

**Perception Student Regarding Historical Material Controversy in
Shaping Reasoning Critical Students at SMA Negeri 1 Pekalongan**Alfian Sulistiyo¹**Abstract**

The implementation of learning controversial history is crucial for enhancing student understanding and developing their critical reasoning skills. This study aims to identify how teachers handle controversial material, explore teachers' historical learning models, and describe students' perceptions of controversial historical content in shaping their critical reasoning abilities. Using a descriptive qualitative method, the research was conducted at SMA Negeri 1 Pekalongan, employing in-depth interviews, observation, and document review as data collection techniques. The study results reveal that students hold a positive and optimistic view towards teaching history when it involves controversial material. They believe that such an approach makes the subject more engaging and significantly contributes to developing their critical thinking skills. Teachers at SMA Negeri 1 Pekalongan utilize various historical learning models to present controversial topics effectively, fostering a classroom environment where students are encouraged to question, analyze, and form reasoned conclusions about historical events. This method improves their understanding of history and equips them with essential skills for evaluating different perspectives and arguments, ultimately promoting a more nuanced and critical approach to learning.

Keywords: *Perception, Controversial History, Critical Reasoning.*

Introduction

History is a reconstruction of the past (Kuntowijoyo, 1995, p. 17). The history referred to in this research includes understanding history as a story, namely a record of past events carried out by humans. Meanwhile, what is meant by controversial is “a difference of opinion; conflict due to different opinions or judgments” (Badudu & Zein, 2001, p. 71). It is said to be controversial because each opinion and another opinion has a basis which, according to the author, is strong (Ahmad, 2008, p. 41). Thus, the history of controversy can be interpreted as still being written, giving rise to several opinions regarding a historical event (Ahmad, 2010, p. 34). Controversial history learning in schools cannot be avoided (Wijaya, 2017; Arta, 2012). This is because the material raised in history learning must be based on factual problems in historiography. On the one hand, Indonesian historiography is currently open to controversial issues (Sarathan, 2018). Thus, the rapid development of controversial historical writing in historiography should be accommodated in classroom learning materials (Hakim, 2018). On

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Academically, learning controversial history has several advantages and benefits when its implementation is managed correctly. However, sometimes, learning history is constrained by attitude. Teachers tend to avoid controversial material (Dudung, 2018). One of the keys to the success of implementing controversial history learning is the teacher's willingness to present controversial issues in the classroom and create an academic atmosphere that supports discussing these issues in dialogic and contextual learning (Sastrawan, 2016; Ningrum, 2009; Hanafi, 2018; Jamin, 2018).

Based on the results of initial observations made by the author while carrying out Field Experience Practices at SMA 1 Pekalongan (10 August – 24 October 2015), students are more enthusiastic about discussing controversial issues in history subjects. Their critical attitude is more visible when faced with controversial material. Materials with controversial issues can stimulate students' critical attitudes in understanding the subject matter. However, this is hampered by students' habits of relying too much on one source for learning, namely textbooks from the government, and this makes students to textbooks (Jubaedah, 2015; Sardiman, 2017; Afandi, 2015).

For this reason, teachers must be more varied in providing learning resources or references to students (Kusnoto & Firmansyah, 2016). Teachers must be brave and creative to prepare students to understand fundamental social and political conditions. This is possible if the teacher is willing and able to prepare controversial history lessons. Thus, teacher self-confidence becomes the initial commitment to implementing controversial history learning. Once the teacher is firmly committed to learning controversial history, the next effort is to provide an understanding of the practice of teaching controversial history. This is related to the main question, "What do teachers do in teaching controversial history?" The first aspect to consider is how teachers should behave toward controversial history. Teaching controversial issues demands a cautious and thorough attitude and the ability to provide adequate resources on the part of the teacher (Kochhar, 2008, p. 456).

