Development of a READING Model (Reading, Exploring, Analyzing, Discussing, and Narrating) Grounded in Multiculturalism to Strengthen Cultural Literacy in Children's Literature Learning

Opik*, Dadang Sunendar, Vismaia S. Damayanti, Bunyamin Maftuh
Elementary Education Study Program, Faculty of Education,
Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia.
*Corresponding Author. Email: opikdanarya@upi.edu

Abstract: This study aims to develop the READING Model (Reading, Exploring, Analyzing, Discussing, and Narrating) based on multiculturalism to strengthen cultural literacy in children's literature learning. The model is grounded in transactional reader-text theory, sociocultural approaches, and cultural competence. This study used an educational design research (EDR) approach, involving problem identification, prototype development, trial and refinement, and implementation and reflection. Data were collected through model validation assessment sheets, implementation observations, reflective interviews, documentation, and testing, and analyzed using thematic analysis and statistical tests. The model was tested on 137 fifth-grade students from six elementary schools in Tasikmalaya City. The results show that the model is highly valid (average score of 3.55 from experts and 3.57 from practitioners), practical (implementation rates of 94.29%, 97.14%, and 100% in three schools), and effective in improving students' learning outcomes in cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains.

Introduction

Indonesia is a great nation blessed with extraordinary cultural, linguistic and ethnic diversity. With more than 1,300 ethnic groups and 718 regional languages spread from Sabang to Merauke, this diversity is an invaluable national wealth (Kemdikbud, 2025). However, behind this potential, diversity also holds serious challenges, especially if it is not managed and understood well by the younger generation. Multiculturalism, if not instilled early in education, can be a source of social disintegration, as suggested by Huda et al. (2023), who state that diversity is a double-edged sword: it can strengthen or destroy a nation's civilisation.

Ideally, the Indonesian education system should be able to instil the values of multiculturalism since the primary education level. Students in primary schools should be taught to recognise, understand and appreciate cultural, religious, racial and ethnic differences as part of the richness of national identity. However, the reality on the ground shows that the strengthening of multicultural values in primary education is still very limited. Learning in the classroom is still dominated by conventional approaches, and appreciation of children's literature, which is actually full of multicultural values, has not been optimally developed (Fitrikasari & Andiana, 2023). However, most of the learning models developed still emphasise cognitive aspects and have not integrated transactional approaches that allow students to actively interact with texts reflectively and collaboratively. Some models have not made children's literature the centre of multicultural learning, even though children's

literature is able to present an imaginative world rich in values and morals. In addition, the use of realistic story texts with multicultural content is still very rarely used systematically in the context of learning in primary schools.

This is reinforced by cases of bullying against students from certain ethnic backgrounds - such as that experienced by O.A., a Puteri Indonesia finalist, model and motivational speaker from Timika, West Papua, who faced tough challenges when moving to Surabaya to continue her education at one of the best high schools in Indonesia. When she was 16 years old, she had a bitter experience that shook her mentally. As the only Papuan student in the school, O.A. was often the target of ridicule regarding her physical appearance and skin colour by her female classmates. This situation caused her confidence to decline and her academic performance to suffer. The unsupportive new environment, coupled with differences in curriculum, language and culture in East Java, further aggravated her adaptation process. She revealed that the taunts she received were a form of covert racism or micro-aggression. As a result of this intimidation, O.A. lost her enthusiasm for learning and often pretended to be sick in order to avoid the uncomfortable school environment (Faridz, 2021).

The same thing happened to a child with the initials JS (8 years old). The Indonesian Child Protection Commission (KPAI) confirmed that an elementary school student in East Jakarta became a victim of bullying related to SARA (ethnicity, religion, race, and intergroup) issues by his friends at school. Previously, information circulating stated that JS was often the target of bullying because he was not considered indigenous. The victim, whose initials are JS, is physically white and has slanted eyes. This then became the reason for his friends to call him Ahok (Putera, 2017).

