

Reframing Historical Literature Learning through Deep Learning Pedagogy in Primary Education

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Abstract

Historical literature in primary education has strong potential to support meaning making, reflection, and early historical thinking, yet classroom practices often emphasise surface-level engagement. This study explores how historical literature learning can be reframed through deep learning pedagogy and how such reframing shapes students' learning processes. Deep learning is operationalised as observable shifts toward interpretive reasoning, dialogic interaction, justification with textual evidence, perspective awareness, and connections between historical meanings and contemporary contexts. Using a qualitative case study design, the research involved two upper primary classrooms in Bandung, Indonesia, with 60 students and two teachers. Data were collected through classroom observations, analysis of student learning artefacts, and semi-structured interviews, and analysed thematically to trace instructional change and student engagement. The findings show a shift from shallow learning routines focused on recall toward deeper engagement characterised by interpretation, reflection, and collaborative dialogue. Students demonstrated increased perspective awareness, stronger evidence-based reasoning, and greater ability to relate historical narratives to lived experience. Dialogic interaction emerged as a key mechanism supporting deep learning. The study highlights the role of pedagogical design and interactional practices in fostering meaningful historical literacy and suggests that interpretive questioning, dialogic teaching, and reflective tasks can promote sustained learning in primary classrooms.

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INTRODUCTION

Learning in primary education plays a foundational role in shaping children's cognitive, social, and moral development. At this level, contemporary educational goals increasingly emphasise the development of understanding that is durable, transferable, and meaningful, rather than the accumulation of isolated factual knowledge (Foster et al., 2021; Hofmann et al., 2021). Primary classrooms therefore function not only as sites for acquiring basic skills, but as formative

spaces where learners develop orientations toward knowledge, whether it is treated as information to be reproduced or as ideas to be examined, questioned, and refined over time.

Primary schooling is also often the first formal context in which children learn how to interpret texts, negotiate meaning with peers, and participate in shared inquiry. Through everyday literacy practices, students begin to internalise implicit norms about what counts as a legitimate response to a text and which forms of thinking are valued in classroom interactions. These early experiences significantly influence whether learners come to view reading and learning as acts of recall or as opportunities for interpretation, reflection, and sense making (Foster et al., 2021; Hofmann et al., 2021).

Within this context, narrative texts hold particular pedagogical promise. Stories provide accessible entry points into values, identity, civic sensibilities, and cultural understanding, while simultaneously supporting language and literacy development (Newman, 2024; Posenti et al., 2023). Historical literature, understood in this study as narrative texts that represent past events and social contexts for young readers, offers opportunities for children to engage with moral choices, multiple perspectives, and the social meanings of historical experience (Newman, 2024; Posenti et al., 2023). This interpretive potential is especially salient in primary classrooms, where literacy development and early historical thinking emerge together and where narratives can function as bridges between personal experience and broader social imaginaries (Foster et al., 2021; Hofmann et al., 2021).

In practice, however, this potential is not always realised. Historical literature learning in primary classrooms is frequently enacted through surface-level instructional routines, including identifying characters, recalling plot sequences, and answering factual comprehension questions (Posenti et al., 2023; George, 2024). Students are often asked to complete worksheet-style prompts such as *Who is the main character?*, *Where does the story take place?*, or *What happened first, second, and third?*. While such tasks support basic comprehension, they tend to position texts as vehicles for information retrieval rather than as invitations to interpret motives, evaluate actions, or connect historical meanings to lived experience. As a result, learning is commonly characterised by memorisation, one-correct-answer tasks, and limited opportunities for dialogue or justification, features widely associated with surface approaches to learning (Entwistle, 2009; George, 2024). This gap between the interpretive affordances of historical narratives and the realities of classroom practice provides a strong rationale for reframing historical literature instruction toward deeper learning.

Deep learning pedagogy has gained increasing attention as an approach that foregrounds meaning making, reflective dialogue, and the application of knowledge beyond immediate tasks (Foster et al., 2021; Hofmann et al., 2021). In primary contexts, deep learning can be understood as a constellation of practices that invite learners to interpret texts, justify ideas with evidence, attend to alternative viewpoints, and connect learning content to situations that matter in their lives. This orientation aligns with sociocultural perspectives that conceptualise classrooms as relational and dialogic environments in which knowledge is co-constructed through interaction rather than transmitted as fixed content (Hofmann et al., 2021; García & Campbell, 2023).

