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# Improving Illustration Drawing Skills Through Project-Based Experimental Methods for Slow Learner Students in Junior High School Fine Arts Learning

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**Abstract**

*Fine arts education essentially serves as a medium to develop students' creativity and ability to convey visual ideas. However, field conditions indicate that illustration drawing learning still faces various obstacles, which become more complex for slow learner students. Slow learner students have below-average learning abilities, thus requiring more time to understand concepts. This research aims to find a solution for improving the illustration drawing skills of slow learner students in fine arts learning through the application of a project-based experimental method. This study uses a Classroom Action Research (CAR) approach conducted cyclically in two cycles, comprising planning, action, observation, and reflection stages. The subjects of this research focused on eighth-grade slow learner students at SMP Negeri 1 Malinau Kota. The results showed that the implementation of the project-based experimental method significantly improved the quality of the learning process, shifting it from teacher-centered to student-centered. This quality improvement directly impacted learning outcomes. In the pre-action stage, the average score for students' illustration drawing skills was 65, with a completeness percentage of 40%. After the action, the average score increased to 72 in Cycle I with 56% completeness, and reached 84 in Cycle II with an 87% learning completeness percentage. Based on the analysis using the N-Gain index, a score of 0.54 was obtained, falling into the medium category. The application of the project-based experimental method proved effective in improving the illustration drawing skills of slow learner students, as well as developing aspects of student creativity, self-confidence, and independence.*



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***Keywords:*** ***Illustration Drawing, Slow Learner, Project-Based Experiment, Fine Arts Education.***

## INTRODUCTION

Fine arts education essentially serves as a medium to develop creativity, imagination, and students' abilities in conveying ideas through visual works. James Catterall (2022) stated that student involvement in creative art activities can positively impact higher-order thinking skills and creativity. Ni Made Ruastiti's (2021) research results also showed that process-oriented fine arts learning is capable of increasing aesthetic experience, learning independence, and student confidence in conveying visual ideas. Effective fine arts learning accommodates individual uniqueness and encourages active student involvement in the creative process (Rosyidi & Apriliyanti, 2024). One of the crucial competencies in junior high school fine arts learning is the ability to draw illustrations, which ideally encourages students to think creatively, develop imagination, and express ideas visually (Kusumawati et al., 2023). However, field conditions indicate that many students experience difficulties in developing ideas, determining objects, arranging compositions, and translating ideas into visual forms, showing that the ongoing learning process has not fully optimized student creativity (Ridho et al., 2024).

These problems become more complex for slow learner students. Slow learners possess learning abilities below the average of their peers, requiring more time to understand concepts, master skills, and complete learning tasks (Kirk et al., 2015). Heward (2018) explained that slow learner students generally experience difficulties in understanding complex instructions, retaining long-term information, organizing ideas, and transferring learned knowledge to new situations. In the context of special education in Indonesia, Mumpuniarti (2017) described slow learners as students requiring a longer time to receive and process information, struggling with abstract concepts, having limited memory capacity, and needing continuous assistance in completing academic tasks. Therefore, they require contextual learning strategies that provide direct experiences and encourage active involvement through meaningful practical activities (Friend & Bursuck, 2019).

This perspective aligns with Piaget's (1972) theory of cognitive development, emphasizing that hands-on experience allows students to build understanding through assimilation and accommodation, making concepts deeper compared to learning that merely relies on verbal explanations. Furthermore, Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory explains that learning abilities develop optimally when students receive scaffolding from teachers or more competent peers



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within the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). This concept is reinforced by John Dewey's (1938) thought on learning by doing, prioritizing direct experience in acquiring knowledge. Inclusive education principles also emphasize creating learning cultures and practices capable of accommodating student diversity without discriminatory treatment (Tony Booth & Mel Ainscow, 2016; UNESCO, 2020). Sunardi (2020) and Purwanta (2021) stated that slow learners require adaptive inclusive education services designed around their individual characteristics, providing concrete experiences and systematic assistance. Efendi (2018) and Soemantri (2018) added that students with mild learning barriers comprehend material more easily through concrete, contextual, and experience-based learning involving direct practice compared to purely verbal delivery.

Conventional, teacher-centered learning methods deprive students of opportunities to explore and develop their creativity, causing them to merely copy examples without producing original works. To overcome this, the project-based experimental method is implemented as a relevant solution. Wina Sanjaya (2016) stated that the experimental method provides opportunities for students to prove a concept themselves through trials, generating understanding based on direct observation. This method is integrated with Project-Based Learning (PjBL), which Thomas Markham (2011) described as involving students in investigating real problems to produce a product as evidence of learning. John W. Thomas (2000) and Rusman (2022) explained that PjBL demands investigation, critical thinking, collaboration, and independence to produce meaningful works. The combination of experimental methods and project-based learning provides concrete learning experiences for slow learners to try, observe, and directly explore drawing techniques before applying them to complete a whole illustration project (Taziri et al., 2025; Ifrianti et al., 2025; Afriani et al., 2025).

