



## STRENGTHENING HISTORY LEARNING AT SMAN 2 MEDAN: BUILDING CHARACTER AND NATIONAL INSIGHT

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### Abstract

*This study aims to analyze the strengthening of history learning at SMA Negeri 2 Medan in building students' character and national insight. This study uses a qualitative descriptive method with data collection techniques through interviews, observations, documentation studies, and questionnaires. The results of the study show that the application of interactive learning methods such as problem-based learning and project-based learning, as well as the use of digital technology in history learning, is able to increase students' understanding of history materials. In addition, history teaching at this school is effective in instilling character values such as honesty, responsibility, discipline, and love for the homeland. Curriculum that integrates local history and extracurricular activities, such as museum visits and nationality seminars, also contributes to broadening students' national horizons. However, the study also found several challenges, including a lack of student interest in history lessons and limited access to technology. Support from teachers, parents, and the community is very important in overcoming these obstacles. Overall, the strengthening of history learning at SMA Negeri 2 Medan has a positive impact on shaping students' character and increasing their national insight.*

**Key words:** History Learning, Character Strengthening, National Insight

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## INTRODUCTION

History learning has an important role in shaping students' character and national insight at various levels of education, including in high school (SMA) (RUSLI 2021). At SMA Negeri 2 Medan, strengthening history learning is one of the main focuses in an effort to increase awareness of national identity, love for the homeland, and social responsibility of students. Through a holistic and integrative approach, history lessons in this school are expected not only to convey past facts, but also to be able to form critical thinking and patriotism attitudes among the younger generation.

In this era of globalization, the rapid flow of information often makes the younger generation lose its historical and national roots (Amanullah, Suryani, and Ardianto 2019). These challenges are faced by many schools, including SMA Negeri 2 Medan, where students are more interested in the development of foreign technology and culture than understanding the history of their own nation. Therefore, innovation is needed in history teaching methods so that the material presented is relevant to current conditions and can attract students' interest in learning more about history.

History learning at SMA Negeri 2 Medan is oriented to develop three main aspects, namely cognitive, affective, and psychomotor. The cognitive aspect emphasizes the understanding and mastery of historical material, while the affective aspect is related to the formation of national attitudes and values. The psychomotor aspect involves students' ability to apply historical knowledge in daily life, both through discussions, presentations, and practical activities such as historical projects (Judge 2023).

In an effort to strengthen history learning, the role of teachers is very central. Teachers not only play the role of presenters of material, but also as facilitators who are able to guide students to think critically about various historical events (Ismail 2018). At SMA Negeri 2 Medan, history teachers have been trained to develop a more interactive learning method, where students are invited to conduct historical studies through problem-based learning (PBL) and project-based learning (PjBL) approaches. This method is believed to be able to increase student participation in the learning process and make history material more vivid and meaningful.

In addition to innovative learning methods, schools also strengthen the use of technology in history learning. The use of digital media such as documentary videos, simulations of historical events, and the use of e-learning platforms are part of the learning strengthening strategy (Effendi 2016). By using this technology, students can more easily access relevant historical sources and delve into the material independently.

Strengthening history learning is also inseparable from a supportive curriculum. SMA Negeri 2 Medan has made adjustments to the curriculum by adding local content related to the history of the local area. This aims to enrich students' insight into local history so that they not only know national history, but are also able to understand the historical context that is closer to their daily lives.

The role of the school environment is also an important factor in building students' character and national insight through history learning. At SMA Negeri 2 Medan, various extracurricular activities related to history and culture, such as history theater and history discussion clubs, are held regularly. These activities provide a space for students to express their interest in history and delve deeper into national values.

In building character, the values instilled through history learning at SMA Negeri 2 Medan are not only limited to the aspect of knowledge, but also in strengthening moral and ethical attitudes. Values such as honesty, justice, and responsibility are taught through the study of historical figures and important events that illustrate the struggle of the Indonesian nation (Cahyono, Nurmalia, and Wijayanti 2024). This is expected to be able to form the character of students who are not only academically intelligent, but also have high moral integrity.

Effective history learning is also able to foster a sense of nationalism and love for the homeland among students (Sartika 2016). By understanding the struggle of the heroes and the long process that the Indonesia went through to achieve independence, students are expected to appreciate the values of independence and have an awareness of the importance of maintaining the unity and unity of the nation.

