

Implementation Of Inquiry-Based History Learning As An Effort To Improve The Critical Thinking Skills Of SMAN 1 Penukal Students

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to describe the implementation of inquiry-based history learning in improving the critical thinking skills of grade XI students at SMAN 1 Penukal. The method used in this study uses a qualitative approach with an instrumental case study design. Data collection techniques include observation, interviews, and documentation, while analysis is carried out through data reduction, thematization, and interpretation. The results of the study show that the inquiry learning model is applied through the stages of orientation, problem formulation, data collection and analysis, conclusion preparation, presentation of results, and reflection. Students' critical thinking activities develop in the form of the ability to interpret historical information, analyze and evaluate sources, formulate evidence-based arguments, and reflect on the thought process independently and collaboratively. Supporting factors include teacher commitment, availability of contextual learning resources, and student enthusiasm, while inhibiting factors include limited student historical literacy, time management, passive learning habits, and limited teacher training. The optimization strategies implemented include challenging material planning, consistent application of inquiry stages, collaborative discussions, and structured reflection by teachers and students.

Keywords: *Inquiry Method; Critical thinking skills; History Lessons.*

INTRODUCTION

History learning has an important role in the process of forming students' understanding at the high school level about past events and their relevance to the present (Syahputra et al., 2020). According to Garvey and Krug (in Hamid Hasan, 1991) there are five goals of studying history, including; 1) increase knowledge of the facts of historical events, 2) increase and give appreciation to historical events, 3) gain the ability to assess and criticize historiography, 4) learn historical research techniques, 5) learn historiography or historical writing techniques (Santosa, 2017). So it can be said that achieving historical goals requires the ability to think critically (Agung et al., 2023).

Critical thinking skills have an important role in efforts to overcome fundamental problems and in finding and developing various alternative solutions. By thinking critically, one can analyze the situation in depth, identify the root of the problem, and consider various perspectives to find the right solution. In contrast, without critical thinking skills, students tend to passively accept information without questioning its validity or relevance.

In history learning, students often face challenges in understanding complex concepts as well as interpreting various sources of historical information. Lack of active participation and critical thinking skills in the learning process can hinder a deep understanding of historical material.

In addition, the limited understanding of the application of critical thinking skills in the historical context is also one of the obstacles in the learning process.

As it develops, the purpose of learning history is not only to convey information about important events, but also aims to develop critical thinking skills, learning skills, curiosity, social concern, and national spirit. However, one study showed that the conventional, teacher-centered model of history learning was less effective in arousing students' curiosity and encouraging their active involvement in the learning process (Yuliana et al., 2021).

According to Fajri et al., (2023), the current implementation of the Independent Curriculum requires teachers to use various modern learning methods that can support the development of student competencies. These methods include inquiry-based learning, projects, problem-solving, challenges, and differentiation approaches. In its application, this method must consider various viewpoints that support the cognitive, social, emotional, and spiritual development of students. In addition, learning also needs to be in line with the values in the Pancasila Student profile as the main goal that is expected to be achieved by students. The inquiry learning method provides an interesting solution in facing this challenge. In this method, students play the role of historical researchers, where they are encouraged to formulate questions, gather information, and draw conclusions independently.

According to Sa'diyah & Aini (2022), the application of inquiry learning methods allows students to engage in a more in-depth learning process. In history learning, the inquiry method plays an important role in encouraging students' critical thinking skills. Through this method, they are encouraged to actively seek information, analyze data, and evaluate various points of view. In addition to enriching students' understanding of historical material, this method also hones the critical skills needed to assess the validity and relevance of information.

The application of inquiry learning methods in history has significant potential in encouraging students' critical thinking activities. By providing students with the opportunity to engage in an active process of inquiry, reflection, and discussion of historical material, this method helps them build a deeper understanding of history while honing important critical thinking skills. This method also creates a learning environment that encourages student participation, so that they can become active and critical learners in understanding and analyzing historical events. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the implementation of inquiry-based history learning in improving students' critical thinking skills at SMAN 1 Penukal.

