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## Utilization of Primary Sources in History Learning: Teachers' Efforts to Improve High School Students' Historical Literacy

**Tomy Wijaya<sup>1</sup>, Fatimah Alauwiyah<sup>2</sup>, Muhammad Reza Pahlevi<sup>3\*</sup>**

<sup>1,2,3</sup>Sriwijaya University, Jl.Raya Palembang-Prabumulih KM.32, South Sumatra, Indonesia

<sup>1</sup>tomywijaya808@gmail.com, <sup>2</sup>fatimahalau21@gmail.com, <sup>3</sup>mrpahlevi@fkip.unsri.ac.id

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**Abstract:** This study investigates the utilization of primary source-based instruction by history educators to improve historical literacy among senior high school students within the framework of the Independent Curriculum. The research utilized a qualitative case study approach at a public high school in South Sumatra, incorporating classroom observations, comprehensive interviews, and document analysis, with data evaluated in accordance with the Miles and Huberman interactive model. The findings indicate that educators organized learning via the phases of planning, implementation, and evaluation, guided by four elements of historical thinking: sourcing, context. However, the implementation of these elements varied across classroom practices. Consistently across classroom practices. Teachers always instructed students to determine the origins of sources and their intended purposes. However, students often struggled with this task due to their limited reading levels, insufficient time, and limited access to physical primary sources. Archival documents, historical photographs, obsolete newspapers, and local artefacts predominantly served as mediated instructional resources influenced by teacher scaffolding, rather than as direct enablers of historical literacy. The research empirically demonstrates that the advancement of historical literacy through primary sources is a negotiated and context-sensitive process influenced by teacher mediation, student readiness, and institutional factors. By demonstrating how the Independent Curriculum alters and constrains historical thinking frameworks, the study theoretically advances the discourse on source-based pedagogy.

**Keywords:** primary sources; historical literacy; history learning; independent learning; teacher facilitator

### INTRODUCTION

In Indonesia's Senior High Schools (SMA), history education predominantly relies on transmissive methods that prioritize rote memorization of facts and chronological sequencing over historical analysis (Firmansyah & Atmaja, 2025). This approach limits students' engagement with the social, political, and cultural contexts of historical events, resulting in inadequate historical reasoning skills, reduced critical awareness, and the view of history as a static and insignificant field (De La Paz et al., 2022). Consequently, historical literacy, characterized as the ability to interpret,

evaluate, and contextualize historical sources across temporal and contextual dimensions, remains insufficiently developed due to students' limited interaction with authentic historical materials (Moseikina et al., 2022; Park & Cho, 2022).

Primary sources are important for learning because they help us understand these issues. Students can work directly with historical evidence and view things from the perspective of historians by using archives, official documents, historical newspapers, photographs, maps, and oral histories. By using these sources, students learn how to ask historical questions and draw conclusions based on evidence. They put things in context, confirm information, and interpret it (Murniati, 2023). This approach changes how students learn about history. Instead of just listening, they begin to ask questions and truly engage with the material.

Teachers play a key role in making sure that primary sources are used effectively in the classroom. As learning designers, educators must carefully select sources that align with learning objectives and promote students' analytical engagement with historical evidence (Burgos-Videla et al., 2025). Their mediating role is crucial in aiding students to contextualize sources within broader socio-political and cultural frameworks. Under the Merdeka Curriculum framework, history instruction is anticipated to employ a student-centered and inquiry-based methodology, prompting students to autonomously investigate and evaluate historical sources during the learning process (Alit, 2025).

The Independent Curriculum offers structural flexibility that has the potential to support the development of historical thinking and literacy through the use of diverse and contextual learning materials, including local primary sources that resonate with students' historical contexts (Wijaya, Alauwiyah, et al., 2025b). Analytically, Indonesia presents a unique educational context where local identities, regional memories, and postcolonial experiences closely tie historical narratives. These characteristics position Indonesian history classrooms as meaningful venues for examining how primary sources function not only as teaching materials but also as instruments for negotiating historical meaning. However, educators continue to face practical challenges, such as limited access to primary sources, inadequate training in source analysis, and limited time and institutional resources, resulting in uneven and unsystematic implementation of source-based pedagogy (Wijaya, Andika, et al., 2025).

