

Projecting the Implementation of *Sastra Masuk Kurikulum* through Literary-Based Learning Experiences

Memproyeksikan Implementasi *Sastra Masuk Kurikulum* melalui Pengalaman Pembelajaran Berbasis Sastra

diterima: 14-11-2025, disetujui: 24-12-2025, diterbitkan: 30 Desember 2025

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.24832/jpnk.v10i2.6546>

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Abstract: *This study aims to explore the experiences of literary-based learning in schools to projecting the implementation of Sastra Masuk Kurikulum (SMK) programme. This research used a qualitative-narrative method, with data collected through semi-structured interviews with experienced teachers from secondary schools in South Sulawesi and the former Acting Head of the Curriculum Centre at Kemendikbudristek in 2024. The findings highlight the importance of sustaining discussions on the design of SMK programme to ensure its full implementation in schools, as it has the potential to enhance literacy, shape character, and foster 21st-century skills. Therefore, before the SMK programme is fully implemented, the government must take into account four critical aspects, namely, teachers' competence, the availability and quality of school infrastructure, the provision of a well-developed guidebook, and the involvement of relevant stakeholders. These considerations are essential projections and recommendations for refining the design of SMK programme before it is officially implemented. Its sustainability must be earnestly pursued, particularly as the programme aligns with the spirit of the most recent deep learning approach and possesses significant transformative potential to enduring 21st-century skills.*

Keywords: *21st-century skills, literary-based learning, Sastra Masuk Kurikulum, teachers' competence*

Abstrak: *Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi pengalaman pembelajaran berbasis sastra di sekolah untuk memproyeksikan implementasi program Sastra Masuk Kurikulum (SMK). Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif-naratif, dengan pengumpulan data melalui wawancara semi-terstruktur melalui guru berpengalaman dari sekolah menengah di Sulawesi Selatan dan mantan Pejabat Pelaksana Tugas Kepala Pusat Kurikulum di Kementerian Pendidikan, Kebudayaan, Riset, dan Teknologi (Kemendikbudristek) pada tahun 2024. Temuan penelitian menyoroti pentingnya mempertahankan diskusi mengenai desain program SMK*

untuk memastikan implementasinya secara penuh di sekolah-sekolah karena program ini berpotensi meningkatkan literasi, membentuk karakter, dan mengembangkan keterampilan abad ke-21. Oleh karena itu, sebelum Program SMK diimplementasikan secara penuh, pemerintah harus mempertimbangkan empat aspek kritis, yaitu kompetensi guru, ketersediaan dan kualitas infrastruktur sekolah, penyediaan buku panduan yang mewakili karya sastra yang sesuai, serta keterlibatan pemangku kepentingan yang relevan. Pertimbangan ini merupakan proyeksi dan rekomendasi penting untuk menyempurnakan desain Program SMK sebelum diimplementasikan secara resmi. Keberlanjutannya harus tetap dipertahankan karena program ini selaras dengan semangat pembelajaran mendalam dan memiliki potensi transformatif yang signifikan untuk membentuk keterampilan abad 21.

Kata kunci: *keterampilan abad-21, pembelajaran berbasis sastra, Sastra Masuk Kurikulum, kompetensi guru*

INTRODUCTION

The use of literary works as a learning medium in Indonesian schools has long been practiced, even before the 21st century. However, literature has not been fully recognized as a vital component in formal education, as evidenced by the absence of literature as a subject and its consideration as only a part of Indonesian language subject. This phenomenon shows that literature is still positioned and developed outside the school environment. The idea of 'schooling literature' then emerged, developed, and continues to be a major concern in various circles, including academics, practitioners, and writers.

This idea is also reflected in the school literacy movement to integrate literature into the schooling process. However, from a formal legal perspective, starting from the Competency-Based Curriculum (Kurikulum Berbasis Kompetensi [KBK]) in 2002, the Education Unit Level Curriculum (Kurikulum Tingkat Satuan Pendidikan [KTSP]) in 2006, to the 2013 Curriculum (Kurikulum-13 [K-13]), language and literature teaching has been largely driven by the goal of improving language proficiency and fostering multicultural understanding (in the context of English language and literature), rather than knowledge and literary values themselves.

Meanwhile, in the current context, since the implementation of the Kurikulum Merdeka and the design of deep learning framework promoted by the Ministry of Education of Primary and Secondary Education, language learning has been increasingly encouraged to improve students' literacy skills, critical and creative thinking, and understanding of the complexity of human life (Badan Standar, Kurikulum, dan Asesmen Pendidikan, 2025). Literature offers strong potential to facilitate such learning. However, as far as researchers have explored, in both academic discussions related to the curriculum, literature-based learning is still positioned as part of language subject. In other words, literature-based learning is still considered part of language subject or only as a linguistic instrument.