In this study, deep learning is framed through complementary theoretical perspectives drawn from contemporary scholarship. Following Fullan and Langworthy, deep learning is understood as learning that engages students in the development of higher-order competencies,

particularly critical thinking, communication, collaboration, creativity, citizenship, and character (Fullan & Langworthy, 2014; Fullan et al., 2018). These competencies position learning as an active, socially embedded process rather than as the mastery of discrete knowledge units. This perspective is further aligned with Mehta and Fine's conception of deep, connected learning, which emphasises intellectual depth, meaningful connections to learners' lives, and sustained participation in authentic disciplinary practices (Mehta & Fine, 2019). Together, these frameworks inform both instructional design and analysis in this study by foregrounding interpretive reasoning, dialogic participation, perspective taking, and the application of historical meanings to contemporary and personal contexts as core indicators of deep learning. Rather than treating deep learning as a fixed outcome, this study adopts a process-oriented stance, examining how these competencies emerge through classroom interaction, task design, and teacher–student dialogue over time.

Dialogic teaching provides a concrete pedagogical pathway for enacting deep learning in primary classrooms because it positions talk as a central tool for thinking, interpretation, and collaborative meaning construction (Hofmann et al., 2021). Dialogic approaches are characterised by open-ended questioning, probing of student reasoning, revoicing of ideas, and the treatment of learners' contributions as resources for collective inquiry rather than answers to be evaluated quickly (Alexander, 2008; García & Campbell, 2023). Reflective practice further strengthens deep learning by supporting learners and teachers in noticing how understanding develops, shifts, and deepens through interaction. These practices are particularly consequential in historical literature learning, where meaning often arises through consideration of motive, consequence, perspective, and ethical implication rather than through recounting events alone (Newman, 2024; Posenti et al., 2023).

Culturally responsive and inclusive dimensions further shape how deep learning is enacted in primary classrooms. Learning becomes more equitable when students' identities, languages, and community knowledge are recognised as legitimate resources for interpretation and inquiry (Hermond, 2023; Yunes-Koch et al., 2022). Multilingual and multimodal literacies expand the ways children make meaning from texts, particularly when learning activities invite visual, oral, dramatic, or artistic responses alongside written work (Fadl & Hassan, 2021; Kustini, 2023; Shohel et al., 2022). Such approaches support the view of historical literature not as a fixed narrative to be mastered, but as a dialogic space in which diverse perspectives and experiences can be explored.

Despite a growing body of scholarship on deep learning, dialogic pedagogy, and historical literacy, empirical studies that trace how historical literature instruction is reframed through deep learning pedagogy in primary classrooms remain limited, particularly when analytical attention is directed toward learning processes rather than outcomes. More evidence is needed to document how instructional routines shift, how student participation changes, and which classroom indicators signal movement from surface engagement to deeper learning orientations in everyday practice (Foster et al., 2021; Hofmann et al., 2021; García & Campbell, 2023). In this study, process-oriented indicators refer to observable features of learning as it unfolds, including changes in the nature of teacher questioning, the depth of students' interpretive explanations, the quality of dialogic interaction, and students' willingness to engage with peers' ideas.

Addressing these gaps, the present study examines how historical literature learning in a primary classroom is reframed through deep learning pedagogy and traces the changes that follow in students' learning processes. Analytical emphasis is placed on engagement, interpretation, reflection, and participation in classroom interactions as observable indicators of deep learning in context. Learning is treated as situated and relational, recognising that changes in students' thinking are closely linked to shifts in pedagogical design, discourse norms, and teacher–student interaction.

