

## Portraits of elementary schools in practicing integrated multiliteracy in learning: A phenomenological study

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### Abstract

In society 5.0, everyone is faced with multiliteracy. Ideally, this multiliteracy is learned from elementary school. However, information on the implementation of learning that trains multiliteracy has not been widely studied. This study aims to describe or photograph the implementation of multiliteracy learning carried out by teachers in elementary schools. This research is a phenomenological type of qualitative research. The participants of this study were elementary schoolteachers in Indonesia. Data were collected by interviewing teachers and observing multiliteracy learning in schools. Data analysis was carried out using the Bogdan and Biklen model with the stages of data reduction, data presentation, conclusion drawing and verification. The results show that the teachers' understanding of multiliteracy was not correct. The implementation of learning that leads to multiliteracy learning has not been carried out; it is still limited to reading and writing activities.

Keywords: Multiliterate learning, elementary school, phenomenology.

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## 1. Introduction

In the condition of society 5.0, the development of science, knowledge and technology is so rapid. The rapid development exposes people to the demands for the need to be able to use and develop technology, to be able to apply science and use even the simplest technology in solving problems. Such abilities are called literacy competencies (Council of the European Union, 2018). A person's problem that needs to be solved can be a complex problem. To be able to solve this complex problem, various types of literacy need to be used. The types of literacy that are often used to help solve problems include literacy, numerical, digital, science, financial and cultural literacies.

Literacy reading and writing is one of the main types of literacy that must be mastered before mastering other types of literacy. Literacy is the ability to read, write, understand and use the forms of written language required by society and/or evaluated by individuals. After reading, it can build meaning from various forms of text (Mullis & Martin, 2021). Reading and writing are critical to student success inside and outside the school environment. Teaching reading and writing together is often recommended because they share the same sources of knowledge and cognitive processes, involve the creation of meaning and can be used together to achieve important learning goals (Graham et al., 2018).

Numerical literacy is the knowledge and skills to acquire, interpret, use and communicate various kinds of numbers and mathematical symbols to solve practical problems in various contexts of everyday life (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2017). Numerical literacy in schools is practical (and used in everyday life). The scope of numerical literacy is very broad, not only in mathematics, but also intersects with other literacies, for example, cultural literacy and citizenship.

Digital literacy is a skill in engaging the connections and communication possibilities of digital technology, in its capacity to generate, mix, reuse and share new knowledge and to convey existing information (Spante et al., 2018). This can be realised by the teacher through the application of digital products in learning activities (Senen et al., 2021; Herwin et al., 2021; Astuti et al., 2022; Sartono et al., 2022; Rahayu et al., 2022; Sartono et al., 2022; Herwin et al., 2022). Scientific literacy can be defined as scientific knowledge and skills to be able to identify questions; acquire new knowledge; explain scientific phenomena and draw conclusions based on facts; understand the characteristics of science; be awareness of how science and technology shape the natural, intellectual and cultural environment; and be willingly involved and care about science-related issues (OECD, 2016). The National Research Council (2012) states that the range of scientific competencies required for scientific literacy reflects the view that science is an ensemble of social and epistemic practices common to all sciences, framing all competencies as actions.

Financial literacy is the knowledge and skills applied to understanding the concepts and risks; skills to be able to make effective decisions in a financial context to improve financial well-being, both individually and socially; and to be able to participate in the community (Lusardi, 2015). In addition, the Financial Services Authority (OJK) also emphasises the importance of financial inclusion as an inseparable part of financial literacy. The definition of financial inclusion itself is a process that ensures easy access, availability and use of the formal financial system for all individuals (Kemendikbud, 2017a).

Cultural literacy is the ability to understand and behave towards Indonesian culture as a nation's identity (Maine, 2021). Cultural literacy is defined as a social practice based on learning and acquiring knowledge through interactive, empathetic, tolerant and inclusive interactions (Lähdesmäki et al., 2022). Cultural literacy is studied in a process that allows the emergence of new ideas and attitudes, the emergence of differences and similarities, cultural values of oneself and others and the emergence of

knowledge about how to meet, interact and live with others. Cultural literacy is a person's ability to understand or 'read' the structure of social reality through various forms of symbolic and material representation and then incorporate these ideas into everyday life (Crawshaw, 2018). Thus, cultural literacy is reconceptualised as a fundamental dialogue (Fiona et al., 2019). Cultural literacy should empower intercultural dialogue and open up dialogue space with inherent democratic potential. Meanwhile, civic literacy is the ability to understand the rights and multiliteracy is an ability that must be possessed by the nation's generation along with the times. This must be instilled in elementary school education. This study aims to describe the implementation of multiliteracy learning carried out by teachers in elementary schools.

