

## OVERCOMING THE LITERACY CRISIS AND IMPROVING CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS AT SDN 8 SUBULUSSALAM

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### Abstract

*Basic education in Indonesia has an important role in forming the foundation of knowledge and character of children as the nation's next generation. Even though basic education in Indonesia has a vision and mission to create intelligent and characterful students, SDN 8 Subulussalam faces a number of challenges, especially related to the literacy crisis and the lack of development of critical thinking skills among students. The literacy crisis at SDN 8 Subulussalam is a fundamental problem that affects students' ability to read, write and understand various forms of text. The aim of this research is to describe Overcoming the literacy crisis and improving critical thinking skills at SDN 8 Subulussalam. This research uses a qualitative approach and descriptive research type. Based on the research results, it shows that SDN 8 Subulussalam faces significant challenges related to limited access to reading materials and students' lack of interest in reading. Concrete efforts by teachers, such as increasing library collections and collaborating with the community, have increased student interest, while the integration of learning methods for critical thinking skills and the use of technology is recognized as a positive step in overcoming the literacy crisis.*

**Keywords:** *Literacy Crisis, Critical Thinking Skills*

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**A. Introduction**

Basic education in Indonesia has an important role in forming the foundation of knowledge and character of children as the nation's next generation. Even though basic education in Indonesia has a vision and mission to create intelligent and characterful students, SDN 8 Subulussalam faces a number of challenges, especially related to the literacy crisis and the lack of development of critical thinking skills among students. The literacy crisis at SDN 8 Subulussalam is a fundamental problem that affects students' ability to read, write and understand various forms of text. This crisis is not only related to the technical aspects of reading and writing, but also includes understanding the content and critical thinking skills that underlie literacy. One of the causes of this literacy crisis is the lack of access to varied and relevant reading materials in the educational environment (Zakiya et al., 2023). The lack of reading books, especially those that depict local realities, can hinder students' interest in reading and stimulate their imagination (Jatnika, 2019). Geographical conditions which may be remote are also a factor that contributes to the literacy crisis at SDN 8 Subulussalam. Limited accessibility to educational resources, including libraries and reading devices, can limit students' literacy experiences. In this context, the role of teachers and educational staff becomes increasingly crucial in guiding students through these literacy challenges and developing a sustainable interest in reading.

Apart from the literacy crisis, the lack of development of critical thinking skills is a serious problem faced by SDN 8 Subulussalam. Critical thinking skills include students' ability to process information, make decisions based on analysis, and develop critical viewpoints on various issues (Muliastri, 2020). Learning methods that are still conventional

and the lack of innovative approaches in teaching hinder the development of these skills. The importance of critical thinking skills is not only limited to students' academic success, but is also the key to success in facing complex challenges in everyday life. Students who have critical thinking skills are able to deal with change better, make more informed decisions, and contribute positively to society. The social and cultural context of SDN 8 Subulussalam also plays a role in shaping students' mindsets and interest in literacy and critical thinking skills. Factors such as local culture, traditional values, and social environment can influence how students access and understand information (Khorunnisa et al., 2023). Therefore, strategies to overcome the literacy crisis and improve critical thinking skills need to consider the social and cultural context.

In facing this challenge, it is necessary to design a holistic approach that involves all education stakeholders, including teachers, parents and local communities. Renewing the curriculum by including learning methods that encourage literacy and critical thinking skills, increasing access to literacy resources, and involving parents in supporting learning at home can be strategic steps (Sugiarto & Farid, 2023). As part of this solution, the use of information and communication technology can also be an effective means of increasing digital literacy and expanding students' access to various information (Nurul Fauziah et al., 2020). By overcoming the literacy crisis and improving critical thinking skills at SDN 8 Subulussalam, it is hoped that we can create an educational environment that is more inclusive, progressive and relevant to the demands of the times. Students will become individuals who are not only proficient in reading and writing, but also able to apply their critical thinking in solving problems and contributing positively to global society. By focusing on building literacy capacity and critical thinking skills, SDN 8

Subulussalam can become an agent of change that encourages educational excellence at the elementary level, forming the next generation who is ready to face a future full of challenges.

## **B. Method**

This research uses a qualitative approach. Abdullah Fattah Nasution (2023:34), said "Qualitative research is analyzing and interpreting facts, symptoms and events based on what happened so that it becomes study material for follow-up." Based on the opinion above, it can be interpreted that researchQualitative is a scientific method that aims to explore and interpret facts, symptoms and events based on the context of reality that is happening. This approach leads researchers to detail, understand, and construct the meaning of the observed phenomena.

The type of this research is descriptive. According to Salim (2019:49) "Descriptive research is research that attempts to describe a symptom, event, event that is happening now." Based on the opinion above, it can be interpreted that descriptive research is a scientific research method which aims to provide a detailed and detailed description of a symptom, event or occurrence that is occurring in the current context. The main aim of this research is to provide an accurate and in-depth description ofthe phenomenon being studied.

## **C. Finding and Discussion**

### **1. Result**

To knowOvercoming the literacy crisis and improving critical thinking skills at SDN 8 Subulussalam, researchers conducted interviews. Following are the results of the interview:

1. What is the current state of literacy at SDN 8 Subulussalam?

Answer:

Currently, literacy conditions at SDN 8 Subulussalam are experiencing challenges. The main obstacles involve limited access to varied reading materials and students' lack of interest in reading.