Studies have demonstrated that the incorporation of primary sources in education yields significant advantages. Fahrudin & Saefudin (2025) found that using digital primary sources significantly boosted student engagement and retention through document-based learning with structured guidance. Kiser et al. (2024) corroborate this conclusion, demonstrating that professional development programs like Teaching with Primary Sources (TPS) significantly enhance students' critical thinking abilities, even in remote learning environments. However, the majority of this research continues to concentrate on digital learning environments, which are already augmented by technological accessibility.

Nonetheless, there exists a paucity of understanding concerning the employment of physical and digital primary sources by Indonesian secondary school educators as contextual learning instruments to augment students' historical literacy in regular classroom activities. Existing research has insufficiently examined how educators apply the stages of historical thinking sources, contextualization, reinforcement, and interpretation within the structural and cultural frameworks of Indonesian schools. This study aims to analyze educators' methodologies in applying primary source-based

history instruction to improve historical literacy within the context of the Independent Curriculum. This study investigates the implementation of historical thinking processes in real classroom settings. It provides tangible insights into educators' methodologies and enhances the discourse on historical literacy and source-based instruction within the framework of national history education in Indonesia.

## METHODS

This study employed a qualitative case study design to in-depth examine history teachers' pedagogical practices in utilizing primary sources to support students' historical literacy (Down et al., 2025; Syah et al., 2025). This design was chosen to capture the complexity and contextual significance of learning practices in a natural classroom environment. The unit of analysis was the instructional practices based on sources employed by history educators. The research was carried out at SMA Sriwijaya Negara in South Sumatra, a school that has adopted the Merdeka Curriculum and incorporated documents, archives, and local historical resources into its history instruction.

Data collection took place over three months. It included six classroom observations, semi-structured interviews with three history teachers, and additional interviews with six students and one curriculum representative. The observations concentrated on how primary source-based learning was designed and implemented, as well as on students' responses to historical inquiry tasks. In-depth interviews lasting between 45 and 60 minutes were conducted to explore participants' perceptions, experiences, and challenges in using primary sources. Informants were selected through purposive sampling, with criteria that included a minimum of three years of teaching experience, consistent use of primary sources in instruction, and active involvement in the implementation of the Independent Curriculum.

Data sources also comprised documentation such as lesson plans, teaching materials, the primary sources employed in instruction, and samples of student work that reflected historical thinking processes. Data analysis followed the interactive model proposed by Miles and Huberman (Rijali, 2018), which involves data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The analysis was carried out using open and axial coding to identify and develop themes corresponding to the dimensions of historical literacy. To maintain the trustworthiness of the data, the study employed methodological triangulation, member checking with teachers, and peer debriefing, which together strengthened the credibility, dependability, and confirmability of the research findings.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### *Results*

#### **Context and Initial Conditions of Source-Based History Learning**

History instruction at Sriwijaya Negara High School is implemented within the framework of the Independent Curriculum and supported by relatively adequate digital infrastructure. Classroom observations show that internet connectivity, LCD projectors, and computers are readily available and routinely integrated into instructional activities. These facilities enable teachers to present digital archives, historical photographs, and other online resources during lessons. Empirically, such conditions provide a strong technical foundation for the application of source-based history learning.

But field research also showed that there were big problems with getting physical primary sources. The school didn't always give out printed archival documents, historical artifacts, and local historical collections. A curriculum representative said, "Schools encourage new ideas, but the availability of historical sources depends on what teachers can get to." This statement illustrates that institutional support remains largely normative, while the concrete provision of historical sources continues to rely heavily on individual teacher initiative.

A summary of school conditions based on observational data is presented in Table 1, highlighting the disparity between available learning support facilities and the accessibility of primary sources. The school implements the Independent Curriculum, which emphasizes project-based learning and the exploration of authentic sources. However, conditions on the ground reveal limitations in the availability of primary sources, both in the number and variety of sources that students can directly access.

Table 1. Observation Analysis Overview of the school

No.	School Aspects	Real conditions on the ground
1	The curriculum	Merdeka Curriculum
2	Learning Facilities	Digital class, LCD, Internet, and Computer
3	Availability of Primary Sources	Limited, digitally dominant, dependent on teacher initiative
4	School policy support	Encouraging teacher innovation and contextual learning
5	Learning approach	Project-based and authentic source exploration

Before the more structured integration of primary sources, interviews indicated that history instruction in the classroom relied predominantly on textbooks and teachers' oral explanations. Under these conditions, students generally positioned themselves as passive recipients of information rather than as active questioners or interpreters of historical evidence. Under these conditions, students generally positioned themselves as passive recipients of information rather than as active questioners or interpreters of historical evidence. One student said, "We usually just read the textbook and listen to the teacher." We don't often look at original historical documents. This statement sums up the main way that history was taught before source-based interventions were put into place.

