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EXPLORING THE ROLE OF PROJECT-BASED LEARNING INFOSTERING CREATIVE THINKING SKILLS WITHIN THE MERDEKA CURRICULUM

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi peran Project-Based Learning (PjBL) dalam mengembangkan keterampilan berpikir kreatif siswa kelas VII di SMP Negeri 9 Kota Pontianak dalam kerangka Kurikulum Merdeka. Dengan menggunakan desain studi kasus kualitatif, data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara dengan guru (Guru Penggerak), observasi sheets, dan penyebaran kuesioner kepada siswa. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa PjBL diimplementasikan secara efektif melalui perencanaan yang terstruktur, kolaborasi, dan praktik reflektif. PjBL memberikan kontribusi yang signifikan terhadap pengembangan keterampilan berpikir kreatif, seperti pemecahan masalah, penciptaan ide, evaluasi argumen, dan refleksi diri. Meskipun terdapat tantangan terkait manajemen waktu dan keterbatasan sumber daya, PjBL terbukti sebagai pendekatan yang relevan dan berdampak sesuai dengan tujuan Kurikulum Merdeka.

Kata Kunci: *Project-Based Learning, Keterampilan Berpikir Kreatif, Kurikulum Merdeka.*

Abstract

This study explores the role of Project-Based Learning (PjBL) in fostering creative thinking skills among seventh-grade students at SMP Negeri 9Kota Pontianak within the framework of the Merdeka Curriculum. Utilizing a qualitative case study design, data were collected through interviews with a teacher (Guru Penggerak), classroom observations, and questionnaires distributed to students. The research findings reveal that PjBL is effectively implemented through structured planning, collaboration, and reflective practices. It significantly contributes to the development of creative thinking skills such as problem-solving, idea generation, argument evaluation, and self-reflection. Despite challenges related to time management and resources, PjBL proves to be a relevant and impactful approach in line with the goals of the Merdeka Curriculum.

Keywords: Project-Based Learning, Creative Thinking Skills, Merdeka Curriculum.

INTRODUCTION

Education in the 21st century equips students to think creatively about complex problems. Kurikulum Merdeka in Indonesia is one example of educational transformation that promotes flexibility, project-based learning, and student character. This curriculum aims to develop students' contextual, collaborative, and participatory skills (Muliardi, 2023). However, many studies show that students' creative thinking skills are still developing, requiring innovation in classroom teaching models.

One type of learning that fits the Merdeka philosophy is project-based learning (PjBL), which uses real-world projects to build 21st-century skills. Students may explore

ideas, collaborate, and create contextual solutions in PjBL (Krajcik & Shin, 2019). In EFL learning, PjBL not only improves language skills but also fosters creative thinking through otological and reflective activities (Dewi & Hafis, 2020). This project is a strategic alternative to increase student engagement and learning.

This study examines how teachers use PjBL to develop creative skills at SMP Negeri 9 Kota Pontianak and how students respond to the model in the context of Merdeka. This research used quantitative methods, including observation, questionnaire, and kuesioner. The main focus is on students' creative problem-solving, collaboration, argument evaluation, and self-reflection during PjBL in English classes. Numerous research has shown that PjBL improves student involvement in learning (Anita & Susilawati, 2018). Since involvement is essential for creativity, studying PjBL in Merdeka Curriculum classrooms is important.

Conceptually, PjBL has been well praised for fostering student creativity and collaboration. (Garcia & Patel, 2022) SAY collaborative project work fosters original ideas and active student participation. (Thomas, 2020) further states that PjBL creates a stimulating and reflective learning environment, which is crucial to creative thinking development. Because of this, this research aims to uncover empirical knowledge that can improve English language teaching methods based on students' creative thinking.

METHOD

This study utilised a qualitative case study methodology to investigate the influence of Project-Based Learning (PjBL) on the development of creative thinking abilities within the framework of the Merdeka Curriculum. The methodology was chosen to provide a comprehensive examination of how a Guru Penggerak executed PjBL in a practical educational context, emphasising preparation, classroom implementation, and assessment. The research was executed at SMP Negeri 9 Kota Pontianak, encompassing a cohort of 99 seventh-grade students from seven classes (VII A to VII G), utilising purposive sampling for participant selection. This design aligns with (Creswell, 2018) assertion that qualitative case studies are helpful for analysing intricate social processes within particular contexts. The research triangulated data from three sources: interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis, so augmenting the trustworthiness of the findings (Flick, 2018).

The researcher employed three primary tools for data collection: observation sheets, semi-structured interviews, and a student questionnaire. Observation sheets were utilised to record teacher-student interactions, student cooperation, and creative expression throughout

Project-Based Learning activities. Interviews with an English instructor (Guru Penggerak) and chosen students examined attitudes and experiences of PjBL. The questionnaire, comprising 20 Likert-scale questions, was administered to 99 students to quantitatively evaluate their impressions of the impact of PjBL on their creative thinking skills. An examination of documents was performed to examine lesson plans, learning modules, providing contextual insights into the execution of the Merdeka Curriculum. The amalgamation of many tools facilitated a thorough comprehension of the study issue (Cohen et al., 2018; Kivunja, 2019).

