

HOW 'KAMPUS MENGAJAR' PROGRAMS SUSTAINABLY AFFECTS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL LITERACY DEVELOPMENT?

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ABSTRACT

The 2022 PISA results show that Indonesia is ranked 71st in the reading category. Indonesian students' reading ability scores decreased from 371 to 359. At the elementary school level, the 2023 national education report card shows that the majority of Indonesian students have only reached the minimum literacy competency level with a percentage of 61.53%. This information indicates that the literacy level of Indonesian students in general is still very low. In response to this, the government through the ministry of education and culture launched a program entitled Kampus Mengajar. This program is designed to bring students to schools, especially elementary school level, to support increasing literacy. This program seeks to optimize student literacy development in Indonesia through improving the quality of teaching, utilizing technology, project-based learning, developing soft skills, and increasing access to innovative reading sources. This research seeks to explore the impact & potential of the Kampus Mengajar program for developing literacy in elementary schools in Indonesia in a sustainable manner. This research uses a type of literature study research (literature review) with the selected review model is a narrative review. Researchers use analytical descriptive methods by collecting, identifying, compiling and analyzing various data found. The result of this study shows that the kampus mengajar program has a good impact and potential in developing sustainable literacy in primary schools. The kampus mengajar has an impact on improving the quality of literacy learning in the classroom and students' reading and writing skills. The challenges for the sustainability of the kampus mengajar program are a limited resources and funding, addressing diverse learning needs, and measuring the long-term impact. Recommendations for program sustainability are; 1) focus on collaborative capacity building, 2) developing sustainable resources and practices, 3) integrating technology for enhanced learning experiences, and 4) monitoring and evaluation with a focus on sustainability.

Keywords: Kampus Mengajar, Literacy Skill, Sustainable Literacy

1. INTRODUCTION

Literacy is the fundamental skill that unlocks the vast storehouse of knowledge and empowers individuals to participate actively in society. While literacy development is a lifelong process, the foundation laid during elementary school is paramount (Murphy, 2023). Literacy development in elementary school is pivotal for several reasons. It lays the foundation for a child's academic success, enabling them to grasp new concepts, solve problems, and engage in independent learning more effectively. Children with strong literacy skills are more confident in their studies, approach education with a positive attitude, and exhibit improved cognitive abilities. This confidence and proficiency in reading and writing translate into better communication skills and a more proactive approach to learning, both inside and outside the classroom.

Literacy development is crucial for overall child development. It supports cognitive development, enhancing a child's ability to think, understand, and make sense of the world around (Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998). Reading to children from

an early age not only improves their language acquisition and communication skills but also stimulates the brain, forming new neural connections and strengthening existing ones. This early exposure to reading helps children bridge the gap between what they see, hear, and read in stories and their own lives, fostering a deeper understanding of their world. Moreover, reading introduces children to the formal language of books, which differs from everyday speech, thereby enriching their vocabulary and grammatical structures. This early exposure to literacy is very important considering the vulnerability of Indonesian students to being left behind in their reading skills compared to other countries. This highlights the importance of early intervention and support for the development of reading skills in Indonesia.