METHOD

This study uses a descriptive qualitative research approach and type with a case study design. The location of this research is at SMAN 1 Penukal, Penukal District, Penukal Abab Lematang Ilir Regency, South Sumatra. The subjects of the study are students of grades XI F3 and XI F4 with educators, teachers of History subjects and school curriculum waka. The data taken are primary data and secondary data including primary data including interview results and observation results while secondary data is taken through documentation studies in the form of lesson plans, LKPD (Student Worksheets), and Syllabus. The data collection technique was carried out with the results of observation, interviews and documentation. The procedure for checking the validity of the data is carried out by triangulation, member checking, and analysis, while data analysis is carried out in three stages, including data reduction, thematization, and interpretation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

After the researcher collects data from the results of the research obtained from the results of in-depth interviews, observations and documentation, then the researcher will conduct data analysis to explain further about the research.

In accordance with the data analysis techniques chosen by the researcher, namely data reduction, thematization, and interpretation by analyzing the data that the researcher has collected from the results of interviews, observations, and documentation.

The data obtained and presented by the researcher will be analyzed by the researcher in accordance with the results of the research which refers to the focus of the research, below are the results and analysis by the researcher, while in this context, the researcher will discuss three subjects that are in accordance with the focus of the research, namely: a) Implementation of inquiry-based history learning, b) Analyzing the effectiveness of the inquiry method, c) Identify supporting and inhibiting factors, d) and provide recommendations for educators in developing more interactive and effective learning models in improving students' critical thinking skills.

1. Implementation of Inquiry-Based History Learning at SMAN 1 Penukul

Based on the results of research that has been collected while at SMA Negeri 1 Penukul through interviews, observations, and documentation, it shows that the inquiry method implemented by History teachers includes a guided inquiry method where students are aimed at finding problems independently and then solving problems studied with their group mates regarding the material of the Japanese Occupation in Indonesia.

Implemented in class XI F3 and in class XI F4, in these two classes students are encouraged to exert all their thinking skills and skills to be able to complete the process on this inquiry method independently, assisted and facilitated by teachers who are always around at all times. They were divided into groups and worked together to solve the problems they found and wrote on the paper they had prepared. Through the process of formulating problems, formulating hypotheses (provisional conjectures), collecting data, testing hypotheses (provisional conjectures), and formulating conclusions. Then the results of the group's work are presented in front of the class and assessed by the teacher.

Based on existing theories about the various methods of inquiry, the opinions of Sund and Trowbridge in Sanjaya (2006), which states that there are three types of inquiry methods: Guide Inquiry, Free Inquiry, Modified free inquiry. From the results of observation through observation, it was found that the implementation of the inquiry method at SMA Negeri 1 Penukul was a guided inquiry type. That is, teachers continue to play an active role in providing initial questions, determining problems, and directing the stages of problem solving.

The implementation of the inquiry method at SMA Negeri 1 Penukul is good and has described the characteristics of the inquiry method, namely it can make students active in the process of searching for data or information, then it can invite students to search and find answers to the problems they study independently accompanied by data that can be accounted for, besides being able to make students' confidence begin to grow when they present in front of the class, And this method successfully invites students to think critically, logically, and structured during the learning process. Then the implementation of this inquiry method in history subjects is very suitable

and relevant because it achieves the learning objectives for the high school level, namely developing critical and analytical thinking skills in understanding historical events, improving students' ability to evaluate historical sources, building awareness and understanding the context of historical events, and developing students' ability to present the results of historical research and analysis effectively.

Based on the results of observations during observation, the stages of the inquiry method when implemented in grades XI F3 and XI F4 there are stages that make students so active and conducive and vice versa. The stages that make students so active and conducive are during the orientation stage, formulating problems, formulating hypotheses (provisional conjectures), testing hypotheses, and formulating conclusions. The stage that makes students less active and conducive is the level of collecting data and presenting answers, because they are too dependent on others to find the data, often joke and some are less appreciative of the problems being studied with their group. And when presentations, there are students who are fluent in explaining to their friends because they master the problem, and those who do not master are somewhat lacking in explaining in front of their friends.