In addition to these issues, we also encounter another reality in the classroom: literary-based learning has so far failed to spark students' interest due to its monotonous nature and frequent focus on the structural aspects of literary works (Hidayat, 2015). Moreover, it is often delivered without any contextualisation in relation to the students lived experiences, resulting in literature appreciation lessons at school remaining limited to literal comprehension, without engaging students' inferential, evaluative, or appreciative competences (Mustakim, 2010). Yet, intrinsic and extrinsic elements should not be seen as dichotomous, for the intrinsic is essentially a form of the extrinsic (Suryajaya, 2024). These extrinsic elements enable literary narratives to be contextualised by tracing the narrative facts embedded within the work itself (Klinkowitz, 2001). These realities indicate that literary-based learning has yet to be approached in a truly holistic manner.

These issues highlight that those teachers play a central role in the effectiveness of literary-based learning. They often fall short in teaching literature effectively, frequently concentrating solely on textual structure, lacking sufficient knowledge of literary works, and failing to apply innovative approaches to contextualise texts within students' everyday lives (Fransori & Parwis, 2022; Kamal, Rohmana, & Wibowo, 2023; Manase & Abdala, 2025; Sumitro & Puniman, 2024). According to Moody (1971) the ideal of the literary-based learning should foster language skills, broaden cultural understanding, cultivate creativity and emotional sensitivity, and support character formation. In other words, it is not merely about enhancing language proficiency, but also about shaping cultured, civic-minded individuals, and nurturing students' creativity (Susanto, 2018). Furthermore, students should be invited into the philosophical dimension of literature as a basis for engaging in dialogue within the classroom. This enables them to reflect upon and synthesise their reading experiences with their lived realities in the factual world (Johansson & Löfgren, 2022).

In response to the challenges, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Kemendikbudristek) launched *Sastra Masuk Kurikulum (SMK)* programme or the inclusion of literature in the curriculum as a part of the 15th episode of *Merdeka Belajar: Kurikulum Merdeka* on 20 May 2024 via YouTube, coinciding with National Book Day. This programme was designed to widely introduce literary works to students while also serving as a recommendation for teachers. Its aims include improving literacy, fostering empathy, sharpening creativity, and developing students' critical thinking (Badan Standar, Kurikulum, dan Asesmen Pendidikan, 2024).

Several of these achievement indicators align with 21st-century skills, which emphasise creativity, critical thinking, problem solving, learning to learn, metacognition, and collaboration (Crystal, Segev, & Hayak, 2024; Griffin & Care, 2015; Wang & Sang, 2024). The compatibility between literature learning and 21st-century skills is further supported by Dass (2014) research, which asserts that literary-based learning can offer students direct experiences in mastering these

holistic skills. Therefore, the *SMK* programme is expected to provide both teachers and students with enriching literary experiences in the classroom while promoting the development of students' 21st-century skills.

Nevertheless, the *SMK* programme has faced certain challenges, particularly due to feedback suggesting that the *Guidebook for the Use of Literary Works* has raised concerns regarding the adequacy of its rigor or appropriateness (Laksana, 2024; Yussup, 2024). Despite this, the enthusiasm for revitalising literature in the classroom remains strong until this day. Empirical studies on literature learning or teaching in schools has been increasingly conducted (Amalia & Octaviani, 2021; Fransori & Parwis, 2022; Jaufillaili, Noviani, & Erawati, 2023; Kamal et al., 2023; Sumitro & Puniman, 2024; Susanto, 2018; Widyahening & Wardhani, 2016; Yarsama, 2022). A common issue these studies can be summarized as the lack of teachers' confidence and competence in implementing literature teaching, which in turn gives rise to a range of challenges in literary-based learning.

On the other hand, research that examines the *SMK* programme remains scarce (Rahman et al., 2024), which discuss the dual role of teachers as distributors of literature. However, their study is limited to a literature review and does not engage with the material conditions in the field. Therefore, to bridge this gap and explore unrealised possibilities, this study aims to explore the experiences of literary-based learning in schools to project the implementation of the *SMK* Programme. To achieve this aim, three research questions are formulated: (1) How do teachers perceive their experiences of literary-based learning in schools? (2) What challenges do teachers face in literary-based learning in schools? (3) How might the implementation of the *Sastra Masuk Kurikulum* programme be projected based on an exploration of teachers' perceptions and challenges in literary-based learning?

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative narrative method, which positions research data as narratives shared by informants who are motivated to recount knowledge, empirical experiences, or information that they consider valid and meaningful to share with others. This study utilizes the dynamic interaction between the issues raised, theoretical perspectives, life experiences, conversations, and reflections to construct a comprehensive narrative understanding. Therefore, this study allows for a deeper understanding of the informants' perceptions and the challenges they face in the context of literature-based learning in schools. This understanding can serve as a projection for the implementation of the *SMK* program in the future, both as a contribution to the discourse on curriculum development and as a practical model for literature-based learning.

