
CONSTRUCTING LITERACY AND NUMERACY THROUGH KEMENDIKDASMEN'S DEEP LEARNING DISCOURSE: A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS USING FAIRCLOUGH'S THREE-DIMENSIONAL MODEL

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Abstract

This study investigates how the Indonesian Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education (Kemendikdasmen) constructs the discourse of *deep learning* in relation to literacy and numeracy through policy-related media texts. Employing Fairclough's three-dimensional model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), the research examines textual features, discursive practices, and broader social practices embedded in the policy discourse. A qualitative research design was adopted, with data drawn from two online news articles published in 2026 that reproduce official statements from Kemendikdasmen regarding deep learning as a strategy to address low literacy and numeracy outcomes. The analysis reveals that literacy and numeracy are framed as urgent national problems through deficit-oriented language and repeated references to international assessments such as PISA. Deep learning is discursively positioned as a modern, logical, and inevitable solution, while teachers are constructed as the primary agents responsible for policy implementation through professional training. Conversely, students are largely depicted as passive recipients of reform, and structural factors such as socioeconomic inequality and regional disparities receive limited attention. These findings indicate that deep learning discourse functions not merely as pedagogical guidance but as a technology of governance that redistributes responsibility and normalizes neoliberal and managerial ideologies within Indonesian education policy. The study highlights the importance of critically engaging with policy language to uncover the power relations and ideological assumptions shaping educational reform.

Keywords: *Deep learning, literacy, numeracy, education policy*

Introduction

Literacy and numeracy have been positioned as central priorities within Indonesia's national education agenda, reflecting both domestic concerns about learning outcomes and global policy trends emphasizing foundational competencies. Contemporary policy discourse defines literacy and numeracy not only as technical skills but as complex competencies involving comprehension, reasoning, and real-world application. These expanded definitions align closely with international education frameworks promoted by organizations such as the OECD, which position literacy and numeracy as essential for lifelong learning and economic participation.

In the Indonesian context, concerns over the low level of students' literacy and numeracy competencies continue to be legitimized through international assessment data, particularly the results of the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA).

Bilad et al. (2024) noted that the PISA 2022 results placed Indonesia's scores in mathematics and reading at their lowest point since the country first participated in 2001, indicating a deeply concerning downward trend.

This condition has since been widely constructed as an urgent national learning crisis, shifting what is fundamentally a pedagogical issue at the classroom level into a matter of national development and global competitiveness (Ismawati et al., 2023). A number of recent studies suggest that innovative learning approaches hold considerable promise in addressing these challenges. Kintoko et al. (2025) found that the application of deep learning approach in matrix material produced a significant improvement in students' critical thinking skills. In similar vein, Muhammad Taufik et al. (2024) demonstrated that Project-Based Learning (PjBL) meaningfully enhanced students' numeracy literacy, with a short-analysis success rate reaching 97% suggesting that project-based approaches are capable of fostering deeper students' engagement with learning content. From a different perspective, Izzatin et al. (2025) showed that integrating local culture into PMRI-Based Learning (Indonesian Realistic Mathematic Education) produced a statistically significant differences in students' numeracy competence, affirming that contextual learning rooted in students' everyday cultural experiences can strengthen conceptual understanding while also boosting learning motivation.

Alongside this problem construction, *deep learning* (*pembelajaran mendalam*) has emerged as a dominant organizing discourse in recent education policy. Introduced prominently by Kemendikdasmen since late 2024, deep learning is framed as a pedagogical approach emphasizing mindful, meaningful, and joyful learning rather than as a new curriculum. Within policy texts, deep learning is presented as the appropriate solution to what is depicted as the failure of surface-level, exam-oriented instruction to produce strong literacy and numeracy outcomes.