The most critical issue in writing history is explaining how and why the event occurred so that it can provide provisions for understanding human life in the past (Suwito, 2014, p. 114). The role of controversial historical material is vital for students. This controversial nature will encourage students to think critically and analyze facts and events if controversial historical material is presented proportionally to students. On the other hand, this controversial history will backfire on students if they learn incorrectly. Citing the opinions of Prof. Bambang Purwanto, the historical issue of controversy in Indonesia is false and a lie. So, mistakes and lies in history must be straightened out so that there are no mistakes and lies in learning at

school so that students do not become victims of wrong history. Referring to Sartono Kartodirdjo's opinion (Article in Kompas Daily, 26 September 1988) that in the context of nation-building, teaching history does not merely function to provide historical knowledge as a collection of historical information but also aims to make students aware or raise their historical awareness. as stated in the Regulation of the Minister of National Education (Permendiknas) Number 22 of 2006 concerning Content Standards, past knowledge contains wisdom values that can be used to train intelligence and shape the attitudes, character, and personality of students. For this reason, historical values must be reflected in students' actual behavior patterns. This research aims to describe (1) teachers' identification of controversial material, (2) the history learning model used by teachers, and (3) students' perceptions of controversial historical material in forming students' critical reasoning. Theoretically, this research can provide an overview of students' perceptions of controversial historical material in forming students' critical reasoning, and the results of this research can be used as a reference for further, more in-depth research on similar topics.

Method

The approach in this research is qualitative and descriptive research. Namely, the data collected is in words, images, and not numbers. According to Kirk and Miller in Moleong (2002, p. 3), qualitative research is a tradition in social science that relies on observing people and one's region and relating to these people in their language and terminology. Qualitative methods are used for several considerations. Firstly, adapting qualitative methods is more accessible when dealing with the realities faced by researchers in the field; second, this method presents directly the nature of the relationship between researchers and informants; third, this method is more sensitive and more adaptable to the many sharpening influences together and to the value patterns encountered (Moleong, 2002, p. 5).

The nature of qualitative research is natural (flowing) (Hakim, 2018). This approach views reality as something that has the dimension of distance, is whole, is a unity, and is constantly changing (open-ended). Therefore, the research design is prepared and developed during the process so that this research allows for conceptual changes according to the situation and conditions in the field (Semiawan, 2010). The sampling technique used by the researcher was purposive sampling because the researcher already knew and understood the conditions in which the research location was a place where the researcher became a practicing teacher.

To test the validity of the data, researchers used triangulation techniques as a data-checking technique (Nugrahani, 2014). The triangulation technique is a data inspection technique that

utilizes something other than the data for checking purposes or as a comparison to the data (Moleong, 2006, p. 330). The triangulation used in this research is source triangulation. Researchers compare and countercheck the trustworthiness of information obtained at different times and with different tools. Testing with sources was carried out in the following way: The researcher compared the data from observations with the results of interviews regarding learning the history of controversy at SMA 1 Pekalongan and compared the results of interviews between history teachers and students regarding the learning process and learning outcomes.

Apart from using data triangulation, researchers also use method triangulation, namely exploring the same data using different data collection methods. Researchers try to retrieve data using various methods through triangulation of methods from one data source. Interview, observation, and document study methods were used to determine teachers' understanding of controversial historical material. Interviews are used to determine the teacher's understanding and observation of teachers and students in learning practices. In document studies, researchers looked at learning tools created by teachers, student learning outcomes, and learning resources used to support and add evidence to data obtained from interviews and observations (Khilmayah, 2016; Ismail, 2009; Rachmawati, 2017).

Results and Discussion

Teacher Identification of Controversial Material

Before determining learning materials, it is necessary to identify aspects of competency standards and essential competencies that students must learn or master. These aspects need to be determined because each aspect of competency standards and essential competencies requires different types of material in learning activities. Each aspect of these competency standards requires different learning or teaching materials to help achieve them. In line with the various competency standard aspects, learning material can also be divided into cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects. Detailed cognitive aspect learning materials can be divided into four types: facts, concepts, principles, and procedures (Reigeluth, 1987, p. 94). The material to be taught needs to be identified, including facts, concepts, principles, procedures, affective, or a combination of more than one type of material. By identifying the types of material that will be taught, the teacher will find it easier to teach it. Identifying the type of learning material is also essential for teaching it. Because each type of learning material requires different learning strategies or methods, media, and evaluation/assessment systems. The learning material chosen to be taught by the teacher and which must be studied by students

should contain material or teaching materials that genuinely support the achievement of competency standards and learning objectives.

