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Reading beyond comprehension: critical literacy, civic reasoning, and the language of educational empowerment in Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

Background: Indonesian education increasingly frames reading as more than comprehension, yet relationships among critical interpretation, civic judgment, and learner empowerment remain fragmented across official policy domains. **Objective:** This study examines how Indonesian curriculum, assessment, regulatory, and implementation documents construct critical literacy, civic reasoning, and educational empowerment. **Method:** A qualitative documentary design analysed 27 prescriptive documents from a verified 40-document corpus through a Critical Literacy Discourse Matrix, Civic Reasoning Matrix, and Educational Empowerment Language Scale, using one bounded excerpt per unique document. **Results:** Interpretive evaluation appeared in 51.9% of prescriptive documents, whereas source scrutiny and perspective plurality occurred in 25.9% and 22.2%, respectively. Claim–evidence reasoning was the most prevalent civic orientation at 55.6%, while deliberation and civic action each appeared in 22.2%. Learner agency occurred in 44.4% of documents, but explicit voice and expression appeared in only 14.8%, revealing a stronger emphasis on cognitive responsibility than public participation. **Implication:** Policy coherence requires closer integration of source criticism, plural perspectives, deliberative practice, and opportunities for learners to produce and communicate knowledge. **Novelty:** This study introduces an integrated cross-document framework that traces how Indonesian educational discourse distributes epistemic authority, civic responsibility, and participatory agency across curriculum and governance levels within Indonesia's education system.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia's literacy challenge is not simply that students read too little, but that many struggle to evaluate what texts claim, whose interests they represent, and how evidence should inform judgment. In PISA 2022, Indonesian fifteen-year-olds averaged 359 points in reading, compared with 476 across OECD countries; only 25 percent reached at least Level 2, while almost none attained Level 5, where readers distinguish fact from opinion using implicit source cues [1]. These figures matter in a media environment shaped by political misinformation, digital hoaxes, and contested civic narratives. Research on Indonesian classrooms links literacy with source verification, critical language awareness, and digital participation [2], [3]. Foundational comprehension remains indispensable, yet comprehension alone cannot prepare learners to

interrogate authority, compare perspectives, or reason about rights and obligations. Reading must therefore be examined as a civic and empowering practice rather than merely a language skill.

Existing scholarship has established several components of this broader conception. Critical digital literacy research identifies evaluation, participation, ethics, and meaning-making as interdependent capacities rather than isolated technical skills [4]. Indonesian studies show that critical literacy can support analytical engagement with exposition texts, digital hoaxes, and culturally situated discourse [5], [2]. Critical ELT research further demonstrates possibilities for co-constructing curricula and combining genre pedagogy with critical questioning [6], [7]. Civic education studies, meanwhile, examine civic-literacy levels, political-news literacy, and digital citizenship among Indonesian learners [8], [9], [3]. However, these strands largely remain separated by subject, educational level, or intervention. Limited attention has been given to how official curriculum, assessment, policy, and contextual documents collectively construct relationships among reading, civic reasoning, learner voice, and educational empowerment across Indonesia's education system.

This study investigates how official Indonesian education documents define reading beyond comprehension and how their language positions learners as interpreters, civic reasoners, and agents of participation. It addresses three questions. First, how do curriculum and assessment texts move from retrieving information toward interpreting viewpoints, scrutinising sources, engaging multiple modes, and recognising values, ideology, or power? Second, how do these documents organise civic reasoning through claim–evidence relations, source evaluation, deliberation, rights and responsibilities, problem–solution judgment, and civic action? Third, how does policy language distribute agency by authorising learners to express positions, produce knowledge, collaborate, and connect learning with social contexts? These questions respond to evidence that critical practices are possible but unevenly institutionalised, while dialogic pedagogy remains constrained by professional, institutional, and sociocultural conditions [10], [11]. By integrating policy discourse across subjects and document types, this study examines systemic coherence rather than evaluating a single classroom intervention.

This study advances the argument that educational empowerment depends less on adding "critical thinking" as a curriculum label than on how documents specify objects of scrutiny, standards of evidence, legitimate speakers, and forms of action. Where reading outcomes require comparison, verification, source criticism, and evaluation of viewpoints, they can create conditions for epistemic agency. Where civic outcomes connect evidence with deliberation, rights, responsibilities, and solution formulation, literacy becomes a resource for citizenship rather than textual reproduction. Yet empowerment may remain restricted when policy language celebrates participation while assessment privileges bounded comprehension, or when learners are asked to voice opinions without examining whose knowledge is authorised. This proposition is consistent with studies advocating critical, dialogic, and culturally responsive pedagogies, while acknowledging implementation barriers [6], [5], [11]. Accordingly, this study tests whether Indonesia's educational discourse forms a progression from understanding texts to questioning, judging, speaking, and acting.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Critical literacy

Critical literacy extends reading beyond extracting meaning toward examining how language organizes knowledge, authority, and difference. Some studies define it primarily as evaluative reading that tests claims, sources, and representations, whereas others treat it as a pedagogical orientation toward voice, justice, and transformation. Indonesian research reflects this divergence. Wulandari [10] emphasizes discourse in digital learning materials, while Hardianti [12] foregrounds learners' perceptions. Mambu [6] and Qoyyimah et al. [7] instead position critical literacy within curriculum co-construction and genre pedagogy. These approaches converge in rejecting comprehension as sufficient, but differ in how explicitly they address power, ideology, and possibilities for action.

Its main dimensions include interpretive depth, source scrutiny, perspective plurality, multimodal engagement, and ideological awareness. Ilomäki et al. [4] conceptualize critical digital literacies as intertwined practices of evaluation, participation, and production. In Indonesian classrooms, Dinihari et al. [2] connect hoax analysis with source evaluation, Hidayat et al. [5] link exposition texts with critical language awareness, and Harsaid et al. [13] expose ideological assumptions in textbooks. Collectively, these indicators distinguish critical literacy from functional reading and decontextualized critical-thinking exercises because they connect textual interpretation with questions of credibility, representation, silence, and authority across print, digital, visual, and socially situated communicative environments.

