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The Effect of Controversial Issues Model on Students' Critical Thinking Skills in Social Studies Education

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Abstract- *The student's critical thinking skills in social studies education in Public Junior High School 14 Bandung is still low. This can be seen from the observation of the researchers, which shows that the students' critical thinking skills in the superior classes are far more prominent compared to the regular classes. The students' critical thinking skills in the superior classes are not only fixated on the problems in their handbooks, but it also has started to recognize about contextual, and even contemporary issues. Furthermore, the learning method used in the superior classes are actually the same as in the regular classes; the only difference is that students in the regular classes are less able to explore broader information/phenomena. They only absorb information obtained from their handbook. This research tries to analyze the controversial issues model, and this research used problems from the controversial and critical issues. The research method is processed with a quasi-experimental research, with non-probability sampling technique. The controversial issues model is compared to the think pair and shared model. The analysis results from the measurements in the experimental and control class before the treatment, showed that there is no difference between the two. However, there is a difference in the students' critical thinking skills between before and after the treatment. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is an effectiveness from the controversial issues learning model, which affects students' critical thinking skills in social studies education.*

Keywords: Critical Thinking Skills, Controversial Issues Model, Social Studies Education.

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A. INTRODUCTION

Thinking plays a big role on humans. By thinking; humans can understand something better, distinguish the right from wrong, as well as solve the problems at hand. Essentially, humans are already able to think ever since they were born, and as time goes by, that ability keeps on increasing. The more it is used, the more it will get better.

Given the fact, this ability must be trained from an early age, especially in school. Through the learning materials provided, students are trained to understand them, solve problems, and come up with new ideas or notions. Critical thinking skills have always become the main focus in every learning situation, therefore; in the 2013 Curriculum, the aspects of the High Order

Thinking Skills (HOTS) must always be included in order to train students' critical thinking skills.

Thinking skills is divided into two parts, namely the ability to think at a low level (Low Order Thinking Skills or LOTS) and the ability to think at a higher level (Higher Order Thinking Skills or HOTS). Students' high-level thinking skills is one of the barometers of the nation's intellectual level. As agents of change, students must be able to show their identities in intellectual, moral, and elegant ways.

The phenomenon which occurred, especially in Public Junior High School 14 Bandung (where the researchers conducted the field experience programs); there are two

class classifications with different characteristics of students. The difference is not only on the characteristics, but also on the students' skills, especially; the skills to think critically. The classification was meant because there are two class classifications in Public Junior High School 14, namely the superior and regular class. The superior class is the class where students have to use their achievement track to enter, while the regular class is just a class that does not use such entry system, and therefore; it is just a normal class as usual. The problems found in the classification of these classes are of course diverse. Especially, in the learning process, the differences between the regular and superior classes are; 1) Students' critical thinking skills in the superior class is far more prominent compared to the regular class. The students' critical thinking skills in the superior class is not only fixated on the problems in their handbooks, but they also have started to recognize contextual, and even contemporary issues. 2) The learning method used in the superior class is actually the same as the regular class. The only difference is, students in the regular class are less able to explore a broader information/phenomena. They only absorb information which are obtained from their handbooks.

Through their skills to identify and absorb information in learning activities, students who have critical thinking skills will be able to answer the problems which arise in their social environments. In accordance to these problems, social study is a subject which is important to be taught to students. This subject aims to make students sensitive to the social problems. Based on the objectives of social studies, it is clear that critical thinking skills in education is very important to be developed in students, so that they will be accustomed to sharpen their thinking skills.

Considering that critical thinking skills is one of the most important aspects which must be possessed by students, the right steps are needed so that the right solution for those problems can be found, in order to optimize the learning and critical

thinking skills of the students by paying attention to the model or approach which will be used in learning process, which should be in accordance to the material and learning atmosphere in class. Therefore, the researchers chose the Controversial Issues model to be used as a social studies learning model, which can support the development of students' critical thinking skills.

