

## Efforts to Improve Students' Literacy Levels through the Establishment of a School Editorial Team at SMK IT Napala, Bogor, West Jawa

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### Abstract

Received: 23 Jun 2025

Revised: 02 Jul 2025

Accepted: 16 Jul 2025

This study aims to explain efforts to improve students' literacy levels through the formation of a school editorial team. A descriptive qualitative method was employed, using analysis and interviews as primary techniques. The object of this research was the literacy level of students at SMK IT Napala, Bogor, West Java. The findings show that the establishment of the editorial team encouraged students to become actively involved in literacy activities, particularly in the production of short story or novel anthologies. Through these activities, students were motivated to read in order to gain sufficient knowledge to write their own stories or novels. This study concludes that students' literacy levels can be improved through productive activities that stimulate students to create. Their productivity in writing drives them to read and comprehend various sources of information.

**Keywords:** literacy level, student literacy, school editorial team

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## INTRODUCTION

Reading interest among Indonesians remains significantly low. According to UNESCO, Indonesia's reading interest index is a mere 0.001 percent, meaning that only one out of every 1,000 Indonesians can be categorized as an active reader (Indrasari, 2024). This finding reflects a concerning state in the national literacy ecosystem. A lack of reading interest directly impacts various aspects of life, such as the quality of human resources, critical thinking ability, and a culture of informed discussion.

This low interest in reading cannot be separated from societal habits that tend to favor instant and visual information over deep, textual reading. The rise of social media and smart devices has reinforced a culture of rapid consumption while ironically displacing reading as a reflective and critical process. This situation necessitates systematic intervention, particularly within educational institutions that play a strategic role in fostering reading habits from an early age.

Efforts to enhance literacy cannot rely solely on providing books or reading facilities. Programs must also foster a love for reading through meaningful and contextual activities. Schools, as formal educational institutions, need to design innovative strategies that position students not just as consumers of text, but also as producers of information, capable of writing, editing, and publishing their own work.

Historically, although Indonesia has been independent for more than seven decades, its literacy rate remains low (Permatasari, 2015). This indicates a gap between political independence and intellectual liberation, which should ideally be reinforced by a strong literacy culture. A nation's progress is not determined by the length of its independence alone, but also by the quality of education and the literacy of its people. Literacy is the fundamental foundation for building a society that is independent, critical, and participatory.

Low literacy levels also hinder the development of a democratic and just society. When citizens are not accustomed to reading and comprehending information effectively, they become more susceptible to hoaxes, misinformation, and uninformed decision-making. Therefore, literacy is not merely the technical ability to read and write, but also the capacity to think analytically, evaluate information, and participate actively in social life.

Various literacy programs have been implemented by the government and NGOs, but many fail to address the root of the problem—namely, the lack of active and sustained student engagement in literacy practices. Hence, a new approach is needed: one that is not merely top-down, but also empowers students through challenging, creative, and meaningful activities that have real-world impact.

According to the 2024 Literacy Development Index (IPLM) published by the Indonesian Central Bureau of Statistics, Indonesia's score was 73.5200 (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2024), placing it in the medium category on the national literacy scale. While this score shows improvement over previous years, it still falls short of the ideal conditions necessary for national progress.

The IPLM is a key indicator used to measure access, skills, and motivation to read and process information. It considers the availability of reading materials, literacy-support facilities, and reading habits. As such, improving the index requires collaboration from various sectors, particularly educational institutions, which serve as the frontline in cultivating a literacy culture.

Given these facts, schools play a crucial role in improving the national literacy index. One effective approach is to implement literacy activities based on student-created works. Such activities not only encourage students to consult more sources, but also hone their critical thinking, writing, and communication skills. One example is the formation of a school editorial team.

School-based journalism holds significant potential in promoting student literacy. Journalism not only teaches students how to write news and articles, but also cultivates critical thinking, accountability in information sharing, and adherence to accuracy and ethical standards (Sinaga, 2017). School journalism activities allow students to explore ideas, construct arguments, and broaden their perspectives on current issues around them.