Guided by deep learning frameworks that foreground interpretive reasoning, dialogic participation, and learner agency (Fullan et al., 2018; Mehta & Fine, 2019), this study examines how historical literature learning is enacted and transformed in primary classroom contexts. The inquiry first investigates how historical literature instruction is typically implemented prior to pedagogical reframing, with particular attention to task design, teacher questioning, and patterns of student participation that characterise surface-oriented learning. It then explores how the reframing of instruction through deep learning pedagogy influences the depth of students' interpretive engagement, as reflected in their reasoning, justification of ideas, and participation in dialogic classroom interaction. Finally, the study seeks to identify observable indicators that signal a shift from surface learning toward deep learning in students' learning processes, including changes in classroom discourse, perspective awareness, and students' ability to connect historical narratives with contemporary or personal contexts.

METHOD

This study adopted a qualitative research approach to examine changes in students' learning processes within authentic classroom settings. The focus of the inquiry was placed on how learning experiences were shaped and transformed through pedagogical reframing rather than on measuring achievement outcomes. A qualitative approach was considered appropriate because it allows close examination of meaning making, interaction, and learning processes as they unfold in everyday educational practice, which is central to understanding instructional change in context (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The research was designed as a qualitative case study that examined historical literature learning as a bounded pedagogical practice situated within primary classroom contexts. This design enabled detailed exploration of instructional decisions, classroom interactions, and students' engagement with learning tasks as interconnected elements of a learning environment. A case study approach was selected to capture the complexity of pedagogical enactment and learning processes in their natural setting, where context and practice are inseparable (Yin, 2018).

The study was conducted in two upper primary classrooms from two public primary schools in Bandung, Indonesia, where historical literature learning formed part of thematic and literacy-oriented instruction. The sites were selected purposively because they provided sustained opportunities to observe historical literature learning practices and pedagogical variation within comparable curricular contexts. The participating classrooms involved a total of 60 students, all of whom took part in the observed learning activities. Participants also included two classroom teachers who designed and implemented the instructional activities. Participation was determined by involvement in the instructional context rather than representational considerations, which aligns with qualitative research traditions in educational inquiry (Cohen et al., 2018).

The instructional process was organised into two phases to enable systematic examination of learning processes. The initial phase focused on documenting existing instructional practices that reflected surface-oriented engagement with historical literature. Classroom observations during this phase attended to patterns of teacher questioning, student responses, and task structures that emphasised factual recall and textual reproduction. The subsequent phase involved the enactment of deep learning pedagogy through instructional reframing. Learning activities were redesigned to foreground interpretation, reflection, dialogue, and connections between historical narratives and students' lived experiences. Tasks included open-ended questioning, reflective writing, and guided discussion aimed at supporting meaningful engagement with texts and ideas.

Data were collected across eight instructional sessions over a six-week period, allowing sufficient time to document instructional routines, observe changes in classroom interaction, and trace developments in students' learning processes. This duration enabled comparison of learning processes across contrasting instructional conditions within the same classroom contexts while maintaining ecological validity (Yin, 2018).

Data were generated through multiple qualitative techniques to support depth and credibility. Classroom observations were conducted during historical literature learning sessions to document instructional practices, interaction patterns, and student participation. Observational data were recorded as detailed field notes to capture classroom dynamics and learning processes as they occurred in situ (Cohen et al., 2018).

Student learning artefacts were collected to examine how understanding was expressed and developed over time. All artefacts produced by students during the observed instructional sessions were included in the analysis, including written responses, reflective tasks, and discussion notes. The inclusion of the full set of artefacts allowed the analysis to capture variation in students' responses, levels of engagement, and interpretive depth across the classroom. This comprehensive approach was considered appropriate for identifying process-oriented changes in learning rather than selecting artefacts based on performance level alone (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the two classroom teachers and a purposive sample of students selected to reflect variation in classroom participation and response patterns observed during instruction. Interview questions invited participants to describe how learning activities were experienced and how understanding developed through engagement with historical literature. The semi-structured format allowed participants to elaborate on their perspectives while ensuring alignment with the research focus and maintaining analytic coherence (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015).

Data analysis was undertaken using thematic analysis to identify patterns related to changes in students' learning processes. Analysis began with repeated reading of observation notes, interview transcripts, and student artefacts to develop familiarity with the dataset. Meaningful units related to engagement, understanding, and interaction were identified and coded. Codes were then organised into broader themes that captured indicators of surface-oriented and deep-oriented learning. Themes were refined through iterative comparison across data sources to ensure internal coherence and analytic clarity. Thematic analysis was selected because it offers a flexible yet systematic approach to examining qualitative data in studies of educational practice and learning processes (Braun & Clarke, 2021).

