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Prospective History Teachers Worldviews on Sensitive and Controversial Issues in History Classes

Robby Fajar Fitrianto¹, Ganda Febri Kurniawan²

Abstract

This study aims to analyze the teacher's world view of sensitive and controversial issues in history learning. This research was carried out using qualitative methods with a descriptive approach. This study involved 90 participants. Data collection in this study used interview techniques relying on two techniques: first, one-on-one interviews with informants and second, group interviews or clustered discussions. Analysis of the research data using an interactive model. The results of this study indicate that the concept of sensitive and controversial issues in history learning has an important position for developing the thinking skills of prospective history teachers. To be able to manage sensitive and controversial issues requires an understanding of innovative learning strategies and evaluations. This study concludes that sensitive and controversial issues in history learning need to be mastered by history teacher candidates who are currently studying, so that this knowledge can have implications for history lessons that train critical thinking skills in schools.

Keywords: Sensitive and Controversial Issues, Prospective History Teachers, Worldviews

Introduction

Sensitive and controversial issues in history learning are unavoidable content to be taught to students at the secondary and university education levels (Conway, 2006; Tribukait, 2021). This issue contains not only debatable history, but also sensitive history, namely history that is politically and ideologically charged. This sensitive history cannot be underestimated (Savenije et al., 2014), there are many cases of quarrels and even hostility in public spaces as a result of such history being a consideration for history teachers to be able to pay attention to the content of this issue to be taught well, meaning the teacher does not trapped in only one understanding of history, but also the teacher carefully considers where his position is, whether he takes sides, how he starts talking about the issue, and what strategies can be used so that this sensitive issue does not just stop in debate, but as a learning objective in history, this issue can be the basis for teachers in developing students' thinking skills.

In study by Mattitaputy (2016) explained that sensitive and controversial issues in history lessons were not paid much attention to by teachers, so teaching about these issues seemed

¹ Undergraduate Student, Universitas Negeri Semarang, <u>fajarrobby055@students.unnes.ac.id</u>

² Assist. Prof., Universitas Negeri Semarang, gandafk@mail.unnes.ac.id

ordinary and had no special appeal. According to Ahmad (2016), this sensitive and controversial issue is summarized in the term "Controversial History", which is understood as various versions of explanations and understandings of historical events. Ahmad further explained that the roots of controversial history are differences of opinion or perspectives that explain events in the past. The effect arising from these differences is to create a tendency for conflict on the part of those who have an interest. This conflict is often born as a political friction, Kurniawan (2022) in his research results explains that the debate arises not only because of differences of opinion, but historical narratives that are born from someone's understanding are not understood academically in society, but these narratives are not value-free, there are ideologies (pros and cons) that allow political interests to enter into it.

Debates that occur usually do not end well, are left hanging and understanding of history does not find a positive way out. Such conditions become a trigger for prospective history teachers to think about the importance of formulating an idea about teaching sensitive and controversial issues in learning history as an asset in developing historical knowledge and thinking skills for students (Cooper & Nichol, 2015). These issues exist not to be avoided, but in the tradition of critical pedagogy, such issues can actually be managed to create an active and democratic learning atmosphere (Brauch et al., 2019). The inability of teachers to manage sensitive and controversial issues is the fundamental reason behind the absence of critical history learning in the classroom. In fact, in some cases, this sensitive and controversial issue has become a barrier for history teachers because like it or not, teachers must be able to describe and understand their students about historical events from various perspectives. The skill of managing issues by teachers is a competency that must be trained and taught in the learning of prospective teachers (Woolley, 2017; Warnasuriya, 2017). The challenge to prepare competent history teacher candidates is a big job that must be programmed by universities that produce educational staff.

Widiadi et al. (2013) explained that teacher skills in managing issues can be an asset in packaging learning in an interesting and fun way at the same time without igniting students' emotions and sentiments, in addition, teachers can attract students to be actively involved in learning without fear of opinion, fear of showing results. his own thoughts. This fear of students is usually caused by two things, first, students who are not used to thinking and using their abilities in discussing an issue and second, learning settings that do not train them to think freely and act democratically (Nichol & Cooper, 2017). So far, learning history still emphasizes formal aspects, is concerned with official history, and overrides a critical approach in its implementation process.