2.2. Civic reasoning

Civic reasoning concerns how individuals interpret problems, weigh evidence, consider competing perspectives, and justify judgments about collective life. One tradition understands it as knowledge of institutions, rights, and duties; another emphasizes deliberation, media judgment, and participation. Indonesian scholarship spans both orientations. Puspaningtyas et al. [8] examine civic literacy as measurable

knowledge and disposition, whereas Manurung et al. [3] focus on political-news literacy. Rahman and Irayanti [14] foreground deliberative citizenship, while Agus et al. [9] argue for movement from awareness toward action. Civic reasoning therefore differs from civic knowledge because it requires warranted judgment under conditions of plurality, uncertainty, and disagreement.

Its analytical indicators include claim–evidence reasoning, source evaluation, deliberative openness, rights-based judgment, problem–solution formulation, and civic action. Biringan et al. [15] associate higher-order thinking with civic knowledge, while Tirza et al. [16] integrate digital literacy and critical thinking into assessment design. Tambunan et al. [17] connect digital literacy with democratic engagement, and Setyonegoro et al. [18] show why rhetorical analysis matters for civic and media education. These studies imply that civic reasoning becomes educationally meaningful when learners move from recognizing norms toward testing contested claims, considering alternative positions, identifying consequences, and proposing defensible responses grounded in evidence rather than compliance.

2.3. Educational empowerment

Educational empowerment refers to expanding learners' capacity to interpret, speak, produce knowledge, and participate meaningfully in educational and civic settings. It is sometimes framed instrumentally as improved skills, access, or employability, but critical pedagogy treats empowerment as redistribution of epistemic authority. Hidayatulloh et al. [19] connect Freirean thought with value-based vocational education, while Murtiningsih and Sujito [20] broaden empowerment through inclusion, intergenerational justice, and technological disruption. Utami [21] and Aminudin [22] add linguistic inclusion, demonstrating that empowerment also depends on whose languages, experiences, and knowledge are legitimized within everyday institutional classroom practice and who is authorized to define worthwhile participation.

Its indicators include learner agency, voice, knowledge production, contextual inclusion, collective action, and teacher autonomy. Susetya and Sukardi [23] associate critical literacy with pedagogical transformation among prospective teachers, while Hidayati et al. [24] emphasize culturally responsive teaching within curriculum reform. Irayanti [11] cautions that dialogic pedagogy may remain rhetorical when institutional conditions inhibit implementation. Sain [25] highlights professional agency amid automation, whereas Matsaini [26] exposes infrastructural inequality in AI-mediated learning. This study therefore treats empowerment not as an assumed outcome, but as a discursive allocation of authority across learners, teachers, texts, and institutions, observable through prescribed actions and participation structures.

3. METHODS

This study analysed one bounded textual excerpt from each unique public document, treating policy language rather than institutions or participants as its material object. The corpus comprised 40 documents: 17 primary texts defining curriculum or assessment expectations, 10 secondary texts regulating or interpreting implementation, and 13 contextual reports describing literacy conditions. Primary materials covered Bahasa Indonesia, Pancasila Education, Social Studies, History, Informatics, AKM, TKA, and character assessment. Secondary materials included regulations, standards, curriculum explanations, and implementation guidance. Contextual materials came from OECD, World Bank, UNICEF, Perpusnas, and national education agencies. Each excerpt retained provenance, section, date, link, scope, and limitations.

Table 1. Corpus composition and analytical status

Code	Data Type	Source or Issuing Channel	Geographic Scope	Period	Number	Principal Characteristics	Status
CUR-CP	Primary	Guru Kemendikdasmen	National	Current pages within 2021–2026 corpus window	11	Learning outcomes for Bahasa Indonesia, Pancasila Education, Social Studies, History, and Informatics	Included; unique
ASM-NA	Primary	Pusat Asesmen Pendidikan	National	Current pages within 2021–2026 corpus window	6	AKM frameworks, TKA specifications, and character-assessment definitions	Included; unique
REG-STD	Secondary	Kemendikdasmen and PSKP	National	2024–2025 and current pages	3	Curriculum regulation, graduate standards, and national standards explanation	Included; distinct regulatory functions
POL-IMP	Secondary	Curriculum Portal, ministerial channels, and BBPMP	National	2024–2025	4	Policy explanations, curriculum adjustment, and deep-learning framework	Included; distinct interpretive functions
GUID	Secondary	Rumah Pendidikan and BSKAP	National	2025 and current pages	3	Learning outcomes, objective sequencing, instruction, and assessment guidance	Included; unique
INT-CTX	Context	OECD, World Bank, and UNICEF	Indonesia-specific; international or selected districts	2023–2026	8	Reading performance, foundational skills, online practices, and programme evidence	Included with scope restrictions
NAT-CTX	Context	Perpusnas, Pusat Asesmen Pendidikan, and ministry channels	National, provincial, or selected schools	2024–2026 and current pages	5	Reading culture, digital literacy, official datasets, and AKM-related context	Included; not treated as curriculum prescription

This study adopted a qualitative documentary design combining directed content analysis with critical policy discourse analysis. Documentary analysis was appropriate because curriculum outcomes, assessment

frameworks, and regulatory guidance do not merely describe learning; they authorise forms of reading, judgment, participation, and knowledge. The design therefore examined both semantic content and the distribution of agency encoded through verbs, objects, modalities, and expected actions. Categories were theoretically informed by critical literacy, civic reasoning, and educational empowerment, yet coding remained responsive to recurrent formulations in the corpus. This design supports comparison across document types without claiming that written prescriptions were enacted in classrooms.

Information was drawn exclusively from publicly accessible and verifiable sources issued by Indonesian government bodies or intergovernmental organisations. Official national sources included Guru Kemendikdasmen, Pusat Asesmen Pendidikan, the curriculum portal, Rumah Pendidikan, BSKAP, PSKP, Perpusnas, and ministerial press channels. Indonesia-specific contextual evidence was obtained directly from OECD, World Bank, and UNICEF publications. These sources were selected because they provided identifiable institutional authorship, stable links, explicit educational scope, and retrievable text. Research literature informed analytical definitions rather than corpus membership, particularly work on critical digital literacy, curriculum co-construction, civic engagement, and dialogic pedagogy [4], [6], [11].

