Terry's management principles [3]. The planning phase at both institutions operates as a data-driven process: rather than relying on intuition, both schools used the National Education Report as the diagnostic instrument for identifying their specific literacy deficits. On this basis the schools established literacy improvement goals aligned with national regulation and with the aims of the Independent Learning Curriculum.

The planning phase also shows the schools adopting divergent, context-specific strategies. SDN Pasirnagara, with better access to telecommunications infrastructure, oriented its planning toward digital acceleration, and the principal and teachers jointly designed teaching modules integrating the Merdeka Mengajar Platform and digital literacy resources. SDN Rancaerang, more geographically isolated, anchored its planning in the contextualization of local wisdom, integrating Sundanese cultural narratives, local agriculture, and environmental phenomena into its literacy curriculum. Effective planning is therefore not monolithic; it requires deep learning-based planning models adaptive to the sociogeographical conditions and resources of the students [16], [22].

Document analysis nevertheless identified a limitation common to both sites. Although diagnostic data were used to set goals, the goals were recorded largely as activity plans rather than as comprehension targets with indicators. Neither school had specified what level of reading comprehension it expected to reach, which means that the planning function did not generate the baseline against which the controlling function could later demonstrate progress. This gap is consequential given that the

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https://doi.org/10.58905/jse.v7i1.1.801

problem the schools set out to address is precisely one of comprehension rather than of reading frequency.

3.2 Organizing Literacy Resources and Student Grouping

In the organizing function, both schools demonstrated systematic structuring through collaborative role distribution and time management. The principals recognized that literacy cannot remain a peripheral activity and must be institutionalized, and consequently established formal Literacy Teams validated by principal decree. These teams comprise a mix of senior and junior teachers, librarians, and selected student representatives, which distributes responsibility for the program beyond the language teachers.

In temporal organization, the schools implemented structured scheduling, including a mandatory fifteen minutes of morning literacy before regular classes and a dedicated weekly literacy session. Technically, the organization of students followed the principles of differentiated instruction and the Teaching at the Right Level approach: instead of grouping students strictly by age or grade during literacy hours, they were grouped according to actual reading competency, ranging from emergent readers to advanced comprehenders [23]. This arrangement rests on the premise that instruction and assessment must be matched to the learner's present level if they are to produce growth rather than merely to record difference [24].

The organization also maximized internal human resources by empowering high-achieving students through peer tutoring, which operationalizes Vygotsky's account of social scaffolding by placing a more capable peer within the learner's zone of proximal development [5]. Cross-teacher mentoring supported this structure, making literacy improvement a collective organizational responsibility and embodying collaborative leadership [25]. Teachers at both sites noted that competency-based grouping required initial explanation to parents, who had understood grade-level grouping as a marker of achievement.

3.3 Implementation of Innovative Literacy Learning

The implementation phase is where managerial planning translates into pedagogical action. The findings indicate a correspondence between the teachers' instructional choices and theories of cognitive development. Implementation at these schools demonstrates that innovation is not synonymous with high-technology intervention; it lies rather in the precision with which reading material is processed to make it relevant to students' lives (Fig. 2).

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https://doi.org/10.58905/jse.v7i1.1.801

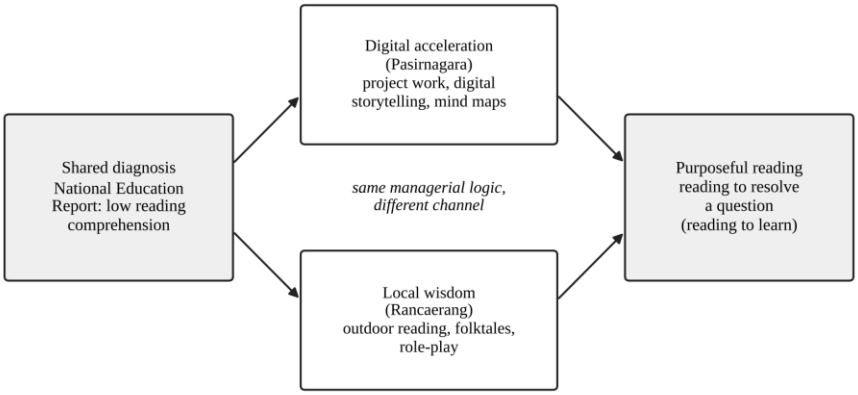


Fig. 2. Two delivery channels for the same managerial logic, both converging on purposeful reading.