Seeing the existing phenomena, there needs to be a separate effort to explore the academic process in tertiary institutions which creates an understanding of prospective history teachers to teach sensitive and controversial issues in schools. Various learning resources and any learning strategies will not have an impact if there is no basic understanding of the prospective history teacher himself. This is in line with Ahmad's opinion (2013) which explains that the weaknesses in controversial history learning stem from the weak creativity and pedagogical competence of history teachers due to the non-optimal learning process of prospective teachers. Misconceptions often occur, especially in the historical interpretation phase (Ofianto, 2018; Kurniawan et al., 2018). This is due to the habit of reading and studying texts that do not grow and the lack of reliable sources so that in the end the existing controversial history is not explored optimally so that the teacher's understanding of the material is minimal, and results in minimal student understanding as well.

Sulistiyo (2016) in his research results explained that controversial historical material can shape students' critical reasoning, triggering dialogical and critical activities. Such student perceptions are born from a mature learning planning process with good media support. Sulkipani et al. (2020) in the results of his research explained that controversial issues in civics learning are quite interesting and increase the enthusiasm of students, students' perceptions of the pros and cons of a narrative can be grown and ultimately give birth to a wise attitude in understanding a context. Sahara et al. (2021) in his research results explained that students' understanding tends to be good in identifying controversial historical material, the learning process with a constructivist approach is considered to have a positive impact on student understanding, as well as the benefits felt by students in studying controversial history lessons. However, this study did not explain how the student's perspective as a prospective history teacher regarding controversial history was not explained. Previous research has not addressed the perceptions of prospective history teacher students about sensitive and controversial issues in history learning, as well as strategies for prospective history teachers to master these issues and manage them to create a critical and enjoyable learning atmosphere.

Based on the background above, this study aims to analyze the world views of history teacher candidates regarding sensitive and controversial issues that they receive in their lecture activities. The focus of this study includes prospective teacher understanding of the basic concepts of sensitive and controversial issues in history learning, perceptions of sensitive and controversial issues in contemporary history, and strategies for managing sensitive and controversial issues in history learning. The research question is why is it important to teach sensitive and controversial issues? What are the types of sensitive and controversial issues in

the aspect of historical knowledge? How do prospective history teachers understand sensitive and controversial issues? And how strategies present sensitive and controversial issues in history learning. An important contribution in this research is as a reference in studying learning on sensitive and controversial issues as well as being a consideration in designing innovative learning and training students' historical thinking skills.

Methods

This research was carried out using a qualitative method with a descriptive approach (Creswell & Poth, 2016). The research seeks to systematically describe the world views of prospective history teachers regarding sensitive and controversial issues in history learning. The research data is a text in the form of statements from informants. The informants of this study were prospective history teacher students in the History Education Study Program, Semarang State University who had graduated in Indonesian historiography and history learning strategies, they were in their fifth semester in their third year of study. This study involved 90 participants. Data collection in this study used interview techniques relying on two techniques: first, one-on-one interviews with informants and second, group interviews or clustered discussions. The interview data are supported by secondary information from written sources such as articles and books with the theme of sensitive and controversial issues in learning, as well as the theme of learning history. The correctness of the data is checked by means of triangulation of information sources. Analysis of the research data used an interactive model with the stages of data collection, data selection, data presentation, and data analysis.

Results and Discussion

Why Are Sensitive and Controversial Issues Important to Teach?

Large-scale studies show that authentic classroom discussions, let alone discussions of sensitive and controversial issues, are quite rare. This situation is also found in history class studies. It seems that most teachers avoid the topic of debate for a variety of reasons: time pressure and coverage, fear of reaction by superiors or students, and personal ambivalence. In addition, teachers often feel they lack the expertise in both content knowledge and discussion facilitation that is necessary to teach sensitive and controversial issues. When handled unexpertly, teaching sensitive and controversial issues can lead to partial or biased knowledge, and partisan views of history. It is important, then, that we begin by reaffirming the claim to teach sensitive and controversial issues. Why take the risk (or bother) teaching the issue?

First, we should note that sensitive and controversial issues can motivate learners and stimulate the classroom. Students are often most interested in sensitive and controversial topics that teachers want to avoid. Taking a position in a debate drives students to a cause as they seek to defend their stance. Social issues can also offer opportunities to connect subject matter to students' lives, thereby increasing its relevance.