Despite growing research on the effectiveness and implementation of deep learning strategies, limited attention has been given to how the policy language itself constructs reform, authority, and responsibility. Few studies critically examine how concepts such as deep learning, literacy, and numeracy operate discursively to legitimize particular ideologies and marginalize structural explanations for educational inequality. Addressing this gap, the present study asks: (1) How is deep learning linguistically constructed in Indonesian education policy discourse on literacy and numeracy? (2) How are teachers positioned within this discourse? and (3) What ideologies and power relations are reproduced through the deep learning discourse? This study aims to contribute to education policy research by critically examining policy language using Fairclough's CDA framework.

Research Methodology

This study employs a qualitative research design using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as proposed by Norman Fairclough. This design is considered appropriate because the study aims to examine how government education discourse constructs meaning, legitimizes policy decisions and naturalizes specific ideological positions (McMillian, R., 2022).

The data of this research consist of textual materials selected through purposive sampling based on their relevance to the research topic. The primary data sources are two publicly accessible online news article published in 2026, both of which report on the official discourse of Ministry of Elementary and Secondary Education (Kemendikdasmen) regarding the implementation of deep learning as a strategy to improve numeracy and literacy competencies of Indonesian students. The first data source as the main references text is an article published on detik.com dated April 9, 2026, at 14.00 WIB, written by journalist Cicin Yulianti, titled "Kemendikdasmen Andalkan Deep Learning

untuk Benahi Literasi-Numerasi”, reaching millions of daily readers that include teachers, partners, school principals, and education policy makers. The second as reproduced or derivative discourse is an article published on infonasional.com titled “Kemendikdasmen Latih Guru Literasi Numerasi”, published on April 13, 2026, at 11.39 WIB, written by Putra. These two text were selected because they directly represented the official institutional voice of Kemendikdasmen, as both articles reproduce verbatim statement made by the Minister of Elementary and Secondary Education, Abdul Mu’ti, in an official press interaction at the Kemendikdasmen building, Jakarta.

This study also uses supporting data from global contextual data to ensure the validity and contextual depth of the analysis such as reports from OECD (PISA 2022) are incorporated to understand how international assessment frameworks influence national education discourse. This supporting data function to triangulate findings and strengthen the interpretation of ideological and power dimensions within the discourse.

The data analysis follows Fairclough’s three-dimensional framework. First, at the textual level, the analysis focuses on linguistic features such as vocabulary, grammar, and rhetorical strategies used to construct the discourse of deep learning and numeracy literacy. Second, at the level of discursive practice, the study examines how the texts are produced, distributed, and consumed, including the intertextual relationship between Detik.com and Infonasional.com as part of discourse reproduction. Third, at the level of social practice, the analysis explores broader socio-political contexts, including the influence of global education standards and the role of state institutions in shaping educational narratives. Through these three levels, the study aims to reveal how power and ideology are embedded and reproduced in education policy discourse.

Results and Discussion

Results

This study presents a comprehensive Critical Discourse Analysis of two online media texts discussing Kemendikdasmen’s policy initiatives on *literacy*, *numeracy* and *deep learning*. The findings reveal how education policy discourse constructs problem, legitimize particular pedagogical solutions and reproduces relations of power and responsibility within Indonesian educational governance.

Textual Construction of Literacy, Numeracy, and Deep Learning

The textual analysis indicates analyzing the language of the discourse, focusing on the lexical items, language structure, semantics and cohesive elements within the text. The term such as “*deep learning*”, “*learning loss*”, “*learning poverty*” and “*recovery*” appear without Indonesian language equivalents, which gives the discourse a global and authoritative tone. This lexical pattern aligns the policy with international educational discourse and positions foreign terminology as a source of legitimacy. The two online media text construct *literacy* and *numeracy* in statement such as:

“Kondisi literasi dan numerasi siswa yang masih rendah” (detik.com) (The literacy and numeracy levels of students are still low)

and

“Masih menjadi tantangan serius dalam dunia Pendidikan” (Infonasional.com) (It remains a serious challenge in the field of education)

These expressions frame educational achievement as insufficient and problematic, creating sense of urgency. The phrase “*deep learning*” itself is strategically repositioned in this discourse and illustrated in a statement of:

“Kemendikdasmen mengandalkan *deep learning* untuk membenahi literasi dan numerasi”(detik.com)

and

“Dengan pendekatan *deep learning* diharapkan kemampuan literasi dan numerasi dapat meningkat” (Infonasional.com).