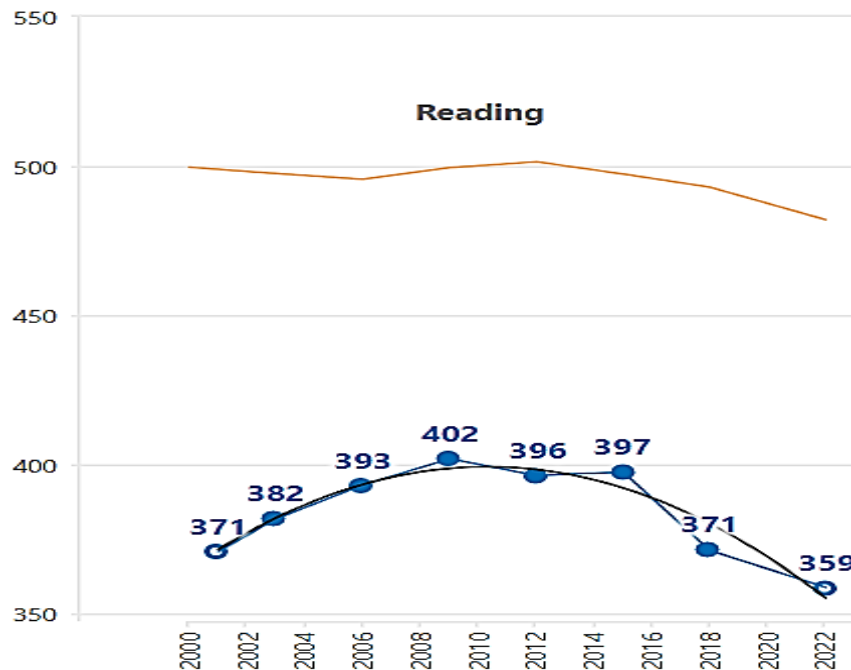
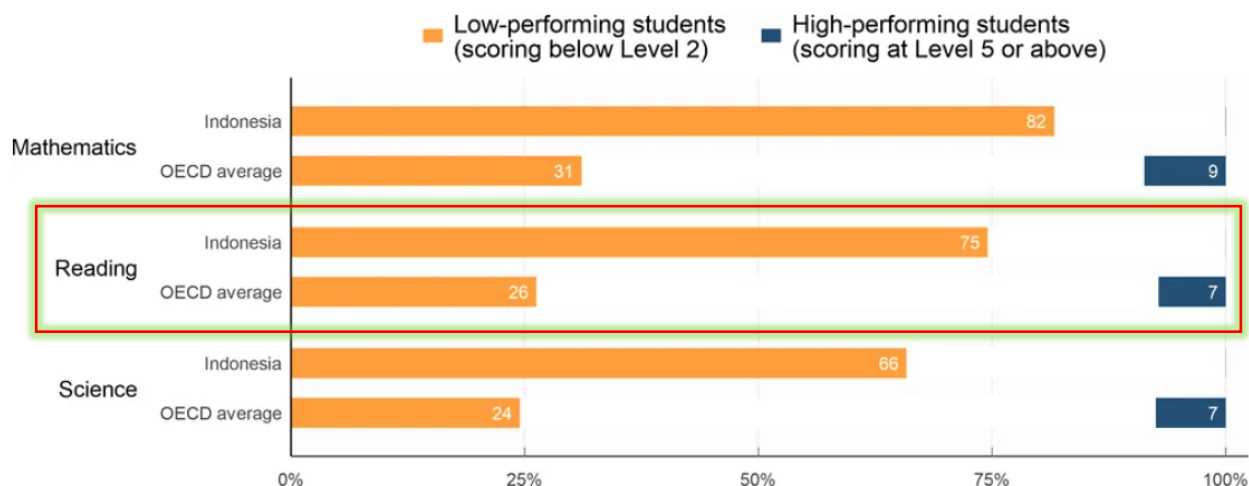


Figure 1. Trends in performance in mathematics, reading and science Indonesia's Student
(source: OECD, 2023)

The results of the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) shows that Indonesian students' reading ability is still in the low range of 350-400. The score is still below the average score of students' reading ability globally (internationally) which is 500. The data validates the backwardness of Indonesian students in literacy skills. Over the most recent period (2018 to 2022), the gap between the highest-scoring students and the weakest students did not change significantly in reading. A smaller proportion of students in Indonesia, than on average across OECD countries, were top performers (Level 5 or 6) in at least one subject. At the same time a smaller proportion of students than on average across OECD countries achieved a minimum level of proficiency (Level 2 or higher) in all three subject, specifically in reading ability.



Note: Numbers inside the figure correspond to percentages.