Data collection proceeded through institutional channels and Indonesian-English search terms concerning reading literacy, source evaluation, critical reasoning, citizenship, deliberation, learner voice, and empowerment. Eligible items were dated between January 2021 and 10 July 2026; current undated official pages were retained with access dates. Each item received a unique code and was entered into linked metadata, text, and coding sheets. Titles and canonicalised URLs were compared to remove duplicates, while near-duplicates were retained only when they performed distinct regulatory or pedagogical functions. Original excerpts, analytic glosses, sections, contextual notes, and scope limitations were preserved to maintain an auditable chain of evidence.

Analysis followed five stages. First, excerpts were segmented and read within their documented context. Second, the Critical Literacy Discourse Matrix coded interpretive depth, source scrutiny, perspective plurality, multimodality, and power awareness. Third, the Civic Reasoning Matrix coded evidence use, source evaluation, deliberation, rights, problem solving, and civic action. Fourth, the Educational Empowerment Language Scale examined agency, voice, knowledge production, inclusion, collective action, and instructional autonomy. Dimensions were scored from zero to three using explicit textual evidence. Finally, patterns were compared across roles, subjects, levels, and genres. A second coder should independently review at least 20 percent before publication and reporting.

Table 2. Analytical instruments and coding rules

Analytical Instrument	Dimensions	Coding Evidence	Scale	Comparative Output
Critical Literacy Discourse Matrix	Interpretive depth; source scrutiny; perspective plurality; multimodal or digital engagement; awareness of values, ideology, or power	Explicit verbs, objects of evaluation, source references, represented perspectives, and textual or multimodal practices	0–3 per dimension	Critical-literacy profile by data role, subject, level, and document genre
Civic Reasoning Matrix	Claim–evidence reasoning; source evaluation; deliberation; rights and responsibilities; problem–solution judgment; civic action	References to evidence, verification, public disagreement, citizenship, rights, duties, solutions, and participation	0–3 per dimension	Distribution of evidence-based civic judgment across curriculum domains
Educational Empowerment Language Scale	Learner agency; voice; knowledge production; contextual inclusion; collective action; teacher or school autonomy	Grammatical agency, authorised actions, forms of expression, collaboration, contextualisation, and instructional discretion	0–3 per dimension	Empowerment-language patterns across policy, curriculum, assessment, and contextual texts