Furthermore, journalism practices in schools can serve as contextual learning tools that bridge theory and practice. Students learn not only how to write, but also how to edit, interview, design layouts, and publish print or online school media. This process is highly effective in improving students' information, media, and language literacy.

Integrating journalism into school literacy programs is both productive and participatory. In vocational schools such as SMK, journalism-based project learning offers dual benefits: improving literacy while equipping students with practical skills relevant to the world of work. Therefore, forming a journalism team is a targeted and highly useful learning strategy.

School editorial or journalism teams play a vital role in sustaining school publications such as magazines, bulletins, or online portals. According to Triyono (2016), well-managed student journalism teams can maintain consistent publication cycles. Beyond being a creative outlet, school media also reflect the vitality of literacy and reading culture among students and teachers.

Editorial team activities include content planning, reporting, writing, editing, and distribution. Each of these phases promotes active student involvement in authentic literacy practices. In the process, students learn to articulate ideas logically, choose precise diction, and adhere to structural and editorial standards.

With the presence of an editorial team, schools can also build a positive image as institutions that actively promote literacy and information transparency. Student

journalistic works serve as important documentation of school activities, achievements, and emerging student opinions. Therefore, schools must support the existence and sustainability of well-structured and professional editorial teams.

More specifically, editorial teams play a deeper role in maintaining the quality and credibility of school publications. Akbar (2025) emphasizes that editorial teams are responsible not only for technical editing, but also for content integrity, originality, and publication ethics. In the educational context, editorial teams can instill academic values such as intellectual honesty, information accuracy, and openness to feedback.

Editorial teams serve as filters that screen the quality of manuscripts before publication. The editorial process involves content evaluation, structural improvement, language editing, and visual design. This process demands high levels of collaboration, precision, and audience awareness. As such, students involved in editorial teams undergo a deep and intensive learning process.

Previous studies have shown efforts to enhance student literacy through contextual learning activities. For instance, Nofiana & Julianto (2018) explored the use of local excellence-based science instruction to improve content, context, and scientific processes. Although the results showed some improvement, the study did not specifically address literacy in terms of student-authored publications.

Meanwhile, Budhianto (2018) found that intensive and engaging language instruction strategies can improve students' literacy motivation and skills. However, the study focused on classroom strategies and did not explore the potential of forming student units for sustained, real-world literacy practice outside class time.

On the other hand, Meilawati & Syarifudin (2024) examined the role of editors in scientific journal publishing in universities. While highlighting the importance of editorial work, their study was limited to academic publishing and did not examine school-based editorial teams as a means of strengthening student literacy.

These studies suggest that while various literacy initiatives exist, few have examined the establishment and optimization of school editorial teams as a strategy to improve literacy, particularly at the vocational high school level. Yet, such teams offer students opportunities to practice writing and reading skills, collaborate, and contribute to internal school publications.

This research fills that gap by analyzing how the formation of a school editorial team can serve as an implementable strategy to foster a structured, creative, and participatory literacy culture in vocational school environments. It offers a novel perspective by emphasizing literacy not only as information consumption but also as editorially curated and publicly disseminated information production.

The study was therefore conducted to examine how the formation of a school editorial team contributes to increasing student literacy levels. Focusing on SMK IT Napala in Bogor, West Java, it aims to document best practices and analyze the effectiveness of this strategy in improving students' reading motivation and writing skills. The central research question addressed is: How can the formation of a school editorial team improve students' literacy levels at SMK IT Napala, Bogor, West Java?

## **METHODS**

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach aimed at gaining an in-depth understanding of the processes, strategies, and impacts of forming a school editorial team on improving students' literacy levels. This approach was selected because it aligns with the research objective, which focuses on interpreting social phenomena in context,

particularly those related to literacy practices and the dynamics of building an editorial structure within a school setting.

The research was conducted during the even semester of the 2024/2025 academic year, specifically between February and April 2025. The study site was SMK IT Napala, an integrated Islamic vocational high school located in Bogor Regency, West Java. This school was chosen because it had initiated the formation of a school editorial team as part of its literacy program reinforcement, supported by internal policies on school-wide literacy movements.