In teaching history, there are two aspects that teachers must pay attention to, namely mastering facts and developing historical thinking habits. Through the study of history, students gain an overview of the background of their current lives. Hence, learning about past events provides an understanding of continuity with today's life. For this reason, identifying learning material is essential before providing the material to students. Indonesia's history with controversial issues is prone to deviations and often confuses students. So, it must be conveyed correctly, with all the theories of experts and facts. The teacher must first know the student's abilities or how well the student knows the material. Usually, students' knowledge is still zero, and they do not know anything about these historical events. So teachers must ensure students' level of knowledge regarding historical events.

The teacher's ability to identify learning material plays a vital role in the success of the learning process. Learning models and strategies must be appropriate to the material being taught and must also pay attention to students' abilities. That is the point of identifying learning materials. Teachers should first observe the students' level of ability or knowledge. This is useful for applying learning models and the teacher's material delivery. The suitability of the material with competency standards and learning objectives must also be considered.

History Learning Models Used by Teachers

Controversy history is history where the writing is still in progress, ultimately giving rise to several different opinions regarding a historical event (Ahmad, 2010, p. 34). Teachers dare to convey controversial issues in their entirety to students in a way that is adapted to the ever-changing perspective of historical science and by students' abilities. Teachers use innovative learning to train students' critical thinking skills and make learning more exciting and meaningful for students. Innovative learning is learning packaged by teachers with the encouragement of new ideas to carry out learning steps with new methods to achieve progress in the learning process and results (Suyatno, 2009, p. 6). Innovative learning provides opportunities for students to build their knowledge. The application of innovative learning in learning aims to provide students with productive, creative activities that encourage them to think. This is by the constructivist paradigm.

Judging from implementing innovative learning in history learning with controversial issues, the teacher conceptually understands the importance of learning the history of controversy to foster students' critical awareness. Apart from that, it also raises students' historical awareness.

This is because having historical awareness will lead humans to understand themselves as a nation, to a self-understanding of the nation (Soedjatmoko in Widja, 1989, p. 10). The implementation of teacher learning also adheres to the principles of innovative learning, namely: (1) learning, not teaching; (2) teacher as facilitator; (3) students as subjects, not objects (student-centered); (4) multimedia, not monomania; (5) human touch; (6) inductive learning, not deductive; (7) the material is meaningful for students, not just memorized; (8) participatory student activities, not passive (Suyatno, 2009, p. 7).

In connection with historical material with controversial issues, in learning, the teacher plays a role in providing information to students about the history of controversy, and the teacher applies (1) objectively; (2) mastering the problem; (3) relevant to the field of historical study; (4) tolerant; (5) help students' reasoning process; (6) additional education (Su'ud, 2007, p. 110). Teaching history with controversial issues at the school level also requires a wise attitude and careful consideration. The teacher is, of course, tasked with simplifying, selecting, and providing meaning appropriate to the student's development, interests, and abilities so that there is no confusion in understanding the material. This will make learning appear as students tend to be more enthusiastic in implementing learning, responding to teacher statements, answering questions, and expressing opinions.

The learning model used in teaching controversial history material is that there is a tendency for teachers to apply a combination of methods. There are similarities in the stages carried out; namely, at the initial meeting, the teacher shows a film related to historical material and controversial issues. After that, it is followed by discussions in certain classes and debates for other classes carried out by students on specific materials (in this case, it is about historical material with controversial issues). Then, students are also advised to study independently to deepen their studies. Joyce et al. (2009, p. 45) stated that a combination of methods in learning is essential. The right combination of methods will help students improve the information obtained during learning. It can encourage understanding of concepts so that students can improve their abilities to become reliable and multitalented learners.