In this case, cultural literacy becomes an integral part of multicultural education. Cultural literacy not only includes an understanding of the values and norms of different cultures, but also demands the ability of individuals to interact ethically in a pluralistic social space (Pangrazio & Selwyn, 2019). Cultural literacy enables students to recognise their own and others' identities and understand social dynamics more comprehensively (Rowsell, 2022). This is in line with UNESCO's (2023) view that education that develops cultural literacy will help prevent social polarisation, strengthen democracy and increase the capacity for social cohesion. Children's literature as a medium of cultural expression has the power to become a bridge in the process of internalising multicultural values. Literature plays a role not only in entertaining, but also in shaping the way we think, feel and understand social reality (Nikolajeva, 2020).

Based on the findings of the preliminary study, various problems were found in learning children's literature appreciation. Among them are the limited teaching materials for children's literature that represent cultural diversity; the lack of realistic storybooks with multicultural values; the dominance of cognitive evaluation that ignores the affective and psychomotor domains; and the lack of learning strategies that allow reflective interaction between students and texts (Resmini, 2018). This is exacerbated by the fact that children's reading books available in school libraries are dominated by textbooks, not literary books that can develop students' cultural insights and empathy (Yustikadewi et al., 2024).

Furthermore, studies show that children's exposure to multicultural literary texts can increase empathy, recognition of differences, and reduce stereotypical biases towards other cultural groups (Thomas & Stornaiuolo, 2021). Similarly, research conducted by Chaudhry et al. (2019) mentioned that children who were involved in reading stories from various cultural backgrounds showed a lower tendency towards ethnocentrism and higher openness to new perspectives. However, learning children's literature appreciation in elementary schools in

Indonesia still faces serious obstacles. The lack of reading books that represent cultural diversity and the absence of learning models that encourage reflective interaction between students and texts lead to weak students' cultural literacy (Yustikadewi et al., 2024). This is in line with the findings of Resmini (2018) who revealed that literature learning tends to be conventional, dominated by reproductive activities, and does not build meaningful interactions with texts.

Although various reading models have been widely developed and implemented in language and literature learning, most existing models still focus predominantly on cognitive aspects such as decoding, comprehension, and textual analysis. These models often overlook the socio-cultural dimension of reading, particularly the integration of multicultural values and the strengthening of cultural literacy in increasingly diverse classroom settings. In the context of children's literature, this limitation becomes even more critical as literature serves not only as a cognitive stimulus but also as a cultural mirror that reflects and shapes students' identity, empathy, and intercultural understanding.

Recent studies in literacy education emphasize the importance of inclusive pedagogy and the need for reading practices that reflect diverse cultural backgrounds and values. However, there remains a lack of integrative models that operationalize multicultural education principles within a structured reading process, especially in primary education. The absence of a comprehensive framework that fosters critical engagement with multicultural texts while simultaneously nurturing cultural literacy skills constitutes a significant gap in the field.

This research introduces a novel instructional model, READING (Reading, Exploring, Analyzing, Discussing, and Narrating) specifically designed to address these gaps. The novelty of this model lies in its multidimensional approach that not only guides students through the stages of literary appreciation but also embeds multicultural values and fosters dialogic reflection and narrative expression. By combining textual analysis with intercultural dialogue and narrative reconstruction, the READING model provides a transformative reading experience that strengthens students' cultural literacy.

In addition, the model emphasizes active and collaborative learning through discussion and narration stages, which are rarely incorporated in traditional reading instruction. It also aligns with global education goals related to inclusivity, respect for cultural diversity, and 21st-century competencies such as critical thinking, empathy, and communication. Therefore, this research offers a new pedagogical contribution by bridging the gap between reading instruction and multicultural education through a systematic, innovative, and contextually relevant model.