The researchers chose the Controversial Issues model because it was considered to be the most appropriate for this problem. The controversial issue, according to Muessig in Komalasari (2014); is something that is easily accepted by someone or a group, but is also easily rejected by other people or groups. The tendency of a person or group to take sides is based on certain thought considerations. Through the controversial issues model, students can develop critical thinking skills because controversial issues always cause pros and cons.

B. THEORETICAL REVIEW

1. Social Studies Education

Social studies education must certainly be linked to the needs and challenges of life which will be faced by students. Therefore, in the 2013 curriculum, the aim of social studies education on the junior high school level is to foster the students to become citizens who are able to make democratic and rational decisions, which can be accepted by all groups in the society.

The aim of social studies education was also stated by Sumaatmaja (Gunawan, 2011); 'the purpose of social studies education is to foster students to become good citizens, who have knowledge and social care, which are useful for themselves as well as their society and country'.

Sapriya (2009) stated about the objectives of Social Studies education as follows:

Social studies education at school aims to prepare students as citizens who master knowledge, skills, attitudes and values which can be used as the ability to solve both

personal and social problems, as well as the ability to make decisions and participate in various society activities to become good citizens.

Based on some of the opinions above, it can be seen that the aim of social studies education is to prepare students to live in a democratic society, by emphasizing aspects of social sciences which are mutually integrated. Therefore, students are able to solve intrapersonal and interpersonal conflicts in society, as well as able to solve social problems and make positive contributions to their surrounding environment.

2. Controversial Issues Model in Social Studies Education

According to Musseig (Komalasari, 2014); a controversial issue is something which is easily accepted by a person or group, but is also easily rejected by other people or groups. As stated by Wiriaatmadja (Komalasari, 2014); if people disagree or conflicting opinions are formed in a matter, then it is called a controversial issue. Seeing the two responses above, it can be seen that this model can be used in a heterogeneous scope, one of which is the classroom of students on junior high school level. Therefore, this model is easily accepted, such as in the process of learning activities which discuss topics that express opinions, listening to other people's opinions, seeking information, recognizing differences, building empathy and then drawing conclusions; the students' will be trained for these things.

Learning through controversial issues in social science education is considered very important. The controversial issue is something which can be found in many cases concerning theories or opinions in the social sciences; this was also expressed by Hasan (Komalasari, 2014). Theories which are built based on field data are often considered not representing the reality which always exists in the social sciences

and therefore, controversial issues is considered natural in social studies education.

According to Hasan (Komalasari, 2014), the steps of learning by using controversial issues are as follows: First, teacher presents material which contains a controversial issue; Second, teacher invites various opinions accompanied by students' arguments about the issue; Third, the controversial issues which have been identified can be used as discussion material.

The discussion was conducted to see the strengths and weaknesses of each student's opinion. Meanwhile, according to Wiraatmadja (Komalasari, 2014), the steps of learning by using controversial issues are as follows:

- a. Teachers and Students brainstorm about the controversial issues which will be discussed.
- b. Students are put in groups and have to choose one case to be studied.
- c. Students do inquiry, invite speakers, read books and gather information.
- d. Students present/discuss the results of the inquiry, submit arguments, and listen to counter-arguments or other opinions.
- e. Students apply concepts, generalizations and social science theories to academically analyze problems.

The application of the controversial issues model in social studies education is an approach or strategy that displays issues which arise in daily life or it can also be that the students themselves who are appointed as the learning materials, therefore they can analyze and solve problems based on their own perception. Although it will lead to differences in perception with other students in its implementation, precisely with it, students will be stimulated to develop their critical thinking skills.

Learning by presenting appropriate controversial issues in social studies education basically seeks to develop critical

thinking attitudes in students and train their confidence, so that they are happy about the challenges that expect them to become students who have critical and reflective thinking.

3. Think Pair and Share Learning Model

Arends (Komalasari, 2014), stated that Think Pair and Share is an effective way to vary the atmosphere of class discussion patterns. In accordance to it, according to Trianto (2010); the Think Pair and Share model is a type of cooperative learning designed to influence student interaction patterns. Thus, the Think Pair and Share learning model is a model which can give students more opportunities to think individually to respond to other opinions, and later help each other to share knowledge with other students.

