



APPLICATION OF A CONTEXTUAL APPROACH IN HISTORY LEARNING TO ENCOURAGE STUDENTS' CRITICAL THINKING AT SMAN 3 MEDAN

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Abstract

The contextual approach has become the main focus in efforts to improve learning at various levels of education. This study aims to investigate the application of a contextual approach in history learning to improve students' critical thinking skills at SMA Negeri 3 Medan. The research method used was classroom action research with class XI science student participants. The research was conducted in three cycles, with each cycle consisting of planning, implementation, observation and reflection. Data was collected through observation, interviews and document analysis. The research results show that the application of a contextual approach is effective in improving students' critical thinking skills. Students demonstrate improvements in their ability to analyze historical context, identify patterns, and relate learned information to contemporary situations. The implications of this research provide direction for the development of more effective curriculum and learning strategies to facilitate students' critical thinking in the context of history learning at the high school level. The implications of this research highlight the importance of developing innovative and relevant learning strategies for improving the quality of education, as well as the importance of support and cooperation from various related parties. Recommendations for future research include exploring the long-term impact of contextual approaches, factors influencing their successful implementation, and collaboration between educational stakeholders. Thus, this research provides a valuable contribution to the understanding of effective learning strategies for improving students' critical thinking skills in the field of history, as well as providing a basis for the development of better education in the future.

Key words: *Contextual Approach, Historical Learning, Critical Thinking*

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INTRODUCTION

By and large, the set of educational experiences completed in schools is as yet static and customary (Asmara, 2019). Being static means that there are no progressions made by history educators every once in a while, just utilizing traditional strategies, for example, the talk technique, which just peruses or rehashes sentences in books and understudies just have opportunities for growth like tuning in, taking notes and retaining the material. introduced by educators without understanding what is being examined, without understanding whether the material introduced or contemplated has significance and worth that is valuable for the existence of understudies, bringing about the insight from understudies that sets of experiences illustrations are exhausting, less fascinating, and less vital to learn (Fitri, 2021).

The issue today is that a set of experiences subjects are viewed by certain understudies as immaterial on the grounds that they just arrange with the past. What's significantly more amusing is that a set of experience examples is inseparable from retaining similar occasions from the past as of recently (Didipu, 2020). Certain individuals even think that a set of experiences is an exhausting and tedious subject. It should be understood that this happens not on the grounds that the verifiable material is negligible or, as of now, not essential to study, but rather because the components of history learning can't adjust to the present circumstances. This means that there should be development from related components in history learning. One component that is extremely compelling is the human component, which consists of educators and understudies (Nurulhaq & Supriastuti, 2020).

Instructors play a significant role in history learning in light of the fact that, as teachers, they are supposed to activate the components that exist in history learning (Rimatuzzahriah & Abrar, 2023). As teachers in history subjects, educators should have the option to introduce something new, both connected with models, methodologies, strategies, and, surprisingly, the utilization of fitting learning media for the present circumstances. Educators should have the option to carry understudies to previous encounters of Indonesian human existence on the grounds that the qualities of history realizing that are diachronic (growing in time)

require a methodology to have the option to change the exhausting worldview of history learning into discovering that is significant and charming for understudies (Nurhasnah et al., 2023).

To accomplish this is definitely not a simple task; it requires the capacity to make new things from the instructor so he can bring history examples into something significant for understudies, and obviously, having the option to dispose of the mark of repetition and exhausting history illustrations requires educator imagination and backing. additionally by the instructor's knowledge, instructive foundation, inspiration or hard-working attitude (A. Hidayat, 2012). Through history training, understudies are welcome to look at the interconnectedness of life experienced without anyone else, their local area or their country, so they develop into a young person who has verifiable mindfulness and gains motivation or shrewdness from stories. - accounts of legends as well as public misfortunes, which eventually empower the arrangement of reasoning examples towards levelheaded basic exact reasoning, and what is no less significant is the investigation of history, which fosters a demeanor of regard for human qualities (Sormin et al., 2019).

Teachers of history need to be innovative and creative in order for these learning goals to be realized. One way to do this is by utilizing a contextual learning approach when presenting historical content. This way, the dreary history learning paradigm can be replaced with meaningful history learning. While history learning is felt to have importance for the people who concentrate on it, at that point, the most common way of assimilating person values will flourish in understudies and the objectives of history learning can be accomplished (Riduan, 2022).