This study aims to produce a Multiculturalism-Based READING (Reading, Exploring, Analysing, Discussing, and Narrating) Model with Strengthening Cultural Literacy in Children's Literature Appreciation Learning. Meanwhile, in detail this research is directed to produce: (1) data on the initial profile of the implementation of multiculturalism-based children's literature appreciation learning with the strengthening of cultural literacy in elementary schools; (2) design of the READING model (reading, exploring, analyzing, discussing, and narrating) based on multiculturalism with the strengthening of cultural literacy in children's literature appreciation learning, and (3) development of the READING model (reading, exploring, analyzing, discussing, and narrating) based on multiculturalism with the strengthening of cultural literacy in children's literature appreciation learning.

Research Method

This research used the Educational Design Research (EDR) approach developed by McKenney and Reeves (2012). EDR emphasized solving real educational problems through an iterative, collaborative and theory-based process. The EDR research design can be observed in the following figure.
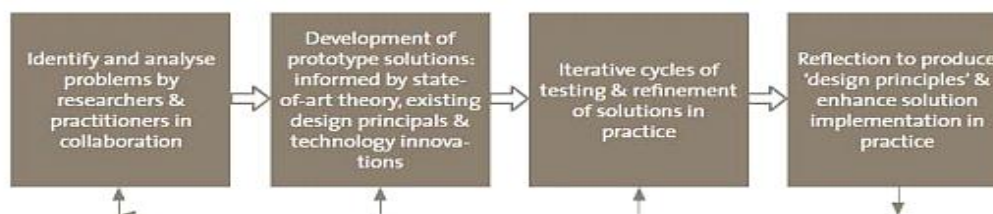

Figure 1. Refinement of Reeves' Problem, Solution, Method, and Design Principles of Educational Design Research Model (Plomp, 2013)

This research was conducted through four main stages: (1) problem identification and analysis, (2) development of initial solutions in the form of a prototype model design, (3) pilot testing and model refinement, and (4) implementation and reflection. The research was conducted in six public primary schools in Tasikmalaya City, West Java, which were selected based on regional categories and socio-culturally diverse student characteristics. The research subjects consisted of 137 grade V students as model trial participants, 6 classroom teachers as education practitioners, and 3 education experts (two academics and one basic education practitioner) as model validators..

Data collection was carried out with various techniques and instruments in accordance with the research stages in the form of: (1) problem identification (observation, interview, document study), (2) model development and validation, (3) practicality and effectiveness test. The data analysis technique used qualitative data in the form of thematic analysis of observation data, interviews, and documentation using the Miles & Huberman, (2020) approach, and quantitative data in the form of validity and practicality analysis using descriptive statistics (average and percentage), effectiveness analysis using parametric and non-parametric statistical tests, depending on data normality (paired sample t-test, Wilcoxon signed-rank test, ANOVA, and Kruskal-Wallis test), instrument reliability test is carried out with Cronbach's Alpha.

Results and Discussion

The results of the research and discussions indicate that the development of the READING model (reading, exploring, analysing, discussing, and narrating) based on multiculturalism with cultural literacy reinforcement began with cognitive pre-tests conducted using written instruments in the form of descriptive questions designed to measure students' initial ability to understand children's literary texts. These questions cover various aspects of literary understanding relevant to the learning outcomes of children's literary appreciation at the primary school level. Students were asked to identify story elements such as characters, plot, and setting. The results of the cognitive pretest can be seen in the following diagram in Figure 2.
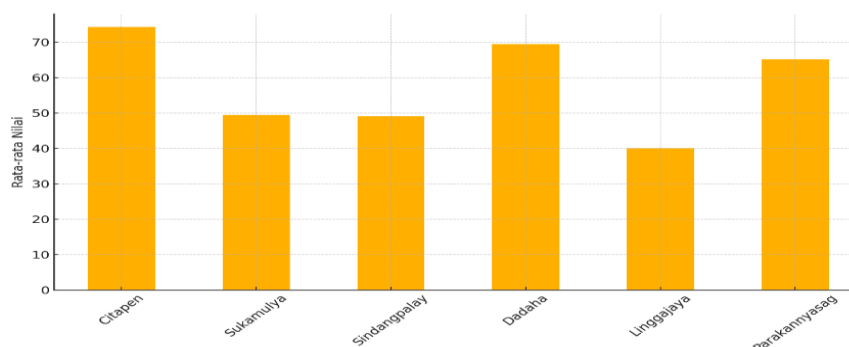
Figure 2. Average Cognitive Pretest Score