Trustworthiness was addressed through several strategies embedded throughout the research process. Triangulation was achieved by comparing evidence from observations, artefacts, and interviews to establish consistency across data sources, strengthening the credibility of interpretations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Prolonged engagement in the classroom contexts enabled the researcher to develop a nuanced understanding of instructional routines and learning dynamics. Thick description was used to present detailed accounts of classroom practices and student responses, allowing readers to assess the potential transferability of findings to similar educational contexts (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

The methodological choices adopted in this study were closely aligned with the Results presented in the subsequent section. Classroom observations provided evidence of changes in instructional practices and interaction patterns. Student learning artefacts illustrated shifts in understanding and reflective engagement. Interview data offered insight into how participants experienced and interpreted the learning process. The integration of these methods ensured that the reported indicators of change from surface learning to deep learning were grounded in systematically generated and rigorously analysed empirical data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Surface-Level Practices in Historical Literature Learning

Observations conducted at the initial stage of the study revealed that historical literature learning in the primary classroom was predominantly characterised by surface-level learning practices, including memorisation, one-correct-answer tasks, and the reproduction of textual information. Learning activities emphasised recognition of explicit textual elements such as characters, settings, and sequences of events, positioning successful learning primarily as accurate recall rather than interpretive engagement.

Classroom interactions reinforced this orientation. Teacher questioning was largely closed and convergent, designed to elicit short, predetermined answers drawn directly from the text. Accuracy functioned as the dominant criterion for participation, while elaboration, justification, or alternative interpretations were rarely invited. As a result, historical texts were treated mainly as sources of factual information to be decoded, rather than as narrative spaces for exploring motives, perspectives, or underlying meanings.

Such practices indicate a learning environment aligned with surface learning characteristics, where cognitive demand remains limited to identification and recall, and where meaning making is constrained by task design. Although identifying characters and events supports basic comprehension, the dominance of recall-oriented routines suggests a partial misalignment with curriculum expectations that emphasise interpretation and engagement with ideas.

The teacher explicitly described this instructional emphasis during the interview:

“Usually, I ask students to mention the characters, the setting, and what happened in the story. The important thing is that they understand the content of the text.”

(“Biasanya saya meminta siswa menyebutkan tokoh, latar, dan apa yang terjadi dalam cerita. Yang penting mereka memahami isi teks.”)

While intended to support comprehension, this emphasis implicitly framed understanding as textual reproduction. When correctness is foregrounded, interpretive responses may be perceived by students as risky or illegitimate, narrowing opportunities for exploratory thinking and reflective engagement.

Analysis of students' written work corroborated this pattern. Most responses consisted of brief factual statements closely mirroring the original text. Students rarely expanded ideas, justified interpretations, or connected narratives to broader meanings, indicating that tasks were perceived primarily as exercises in information retrieval rather than in constructing understanding (Entwistle, 2009).

Students' Perceptions of Task Purpose

Students' accounts closely echoed observed instructional routines. Historical literature learning was consistently described as reading followed by answering questions, reinforcing the perception that task completion and correctness constituted the primary learning goals.

"We read the story and then answer questions from the book."

("Kami membaca cerita lalu menjawab pertanyaan dari buku.")

"The questions are usually about the characters and what happened in the story."

("Pertanyaannya biasanya tentang tokoh dan apa yang terjadi dalam cerita.")

Observation notes indicated that students rarely initiated questions, challenged interpretations, or extended discussion beyond task requirements. Participation was predominantly compliance-oriented, reflecting a classroom culture that prioritised accuracy and error avoidance over dialogue and inquiry (Hattie, 2012).

The teacher acknowledged this dynamic:

"Students usually look for the exact answer from the text because they are afraid of being wrong."

("Siswa biasanya mencari jawaban yang persis dari teks karena takut salah.")