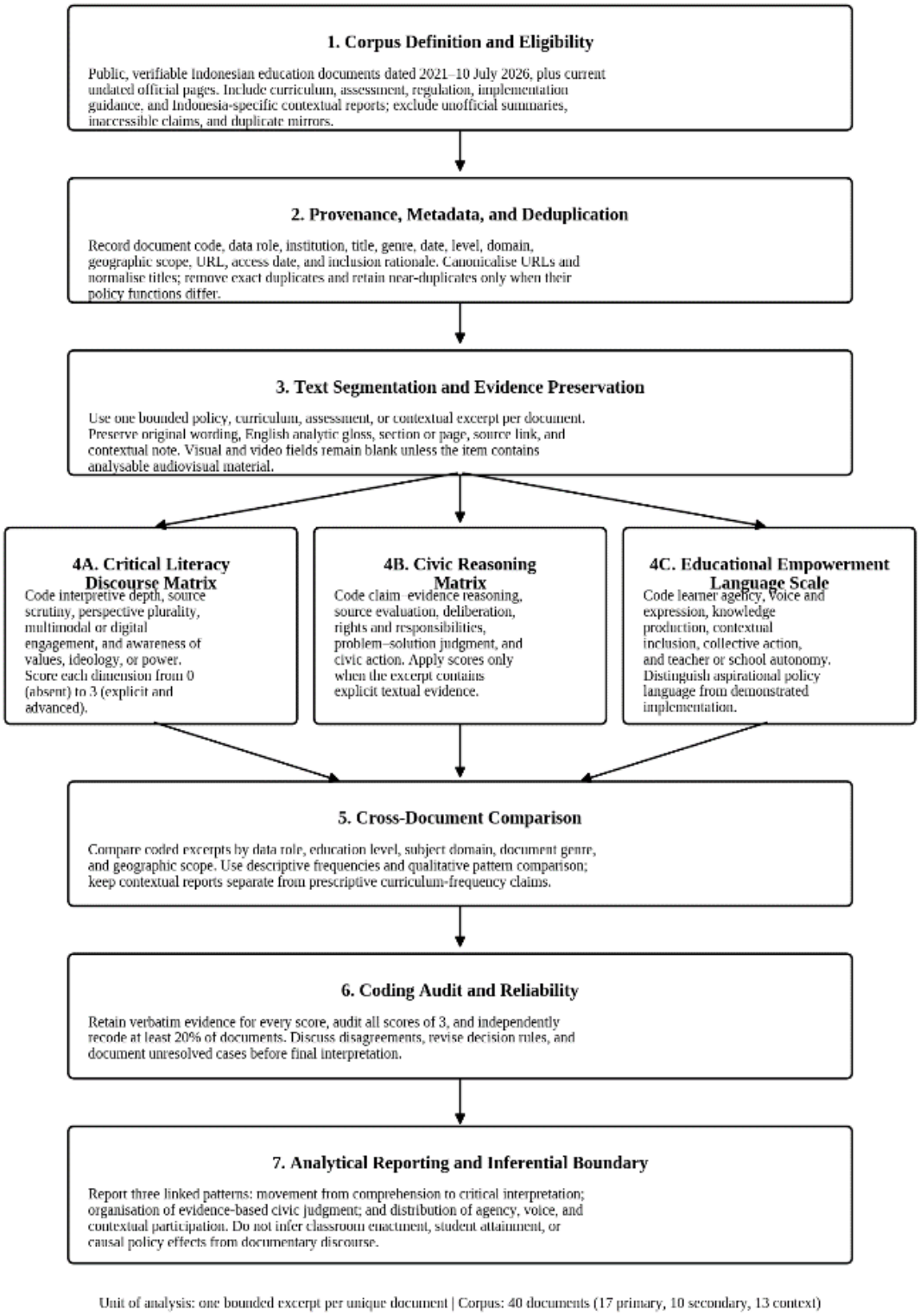


Figure 1. Operational analysis matrix

4. RESULTS

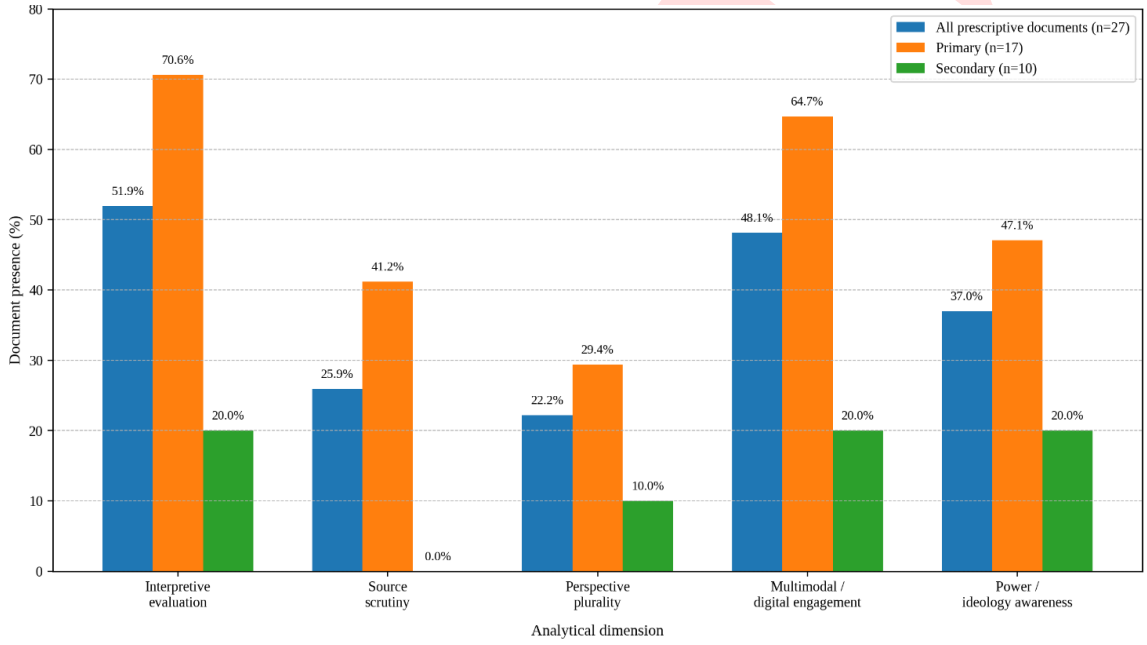
4.1. From comprehension to critical interpretation

Reading is represented across Indonesia's prescriptive education documents as a layered continuum rather than a single comprehension skill. Coding covered 27 curriculum, assessment, regulatory, and implementation documents, while contextual reports were retained only for subsequent interpretation. Each dimension was counted when its score exceeded zero, and advanced articulation referred to a score of three.

This procedure makes visible both breadth and intensity: frequency indicates how widely an orientation appeared, whereas mean scores show how strongly it was formulated. The distribution reveals that critical literacy was not absent from official discourse, but neither was it integrated consistently. Evaluative interpretation and multimodal engagement appeared across almost half of the corpus, while source scrutiny and perspective plurality remained concentrated within a smaller set of disciplinary texts.

Table 3. Distribution of critical-literacy orientations in prescriptive education documents (n = 27)

Analytical Dimension	Operational Manifestation	Frequency	Percentage	Mean Score (0–3)	Advanced Articulation (n)	Variation by Data Role	Representative Textual Evidence	Data Codes
Interpretive evaluation	Analysing information, interpreting meaning, reflecting on texts, and evaluating ideas or viewpoints through explicit reasoning criteria	14	51.9%	1.00	3	Primary: 12/17 (70.6%); Secondary: 2/10 (20.0%)	"Peserta didik mampu mengevaluasi gagasan dan pandangan berdasarkan kaidah logika berpikir dari membaca berbagai tipe teks."	PRI-BI-F-004; PRI-SEJ-E-010; SEC-SKL10-020
Source scrutiny	Comparing sources, judging accuracy and data quality, verifying information, triangulating evidence, and criticising primary or secondary sources	7	25.9%	0.48	2	Primary: 7/17 (41.2%); Secondary: 0/10 (0.0%)	"Proses analisis informasi dilakukan dengan cara verifikasi, interpretasi, dan triangulasi informasi."	PRI-IPS-D-009; PRI-SEJ-E-010; PRI-BI-D-002
Perspective plurality	Engaging ideas, opinions, viewpoints, alternative positions, or opportunities for expression within textual and civic interpretation	6	22.2%	0.26	0	Primary: 5/17 (29.4%); Secondary: 1/10 (10.0%)	"Peserta didik mampu mengevaluasi gagasan dan pandangan berdasarkan kaidah logika berpikir."	PRI-BI-F-004; PRI-PP-D-006; PRI-PP-E-007
Multimodal and digital engagement	Reading, viewing, and using information across digital, visual, technological, or contextually diverse communicative environments	13	48.1%	0.59	0	Primary: 11/17 (64.7%); Secondary: 2/10 (20.0%)	"Memahami keterbukaan informasi, memilih informasi yang bersifat publik atau privat, menerapkan etika dan menjaga keamanan dirinya dalam masyarakat digital."	PRI-INF-D-011; SEC-KUR12-018; PRI-AKM-012
Power and ideology awareness	Examining rights, responsibilities, civic norms, Pancasila values, information ethics, freedom of expression, and institutional authority	10	37.0%	0.85	4	Primary: 8/17 (47.1%); Secondary: 2/10 (20.0%)	"Menganalisis kasus pelanggaran hak dan pengingkaran kewajiban warga negara dan merumuskan solusi dari permasalahan tersebut."	PRI-PP-F-008; PRI-PP-D-006; PRI-INF-D-011



Values reproduce Table 3 exactly; contextual documents are excluded from prescriptive-frequency calculations.