The primary data sources consist of several experienced four language teachers from four secondary schools (SMP and SMA/SMK) in South Sulawesi—each of them comes from rural and urban areas. To supplement the existing data, as secondary data, we also interviewed the former Acting Head of the Center for

Curriculum and Learning at the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Kemendikbudristek) in 2024, who served as one of the key stakeholders for designing the program. Teachers were selected based on a minimum of three years of experience teaching Indonesian language, with the assumption that this duration indicates sufficient understanding of literature, specifically literary content, literary works, and the teaching of literature. Based on these inclusive criteria, this study uses purposive sampling technique.

Data collection was carried out from March 2024 to June 2025. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews, taking into account: *flexibility* (having guidelines, but being able to change the order of questions or ask new questions based on the respondent's responses), *open-ended questions* (to encourage respondents to provide detailed and nuanced responses), *focus on the topic* (while flexible, still focused on the research objectives to gain in-depth insights), and *exploration* (with the opportunity to delve deeper into interesting or unexpected topics that arose during the interview). Most of the interviews were conducted in person and in stages, while the rest used communication media platforms (WhatsApp, e-mail, and face to face).

To gain a comprehensive understanding of the research questions, we also used various theories, concepts, and relevant learning studies as secondary data. The collected data were analysed using the Miles and Huberman model, which was applied by grouping the data from in-depth interviews to obtain conclusions. This model provides a systematic approach to organizing and interpreting rich narrative data through the stages of data reduction, presentation, and conclusion drawing (Miles et al., 2014). In the data reduction stage, we conducted a close reading of the collected data and highlighted information related to perceptions and future challenges in implementing literature learning within the *SMK* programme. The data displayed phase involved presenting the highlighted findings in a clear and coherent manner. Finally, the conclusion drawing and verification stage served to validate the findings and the overall discussion.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Literary-based learning in schools is expected to produce students who become insightful interpreters of their own lives (Chambers & Gregory, 2006). In this context, students need to be prepared with creative thinking, critical thinking, collaborative thinking, and metacognitive abilities, which are essential 21st-century skills for addressing future challenges (Dass, 2014). To achieve optimal learning outcomes and develop these skills, literary-based learning must be supported by several components, including adequate facilities, strong student motivation, and teachers with sound pedagogical and literary competence.

However, in many learning contexts, teachers often take on an overly dominant role. This situation is also frequently observed in literature classes, where teachers tend to take the lead in delivering content and providing interpretations of literary

texts. This teaching practice is far from ideal and does not support the broader aims of literature or humanities learning.

It is not intended to glorify the role of excessively active teachers, nor to justify students remaining passive recipients, nor to deny the efforts of teachers who have innovatively and creatively designed effective and engaging learning models. Rather, this condition may represent a common reality in the classroom. However, we may all agree on a shared consensus that literary-based learning in schools—which emphasises language use, reading, analysis, and discussion of themes or topics within literary works - offers an ideal model for achieving high-quality and inclusive education. This is especially true for effective learning approaches that ensure students do not feel psychologically afraid of making mistakes. Students are given ample opportunities to actualise themselves and are provided with space to engage without the fear of mistakes during the learning process (Nugraha, 2021).

To create such an environment, teachers must position themselves as subjects equal to their students and temporarily relinquish their authority by embracing the role of one who does not possess superior knowledge (Rancière, 1991; Rustan, 2022). The role of a teacher is merely to serve as fuel that intensifies the flame already burning within the learner. Beyond that, the student must venture into the dense forest of literature to discover new meanings and experiences. Only to that extent, literature would be able to offer meaningful and transformative experiences to the student.

Nevertheless, it can only be effectively realised if teachers themselves are capable readers of literature. This is in line with, Goodwyn's (2012) argument that teachers who teach literature—or indeed, teachers in general—must demonstrate enthusiasm for the subjects they teach, a genuine love of reading, a view of teaching as a creative endeavour rather than an office-bound routine, an appreciation of teaching as an enjoyable process, and a sense of professional stability and wellbeing. These form the ontological criteria of a teacher who can foster a rich and meaningful literature learning environment in the classroom. At the very least, a teacher must have a deep affection for books. If all these aspects must be idealised then it is certain that the learning process will struggle to reach the ideal of nurturing students as fully realised human beings.

Teachers' Perceptions of Literary-based Learning

Teachers' perceptions occupy a central position in literature-based learning because these perceptions shape how teachers understand, interpret, and respond to students' learning needs. The way teachers view literature-based instruction influences the strategies they employ, the types of learning experiences they design, and the extent to which they can facilitate students' active engagement. When teachers' perceptions are positive and progressive, the learning process is more

likely to unfold meaningfully, adaptively, and in ways that promote students' critical thinking.