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study utilized a Classroom Action Research (CAR) design developed by Kemmis and McTaggart, which is a reflective research process conducted by teachers to solve problems and improve learning quality. The research was systematically planned and executed over a period of three months, from January to March 2026, comprising two cycles. Each cycle consisted of four stages: planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. The intervention was implemented through a Project-Based Learning approach based on daily life contexts, designed to encourage active student involvement, develop deep material comprehension, and connect it meaningfully to real situations. Each cycle consisted of two meetings that facilitated students in building reading


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comprehension through project stages, such as problem identification, contextual reading activities, and summarizing findings.

The research was conducted at SD Negeri 003 Mentarang Hulu, located in Lung Semamu Village, Mentarang Hulu Subdistrict, Malinau Regency, North Kalimantan. The subjects of this study were eight fourth-grade students, comprising three males and five females. Within this group, three students with learning barriers were specifically identified as experiencing difficulties in reading comprehension.

Data collection techniques employed in this research included observation, testing, and documentation. Observations were conducted by the researcher, acting as the teacher, using observation sheets with a checklist assessment to record students' reading comprehension progress during the learning activities. Tests were administered before and after the intervention to measure reading comprehension abilities, while documentation served as complementary evidence to support the observation and test data.

The collected data were analyzed using qualitative descriptive and quantitative descriptive techniques. Observational data regarding student behavior during the learning process were scored and analyzed using percentages. Furthermore, numerical data from the reading comprehension tests were analyzed to determine the achievement scores, and the N-Gain was calculated to measure the improvement. The N-Gain results were interpreted into high (> 0.7), medium (0.3 < N-Gain < 0.7), or low (< 0.3) categories. The learning activities were declared successful if there was an 85% change at the end of each cycle, indicated by an improvement in students' reading comprehension abilities.

## RESEARCH RESULTS

### Results

The initial condition description serves as an empirical overview of the students' illustration drawing skills prior to the learning intervention. Observations revealed that the fine arts learning process in class VIII predominantly utilized a conventional, teacher-centered approach. Students generally followed instructions mechanically without adequate space for independent exploration, resulting in low creativity and underdeveloped visual thinking skills.

The pre-action analysis identified four main issues: difficulties in visual idea development where students relied heavily on teacher examples; poor composition with disproportionate object placement; limited technical skills resulting in unstable lines; and low creativity in visual expression. Quantitatively, the initial test showed a class average score of 65, with a learning


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completeness percentage of only 40%. The two specific slow learner subjects, LS and MR, exhibited distinct barriers. LS showed cognitive and affective barriers, specifically difficulty in initiating tasks and low self-confidence, resulting in an initial score of 60. MR demonstrated psychomotor and concentration barriers, characterized by unstable line quality and a short attention span, obtaining an initial score of 58.

Cycle I was designed to implement the project-based experimental method using the theme "My School Environment". The learning activities included experimenting with drawing techniques (lines, shapes, composition) and independently developing an illustration project.

Table 1. Student Activity Observation Results in Cycle I

| No | Observed Aspect | Percentage | Category |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Attention to learning | 70% | Fair |
| 2 | Activeness in asking questions | 60% | Fair |
| 3 | Participation in activities | 65% | Fair |
| 4 | Creativity in drawing | 60% | Fair |
| 5 | Independence | 58% | Fair |

The observation data indicated student activity was in the fair category, requiring further enhancement. The learning outcomes were measured through performance rubrics.

Table 2. Distribution of Student Scores in Cycle I

| Category | Score Range | Number of Students | Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|
| Very Good | 85–100 | 4 | 12% |
| Good | 75–84 | 14 | 44% |
| Fair | 65–74 | 10 | 31% |
| Poor | <65 | 4 | 13% |
| **Total** | | **32** | **100%** |

Table 3. Recapitulation of Learning Outcomes in Cycle I

| Indicator | Score |
|---|---|
| Class average | 72 |
| Highest score | 90 |
| Lowest score | 60 |



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| | |
|---|---|
| Learning completeness | 56% |

While there was an increase from the pre-action stage, the results did not reach the targeted success criteria. The progress of the two slow learner subjects was also monitored.