Taken together, these findings indicate that historical literature learning initially functioned as a recall-based activity, limiting students' opportunities to engage with historical meaning, ethical reflection, or interpretive reasoning.

Enactment of Deep Learning Pedagogy in Historical Literature Instruction

Following instructional reframing, classroom observations revealed a substantial shift toward deep learning-oriented practices, characterised by higher cognitive demand, dialogic interaction, and interpretive engagement. Learning activities were redesigned to foreground meaning, perspective, and justification rather than factual recall.

Teacher questioning practices changed markedly. Teachers employed probing, open-ended questions, invited students to justify claims with textual evidence, and frequently used revoicing

and follow-up prompts to extend thinking. Rather than evaluating answers immediately, teachers positioned student contributions as starting points for collective inquiry. These teacher moves functioned as cognitive scaffolds that modelled interpretive reasoning and legitimised multiple perspectives.

The teacher described this pedagogical shift:

“I no longer focus only on correct answers. I want students to explain why something happened in the story and what we can learn from it.”

(“Saya tidak lagi fokus hanya pada jawaban benar. Saya ingin siswa menjelaskan mengapa sesuatu terjadi dalam cerita dan pelajaran apa yang bisa diambil.”)

Task redesign further supported this shift. For example, a factual prompt such as “What happened after the main event?” was replaced with an interpretive task asking “Why did the character make this decision, and what evidence in the text supports your explanation?”. Students discussed interpretations with peers before producing reflective responses, increasing cognitive demand and collaborative reasoning.

Observation records indicated increased student agency. Students spoke more frequently, responded to peers’ ideas, and extended discussions by offering alternative interpretations. In several instances, students initiated questions, challenged explanations respectfully, and revised their thinking during dialogue, indicating growing ownership of the learning process.

An excerpt illustrates this shift:

Teacher: *Why do you think the character decided to stay?*

Student A: *Because he felt responsible for the others.*

Teacher: *What in the story supports that idea?*

Student B: *It also shows courage, not just responsibility.*

Such exchanges demonstrate how dialogic interaction supported interpretive depth and collaborative meaning making.

Students themselves recognised this change:

“We can talk about why the character made that decision, not just what happened.”

“When my friend gives a different opinion, it makes me think again about the story.”

Historical literature thus became a space for reflective inquiry rather than information retrieval.

Indicators of the Shift from Surface Learning to Deep Learning

Analysis across observations, artifacts, and interviews revealed consistent indicators marking a shift from surface learning to deep learning. These indicators align closely with Fullan

and Langworthy's 6Cs framework, particularly Critical Thinking, Communication, Collaboration, Citizenship, and Character.

Table 1. Indicators of the Shift from Surface Learning to Deep Learning in Historical Literature Instruction and Alignment with the 6Cs

Learning Dimension	Surface Learning Indicators	Deep Learning Indicators	Primary Data Sources	Related 6Cs
Text engagement	Identification of characters, settings, events	Explanation of motives, reasons, and meanings	Student writing, observations	Critical Thinking
Type of understanding	Recall and reproduction	Interpretation and meaning construction	Artifacts, interviews	Critical Thinking
Reflective thinking	Minimal reflection	Articulation of values and lessons	Student reflections	Character, Citizenship
Classroom participation	Brief, compliance-oriented responses	Dialogic participation with elaboration	Observation notes	Communication, Collaboration
Perspective awareness	Single viewpoint dominance	Recognition of multiple perspectives	Classroom discussions	Citizenship
Knowledge transfer	Confined to text	Connections to personal and contemporary contexts	Interviews, tasks	Citizenship, Character

Analytic mapping.

These indicators demonstrate that deep learning in this study was enacted through the development of higher-order competencies rather than through content accumulation alone. Interpretive reasoning reflects Critical Thinking; dialogic interaction operationalises Communication and Collaboration; perspective awareness and ethical reflection align with Citizenship and Character. This mapping confirms that observed learning processes are theoretically consistent with established deep learning frameworks.

Overall, the results demonstrate that instructional reframing enabled a shift from memorisation and one-correct-answer routines toward interpretive, dialogic, and agentic learning processes that align with contemporary models of deep learning in primary education.