Teachers also corroborated this condition and acknowledged the limitations of students' initial abilities in engaging with primary sources. As one teacher explained, "When first presented with original documents, many students are confused. They have difficulty understanding the context and distinguishing between fact and opinion." This statement serves as empirical evidence that students' historical literacy had not yet been adequately developed at the early stage of implementation.

The historical literacy indicators observed in this study included students' abilities to identify source origins, recognize source types, and distinguish between factual and opinionated information in historical texts. However, students displayed limited and uneven progress in more advanced skills. These include connecting sources to larger socio-political contexts and creating coherent historical interpretations. These findings suggest that developing historical literacy happens slowly and is influenced by context.

From an interpretative perspective, these findings suggest that the implementation of primary source-based learning at Sriwijaya Negara Senior High School has not yet been fully institutionalized, even though it is technically supported by available digital facilities. The discrepancy between curriculum-level support and the limited availability of authentic historical sources generates structural constraints within classroom practice. Accordingly, within the scope of this study, historical literacy cannot be regarded as an automatic product of the Independent Curriculum. Instead, it emerges as a negotiated process formed through the dynamic interaction of school policies, teacher initiatives, and students' readiness to engage with historical sources.

### Types of Primary Sources and Selection Practices

Based on classroom observations, interviews, and document analysis show that teachers actively use a mix of physical and digital primary sources in history instruction. The materials used include colonial archival documents, photographs of local historical events, old newspapers, colonial-era maps, and local artifacts, as well as digital archival collections accessed through the National Archives of the Republic of Indonesia (ANRI) and the South Sumatra Regional Archives. These findings indicate that source-based learning practices are not limited to one medium but are adaptable to resource availability and the particular context of classroom learning.

The use of digital primary sources appears to be more dominant when physical sources are difficult to present in person. In several observation sessions, teachers showed archival documents and historical photographs for students to look at together. One teacher explained, "Digital archives help students access authentic sources when we can't bring the original documents into the classroom." This statement shows that digital archives provide a practical way to overcome the limited access to physical primary sources.

Based on the observations, the types and purposes of primary sources used in learning are summarized in Table 2, which illustrates the variety of sources and the learning objectives they aim to achieve. Colonial archival documents, for example, are used to train students in reading the colonial administrative context, while historical photographs are used to identify figures, locations, and events. Old newspapers are used to introduce past public discourse, while colonial maps help students understand territorial changes and the dynamics of colonial politics.

Table 2. Observation Analysis Overview of the school

No.	Types of Primary Sources	Examples of Use in Learning	Learning objectives
1	Colonial archive documents	Decree of the Resident of Palembang in the 19th century	Train students to read and understand the colonial administrative context
2	Historical Photos	Photo of the resistance of the people of Palembang 1947	Identifying characters, places, and context of events
3	Old Newspapers	Article from Merdeka in the 1950s	Training Students to Understand Past Public Opinion and Discourse
4	Colonial Map	Map of the residency area of South Sumatra in 1930	Helping Students Understand Territorial Change and Colonial Politics
5	Local Artifacts	Traditional weapons and	Raising Awareness of



		household tools from the war era	Cultural Values
6	Digital Archives	ANRI and Archives Service online collections	Developing Digital Literacy and Historical Research Skills

Interviews with educators indicated that the selection of primary sources is not arbitrary but is instead determined by three principal criteria: relevance to the subject matter, an appropriate level of complexity for students' literacy skills, and accessibility. Educators evaluate the comprehensibility of a source for students within the constraints of limited instructional time and its alignment with the objectives of historical analysis.

Table 3. Source Selection Criteria

No.	Primary Source Selection Criteria	Explanation	Implications for Learning
1	Relevance to the material	Sources directly related to the learning theme (e.g.: colonial period, struggle for independence)	Helping students understand historical context in depth
2	Level of complexity	Adapted to the thinking and reading abilities of high school students	Avoiding difficulties of understanding and increasing participation
3	Affordability and accessibility	Easily available from local archives, museums, or digital sources	Encouraging teacher sustainability and independence in learning innovation

Field data indicated that educators often modified primary sources prior to classroom application. These adaptations involved selecting specific excerpts, simplifying the language of documents, and designing guiding questions to direct students' attention to key aspects of the sources. As one teacher noted, "Some documents are too complex, so I simplify the text and focus on the most important parts for students to analyze." This instructional practice was consistently watched across six classroom observation sessions.