In effective instructional practice, students are provided the freedom to use, apply, or adopt learning methods that align with their individual preferences and needs to achieve the intended learning outcomes. For this reason, literature-based learning in schools should adopt a student-centered learning model. Within this framework, teachers function primarily as facilitators, while students are given conditions and environments—physical space, mental space, and motivation—that enable them to actively seek and construct meaning through literary experiences. This approach aligns with the principles of deep learning, which emphasize the importance of creating attentive, meaningful, and enjoyable learning environments (Badan Standar, Kurikulum, dan Asesmen Pendidikan, 2025). Such an environment encourages students to develop essential skills and strengthen their critical thinking abilities.

Teachers' perceptions of literature-based learning therefore, play a pivotal role—not only in relation to the students they teach, but also in relation to the learning object itself. In general, perception refers to the process through which teachers, together with students, interpret information about objects, events, or relationships within the school context. In the specific context of literature-based learning, this includes how teachers observe, comprehend, organize, and interpret information and experiences in order to create meaningful learning conditions.

Before the government's introduction of the SMK programme in 2024, the use of literary works as a teaching media was by no means a new practice in formal education. Many language teachers have already implemented such approaches in various creative and diverse ways throughout their teaching processes. Although literary-based learning in schools has often been driven by curricular demands, several teachers have empirically acknowledged that literary texts consistently offer enriching experiences when used as reading and discussion materials.

"In my experience of using literary texts as teaching materials with my students, it has certainly been very rewarding. There are numerous lessons to be drawn from the moral messages embedded in literary works. My students also gain a deeper understanding of real-life issues such as the environment, social dynamics, etc. What they did not know and were not previously aware of, they came to realise through their reading experiences," (*Interview with AA*).

In certain situations, teachers are required to be proactive—or at the very least—to introduce, guide, and provide students with a foundational understanding of specific bodies of knowledge. Adapting to students' needs and ensuring the material feels relevant to their lives is key. Within the framework of the deep learning, this is considered imperative, particularly in ensuring that the content taught remains connected to students' real-life experiences (Badan Standar,

Kurikulum, dan Asesmen Pendidikan, 2025). This principle also aligns with the Kurikulum Merdeka. Presenting literary texts in a manner that is accessible and engaging allows for the creation of mindful, meaningful, and joyful learning experiences.

As AA's argued, the use of literary texts as teaching material is not only an enriching experience for teachers, but also for students. The teacher observed a shift in students' understanding, even if it was not always consciously recognised. Students became more attuned to various real-world issues such as environmental and social matters, that were conveyed through literary works. This phenomenon is in line with Mead's (2008) perspective that aesthetic objects, such as literature, can function as instruments that activate reflective engagement in the classroom.

However, to maximise the benefits of literary-based learning in schools, it is crucial that teachers understand how students perceive literary texts. In theory, the more positive a student's perception of an object, the more effectively they can engage with and understand it. Accordingly, teachers can improve the quality of instruction by attending to students' preferences and needs, particularly by selecting suitable methods and media for delivering the content. To achieve a state in which students are genuinely interested in and enjoy a literary works, it is important to carefully curate and contextualise the chosen text, from its presentation to its thematic content.

"Literary-based learning is closely tied to the literary content itself. If the reading material is interesting to students, they become enthusiastic. However, if the content falls outside their interests, it becomes difficult to motivate them to read. Therefore, it is hard to 'force' students to read something a teacher deems excellent if they do not find it engaging," (*Interview with A*).

How to foster students' interest in reading literary works that may not initially appeal to them? Developing students' interest to read literary work that a teacher finds valuable, but which does not immediately resonate with students, remains a complex challenge in literary-based learning. Naturally, compelling students to read texts they find unappealing is not recommended, though this practice is still frequently observed in classrooms. It is possible that such a mismatch originates from an initial misjudgement in gauging students' literary preferences.

As an interview with respondent A noted, literary-based learning is intrinsically connected to the content and form of the selected texts, yet not all literary works are equally appealing to students. This is largely due to individual sensibility, which can be presumed to differ significantly across learners. For instance, in a classroom of 30 students, some may enjoy short stories but not poetry or novels, while others might favour novels but dislike dramatic performances. Even the format or packaging of a text—regardless of its literary content—can influence a student's enthusiasm and learning motivation. To avoid these situations where students feel 'forced' to engage with literary works they cannot relate to, it is crucial that teachers

introduce texts that align with students' preferences. This may be achieved through engaging storytelling techniques that spark interest and emotional connection. Introducing literature in this manner allows students to approach the work more openly and with greater curiosity.