Table 4. LS's Progress in Cycle I

| Aspect | Initial Condition | Cycle I |
|---|---|---|
| Image ideas | Very limited | Starting to develop |
| Composition | Unorganized | Starting to structure |
| Image details | Minimal | Starting to increase |
| Self-confidence | Low | Starting to increase |
| **Score** | **60** | **70** |

Table 5. MR's Progress in Cycle I

| Aspect | Initial Condition | Cycle I |
|---|---|---|
| Line technique | Unstable | Starting to improve |
| Neatness | Low | Slightly increased |
| Concentration | Low | Starting to focus |
| Participation | Passive | More active |
| **Score** | **58** | **68** |

Reflecting on Cycle I, several issues emerged: instructions were too complex, visual media lacked variety, student activeness lacked stimulation, and scaffolding for LS and MR was not evenly distributed. Cycle II was subsequently planned with simplified instructions, visual idea cards, and intensified individual scaffolding.

The implementation in Cycle II emphasized student-centered learning and active participation. The observation results demonstrated a significant increase in student activity.

Table 6. Student Activity in Cycle II

| No | Observed Aspect | Percentage | Category |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Attention to learning | 88% | Good |
| 2 | Activeness in asking questions | 82% | Good |


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| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 3 | Participation in activities | 85% | Good |
| 4 | Creativity in drawing | 83% | Good |
| 5 | Independence | 82% | Good |
| **Average** | | **84%** | **Good** |




Figure 1. Graph of Student Activity Improvement

The learning outcomes in Cycle II showed that the established targets were successfully met.

Table 7. Distribution of Scores in Cycle II

| Category | Score Range | Number of Students | Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|
| Very Good | 85–100 | 10 | 31% |
| Good | 75–84 | 18 | 56% |
| Fair | 65–74 | 4 | 13% |
| Poor | <65 | 0 | 0% |
| **Total** | | **32** | **100%** |



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Table 8. Recapitulation of Learning Outcomes in Cycle II

| Indicator | Score |
|---|---|
| Class average | 84 |
| Highest score | 95 |
| Lowest score | 70 |
| Learning completeness | 87% |

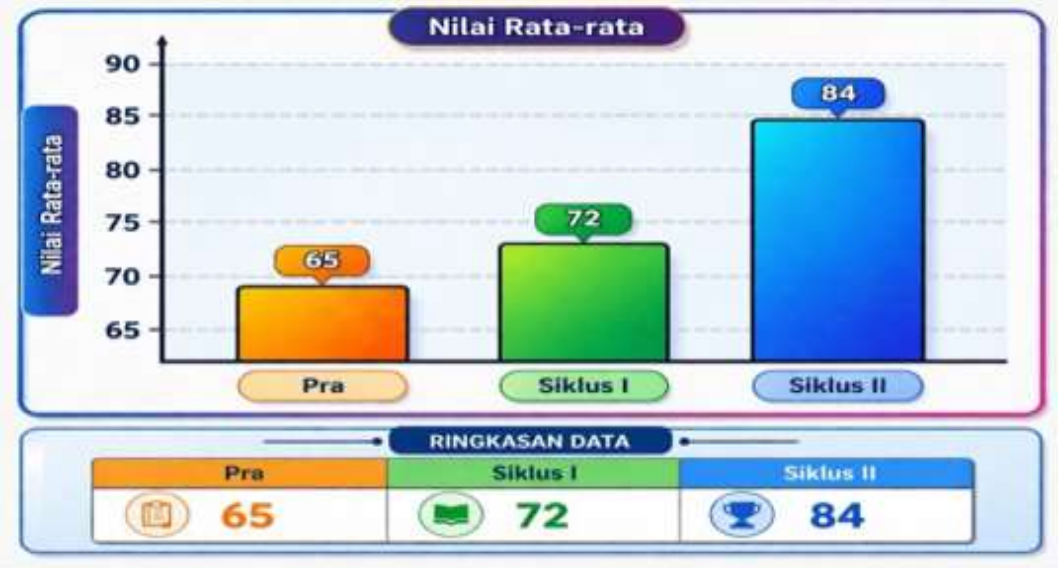



Figure 2. Graph of Learning Outcomes Improvement

The two slow learner subjects demonstrated optimal development in Cycle II.

Table 9. LS's Progress

| Aspect | Pre | Cycle I | Cycle II |
|---|---|---|---|
| Image ideas | Very limited | Starting to develop | Independent & creative |
| Composition | Unorganized | Fair | Good |
| Details | Minimal | Starting to exist | Clear & complete |
| Self-confidence | Low | Increased | High |
| **Score** | **60** | **70** | **82** |


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Table 10. MR's Progress

| Aspect | Pre | Cycle I | Cycle II |
|---|---|---|---|
| Line technique | Unstable | Starting to improve | Stable |
| Neatness | Low | Fair | Good |
| Concentration | Low | Starting to focus | Stable |
| Participation | Passive | Active | Very active |
| **Score** | **58** | **68** | **80** |

**DISCUSSIONS**

The research findings illustrate a substantial shift in the learning process from teacher-centered to student-centered learning. Following the implementation of the project-based experimental method, students became more active and participatory.