The research subjects included students and teachers directly involved in the formation and management of the school editorial team. Specifically, the participants consisted of:

- Five active student members of the editorial team,
- Two literacy advisor teachers, and
- One school principal as the policy-maker.

The object of this study was students' literacy level, which was observed through their engagement in editorial activities such as editing, writing, and publishing literary works, including short stories, articles, and school bulletins. Data were collected using three primary techniques:

1. In-depth interviews were conducted with student participants, literacy advisors, and the principal to gather information on the processes, challenges, and impacts of the editorial team formation on students' reading habits and literacy engagement. Semi-structured interviews were used to allow flexibility in exploring emerging topics in depth.
2. Participant observation was carried out to closely monitor editorial team activities during the planning, production, and distribution phases of literary content. The researcher observed students' interactions and participation in authentic literacy practices.
3. Document analysis involved collecting and reviewing the editorial team's outputs, such as articles, short stories, school magazines, and meeting notes. These documents served as concrete evidence of students' literacy practices.

Data analysis followed the model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), which comprises three main stages:

- Data reduction, involving the sorting, simplification, and categorization of raw data into themes relevant to the research focus.
- Data display, using narrative descriptions, direct quotations, and thematic matrices to highlight relationships and patterns.
- Conclusion drawing and verification, where findings were interpreted by linking them with existing theories and previous research, followed by data validation through triangulation.

To ensure data validity and trustworthiness, the researcher employed data triangulation by comparing results obtained from different techniques (interviews, observations, documentation) and sources (students, teachers, principal). Additionally, member checking was conducted with key informants to confirm that the researcher's interpretations accurately reflected field realities.

Through this methodological approach, the study aimed to produce a comprehensive and credible account of how the formation of a school editorial team can serve as an effective, participatory, and sustainable strategy for improving students' literacy levels in vocational education settings.

## RESULTS & DISCUSSION

### **Results**

The findings of this study indicate that the formation of a school editorial team at SMK IT Napala had a significant impact on enhancing students' literacy engagement. The team functioned not only as a platform for developing journalistic skills, but also as a strategic effort to reinforce literacy culture within the school environment. Student participation in the editorial team made them more involved in reading, writing, and critical thinking activities in a continuous and meaningful manner.

#### **1. Increasing Reading Interest through the Demand for Writing**

Field observations showed that students involved in the editorial team exhibited a marked increase in reading activity, primarily as preparation for writing school bulletin content, articles, and creative works. Students actively sought references from books, online articles, and other information sources to enrich their writing materials. One student interview revealed:

“I’ve started reading books more often because if I want to write a short story or an opinion piece, I need to understand the topic—I can’t just write anything.” *Rika Virna, SMK IT Napala Student, 2025*

This writing demand served as a direct stimulus for developing reading habits that were previously underdeveloped.

#### **2. Structured and Internalized Editorial Functions**

During implementation, the school editorial team carried out key functions as outlined by Indriani & Sihombing (2024) and Bintang Semesta Media (2025), including:

- **Manuscript Evaluation and Selection:**  
Students were trained to assess submissions from their peers for inclusion in the school bulletin. They learned to evaluate ideas, thematic relevance, and basic writing structure, fostering critical thinking and textual analysis skills.
- **Manuscript Editing:**  
Together with the faculty advisors, team members edited texts for spelling, grammar, and sentence structure, directly enhancing their functional literacy skills.
- **Publishing Process Management:**  
Students participated in production scheduling, task distribution, layout design, and printing processes, exposing them to literacy-based project management.
- **Ethics and Standards Compliance:**  
Students were guided to understand the importance of originality, avoid plagiarism, and respect copyright. Ethical publishing principles were incorporated into every editorial meeting.
- **Communication and Collaboration:**  
Editorial activities encouraged students to engage in discussions and provide constructive feedback to each other. They practiced articulating ideas and receiving critique productively.
- **Team Capacity Building:**  
Students received training in basic journalism, creative writing, and digital layout design. They also managed the school’s social media as a dissemination platform for their work.