In this process, the teacher must first complete their own development as a progressive and critical reader (Goodwyn, 2012). A progressive reader, in Goodwyn's terms, is one who possesses a deep affection for reading. Such affection naturally leads to broad exposure to diverse literary works, enabling the teacher to speak from experience. A teacher with this level of reading competence can act as an external motivational force who inspires interpretative, critical, and creative reading students' habits (Calafato, 2024; Watson et al., 2022).

Moreover, a teacher with rich literary experience will be better equipped to identify students' reading preferences. This might begin with choosing topics or themes that resonate with students' biological, psychological, and cognitive development. At the junior high school level, for example, learners often gravitate towards stories involving adolescence, friendship, family, or self-discovery. Other engaging options include fables, fairy tales, or superhero narratives. Consequently, a teacher's competence in reading students' psychological realities, recognising their preferences and inclinations, can transform the act of reading literature from an obligation into a source of personal engagement and joy.

The Challenges of Literary-based Learning

As previously discussed, literary-based learning offers numerous advantages. However, these advantages can only be realised when led by teachers who are both competent readers and capable of presenting literature as an engaging, enjoyable, and meaningful pedagogical tool for students. That said, it must also be acknowledged—based on empirical observations—that literary-based learning in schools faces significant challenges beyond those already mentioned. Data gathered by the researcher indicate a common concern among the four interviewed teachers: the persistently low interest in reading and the severe lack of adequate learning resources. This is reflected in LA's statement below:

“The greatest challenge in teaching literature lies in the low levels of reading interest. When teachers attempt to address this issue, we are often hindered by limitations in resources, for instance, the lack of appealing books or materials for students. Therefore, the core issue is not necessarily about helping students understand the content of literary works, but more fundamentally, about how to cultivate students' interest in literature amidst current limitations and disruptions.”

In other words, teaching literature in schools where students exhibit a low interest in literary works presents a significant challenge. This challenge is closely linked to access to reading materials, including students' comprehension of language

(Hasana, 2020) and the availability of reading resources—whether online or offline (Utami & Nur, 2021; Yuliani, 2024). In addition to these two challenges, the learning environment and teachers' motivation also play a crucial role (Astriani, Ginanjar, & Aisyiyah, 2022; Lustyantje & Aprilia, 2020). Among these challenges, infrastructure that provides a wide array of relevant and engaging reading materials is no less important.

These situations have been acknowledged by several teachers based on their experiences in schools, particularly when assessing the condition of school libraries. Although the world has transformed significantly due to the emergence of social media, the internet, and Artificial Intelligence (AI), for many of the teachers interviewed, the overwhelming influence and distractions caused by these three phenomena have contributed to students' disorientation and declining interest in reading, let alone in engaging with literature.

These concerns are echoed in data from the OECD (2019), which states that students seem to read more in online formats, such as chats, online news or websites containing practical information (e.g. schedules, events, tips, recipes). The data further show that the percentage of students engaging with such formats has increased by 5% since 2009: chat usage rose from 80% to 85%, online news from 70% to 75%, and websites offering practical content from 75% to 80% (OECD, 2019). These trends undoubtedly pose a new challenge: the need to redirect reading sources into digital formats and foster the corresponding habitus.

The internalization of such a habitus opens new avenues for literary-based learning. While many communities, especially indigenous ones, may remain resistant to technological change, it is undeniable that the digital revolution has transformed the ways in which we access and engage with knowledge, including literary works. E-books, online libraries, and digital platforms should make literature more accessible than ever before. These digital resources, including interactive tools, have the potential to cater to tech-savvy students, thereby simultaneously enhancing both the relevance of literature and students' interest in it.

E-books and digital libraries have eliminated barriers related to availability, cost, and location, making literary texts more readily accessible. With just a few clicks or taps, readers can access vast collections of literary works around the world, encompassing a variety of genres, languages, and historical periods. This level of accessibility is particularly beneficial for students living in remote areas or attending schools with limited library resources, where printed books may not be easily obtainable. Furthermore, digital formats accommodate various learning styles and accessibility needs—such as audio narration, dynamic text features, and interactive glossaries. However, such benefits can only be realised if technological infrastructure is managed inclusively and made available to all segments of society.

Projecting the Implementation of *Sastra Masuk Kurikulum* Programme

Referring back to the previous discussion, there are three critical challenges that must be considered for literary-based learning in the classroom: (1) teachers' competence; (2) the infrastructure for providing accessible reading materials; and (3) student motivation. These three findings may serve as a navigational guide for projecting the implementation of the SMK programme.