Figure 2. Top performers and low-performing students in mathematics, reading and science Indonesia's Student (source: OECD, 2023)

Some 25% of students in Indonesia attained Level 2 or higher in reading (OECD average: 74%). At a minimum, these students can identify the main idea in a text of moderate length, find information based on explicit, though sometimes complex criteria, and can reflect on the purpose and form of texts when explicitly directed to do so. The share of 15-year-old students who attained minimum levels of proficiency in reading (Level 2 or higher) varied from 89% in Singapore to 8% in Cambodia. In Indonesia, almost no students scored at Level 5 or higher in reading (OECD average: 7%). These students can comprehend lengthy texts, deal with concepts that are abstract or counterintuitive, and establish distinctions between fact and opinion, based on implicit cues pertaining to the content or source of the information. The 2022 PISA results can adequately illustrate how generally low the quality of literacy in Indonesia is. The low literacy ability of Indonesian students is also supported by various expert research data which states that the literacy ability of Indonesian students in general is still far below that of developed countries throughout the world.

The government of Indonesia launched the Kampus Mengajar program in response to the low literacy rates among Indonesian students, particularly in elementary schools. This initiative is part of the broader Merdeka Belajar (Independent Learning) curriculum, aimed at transforming the traditional education system into a more flexible and independent learning environment. The Kampus Mengajar program is designed to enhance students' literacy and numeracy skills through a curriculum that emphasizes self-directed learning, critical thinking, and problem-solving. By focusing on these areas, the program seeks to address the fundamental literacy skills that are often lacking in the traditional education model. This approach not only aims to improve students' academic performance but also prepares them for lifelong learning and success in the modern world. The launch of the Kampus Mengajar program represents a strategic effort by the Indonesian government to address the literacy skills gap among students and ensure that they are well-equipped to navigate the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century.

The "Kampus Mengajar" program in Indonesia plays a significant role in literacy development. This initiative is part of a broader shift towards independent learning, which is a new paradigm of education in Indonesia. The Kampus Mengajar program aims to empower students with the skills and knowledge necessary to learn independently, thereby fostering a culture of lifelong learning. By emphasizing self-directed learning, students are encouraged to take ownership of their education, which is a critical component of literacy development. This approach not only enhances students' reading and writing skills but also develops

their critical thinking, problem-solving, and research abilities (Jamaludin et al., 2022) . These skills are essential for navigating the complexities of modern education and preparing students for future challenges in the workforce and beyond.

Moreover, the Kampus Mengajar program aligns with the Indonesian government's vision for education reform, which seeks to create a more dynamic and responsive educational system. By integrating technology and fostering a culture of independent learning, the program aims to equip students with the tools and attitudes necessary to thrive in a rapidly changing world (Sumani et al., 2022). This focus on literacy development through independent learning is particularly relevant in the context of Indonesia, where the country's rapid economic growth and increasing globalization present unique challenges and opportunities for education. The Kampus Mengajar program represents a strategic investment in the future of Indonesian education and the development of its citizens.

The potential impact of implementing the Kampus Mengajar program is significant. It has the potential to transform the educational landscape in Indonesia, moving away from a one-size-fits-all approach to education and towards a more personalized and flexible learning environment. This shift could lead to improved student outcomes, including higher literacy rates, better critical thinking skills, and enhanced problem-solving abilities (Nugraha et al., 2023). Furthermore, the program could contribute to a more dynamic and responsive educational system, better equipped to meet the challenges and opportunities of the future. By empowering students with the skills and knowledge necessary to learn independently, the Kampus Mengajar program not only enhances their academic performance but also prepares them for lifelong learning and success in the global economy. So the question is, how Kampus Mengajar programs guarantee the sustainable development of Indonesian students' literacy?