Figure 2. Critical-literacy presence across prescriptive document roles

Interpretive evaluation was the most frequent orientation, occurring in 14 documents (51.9%), followed by multimodal or digital engagement in 13 documents (48.1%). Bahasa Indonesia Fase F required learners to "evaluate ideas and viewpoints based on principles of logical reasoning," while History Fase E prescribed selection, criticism, and interpretation of primary and secondary sources. Source scrutiny appeared in only seven documents (25.9%), although its strongest formulations were methodologically explicit: Social Studies Fase D required "verification, interpretation, and triangulation of information." Perspective plurality was least developed, appearing in six documents (22.2%) without any advanced score. Power and ideology awareness appeared in ten documents (37.0%), particularly where learners analysed rights violations, civic duties, Pancasila values, information ethics, or freedom of expression.

This uneven profile suggests that critical literacy is institutionally recognised but organised through disciplinary fragments rather than a fully connected pedagogical progression. Evaluative verbs create

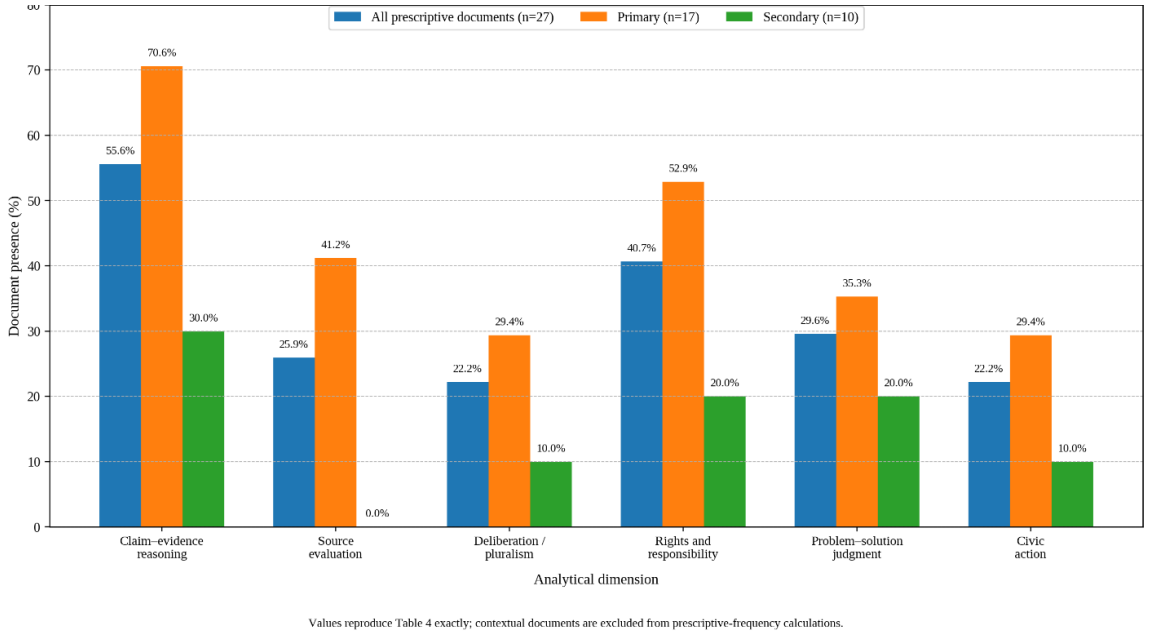
openings for epistemic agency, consistent with Wulandari's [10] account of critical engagement with digital materials and Hidayat et al.'s [5] emphasis on critical language awareness. However, evaluation does not automatically become critical literacy when learners are not systematically asked to compare perspectives, identify exclusions, or examine how authority is produced. Ilomäki et al. [4] similarly position critical digital literacy as an integration of evaluation, participation, and production, while Mambu [6] stresses curriculum co-construction. This study therefore interprets Indonesia's policy architecture as comparatively strong in analytical demand but weaker in plural voice, counter-reading, and sustained ideological inquiry.

4.2. Civic reasoning as evidence, deliberation, and public judgment

Civic reasoning was distributed across the same 27 prescriptive documents and the same bounded-excerpt unit used in the preceding analysis. Claim–evidence reasoning was the most widely represented dimension, appearing in 15 documents, whereas deliberation and civic action each appeared in only six. This distribution indicates that official educational discourse more frequently authorises learners to analyse information than to participate in collective judgment. Primary curriculum and assessment texts consistently contained more explicit civic-reasoning indicators than secondary regulatory or implementation documents. The contrast is especially pronounced in source evaluation, which appeared in seven primary documents but no secondary texts. Civic reasoning was therefore present as a curricular expectation, although its component practices were not equally institutionalised across document roles.

Table 4. Distribution of civic-reasoning orientations in prescriptive education documents (n = 27)