The stages in the inquiry method consist of orientation, formulating problems, formulating hypotheses (provisional conjectures), data collection, testing hypotheses, formulating conclusions, presenting answers, and reflection. The explanation of the stages will be described as follows:

a) Orientation

The orientation stage at SMA Negeri 1 Penukal is appropriate and well implemented. Based on observations, teachers try to understand students about the material in two ways, namely by telling short stories and also by displaying powerpoints in which there is material content and videos that help students understand the lessons. This first stage is in accordance with the stages of the inquiry method, and is supported by the presentation of the Sanjaya (2006), namely orientation is fostering and regulating the classroom atmosphere so that it is more responsive. At the beginning, the teacher conditions the students to go to the learning process (inviting students to think about solving problems).

b) Formulating the Problem

Based on observations, students are divided into groups. The students formulated the problem as best they could by discussing it with their group mates, assisted by providing suitable material to be made into problems on powerpoint slides. Then the results of the related group discussions are written on paper provided by each group. Based on the observations that formulated this problem were carried out by students but still inseparable from the help and direction from the teacher, this is a characteristic of guided inquiry.

c) Formulating a Hypothesis (Provisional Guess)

The stages of formulating hypotheses by students are good and are in accordance with the stages of the inquiry method, based on the observation of students discussing with their group mates to agree on the answers that will be used as the initial hypothesis (provisional conjecture), in classes XI F3 and XI F4 students already understand and immediately write the results of their initial hypothesis on paper.

d) Data Collection

Based on the observation of students discussing with their group friends, some argue, some look for sources on the internet, some search in package books, some write on paper, everything is

silent. All of them help each other in solving the problem under study. This fourth stage is appropriate in the stage of the inquiry method, and has similarities with the Sanjaya presentation, which is an activity that explores the information needed to test a predetermined hypothesis. This process of data collection can motivate students to cultivate perseverance and accuracy in finding these sources and can develop their thinking skills.

e) Testing Hypotheses and Formulating Conclusions

The stage of testing hypotheses and formulating conclusions in these two classes has been well realized and in accordance with the stages of the inquiry method. Based on observations during the implementation process, these two stages are carried out simultaneously, in addition to saving time. Students often ask questions to the teacher because of the many answers they get beforehand, but the teacher always goes around to help the students in determining and showing answers that are suitable and relevant to answer the problems being researched.

f) Presenting Answers

Based on the observation of the results of the group discussion that had been written on paper and shown to his friends. Each individual in the group has an obligation to explain the explanation in front of their friends well, some are still shy because they do not master the answers, some are confident because the students have mastered the answers. And then the teacher gives time for a question and answer session for students who do not understand. Some even argue, even asking for an explanation again accompanied by the data they obtained. The teacher straightens and provides additional explanations to the students at the end, if the explanation during the presentation is considered to be still lacking. Then the teacher assesses the results of each group's presentation.

g) Reflection

The reflection stage has been implemented well, but due to the constraints of learning time that has run out, this reflection stage is carried out directly (the teacher asks the students directly) without writing. This stage is also a complement to the inquiry method, because this inquiry method is based on contextual learning.

2. The Effectiveness of Inquiry Learning Methods in Improving Students' Critical Thinking Skills

The effectiveness of a learning method is not only measured by the achievement of academic results, but also by the extent to which the method is able to change the way students think and respond to knowledge. Based on the results of research at SMA Negeri 1 Penukal through observation and interviews, it shows that the application of inquiry learning methods in history subjects in grades XI F3 and XI F4 shows a real impact on strengthening students' critical thinking skills. This ability is seen in four main dimensions, namely: (1) learning style transformation, (2) the ability to analyze and evaluate historical sources, (3) the preparation of logical arguments, and (4) reflective awareness of history.

The change in student learning patterns from a passive to an active approach reflects the effectiveness of inquiry learning in building *Student Centered Learning*. Previously, students tended to be passive recipients of information, but after the inquiry method was applied, students began to engage in exploratory activities, ask questions, and express opinions. This condition is in line with the view Hammond (2015), that learning that fosters curiosity and open dialogue is the basis for the development of critical thinking skills.

The effectiveness of the inquiry method can also be seen from the ability of students to access, compare, and evaluate various historical sources. When students are able to identify the differences between narrative in text and visual evidence in historical photographs, they not only understand the material, but also demonstrate high-level thinking competencies (HOTS). This is in line with research by Fuad et al., (2015), which emphasizes that inquiry-based learning is a strategic way to build critical thinking skills through processing information from various sources.

In group discussions and presentations, students demonstrate the development of the ability to present logical and data-driven arguments. Not only expressing opinions, they are also able to build argument structures ranging from background, supporting data, to critical conclusions. This shows that students have internalized the claim evidence reasoning approach that is widely used in the development of critical thinking skills in various disciplines (McNeill & Krajcik, 2012).