4. Critical Thinking

A person's ability to provide a view or decision making, as well as able to bring up ideas or notions is part of someone's more specific thinking skills. According to Johnson (2004); thinking skills can be divided into critical and creative thinking. Both are also referred to as higher order thinking skills. Critical thinking is a well-organized mental process and it plays a role in the process of making decisions to solve problems, by analyzing and interpreting data in scientific inquiry activities. While creative thinking is a thinking process which produces original, constructive ideas, and emphasizes the intuitive and rational aspects.

While according to Syahril (2017); students' critical thinking skills can be improved by applying external learning methods which provided outside the classroom. They will be able to actively seek, gather and analyze information by connecting, comparing, assessing, as well as generalizing the results obtained. This means, student's critical thinking skills is sharpened by lessons which are given directly. Students often practice criticizing the phenomena around them, which related to the learning materials, and analyzing phenomena or problems; therefore they can

deliver them better in front of the class. This is in accordance to what Sapriya (2011) stated:

The purpose of critical thinking is to aim for an opinion or idea, including to consider or think based on the opinions expressed. The purpose of critical thinking is to assess a thought, interpret values and even evaluate the implementation or practice of such thoughts and values. Critical thinking even includes considering activities based on known opinions.

C. METHOD

The method used in this study is one of the quantitative methods of experimentation. The experimental method is a research method which tests the hypothesis in the form of a causal relationship through the manipulation of independent variables, and examines the changes caused by such manipulation (Sunarto, 2009, p. 95). The research used in this research is a quasi-experimental research. According to Ali (2011), quasi-experimental is another way of doing experimentation, in various behavioral and social researches. Quasi-experimental researches are seen in order to clarify the variables which form the basis of quasi-experimental research as follows.

Table 1. Reseach Variable

X Variable	Controversial Issues Learning
Y Variable	Critical Thinking

In the sample group, the study was given a different sample treatment, which the purpose was to find out the extent of controversial issues' influence on students' critical thinking in social studies education in class. Controversial issues is prepared to be given in the social studies education in the experimental class. The control class only did social studies education with the application of Think Pair and Share model, because it is considered equivalent to the learning. Then, the initial and final measurements were given both in the control

and experimental class. This was done to measure the effect of the controversial issue on students' critical thinking in the experimental class. Moreover, this was to determine the existence of a difference between the class which was given a controversial issue and the class which was not.

This research was conducted at Public Junior High School 14 Bandung, located in Jl. Lap. Supratman, Kelurahan Cihapit, Kecamatan Bandung Wetan, Kota Bandung. The reason that the researchers took this school was because the researchers found a very interesting difference, which is the difference in the characteristics of students' critical thinking skills in the superior and regular classes.

The population in this study were all the eighth grade students of Public Junior High School 14 Bandung in the academic year of 2019/2020, consisting of nine classes with a total of 297 students.

The sampling technique used in this study was the non-probability or quota sampling. The researchers took samples from a population of the eighth grade at Public Junior High School 14 Bandung, which amounted to 297 students. Then, the researchers took a sample of two classes; which were VIII-E and VIII-F, where VIII-E was used as an experimental class and VIII-F as a control or comparison class. The reason that the researchers took this sample was because one of these two classes is actually a superior class, and the other is a regular class.

In the research, a questionnaire was used as a data collection tool. In general, the preparation of the questionnaire was carried out through several stages, and the first started with the preparation of the indicator lattice; which included indicators and sub-indicators of aspects to be made. Afterwards, the questionnaire can be tested on students outside the research sample, in order to determine the validity and reliability of each question item. The results of the data will be tested and processed using the SPSS application.

D. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results and discussion in this study are to describe and see the effect of controversial issues model in social studies to improve students' critical thinking skills. The results of the study can be seen in the discussion below:

1. The Difference in the Improvement of Students' Critical Thinking Skills between Before and After the Treatment

The choice of the learning models and methods must also be considered by teachers, because the learning applied must be meaningful for students. The inappropriate learning models and methods will affect students' critical thinking skills. The critical thinking skills is very important in learning activities, especially social studies.