Analytical Dimension	Operational Manifestation	Frequency	Percentage	Mean Score (0–3)	Advanced Articulation (n)	Variation by Data Role	Representative Textual Evidence	Data Codes
Claim–evidence reasoning	Analysing information, applying logical principles, interpreting evidence, and testing claims through verification or source criticism	15	55.6%	1.04	2	Primary: 12/17 (70.6%); Secondary: 3/10 (30.0%)	"Proses analisis informasi dilakukan dengan cara verifikasi, interpretasi, dan triangulasi informasi."	PRI-IPS-D-009; PRI-SEJ-E-010; PRI-BI-F-004
Source evaluation	Assessing accuracy, comparing information, evaluating data quality, and criticising primary or secondary sources	7	25.9%	0.48	2	Primary: 7/17 (41.2%); Secondary: 0/10 (0.0%)	"Melakukan seleksi dan kritik terhadap sumber-sumber primer maupun sekunder."	PRI-SEJ-E-010; PRI-IPS-D-009; PRI-BI-D-002
Deliberation and pluralism	Considering viewpoints, practising deliberation, expressing opinions, and developing shared decisions through discussion or collaboration	6	22.2%	0.48	2	Primary: 5/17 (29.4%); Secondary: 1/10 (10.0%)	"Melaksanakan praktik musyawarah untuk membuat kesepakatan dan aturan bersama."	PRI-PP-C-005; PRI-PP-D-006; SEC-PPA-025
Rights and responsibility	Reasoning about rights, duties, citizenship, public-private information, ethical conduct, and Pancasila-based norms	11	40.7%	0.81	4	Primary: 9/17 (52.9%); Secondary: 2/10 (20.0%)	"Menganalisis kasus pelanggaran hak dan pengingkaran kewajiban warga negara."	PRI-PP-F-008; PRI-INF-D-011; SEC-SKL10-020
Problem–solution judgment	Identifying public or normative problems, connecting theory with practice, and proposing contextually relevant responses	8	29.6%	0.48	2	Primary: 6/17 (35.3%); Secondary: 2/10 (20.0%)	"Merumuskan gagasan solutif untuk mengatasi perilaku yang bertentangan dengan nilai Pancasila."	PRI-PP-E-007; PRI-PP-F-008; PRI-AKMF-013
Civic action	Applying agreements, practising freedom of expression, contributing to collective life, or translating judgment into participation	6	22.2%	0.30	0	Primary: 5/17 (29.4%); Secondary: 1/10 (10.0%)	"Mempraktikkan kemerdekaan berpendapat sebagai warga negara dalam era keterbukaan informasi."	PRI-PP-D-006; PRI-PP-C-005; PRI-SK-017



Values reproduce Table 4 exactly; contextual documents are excluded from prescriptive-frequency calculations.

Figure 3. Civic-reasoning presence across prescriptive document roles

Claim–evidence reasoning occurred in 55.6% of documents, including Social Studies guidance requiring "verification, interpretation, and triangulation of information." Rights and responsibility formed the second most prevalent dimension at 40.7%, with Pancasila Education Fase F directing learners to analyse "violations of rights and denial of citizens' obligations." Problem–solution judgment appeared in eight documents, particularly where learners were required to formulate solutions to conduct conflicting with Pancasila values. Deliberation, however, was restricted largely to Pancasila Education, including the requirement to conduct musyawarah and establish shared rules. Civic action had the lowest mean score, 0.30, and received no advanced articulation, showing that participation was usually expressed as practice or application rather than learner-initiated public action.

This configuration positions civic reasoning between analytical competence and bounded participation. Its strong claim–evidence component accords with Tirza et al. [16], who connect critical thinking and digital literacy with civic assessment, and Manurung et al. [3], who demonstrate the importance of evaluating political information. Yet civic judgment cannot be reduced to verifying claims because democratic reasoning also requires disagreement, perspective-taking, justification, and collective decision-making. Rahman and Irayanti's [14] deliberative framework and Tambunan et al.'s [17] account of democratic engagement suggest that evidence acquires civic significance when learners can use it within public interaction. The corpus consequently constructs learners more consistently as evaluators of information and civic norms than as initiators of sustained democratic participation.

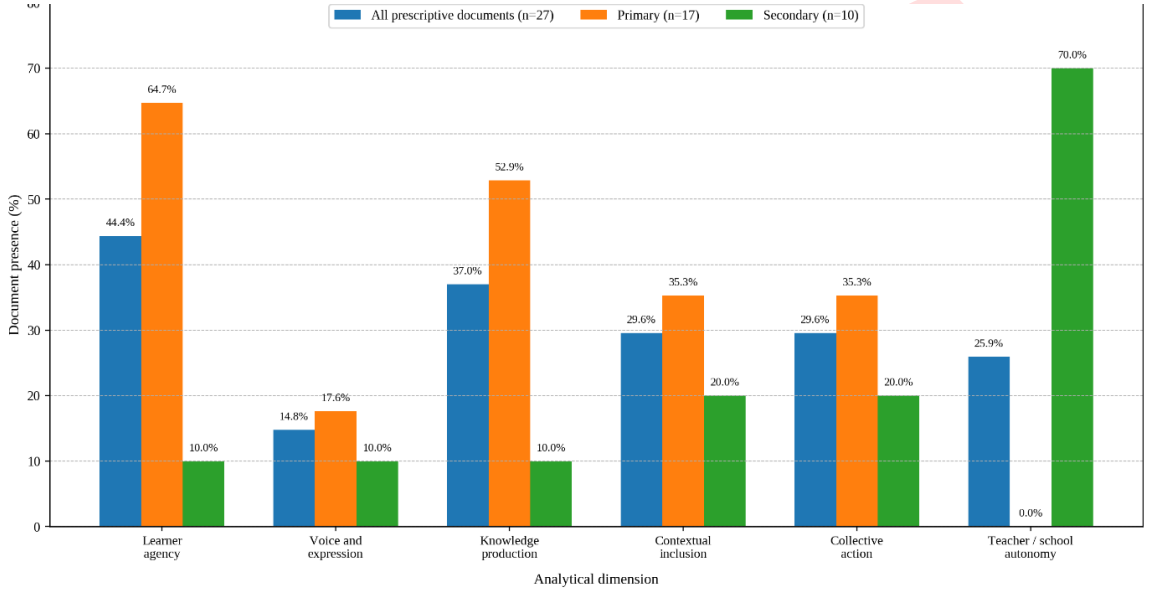
4.3. Educational empowerment through agency, voice, and contextual participation

Empowerment language was examined through the same bounded excerpts and documentary classifications used in the preceding analyses. Learner agency appeared most frequently, occurring in 12 of 27 documents, while explicit voice and expression appeared in only four. Knowledge production occupied an intermediate position, indicating that several curriculum texts authorised learners to interpret, verify, and criticise information without consistently extending those practices into public expression. A distinctive division emerged between document roles. Primary texts concentrated on learner action, whereas secondary texts contained nearly all references to teacher and school autonomy. Educational empowerment was therefore distributed across different institutional levels: learners were assigned analytical responsibilities through curriculum outcomes, while educators received planning discretion principally through implementation guidance.