In addition, national insight is also strengthened through an understanding of cultural and ethnic diversity in Indonesia (Purnama et al. 2023). At SMA Negeri 2 Medan,

students are invited to learn the history of various regions in Indonesia, so that they can better appreciate diversity and understand the importance of tolerance in the life of the nation and state. This is an important part of building an inclusive national character and respecting differences.

SMA Negeri 2 Medan has also collaborated with various cultural institutions and history museums to support the strengthening of history learning. Through visits to museums and participation in historical seminars, students have the opportunity to learn directly from authentic historical sources and delve deeper into the material. This activity also encourages students to appreciate the nation's cultural heritage and history more.

The biggest challenge in strengthening history learning is how to relate the relevance of history to students' lives today' (Nur, Sukestiyarno, and Junaedi 2019). Teachers at SMA Negeri 2 Medan strive to explain that history is not just the past, but also a reflection of the present and a clue for the future. With this approach, students are expected to see the importance of learning history in facing the challenges that exist in the modern era.

The strengthening of history learning at SMA Negeri 2 Medan also received support from parents and the surrounding community. They take part in various school activities related to history, such as commemorations of national holidays and historical competitions. This participation is proof that history teaching is not only the responsibility of the school, but also involves all elements of society.

Overall, strengthening history learning at SMA Negeri 2 Medan is a strategic step in building students' character and national insight. Through various approaches that are holistic, interactive, and supported by the school environment and the community, it is hoped that the young generation will not only be intelligent in knowledge, but also have a strong sense of nationality and be ready to face future challenges.

In the end, strengthening history learning is not only about increasing knowledge, but also about how to form attitudes and behaviors that are in harmony with national values. Thus, it is hoped that graduates of SMA Negeri 2 Medan will be able to become a generation that loves the

homeland, has a strong character, and has a broad national insight.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive method (Agustianti et al. 2022). The qualitative approach was chosen because this study seeks to deeply understand the process of strengthening history learning applied at SMA Negeri 2 Medan, as well as how this learning has an impact on the formation of students' character and national insight. The descriptive method is used to describe the phenomena that occur in the field in detail and systematically.

### **1. Research Location**

This research was conducted at SMA Negeri 2 Medan, a high school that has a long history in the application of quality history education. The selection of this location is based on the school's policy of committing to integrating national values in history learning, as well as the students' social and cultural diversity backgrounds that reflect the national context of Indonesia.

### **2. Research Subject**

The subjects of this study include history teachers, students of grades X and XI, and principals at SMA Negeri 2 Medan. The selection of this subject is carried out by purposive sampling technique, which is the selection of informants based on certain considerations relevant to the focus of the research. History teachers are chosen because they play a direct role in teaching history, while students are chosen as recipients of learning to see the impact of the applied methods. The principal is involved in understanding school policies related to strengthening history learning.

The number of informants in this study is determined proportionally by considering the number of history teachers and students involved in the learning process. A total of 5 history teachers, 30 students from two classes (classes X and XI), and the principal were the main informants in this study.

### **3. Data Collection Techniques**

The data in this study was collected through several techniques, namely, (Jogiyanto Hartono 2018):

- In-Depth Interviews: Interviews are

conducted with history teachers and school principals to explore information related to strategies, methods, and policies in strengthening history learning. The interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner to allow flexibility in deeper data mining.

- Participatory Observation: Researchers make direct observations into the classroom during the history learning process. This observation is carried out to see firsthand how the teaching process is carried out, the methods applied, and the interaction between teachers and students. Observations are also carried out in extracurricular activities related to history and nationality.
- Documentation Study: Additional data was obtained from various official school documents, such as syllabus, learning implementation plan (RPP), extracurricular activity reports, and other documents relevant to strengthening history learning at SMA Negeri 2 Medan. Documentation studies also include a review of the curriculum used in schools related to history lessons.