The bar chart above, which is based on the results of the cognitive pretest, shows a variation in the level of student achievement in each primary school. The highest average score was obtained by SDN Citapen with 74.25, followed by SDN Dadaha with 69.40, and SDN Parakannyasag with 65.14. This average score indicates that students in these schools were generally able to answer most of the pretest questions with a high level of accuracy, reflecting their initial mastery of the basic elements of children's literature texts.

Meanwhile, SDN Linggajaya recorded the lowest average score of 40.08, followed by SDN Sindangpalay with 49.08 and SDN Sukamulya with 49.41. These average scores indicate that there are still considerable challenges for some students in understanding children's literature texts on aspects such as story structure, the use of figurative language, and extracting symbolic meanings and moral values in the text. The difference in average scores between schools shows that students' initial understanding of children's literature texts is not uniform. The score range between the highest and lowest performing schools is more than 30 points. This indicates the need for a learning approach that can accommodate the diversity of students' initial levels of understanding in each school context.

The next stage in the development of the READING model, namely product validation, consists of two main components, namely learning model validation and children's literature book validation. Model validation is carried out to evaluate the theoretical and practical feasibility of learning syntax, learning principles, support systems, and implementation scenarios in the context of children's literary appreciation. Meanwhile, the validation of children's literature aims to ensure that the reading materials used align with multicultural values, are relevant to students' developmental needs, and support the enhancement of cultural literacy in literature appreciation learning.

Table 1. Summary of Expert Assessment of the READING Model Design

No	Assessment Aspects	Value		Average
		Validator 1	Validator 2	
1	Rational Model	4	4	4.0
2	Model Foundation	4	3	3.5
3	Objectives and Targets	4	4	4.0
4	Model Syntax	3	4	3.5
5	Model Evaluation	3	4	3.5
6	Social System	4	4	4.0
7	Principles of Reactions	3	3	3.0
8	Support System	2	3	2.5
9	Impact of the Model	4	4	4.0
	Average Total	3.44	3.67	3,55
	Percentage (%)			88.89%

Based on the assessment results of two validators, the total score obtained was 64 out of a maximum of 72, with an average score per aspect of 3.55 and a suitability percentage of 88.89%. Therefore, the READING model is classified as 'Very Good' and is suitable for implementation with minor revisions in accordance with the validators' notes. The assessments provided by each validator offer valuable feedback and are an important part of the model refinement process. Overall, both validators provided positive evaluations. The READING model is considered to have a systematic structure, relevant to the needs of children's literary appreciation learning in primary schools, and aligned with the promotion of multiculturalism-based cultural literacy. The theoretical and philosophical foundations of this model are deemed to support the principles of active, reflective, and contextual learning.

The next stage involves evaluation by education practitioners, namely primary school teachers who have direct experience in children's literature education. Practitioners also use the same instruments and provide explanatory notes on their scores, ensuring that the validation results reflect the reality and challenges of implementation in the classroom. The summary of the model evaluation by education practitioners is as follows.

Table 2. Recapitulation of Teachers' Assessment of the READING Model Design

Aspek	Nilai						Average
	G1	G2	G3	G4	G5	G6	
Rational Model	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0
Model Foundation	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0
Objectives and Targets	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0
Model Syntax	3.0	3.0	4.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.17
Model Evaluation	3.0	3.0	4.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.17
Social System	4.0	3.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	3.83
Principles of Reactions	3.0	3.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	3.0	3.5
Support System	2.0	2.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	2.0	2.5
Impact of the Model	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0
Average	3.44	3.33	3.89	3.67	3.67	3.44	3.57
Percentage (%)							89, 35 %

Based on the validation results from six elementary school teachers on the READING model, the overall average score was 3.55 out of a maximum score of 4.00, with a feasibility percentage of 88.89%. This indicates that the model falls into the 'Very Good' category and is suitable for pilot testing in multicultural-based children's literary appreciation learning at elementary schools. Several aspects, such as Model Syntax, Model Evaluation, and Support System, are recommended for improvement to optimise the model's implementation and applicability in the classroom.