Table 5. Distribution of educational-empowerment orientations in prescriptive education documents (n = 27)

Analytical Dimension	Operational Manifestation	Frequency	Percentage	Mean Score (0–3)	Advanced Articulation (n)	Variation by Data Role	Representative Textual Evidence	Data Codes
Learner agency	Authorising learners to analyse, evaluate, select, reflect, formulate ideas, and construct solutions rather than receive information passively	12	44.4%	0.78	2	Primary: 11/17 (64.7%); Secondary: 1/10 (10.0%)	"Merumuskan gagasan solutif untuk mengatasi perilaku yang bertentangan dengan nilai Pancasila dalam kehidupan sehari-hari."	PRI-PP-E-007; PRI-PP-F-008; PRI-BI-F-004
Voice and expression	Enabling learners to	4	14.8%	0.30	1	Primary: 3/17	"Mempraktikkan kemerdekaan	PRI-PP-D-006;

	communicate positions, express opinions, evaluate viewpoints, and participate in public or civic expression					(17.6%); Secondary: 1/10 (10.0%)	berpendapat sebagai warga negara dalam era keterbukaan informasi."	PRI-PP-E-007; SEC-SKL10-020
Knowledge production	Positioning learners as interpreters, investigators, or producers of evidential meaning through analysis, verification, criticism, and interpretation	10	37.0%	0.59	2	Primary: 9/17 (52.9%); Secondary: 1/10 (10.0%)	"Melakukan seleksi dan kritik terhadap sumber-sumber primer maupun sekunder; melakukan penafsiran untuk mendeskripsikan makna di balik sumber-sumber."	PRI-SEJ-E-010; PRI-IPS-D-009; PRI-BI-C-001
Contextual inclusion	Connecting learning with family, school, digital society, everyday life, diverse contexts, or relationships between theory and practice	8	29.6%	0.63	2	Primary: 6/17 (35.3%); Secondary: 2/10 (20.0%)	"Kegiatan kokurikuler dirancang agar menghubungkan antara teori dan praktik dalam kehidupan nyata."	SEC-ADJ-026; PRI-AKMF-013; PRI-PP-E-007
Collective action	Organising learning through deliberation, shared agreements, collaboration, community participation, and collectively oriented practices	8	29.6%	0.48	2	Primary: 6/17 (35.3%); Secondary: 2/10 (20.0%)	"Melaksanakan praktik musyawarah untuk membuat kesepakatan dan aturan bersama."	PRI-PP-C-005; SEC-PPA-025; PRI-INF-D-011
Teacher and school autonomy	Providing space for instructional planning, sequencing, contextual adaptation, and collaborative development of learning experiences	7	25.9%	0.41	1	Primary: 0/17 (0.0%); Secondary: 7/10 (70.0%)	"Pengembangan rencana pembelajaran yang kolaboratif."	SEC-PPA-025; SEC-ATPDEF-024; SEC-NAPM-022



Values reproduce Table 5 exactly; contextual documents are excluded from prescriptive-frequency calculations.

Figure 4. Educational-empowerment language across prescriptive document roles

Learner agency appeared in 44.4% of documents and reached advanced articulation where Pancasila Education required students to "formulate solution-oriented ideas" and respond to violations of rights or civic obligations. Knowledge production occurred in ten documents, particularly in History and Social Studies, where learners selected, criticised, verified, interpreted, and triangulated sources. Contextual inclusion and collective action each appeared in eight documents. Their strongest formulations connected theory with real-life practice and required musyawarah for shared agreements. Voice and expression remained least frequent at 14.8%, despite one explicit requirement to practise freedom of expression. Teacher and school autonomy appeared in seven secondary documents but no primary texts, reflecting its location within policy implementation rather than learner competency statements.

This distribution shows that empowerment is articulated more strongly as cognitive agency than as publicly exercised voice. Learners are frequently authorised to analyse or solve problems, but less frequently positioned as speakers who publish, contest, or reshape institutional knowledge. This distinction supports Susetya and Sukardi's [23] view that critical literacy requires pedagogical transformation rather than the acquisition of analytical skills alone. Utami [21] and Aminudin [22] further suggest that meaningful agency depends on linguistic and contextual inclusion, while Irayanti [11] cautions that dialogic aspirations can be constrained during implementation. The concentration of instructional autonomy in secondary documents consequently creates potential for contextual adaptation, but empowerment remains conditional on whether teachers translate regulatory flexibility into sustained learner voice, collaboration, and knowledge production.

5. DISCUSSION

The prominence of interpretive evaluation, alongside weaker source scrutiny and perspective plurality, indicates that Indonesian education discourse has moved beyond literal comprehension but has not fully

institutionalised critical reading. Its contribution lies in authorising learners to analyse ideas, compare information, and apply logical criteria, thereby expanding reading into epistemic judgment. However, this architecture becomes dysfunctional when evaluation is detached from attention to whose knowledge is privileged, which perspectives are excluded, and how authority is constructed. Wulandari [10] and Hidayat et al. [5] similarly show that critical literacy depends on language awareness, not merely higher-order questioning. By contrast, Ilomäki et al. [4] emphasise participation and production as integral to critical digital literacy, revealing a narrower orientation in this corpus. This matters because evaluative competence without ideological and perspectival inquiry may improve textual discrimination while leaving representations intact. Critical literacy therefore appears institutionally recognised, yet incomplete as a framework for democratic reading.

This unevenness is best explained by the structure of subject-based curriculum organisation rather than by a single pedagogical deficiency. Source criticism is concentrated in History and Social Studies, evaluative reasoning in Bahasa Indonesia, and rights-oriented interpretation in Pancasila Education, producing complementary but weakly connected competencies. Such fragmentation reflects a curricular logic in which disciplines retain specialised epistemic responsibilities, even when national policy promotes integrated literacy. Mambu [6] and Qoyyimah et al. [7] demonstrate that critical literacy becomes stronger when language, genre, and social questioning are co-constructed; Harsaid et al. [13], however, show that textbooks may reproduce ideological assumptions despite critical aspirations. The observed pattern therefore correlates with limited cross-disciplinary articulation: learners may encounter evaluation, source checking, and civic critique separately rather than as one recurring reading practice. This structure explains why analytical demand is visible across documents while plural voice and power analysis remain less consistently elaborated in educational expectations.