The reflection that appears at the end of the learning process is proof that students do not only understand history as a collection of facts, but as a complex process that has relevance to the present. This is in line with Seixas & Morton's (2013) theory of historical consciousness, which underscores the importance of viewing history as a tool for understanding identity, forming opinions, and making wise decisions (Wright-Maley, 2015).

3. Supporting and Inhibiting Factors in the Application of Inquiry Methods in History Learning

Based on the results of the research in both classes, the application of the inquiry-based history learning method runs in dynamics influenced by various factors. Learning is not only determined by the design of the method, but also by the involvement of teachers and students, the readiness of school resources, and technical and cultural obstacles. This discussion focuses on the relationship between the patterns of findings, the categorization of key factors, and their position on the inquiry-based theory of historical learning.

Field findings show that the success of the implementation of inquiry learning is supported by four main strengths, namely: (1) teacher commitment, (2) student enthusiasm, (3) school support, and (4) availability of learning resources. First, the commitment and creativity of history teachers is the central point of success. Teachers not only prepare lesson plans that support inquiry learning, but also actively facilitate students in the process of historical exploration. Teachers create a challenging and flexible learning atmosphere. The role of teachers as facilitators in contextual learning is very important in fostering higher-level thinking activities (Arsyad, 2021).

Second, students' enthusiasm and curiosity are indicators that inquiry learning has aroused internal learning motivation. As seen in the interview, students feel more challenged and involved when asked to interpret the subject matter being discussed. This condition reflects that inquiry is not only a cognitive strategy, but also touches on the affective aspect of students (Fuad et al., 2015).

Third, support from the school environment, such as projector facilities, internet, and libraries, also facilitated the implementation. Schools provide a space for innovation for teachers to apply inquiry methods, which in this case is a strong signal that there is a pedagogical climate that is open to change. A supportive learning environment in terms of infrastructure and policy is one of the determinants in the success of inquiry-based approaches (Gómez & Suárez, 2020).

Fourth, the availability of learning resources, both primary and secondary, provides opportunities for students to hone their ability to study historical information contextually. The use

of articles from Djawa Baroe, propaganda photos, and excerpts from historical interviews encourages students to analyze and assess historical evidence more critically. Students' engagement with authentic sources is at the core of historical thinking competence (Wright-Maley, 2015).

In addition to support, the implementation of inquiry learning also faces obstacles stemming from student literacy, implementation time, learning patterns, and professional support. First, the limitations of students' historical literacy are the initial challenge. Some students still have difficulty understanding historical texts and visual documents such as propaganda photos. This shows that the competence of critical reading of historical sources has not been built evenly. These findings are consistent with Wineburg (2018), which states that reading historical sources requires special training and cannot be confused with reading ordinary narratives.

Second, the limitation of learning time is also a real technical obstacle. The teacher cannot complete all stages of the inquiry in one meeting (1 x 45 minutes). As a result, the inquiry process often does not reach the stage of reflection or strengthening conclusions. In fact, adequate time is an important requirement for process-based learning such as inquiry (Aidoo, 2024).

Third, the student learning culture that is still passive can be seen from the tendency of some students to only follow directions without taking the initiative to think or discuss. In a group, an active role is played by only some members, while others are passive. This suggests that inquiry learning requires a cultural transformation of learning from an instructional pattern to a participatory pattern.

Fourth, the lack of formal training for teachers on historical inquiry strategies causes teachers to learn independently without systematic support from schools or offices. Although teachers have shown high initiative, learning at risk does not develop optimally due to the absence of a forum for sharing good practices or methodological coaching. As affirmed by International Commission on the Futures of Education & Indonesian National Commission for UNESCO (2022), teacher professional development is an important pillar in the implementation of 21st century learning.

4. Optimized Strategies to Increase the Effectiveness of Inquiry-Based History Learning

Based on the results of interviews, observations, and documentation analysis obtained by the researcher, the optimization strategy in inquiry-based history learning not only involves technical aspects, but also touches on pedagogical, cognitive, and social dimensions. The strategies carried out by teachers and students in both classes reflect the transformation of learning methods from knowledge transfer to the construction of shared meaning that involves active interaction, resource exploration, and critical reflection. This discussion elaborates on the patterns that emerge in the strategy of strengthening inquiry learning, their relationship with the category of critical thinking dimensions, and their relevance to previous theories and findings.

a) Integration of Teacher Strategies: Integration of Inquiry Stages and Critical Thinking Stimulation.