In classroom practice, this change in sources allowed students to take part in basic analytical tasks. They could identify important information, recognize where sources came from, and understand the purpose of the texts. However, more in-depth contextual analysis remained limited. These findings show that using primary sources at this stage mainly helps build basic historical literacy skills instead of creating more complex historical interpretations.

Overall, this study indicates that using primary sources in history learning at Sriwijaya Negara Senior High School is both practical and contextually relevant. Teachers navigate curriculum demands, resource limitations, and diverse student abilities by integrating physical and digital sources and adapting their instructional approaches accordingly. The findings do not indicate consistent or perfect practices. Instead, they illustrate how source-based learning works in real classrooms. These classrooms face different structural and teaching challenges.

### Classroom Practices and Observed Student Engagement

During classroom observations, it was clear that the teacher planned history lessons around three main activities: analyzing sources, having small group discussions,

and showing the results. This pattern appeared in every session observed during the research period. Each lesson started with the teacher discussing primary and secondary sources related to the topic. Then, she asked the students to work in groups and share their findings with the whole class. Observation sheets and the researcher's field notes were used to keep track of this practice in a systematic way.

During the lesson, the teacher guided students in identifying the source's origin, authorship, and purpose. In one session, the teacher said, "Pay attention to who created this document and why it was written." Students then compared information from the colonial document with historical photographs of the Palembang resistance in 1947. They discussed the events that led to this. This activity took about 30-40 minutes in one session.

Learning artefacts such as student worksheets and presentation materials show different levels of student engagement with historical evidence. Some students wrote responses that linked the content of the source to the social and political context. Others focused mainly on visual descriptions or narratives. One student's worksheet stated, "This photo shows resistance in Palembang because people opposed colonial policies that were harmful to the local community." This comment shows that some students tried to connect the visual source to the causes of the event, even if not all provided detailed arguments.

Interview data supported the findings from observations and learning materials. Several students mentioned that using original sources changed their understanding of history. One student stated, "When we analyze documents and photographs, we realize that history is not just one story." Other students noted that group discussions allowed them to see different viewpoints, but they still found it hard to create evidence-based arguments in writing.

Based on observations, artefacts, and interviews, the indicators of historical literacy seen in this study included: (1) the ability to identify the origin and purpose of sources, (2) the ability to compare information from two different types of sources, and (3) the initial ability to connect sources to a specific historical context. Other indicators, like evaluating the credibility of sources or making complex historical arguments, were not consistently seen among all students.

Table 4. Learning Stages

No.	Learning Stages	Teacher and Student Activities	Didactic Objectives
1	Planning	Teachers prepare lesson plans, select primary sources according to the theme, determine historical literacy objectives	Ensuring integration between sources, objectives, and learning outcomes
2	Implementation	Students analyze sources (documents, photos, maps), discuss, and present the results of their interpretation.	Develop historical thinking and collaborative work skills
3	Evaluation	The teacher assesses students' source analysis, interpretation, and argumentation skills.	Measuring the level of understanding and application of historical literacy

The learning stages can be divided into three main phases: planning, implementation, and evaluation. In the planning phase, teachers develop lesson plans and select historical sources that align with historical literacy goals. In the implementation phase, students examine documents, photos, and maps. Students also discuss their findings in groups and share their interpretations. During the evaluation phase, people look over worksheets and presentations and talk about them. It aims to understand the origins and the historical context that underpin them.

In the classroom context studied, source analysis-based history learning facilitated student engagement in the early aspects of historical literacy through direct interaction with primary and secondary sources that encouraged the introduction of diverse perspectives and questioning of single narratives; empirical findings from observations, interviews, and analysis of learning artifacts showed variations in achievement between individuals and illustrated how historical literacy was mediated in specific classroom practices, with interpretations strictly limited to the context of this study and without claims of generalizability or long-term effectiveness.

### *Discussion*

#### **Historical Literacy in Practice: Alignment and Tensions with Theory**

The findings of this study suggest that history teachers' use of primary sources in the classroom partly aligns with the idea of historical literacy as described by Seixas & Morton (2012) and Wineburg (2001). This alignment is particularly evident in how teachers present the stages of historical thinking: sourcing, contextualization, corroboration, and interpretation, as a means to analyze sources. However, the field data indicated that the application of these stages differs. Factors like classroom conditions, student readiness, and teachers' skills in teaching impact this process.