The civic-reasoning pattern carries a double implication. Its strongest function is to position learners as assessors of claims, evidence, rights, and public problems, moving citizenship education away from memorising institutions or moral prescriptions. This aligns with Tirza et al. [16] and Manurung et al. [3], who connect civic competence with critical thinking, digital literacy, and political-news evaluation. Yet weak articulation of deliberation and civic action limits how far such reasoning can become democratic practice. Evaluating information is necessary, but citizenship also requires listening across disagreement, justifying decisions, and acting with others. Rahman and Irayanti [14] foreground deliberation as a condition of democratic citizenship, whereas Tambunan et al. [17] emphasise engagement through digitally mediated participation. Compared with these accounts, this corpus constructs a cognitively capable rather than active learner. Civic reasoning consequently functions as preparation for judgment, but risks remaining procedural unless evidential analysis is connected to participation and collective decision-making.

The underlying structure of this imbalance lies in how texts manage tension between democratic agency and normative order. Pancasila Education authorises analysis of rights, duties, and social problems, but situates action within bounded forms such as compliance, agreement, or guided participation. This does not negate democratic intent; rather, it suggests that participation is framed through sanctioned norms. Agus et al. [9] argue for movement from civic awareness to action, while Puspaningtyas et al. [8] show that civic literacy remains measured through knowledge and disposition. Setyonegoro et al. [18] demonstrate that rhetorical analysis can strengthen civic and media education by exposing how public claims are constructed. These studies explain why evidence-based judgment appears more consistently than open-ended civic action: analytical competencies are easier to codify, sequence, and assess than deliberation. Accordingly, the pattern reflects a preference for governable participation, where learners reason within civic frameworks but seldom redefine those frameworks themselves.

The empowerment profile shows that policy discourse grants learners cognitive agency while offering fewer opportunities for explicit voice, publication, or public knowledge-making. This distinction is consequential. Authorising learners to analyse, interpret, and formulate solutions can reduce passive reception and support epistemic confidence, yet empowerment remains partial when learners are not equally authorised to contest, communicate, or reshape institutional meanings. Susetya and Sukardi [23] associate critical literacy with pedagogical transformation, while Utami [21] and Aminudin [22] demonstrate that participation depends on linguistic inclusion and diverse knowledge. The corpus supports the first dimension more strongly than the second: agency is visible as intellectual work, but voice is comparatively constrained. This pattern neither invalidates empowerment claims nor confirms their realisation. Instead, it shows that official discourse creates enabling conditions whose democratic value depends on classroom enactment. Educational empowerment therefore operates as a potential redistribution of epistemic authority, not as an accomplished institutional outcome.

The distribution of empowerment across document roles clarifies why this potential remains conditional. Primary curriculum and assessment texts assign analytical responsibilities to learners, whereas secondary guidance concentrates teacher and school autonomy in planning, sequencing, and contextual adaptation. This separation creates a mediation structure: learners receive agency through prescribed

competencies, but educators control conditions under which such agency becomes dialogic, inclusive, or performative. Irayanti [11] cautions that dialogic pedagogy may fail to take root when institutional routines, readiness, and classroom hierarchies remain unchanged. Sain [25] similarly locates professional agency within tensions between pedagogical judgment and automation, while Matsaini [26] highlights infrastructural inequalities shaping access to empowering learning. These perspectives explain why policy flexibility cannot be equated with learner empowerment. Autonomy may enable contextual pedagogy, but may also reproduce conventional authority. The deeper implication is that empowerment depends on alignment among curriculum expectations, teacher discretion, linguistic inclusion, resources, and participatory classroom structures.

6. CONCLUSION

This study shows that Indonesian educational discourse has moved beyond literal comprehension by embedding evaluation, source comparison, civic judgment, and learner agency across curriculum, assessment, and policy texts. Its central lesson is that critical literacy becomes consequential only when interpretive analysis, civic reasoning, and empowerment are treated as interdependent rather than separate competencies. Methodologically, this study contributes an integrated documentary framework combining a Critical Literacy Discourse Matrix, Civic Reasoning Matrix, and Educational Empowerment Language Scale. This approach renews analysis by tracing how official documents distribute epistemic authority, civic responsibility, and participation across subjects, institutional levels, and forms of educational governance.

This study is limited by reliance on public documents, which cannot establish how policy language is interpreted, enacted, or contested in classrooms. Coding captures explicit textual formulations more reliably than implicit pedagogical meanings, while contextual indicators cannot be treated as evidence of implementation or causality. Future research should therefore combine documentary analysis with classroom observation, teacher interviews, student discourse, assessment artefacts, and longitudinal comparison across regions and school types. Comparative studies should examine linguistic diversity, digital inequality, and institutional capacity. Such work would clarify when policy commitments to critical reading and civic participation become sustained practices rather than aspirational formulations.

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Imam Masrur: conceptualization, methodology, formal analysis, writing – original draft, writing – review and editing.

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Author states no conflict of interest.

AI USE DECLARATION

The author used artificial intelligence tools to assist with the generation of illustrative figures and with the formatting and layout of this manuscript. AI was not used to generate the substantive content, conceptualization, data, analysis, or conclusions of the research, all of which remain the sole responsibility of the author.

INFORMED CONSENT

Not applicable – this study did not involve direct human participants. Data consisted solely of publicly accessible documentary sources: curriculum, assessment, regulatory, implementation, and contextual education documents issued by Indonesian government bodies and intergovernmental organisations.

ETHICAL APPROVAL

This research did not involve human or animal subjects; it analyzed publicly accessible documentary and policy materials, and therefore no institutional review board approval was required. Where research does involve human subjects, the author affirms that such research would be conducted in full compliance with all relevant national regulations and institutional policies, in accordance with the tenets of the Declaration of Helsinki, and would be approved by the author's institutional review board or equivalent committee.

DATA AVAILABILITY

The documentary corpus of publicly accessible Indonesian curriculum, assessment, regulatory, implementation, and contextual education documents analyzed in this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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