Thematic analysis was utilised on the qualitative data obtained from interviews and observational notes, adhering to (Braun & Clarke, 2019) six-step paradigm to discern patterns associated with the evolution of creative thought. Descriptive statistics use SPSS were applied to analyse questionnaire data, emphasising frequency distributions and mean scores to identify overall patterns. This methodological triangulation facilitated the validation and cross-verification of data, so assuring the internal consistency and reliability of the conclusions. Consistent with (Sandelowski, 2010) recommendation, descriptive qualitative analysis was utilised to understand students' involvement with creative markers, including problem-solving, argument assessment, and reflective thinking. The technique offered a comprehensive framework for comprehending the influence of PjBL on fostering students' creative thinking Skill within the Merdeka Curriculum

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This research demonstrates that the teacher's implementation of Project-Based Learning (PjBL) at SMP Negeri 9 Kota Pontianak is in accordance with the concepts of the Merdeka Curriculum. Observation sheets, interviews, and student surveys revealed that the teacher crafted learning experiences by incorporating real-world concerns and student interests into project topics. Structured project planning and evaluation rubrics were employed, facilitating a uniform approach from planning to reflection. This aligns with (Thomas, 2020) findings, which highlighted the significance of organised planning and feedback in optimising creative results in PjBL settings. Additionally, children were urged to engage in collaborative planning, which cultivated a feeling of ownership and creativity in the educational process.

Student participation and the cultivation of creative thinking were assessed across many dimensions, including problem-solving, argument analysis, and collaborative efforts.

Table 1 indicates that more than 75% of students concurred or strongly concurred that Project-Based Learning (PjBL) facilitated their creative and critical thinking. The projects, including the development of infographics and written reports, fostered innovative thinking and practical implementation. This corresponds with the constructivist approach, which posits that knowledge is actively produced via significant experiences (Krajcik & Shin, 2019). Moreover, collaborative assignments and presentations enabled students to assess peer contributions, cultivate innovative ideas, and polish their arguments through discourse, therefore augmenting both critical and creative abilities (Hmelo & Silver, 2019)

Table: Students' Perception of PjBL in Supporting Creative Thinking skills

Indicator	Score	Percentage (%)
Analysis Skill	3,3	70,60%
Argument Evaluation	3,5	75,75%
Creativity in Problem Solving	3,6	75,91%
Discussion and Collaboration	3,2	69,36%
Self-Reflection	3,0	65,39%

Notwithstanding these advantages, difficulties arose over time limitations and insufficient resources. Educators said that planning and facilitating Project- Based Learning (PjBL) activities necessitated considerable time commitment, and certain projects could not be executed effectively owing to insufficient materials or limited access to digital resources. The findings underscore concerns articulated by (Zhang & Li, 2020), who observed that systemic obstacles, including time constraints, training deficiencies, and resource scarcity, might hinder the efficacy of PjBL in Asian contexts. Nonetheless, the teacher's adaptation and reflective practices alleviated certain challenges, underscoring the significance of teacher facilitation and curricular flexibility within the Merdeka framework.

In conclusion, the use of PjBL at SMP Negeri 9 Pontianak significantly facilitated the enhancement of students' creative thinking abilities via problem-based engagement, reflection, and cooperation. The congruence between project topic and students' interests, together with the organised stages of preparation, execution, presentation, and reflection, enabled students to engage in a more profound and significant learning experience. These findings corroborate past evidence supporting PjBL as a method to augment 21st-century abilities (Garcia & Patel, 2022), especially within an educational framework such as Merdeka that emphasises creativity and student autonomy.

CONCLUSION

This study examines the impact of Project-Based Learning (PjBL) on the development of students' creative thinking abilities at SMP Negeri 9 in Pontianak, framed within the Merdeka Curriculum.The qualitative research findings demonstrate that Project-Based Learning (PjBL) is an excellent tool for enhancing students' creative thinking abilities.The qualitative research findings demonstrate that Project-Based Learning (PjBL) is an excellent tool for enhancing students' creative thinking abilities.

The execution of PjBL occurs via a methodical process encompassing project planning, theme selection, collaboration, reflection, and assessment.The execution of PjBL occurs via a methodical process encompassing project planning, theme selection, collaboration, reflection, and assessment.Educators serve as facilitators who enhance the learning process and promote critical and creative thinking among pupils.Moreover, Project-Based Learning (PjBL) has demonstrated an enhancement in student engagement and fosters the development of new solutions through projects pertinent to daily life.

Subsequently, Project-Based Learning (PjBL) has demonstrated an enhancement in student engagement and fosters the development of new solutions through projects pertinent to daily life. this research also identifies some obstacles, including time management and resource availability, that may impede the effective application of PjBL. this study also outlines other problems, like time management and resource availability, that may impede the effective application of PjBL.This study also outlines other problems, like time management and resource availability, that may impede the effective application of PjBL. the Merdeka Curriculum's flexibility enables educators to create projects that correspond with students' interests and requirements, so enhancing motivation and engagement in the learning process.the Merdeka Curriculum's flexibility enables educators to create projects that correspond with students' interests and requirements, so enhancing motivation and engagement in the learning process.

This research demonstrates that Project-Based Learning (PjBL) promotes students' creative thinking capabilities and fosters the development of teamwork, communication, and problem-solving abilities.This study's findings demonstrate that PjBL boosts students' creative thinking capabilities while also fostering teamwork, communication, and problem-solving abilities. This research underscores the importance of reflection and feedback in enhancing the quality of project-based learning.Consequently, Project-Based Learning

(PjBL) can serve as a principal strategy for realising innovative and competency-based education in the period of Merdeka Curriculum.

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