The official explanation from Kemendikdasmen clarifies that the phrase “*deep learning*” used by the Minister is not the same as the *deep learning* commonly used. In the educational context, *deep learning* is a learning approach that emphasizes understanding concept and mastering competencies in the depth within a narrower scope of material. Phrases such as “*akan gencar*” (will intensively), “*dapat terselesaikan*” (can be resolved), and “*harapan kami*” (our hope) combine optimism with institutional authority. However, alongside this confident framing, the minister’s own words reveal an awareness of the approach’s originality and uncertainty. “*ini baru kita canangkan semenjak kepemimpinan kami di Oktober 2024*” (this was only launched since our leadership began in October 2024). This temporal acknowledge of contribution is quickly neutralized in the discourse by the subsequent promise of success, creating a rhetorical move that suppresses legitimate doubt about implementation. This study also employs a classic problem-solution framing structure. It is framed through the citation of PISA 2022 data, and the solution is immediately offered through the *deep learning* approach. This problem-solution structure naturalizes the government’s policy response by making it appear as the logical, evidence-based answer to an objective problem, thereby foreclosing the possibility of alternative interpretations or solutions (Jones, A., 2025). The data support the urgency of the *deep learning* policy, particularly Indonesia’s low performance in reading and mathematics. By using internationally recognized assessment data, the discourse gains legitimacy through authority.

Discursive Practices and Actor Positioning

At the level of discursive practice, the findings reveal a strongly top-down mode of discourse production. The analyzed texts are produced through official ministerial statements and disseminated by mainstream online news media, ensuring wide circulation and institutional legitimacy. The authoritative voice of Kemendikdasmen dominates the discourse, while other stakeholders, particularly teachers and students, are largely absent as speaking subjects. The dominant voice of Kemendikdasmen, in particular, is evident in excerpts such as:

“Menteri Pendidikan Dasar dan Menengah, Abdul Mu’ti mengatakan” (Detik.com)

(Ministry of Elementary and Secondary Education, Abdul Mu’ti said...)

and

“Menurut Kemendikdasmen, pelatihan guru menjadi kunci peningkatan literasi dan numerasi”(Infonasional.com)

(According to the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education, teacher training is key to improving literacy and numeracy)

Teachers and students appear only as recipients of policy rather than as speaking subjects. This pattern reflects a top-down discursive practice in which meaning is defined by institutional authority without contestation. As Fairclough (1993) observes, discourse is fundamental to understanding power relationships and the mechanisms through which power and control are maintained and through which social ordering is achieved.

Moving from production to distribution, the two texts analyzed in this study were spread through platforms that serve different but complementary audiences. This difference in platform choice reveals a layered distribution strategy where the deep learning discourse was spread in two directions at once, shaping public opinion before any critical evaluation from educators or researchers had time to emerge. Studies applying Fairclough's three-dimensional CDA model to Indonesian online news show that the choice of media platform reflects each outlet's framing strategies and their relationship with broader social representations.

Turning to the question of genre and intertextuality, both texts belong to the genre of the institutional press news report, a genre that combines journalistic narration with direct quotations from official sources, presenting ministerial statements not as claims open to debate but as facts worthy of public attention. Abdul Mu'ti told journalists that this program is a collective effort to address the problems that Indonesia still faces today, which have not yet fully recovered, referring specifically to learning loss, learning poverty, various PISA scores, and academic achievements that have not yet met expectations. By embedding this statement within a journalistic report without a counter voice, the genre naturalizes the minister's framing of the problem and positions the government's solution as the only response worth reporting. The texts then build their authority through a chain of intertextual references that connect one discourse to another. The most prominent reference is to PISA 2022 data, where the results show that reading literacy and mathematics scores of most Indonesian students remain below the OECD average, with only 25 percent of students scoring above the average in reading literacy and only 18 percent scoring above the average in mathematics, figures that reflect the urgency of early intervention.

