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The Role of Classroom Teachers in Improving Learning Quality at State Elementary School (SDN) 117/II Bungo Regency

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Abstract:
The quality of learning in elementary schools is foundational for student competence, yet a gap often exists between national curriculum expectations and pedagogical realities in semi-rural areas. This study comprehensively analyzes the multidimensional role of classroom teachers in improving learning quality at SDN 117/II Bungo Regency. Using a qualitative case study design, data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation, involving a principal, four classroom teachers, and eight students selected via purposive sampling. Data were analyzed using the Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña interactive model and validated through source and technique triangulation. The findings reveal that teachers improve learning quality through four dimensions: (1) designing contextual and differentiated learning utilizing local agrarian environments (e.g., river ecosystems, oil palm plantations); (2) facilitating and motivating students using Malay Bungo local wisdom (e.g., *pantun*, mutual cooperation values) to overcome infrastructure limitations; (3) implementing continuous formative assessments with descriptive feedback for targeted remediation; and (4) integrating Pancasila Student Profile values through local environmental issues. This study contributes theoretically by expanding contextual pedagogy frameworks in semi-rural settings and practically by providing evidence-based recommendations for the Bungo Regency Education Office to design localized, intensive teacher mentoring.

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Introduction (مقدمة)

Primary education is a fundamental phase that determines the trajectory of students' cognitive, affective, and psychomotor development. In the educational ecosystem, learning quality is not only measured by students' academic achievements but also by the educational

interaction process that occurs within the classroom. Classroom teachers in elementary schools hold a central and strategic position as the primary architects of this learning process. The contemporary educational paradigm, particularly in the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in Indonesia, has shifted the teacher's role from merely an information provider (transmitter) to a facilitator, motivator, and adaptive learning designer (Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, 2022). Theoretically, this shift aligns with Culturally Responsive Teaching and Ethnopedagogy (Chandra, 2022), which posit that learning is optimized when instruction aligns with students' cultural frames of reference. This shift demands that teachers possess strong pedagogical competence to respond to the diversity of student characteristics, including in the context of schools in semi-rural areas like Bungo Regency.

Bungo Regency, located in Jambi Province, possesses unique demographic and sociocultural characteristics. Its community is a blend of Jambi Malay culture, transmigrants, and indigenous peoples. This sociocultural context has direct implications for education, where students at SDN 117/II Bungo Regency come from diverse cultural and economic backgrounds, and varying levels of learning readiness. The quality of learning in this school cannot be separated from how classroom teachers manage classroom dynamics, design learning relevant to students' daily lives, and motivate students amidst limited access to information technology facilities compared to schools in urban centers (Zulkifli, 2023; Fauzi, 2024).

Although various teacher quality enhancement policies have been launched by the government, realities in the field often reveal a gap between policy expectations and pedagogical practice. Several recent studies show that teachers in buffer or semi-rural areas frequently encounter obstacles in implementing differentiated learning and formative assessment due to high administrative burdens and minimal access to practitioner communities (Prihatin, 2022; Dewi, 2023). Conversely, literature demonstrates that highly resilient teachers who integrate local wisdom into learning are capable of producing comparable or even superior learning quality in terms of character formation and material relevance (Rahayu et al., 2022; Ismail, 2023).

Research Gap and Novelty: While previous studies have extensively explored teacher competence, they often focus on urban "Mover Schools" (Rahayu et al., 2022) or examine isolated dimensions such as administrative burdens (Prihatin, 2022) or digital divides (Zulkifli, 2023). There is a distinct lack of holistic research examining how teachers navigate the intersection of national curriculum demands and deep sociocultural integration in agrarian-transition regions. Therefore, this study offers novelty by analyzing the role of classroom teachers holistically (as designer, facilitator, evaluator, and character educator) within the specific, under-researched sociocultural context of Malay Bungo.