Based on the critical thinking skills data from SPSS version 23 through paired samples test in students' critical thinking skills after the pretest and post-test in the experimental class, with a sig (2-tailed) value of 0,000 smaller than the value of $\alpha = 0.05$, which means that H_0 was rejected. Therefore, it can be concluded that there was an increase in the creative thinking skills after the pretest and post-test in the experimental class which used the controversial issues model. The result can be seen in the graph below:

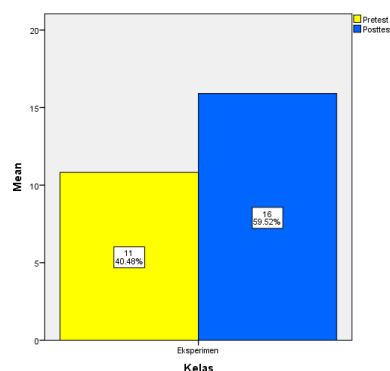


Figure 1. Experiment Class Before and After the Treatment

Based on the figure above, it can be seen that there was an increase about 19.04%. The pretest in the experimental class had an average of 40.48%, while the post-test in the experimental class had an average of 59.52%. From this, the difference in students' critical thinking skills in the experimental class after the pretest and post-test can clearly be seen. The improvement from the controversial issues model on students' critical thinking skills was caused by the characteristics of the controversial issues model itself, where in its learning process it used an approach which displays issues that arise in daily life. Therefore, students can analyze and solve problems based on their own perception. Although it will lead to differences in perception with other students in their implementation, precisely with that, students will be stimulated to develop their critical thinking skills.

2. The Difference in the Improvement of Critical Thinking Skills between Before and After the Treatment

A learning model is one of the learning components which need to be considered by teachers to achieve learning goals. The reason is because the presence of students is not merely a formality as a complement in learning, but more than that, students are required to actively participate in learning.

Based on the critical thinking skills of the SPSS test version 23 through paired samples test technique in students' critical thinking skills after the pretest and post-test in the control class, with a sig (2-tailed) value of 0.269 greater than the value of $\alpha = 0.05$, meaning that H_0 was accepted. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is no improvement in the critical thinking skills after the pretest and post-test in the control class, which used Think Pair and Share model. The result can be seen in the graph below:

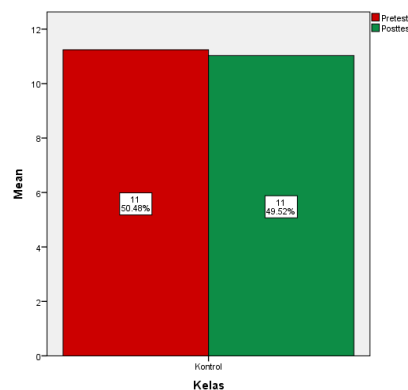


Figure 2. Control Class Before and After the Treatment

The figure above is processed through the result of t-test on SPSS version 23, which shows the average result of the measurement of critical thinking skills pretest and post-test in the control class. Based on this graph, it can be seen that it shows the same result; there is no improvement in the post-test result (and it even decreased), the pretest result in the control class has an average of 50.48%, while the post-test: 49.52%. From this, it can be said that there is no improvement in the critical thinking skills after using the Think Pair and Share model. The control class, which became the comparison class in the learning process, was given the same treatment; the difference was only from the learning model. The result and students' critical thinking skills are unclear, and the condition of students in class tends to be active, but not conducive. This is because in the learning process, teachers used Think Pair and Share model, which made students less able to develop their critical thinking skills, and therefore; it cannot be improved.

The result of the Think Pair and Share model will be clearer if the learning objectives are more into learning motivation, cooperation, and interpersonal intelligence. The reason is because in the learning process, this learning model prioritizes activities among students, even though in the learning process there are activities which require students to digest information and manage their own way of thinking to be discussed.