2. What is the cause of the literacy crisis at SDN 8 Subulussalam?

Answer:

Some of the causes involve the lack of reading materials that are relevant to local realities, lack of accessibility to literacy resources, and minimal efforts to increase students' interest in reading.

3. What is the role of teachers in overcoming this literacy crisis?

Answer:

Teachers have a crucial role in overcoming the literacy crisis. They need to create learning environments that stimulate students' interest in reading, use innovative teaching methods, and provide access to interesting reading materials.

4. Have there been any concrete efforts to increase students' interest in reading at SDN 8 Subulussalam?

Answer: There have been efforts, including increasing school library collections, introducing engaging reading programs, and collaborating with local communities to provide reading materials that reflect students' cultures.

5. How do students react to the efforts that have been made to improve literacy?

Answer: Student reactions were generally positive. They showed increased interest in reading, engaged in discussions, and expressed a desire to access more interesting reading materials.

6. To what extent are critical thinking skills considered in learning at SDN 8 Subulussalam?

Answer:

Critical thinking skills are the focus of learning, but there are still challenges related to integrating learning methods that encourage critical thinking skills.

7. What are the obstacles faced in developing critical thinking skills among students?

Answer:

The main barriers include a lack of innovative approaches to teaching, limited resources, and minimal training for teachers regarding learning methods that encourage critical thinking skills.

8. Have there been any positive changes in students' critical thinking skills after development efforts?

Answer:

Yes, there have been visible positive changes. Students are more active in constructing arguments, able to analyze information critically, and participate actively in class discussions.

9. What is the role of technology in improving critical thinking skills at SDN 8 Subulussalam?

Answer:

Technology is used as a tool to expand students' access to information, facilitate online discussions, and provide a platform for practicing analytical and synthetic skills.

10. Has the community or parents been involved in supporting the development of students' critical thinking skills?

Answer:

The community and parents are involved through discussion sessions, workshops and supporting learning activities at home. Their involvement is considered important to strengthen the implementation of learning strategies that encourage critical thinking skills.

## **2. Discussion**

Based on the results of interviews regarding literacy conditions at SDN 8 Subulussalam, the school is currently facing significant challenges. The main obstacles faced are limited access to a variety of reading materials and students' lack of interest in reading. This lack of interest is one of the main factors contributing to the literacy crisis in schools. The causes of the literacy crisis at SDN 8 Subulussalam include several factors. First, the lack of availability of reading materials that are relevant to local realities is the main obstacle. Apart from that, lack of accessibility to literacy resources and minimal efforts to increase students' interest in reading also contribute to unsatisfactory literacy conditions. The role of teachers at SDN 8 Subulussalam is recognized as crucial in overcoming the

literacy crisis. Teachers are expected to not only deliver lesson material, but also create a learning environment that stimulates students' interest in reading. Using innovative teaching methods and providing access to interesting reading materials are important strategies implemented by teachers. Concrete efforts have been made to increase students' interest in reading, including increasing school library collections, introducing engaging reading programs, and collaborating with local communities to provide reading materials that reflect students' culture. Student responses to these efforts were generally positive, indicating increased interest in reading, active participation in discussions, and a desire to access more interesting reading materials.

Apart from literacy, critical thinking skills are also the focus of learning at SDN 8 Subulussalam. However, there are challenges in integrating learning methods that can encourage critical thinking skills. Barriers include a lack of innovative approaches to teaching, limited resources, and minimal training for teachers regarding learning methods that can improve critical thinking skills. However, the interview results showed positive changes in students' critical thinking skills after development efforts were carried out. Students appear to be more active in constructing arguments, able to analyze information critically, and participate actively in class discussions. The use of technology at SDN 8 Subulussalam is also recognized as a tool to improve students' critical thinking skills. Technology is used to expand students' access to information, facilitate online discussions, and provide a platform for practicing analytical and synthetic skills. The involvement of the community and parents is also an important factor in supporting the development of students' critical thinking skills. Through discussion sessions, workshops and support for learning activities at home, their

involvement is considered important to strengthen the implementation of learning strategies that encourage critical thinking skills at SDN 8 Subulussalam.

#### **D. Conclusion**

Based on the results of the research that has been carried out, the researchers concluded that schools face significant challenges, mainly related to limited access to reading materials and students' lack of interest in reading. Causative factors involve the minimal availability of relevant reading materials, lack of accessibility of literacy resources, and minimal efforts to increase students' interest in reading. Teachers are recognized as having an important role in overcoming the literacy crisis by creating a learning environment that stimulates interest in reading through innovative methods. Concrete efforts, such as increasing library collections and collaborating with the community, have provided positive results with more active student responses. Apart from that, critical thinking skills are also a focus, although there are still challenges in integrating learning methods that support these skills. The use of technology is recognized as a tool to improve students' critical thinking skills, while community and parental support is considered crucial in strengthening learning strategies that promote these skills. Overall, these efforts reflect positive steps in overcoming the literacy crisis and developing critical thinking skills at SDN 8 Subulussalam.

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