Discussion

Framing Deep Learning in Primary Historical Literacy

The findings of this study contribute to a growing body of evidence suggesting that deep learning in primary historical literacy is shaped less by learners' developmental limitations and more by the pedagogical conditions created in classrooms. The observed shifts in students' interpretive explanations, reflective thinking, and dialogic participation align with research indicating that questioning formats and discourse norms play a central role in shaping learning trajectories. Instructional questioning that probes reasoning, invites dialogic justification, and problematises historical narratives has been shown to transform recall oriented practices into opportunities for meaning making and interpretation, even among young learners (Lehtinen et al., 2021; George, 2024).

The study's emphasis on interpretive engagement resonates with broader theoretical characterisations of deep learning as meaning oriented and reflective. Inquiry based and art informed approaches that foreground thoughtful interpretation, particularly when connected to

culturally meaningful or local histories, have been associated with enhanced critical thinking and reflective engagement in primary contexts (Ampartzaki, 2023). The movement from surface to deep learning identified in this study mirrors findings from dialogic pedagogy research, which positions sustained classroom dialogue as a key mechanism for cognitive development and shared meaning making (Lehtinen et al., 2021; George, 2024).

Dialogic Interaction as a Central Mechanism

Dialogic interaction emerged as a core mechanism underpinning the transformation of learning processes observed in this study. When classroom talk shifted from brief question-and-answer exchanges toward sustained dialogue, students demonstrated greater confidence in expressing ideas and greater openness to alternative perspectives. This pattern supports dialogic teaching research that positions talk not merely as a means of participation, but as a central tool for thinking and learning (Lehtinen et al., 2021). In this context, students began to reposition themselves from passive recipients of information to active co-constructors of historical meaning, a shift widely associated with deeper engagement and learner agency (George, 2024).

Sustained dialogic exchanges also supported interpretive depth by enabling students to test ideas, respond to peers, and refine understandings collaboratively. Such dialogic conditions are repeatedly linked to richer historical understanding and to learners' developing capacity to reason about motive, consequence, and the ethical dimensions of historical narratives (Lehtinen et al., 2021; George, 2024). Importantly, these dialogic practices foregrounded student voice as a central feature of classroom interaction. By treating students' contributions as resources for collective inquiry rather than as answers to be evaluated quickly, classroom discourse reflected key principles of democratic classroom practice in which multiple perspectives are valued and meaning is negotiated collaboratively.

Perspective Awareness and Critical Literacy

The emergence of perspective awareness represents another significant indicator of deeper learning in primary historical literacy. Students' willingness to recognise multiple viewpoints and to reconsider initial interpretations aligns with scholarship on historical thinking and critical literacy, which emphasises that understanding history involves engaging with contested narratives and recognising the constructed nature of historical accounts (Fernández et al., 2020). The findings suggest that primary learners are capable of such nuanced reasoning when pedagogical designs foreground interpretation and dialogue rather than factual recall.

This development also connects historical literacy with early forms of civic and ethical reasoning. Engaging with diverse perspectives allows students to situate historical narratives within broader moral and social contexts, fostering dispositions toward critical citizenship that extend beyond the immediate learning task (Fernández et al., 2020).

Transfer and Relevance to Contemporary Contexts

A further dimension of deep learning identified in the study is students' ability to connect historical narratives to personal experiences and contemporary situations. Transfer of understanding beyond the immediate classroom task is widely recognised as a hallmark of deep learning, particularly when learning is framed as relevant and meaningful (Flook et al., 2022). In

the context of historical literacy, such transfer supports civic understanding and ethical reflection by linking past events to present day concerns and values (Fernández et al., 2020).

The findings indicate that when historical literature learning invites students to consider relevance and application, learning extends beyond textual interpretation to broader orientations toward inquiry and reflection. This reinforces arguments that relevance and transfer are not optional extensions of learning, but central components of deep learning pedagogy (Flook et al., 2022).

Culturally Responsive and Inclusive Dimensions

Although multilingual and multimodal practices were not explicitly foregrounded in the instructional design, the observed increase in student participation and willingness to share diverse perspectives points toward more inclusive classroom dynamics. Research on culturally responsive pedagogy highlights the importance of recognising students' identities, languages, and experiences as assets for learning, particularly through dialogic and interpretive approaches (Fernández et al., 2020).