#### **4. Data Analysis Techniques**

The data obtained from the results of interviews, observations, documentation studies, and questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive qualitative analysis techniques. The data analysis process is carried out through several stages as follows:

- Data Reduction: At this stage, the data obtained from the field is selected, simplified, and focused on aspects relevant to the research. Irrelevant data is discarded so as not to interfere with the focus of the research.
- Data Presentation: Reduced data is presented in the form of narratives, tables, or matrices to make it easier to understand. The presentation of this data aims to see patterns, relationships between variables, and important findings from the research.
- Drawing Conclusions and Verification: After the data is presented, the researcher draws conclusions based on the findings obtained. This conclusion is then verified through data re-checking and source triangulation, namely comparing data from interviews, observations, and documentation to ensure the validity and

validity of the research results.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

This research was conducted to explore how strengthening history learning at SMA Negeri 2 Medan can build students' character and national insight. Based on the results of data collection through interviews, observations, documentation studies, and questionnaires, the results of the study are divided into several main findings.

### **1. Strategy for Strengthening History Learning at SMA Negeri 2 Medan**

Based on interviews with history teachers, school principals, and observation results, strategies to strengthen history learning at SMA Negeri 2 Medan are carried out through various innovative approaches. One of the main strategies is the use of interactive learning methods such as problem-based learning (PBL) and project-based learning (PjBL). History teachers actively involve students in discussions about historical events and ask them to analyze historical problems and develop projects that are relevant to the material.

Teachers also use various technology-based learning media, such as documentary videos, simulations of historical events, and e-learning platforms. This can be seen from direct observation in the classroom, where students actively participate in learning with the help of the technology. The use of technology not only makes learning more interesting, but it also helps students understand the historical context more clearly and relevantly.

The findings of this study show that the use of interactive learning strategies such as problem-based learning (PBL) and project-based learning (PjBL) at SMA Negeri 2 Medan significantly increases student involvement in understanding history. This is in line with the theory of constructivism, which states that learning occurs effectively when students are actively involved in the learning process, especially by solving problems or working on real projects (Piaget 1976).

Learning methods involving technology have also been proven to increase students' attraction to history lessons. In this case, the use of digital media such as documentary videos and simulations of historical events can help students understand

the historical context more concretely, as explained in research conducted by (English and Doddington 2019), which emphasizes the importance of hands-on experience in learning.

Research by (Women's 2024) supports these findings, where the use of technology in history learning has been shown to increase students' interest and understanding of the material being taught. However, the challenges of access to technology found at SMA Negeri 2 Medan are also a reminder that the digital divide can still be an obstacle in the application of modern learning methods in various schools, especially in areas with uneven technological infrastructure.

## **2. History Learning in Shaping Student Character**

Findings from interviews with students and questionnaire analysis show that history learning at SMA Negeri 2 Medan has a significant influence on shaping students' character. National values such as honesty, responsibility, discipline, and love for the homeland are integral parts of the material taught.

Most of the students (85%) stated that they felt an increased awareness of the importance of maintaining the unity and unity of the nation after learning about the struggle of the heroes and the process of Indonesia's independence. Students also realize that historical events provide moral lessons that can be applied in daily life.

Students who take part in history-related extracurriculars, such as history theater and history discussion clubs, show a higher level of concern for national issues. They also stated that these extracurricular activities helped them better understand national values and strengthen their character, especially in terms of cooperation, leadership, and respect for diversity.

The results of the study show that the strengthening of history learning at SMA Negeri 2 Medan has a positive influence on the formation of students' character, especially in terms of honesty, responsibility, and love for the homeland. Theory of character education put forward by (Lickona 1991) stated that education that focuses on developing moral values, such as those in history learning, can help shape students' stronger character.

History learning that teaches the struggle of national heroes and the process of Indonesia's independence directly makes students aware of the importance of sacrifice, courage, and cooperation. This is in line with the concept of national character building explained by Ki Hajar Dewantara, where learning history is one way to build a strong national identity and national character.

Other research by (Dalimunthe 2023) also supports these results. Dewi found that students who studied history with an approach that emphasized moral and ethical values showed an improvement in aspects of social responsibility and awareness of nationalism. This shows that history is not only about teaching facts, but also a means to instill national and moral values that are important in shaping the character of the younger generation.

## **3. The Role of Teachers in Strengthening History Learning**

The results of in-depth interviews with history teachers show that the role of teachers is very significant in directing students to understand the importance of history in shaping national identity. Teachers not only convey historical material factually but also guide students to relate historical events to the current situation.