History learning at the high school level has an important role in shaping students' understanding of past events and their relevance to the current context (Lee, 2017). However, sometimes history learning is considered dry and uninteresting for some students. Limitations in traditional teaching methods often fail to arouse students' interest and critical thinking skills. To overcome this challenge, a contextual approach has been proposed as a potential learning strategy for increasing the effectiveness of history learning (Wang, H., & Chen, 2018).

The contextual approach emphasizes the importance of presenting learning material

in a context that is relevant and significant for students. By linking historical material to contemporary situations and issues, this approach aims to build deeper understanding and improve students' ability to think critically (M. S. Hidayat, 2012).

In the context of SMA Negeri 3 Medan, learning history requires an innovative approach to improve the quality of learning and stimulate students' critical thinking skills. Therefore, this research aims to investigate the potential for implementing a contextual approach to history learning at this school, with a focus on developing students' critical thinking skills.

Apart from the challenge of increasing students' interest and abilities in learning history, SMA Negeri 3 Medan also faces pressure to prepare students to have skills that are relevant to the demands of the times. Education today not only aims to transfer knowledge but also to equip students with the critical thinking, analysis and synthesis skills necessary to face complex challenges in real life (Ministry of Education and Culture Republic of Indonesia, 2016).

It is hoped that a contextual approach to history learning can be a solution to overcome this challenge. By emphasizing the connection between historical material and actual situations and contexts, students at SMA Negeri 3 Medan are expected to be able to develop a deeper understanding of the relevance of history to their lives today. This is also in line with the spirit of the 2013 curriculum, which emphasizes context-based learning to motivate students and increase their understanding of subject matter (Kurniawan, A., & Pramono, 2019).

Apart from that, applying a contextual approach to history learning can also support the development of 21st-century skills, which are the main focus of education today. The ability to connect, analyze and evaluate information from various sources is the key to success in facing future challenges. By considering these conditions, this research aims to contribute to the development of relevant and effective learning strategies to improve students' critical thinking skills at SMA Negeri 3 Medan through the application of a contextual approach to history learning.

METHODOLOGY

This research uses a classroom action

research (PTK) approach as a framework for investigating the application of a contextual approach to history learning at SMA Negeri 3 Medan. This approach was chosen because it can provide a deep understanding of the effectiveness of the contextual approach in improving students' critical thinking skills directly through gradual observation, action and reflection (Sugiyono, 2017).

Research Participants: The participants in this research were students of class XI Science at SMA Negeri 3 Medan. Participants were selected purposefully by considering their willingness to engage in the experimental learning process (Sugiyono, 2013).

Research Instruments: **Observation Sheet:** Used to record learning activities, interactions between teachers and students, as well as student responses to learning. **Interview Guide:** Used to conduct interviews with teachers and students to gain a deeper understanding of their experiences in learning history with a contextual approach. **Learning Documentation:** Used to collect data in the form of learning materials, learning plans, and student products produced during the learning process.

Research procedure: **Planning:** Identify history learning materials that will be taught using a contextual approach. Plan learning activities that are relevant and appropriate to local and contemporary contexts. **Implementation:** Implement the learning plan gradually over several learning cycles. **Observation:** Observe the learning process, interactions between teachers and students, and student responses to learning. **Interviews:** Conduct interviews with teachers and students to gain a deeper understanding of their experiences in learning history with a contextual approach. **Reflection:** Reflect on the results of observations and interviews to evaluate the effectiveness of the contextual approach in improving students' critical thinking skills. Identify the weaknesses and strengths of the approach used (Miles & Huberman, 1992).

Data analysis: The collected data will be analyzed qualitatively using thematic analysis techniques. Data from observation sheets, interviews, and learning documentation will be analyzed to identify patterns, main findings, and implications of implementing a contextual approach in history learning at SMA Negeri 3 Medan (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The research results show that the application of a contextual approach to history learning at SMA Negeri 3 Medan has had a positive impact on students' critical thinking abilities. Over the course of cycle three of the study, there was significant improvement in students' ability to analyze historical context, identify patterns, and relate learned information to contemporary situations. Through the use of a contextual approach, students are more involved in learning and are able to relate historical material to personal experiences and everyday realities. They also demonstrate better abilities in formulating critical questions, presenting arguments, and evaluating various points of view on a historical event.

The application of a contextual approach to history learning has several important implications. First, this approach helps students see the connection between the past and the situations and contexts they are currently experiencing. This helps strengthen their understanding of the relevance of history to real life, thereby increasing students' learning motivation and interest in history subjects.