At SDN Pasirnagara, implementation drew on digital resources. Teachers employed Project-Based Learning integrated with interactive quizzes and digital storytelling using tablets and projectors. Students were not reading passive texts but researching topics, synthesizing information, and presenting findings through digital mind maps. This approach developed digital literacy alongside reading skill, and teachers reported that the requirement to present findings obliged students to read for a purpose rather than to complete a page count.

SDN Rancaerang implemented a hybrid-resilient strategy to address its infrastructure limitations, relying on physical media, interactive reading corners, and outdoor learning. Teachers brought reading material into contact with the local environment: texts concerning ecosystems were taught in the school garden or nearby rice paddies, and teachers curated folktales and local historical texts that students read, analyzed for moral content, and re-enacted through role-play. This approach supported the processes of assimilation and accommodation described by Piaget, since students could connect abstract text to concrete experience [6].

A common element across both schools was the transformation of the physical classroom environment. Interactive reading corners were designed to be inviting rather than merely available: they held student-made material, comfortable seating, and reading challenge boards. The success of implementation at both sites rests on the teachers' capacity to create meaningful learning experiences [26]. Whether through digital platforms or local wisdom, teachers shifted the orientation from learning to read toward reading to learn, which is the shift the comprehension problem requires.

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3.4 Evaluation, Constraints, and Institutional Responses

Evaluation at SDN Pasirnagara and SDN Rancaerang is treated not as an end-of-semester administrative task but as a continuous formative instrument. The schools conducted periodic evaluation through formative assessment, including reading comprehension exercises and oral retellings, and through review of student work portfolios. This feedback allowed the Literacy Teams to track individual progress and to adjust the competency-based groupings as students advanced, which is the mechanism that keeps differentiated grouping from hardening into fixed streams.

The evaluation process also mapped several constraints. Both schools identified infrastructural barriers as the principal obstacle to equalizing technology-based literacy: a limited number of digital devices, unstable connectivity, particularly at Rancaerang, and a suboptimal ratio of enrichment books to students. A human resource constraint was also recognized, since some senior teachers were reluctant to adopt new pedagogical models, and funding constraints restricted the procurement of new reading material.

The solutions adopted indicate that management responded institutionally rather than leaving teachers to improvise [17], [27]. To address the shortage of fresh reading material, the schools implemented a rotation system between classes and initiated book-swap arrangements with neighboring schools. To address budget limitations, the principals mobilized external social capital, engaging alumni, the School Committee, and community leaders in book donation drives. To address human resource constraints, the schools used the national teaching platform for independent teacher training, coupled with peer mentoring in which more confident teachers assisted colleagues struggling with digital integration [13].

3.5 Cross-Site Comparison of Literacy Management

Compared across sites, the two schools converge on the substance of all four management functions, on the diagnostic use of the Education Report, and on the gap in comprehension indicators, while differing in the channel through which each function is delivered, as summarized in Table 2.

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Table 2. Cross-site comparison of innovative literacy management

Management Function	SDN Pasirnagara (Cianjur)	SDN Rancaerang (Sukabumi)
Planning	Oriented toward digital acceleration; modules built around the national teaching platform	Oriented toward local wisdom; modules built around Sundanese narrative, agriculture, and environment
Organizing	Literacy Team by decree; competency-based grouping supported by digital records	Literacy Team by decree; competency-based grouping recorded manually
Implementation	Project-Based Learning with digital storytelling and mind maps	Outdoor and environment-based reading, folktale analysis, and role-play
Evaluation	Formative assessment and portfolios reviewed with platform support	Formative assessment and portfolios reviewed in Literacy Team meetings
Shared gap	Comprehension indicators not defined at planning stage	Comprehension indicators not defined at planning stage

The pattern in Table 2 indicates that geography and infrastructure determine the delivery channel rather than the managerial logic. At SDN Pasirnagara, connectivity made digital acceleration the efficient route to purposeful reading. At SDN Rancaerang, isolation made the local environment the available resource, and the result was not a weaker form of literacy instruction but a different and in some respects more concrete one, better matched to the developmental stage of the learners. That both schools nevertheless lack comprehension indicators suggests this gap arises from the prevailing conception of literacy programs as activity rather than from local conditions, a conception reinforced by guidance that frames the School Literacy Movement first as a habituation activity [9].

