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The Reality and Challenges of Teachers in Realizing Innovative Learning in Elementary Schools

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Abstract

Innovative learning is an important approach inimproving the quality of teaching and learning processes in elementary schools. Teachers are required to create creative, active, and student-centered learning in order to develop students' critical thinking and 21st- century skills. However, in practice, there are still various challenges faced by teachers in implementing innovative learning in the classroom. This study aims to analyze the realities and challenges faceed by elementary school teachers in implementing innovative learning. The method used in this study is a library research findings. The results of the study show that several major challenges faced by teachers include limited pedagogical competence, inadequate learning facilities and infrastucture, high administrative workload, differences in students characteristics and abilities, and the demands of curriculum changes. Therefore, various efforts are needed, such as improving teacher compotence, providing adequate learning facilities, and strengthening educational policies to support the implementation of innovative learning effectively in elementary schools.

Keywords: *Innovative Learning, Elementary School Teachers, Learning Challenges, Elemtary Education.*

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INTRODUCTION

Education plays an important role in shaping the quality of human resources capable of facing the challenges of a rapidly changing era. In the context of elementary education, the learning process does not only function to deliver knowledge but also to develop students' critical thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration skills. Therefore, teachers are required to create innovative learning environments so that the learning process becomes more meaningful and increases students' engagement in classroom activities.

Innovative learning is a learning approach that emphasizes the use of creative strategies, methods, and media that are student-centered. Through innovative learning, students are not merely recipients of information but actively participate in the learning process through exploration, discussion, problem-solving, and collaboration with their peers.

Furthermore, developments in the Indonesian education curriculum, particularly through the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, increasingly emphasize the importance of student-centered learning. Teachers are encouraged to apply various innovative learning models such as project-based learning, problem-based learning, and contextual learning. These approaches are expected to provide

learning experiences that are more relevant to students' daily lives while also encouraging the development of 21st-century skills.

Teachers who deliver learning materials to students must possess strong teaching abilities. Based on Article 28 Paragraph 3 of Government Regulation of the Republic of Indonesia Number 19 of 2005 concerning National Education Standards, teachers are required to have the ability to understand the conditions and feelings of students. The competencies that teachers must possess include pedagogical competence, personality competence, professional competence, and social competence. These four competencies are essential in supporting the success of the learning process and preparing students for various learning activities. In addition, Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 14 of 2005 concerning Teachers and Lecturers states that pedagogical competence refers to the teacher's ability to manage students' learning processes (Faridah et al., 2020). The Ministry of National Education (2004) also states that this competence relates to learning management skills. These competencies can be seen in teachers' ability to plan learning programs, implement and manage the learning process, interact with students, and assess learning outcomes. Thus, professional teachers are not only able to perform teaching tasks but are also capable of managing themselves in carrying out their daily responsibilities so that they can help students develop from not knowing to understanding, and from immaturity to maturity (Pibina et al., 2025).

However, in practice, not all teachers can easily implement innovative learning in the classroom. Various studies indicate that teachers still face several challenges in realizing innovative learning in elementary schools. These challenges include limited pedagogical competence, inadequate learning facilities and infrastructure, and a relatively high administrative workload. The implementation of innovative learning within the Merdeka Curriculum still encounters several obstacles, particularly related to teachers' readiness to design creative and effective learning strategies.

Despite these challenges, innovative learning remains one of the key factors in improving the quality of education in elementary schools. Therefore, continuous efforts are needed to improve teacher competencies and provide adequate facilities and infrastructure so that innovative learning can be implemented optimally.

Based on the description above, this study aims to analyze the realities and challenges faced by teachers in implementing innovative learning in elementary schools and to identify various efforts that can support the implementation of innovative learning in the elementary education process.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach using the library research method (Sugiyono, 2019). This method is used to examine and analyze various literature sources related to innovative learning and the challenges faced by teachers in its implementation in elementary schools. The literature study was conducted by collecting data from various sources such as scientific journals, books, research articles, and academic documents relevant to the research topic.

The data collection technique was carried out through searching and analyzing literature obtained from various scientific journal databases such as Google Scholar and national journal portals. The literature used mainly comes from educational journals discussing innovative learning, teacher competencies, and the implementation of learning in elementary schools.

Furthermore, the data analysis technique was conducted using qualitative descriptive analysis, namely by reviewing, comparing, and interpreting various findings from relevant literature. Through this analysis, the researcher attempts to identify the realities occurring in the field as well as the various challenges faced by teachers in realizing innovative learning in elementary schools.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Concept of Innovative Learning

Innovative learning is an approach in education that emphasizes renewal in learning processes, methods, and strategies in order to improve both the quality of the learning process and student learning outcomes. According to Sanjaya and Budimanjaya, innovative learning refers to learning that adapts to the development of the times, utilizes technology in learning activities, and provides opportunities for students to develop critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication skills.