2. METHOD

This research uses a type of literature study research (literature review) with the selected review model is a narrative review. The study conducted in the narrative review model is to compare data from several national and international journals that have been analyzed and summarized based on the author's experience, existing theories and models. The research method used is a qualitative research method with the data source used in the form of secondary data obtained from several scientific journals, articles and previous studies that have been analyzed by the author, as well as internalizing the author's observations about the research problem being studied. Researchers use analytical descriptive methods by collecting, identifying, compiling and analyzing various data found.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Impact of 'Kampus Mengajar' programs on elementary school literacy development

Indonesia's Kampus Mengajar Merdeka Belajar program broadens access to quality education by deploying university students to under-resourced schools, enhancing teacher skills through professional development, and creating new learning materials. As Debrah et al. (2021) stated, this kind of initiative could injects fresh perspectives into classrooms, strengthens teacher expertise, provides valuable resources, and raises public awareness of education's significance, ultimately leading to a better learning environment for more Indonesian students.

The Kampus Mengajar Merdeka Belajar program enhances the quality of education for students in several ways (Nelly et al., 2022). University student mentors bring fresh perspectives and potentially stronger subject knowledge to classrooms, particularly in under-resourced schools. This exposure can ignite a passion for learning and improve student comprehension. Additionally, the program fosters the development of essential soft skills like problem-solving and communication through innovative teaching methods employed by the student

mentors. These combined factors can lead to a more well-rounded educational experience for students.

Drawing on global education research, the Kampus Mengajar Merdeka Belajar program's implementation aligns with strategies proven to enhance educational quality of UNESCO. By placing university students in underserved schools, the program echoes findings that peer learning approaches can boost student achievement and motivation (Topping et al., 2017). Moreover, the program's emphasis on professional development for teachers reflects global recognition of the critical role well-trained educators play in student success (OECD, 2019). This focus on both student exposure to fresh perspectives and teacher skill improvement creates a fertile ground for quality improvement within the Indonesian education system.

The Kampus Mengajar program holds promise for enhancing student reading and writing skills by leveraging two key strategies supported by educational research. Firstly, the program introduces university student mentors into classrooms. Research by Topping et al., (2017) demonstrates the effectiveness of peer learning approaches in boosting student motivation and achievement, including in literacy skills. These university mentors can serve as positive role models, igniting a passion for reading and writing in younger students. Additionally, they can provide personalized attention, particularly beneficial in under-resourced schools that often lack dedicated literacy programs.

Secondly, the Kampus Mengajar program emphasizes innovative teaching methods. The National Council of Teachers of English highlights the importance of engaging instructional practices in improving student comprehension and engagement with reading and writing (Seltzer & O'Brien, 2024). By encouraging these methods, the program equips student mentors with the tools to make literacy learning more interactive and effective. This combination of positive role models and engaging teaching methods has the potential to create a more supportive and stimulating learning environment, fostering significant gains in student reading and writing skills.

Apart from bringing innovation to reading and writing learning methods, the Kampus Mengajar program also requires students to initiate other literacy development programs in the nature of projects. To date, many works have been produced by students in the implementation of campus teaching at schools in order to create a strong literacy culture and nuance in schools. Various programs such as revitalizing reading corners, making wall magazines, literacy-rich environments, Indonesian drama classes, and literacy festivals have been able to change the atmosphere of literacy learning in schools to be more lively and enjoyable. Strickland & Walker (2004) said If teachers create a literate environment supporting all readers in their efforts to make sense of literacy events, students will come to revalue reading. Literacy learning should not be seen as an exclusive thing but integrated into daily habits.

The program empowers university mentors to create engaging literacy projects tailored to student interests. This builds upon the Merdeka Belajar principle of student-centered learning. By introducing students to a variety of reading materials beyond textbooks and incorporating games, discussions, or creative writing exercises, the program makes learning enjoyable and caters to individual preferences. This shift away from rote memorization and towards fostering a love for reading resonates with research by Allington (2006) who highlights the importance of student choice and engagement in developing a love for reading. This autonomy and focus on enjoyment can spark a natural curiosity and intrinsic love for reading that goes beyond mandated learning.