Dialogic and reflective practices appear to provide a pedagogical foundation for inclusion by valuing multiple interpretations and legitimising diverse contributions. This aligns with work suggesting that inclusive classrooms are characterised not only by representation, but by participation structures that allow students to negotiate meaning across cultural and linguistic resources (Fernández et al., 2020).

Methodological Contributions and Indicators of Learning Change

From a methodological perspective, the study contributes process oriented indicators of a shift from surface learning to deep learning. Rather than relying solely on outcome measures, the analysis foregrounds observable features such as patterns of interaction, forms of student response, and the quality of classroom discourse. This approach aligns with calls in educational research to document learning as it unfolds in situ and to capture how pedagogical change is enacted in everyday practice (Gibbons & Ng He, 2021).

The indicators identified in this study offer a practical analytic lens for examining deep learning in primary classrooms and complement existing methodological frameworks that analyse dialogue, interpretation, and engagement as central dimensions of learning (Gibbons & Ng He, 2021).

Implications for Practice and Professional Development

The findings suggest several practical implications for primary educators. Reframing questions and tasks to foreground interpretation and justification offers a concrete entry point for fostering deeper learning in historical literature instruction (Lehtinen et al., 2021). For example, a factual prompt such as "Who is the main character?" can be redesigned into an interpretive question like "Whose perspective is most visible in the story, and why might that perspective matter?". Similarly, instead of asking "What happened in the story?", teachers can invite deeper engagement by asking "Why did these events matter for the characters, and what can we learn from them today?". Such task redesigns shift classroom talk from recall toward reasoning, evidence use, and meaning making.

Developing professional practice around dialogic teaching, including extended student talk and collaborative inquiry, can further support interpretive depth and learner agency (Lehtinen et al., 2021). To expand the application of these practices beyond individual classrooms, collaborative action research across schools offers a promising pathway. Through joint planning, observation, and reflection, teachers can collectively adapt interpretive and dialogic strategies to diverse classroom contexts while generating shared professional knowledge about deep learning-oriented instruction.

Task designs that integrate multimodal representations, such as visual artefacts, drama, or artistic responses, provide additional pathways for interpretation and engagement, particularly for learners with diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds (Moya, 2022). Culturally responsive practices that treat students' identities and experiences as educational resources can further strengthen inclusive participation in historical inquiry (Fernández et al., 2020).

The single classroom design limits the generalisability of the findings, as learning processes are shaped by local conditions including teacher expertise and classroom culture. Multi-site and longitudinal studies are therefore needed to examine how deep learning-oriented reframing of historical literature instruction operates across diverse contexts and over time (Lehtinen et al., 2021; Gibbons & Ng He, 2021). Future research could also foreground multilingual and multimodal practices more explicitly to explore how culturally and linguistically diverse learners experience dialogic inquiry in historical literacy contexts, extending understanding of how deep learning pedagogy can support equity and inclusion alongside interpretive depth.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that historical literature learning in primary classrooms can be meaningfully transformed through the enactment of deep learning pedagogy. When instructional practices emphasise interpretation, reflection, and dialogue, students move beyond recall oriented engagement toward deeper forms of understanding that involve reasoning, perspective taking, and connection to lived experience.

The findings indicate that deep learning in primary historical literacy is shaped primarily by pedagogical design rather than by learners' developmental constraints. Dialogic interaction and interpretive questioning enabled students to construct meaning collaboratively, reconsider initial interpretations, and engage with historical narratives as sources of reflection rather than as repositories of facts.

Historical literature emerged as an effective medium for supporting early historical thinking and ethical reasoning, particularly when learning tasks invited connections between past narratives and contemporary contexts. The identification of observable indicators of change in discourse, participation, and student responses provides a process oriented lens for examining shifts from surface learning to deep learning in primary classrooms.

Overall, the study contributes evidence that reframing historical literature instruction through deep learning pedagogy can support meaningful, reflective, and inclusive learning in primary education, with clear implications for classroom practice and future research.

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