## 2. Method

### 2.1. Types of research

This research is a qualitative research with a phenomenological approach. According to Bogdan and Biklen (Mertens, 2019), phenomenological analysis emphasises the subjective experience of individuals. The phenomenon understood in this study is multiliteracy learning in elementary schools. Furthermore, the method used by the teacher in training multiliteracy in learning is described.

### 2.2. Participants

Participants in this study consisted of 56 teachers who teach at the elementary school level in Indonesia. In this study, participants were grouped based on their working area, namely West, Central and East Indonesia. The participants of this study were elementary schoolteachers who had studied for more than 5 years. The participants were 56 teachers representing all regions in Indonesia. The use of this informant selection technique was based on the fact that the phenomenon which became the focus of the study was felt by almost all other related informants. Participants were selected by convenience (or opportunistic) sampling in accordance with the availability of samples in the field. The distribution of teachers in each region is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Participant distribution

| Region            | Province  | Number of teachers filling out the questionnaire | Number of teachers participating in the interview |
|-------------------|---|--|---|
| Western Indonesia | Aceh, Palembang, Jakarta, West Java, West Kalimantan, East Java                     | 25   | 2   |
| Central Indonesia | North Kalimantan, East Kalimantan, Bali, Central Sulawesi, NTB, NTT, South Sulawesi | 22   | 2   |
| Eastern Indonesia | Maluku, Papua, West Papua   | 9  | 1   |

### 2.3. Data collection and instruments

The main instrument of data collection in this study was a questionnaire with a phenomenological approach. Data were collected using an open questionnaire distributed using Google Form. A total of five participants were interviewed more broadly and in-depth to confirm the data and obtain data related to teachers' understanding of multiliteracy. The development of the instrument by the researcher was based on the indicators of the problem in the research. The instrument contains questions that consist of two parts. The first part contains teachers' demographic information, namely

questions about the length of time the respondent has worked as a teacher and the institution where the respondent teaches. The second part contains questions about understanding and implementing literacy and multiliteracy learning. Research data collection was carried out by sending a Google Form link via WhatsApp to respondents with an elementary schoolteacher academic background. The number of respondents to the questionnaire conducted online using the Google Form was 56 teachers.

#### 2.4. Data analysis technique

Data from interviews and open questionnaires were analysed and presented in tables to be classified into sub-themes. This research data analysis uses qualitative analysis. Data analysis used the Bogdan and Biklen (1982) model to determine the relationship between sub-themes. The relationship between these themes was the basis for researchers to describe the important findings in this study.

#### 2.5. Ethical clearance

This research has been approved by each respondent. Information and written consent were obtained from all respondents before filling out the questionnaire and interview. The researcher conveyed to the respondents that this study would only photograph their understanding of literacy and multiliteracy. Respondents were informed that all data are for research purposes only and does not affect the future fate of teachers. The research is not to evaluate teacher performance. The names of the teachers are kept confidential for research purposes and their identities are coded to ensure their answers have no effect on their profession as teachers.

### 3. Results and discussion

The results of the study provide information about the portrait of the implementation of learning that trains multiliteracy. The portrait of the implementation of learning that trains multiliteracy is classified into several things, namely teachers' understanding of literacy and multiliteracy, learning strategies for implementation, measurement and assessment of literacy. The researcher describes each sub-theme below.

#### 3.1. Teacher's understanding of literacy

The results of data analysis and reduction of teachers' knowledge about literacy indicate that their knowledge of literacy is still not correct. Some of the explanations given by the teacher are general in nature. In fact, there are still many teachers who are still confused between the concept of literacy and strategies for developing literacy itself. The same results can be seen in Table 1. The findings show that some teachers have explained literacy completely using various types of literacy in various fields. Based on the results of the FGD, the new teacher was able to understand several activities regarding literacy. Based on the teachers' response, not all teachers understand literacy well. Teachers are still unable to distinguish between literacy abilities, skills or activities.