During the sourcing phase, classroom observations showed that teachers regularly helped students identify where a document came from, who wrote it, when it was created, and its purpose. One teacher said, "Students were first asked who created the document and why, as they often assume all historical texts are neutral." This practice highlights teachers' efforts to promote skepticism about sources and encourage students to engage with historical evidence, which aligns with the basic elements of historical literacy (Munira, 2021; Tressyalina et al., 2025).

Reinforcement of the contextualization stage showed clear differences. In some sessions, teachers encouraged students to connect sources with wider social and political conditions. For instance, students were encouraged to analyze newspapers from the independence revolution era within the context of colonial conflict (Maghfiroh et al., 2021; Pernantah et al., 2023). An examination of student worksheets, however, revealed that not all students were able to transcend mere factual descriptions. One student's note stated, "This newspaper reported on the resistance in Palembang," but did not provide any explanation of the political background or ideological interests behind the report.

Similar variations were also seen in the corroboration stage. Some groups of students compared information from archival documents and historical photographs to identify different points of view. In contrast, others treated each source as a separate representation of facts. This finding shows that while teachers have taught the practice of comparing sources, not all students have fully developed this skill (Gannar & Kilani, 2025; Darmawan et al., 2025).

Students consider the interpretation stage to be the hardest. Interviews revealed that students often struggle to understand conflicting historical sources. "It's hard to



make a decision because different sources show different points of view," one student said. This statement highlights the difficulties students face in grasping history and how their viewpoints can change over time (Amalia & Rahmawati, 2021; Halverson et al., 2025).

The findings of this study indicate that the adaptability of the Independent Curriculum enhances source-based history education. But this doesn't mean that people will get better at history. This problem comes up because of time limits, differences in students' abilities, and the fact that not all students have the same access to primary sources. The connection between the goals of the curriculum and what happens in the classroom depends on the school's support and the teachers' ability to teach. The results show that students are slowly getting better at thinking about history. They also point out that historical literacy is a negotiated practice that includes theory, teaching methods, student readiness, and the context of the institution, not just the use of primary sources.

### **Educators as Facilitators: Opportunities and Constraints**

From a constructivist viewpoint, the results of this study indicate that history teachers at the research sites perceive themselves as facilitators of learning rather than the sole providers of historical knowledge. This approach appears in classroom practices that focus on active student participation in analyzing historical sources, rather than just listening to narrative explanations from the teacher (Asril et al., 2025; Utami et al., 2023). Field data, however, indicate that this transition in roles is incremental and has not completely supplanted conventional teaching methodologies.

Teachers use guided inquiry methods to teach. They ask questions that help students pay attention to the most important parts of the source (Evers et al., 2025). When teachers are first analyzing something, they often ask questions like "Who wrote this document?" and "What was the purpose of this resource?" One teacher said, "It's not my job to explain everything; it's my job to help students find meaning in the sources." This statement makes it clear that the teacher wants to change the focus of learning from themselves to the students.

In addition to analytical questions, teachers put students into small groups to talk about their findings (Susanti et al., 2025). Group discussions let students compare their interpretations and work together to understand the meaning of sources. However, observations show that the quality of these discussions can vary significantly. Some groups can build simple, evidence-based arguments, while others often look for direct guidance from the teacher, which suggests limited learning independence.

Teachers provide support through source analysis guide sheets and sample questions. This practice helps some students understand the historical flow of thought, especially when identifying basic source information (Kuncoro & Turahmat, 2025). However, student interviews showed that many view the scaffolding as "answer prompts" instead of tools for thinking, which can restrict their independent exploration in some cases.

Even though this helpful method fits with inquiry-based teaching (Ahmed et al., 2025; Wijaya, Alauwiyah, et al., 2025a) and what has been found in the past, data from the field showed that it was not always easy to use. Teachers said they didn't have much time to learn. These limitations made it difficult to do in-depth source analysis, especially while also doing the curriculum and administrative work of the Independent Curriculum.

Variations in student literacy levels present a significant challenge. One teacher noted, "Not all students can analyze documents independently; some still need very detailed guidance." This situation indicates that the teacher's role as a facilitator is not always carried out effectively. Teachers often have to resort to direct instruction to make sure students understand the basics (Song et al., 2025).