Following the validation process by experts and learning was practitioners, a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) was conducted on 17 January 2025 as a means to delve deeper into the initial findings and clarify the feedback provided earlier. The FGD aimed to ensure the alignment between the substance of the READING model and the implementation context in the field, as well as to identify aspects that need to be strengthened before the model is tested on a larger scale.
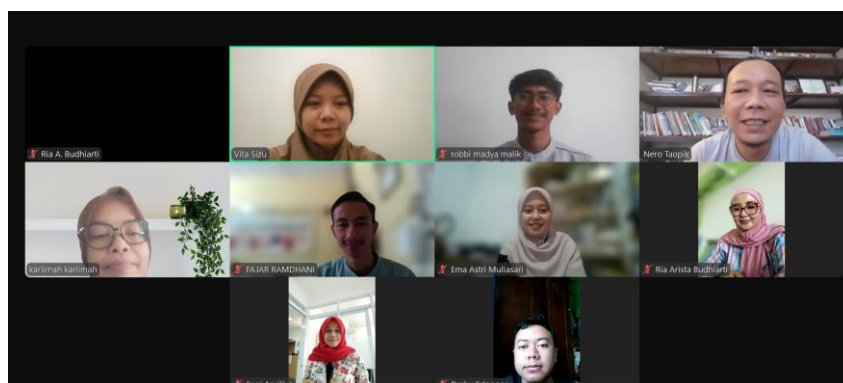
Figure 3. Group photo of participants in the READING Model Validation FGD

Furthermore, the design of the READING model based on multiculturalism with the reinforcement of cultural literacy in children's literary appreciation learning will be validated against children's storybooks used as the main teaching materials. The validation process involves three experts with competencies in language education, arts, and children's literacy. This validation aims to ensure that the children's storybook aligns with multiculturalism principles, is relevant to the developmental needs of primary school students, and is effective in supporting cultural literacy enhancement through a contextual and meaningful literary approach. The validation results are presented in Table 3 below.

Table 3. Model Design Validation Results

No	Aspects Assessed	Score			Average of Aspects
		V1	V2	V3	
1	Free from Violence and SARA	4	4	4	4.0
2	Book Completeness	3	2	3	2.67
3	Multiculturalism in Story Structure	4	4	4	4.0
4	Appropriateness of Multiculturalism Values and Materials	4	4	4	4.0
5	Child Story Presentation Techniques	4	4	4	4.0
6	Creativity of Materials and Stories	3	4	3	3.33
7	Language Use in Children's Stories	4	4	3	3.67
8	Children's Story Pictures and Illustrations	4	4	4	4.0
9	Coherence of Text with Graphics	3	3	4	3.33
	Overall Percentage				91,67%
	Total Average of Aspects				3.67

Based on the summary of scores above, the average score for each aspect reached 3.67 out of a maximum scale of 4. The book's suitability percentage reached 91.67%, reflecting a very high level of achievement in various aspects of assessment. Aspects such as the representation of multicultural values in the story structure, the use of children's language, and the quality of illustrations received high scores. Following the design validation testing phase, the results of the Practical Assessment of the multiculturalism-based reading model (reading, exploring, analysing, discussing, and narrating) with cultural literacy reinforcement in children's literary appreciation learning, which was tested in six primary schools, can be seen in Figure 4 below.
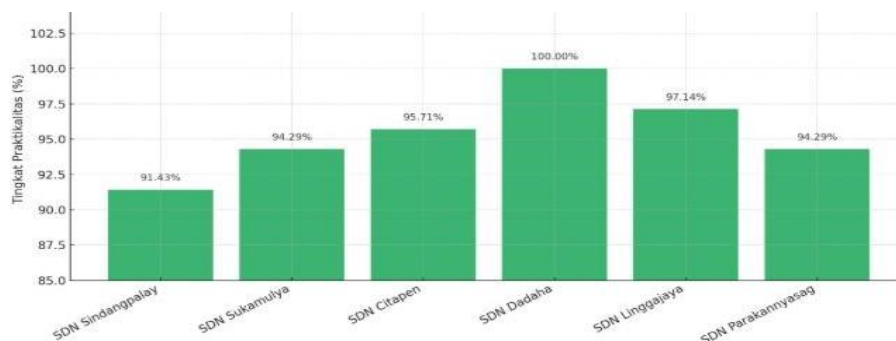
Figure 4. Level of Practicality of the READING Model in Six Primary Schools