However, the main claim to teach sensitive and controversial issues is its role in democracy education. As Hess (2009) argues, involving students in discussing social issues serves as a model for participation in a democratic society and serves as an induction into the community of citizens. Surveys have shown that instruction centered on discussion of social issues predicts attitudes to democratic participation. Discussing controversial issues should also enhance learners' ability to engage with opposing views while articulating reasoned opinions of their own. These are competencies (and dispositions) that are crucial at a time of growing political polarization and socioeconomic segregation.

Furthermore, discussion of controversial issues leads to cognitive gains, especially in the realm of argumentation and reasoning. Competing with discussants' claims and assessing their validity enhances individual reasoning. Discussants learn to see the relationship between evidence and claims, and integrate counterarguments into their line of reasoning. Learners construct more complex mental representations of an issue when they encounter competing, debating, and conflicting perspectives with one another. While some, or all, of the different reasons for teaching sensitive and controversial issues today may apply to historical issues, we must note the unique aspects of applying this approach to history education.

Types of Sensitive and Controversial Issues in Aspects of Historical Knowledge

It is good to point out some types of sensitive issues and historical controversies in which educators can engage their students. While these ideal types are not mutually exclusive, they may differ in the structuring of debate, the practice of the discipline they acquire, and their emotional and motivational drive.

The first type of historical controversy that students can engage in is debates between historical actors in the past, such as events where group members or their representatives debate the path their community should follow in a contested issue. Classic cases for this are documented discussions about representative institutions such as the debate on the US Declaration of Independence, the Indian independence movement which debated civil disobedience versus violence, or the Indonesian independence movement which debated the official day and date of independence for the Republic of Indonesia, some holding the date August 17, 1945, others

argue that independence will definitely come in 1949. However, the dilemmas faced by much smaller groups can also form the basis of repeated debates. The idea of teaching history through dilemmas and controversies guides the Reacting to the Past curriculum initiative for reenactment of major controversies in US and world history. An example of a parallel is the Israel Educational Technology Center's argumentative game and video series featuring historical figures debating focal points in Jewish and general history. Students argue for different points of view on issues such as resistance to British mandate rule, the declaration of statehood of Israel, the initiator of the French Revolution, the initiator of the General Offensive of 1 March 1949, Darul Islam, the March Eleven Order, and the 30 September Movement.

This fosters a parallel sense of human agency and the understanding that decisions in history are not predetermined but are the result of human deliberations (Ho et al., 2017). Even though these events are a thing of the past and the participants in the discussion cannot actually change the choices made by their countries or movements, for pedagogical purposes, teachers should let students make their choices even if they turn out to be counterfactual. So, as long as they can rationally support it with reference to contemporary evidence or commonly held world views, students can debate whether dropping a nuclear bomb on a Japanese city is a better alternative to an amphibious invasion—a reasonable alternative decision.

The second type of teaching controversial issues of history, and which is more prominent in the empirical study of learning and cognition, involves students in historical controversies. This type of controversial issue stems from open historical questions to which multiple (and at first glance at least) contradictory but essentially plausible answers or interpretations are given by historians. This type of controversy seems closer to a rational dispute. Debating questions may be causal, such as what was the main cause for the birth of Darul Islam, or require perspective taking (eg tracing the main motivations that drive a leader to act). In many cases, the question behind such sensitive and controversial issues calls for moral judgement, as when trying to evaluate whether a policy (such as the "containment" of the communists) or an action (for example, dropping the atomic bomb) was justified or not, or whether the results the benefit is greater than the price.

Several conflicting interpretations have led to published historical debates such as the German Historikerstreit, the assessment of Japanese war crimes, or the Israeli "New Historian" controversy about the veracity of Israel's War of Independence. Different interpretations did not clash publicly, for they came from different eras, regions or theoretical perspectives, such as different views of the Middle Ages as an era of regression and stagnation or as a dynamic reshaping of Europe. Even if those differences do not lead to actual debate between historians,

for educational purposes enough of these different and conflicting interpretations form the basis of debate between learners. To participate in debating these types of controversial issues, students must engage both with conflicting interpretations and with some underlying evidence. The most intensely sensitive and controversial issues can be seen as a third type. This stems not (or not exclusively) from contradictions between the thinker's interpretations but from more recent concerns. This may include concern with the moral implications of accepting perspectives already quite consensual in disciplinary research but clashing with collective memory. Kubota (2014) explains that the controversy arose from Japanese students' rejection of research on Japanese atrocities in World War II and the reaction of students of Chinese descent towards it. Similar controversies may arise from emotional or moral responses to historical representations, monuments, or memorials.