Teachers at SMA Negeri 2 Medan tend to use a contextual approach, where they connect historical events with contemporary issues, such as diversity, tolerance, and globalization. In this way, students are invited to think critically about historical events and apply the values learned in daily life.

This strengthening is also supported by teacher professional development programs, where teachers regularly participate in training and seminars related to more innovative history learning methods. This is reflected in an interview with the principal who stated that the school provides full support for improving teacher competence, especially in terms of the application of technology in learning.

Another finding of this study is the importance of the role of teachers in directing students to understand history as something relevant to their current lives. Teachers who use contextual approaches, such as linking historical events to contemporary issues such as tolerance and globalization, play an

important role in shaping students' critical thinking. According to the critical pedagogical theory put forward by (Harisuddin 1981), teachers should act as facilitators who encourage students to think critically and relate what they learn to their social reality.

This approach is also supported by research (Dalimunthe 2023), which found that teachers who use contextual methods in teaching history can improve students' understanding of the relevance of history in modern life, especially in the context of pluralism and social diversity. Teachers at SMA Negeri 2 Medan who actively associate history learning with contemporary national issues contribute to increasing students' national insights, which ultimately strengthens the sense of nationalism.

#### **4. Curriculum and Extracurricular Activities as Support for Strengthening History Learning**

The findings from the documentation study and interviews with the principal revealed that the history curriculum at SMA Negeri 2 Medan has been adjusted to local content, especially the history of the local area. This local history material helps students understand more deeply the context of their nationality and local identity, while increasing their sense of pride in the cultural heritage that exists around them.

Activities such as visits to the history museum and national seminars are also an important part of strengthening history learning at this school. These activities provide students with hands-on experience to learn from authentic artifacts and historical sources. Based on observations, students seemed enthusiastic in participating in this activity, which helped enrich their insight into history and nationality.

The study also found that a history curriculum tailored to local content, especially local history, contributes greatly to increasing students' awareness of history and local identity. This is in accordance with the concept proposed by (Barton and Levstik, 2004), which states that studying local history can provide a more personalized and relevant learning experience, thereby strengthening the link between personal and national identities.

In addition, extracurricular activities such as museum visits and nationality

seminars provide opportunities for students to learn history directly through experiences outside the classroom. According to (Cole and SCRIBNER 1978), learning will be more effective if students engage in social interaction and real experiences, which can strengthen their understanding of the material being taught in the classroom.

These activities also serve as a means to enrich students' national insights, as they not only learn from textbooks, but also from authentic historical artifacts and interactions with historians. Research by (Latifah and Wathon 2021) It also found that educational visits to historical sites help students deepen their knowledge of the nation's history and strengthen their love for the homeland.

#### **CONCLUSION**

Based on the results of the research and discussions that have been carried out, it can be concluded that strengthening history learning at SMA Negeri 2 Medan has proven to be effective in shaping students' character and expanding their national horizons. Through the application of interactive learning methods such as problem-based learning and project-based learning, as well as the use of technology and contextual approaches, students are more actively involved in understanding history. This approach not only improves their understanding of historical events, but also helps them relate history to contemporary situations and challenges, such as globalization and diversity.

History learning at SMA Negeri 2 Medan also plays an important role in shaping character values, such as honesty, responsibility, discipline, and love for the homeland. Students directly feel the impact of this learning, especially in terms of increasing awareness of the importance of national unity and unity. This strengthening of national values is supported by relevant local history curricula and extracurricular activities, such as museum visits and nationality seminars, which enrich the students' learning experience.

The role of teachers is also very crucial in guiding students to think critically and understand the relevance of history to their lives. Teachers who use a contextual approach successfully increase students' engagement in historical discussions and help them apply the values they learn in their daily lives.

However, the study also revealed

several challenges, such as students' lack of interest in history lessons and limited access to technology. However, with strong support from parents, the community, and cooperation with cultural institutions, these challenges can be overcome.

Overall, the strengthening of history learning at SMA Negeri 2 Medan has had a positive impact in building the character of students who are more resilient and nationalistic. These efforts are very important in creating a young generation that has an awareness of their national identity and is able to face global challenges while still upholding national values.

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