This study's findings demonstrate that the Independent Curriculum's flexibility does not ensure the implementation of inquiry learning. The availability of resources, student readiness, and teacher workload limit the teacher's role as a facilitator. The effectiveness of the constructivist approach is contingent upon the school environment, the teacher's competencies, and the curriculum design. This research demonstrates that classroom experiences influence the role of the facilitator. It contributes to the discourse on constructivism and inquiry-based pedagogy by highlighting the disparity between theoretical concepts and the practical application of history education within the Independent Curriculum.

### **Primary Sources, the Independent Curriculum, and Scholarly Contribution**

The findings of this study indicate that learning history through primary sources aligns closely with the Independent Curriculum, with a particular emphasis on student-centered inquiry learning (Firmansyah & Atmaja, 2025). In the classrooms observed during the study, teachers used archives, historical photographs, and local artifacts to begin discussions about historical questions and explore the meaning of past events. This approach moves away from simply passing on knowledge. Instead, it lets students play an active role in shaping their own understanding of history.

Classroom observations show that primary sources spark discussion and inquiry, especially when teachers connect these sources to local contexts that resonate with students. Photographs of local historical events and colonial archival documents encourage students to ask questions about historical figures, interests, and situations. In this way, primary sources are not just examples but also tools for analysis that allow for historical exploration (Fahrudin et al., 2025).

However, field data also show issues with fitting resource-based learning into the Independent Curriculum. Access to primary sources is inconsistent and mainly depends on individual teachers' efforts and the availability of digital archives. These limitations suggest that support for resource-based learning has not been fully established, making its implementation highly dependent on context and sometimes unsustainable (Kononets et al., 2020).

Using digital archives provides valuable opportunities for accessing information in different ways. However, it also presents challenges. Some teachers noted that limited infrastructure and students' low digital skills can reduce the effectiveness of source analysis. This conclusion suggests that schools need policies to support flexible curriculums. They need to ensure that resources are available and that technology is ready, not just create a standard teaching environment (Alenezi, 2023).

Moreover, although the Independent Curriculum seeks to foster critical thinking and conform to the Pancasila Student Profile (Sanur et al., 2025), the results of this study suggest that these outcomes cannot be regarded as inherent. Students exhibit an initial ability to interrogate the reliability of sources and value diverse perspectives; however, these skills evolve gradually and inconsistently, necessitating continuous and intentional pedagogical support from educators.

A student said, "Looking at sources makes us think more, but it also takes more

time and support." This shows the difference between what inquiry-based learning is supposed to do and what really happens in the classroom. This statement highlights that deeper cognitive engagement often requires additional support, emphasizing that the teacher's active role as a facilitator and mediator of learning is closely tied to source-based learning (Sheppard & Kollasch, 2025).

These results go against common beliefs about the effectiveness of the Independent Curriculum. They emphasize the need for contextual and institutional support for its implementation. While the curriculum offers a supportive framework, classroom learning is significantly shaped by factors such as student readiness, teacher competence, and the availability of learning resources (Abrar et al., 2025). Therefore, a complex interplay between policy, pedagogy, and the institutional environment results in the success of resource-based learning.

This study makes a scholarly contribution by offering classroom-based empirical evidence showing that historical literacy developed through primary sources is a negotiated practice rather than a straightforward result of curriculum design. Theoretically, it advances the discourse on historical literacy by highlighting that the development of historical thinking operates as a dynamic process, shaped by teacher mediation, student readiness, and the availability of resources. It also treats the Indonesian history classroom as a lens to examine the gap between the intentions of the Independent Curriculum and the realities of classroom practice, offering insights into source-based instruction that go beyond what official policy documents convey.

## CONCLUSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that the incorporation of primary sources in history education, along with a supportive classroom environment, improves students' historical literacy in alignment with the Independent Curriculum. Students' use of old documents, photos, newspapers, and local sources shows that these sources not only help them remember facts better, but they also help them think critically. This means knowing how to use evidence, think logically in a certain situation, and realize that history can be understood in different ways. Still, this method only works if there are enough sources, teachers are willing to help, and students are ready. The evidence shows that learning based on primary sources is a contextual teaching process rather than a method that produces the same results for everyone.

These findings add to the conversation about historical literacy. They show that historical meaning comes from the interaction of sources, student interpretations, and teacher guidance within the school's framework. The study also points out challenges in carrying out the source-based Independent Curriculum. These challenges include unequal access to materials and differences in teacher preparedness. It suggests that any changes to the curriculum should take local conditions into account. With a qualitative design at a single site, these findings are not intended for broad generalization, but rather provide an analytical foundation for comparative and longitudinal research on primary source-based history teaching practices across various Indonesian school contexts.

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