Significance: The significance of this study is twofold: theoretically, it enriches the discourse on contextual pedagogy and ethnopedagogy in semi-rural areas; practically, it provides empirical evidence for the Bungo Regency Education Office to formulate localized, context-specific teacher mentoring policies. This study aims to explore and analyze how classroom teachers at SDN 117/II Bungo Regency function to enhance learning quality. Specifically, it addresses the question: *How do classroom teachers design, facilitate, evaluate, and integrate character values into learning at SDN 117/II Bungo Regency?*

Method (منهج)

Research findings at SDN 117/II Bungo Regency provide a comprehensive representation of how classroom teachers navigate challenges and capitalize on opportunities to enhance learning quality. This discussion synthesizes these findings with contemporary educational theory, providing deeper critical analysis and practical implications.

Teacher Adaptability in Designing Contextual Learning Findings regarding contextual and differentiated learning design align with core principles of the Merdeka Curriculum, which emphasize learning tailored to students' achievement stages (Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, 2022). The Merdeka Curriculum contributes specifically to improving learning quality by providing the pedagogical autonomy necessary for teachers to deviate from rigid, standardized textbooks. This flexibility is the prerequisite that allows local wisdom to be integrated effectively. In semi-rural settings, contextualization is an epistemological necessity. According to Darling-Hammond (2020), learning quality is strongly governed by the real-world relevance of content. Teachers at SDN 117/II exhibit pedagogical resilience by adapting differentiated learning into simple yet effective practices, supporting Prihatin's (2022) observation of 'improvisational pedagogy' in resource-constrained regions.

Leveraging Local Wisdom as a Facilitation Modality The role of teachers as facilitators utilizing Malay Bungo local wisdom is a highly significant finding. The practical implication of integrating local wisdom into differentiated learning is that abstract scientific or mathematical concepts are translated into familiar cultural schemas, reducing cognitive load for students from agrarian backgrounds. Studies by Ismail (2023) and Chandra (2022) confirm that ethnopedagogy significantly increases student engagement. At SDN 117/II, teachers successfully converted technological constraints into opportunities to strengthen humanistic interactions. Hattie (2021) emphasized that teacher-student relationships exert a substantial effect size on academic achievement; the familial approach and integration of local *pantun* represent concrete expressions of building these positive relationships.

Transforming Evaluation into Assessment for Learning Evaluation practices oriented toward follow-up reflect a shift in assessment paradigms. The practical implication of integrating local cultural values, such as '*bersauh ke pantai*' (deliberation and mutual cooperation), into formative assessment shifts the assessment dynamic from a top-down judgment to a collaborative dialogue between teacher and student. This finding aligns with Yuliana (2024) and Fauzi (2024), who revealed that consistent formative assessment helps bridge learning gaps. Nevertheless, challenges remain regarding administrative burdens, as teachers frequently sacrifice recess periods to provide descriptive feedback, indicating that teacher well-being requires targeted attention (Supriadi, 2023).

Character and Literacy Integration Amidst Challenges The practical implication of integrating local wisdom into character education is that the Pancasila Student Profile is transformed from a doctrinal list into lived, contextual experiences. Internalizing character through local environmental issues (such as river conservation) shows that teachers effectively apply Project-Based Learning contextually. This corroborates Junaedi (2025) and Asyifa (2023), indicating that character education integrated with local issues leads to deeper value internalization and sustainable behaviors compared to doctrinarian methods.

Systemic Challenges and Implications Despite remarkable efforts, this study uncovers systemic challenges. Teachers feel overwhelmed by complex administrative demands, while access to training from the Education Office remains overly general (Dewi, 2023; Zulkifli, 2023). Mulyasa (2021) cautioned that without systemic support, grassroots teacher innovation is difficult to sustain. Improving learning quality cannot rely solely on individual teachers; it necessitates a supportive educational ecosystem.

Result (نتائج)

Based on interviews, observations, and documentation studies at SDN 117/II Bungo Regency, it was found that the role of classroom teachers in improving learning quality extends beyond mere delivery of curriculum content. Research findings are categorized into four main themes:

1. The Role of Teachers as Contextual and Differentiated Learning Designers Classroom teachers at SDN 117/II endeavor to design learning that contextualizes material within the surrounding environment of Bungo Regency. Observation on March 14, 2025, revealed that during a science lesson on ecosystems, the Grade 4 teacher did not rely exclusively on textbook illustrations; instead, students actively mapped the biodiversity around the school's adjacent rubber plantation and a small river, demonstrating significantly higher engagement compared to textbook-based lessons. "I always try to connect the material with what they see every day. If the textbook covers plant topics, I take them to the garden behind the school or ask them to bring leaves from their parents' oil palm gardens. Thus, they comprehend faster because it is something familiar to them," stated the Grade IV Teacher. Furthermore, teachers differentiate both process and product. For students with low literacy readiness, teachers provide visual and audio materials. Reviewed Teaching Module documents revealed teacher reflection notes regarding learning step adjustments derived from non-cognitive diagnostic assessments administered at the beginning of the semester.