As Seixas' model of historical thinking (2015) shows, the ethical dimension of historical thinking, which encourages student involvement in controversy, also includes an ethics of commemoration and historical representation. These controversies may take the form of disputes over the collective memory of heroes or an era that was once praised and is now being viewed more critically. An example of such a controversial issue is the image of European New World inventors, which is debated (even at high school and undergraduate levels) by Europeans and indigenous peoples or between conservatives and critical liberals. Similar controversies accompanying East Asian nations' warnings about Japan's role in World War II have begun to enter the world of education. Controversy in some cases can refer to the proper way to remember or commemorate a leader or an event, as Budiawan (2013) suggests in relation to national monuments. Controversy can also arise over student affiliation or identity. Students may support or reject historical agents or topics according to their group's current relationship to historical groups or issues.

This type of controversial issue, which is sometimes related to the topic of history as "difficult history", can be seen from a strictly cognitive-discipline perspective as departing from the rational discourse implied in Dearden's (1981) definition and centering solely on a clash of values. and emotions. We believe that addressing controversial issues is a combination of the cognitive, socio-political, and affective aspects of student learning. Hence in teaching controversy, there is also a place for "horizon fusion" in which learners' interpretations of the past are driven by current concerns. However, because in Gadamer's (1989) notion of "fusion" learners' preconceptions are used to make the past speak for them in the present, there is a risk that current preconceptions and common understandings of a term or concept will govern the stance learners engage in controversy. We believe that presentist types of emotional-ethical

responses to sensitive and controversial issues have led to their general negative connotation. For many history educators, "sensitive and controversial" is taken as a warning adjective, describing its content (as dangerous or unreliable and therefore better avoided). However, if educators would view a controversial term as describing the process of engaging with a topic through contrasting perspectives, it might actually make it less threatening.

Understanding of Prospective History Teachers on Sensitive and Controversial Issues

The perceptions of prospective history teachers in the History Education Study Program regarding sensitive and controversial issues share the same characteristics. Based on the interview results, controversial history is explained as an event that has other versions based on different opinions or the author's perspective. Differences of opinion/perspectives in the writing of controversial history are influenced by several factors, one of which is the lack of sources or the various versions of historical narratives. If examined, the elaboration of the prospective teacher itself is in accordance with the existing concept. Ahmad (2016) explains that controversial history is a narrative or description of a historical event which contains various explanations/versions caused by different insights or perspectives from historians in viewing these historical events.

Controversial history courses are indeed not subjects that are specifically presented in one course in the department. Based on the results of the analysis carried out by the researcher, in the study program curriculum sheets there are no special courses for sensitive and controversial issues or controversial history. Controversial historical material and discussion itself merges and is embedded in every other historical course. However, even so, based on the results of interviews conducted by informant researchers stated that in the Historical Historiography course there are discussion sub-chapters that specifically provide an understanding of sensitive and controversial issues. Widiadi (2013) explains that controversial history exists due to differences in the perceptions of historians in writing historical events based on the sources or evidence they use. Meanwhile, according to Kamarga (2017) controversial history exists because of the influence of personal biases or the purpose of the author in presenting a historical narrative. Drawing the essence of this opinion, it is found that controversial history is present due to the writing of history which is influenced by several other factors, causing controversy in it. So it is natural that sensitive and controversial issues merge into the discussion subchapters in historical historiography courses.

As previously explained, controversial historical material is one of the sub-chapters of the Historiography course. Material on controversial history itself is felt to be lacking considering

the concept of controversial history itself is very complex. On the other hand, there are many events with controversial writing itself, and almost every historical event itself can be said to be controversial due to the large contribution of the historian's perspective in writing historical stories.

The limited knowledge regarding sensitive and controversial issues is motivated by three factors: first, the very limited intensity of dialogue in lecture halls; second, sensitive and controversial issues that are not explained anatomically and intensely in class; and third, teacher candidates who are not accustomed to developing critical thinking skills in various ways so that there are obstacles in dealing with sensitive and controversial texts. This is supported by the perceptions of prospective history teachers regarding sensitive and controversial issues that are considered important and require special discussion, the ability to prepare teaching with these materials is needed to create critical learning.