4 Discussion

The findings from SDN Pasirnagara and SDN Rancaerang provide a basis for discussing the intersection of educational management, pedagogical theory, and the literacy problem in Indonesia. Analyzed through Terry's POAC framework [3], the improvement of student literacy appears closely linked to the systematic and adaptive execution of the four managerial functions. The schools did not execute isolated literacy activities; they managed a literacy ecosystem in which planning, grouping, instruction, and assessment were connected.

In planning and organizing, the study confirms the value of data-driven, context-specific management. The use of the Education Report as a diagnostic baseline aligns with contemporary quality assurance principles, and the divergence in strategy between digital acceleration and local wisdom contextualization illustrates the flexibility of the Independent Learning Curriculum. Transformative education must emphasize 21st-

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ISSN: 2745-5351
https://doi.org/10.58905/jse.v7i1.1.801

century competencies, but their delivery requires contextualization to students' realities [11]. By organizing Literacy Teams and applying competency-based grouping, both schools replaced one-size-fits-all structures with arrangements that prioritize actual student competency over administrative uniformity [23], [24].

The implementation phase offers the most substantive theoretical discussion. The Indonesian literacy paradox stems largely from a failure to move students beyond decoding into analysis. Vygotsky's social constructivism holds that learning is fundamentally social, and this was evident in the schools' use of peer tutoring, collaborative project work, and interactive reading corners, where students discussed and constructed meaning together rather than reading in isolation [5]. Simultaneously, Piaget's account of concrete operational thought explains why SDN Rancaerang's use of the local environment was effective: anchoring text in lived experience bridged the gap between the written word and the child's reality [6]. The implication is that high-technology intervention is not the only route to innovation, and that pedagogical creativity grounded in local context can be equally effective in particular socio-geographical settings.

The comparison with international practice is instructive here. Phenomenon-based learning in Finland achieves comprehension gains by embedding reading in multidisciplinary inquiry rather than confining it to language instruction [14]. Both Indonesian schools in this study arrived at a functionally similar arrangement by different means: project work at Pasirnagara and environment-based inquiry at Rancaerang each required students to read in order to resolve a question. This convergence suggests that the mechanism underlying comprehension gains is the purposefulness of reading rather than the sophistication of the medium, which is consistent with the finding that literacy culture requires early establishment and combined institutional support [15].

The controlling phase, together with the navigation of constraints, brings the discussion to organizational resilience [17], [18]. The identification of infrastructural deficits could have produced paralysis; instead, the schools rotated reading material, produced their own media, and mobilized alumni and community networks, which reflects a proactive managerial stance. The significance of this is that the success of literacy innovation in rural areas cannot be measured by the sophistication of facilities but by the leadership's capacity to convert constraint into pedagogical opportunity. The kindness-based and collaborative leadership exercised by the principals created conditions in which teachers felt able to innovate despite limitations [25], [28].

At the same time, the absence of comprehension indicators constitutes the clearest weakness in the cycle and deserves emphasis precisely because the schools' substantive achievement is real. Both schools can describe what they did and can point to increased student engagement, but neither can demonstrate movement in comprehension across years, which is the outcome the national diagnostic data identified as deficient. Developing simple comprehension rubrics tied to the competency groupings would close this gap and would supply the planning function with the baseline it currently lacks [24]. Fig. 3 summarizes the cycle and this weak link.