Ontologically, the SMK programme is designed not merely to enhance the literary-based learning within Bahasa Indonesia and English classes, but also to integrate literary-based learning across all subjects and grade levels. The reading materials are to be curated collaboratively by the government, literary experts, authors, academics, teachers, and practitioners alongside model teaching modules that can be adapted to specific classroom needs. In relation to this, the former Acting Head of the Centre of Curriculum and Learning at Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Kemendikbudristek) in 2024, ZA, stated:

"In essence, this programme serves as a form of reinforcement within the existing curriculum. Its aim is not to add a new subject, but to strengthen all subjects. Literature can be embedded within social sciences, natural sciences, and even religious subjects. From this perspective, literature accommodates diverse viewpoints on events, thereby encouraging students to think holistically and critically about real-world issues, so they can derive meaning from what they learn. It is from this principle that I have assured my colleagues: this does not add a new subject to the learning load but rather helps today's students better understand the content they are engaging with."

This statement clearly illustrates the positioning of the programme within schools: that literature—both as a cultural product and as a form of knowledge—is vital in fostering diversity of perspectives and promoting a more holistic understanding of learning content. Literature, therefore, does not stand in opposition to other subjects currently taught in schools; rather, it acts as an additional instrument to enrich students' comprehension. In other words, literature is designed to enter the soul of every subject.

This approach is entirely feasible. For instance, in economics lessons, teachers can encourage students to respond to specific economic topics or concepts through poetry (Davis, 2019; Ziliak, 2009). Poetry can also offer students a deeper emotional or introspective experience within the study of economics. A similar possibility may be observed in the use of literature within biology, as demonstrated by Dwyer (2011), who employed Shakespeare's *King Lear* as an object of evocritical analysis to explore patterns of behavioural change and their relationship with the biological traits that govern the characters' actions. Likewise, literary ecocriticism may be employed to examine environmental change. Besides these subjects, literature can also be meaningfully integrated into geography (Hobai, 2015), mathematics (Koehler, 1982), and history subjects (Colăcel, 2016).

The integration of literature into many subjects cultivates a habit of interdisciplinary thinking, enabling students to approach problem-solving in a holistic thinking. This way of thinking is particularly pertinent to the development of essential 21st-century skills. The relevance of this approach is further articulated by ZA:

“Literary works cannot be understood in a purely literal way. Students must be encouraged to develop critical thinking skills. Literature cannot be approached from a single perspective, which is why we must promote collaborative thinking. In doing so, several 21st-century skills can be developed through literature, such as critical thinking, collaborative thinking, creative thinking, and communication.”

This perspective aligns closely with the ontological nature of literature. Since its inception, literature has served as a form of mimesis, reflecting all facets of human life. Its interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary essence has always been embedded in its core. As such, literature should never be read or treated in a purely literal manner, and its interpretation naturally calls for interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary approaches. To place literature within a rigid structural framework would be a grave misstep, dulling its relevance in developing 21st-century skills. Indeed, the role of literature in fostering these competencies has not only been acknowledged but also proven effective. Literature holds considerable promise in developing key skills such as problem-solving, holistic thinking, collaborative thinking, creativity, and critical thinking (Crystal et al., 2024). Accordingly, the *SMK* programme offers great potential for enhancing students’ 21st-century skills. It may also serve as a strategic response to the literacy crisis in Indonesia, where, according to the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) report in 2018, Indonesian students scored an average of 371 in reading literacy, ranking 72nd out of 77 participating countries (OECD, 2019).

The programme has been welcomed with optimism by many teachers and school communities. They regard it as a promising solution to Indonesia’s literacy challenges. As expressed by interview with N: “*Sastra Masuk Kurikulum* Programme aims to address the literacy issues faced by Indonesia.” This objective aligns with the overarching goal of Kurikulum Merdeka at the time, namely, to foster students’ reading literacy (Badan Standar, Krikulum, dan Asesmen Pendidikan, 2024).

This initiative represents not only a source of hope, but also a tangible expression of the government’s commitment, in collaboration with societal stakeholders, to improving students’ literacy levels. Several teachers view the *SMK* programme as a means of internalising the nation’s educational objectives—particularly in shaping a generation that embodies the Dimension of Graduate Profile and nurturing students’ sense of nationalism, as articulated by BA:

“Actually, *Sastra Masuk Kurikulum* Programme is not an entirely new development. Teachers of Bahasa Indonesia have long integrated literature into their teaching practices. However, what distinguishes this initiative is its

formal inclusion within the national curriculum system, ensuring that such integration is not limited to particular teachers' efforts but is embraced across the educational spectrum. This programme [...] aims to instil moral, cultural, and aesthetic values embedded in literary works into students, in alignment with the national educational objective of cultivating a generation of learners who embody the Pancasila profile. Through this approach, students are encouraged to develop interpretative, critical, and creative skills when engaging with literary texts. Furthermore, this programme is designed to foster patriotism and broaden students' cultural awareness."