Innovative learning is one of the strategies designed by teachers to help students understand learning materials more effectively and easily (Novela et al., 2024). Mustafa and Dwiyogo define innovative learning as a learning process that uses new or modified approaches, methods, techniques, and learning media to create more meaningful, active, and effective learning experiences. Innovative learning is not limited to the use of technology but also includes renewal in various aspects of learning, including the way learning is designed, implemented, and evaluated. In innovative learning, teachers do not only act as transmitters of information but also as facilitators who assist students in discovering and constructing their own knowledge.

Innovative learning involves models such as inquiry learning or project-based learning, which stimulate students' creativity through concrete interaction and the use of technology. In elementary schools, this approach is particularly important because students aged 7–12 years are in the concrete operational stage, which requires real and contextual learning experiences to avoid boredom. Teachers are therefore required to be creative so that learning does not become monotonous, in line with the constructivist learning paradigm (Made et al., 2024).

The success of innovative learning largely depends on teachers' awareness, wisdom, and careful planning in designing learning activities. Teachers need to develop creative ideas in teaching so that learning becomes systematic, engaging, and responsive to students' needs (Ulhaq et al., 2025). By doing so, students can develop stronger reasoning abilities and become more actively involved in the learning process.

In this context, the roles of teachers and school principals become highly important. Teachers are expected to creatively utilize local resources, use simple teaching materials, and involve parents and community members as part of

the learning ecosystem. This approach aligns with the ideas of Abdurrahmansyah, who emphasizes that learning innovation can still be implemented even with limited facilities, as long as teachers possess strong pedagogical competence. However, severe limitations in facilities may still reduce the quality of learning, especially in activities requiring digital technology. This indicates that teacher creativity cannot completely replace the role of adequate educational infrastructure.

School principals also play a strategic role in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum through decision-making, school management, and collaboration with external stakeholders. Community support, including contributions of materials or the use of environmental resources as learning materials, reflects collaborative leadership as recommended by Abdurrahmansyah. This demonstrates that various limitations can be addressed through visionary leadership and community empowerment (Putri et al., 2025).

From the definitions above, it can be concluded that innovative learning is a learning process that emphasizes teachers' creativity in designing engaging, interactive, and relevant learning activities aligned with students' needs and contemporary developments. Such learning increases student participation and encourages meaningful learning experiences.

In practice, innovative learning can be implemented through various learning models such as problem-based learning, project-based learning, cooperative learning, and inquiry learning. These models provide opportunities for students to actively participate in the learning process through discussion, group work, problem-solving, and exploratory activities.

However, the reality in the field shows that the implementation of innovative learning in elementary schools has not yet been fully optimized. Some teachers still rely on conventional teaching methods such as lectures and assignments. This situation often results in limited student participation in the learning process. Research published in the Basicedu Journal indicates that innovative learning strategies can

Challenges in Implementing Innovative Learning

One effective form of teacher development is training. In the rapidly evolving digital era, the urgency of teacher training and human resource development has become increasingly crucial in improving educational quality. Training needs analysis in modern education shows that digital transformation has significantly changed the learning paradigm. In addition, the application of technology in learning, such as e-learning and blended learning, has become an important solution for improving teachers' competencies in facing educational challenges in the digital era.

Despite various efforts, teachers still face several challenges in improving their competencies. In some regions, particularly rural areas, the quality of education still faces serious obstacles. Limited access to technology and the lack of training opportunities for teachers are two major problems affecting the quality of education in rural areas.

Technological facilities and infrastructure in many rural areas remain limited, especially in the education sector. Internet access, which has become an essential component of modern learning, is still not adequately available in many rural regions. The lack of internet access and supporting technologies prevents

teachers from utilizing modern learning resources, including online learning materials that can broaden students' perspectives.

In addition to technological limitations, rural areas also face shortages of basic educational infrastructure such as proper school buildings, libraries, and laboratories. The imbalance in the provision of physical infrastructure widens the gap between education in urban and rural areas. Without adequate supporting facilities, teaching and learning activities cannot be conducted optimally, which ultimately affects the quality of education received by students.

Another challenge is the lack of training and capacity development for teachers. Teachers are the main agents in the educational process, and improving their quality is crucial to improving student learning outcomes. In rural areas, teachers often lack adequate training to face curriculum changes and the demands of 21st-century learning. This condition is further exacerbated by limited educational budgets and insufficient attention from authorities toward teacher professional development in remote areas.