Table 2. Teacher's understanding of literacy

| Data                 | Teachers' understanding of literacy   | Theme               | Association between themes   |
|----------------------|---|---------------------|--|
| Online questionnaire | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Activities carried out before learning</li> <li>2. What I know about literacy is that literacy is reading.</li> <li>3. Reading activities</li> <li>4. Habituation of reading to students</li> </ol> | Literacy activities | Teachers' understanding is still limited to literacy activities and is not comprehensive |

|           |   |                     |
|-----------|---|---------------------|
|           | 5. Literacy is a reading habit that must be maintained.   |                     |
|           | 1. Literacy is an individual's ability to read, write, speak and count  | Literacy concept    |
|           | 2. Literacy is the ability to understand something  |                     |
|           | 3. The ability that a person has in communicating, by listening, speaking and writing   |                     |
| Interview | 1. As far as I know literacy is like reading before learning  | Literacy activities |
|           | 2. During this 5-minute activity before learning the children are asked to read a book  |                     |
|           | 3. Children are asked to read in the reading corner of the classroom or in the library  |                     |
|           | 1. Literacy is a student's skill in reading, writing, and conveying information   | Literacy concept    |
|           | 2. Literacy refers to an individual's ability and skill in reading, writing, arithmetic, and problem solving at a certain level of expertise required in everyday life. |                     |

### 3.2. Teacher's understanding of multiliteracy

The results of data analysis and reduction of teachers' knowledge about multiliteracy showed that they were not familiar with the term multiliteracy. Some of the explanations given by the teacher were not correct.

Table 3. Teacher's understanding of multiliteracy

| Data  | Teachers' understanding of multiliteracy   | Theme             | Association between themes                        |
|---|--|-------------------|---|
| Online questionnaire  | 1. Don't really understand and haven't studied too   | Do not understand | Teachers who do not understand multiliteracy well |
|   | 2. I've never heard of   |                   |   |
|   | 3. Activities that can improve critical thinking skills.   |                   |   |
|   | 4. Part of the end of literacy development   |                   |   |
|   | 1. Multiliteracy is a way or method to communicate with certain technology or media, both visual and audio |                   |   |
| 2. In my opinion, multiliteracy is a reading and writing activity that involves various media |  |                   |   |
| 3. Multiliteracy is a new paradigm in literacy learning                                       |  |                   |   |
| 4. Understanding things from various ways   |  |                   |   |
| 5. Many ways to read  |  |                   |   |
| Interview   | 1. I don't know what multiliteracy is  | Do not understand |   |
|   | 2. I've never heard of   |                   |   |
|   | 1. More complex than literacy, not only related to reading, writing and communicating.                     | Able to explain   |   |

2. Literacy skills that do not only cover basic skills, but also develop other literacy skills (digital literacy, culture etc.)
3. Initially literacy was only in reading and writing. Now being multiliterate, the scope is broad, namely digital literacy, social literacy, numerical literacy etc.

### 3.3. Application of literacy and multiliteracy in the learning process

For the third sub-theme, the teacher was asked to explain the experience of integrating literacy and multiliteracy understanding into classroom learning. In the same sub-theme, it is hoped that the teacher can describe his experience in developing student literacy. The results can be seen in Table 4.

Table 4. Application of literacy in the learning process

| Data                 | Application of literacy  | Theme  |
|----------------------|--|--|
| Online questionnaire | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Choose reading things that students will do that have something to do with our learning.</li> <li>2. Students are asked to read for 5 minutes before the lesson begins.</li> <li>3. By linking each lesson into the reading system and understanding the purpose of the lesson</li> <li>4. Inviting students to read readings and make story questions in math lessons.</li> <li>5. Improve reading skills, increase practice questions</li> <li>6. By providing guidance on understanding literacy</li> <li>7. Optimise library role</li> </ol> | All activities have reflected the application of literacy, but are still limited to reading and writing activities |
| Interview            | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. In order for the learning to be literal in nature, various sources and learning media are needed in learning. Not only teachers, but the surrounding environment is also a learning resource.</li> <li>2. Literacy can be integrated into all subjects. The key is in the teacher.</li> <li>3. In learning there must be literacy, students are asked to read, write, count and students are asked to convey ideas, tell stories etc.</li> <li>4. Observing the environment around the school related to the subject matter</li> </ol>           |  |