The Kampus Mengajar program in Indonesia, which places university students in elementary schools, offers a unique opportunity to not only enhance student literacy development but also positively impact teachers' professional growth and practice. Research suggests the program benefits teachers in several ways. Firstly, Kampus Mengajar students can expose teachers to innovative teaching strategies (Suprema et al., 2023), fostering professional development

through collaboration and knowledge sharing. This can involve techniques like incorporating technology into lessons or differentiated instruction to cater to diverse learners' needs. Secondly, the program reduces teacher workload by providing support with tasks like conducting reading groups or preparing materials, allowing teachers to focus on core instruction and personalized attention for students (Suyatno et al., 2023).

Furthermore, witnessing improved student literacy outcomes due to collaborative efforts can be a motivating factor for teachers, increasing job satisfaction and fostering a sense of shared responsibility for student success (references on teacher motivation and job satisfaction can be found in general educational research on professional development programs). Overall, the Kampus Mengajar program holds promise for creating a supportive environment where both teachers and students can thrive in their literacy development journeys.

3.2 Challenges and limitations of 'Kampus Mengajar' programs

1) Limited resources and funding

A study conducted by Laksono & Retnaningdyah (2018) reveal, resource limitations impede the program's capacity to deliver quality education consistently, with inadequate teaching aids, insufficient infrastructure, and a dearth of trained educators in remote areas exacerbating the challenge. Research by Allington (2014) emphasizes the importance of providing students with a wide range of engaging and age-appropriate reading materials. This lack of variety can hinder student motivation and make it difficult for them to find materials that spark their interest and cater to their reading levels. Hence, addressing these constraints through sustainable funding mechanisms and efficient resource allocation strategies is imperative to enhance the program's impact and ensure equitable access to education for all students.

According to Yasir (2021), underscores the pivotal role of financial backing in sustaining such initiatives, with the program heavily reliant on external funding to cover essential expenses like transportation, teaching materials, and accommodation for student volunteers. However, securing adequate financial support remains a formidable challenge, hindering the program's scalability and its potential to reach more remote and underserved communities. Funding could address logistical challenges faced by host schools, such as providing dedicated classroom space and essential teaching materials for the Kampus Mengajar students. Additionally, resources could be allocated for ongoing mentorship ensure a more supportive environment that ultimately leading to a more successful program (Muhammad Hilmi et al., 2022).

2) Addressing diverse learning needs

Addressing diverse learning needs within the development literacy programs in Indonesia presents a significant challenge due to the country's vast geographical and cultural diversity. With over 700 languages spoken across the archipelago (Sneddon, 2003), the literacy needs vary greatly among different regions, ethnic groups, and socio-economic backgrounds. Research by Azizah et al. (2022) highlights the disparities in literacy rates between urban and rural areas, as well as among different demographic groups, underscoring the importance of tailored approaches to address diverse learning needs effectively. Furthermore, inadequate access to quality education resources and trained educators in remote and marginalized communities further exacerbates the challenge of promoting literacy development comprehensively (UNESCO, 2017).

Moreover, the rapid advancements in technology and digital media pose additional challenges in addressing diverse learning needs within development literacy programs. While digital platforms offer new opportunities for literacy development, particularly among younger generations, the digital divide persists, with many communities lacking access to reliable internet connectivity and digital devices (Curran et al., 2019). Research by Kurniawan & Zaphiris (2006) emphasizes the importance of bridging this gap through innovative approaches that leverage technology while considering the socio-economic constraints faced

by marginalized populations. Additionally, promoting digital literacy skills alongside traditional literacy practices is essential to equip learners with the tools they need to navigate an increasingly digital world.

