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Rapor Pendidikan as a Boundary Object in Instructional Decision-Making: A Qualitative Study

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ABSTRACT

The use of national assessment data has increasingly been positioned as a foundation for instructional decision-making in schools. In Indonesia, Rapor Pendidikan (Education Report Card) was developed as a national platform providing school-level quality data, including students' literacy and numeracy achievement. However, the availability of data does not necessarily correspond to changes in classroom practice. This study aims to analyze how principals and teachers interpret and use literacy and numeracy data presented in Rapor Pendidikan by positioning it as a boundary object. This research employed a qualitative case study design. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with the principal and teachers, document analysis of Rapor Pendidikan, and reflective field notes. Findings indicate that Rapor Pendidikan is jointly recognized and accessed by various school actors; however, it primarily functions as an informational artifact rather than as a basis for instructional decision-making. No systematic mediation practices were identified that connect data indicators with classroom instructional decisions. These findings suggest a stalled boundary crossing condition, in which data are recognized and understood but not translated into pedagogical action. The study underscores that educational data use constitutes a social practice dependent on instructional leadership, professional collaboration, and collective sensemaking at the school level.

Keywords: Rapor Pendidikan, boundary object, literacy, numeracy, data-based decision-making



INTRODUCTION

The use of assessment data has become a central agenda in global education policy. Schools are encouraged to employ data as a basis for instructional decision-making, particularly in literacy and numeracy competencies, which are regarded as foundational for students' academic success (OECD, 2019). Data are assumed to enable schools to identify instructional challenges, design appropriate interventions, and improve both learning processes and outcomes.

Nevertheless, extensive research demonstrates that increased availability of assessment data does not automatically lead to changes in classroom instructional practice (Schildkamp, Lai, & Earl, 2013; Spillane, 2012). Data are often accessible and understood but are not meaningfully integrated into everyday instructional decision-making. The literature on data-based decision making (DBDM) emphasizes that the primary issue is not data availability, but rather how school actors interpret and translate data into pedagogical action (Mandinach & Schildkamp, 2021).

Datnow and Park (2018) argue that data use is a social practice shaped by school culture, leadership, and professional interaction. Data do not function neutrally; rather, they operate through processes of interpretation and negotiation of meaning. Visscher (2021) further notes that teachers and school leaders are generally capable of reading and understanding assessment data, yet they encounter difficulties when attempting to translate such data into concrete instructional strategies.

In Indonesia, Rapor Pendidikan was developed as a national platform providing a comprehensive profile of school quality across multiple indicators, including students' literacy and numeracy achievement (Kementerian Pendidikan, 2022). Normatively, Rapor Pendidikan is intended to serve as a foundation for reflection and data-informed planning at



the school level. In practice, however, its use often remains at the level of data recognition without extending to instructional change.

Most literacy and numeracy research in Indonesia has focused on factors influencing student achievement or the effectiveness of instructional interventions. While such approaches are important, they do not sufficiently explain how national assessment data are used in instructional decision-making practices. Therefore, this study positions Rapor Pendidikan as a boundary object to examine the relationship between data, school actors, and instructional practice.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a qualitative approach with a case study design. The research was conducted in a secondary school in Bantaeng Regency. The researcher acted as an insider researcher (teacher), enabling direct access to school practices related to the use of Rapor Pendidikan.

Participants included the school principal and teachers directly involved in literacy and numeracy instruction. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, document analysis of Rapor Pendidikan, and reflective field notes. Data analysis was conducted thematically and iteratively using the concepts of boundary object and boundary crossing as analytical lenses (Akkerman & Bakker, 2011). Trustworthiness was ensured through source triangulation and researcher reflexivity.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Shared Awareness of Literacy and Numeracy Data

The findings indicate that both the principal and teachers demonstrated a shared awareness of the existence and content of literacy and numeracy data presented in *Rapor*



Pendidikan. They were able to identify the school's overall achievement position and recognized that the data represented students' literacy and numeracy competencies based on national assessment results. This suggests that *Rapor Pendidikan* has been successfully accessed and acknowledged by multiple school actors, functioning as a shared reference point in understanding school quality outcomes.

This shared awareness aligns with previous research indicating that teachers and school leaders generally do not experience significant difficulty in reading or understanding assessment data provided by educational systems (Visscher, 2021). However, as emphasized in the data-based decision-making (DBDM) literature, awareness and understanding of data constitute only an initial stage and do not necessarily lead to changes in instructional practice (Mandinach & Schildkamp, 2021). Thus, the success of *Rapor Pendidikan* in providing information cannot be equated with success in promoting instructional decision-making.

2. Divergent Interpretations of Data Between the Principal and Teachers

Despite this shared awareness, the study identified clear differences in how the principal and teachers interpreted the literacy and numeracy data. The principal tended to view *Rapor Pendidikan* data as a macro-level tool for reflecting on overall school performance and as a basis for general planning, particularly in relation to reporting requirements and accountability demands. In this perspective, data functioned as indicators of school quality to be monitored and compared over time.

In contrast, teachers perceived the literacy and numeracy data as aggregated information with limited relevance to the concrete realities of classroom learning. They reported difficulty using the data as a foundation for instructional decision-making because it did not directly represent individual students' learning needs. Consequently, teachers relied more heavily on their teaching experience, classroom observations, and formative assessment results when determining instructional strategies.



These differences reflect Datnow and Park's (2018) findings that data are often interpreted differently depending on professional roles and responsibilities. In this context, the same data served managerial purposes for the principal while functioning merely as background information for teachers. Importantly, this divergence does not indicate resistance to data but rather reveals distinct logics of practice that have not been reconciled through pedagogical dialogue.