Sensitive and controversial issues can be found in every period of Indonesian history, one of which is from the early independence to reformation period. Sensitive and controversial issues during the independence period were contained in several historical events. However, out of the many historical narratives, there are two historical narratives which are very strong in terms of sensitive and controversial issues. The two narratives are the events of the September 30th Movement and the March Eleventh Order. The September 30 Movement or often abbreviated as G30S or G30S/PKI (Indonesian Communist Party), Gestapu (Thirty September Movement), Gestok (October One Movement) was an event that occurred on September 30, 1965 in which six high-ranking Indonesian military officials and several others were killed in an attempted rebellion known as a coup attempt which in official history was carried out by members of the Indonesian Communist Party to seize power by force. The March Eleven Warrant, better known by its abbreviation Supersemar, is an order signed by President Soekarno on March 11, 1966 which gave a mandate to Lieutenant General Suharto, as Commander of the Security and Order Operations Command (Kopkamtib), to take all actions deemed necessary. " to overcome the security situation and poor government stability during the purges after the September 30th Movement. Throughout history, the letter's physical form has never been found so that the contents of the sensitive and controversial issue are so strong. The two events are interrelated and often when students understand the two they can get caught up in partisan and partial understandings, thus losing the substance of the history learning process itself.

From the results of the interviews conducted, all informants mentioned one of the two narratives. This shows that students' understanding of controversial post-independence historical events is only limited to big narratives such as the G30S/PKI and Supersemar events.

The narratives given by informants about the events of the G30S/PKI and Supersemar themselves are quite varied. However, all of the existing narratives form the same pattern, that is, there are allegations or other versions of existing historical narratives so that the truth is very biased.

Based on the results of the interviews conducted by the researchers, there was at least a general explanation of the informants' perspectives and understanding of the G30S/PKI. The informant narrated that G30S/PKI is a controversial history which contains five different versions. The five versions relate to the masterminds or pioneers who planned the action of the movement. The masterminds of the five versions include the PKI, Suharto, Soekarno, the CIA (Central Intelligence Agency), and the Army's Internal Conflict. G30S/PKI itself is a dark historical event in which the army general who was in office at that time was killed. The motive for the killing and the mastermind behind the killing are still a mystery that has generated controversy. Quoting from Adam (2018) it is explained that the G30S tragedy itself can be seen from three stages, namely the prologue, the G30S incident and the epilogue. Adam further explained that the September 30 movement or tragedy itself did not only revolve around the phenomenon of killing generals. Five years before the phenomenon of the killing of a army general at that time was a prologue event that started the G30S phenomenon itself. Besides that, there is an epilogue or the end of the story of the G30S event which took place for at least 30 years after the general's assassination.

In Supersemar's narrative, which was delivered by the informant himself, it still tends to be in a simple stage. Informants narrated the Supersemar incident as an event for the transfer of power from President Soekarno to President Soeharto. The informants believe that there is a controversy contained in the Supersemar evidence itself. As we know, there are various versions of the evidence from Supersemar, all of which contain the political interests of each party. In addition, the validity of the existing Supersemar is still questionable and doubtful until now. This is a controversy that is still rolling today among historians.

The explanation of the two controversial historical narratives indicates that prospective history teachers have an understanding of sensitive and controversial issues. Even though the existing explanations are still in the stage of general explanation, it should be realized that an understanding of the existence of controversies in these historical events is very necessary for a prospective history teacher. This is not without reason considering that the two narratives are included in the central discussion sub-chapter on historical themes in the current history curriculum. The ability to understand controversial history itself is needed considering that discussion of controversial history itself is still very minimal to be discussed in history at the

high school level. Quoting from Sumardiyansyah (2015) controversial history needs to be understood by a teacher so that learning can be carried out critically, full of dialogue, and intensively in the process of forming knowledge. A teacher himself should be able to be neutral and impartial in providing historical explanations, which was later stated by Sumardiyansyah as a neutral attitude from ideology in history. Teachers must also be required to be wise in teaching history, especially controversial history.