Table 5. Application of multiliteracy in the learning process

| Data                 | Application of multiliteracy   | Theme  |
|----------------------|--|--|
| Online questionnaire | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Have never implemented multiliteracy</li> <li>2. Improve reading and writing skills</li> <li>3. Just know and have not applied</li> </ol>      | The activities carried out are the same as literacy activities |
| Interview            | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. So far, I've never heard of it so I've never used it</li> <li>2. So far the activities carried out are reading, writing, arithmetic</li> </ol> |  |

| Data | Application of multiliteracy   | Theme |
|------|--|-------|
|      | 3. Connects the four skills of reading, writing, arithmetic, speaking and technology use |       |

### 3.4. Implementation of literacy and multiliteracy assessment

The results of the analysis and data reduction are summarised in Table 6. Their responses indicate that most of them have not specifically measured literacy. Teachers carry out integrated literacy assessments with subject assessments by means of observations, presentations and tests.

Table 6. Literacy and multiliteracy assessment

| Data                 | Literacy and multiliteracy assessment  | Theme  |
|----------------------|--|--|
| Online questionnaire | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Never</li> <li>2. Carry out an assessment of reading and writing skills</li> <li>3. Giving reading, writing questions</li> <li>4. Assessment of Indonesian subjects</li> </ol> | Assessment of reading and writing is integrated with the subject |
| Interview            | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Never in particular</li> <li>2. Assessment is carried out integrated with lessons such as reading, writing, speaking, arithmetic etc.</li> </ol>                               |  |

The School Literacy Movement is a programme compiled since 2016 as a comprehensive and sustainable effort to make its citizens literate throughout their lives through public involvement (Kemendikbud, 2017b). The type of literacy developed is not only limited to reading and writing, but also adapted to the views of the international community. For society to survive in the 21st century, there are six types of literacy that must be mastered. The six literacy courses are (1) literacy literacy, (2) numerical literacy, (3) scientific literacy, (4) digital literacy, (5) financial literacy and (6) cultural literacy and citizenship (Kemendikbud, 2017b). Mastering them is very important so that modern communication needs become more complex. The combination of these shared abilities is called 21st-century literacy or multiliteracy (Holloway & Gouthro, 2020). Based on this description, the possibility of teachers' understanding of literacy as a whole is still lacking. In addition, teachers will find it difficult to apply multiliteracy in the learning process if there is no socialisation and training.

This qualitative research presents empirical evidence regarding the portrait of the implementation of multiliteracy learning carried out by teachers in elementary schools. Data collection using an online questionnaire, namely Google Form, consists of two parts. The first part consists of the respondents' demographic questions. Furthermore, the second part contains questions related to teachers' understanding of literacy and multiliteracy, their application in learning and their assessment. Based on the results of data collection, there were 56 elementary schoolteachers spread across Indonesia. Based on the results of the online questionnaire, interviews were conducted with five elementary schoolteachers representing three regions. The results of the responses based on data collection are reduced through research, namely by isolating data that are considered essential or not essential to be described.

The findings of this study indicate that teachers are still not right in understanding literacy and multiliteracy. Some teachers think that literacy is a reading activity (Teacher 1, Teacher 3 and Teacher 4 who filled out the online questionnaires). Other teachers think that literacy is a student's skill in reading, writing and conveying information (Teacher 2 and Teacher 5 who filled out the online questionnaires).

Some teachers who filled out the online questionnaires said that literacy is an activity that is carried out before learning. Given the fact that some teachers still partially understand literacy, this is in accordance with research conducted by Susanto and Rifai (2018), which also states that based on qualitative studies, teachers think that the school literacy programme is to build students' good habits of reading such as the habit of reading 30 minutes before reading class. The results of the other studies show that since the emergence of the term literacy, departing from the traditional view of reading readiness is the dominant view for teachers (Giles & Tunks, 2015). It was suggested that different instructions rather than the application of a single instructional approach based entirely on certain perceptions might be the best approach to facilitate the acquisition of children's literacy. Teacher preparation is essential for effective literacy teaching in the classroom. The best teachers can take care of their students and have a knowledge base to pass on to their classes and students.

Teachers' understanding of literacy illustrates that they have not fully understood it well. This is not much different from their understanding of multiliteracy. The research findings show that teachers have never heard of the term multiliteracy (Teacher 1, Teacher 2, Teacher 3 and Teacher 4). However, Teacher 2 and Teacher 3 tried to convey that multiliteracy is more than reading and writing. Teacher 5 said that multiliteracy is a skill that is more than reading and writing; multiliteracy has a broad scope, namely digital literacy, social literacy, numerical literacy etc. The term multiliteracy is not yet familiar to teachers, so they have not been able to convey their understanding of multiliteracy. Research on multiliteracy has not been widely carried out in Indonesia.