3) Measuring the long-term impact

Measuring the long-term impact of development literacy programs in Indonesia presents a significant challenge. While programs might show initial improvements in student reading skills, gauging their lasting effects requires a long-term perspective. Many Indonesian literacy programs struggle with resource constraints, which often limit the scope of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) efforts. In-depth, long-term studies can be expensive and require trained personnel, resources that might not be readily available. Without robust M&E systems, it's difficult to assess how effectively programs are contributing to sustained improvements in student literacy beyond the immediate program duration (S. Karimi, 2020).

Research by UNESCO (2017)) indicates that assessing the enduring effects of literacy initiatives requires longitudinal studies that track participants' progress beyond the duration of the program. However, logistical constraints, funding limitations, and the transient nature of program participants pose challenges in conducting comprehensive long-term evaluations. Additionally, the effectiveness of literacy interventions may be influenced by socio-economic factors, educational policies, and cultural dynamics, further complicating efforts to measure sustained impact (Benavot, 2015). Factors beyond the program's scope, such as a student's home environment, access to reading materials, and continued educational opportunities, all play a role in long-term literacy outcomes. This makes it challenging to isolate the program's specific long-term impact and attribute reading skill gains solely to the program's intervention.

3.3 Recommendations for development of sustainability

1) Focus on Collaborative Capacity Building: Strengthening partnerships with schools and communities

To strengthen partnerships with schools and communities and sustain the impact of 'Kampus Mengajar' programs, several recommendations can be considered. Firstly, fostering collaborative relationships with local schools is essential for integrating program activities into the existing educational infrastructure. Research by Aulia et al. (2022) underscores the importance of aligning program objectives with school curricula and learning outcomes to ensure relevance and sustainability. By engaging school administrators, teachers, and students in program planning and implementation, 'Kampus Mengajar' can enhance buy-in and foster a sense of ownership among key stakeholders. Additionally, providing professional development opportunities for teachers to incorporate innovative teaching methods promoted by the program can further strengthen partnerships with schools and promote long-term impact.

Establishing community-led initiatives, such as parent-teacher associations or literacy clubs, can create platforms for ongoing collaboration and support for educational activities even after university students have completed their assignments. Instead, cultivate a collaborative environment where Kampus Mengajar students work alongside elementary school teachers. University students can share effective literacy practices, co-teach lessons, and mentor teachers on differentiated instruction strategies (Ahyar & Zumrotun, 2023). This collaborative approach equips teachers with the necessary skills and knowledge to sustain effective literacy instruction beyond the program's duration. Research by Desimone et al. (2003) highlights the importance of teacher collaboration in promoting effective teaching practices. By building teacher capacity and fostering a culture of shared learning, Kampus Mengajar can ensure continued literacy development even after university students' departure.

Promoting sustainability requires a long-term commitment to capacity building and institutional strengthening within both schools and communities. Catone et al., n.d. suggests investing in training programs for local educators, community

leaders, and university students to develop their skills in project management, leadership, and advocacy. By empowering local stakeholders to take ownership of educational initiatives and mobilize resources effectively, 'Kampus Mengajar' programs can foster a culture of self-reliance and resilience in the face of challenges. Additionally, establishing monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to track program impact and gather feedback from beneficiaries can facilitate continuous improvement and adaptation to evolving needs and circumstances. Through these concerted efforts, 'Kampus Mengajar' can strengthen its partnerships with schools and communities and maximize its long-term impact on education equity and quality in Indonesia.

2) Developing Sustainable Resources and Practices

The program's impact can be extended by creating resources and practices that schools can readily adopt after the university students leave. This could involve co-creating accessible lesson plans with teachers, compiling a library of age-appropriate reading materials for different skill levels, or establishing partnerships with local librarians or literacy organizations. These resources and connections can provide ongoing support for teachers and students, fostering a sustainable approach to literacy development. Developing sustainable resources and practices for a reading development program at an elementary school, also need to involves a multifaceted approach aimed at long-term effectiveness and community engagement. It need to establishing partnerships with local libraries, educational organizations, and community centers can provide access to a wide range of reading materials and resources. Collaborating with these entities not only ensures a steady supply of books but also fosters a sense of community involvement in the program.