From this vision of implementation, we may derive a crucial point regarding the relationship between the existing experience of literary-based learning in schools and the emergence of the SMK programme. The application of literary-based learning as a cross-disciplinary approach within this programme is expected to have a significant impact on students' personal development. It not only serves as a platform to internalise the Dimension of Graduate Profile, but also nurtures a sense of patriotism and deepens cultural understanding. This is grounded in the belief that literature serves as a powerful medium for transmitting values and conveying specific messages in line with the nation's educational aspirations (Dass, 2014).

To realise this objective, Kemendikbudristek, through the National Book Centre, has compiled a guideline recommending 177 literary texts (43 for elementary school, 29 for junior high school, and 105 for senior high school) curated in collaboration with authors and teachers across Indonesia. These recommendations were made with careful consideration of content, psychological impact, philosophical depth, and social relevance. However, this initiative has also led to some discussions, particularly the selection of texts, the use of AI, the involvement of stakeholders, and the issues related to disclaimers.

"The guidelines are currently under review due to feedback regarding the selection of literary works. All relevant stakeholders should have been involved during the compilation process. The use of AI should be used wisely to assist in the creation of guidelines. Ideally, the guidelines should be concise and provide general guidance for teachers on how to integrate literature into various subjects as well as offer guidance on how to handle sensitive or challenging language in texts. Without a disclaimer, there is no guarantee that children will remain protected from sensitive or potentially challenging language that often found in media.," (*Interview with ZA*).

According to Laksana (2024) the guideline tend to feature numerous disclaimers, and the selection of text is limited to Indonesian works only. In his view, translated works should also be considered an integral part of Indonesian literature. Not only do translated works enrich the canon of Indonesian literary discourse, but they also cultivate a more expansive, global literary knowledge

within the school context. Therefore, the use of unnecessary disclaimers and the exclusion of translated literature warrant more careful and inclusive consideration.

Nevertheless, from the researcher's perspective, the selected texts are intended merely as a guide for teachers—not as an obligatory list, a mandate, nor an attempt to canonise Indonesian literature. There is no requirement to use all the recommended books. Teachers and students are encouraged to explore other literary works that may be more appropriate or relevant to subjects, including texts from other parts of the world. In this respect, the list serves only as a navigational aid to introduce works that may not have been included in the official recommendations. Ultimately, it falls to the teacher and their competence in literary instruction to determine what best suits their subject area. The assumption here is that no matter how well-crafted the guideline may be, it will be ineffective if teachers are unable to utilise it or identify relevant texts for their students.

"[Before we are implementing] the programme [...] we must be prioritised is enhancing teachers' capacity to teach literary texts. This issue has not been sufficiently addressed thus far," (*Interview with A*).

A's statement is validated by an acknowledgement from ZA:

"We have not yet had the opportunity to assess teachers' capacities, as we were only just planning to conduct a study on their perspectives regarding literary works. Our initial step was to prepare the guideline, followed by plans to organise webinars and discussions about the *Sastra Masuk Kurikulum* programme."

In relation to this competence, most teachers who teach literary works in schools are already considered adaptive to changes in the times. This claim is supported by statistical data presented by Amelia, Deli, & Setiawan (2024), which shows that most Indonesian teachers are millennials (51.95%) and followed by Generation X (29.89%). Regarding digital literacy, 75% of teachers reported using computers, and 89.18% are internet users. These figures support the assumption that most teachers are already digitally and contextually adaptive.

"I envision the future of literary-based learning as more adaptive and attuned to the developments of the times. I imagine literature being taught through more interactive and creative approaches, such as the use of digital technology to introduce literary works via multimedia platforms, films, or modern adaptations," (*Interview with AN*).

Change is inevitable. Through such transformations, the principal aim of literature—to internalise 21st-century skills—may well be realised. Integrating literature with technology, visual arts, and digital media can make it more engaging and accessible to students. Besides fostering these skills, such an approach can also help students better understand diverse identities and experiences—ranging

from multicultural perspectives to knowledge of marginalised writers. This promotion of diversity in literature aims to cultivate empathy, broaden worldviews, and advance social justice by introducing students to traditions and narratives that may be new to them.

While the significance of classical literary works should not be neglected, there must be greater room for exploring contemporary works that are assumed to be closer and more relevant to students' lives. When this condition is achieved, literature will be viewed not merely as a supporting instrument for various school subjects, but as an integral component of character and cultural education. It has the potential to develop students' emotional intelligence and social awareness (Muassomah et al., 2020; Widyahening & Wardhani, 2016), while continuing to internalise 21st-century skills. In this sense, the *SMK* programme is widely hoped—and envisioned—to serve as a strengthening force for all subjects taught by all teachers.