Teachers' strategies in compiling LKPD based on historical issues and selecting visual sources that trigger critical questions affirm the role of teachers as learning designers and facilitators. This is in line with Darling's view-Darling-Hammond et al., (2024), which emphasizes the importance of learning design that is able to stimulate higher-order thinking skills through the selection of relevant and contextual content.

The consistent application of the inquiry stage also shows compatibility with the constructivist learning model recommended by the Bell et al., (2019), where the learning process starts from exploration, asking questions, to synthesis and reflection. By involving all of these stages, teachers not only build students' conceptual understanding, but also instill analytical and reflective thinking structures.

b) The Role of Reflection as a Cognitive and Affective Strategy

The reflection session given by the teacher at the end of the learning serves as an important metacognitive medium. Reflection encourages students not only to assess the knowledge gained, but also to review their thought processes. This is in line with the theory of metacognition according to Zohar & Ben-Ari (2022), which states that reflection helps students develop an awareness of their own thinking strategies, which are the foundation of critical thinking and independent learning.

This activity also shows the affective dimension of history learning, namely how students interpret the learning experience and history itself. Thus, reflection becomes the link between the cognitive (analysis, synthesis, evaluation) and affective (meaning, historical awareness) dimensions, making it a comprehensive optimization strategy.

c) Student Collaborative Strategies: Internalizing Roles and Increasing Learning Autonomy

Students who divide tasks into groups based on roles and interests demonstrate healthy and targeted collaborative practices. This strategy reflects the principles of constructivist social learning as stated by Vygotsky in (Kim & Hannafin, 2021), social interaction in the context of meaningful tasks encourages higher cognitive development. Furthermore, students' initiative in seeking additional information outside of the sources provided by the teacher shows indicators of learner autonomy. This is in accordance with the characteristics of inquiry learning according to Pedaste et al., (2015), which emphasizes the importance of free exploration and active involvement of students in developing questions and seeking answers independently.

d) Presentation and Argumentation: A Space for Critical and Communicative Practice

Group presentation activities and intergroup discussions are the main means for students to hone critical thinking and argumentative communication skills. In this activity, students not only convey information, but also test and defend their arguments. This supports the evaluation and explanation dimension of the critical thinking model developed by (Facione, 2020). Students learn to think in a structured way, formulate arguments based on evidence, and consider other viewpoints logically.

In the context of historical education, this is a form of historical reasoning actualization which, according to Seixas & Morton (2015), includes the ability to use evidence, understand cause and effect, and evaluate perspectives in historical narratives (Wright-Maley, 2016).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMENDATIONS

Based on the results of data analysis from observations, interviews, and documentation in two classes (XI F3 and XI F4), it was found that the inquiry learning method made a significant contribution to improving students' critical thinking skills in the context of the material "Japanese Occupation in Indonesia".

First, the implementation of the inquiry method has changed students' learning styles from passive to active, investigative, and reflective.

Second, the effectiveness of the inquiry method in encouraging critical thinking skills can be seen from students' ability to analyze and evaluate historical sources.

Third, the success of the implementation of the inquiry method is influenced by a number of supporting factors, including the commitment and creativity of teachers in designing learning, student enthusiasm, support for the school environment, and the availability of varied learning resources.

On the other hand, a number of challenges such as limited student historical literacy, time management, passive learning habits, and limited teacher training are also inhibiting factors that need to be overcome in order to implement inquiry learning more optimally.

Fourth, the optimization strategies implemented by teachers and students play an important role in supporting the success of inquiry-based history learning. Teachers apply material planning that encourages critical questions, systematic stages of inquiry, and reflection and collaboration in the learning process. Meanwhile, students show initiative in dividing tasks, finding additional resources, developing arguments, and reflecting on their learning process.

The findings in this study provide some important implications for the practice of history learning in secondary schools. (1) the need to shift the method from conventional teacher-centered learning to student-centered learning. (2) strengthening the professional capacity of teachers through special training that focuses on inquiry strategies in the context of history learning. (3) actively involve students in the process of discovering historical meaning through authentic sources, the method of inquiry can be a bridge between the understanding of academic history and the formation of critical historical awareness.

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