In terms of routine practice in schools, alternative efforts to develop sustainable resources can be addressed by contextualize materials. Such as relate to local environment. Instead of using abstract concepts, Kampus Mengajar students can tailor their teaching to the specific environment of the elementary school. For example, reading exploring about water conservation efforts, or traditional sustainable agricultural techniques. Resources like "World Wildlife Fund: <https://www.worldwildlife.org/>" or "The Nature Conservancy: <https://www.nature.org/>" offer educational materials that can be adapted for younger audiences.

Another way, for example is using project base learning. Hands-on projects can solidify understanding of sustainability principles. Students could develop a school garden using recycled materials, design posters promoting water conservation, or conduct a waste audit to identify areas for improvement. Project Learning resources can be found from "Edutopia: <https://www.edutopia.org/>". The teachers can also create digital resources like presentations, interactive games, or short educational videos that can be easily adapted and used by future participants. Sharing platforms like "Google Drive: <https://www.drive.google.com/>" or "Dropbox: <https://www.dropbox.com/>" can be used to store and share these resources.

3) Integrating technology for enhanced learning experiences

Integrating technology can enhance both access to resources and the learning experience. Implementing digital libraries or online platforms for reading materials can overcome physical barriers and provide students with a diverse selection of books. Additionally, utilizing educational apps or interactive e-books can make reading more engaging and interactive, catering to different learning styles and preferences among students. For example, apps like Lexia Core5 and Raz-Kids provide adaptive activities targeting various aspects of literacy, such as phonics, comprehension, and vocabulary, while also tracking students' progress over time. In another way, platforms like Epic! and Storybird offer access to a vast library of digital books, audiobooks, and multimedia content, allowing students to explore diverse genres and formats

Optimizing technology to support sustainable programs can also be implemented in the provision of Collaboration and Knowledge Sharing forums. Creating online platforms or communities of practice where university students can exchange ideas, resources, and best practices fosters a sense of belonging and collective learning, strengthening their commitment to the program and its long-term sustainability (Mikroyannidis et al., 2023). Create a platform for Kampus Mengajar students to share their experiences, successful teaching strategies, and locally-sourced content related to sustainability. This platform could be a forum, online community, or social media group.

4) Monitoring and Evaluation with a Focus on Sustainability

Track Student Progress and Kampus Mengajar Implementation: Regular assessments should measure student literacy skills before, during, and after the Kampus Mengajar program. Additionally, M&E should evaluate factors influencing long-term sustainability, such as the effectiveness of teacher training provided to Kampus Mengajar participants, the integration of literacy practices into the regular curriculum by elementary school teachers, and the availability of necessary resources within the schools. Research by Durlak & DuPre (2008) emphasizes the importance of evaluating these implementation factors alongside student outcomes to understand how the program is functioning and identify areas for improvement.

Evaluate Long-Term Sustainability of Literacy Gains: M&E should extend beyond the Kampus Mengajar program's duration to assess the program's lasting impact on student literacy skills and school practices. This could involve tracking student literacy levels months after the program's completion or monitoring schools continued use of the Kampus Mengajar teachers' implemented literacy strategies. By collecting data on these long-term outcomes, the program can be adapted to ensure it contributes to lasting improvements in student literacy and empowers schools to continue promoting literacy development after the Kampus Mengajar students depart (Karimi et al., 2020).

4. SUMMARY

The kampus mengajar program shows good impact and potential in developing sustainable literacy in primary schools. The kampus mengajar has an impact on improving the quality of literacy learning in the classroom and students' reading and writing skills. The challenges for the sustainability of the kampus mengajar program are a limited resources and funding, addressing diverse learning needs, and measuring the long-term impact. Recommendations for program sustainability are; 1) focus on collaborative capacity building, 2) developing sustainable resources and practices, 3) integrating technology for enhanced learning experiences, and 4) monitoring and evaluation with a focus on sustainability.

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