Teacher understanding related to literacy and multiliteracy is not a simple problem. Studies of teachers' understanding and beliefs show that the extent to which teachers adopt new learning practices in their classrooms is closely related to the degree of congruence between their personal beliefs and the assumptions underlying the teaching of a particular innovation (David et al., 2002). Teachers' understanding and beliefs about literacy are important in understanding current teacher classroom practice and in designing developmental programmes. The extent to which teachers understand literacy correlates with their literacy learning practices in the classroom.

The implementation of literacy learning in the classroom is based on what has been conveyed by the teachers. Related to multiliteracy learning, the teacher conveys what has been implemented in literacy learning in the classroom. In the form of activities that have been carried out, all teachers convey reading and writing bias before learning. Several teachers conveyed integrated literacy activities in learning. This is very important to be mastered and trained by the teacher because in learning activities the teacher becomes the main actor in learning who will plan, implement and evaluate the learning (Herwin et al., 2022; Herwin & Dahalan, 2022; Herwin, 2022; Pujiastuti et al., 2021; Herwin & Nurhayati, 2021; Wuryandani & Herwin, 2021; Tjabolo & Herwin, 2020).

There is no specificity of multiliteracy learning. In learning, there must be literacy activities where students are asked to read, write and count; students should be asked to convey ideas, tell stories and others. Marmuah et al. (2022) conveyed the results that schools had made a literacy culture plan and it had been implemented optimally. Literacy culture management consists of habituation, development and teaching. This is in line with the results of the research on teacher literacy understanding, changing teaching practices and influencing student learning (Costello, 2012). However, the results of other studies show that the implementation of new literacy at the stage of habituation and development has not yet reached the learning stage (Pantiwati et al., 2020). These results indicate that the development of literacy programmes still has many weaknesses and requires intensive efforts to improve student literacy.



In fact, the results of the study show that most teachers have not specifically measured literacy; teachers carry out integrated literacy assessments with subject assessments by means of observations, presentations and tests. The government has promoted the development of a literacy culture through the School Literacy Movement (Kemendikbud, 2017b). Srimulyo et al. (2020) conveyed the results that the government, community and community groups have made efforts to develop a literacy culture, one of which is the creation of the School Literacy Movement. However, this role and performance has not been optimal due to development gaps, budget constraints and lack of information and public awareness about the importance of literacy culture.

The results of this study indicate that elementary schoolteachers have not implemented multiliteracy learning. Most teachers said that they had carried out literacy activities, namely reading. This is an indication that the teachers' understanding of literacy and multiliteracy is still not right, especially with regard to how to integrate it in learning. This condition will certainly affect students' literacy skills and achievement. This is in line with Sherbine's (2019) opinion that broadening the definition of what is considered literacy is very important to design literacy and multiliteracy learning that suits students' needs.

#### **4. Conclusion**

The results of this study indicate that not all teachers understand literacy and multiliteracy well. Teachers still cannot distinguish literacy from abilities, skills or learning activities. Almost all teachers answered that literacy is a reading activity before learning begins. Teachers have never heard of the term multiliteracy, and several teachers said that multiliteracy is an activity that is more than literacy. Teachers have realised the importance of literacy for students, but they are still confused about the activities that improve student literacy. Activities that have been carried out by the teacher are related to reading activities. In addition, the teacher's lack of understanding about literacy also causes teachers to never assess literacy skills and even students' multiliteracy. The results of this study confirm that the teachers' lack of understanding of literacy results in a lack of variety in literacy activities and the absence of multiliteracy activities in the classroom.

Although teachers are the key in improving students' literacy skills, all educational institutions have the same responsibility to advance education in the country. The government and education experts must find a solution to overcome this problem. Therefore, conducting socialisation and teacher training on training literacy and multiliteracy in learning is one of the recommendations that must be implemented. In addition, learning resources such as books, access to electronic media or other sources still need further attention from the government, schools, and education experts.

Further research can be conducted based on the findings of this study. Exploring the knowledge and literacy skills of teachers needs to be dug deeper so that it is easy to identify which literacy teachers need to be trained on. Different types of research can be conducted but should be based on the findings of this study. The knowledge and skills of teachers need to be described more broadly and in-depth so that it is easy to identify which areas need improvement.

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