3. The Difference in Students' Critical Thinking Skills between Before and After the Treatment

Based on the test result from SPSS 23 through the Independent Samples Test technique in measuring students' critical thinking skills in the experimental and control class, with the sig (2-tailed) pretest value in the experimental and control class based on the Equal Variances Assumed, both showed the same result; which is 0.504, meaning it is greater than the value of $\alpha = 0.05$, which means that H_0 was accepted. At the post-test in the experimental and control class based on the Equal Variances Assumed, both showed 0,000, meaning it is smaller than the value of $\alpha = 0.05$, which means that H_0 was rejected. Based on this data, it can be concluded that there is a difference in the pretest and post-test in experimental and control class. The result can be seen in the graph below:

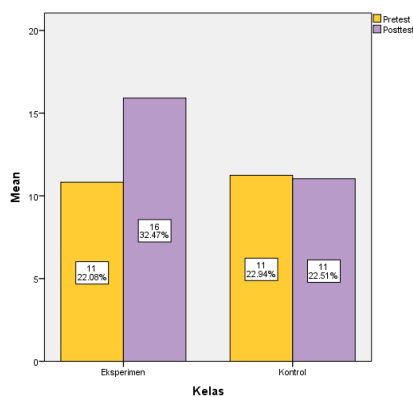


Figure 3. Students' Critical Thinking Skills After Pretest and Post-test in the Experimental and Control Class

Based on the image above, it can be seen that there is a difference. There is an improvement in the average value after the pretest and post-test in the experimental class, while there is no improvement in the control class. The pretest of students' critical thinking skills in the experimental class was 22.08%, and increased in the post-test by 10.39%; to 32.47%. As for the control class, the pretest and post-test of students' critical

thinking skills did not increase; which was 22.94% for the pretest and 22.51% for the post-test.

Based on the description above, the activities in the experimental and control class showed critical thinking skills in different social studies education. In the experimental class, it can be seen that students' critical thinking skills is higher compared to the control class. It can be concluded that the controversial issues learning model influences students in improving their critical thinking skills, especially in social studies education, which is identical to the materials which often relate to events in the surrounding environment.

E. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the quasi-experimental research conducted in the eighth grade of Public Junior High School 14 Bandung, the difference in students' critical thinking skills in social studies education was found. This research was conducted in an experimental class which used the controversial issue model, and in a control class which used think pair and share model. Based on the results of the data analysis findings and discussions which have been conducted in the next chapter, the researchers draw some conclusions as follows:

- a. The research conducted after the treatment using the controversial issues model showed that there is an increase in the students' critical thinking skills. From the result of the t-test, the data showed the value of sig (2-tailed) 0,000 is smaller than the value of $\alpha = 0.05$, meaning that H_0 was rejected; therefore, it can be said that there is an improvement in the students' critical thinking skills. From the pretest result, it has an average of 40.48%, while from

the post-test, it has an average of 59.52%; it means that there was an increase of 19.04%. This showed that the controversial issues model gives an influence and improvement on critical thinking skills.

- b. The application of the controversial issues model was able to develop students' critical thinking skills, but when the think pair and share learning model was used as a comparison model, it did not improve the students' critical thinking skills. From the result of the t-test, the data showed the value of sig (2-tailed) 0.269 is greater than the value of $\alpha = 0.05$, meaning that H_0 was accepted; therefore, it can be said that there is no improvement in the students' critical thinking skills. From the pretest result, it has an average of 50.48% and from the post-test result, it has an average of 49.52%. This shows that if the controversial issues model was not used, there will be no influence or improvement in students' critical thinking skills.
- c. The application of the controversial issues model was able to give a significant influence and improvement on students' critical thinking skills, compared to the think pair and share model. This was proven by the research result which showed the effect on students' critical thinking skills. From the measurement result, with the sig (2-tailed) pretest value in the experimental and control class based on the Equal Variances Assumed, both showed the same result; which was 0.504, meaning it was greater than the value of $\alpha = 0.05$,

which means H_0 was accepted, and it showed no influence and improvement in critical thinking skills.

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