Strategies for Presenting Sensitive and Controversial Issues in Learning History

Based on the results of the interviews conducted, all informants stated that sensitive and controversial issues were important learning materials to be presented in history lessons. All informants have their own reasons underlying the statement. Some of the underlying reasons include honing students' critical thinking skills, giving students an understanding of the existence of different versions and opinions of a historical event, providing an understanding of the need for historical objectivity, cultivating an attitude of respect for differences of opinion, and honing historical thinking skills. Prospective teachers believe that learning controversial history has an important role and urgency. However, it should be underlined that the informants considered that the educational units that were suitable for giving an understanding of controversial history themselves were high schools and tertiary institutions. This is because at the unit level, students have started to have a mature mindset and mindset so that they are able to absorb the conceptions of controversial history itself. Quoting Djunaedi (2015) it is explained that controversial history is an important historical lesson in providing an understanding of differences of opinion, an understanding of objective historical scientific studies that tends to give birth to subjectivity. In addition, Djunaedi also explained that given controversial history had an influence on the affective and psychomotor aspects of students, helped students to increase historical awareness including students' ability to think critically, provided an understanding of historical concepts in every historical event, and increased student motivation. in finding answers to their questions about the concept of actual events in history.

Based on the results of interviews, informants stated that teaching sensitive and controversial issues has various obstacles. The constraints that exist themselves relate to the lack of learning resources and the ability of prospective teachers to package the existing controversial history. Obstacles that exist include related to government policies related to education, the lack of ability of prospective teachers to utilize reference sources and the government's lack of attention to sensitive and controversial issues in learning history. Existing constraints will

greatly affect the objectives of learning history itself. Therefore there is a need for alternative solutions to help prospective history teachers manage and teach sensitive and controversial issues in history classes.

Based on the results of the interviews, informants stated that it was necessary for prospective teachers to recognize sensitive and controversial issues, lecturers needed to present relevant texts to develop the ability of prospective history teachers. In addition, the informants also stated that there is a need to develop media that supports learning sensitive and controversial issues. Quoting Ahmad (2016) that there are at least several attempts to overcome obstacles in learning the history of this controversial issue, some of these efforts are related to implementing the use of supporting sources for controversial history learning and evaluating the abilities of students who are integrated with the use of learning technology. Further efforts that can be implemented are the provision of special student worksheets for teaching sensitive and controversial issues in learning for prospective teachers, so that teachers will be accustomed to learning to understand these issues. In addition, Djunaedi (2015) states that there are several strategies that can be used to package this controversial history lesson, some of these strategies include the use of cooperative learning methods with discovery learning.

Finally, learning sensitive and controversial issues requires good teacher quality, so that standardized and quality-assured education for prospective teachers is needed. It is agreed that this issue can develop students' historical thinking skills, but the learning process will not go well if the teacher does not understand the basic concepts of sensitive and controversial issues. In simple terms, this knowledge can be built by familiarizing prospective teachers with studying what "official history" is and what "alternative history" can be managed in learning. Bias of knowledge and debate stems from differences in the narratives that are built, learning history with sensitive and controversial issues does not seek to build political or ideological conflict, but seeks to raise awareness about the importance of a peaceful and democratic life.

Conclusion

This study intends to analyze the world views of history teacher candidates regarding sensitive and controversial issues in history learning. How a prospective teacher can master the basic concepts of sensitive and controversial issues becomes the object of analysis. In addition, education for prospective teachers that is democratic and can develop students' thinking skills is also being questioned. The results of the study show that education for prospective history teachers needs to focus on developing pedagogical competencies that enable prospective history teachers to understand the basic concepts of sensitive and controversial issues, then be

able to discover and manage them in classroom learning. The absence of studying sensitive and controversial issues has resulted in the cessation of critical and intensive dialogue in forming historical thinking skills which are the basic capital in understanding broader historical narratives. The obstacles faced in achieving this competence are first, the very limited intensity of dialogue in the lecture hall; second, sensitive and controversial issues that are not explained anatomically and intensely in class; and third, teacher candidates who are not accustomed to developing critical thinking skills in various ways so that there are obstacles in dealing with sensitive and controversial texts. For this reason, the implication of this research is the need for a learning model for sensitive and controversial issues in tertiary institutions that can develop the competence of prospective history teachers, so that later it will have an impact on improving their performance in fostering students' critical thinking skills at school.

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