The bar chart above showed the practicality level of the READING Model in six elementary schools based on trial results, including: (1) SDN Dadaha recorded the highest practicality score of 100%, indicating that all components of the model can be optimally implemented; (2) SDN Linggajaya and SDN Citapen also recorded very high scores, 97.14% and 95.71% respectively; (3) Other schools such as SDN Sukamulya and SDN Parakannyasag achieved 94.29%, while SDN Sindangpalay was slightly lower at 91.43%, but still falls within the highly practical category. This diagram reinforces that the READING Model is highly practical and flexible for application in various school contexts with different characteristics.

The effectiveness of the READING Model based on multiculturalism and cultural literacy in children's literary appreciation learning was tested in two stages: a limited test and a comprehensive test. The results of the effectiveness test conducted in six elementary schools can be seen in Figure 5 below.
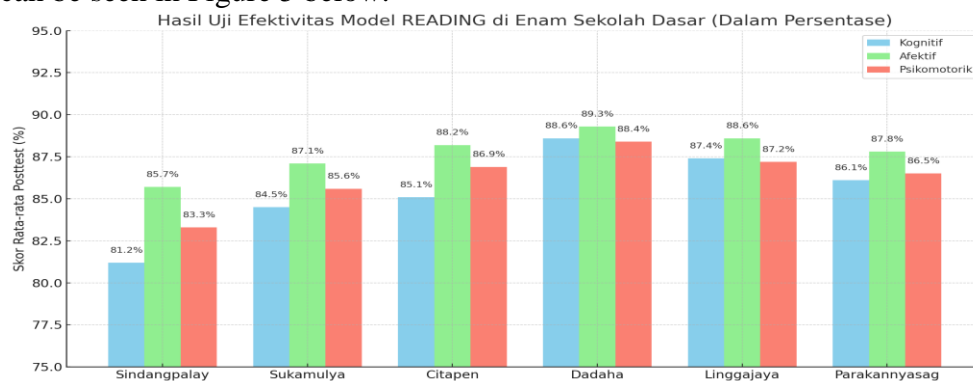

Figure 5. Results of the READING Model Effectiveness Test in Six Primary Schools

The bar chart above illustrates the results of the effectiveness test of the READING Model (Reading, Exploring, Analysing, Discussing, and Narrating) in improving the learning outcomes of elementary school students in six different locations, namely SDN Sindangpalay, SDN Sukamulya, SDN Citapen, SDN Dadaha, SDN Linggajaya, and SDN Parakannyasag. This effectiveness was measured across three primary domains of children's literary appreciation learning: cognitive, affective, and psychomotor, with post-intervention (posttest) average scores ranging from 81.20% to 89.30%.

The highest score was achieved by SDN Dadaha with a score of 88.60%, indicating a very high level of student comprehension of the text used. Second and third place were achieved by SDN Linggajaya (87.40%) and SDN Parakannyasag (86.10%), indicating that students at both schools also have a very good level of comprehension. These results reflect the effectiveness of the 'Exploring and Analysing' stage in the READING Model syntax, which encourages students to explore cultural meanings in texts. SDN Sindangpalay, despite having the lowest score in this domain (81.20%), remains in the high category and indicates

that the model remains effective despite potential technical challenges or adaptation issues during initial implementation.