Several major challenges in implementing innovative learning include (Sustiana et al., 2025):

1. Resistance to change and societal expectations
   Some teachers still tend to use traditional teaching methods and are not fully open to implementing new approaches. In addition, parents and communities often expect conventional teaching methods.
2. Limited teacher competence and training
   Many teachers lack sufficient knowledge and skills to implement innovative learning due to limited professional development opportunities.
3. Limited facilities, infrastructure, and funding
   Innovative learning often requires adequate media, technology, and teaching aids, which are not always available in all schools.
4. Time constraints and curriculum adjustments
   Innovative learning requires longer preparation time and must be aligned with national curriculum requirements.
5. Sustainability of innovative learning implementation
   Ensuring that innovative learning is implemented consistently and sustainably over time remains a significant challenge.

Efforts to Overcome the Challenges of Innovative Learning

To realize innovative learning in elementary schools, collaborative efforts involving teachers, schools, and the government are necessary. Several strategies that can be implemented include:(Sari et al., 2018)

1. Overcoming resistance to change
   This can be achieved by involving teachers in the development of innovative learning programs, demonstrating the success of new methods through pilot projects, and providing incentives or rewards for teachers who implement innovative practices.
2. Addressing infrastructure and funding limitations
   Schools can gradually implement innovative learning based on their conditions, utilize local resources, and collaborate with external stakeholders.
3. Improving teacher competence and training

Continuous professional development programs, teacher learning communities, and mentoring from experienced teachers can help teachers develop more effective learning strategies.

4. Managing time constraints and teacher workload
   Reducing administrative burdens and allocating specific time for teachers to design innovative learning activities can support innovation.
5. Bridging the digital divide
   Providing devices for disadvantaged students, developing offline learning materials, and establishing community learning centers can help reduce digital inequality.
6. Developing evaluation systems and curriculum adjustments
   Assessment rubrics aligned with innovative learning approaches, project-based assessments, portfolio evaluations, and formative assessments should be integrated into the learning process.

Solutions and Recommendations for Effective Implementation

To overcome limitations in teacher training access, strong support from the government and educational institutions is required. The government must provide funding and alternative training opportunities for teachers in remote areas so that they can access professional development programs comparable to teachers in urban areas.

Central and local governments must strengthen collaboration in improving the quality of education following the Regional Autonomy Law, which assigns educational management responsibilities to district and municipal governments.

Strategies to improve teachers' digital competencies include:

1 Training programs (face-to-face or online)
2 Development of supporting infrastructure
3 Provision of learning content
4 Motivation through incentives or rewards

Training remains one of the most effective ways to improve teacher competencies. Training programs should be designed based on teachers' characteristics and needs to ensure effectiveness (Sari et al., 2018).

Several strategic recommendations for effective implementation include (Wijaya et al., 2024):

1. Teacher Professional Development
   a. Organizing practical training based on experiential learning
   b. Establishing communities of practice among teachers
   c. Developing online self-learning modules
   d. Strengthening the role of teacher working groups (MGMP and KKG)
   e. Integrating innovative learning in teacher education institutions
   f. Implementing continuous coaching systems
   g. Developing career pathways based on teaching innovation
   h. Establishing innovation centers in each province
   i. Encouraging collaborative classroom action research
2. Optimization of School Resources
   a. Developing innovative learning models suited to school conditions
   b. Utilizing local resources and recycled materials as learning media

c. Establishing shared learning resource banks
d. Promoting resource sharing among schools
e. Developing community learning centers
f. Collaborating with industries through CSR programs
g. Developing sustainable digital infrastructure
h. Establishing innovative learning laboratories in districts
- Integrating learning technology with school management systems

3. Support from Parents and Educational Stakeholders
   a. Involving parents through regular forums
   b. Organizing exhibitions of innovative learning outcomes
   c. Strengthening collaboration between schools and communities
   d. Developing strategic partnerships with various sectors
   e. Establishing networks of model schools for innovative learning
   f. Creating online platforms for sharing best practices
   g. Establishing provincial educational innovation centers
   h. Developing national policies supporting lifelong innovative learning
   i. Cultivating a culture of innovation within the national education ecosystem.

CONCLUSION

Innovative learning plays an important role in improving the quality of education in elementary schools. This approach emphasizes the use of creative strategies, methods, and learning media that actively involve students in the learning process. Through innovative learning, students are encouraged to develop critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication skills that are essential in the 21st century. Teachers therefore have a crucial role in designing learning activities that are engaging, meaningful, and relevant to students' needs so that the learning process can run effectively and optimally.

However, the implementation of innovative learning still faces several challenges, such as limited teacher competence, inadequate infrastructure and technology, high administrative workloads, and resistance to change. To overcome these challenges, cooperation among teachers, schools, governments, and the community is required through continuous professional development, improved educational facilities, and stronger support systems. With sustained efforts and collaboration from various stakeholders, innovative learning can be implemented more effectively and contribute to improving the quality of education in elementary schools.

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