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https://doi.org/10.58905/jse.v7i1.1.801

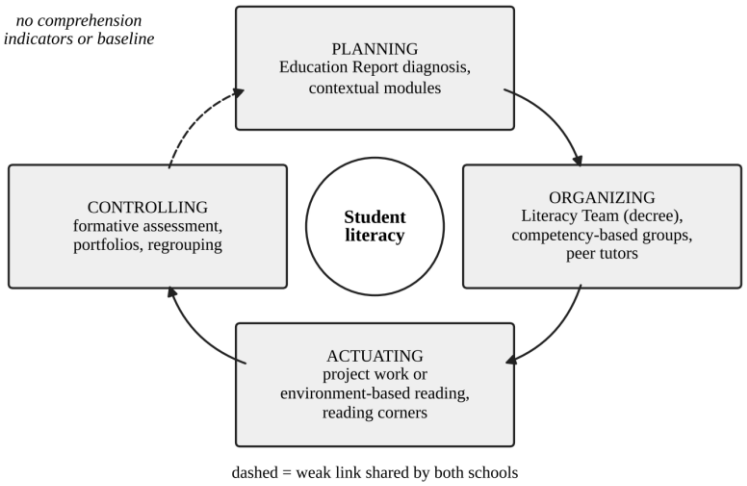


Fig. 3. The POAC cycle of literacy management at both schools; the dashed link marks the missing comprehension indicators that prevent evaluation from informing the next planning cycle.

4.1 Limitations

Several limitations of this study should be acknowledged: it involved two elementary schools, so the findings are analytically rather than statistically generalizable; literacy improvement was assessed through observation, portfolios, and informant accounts rather than through standardized measurement; and the absence of longitudinal data means conclusions about durability remain inferential.

5 Conclusion

This research concludes that innovative learning management at SDN Pasirnagara and SDN Rancaerang has been effectively implemented through an adaptive POAC cycle. Planning was conducted strategically on the basis of Education Report data and tailored to the sociogeographical characteristics of each school. The organization of resources created a collaborative ecosystem involving peer tutors, Literacy Teams, and external partnerships that addressed funding and facility gaps. During implementation, pedagogical innovation was realized through two context-appropriate approaches, digital acceleration and local wisdom contextualization, both of which produced

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ISSN: 2745-5351
https://doi.org/10.58905/jse.v7i1.1.801

meaningful learning experiences. Evaluation functioned responsively, serving as a basis for mitigating infrastructural constraint rather than as an administrative record.

The principal obstacles identified were the limited availability of digital devices, suboptimal book-to-student ratios, and geographical barriers to full digital standardization. These were navigated through leadership within limitations, involving the rotation of material, teacher-produced media, and the mobilization of external social capital. The comparative dimension indicates that the managerial logic was identical at both sites while the delivery channel varied with geography and resources, so that schools adopting this model should replicate its structure and select channels suited to their own conditions.

The study further concludes that the weakest point of the cycle is measurement. Neither school had defined comprehension indicators at the planning stage, which limits its capacity to demonstrate progress on the very deficit the national data identified. Addressing this would strengthen both the first and the last function of the cycle simultaneously.

On this basis the following recommendations are proposed. For school supervisors: shift focus from administrative compliance toward mentoring and recognizing local wisdom-based innovation, and facilitate cross-learning between digitally advanced and contextually strong schools. For principals: use the Education Report consistently as a planning instrument, define comprehension indicators with baselines, and strengthen external collaboration to build durable literacy ecosystems. For teachers: contextualize reading material to students' experience and use available platforms to develop varied literacy modules. For future researchers: conduct longitudinal studies quantifying the long-term impact of these management models on standardized literacy attainment.

DECLARATIONS

Author Contributions

Conceptualization, I.S. and L.S.; methodology, I.S. and L.S.; investigation and data curation, I.S.; formal analysis, I.S.; writing—original draft preparation, I.S.; writing—review and editing, L.S.; supervision, L.S. Both authors have read and agreed to the published version of the article.

Funding

This research received no external funding.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this article.

Research Ethics and Informed Consent

Permission was obtained from the relevant education offices and from both schools before fieldwork, teachers gave informed consent, and parental consent was secured before any student was interviewed. The identities of individual teachers and students are not disclosed, and records containing personal student data were examined on school premises without being copied.

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Data Availability Statement

Anonymized interview transcripts, field notes, and coding records are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request. Student records and portfolios are not available because they contain personal data of minors.

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