2. The Role of Teachers as Facilitators and Motivators Based on Local Wisdom Limitations in technological infrastructure do not diminish teacher dedication. Classroom teachers function as facilitators by utilizing concrete media and local wisdom. Teachers of Grades II and III utilize natural materials such as seeds, leaves, and pebbles to teach basic mathematical concepts. Regarding motivation, teachers employ a cultural approach. Field notes from April 5, 2025, showed that when the teacher recited a Malay *pantun* about studying, 80% of previously passive students raised their hands to participate. "Children here are sometimes shy when asked to present. I motivate them through a familial approach, like parents to children. I use Malay *pantun* between lesson segments, like '*Pergi ke pasar membeli ragi, jangan lupa membeli duku; jika ingin ilmu yang tinggi, rajinlah belajar wahai muridku,*' to break the ice and encourage them to speak up," shared the Grade III Teacher. A Grade 3 student corroborated this: "*I feel brave to answer when the teacher uses the pantun, it feels like playing but we are learning.*"

3. The Role of Teachers as Follow-Up-Oriented Evaluators A paradigm shift in evaluation is clearly visible in practice at SDN 117/II. Classroom teachers utilize not only written tests but also observations and portfolios. Analysis of student portfolios showed that teachers wrote specific, descriptive feedback such as, "*Your drawing of the river ecosystem is detailed, but let's work on labeling the biotic components correctly,*" rather than just assigning a numerical score. The Grade V Teacher explained that formative assessments serve to map student needs. "If daily test scores are low, I do not immediately reprimand them. I evaluate whether my teaching method was flawed or if the students lacked understanding. If they lack understanding, I conduct remedial sessions using a different approach, perhaps in small groups during recess," she explained.

4. The Role of Teachers as Character Educators and Literacy Promoters Classroom teachers serve as role models and integrators of the Pancasila Student Profile. Observations showed that teachers explicitly teach values of mutual assistance through group work and critical reasoning through problem-based learning using local issues, such as methods for maintaining village river cleanliness. Furthermore, classroom teachers actively drive literacy initiatives. Teachers implemented a 'Classroom Reading Corner' stocked with books from diverse sources, including teacher-authored illustrated storybooks featuring local Bungo legends. This literacy movement encompasses reading, writing, and storytelling, significantly elevating student communication skills and cultural pride.

Discussion (مناقشة)

Research findings at SDN 117/II Bungo Regency provide a comprehensive representation of how classroom teachers navigate challenges and capitalize on opportunities to enhance learning quality. This discussion synthesizes these findings with contemporary educational theory, providing deeper critical analysis and practical implications.

Teacher Adaptability in Designing Contextual Learning Findings regarding contextual and differentiated learning design align with core principles of the Merdeka Curriculum, which emphasize learning tailored to students' achievement stages (Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, 2022). The Merdeka Curriculum contributes specifically to improving learning quality by providing the pedagogical autonomy necessary for teachers to deviate from rigid, standardized textbooks. This flexibility is the prerequisite that allows local wisdom to be integrated effectively. In semi-rural settings, contextualization is an epistemological necessity. According to Darling-Hammond (2020), learning quality is strongly governed by the real-world relevance of content. Teachers at SDN 117/II exhibit pedagogical resilience by adapting differentiated learning into simple yet effective practices, supporting Prihatin's (2022) observation of 'improvisational pedagogy' in resource-constrained regions.