3. Data as an Informational Artifact Rather Than an Instructional Guide

The findings further indicate that literacy and numeracy data in *Rapor Pendidikan* have not functioned as a guide for instructional decision-making. Although the data were acknowledged as important, no systematic practices were identified that linked the indicators in *Rapor Pendidikan* to the design or adaptation of classroom instruction. Instead, *Rapor Pendidikan* was more frequently treated as an informational document reviewed periodically, particularly in the context of evaluation and reporting.

This finding is consistent with literature suggesting that assessment data often remain within the domain of accountability rather than extending into instructional practice (Schildkamp, Lai, & Earl, 2013). Mandinach and Gummer (2016) argue that data literacy is not synonymous with data use. Understanding data is a necessary but insufficient condition for instructional change. Without mechanisms that connect data to pedagogical action, data tend to remain external to everyday instructional decision-making processes.

4. The Absence of Mediation Practices and the Stalled Translation of Data

A key finding of this study is the absence of mediation practices specifically designed to bridge literacy and numeracy data with instructional decisions. No regular forums or collaborative mechanisms were identified that enabled the principal and teachers to engage in pedagogically focused discussions of the data. When discussions occurred, they were



generally broad and centered on numerical achievement rather than instructional implications.

This absence of mediation explains why the translation of data into instructional action did not occur. The literature suggests that effective data use requires collaborative spaces in which school actors engage in joint interpretation and negotiation of meaning (Datnow, Park, & Kennedy-Lewis, 2013; Schildkamp et al., 2021). Without such spaces, data remain external artifacts that are not integrated into instructional practice.

Within the boundary crossing framework, this condition can be understood as a halted process of boundary crossing that fails to generate cross-practice learning (Akkerman & Bakker, 2011). *Rapor Pendidikan* functions as a boundary object that is jointly recognized and used, yet it is not supported by practices that enable meaningful interaction between policy logic and pedagogical logic.

5. Numerical Data, the Absence of Narrative, and Weak Sensemaking

The study also found that the numerical data presented in *Rapor Pendidikan* were not accompanied by pedagogical narratives that could assist teachers in linking numerical indicators to students' learning experiences. Teachers perceived the data as abstract representations that were difficult to connect to classroom realities. This condition weakened the sensemaking processes necessary for data to inform instructional practice.

Recent research indicates that numerical data require professional narratives to become meaningful for pedagogical practice (Studies in Educational Evaluation, 2021). Datnow and Hubbard (2022) emphasize that teachers' sensemaking processes are strongly influenced by their teaching experience and social interaction. In this study, sensemaking occurred individually and experientially rather than through collective, data-informed dialogue. As a result, *Rapor Pendidikan* did not become an integral component of instructional decision-making.



6. *Rapor Pendidikan* as a Boundary Object and the Phenomenon of Stalled Boundary Crossing

Based on these findings, *Rapor Pendidikan* can be conceptualized as a boundary object that functions primarily at an informational level. The artifact is successfully recognized and accessed by multiple school actors but does not facilitate productive boundary crossing. This condition reflects the phenomenon of stalled boundary crossing—situations in which cross-boundary artifacts are recognized and understood but do not evolve into cross-practice learning (Akkerman & Bakker, 2011).

Theoretically, this phenomenon is significant because it demonstrates that the failure of data use does not stem from individual resistance or incompetence. Rather, it results from the absence of structural supports and enabling practices at the school level. Data are present, actors are present, yet mediation processes are not facilitated. Consequently, *Rapor Pendidikan* operates as a structurally stable policy artifact but remains pedagogically weak.

7. The Role of the Principal and the Dimension of Instructional Leadership

The findings also highlight the principal's role in the use of literacy and numeracy data. Although the principal recognized the importance of data, this understanding had not yet been translated into instructional leadership practices that actively facilitate pedagogical data use. The principal had not assumed the role of a boundary broker who bridges policy discourse and classroom practice (Wenger, 1998).

Previous studies indicate that instructional leadership and collaborative practices are key factors in successful data use within schools (Schildkamp et al., 2021; Datnow & Park, 2018). In this context, the absence of leadership practices that mediate data use resulted in *Rapor Pendidikan* remaining within managerial and administrative domains, disconnected from the dynamics of classroom instruction.

8. Theoretical Implications



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Theoretically, these findings reinforce the argument that educational data use is fundamentally a social practice dependent on mediation, collaboration, and collective sensemaking. By employing the lenses of boundary object and boundary crossing, this study demonstrates that national assessment data can function informationally without generating instructional transformation.

These findings extend the data-based decision-making literature by challenging approaches that position individual data literacy as the primary solution. Instead, the study underscores the importance of organizational and leadership dimensions in determining whether data serve as catalysts for professional learning or remain mere reporting artifacts.

In sum, the limited utilization of literacy and numeracy data in *Rapor Pendidikan* does not reflect individual failure. Rather, it illustrates the complex dynamics of data as a cross-practice artifact. While *Rapor Pendidikan* has successfully functioned as a shared boundary object, it has not yet evolved into a mechanism for cross-practice learning due to the absence of adequate mediation practices.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the limited use of literacy and numeracy data in *Rapor Pendidikan* is not caused by a lack of data or insufficient understanding among educators, but rather by stalled boundary crossing processes. While *Rapor Pendidikan* functions as a recognized boundary object, it does not yet trigger instructional transformation due to the absence of mediation practices and structured pedagogical dialogue. Effective educational data use requires instructional leadership, professional collaboration, and collective sensemaking to enable data to function pedagogically rather than merely administratively.



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