Social Practices and Ideological Implications

Social practices are analyzed at the third level of the model to explore the discourse's societal implications (Martin Rojo, 2001). At this level, the discourse indicated deep learning, literacy and numeracy functions ideologically to regulate education practice and redistribute responsibility. Responsibility for improving *literacy* and *numeracy* is discursively shifted towards teachers through an emphasis on training and professional adjustment. This is evident in statement of:

"Guru akan diberikan pelatihan untuk meningkatkan literasi dan numerasi" (Detik.com) (Teacher will be provided with training to improve literacy and numeracy)

and

"Peningkatan kualitas pembelajaran dilakukan melalui penguatan kompetensi guru" (Infonasional.com) (Improving the quality of learning is carried out through strengthening teachers' competencies)

By framing literacy and numeracy problems primarily as pedagogical deficiencies, the discourse shifts attention away from broader structural determinants such as poverty, regional disparities, and unequal access to educational resources. Responsibility for improvement is thus relocated from the state to individual schools and teachers.

This redistribution of responsibility aligns closely with neoliberal and managerial ideologies in education, where improvement is framed in terms of efficiency, performance, and professional self-management. Literacy and numeracy are constructed as measurable competencies that reflect institutional effectiveness, reinforcing the dominance of accountability regimes and performance indicators. Although deep learning is presented in humanistic terms emphasizing joyful and meaningful learning, it simultaneously operates as a subtle mechanism of governance that defines acceptable pedagogical practices and professional identities.

Discussion

The findings of this study illustrate how Kemendikdasmen's discourse constructs educational reform through processes of crisis framing and solution naturalization. From Fairclough's (2010) perspective, such crisis discourse does not merely describe reality but actively constructs a sense of urgency that legitimizes specific policy interventions. By repeatedly emphasizing low literacy and numeracy outcomes and aligning them with international comparisons, the discourse produces a sense of inevitability surrounding deep learning as the appropriate response. This naturalization process limits critical debate by presenting deep learning not as one possible approach among many, but as common sense.

Consistent with Fairclough's theory of discourse as social practice, the analysis shows that policy language does more than communicate technical information; it actively shapes how problems, responsibilities, and identities are understood. The positioning of teachers as primary agents of reform reflects a broader neoliberal logic in which systemic issues are individualized and transformed into matters of professional competence and self-improvement. Teachers are encouraged to internalize policy goals and regulate their own practices in accordance with state-defined standards of effective teaching.

At the same time, the systematic exclusion of structural explanations for low literacy and numeracy outcomes reveals the ideological nature of the discourse. Factors such as socioeconomic inequality, regional underdevelopment, and uneven infrastructure are rendered invisible, despite their well-documented influence on learning achievement. As a result, the discourse reinforces existing power relations by legitimizing pedagogical adjustment as the primary site of intervention while obscuring the state's responsibility for addressing broader social inequalities.

Overall, the expanded analysis underscores the value of Critical Discourse Analysis in education policy research. By examining textual, discursive, and social dimensions simultaneously, CDA makes visible the ideological work performed by seemingly neutral policy terms such as deep learning, literacy, and numeracy. This study demonstrates that these concepts function not only as educational goals but also as instruments of governance that shape professional identities, accountability structures, and the direction of education reform.

Conclusion

This study concludes that the discourse of deep learning in Indonesian education policy operates as both a pedagogical narrative and a technology of governance. Through Fairclough's three-dimensional CDA model, the analysis shows that literacy and numeracy are framed as urgent national problems, deep learning is positioned as a modern and unquestionable solution, and teachers are constructed as primary agents of reform. At the same time, structural determinants of educational inequality are marginalized. These findings highlight the need for critical engagement

with policy discourse, as language plays a central role in shaping power relations, professional identities, and the direction of education reform. Future research should extend CDA to a wider range of policy texts and examine how educators negotiate and reinterpret these discourses in practice.

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