In addition, the affective results showed that SDN Dadaha again achieved the highest score with 89.30%, followed by SDN Citapen (88.20%) and SDN Linggajaya (88.60%). These figures reflect the success of the Discussion and Narrative stages in shaping multicultural attitudes. Furthermore, psychomotor skills were achieved by SDN Dadaha once again as the highest with a score of 88.40%, followed by SDN Citapen (86.90%) and SDN Parakannyasag (86.50%). These high scores indicate that this model not only successfully enhances cognitive understanding and attitudes but also provides students with opportunities to express themselves physically and creatively.

The results of the discussion of the research findings described above indicate that the development of the READING model (Reading, Exploring, Analysing, Discussing, and Narrating) based on multiculturalism with the reinforcement of cultural literacy shows significant results in improving the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor abilities of primary school students in children's literature appreciation learning. This is in line with the findings of Thomas & Stornaiuolo (2021), who stated that literature learning based on cultural diversity has been proven effective in broadening social awareness and facilitating student engagement across identities. The READING model not only influences literary understanding but also fosters inclusive attitudes among students through reflective interaction with texts. The exploration and analysis stages designed in this model provide space for students to interpret the cultural values contained in literary texts, as recommended by Young & Long (2020), that critical interpretation of multicultural narratives can build cultural competence and empathy in students.

The results of the effectiveness test showed significant improvements in three learning domains. In the cognitive domain, improvements in text comprehension and literary analysis skills were evident, particularly in recognising symbolism and cultural meanings contained in narrative texts (Coiro et al., 2022). In the affective domain, learning through the READING model increased students' cultural awareness of diversity. These results reinforce the argument of Nieto & Bode (2018) that multicultural education should be transformative, not merely informative. In the psychomotor domain, the READING model demonstrated students' active engagement in learning through creative expressions such as dramatisation, retelling, and narrative presentations.

The increase in post-test scores in all three learning domains above 80% in all schools studied indicates the overall effectiveness of the model. This indicates that the READING model is not only relevant for schools with high resources, but also highly suitable for implementation in educational settings with limited resources, as stated by Paris & Alim (2020), that educational models prioritising cultural justice have transformative power even in marginalised contexts. Additionally, the improvement in cultural literacy through this model has proven effective in fostering identity awareness, building empathy, and enhancing students' reflective abilities regarding social issues such as racism, discrimination, and marginalisation. This study has significant conceptual and practical implications. Conceptually, this study contributes to the theoretical advancement of literacy education by integrating multicultural values into the reading process, emphasising the role of literature not only as a cognitive tool but also as a medium for character building and cultural understanding. Practically, this model provides educators with a structured yet flexible pedagogical approach that can be applied in various classroom contexts. This empowers teachers to promote inclusive classroom dialogue, reduce cultural bias, and enhance students' cultural literacy competencies.

Conclusion

The findings indicate that the model is highly valid according to experts and practitioners, highly practical based on implementation trials, and highly effective in improving students' cognitive, affective, and psychomotor learning outcomes. Based on these findings, the READING Model is considered stable, adaptable, and suitable to be adopted as an alternative approach to multicultural-based children's literature instruction.

Recommendation

Based on the conclusions outlined above, the author presents strategic recommendations that include: (1) For Primary School Teachers: It is recommended to implement the READING model as an approach to teaching children's literature that integrates language skills and strengthens tolerance and appreciation of cultural diversity. Each stage of the model syntax should be optimised contextually, accompanied by facilitation of reflective dialogue and expressive activities for students; (2) For Curriculum Developers and Instructional Designers: This model can be used as a reference in designing learning tools and children's storybooks that are rich in multicultural values and cultural literacy. READING-based modules and readings will strengthen character-based learning outcomes. (3) For Education Policy Makers: The results of this study serve as a foundation for developing policies that promote literary appreciation as a means of strengthening multicultural values. This model is in line with the spirit of the Merdeka Curriculum, which emphasises differentiation, contextualisation, and the formation of Pancasila Student Profiles through meaningful learning.

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