Leveraging Local Wisdom as a Facilitation Modality The role of teachers as facilitators utilizing Malay Bungo local wisdom is a highly significant finding. The practical implication of integrating local wisdom into differentiated learning is that abstract scientific or mathematical concepts are translated into familiar cultural schemas, reducing cognitive load for students from agrarian backgrounds. Studies by Ismail (2023) and Chandra (2022) confirm that ethnopedagogy significantly increases student engagement. At SDN 117/II, teachers successfully converted technological constraints into opportunities to strengthen humanistic interactions. Hattie (2021) emphasized that teacher-student relationships exert a substantial effect size on academic achievement; the familial approach and integration of local *pantun* represent concrete expressions of building these positive relationships, directly enhancing the affective quality of learning.

Transforming Evaluation into Assessment for Learning Evaluation practices oriented toward follow-up reflect a shift in assessment paradigms. The practical implication of integrating local cultural values, such as '*bersauh ke pantai*' (deliberation and mutual cooperation), into formative assessment shifts the assessment dynamic from a top-down judgment to a collaborative dialogue between teacher and student. This finding aligns with Yuliana (2024) and Fauzi (2024), who revealed that consistent formative assessment helps bridge learning gaps. Nevertheless, challenges remain regarding administrative burdens, as teachers frequently sacrifice recess periods to provide descriptive feedback, indicating that teacher well-being requires targeted attention (Supriadi, 2023).

Character and Literacy Integration Amidst Challenges The practical implication of integrating local wisdom into character education is that the Pancasila Student Profile is transformed from a doctrinal list into lived, contextual experiences. Internalizing character through local environmental issues (such as river conservation) shows that teachers effectively apply Project-Based Learning contextually. This corroborates Junaedi (2025) and Asyifa (2023), indicating that character education integrated with local issues leads to deeper value internalization and sustainable behaviors compared to doctrinarian methods. Furthermore, the use of local legends in the Reading Corner directly addresses the literacy gap by providing culturally relevant texts, which Bishop (2020) notes is critical for under-resourced schools.

Systemic Challenges and Implications Despite remarkable efforts, this study uncovers systemic challenges. Teachers feel overwhelmed by complex administrative demands, while access to training from the Education Office remains overly general (Dewi, 2023; Zulkifli, 2023).

Mulyasa (2021) cautioned that without systemic support, grassroots teacher innovation is difficult to sustain. Improving learning quality cannot rely solely on individual teachers; it necessitates a supportive educational ecosystem.

Conclusion (خاتمة)

Based on research findings and discussion, it is concluded that the role of classroom teachers in improving learning quality at SDN 117/II Bungo Regency is multidimensional, adaptive, and deeply rooted in the local sociocultural context. First, as learning designers, teachers successfully contextualize instructional content and apply simple differentiation relevant to Bungo's agrarian environment and students' daily lives. Second, as facilitators and motivators, teachers leverage Malay Bungo local wisdom and concrete media to overcome technological infrastructure limits, building strong teacher-student rapport. Third, as evaluators, teachers have shifted from summative measurement toward actionable formative assessments focused on learning process improvement. Fourth, as character educators, teachers integrate Pancasila Student Profile values and propel literacy through cultural and environmental approaches. Overall, teacher adaptability and pedagogical resilience serve as the cornerstone of learning quality enhancement in the school.

Recommendations Based on the conclusions above, this study offers the following recommendations:

- **For Teachers:** Encouraged to actively participate in and build learning communities (Practitioner Communities) within Teacher Working Groups (KKG) across Bungo Regency to share best practices regarding differentiated instruction and local wisdom integration, while managing administration efficiently using accessible technology.
- **For School Principals:** Urged to provide moral support and flexible policies regarding administrative loads, fostering a school climate that nurtures small-scale classroom innovations initiated by teachers.
- **For Bungo Regency Education Office:** Recommended to design tailored technical training and mentoring programs (bimtek) that move away from one-size-fits-all models toward the context-specific needs of semi-rural teachers. Furthermore, policy adjustments to reduce administrative workloads or provide auxiliary administrative staff are essential to allow teachers to concentrate on pedagogical interaction quality.
- **For Future Researchers:** Recommended to conduct quantitative or mixed-methods studies to precisely measure the effect size of teacher roles and local wisdom integration on cognitive and non-cognitive student outcomes across Bungo Regency and surrounding regions.

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