Students' Perceptions of Controversial Historical Material in Forming Students' Critical Reasoning

Controversial history learning attempts to discuss controversial issues in history in class. This is done by presenting various perspectives on the past in a balanced manner in the classroom. Controversial history learning is supported by a mutually supportive atmosphere to deeply understand the problems of the past and explain their meaning to build students' historical

awareness. Learning history with controversial material has the potential to help students develop several abilities, such as the ability to solve problems and think critically. This is because, at the high school level, it is assumed that students have begun to be able to think critically through their emotional and intellectual development (Purwanto, 2006, p. 266). Students have a favorable view of learning history with controversial issues using innovative learning implemented by teachers. Controversial historical material makes students highly curious about historical events with elements of controversy. Students have a great interest when given facts different from the historical facts they have known. Seeing this, students will have a deep understanding and can start thinking critically. A positive response to learning implemented by the teacher will influence good learning motivation, but if students have negative or wrong perceptions, they will have poor learning motivation. This proves that students' perceptions of history lessons greatly influence the achievement of success in history learning itself.

During the learning process, students were very enthusiastic. Not a few students dare to express opinions and ask questions. During the power learning process, capture positive students and be more interested, and a mental urge arises to study the event to find answers to the truth of the event. The students' enthusiasm was also visible in the assignments they collected. The controversial historical material also makes students play an active role in learning. Through historical learning about controversial issues, students are encouraged to actively express their ideas and solve problems. However, it was stated that there must be thorough preparation so that learning about controversial issues can run well. James (Ahmad, 2013, p. 48) explains that controversial issues have advantages in fostering a critical thinking pattern in students. Through studying controversial issues, students are expected to be able to see problems as not just something that happens (given) but also to be able to explore the background and reasons why these controversial issues can occur. The above view aligns with previous opinions expressed by Soley (Ahmad, 2013, p. 48), who stated that teaching controversial issues will foster a deep understanding of social reality to prepare students as good citizens and able to think critically. Linked to character development, learning about controversial issues is also relevant in developing students' character.

Students confirmed that well-managed learning about controversial issues has the potential to help them express ideas, make decisions, be ready to face rapid change, and be responsive to actual problems in various aspects. From a historical learning perspective, controversial issues, or what is known as controversial history, can potentially develop students' abilities. According to him, controversial history can give students an open-minded attitude toward differences in

historical facts. It also teaches students that narratives in history are open to change and that the conclusions produced are not final. This is useful in eliminating students' tendency to give a hasty assessment of a problem. Students become more understanding about differences, change and continuity, cause and effect, interpretation of an event, and problems with historical evidence. The advantages of studying controversial history include comprehensively understanding past realities. Through understanding various versions of history, students are expected to be able to see various points of view when explaining a problem. In this way, reconstruction of traces of the past can be carried out more thoroughly (Ahmad, 2013, p. 49).

Conclusion

The teacher's ability to identify learning material plays a vital role in the success of the learning process. Learning models and strategies must be appropriate to the material being taught and must also pay attention to students' abilities. That is the point of identifying learning materials. Teachers should first observe the students' level of ability or knowledge. This is useful for applying learning models and the teacher's material delivery. The suitability of the material with competency standards and learning objectives must also be considered. Innovative learning is used by teachers in history lessons with controversial issues to train students' critical thinking skills and make learning more exciting and meaningful for students. Teachers dare to convey controversial issues thoroughly to students. Students have a positive assessment and view of learning history with controversial material. The teacher admits that by studying the history of controversy, students become very interested when given facts different from those they have known. Students will have a deep understanding and can begin to think critically. Based on the results of interviews conducted with students, it can be seen that some students like the learning carried out by the teacher. This is because students are interested in historical material with controversial issues, creative teachers provide variations in learning (not monotonous), and students play an active role in learning.

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