This increase in activity aligns with the constructivist theory stating that learning becomes more effective when students are actively involved in the process. From the perspective of learning outcomes, a consistent and significant improvement occurred across the stages.

Table 11. Comparison of Learning Outcomes

| Stage | Average | Completeness |
|---|---|---|
| Pre-Action | 65 | 40% |
| Cycle I | 72 | 56% |
| Cycle II | 84 | 87% |




Figure 4. Graph of Learning Outcomes Improvement



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The method provided students with experiential learning opportunities, ensuring the resulting comprehension became deeper and more meaningful. Based on the N-Gain analysis, a score of 0.54 was achieved, falling into the moderate category, which proves the intervention's effectiveness. The specific focus on slow learner students confirmed the method's adaptive and inclusive nature.

Table 12. Progress of LS and MR

| Student | Pre | Cycle I | Cycle II | Gain |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| LS | 60 | 70 | 82 | +22 |
| MR | 58 | 68 | 80 | +22 |

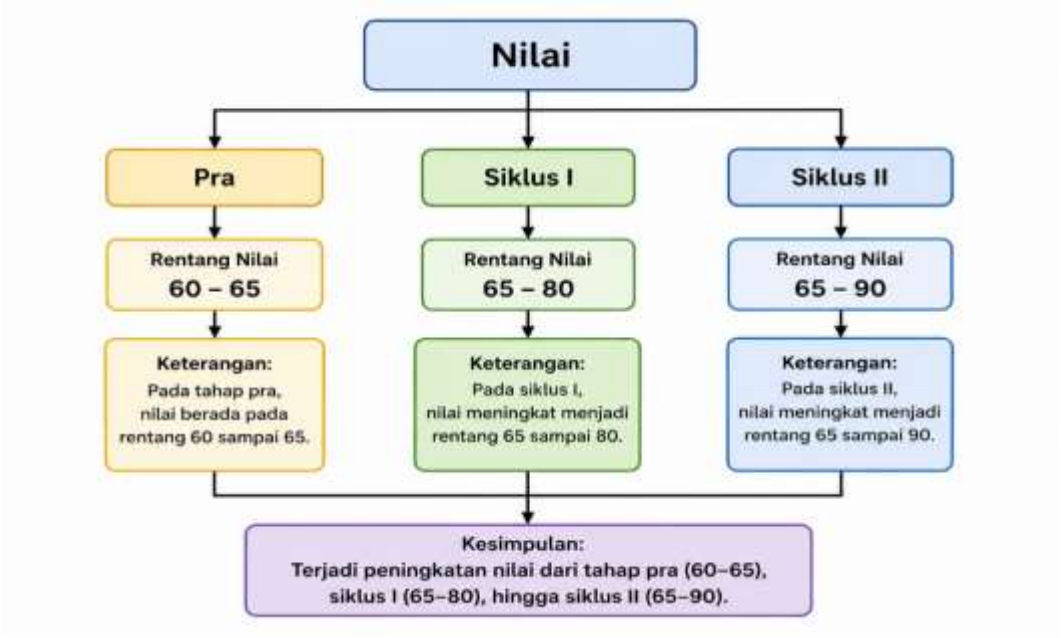



Figure 5. Graph of LS and MR Progress

LS exhibited growth in idea generation and self-confidence, while MR improved technically and in maintaining concentration. The intervention successfully impacted not only cognitive domains but also affective and psychomotor aspects, solidifying theoretical foundations regarding hands-on experience and scaffolding within inclusive education contexts.

## CONCLUSION

The application of the project-based experimental method effectively improved the



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quality of the fine arts learning process, particularly for slow learner students. The learning paradigm significantly shifted from a conventional, teacher-centered approach to a student-centered environment, providing students with direct opportunities to explore ideas, experiment with drawing techniques, and complete projects progressively. This hands-on experience successfully created a more interactive, collaborative, and inclusive learning environment where students became more confident in expressing their visual concepts. The enhancement of the learning process is evidenced by the consistent increase in student learning activity, which rose from 58% in the pre-action stage to 63% in Cycle I, and reached 84% in Cycle II.

Furthermore, this method demonstrably elevated students' learning outcomes in illustration drawing. The class average score progressively improved from 65 in the pre-action stage to 72 in Cycle I, and ultimately achieved 84 in Cycle II. Concurrently, the learning completeness percentage surged from 40% to 56%, and peaked at 87%, indicating that the vast majority of students successfully met the designated passing criteria. Supported by an N-Gain index of 0.54 in the moderate category, the project-based experimental method proved to be an effective strategy for enhancing illustration drawing skills, delivering meaningful practical experiences that accommodated the intensive learning needs of slow learner students.

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