Nevertheless, before the programme is fully implemented, the government must consider teachers' competence, the availability and quality of school infrastructure, the provision of a well-developed guidebook that represents appropriate and relevant literary works without excessive disclaimers, and the involvement of relevant stakeholders. These aspects support the programme's sustainability and alignment with the *Pembelajaran Mendalam* (deep learning) approach, ensuring its transformative potential to enduring 21st-century skills.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

The literary-based learning in schools offers numerous benefits, including the development of 21st-century skills, the internalisation of the Dimension of Graduate Profile, the internalization of national pride, and the strengthening of cultural awareness. Literature also provides interdisciplinary knowledge that can be integrated across various subjects such as economics, biology, mathematics, and history. The *SMK* programme, recognized as a significant innovation within the national education system, has been positively received for its potential to enhance literacy and enrich learning in all subjects.

On the other hand, teachers perceive the *SMK* Programme as a collaborative effort among the government, educators, schools, and the broader community to enhance students' literacy skills, address persistent literacy challenges, and instill moral, cultural, and aesthetic values aligned with the goals of national education—particularly the formation of young citizens embodying the graduate profile. As an approach, this initiative encourages students not only to study the Indonesian language from a structural perspective in language classes but also to develop interpretive, critical, and creative abilities through the analysis of literary texts across subjects and grade levels.

However, teachers with experience teaching literature in schools encounter significant challenges, especially when attempting to integrate literature instruction

into the Literature in Curriculum Program. Despite differing views regarding the program, teachers are nearly unanimous about the obstacles they face: low student reading interest and limited facilities. Additional difficulties, which are increasingly difficult to avoid, include the pervasive influence and distractions of social media, the internet, and artificial intelligence, all of which contribute to students' declining motivation to read, spend extended time with books, and engage deeply with literature.

Nevertheless, many teachers remain optimistic, imagining various important possibilities for the future of literature education. Various stakeholders—especially teachers—recognize the importance of involving multiple components in realizing high-quality and inclusive literature learning in schools. Collaborating with authors, literary scholars, educators, education experts, lecturers, practitioners, and even psychologists is important for curating recommended literary reading lists and improving teachers' competence in teaching literary texts.

Another opportunity envisioned is that literature instruction must be adaptive to contemporary developments, promoting interdisciplinary collaboration—for example, combining literature with technology, visual arts, or digital media to make it more engaging and accessible for students. Many stakeholders also hope that literature will eventually become a required or dedicated subject at all levels of schooling, rather than merely one component within the Indonesian language curriculum or a supplementary element across various subjects.

However, the programme has also received constructive feedback, primarily regarding the literary guidebook. This guidebook reflects some areas that need improvement, such as reducing the use of overly cautious language and disclaimers, adjustment AI utilization. In addition, greater attention should be given to the context and the classroom conditions based on research. It would be valuable for the programme to be considered in order to determine its readiness for full implementation.

Recommendations

Before the SMK Programme is fully implemented, four major aspects must be considered by policymakers. First, teacher competence, including reading habits, pedagogical skills, and digital literacy. Second, learning infrastructure, such as access to digital and print reading materials in libraries as well as digital technologies. Third, comprehensive guidelines that accommodate representative text selections, ranging from classical and modern works to film-based and translated texts relevant to students' lives, without relying on restrictive approaches. Fourth, the involvement of relevant multiple stakeholders, including authors, teachers, public libraries, literary scholars, curriculum experts, psychologists, and philosophers.

In addition to these broader considerations, more targeted technical recommendations are necessary to ensure effective implementation of the SMK Programme.

(a) For Teachers

There is a need to strengthen teacher literacy through continuous reading programs, literary pedagogy workshops, and training on the use of digital technologies for exploring literary texts. Teachers also require practical guidance on instructional strategies that promote deep interpretation, critical discussion, and interdisciplinary integration of literature across subject areas.

(b) For Schools

Schools must provide and enhance access to learning resources, both digital and print, through the development of modern libraries, partnerships with publishers, and the provision of digital platforms for reading and discussion. Schools should also foster a supportive literacy environment by organizing book clubs, reading corners, and thematic literacy activities.

(c) For Researchers

Further research is needed to examine the implementation of the SMK Program in diverse contexts, such as urban, rural, and frontier (3-T) regions to produce adaptive and contextually grounded implementation models. Studies on teacher perceptions, the effectiveness of instructional methods, and students' responses to various types of literary texts should be expanded.

(d) For the Government

The government must develop more structured curricular guidelines, including standards for literary text selection, learning outcome indicators, and exemplary instructional practices. Moreover, teacher training programs should be designed systematically and sustainably, combining in-person workshops, online training modules, and collaboration with professional literacy and education organizations.

These recommendations can serve as policy projections to support refinement of the SMK Programme before its formal implementation. Ensuring the program's continuity is crucial, particularly because it aligns with the principles of the deep learning approach and holds significant transformative potential for strengthening students' literacy and 21st-century skills.

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