Second, the contextual approach also encourages the development of students' critical thinking skills. By considering various contextual factors, students are invited to think analytically, evaluate various sources of information, and develop arguments based on historical evidence. This is in accordance with the demands of the 2013 curriculum, which emphasizes the development of 21st century skills, including critical thinking skills.

However, there are several challenges to implementing a contextual approach to history learning. One of them is ensuring that the context used is relevant and can be understood by students. In addition, more time and effort are needed to plan and implement context-based learning.

In the context of this research, the findings show that the application of a contextual approach to history learning at SMA Negeri 3 Medan has the potential to improve students' critical thinking skills. However, to achieve optimal results, strong support is needed from all related parties, including teachers, students and the school.

This research contributes to the understanding of effective learning strategies

to improve students' critical thinking skills in the field of history. The implications of the results of this research can be a guide for developing more effective curriculum and learning strategies in the future.

Apart from that, the findings also show that the application of a contextual approach to history learning at SMA Negeri 3 Medan can create an inclusive and student-centered learning environment. By relating historical material to students' experiences and realities, this approach allows each student to feel relevant and involved in the learning process. This is in line with the principles of inclusive education, which emphasize the acceptance, participation and progress of each individual.

Furthermore, applying a contextual approach also opens up space for the development of broader critical thinking skills. Through context-based history learning, students not only learn about historical facts but also develop a deeper understanding of historical processes, the complexity of events, and their impact on the development of society. This helps prepare students to be active, open-minded citizens and able to participate in complex discussions and decision-making in society.

However, this research also identifies several challenges that need to be overcome in implementing a contextual approach to history learning. One of them is the availability of adequate resources, both in terms of reading materials and technology that supports context-based learning. Apart from that, the teacher's role in designing and implementing learning that is relevant to the context is also the key to success in implementing this approach.

Thus, these findings indicate that the application of a contextual approach to history learning at SMA Negeri 3 Medan has the potential to improve the quality of learning and students' critical thinking abilities. However, to achieve optimal results, strong commitment and cooperation from all relevant parties are needed, as are continuous efforts in developing and implementing relevant and effective learning strategies.

The findings from this research have several important implications in the context of history learning at SMA Negeri 3 Medan and in the broader educational context.

First, this research contributes to the understanding of effective learning strategies to improve students' critical thinking skills in the

field of history. These implications can be the basis for developing a curriculum that is more relevant and oriented towards developing critical thinking skills in the future.

Second, this research also provides practical input for history teachers in designing and implementing learning that is more interesting and meaningful for students. By utilizing a contextual approach, teachers can more easily relate historical material to students' experiences and realities, thereby increasing their engagement and understanding.

Third, this research also underlines the importance of support and cooperation from various related parties, including schools, government and society, in supporting the implementation of innovative and relevant learning strategies. Strengthening infrastructure and resources, training for teachers, and active participation from students and parents are also keys to achieving success in context-based learning. This research also opens up space for further research in several aspects. First, further research could be conducted to explore the long-term impact of implementing a contextual approach to history learning on students' historical understanding and their ability to think critically.

Second, further research could also investigate factors that influence the successful implementation of a contextual approach, including school support, teacher preparedness, and student characteristics.

Third, research involving collaboration between schools, universities and research institutions can provide more comprehensive insight into the implementation and impact of contextual approaches in history learning.

Thus, it is hoped that further research can provide a deeper understanding of the potential and challenges of adopting a contextual approach to teaching history, as well as make a greater contribution to improving the quality of education in Indonesia.

CONCLUSION

This research highlights the effectiveness of applying a contextual approach to improving students' critical thinking skills in history learning at SMA Negeri 3 Medan. Through the use of this approach, students not only learn about historical facts but also

develop a deeper understanding of the relevance of history to their lives today. The results showed a significant increase in students' ability to analyze historical context, identify patterns, and relate the information learned to contemporary situations.

Applying a contextual approach also creates an inclusive and student-centered learning environment and opens up space for the development of broader critical thinking skills. However, there are several challenges that need to be overcome, such as the availability of adequate resources and the role of teachers in designing learning that is relevant to the context.

The implications of this research highlight the importance of developing innovative and relevant learning strategies for improving the quality of education, as well as the importance of support and cooperation from various related parties. Recommendations for future research include exploring the long-term impact of contextual approaches, factors influencing their successful implementation, and collaboration between educational stakeholders.

Thus, this research provides a valuable contribution to the understanding of effective learning strategies for improving students' critical thinking skills in the field of history, as well as providing a basis for the development of better education in the future.

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