#### **3. Tangible Outcomes and Ownership of Literacy**

The most visible outcome of this initiative was the publication of student-authored novels. Students developed a sense of ownership and pride in their creations. Some began

writing their own short novels independently, inspired by the editorial experience. According to the principal:

“The students became more enthusiastic because they felt their writing would be read by many not just by teachers as assignments.”

*Kholifatul Husna, Principal of SMK IT Napala, 2025.*



Figure 1. Student-published novel at SMK IT Napala

#### 4. Literacy as a Constructed Culture

Student involvement in the editorial team gave rise to a new social environment in which reading and writing were no longer viewed as obligatory tasks, but rather as a need and a way of life. Literacy practices became more meaningful as they were tied to real-life goals and had an impact on the broader school community.

#### Discussion

The results of this study affirm that the formation of a school editorial team significantly enhances students' literacy activities, both in terms of quantity and quality. Students did not merely engage in writing and editing; they were also motivated to read more extensively as part of the broader creative process. This suggests that literacy can develop naturally when it is connected to meaningful and collaborative experiences.

These findings are consistent with those of Budhianto (2018), who emphasized that engaging and varied language instruction strategies can promote greater student involvement in literacy activities. In the context of the editorial team, students were not passive recipients of instruction but active participants managing and developing school-based literacy content. Activities such as editing, writing, and discussing texts became enjoyable and contextual learning processes. This supports the argument that active engagement in literacy practices enhances student motivation and literacy skills.

Moreover, this study reinforces the conclusions drawn by Nofiana & Julianto (2018), who demonstrated that contextual and locally relevant instructional approaches improve students' comprehension and literacy skills. In this research, the editorial team became a concrete, local context that allowed students to develop content based on their own experiences, perspectives, and realities. Students were not merely consumers of information but also producers of knowledgean application of contextual literacy that fosters students' cognitive engagement.

From an institutional and governance standpoint, this study echoes Meilawati & Syarifudin (2024), who argued that publishing is a complex, collaborative endeavor involving roles such as writers, editors, and reviewers. At SMK IT Napala, the editorial team reflected a miniature organizational learning structure that exposed students to values

such as ethics, discipline, and responsibility in publication thus reinforcing the educational function of literacy as part of character and professional development.

Importantly, the finding that writing demands stimulate reading confirms the effectiveness of a production-based literacy strategy over a consumption-only model. Writing activities create a need for reading not the other way around. Hence, literacy programs that only focus on increasing the number of books read without linking reading to applicable contexts are likely to be less effective than approaches rooted in student-generated work.

In summary, this study contributes to the development of literacy models that emphasize student participation and production. Such approaches have the potential to not only improve basic literacy, but also cultivate 21st-century skills such as communication, collaboration, and critical thinking. The novelty of this research lies in its emphasis on the school editorial team not merely as a publication tool, but as a holistic and sustainable literacy learning ecosystem.

## CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the formation of a school editorial team at SMK IT Napala, Bogor, West Java, significantly contributes to improving students' literacy levels. Through their involvement in every stage of the publishing process from manuscript evaluation and editing to publication and promotion students were immersed in a vibrant and productive literacy ecosystem within the school environment. This engagement encouraged not only writing but also fostered natural motivation to read and explore a variety of reference materials as part of their creative process.

The school editorial team functioned as an educational platform that introduced students to the values of professionalism, collaboration, responsibility, and publication ethics. These findings are in line with the demands of 21st-century education, which views literacy not merely as a technical skill of reading and writing, but as a critical and reflective competency that connects directly to students' real-world experiences and social involvement.

The study confirms that student productivity in writing serves as a powerful trigger for increased reading. This suggests that literacy development is most effective when anchored in authentic and meaningful activities. The editorial team proved to be a strategic, practical model that integrates cognitive, affective, and social dimensions of literacy within the school setting.

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