

# STUDENTS' CRITICAL THINKING AND PROBLEM-SOLVING SKILLS IN SOCIAL STUDIES LESSON CONTENT IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

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## Abstract.

Critical thinking and problem-solving skills are skills needed in the challenges of 21st century skills in the era of the Industrial Revolution 4.0 and as competencies that must be possessed by students. The research conducted aims to determine the real conditions in elementary schools in improving students' critical thinking and problem-solving skills in social studies learning. This research was conducted using qualitative descriptive research methods that aimed to find out and explore how teacher strategies in designing social studies learning in the classroom. While the data collection techniques carried out by researchers in preliminary studies are interviews, observations and documentation. The results of this study explain that the implementation of learning is carried out using lecture, question and answer and discussion methods, the learning model has not varied tends to be monotonous as a way to improve critical thinking and problem-solving skills but not in accordance with the correct steps

**Keywords:** Learning, Critical Thinking, Problem Solving.

**How to Cite:** Faridah, I.S. (2024). Students' Critical Thinking And Problem-Solving Skills In Social Studies Lesson Content In Elementary School. *Proceeding The 6th International Conference Elementary Education*, 6(1), 200-205.

## INTRODUCTION

Critical thinking skills (*Critical Thinking*) and problem-solving skills (*Problem Solving*) is one of the 21st century skills that students must have. The 21st century skills that students must be competency in are learning and innovating skills, literacy towards information, media and technology as well as readiness for life and career. 21st century skills as explained by Trilling and Fadel (2009: 46) namely 1) *learning and innovation skills*; 2) *Information, media, and technology skills*; 3) *life and career skills*.

*Critical Thinking Skills* are fundamental problem-solving skills. This skill is important for students to have in finding the source of the problem and how to find and find the right solution to the problem at hand. Critical thinking skills can be instilled in a variety of disciplines. Teachers play an important role in designing and developing learning programs that are more focused on empowering these skills. Zubaidah (2018). Critical thinking in the era of the Industrial Revolution 4.0 must be a skill that students must have as a life skill to prepare themselves in the future. still according to Zubaidah, (2019) Critical thinking is currently one of the *life skills* that need to be developed through the educational process. Through the ability to think, a person will be able to observe and find solutions to all problems faced in his life. Therefore, during the industrial revolution 4.0, thinking skills are essential skills that must be possessed by every graduate at every level of education. Critical thinking according to Ennis is reasonable and reflective thinking that focuses on deciding what to believe or do. Critical thinking according to Trilling and Fadel (2019) includes: 1) effective reasoning, 2) asking questions and solving problems, 3) analyzing and evaluating, 4) reflecting on the process and decisions made.

Critical thinking skills are an important part of implementing the independent curriculum. The organization of learning in the independent curriculum includes intracurricular, projects to strengthen the profile of Pancasila students, extracurricular and school culture. And critical thinking is one element of the Pancasila student profile of the six elements, as explained in Yogi et al., critical thinking skills or critical reasoning are also one of the elements of character education in the implementation of the independent curriculum through the Pancasila Student Profile.

The independent curriculum is a new paradigm curriculum that provides opportunities for students to develop their creativity and characteristics, this is explained in Permendikbud Number 22 of 2020, p.55), The new paradigm curriculum is a curriculum formed by the Free Learning Policy will be characterized by flexibility, based on competence, focusing on character development and soft skills, and accommodating to the needs of the world. This is the first step in the implementation of the independent curriculum to provide opportunities for students to improve their quality by improving critical thinking and problem-solving skills contained in strengthening the Pancasila student profile project. Pancasila student profile strengthening project that provides opportunities for students to explore contemporary issues such as environmental issues/global warming and sustainable lifestyles, diversity and tolerance, physical and mental health including wellbeing, and so on.

The achievement of learning objectives can also be determined by the right media, methods and learning models that are able to direct students to be able to explore and improve critical thinking and problem-solving skills. The success of learning achievement in the classroom is the responsibility and importance of the teacher's role in designing learning, including how teachers use media and learning models that are relevant to learning objectives and consider the characteristics of students as explained in Permendikbud number 16 of 2007 concerning teacher professionalism competence, namely that teachers must be able to develop subject matter creatively so that they can provide knowledge with more breadth and depth for students and the ability to act reflectively in order to develop professionalism in a sustainable manner and Understand the phenomenon of interaction of the development of science, technology, art, religious life, and the development of society and global interdependence.

The role of teachers in 21st century learning is that teachers must be able to teach students, not only able to teach and manage classroom activities, but also required to be able to create effective relationships with students and the school community, using technology to improve the quality of teaching. Some of the roles of teachers that can be carried out in the learning process in the 21st century are: teachers have a role as mentors, companions, guides and trainers in helping students to find and solve problems faced in the learning process, because teachers as described in the Law on lecturers and teachers no. 14 of 2005 are professional educators with the main task of educating, teaching, guiding, directing, training, assessing, and evaluating learners in early childhood education formal education pathways, primary education, and secondary education.

## **METHOD**

This research was conducted using qualitative descriptive research methods that aimed to find out and explore how teacher strategies in designing social studies learning in the classroom. While data collection techniques are interviews, observation and documentation.

The interview technique was conducted to class V teachers which aimed to find out and explore information about how teachers implement social studies learning in schools. Interviews were conducted by exploring teacher information ranging from lesson planning, determining learning objectives, determining learning methods and models and how the learning process is carried out whether there are teacher efforts in improving critical thinking and problem-solving skills, as well as evaluation used. In measuring learning achievement. Interviews were also conducted for class V students totaling 40 students. This interview was conducted with the aim of knowing the extent of students' response to the stimulus delivered by the teacher in the learning process. Whether learning provides opportunities for students to improve critical thinking and problem-solving skills, also to find out the extent of learning strategies or models used by teachers Interviews are conducted using interview instruments that have been prepared by researchers in advance.

Observation techniques are carried out by researchers also to educators and students. Observations to educators are carried out to determine the extent to which the social studies learning process in schools is carried out starting from the preliminary activities, these activities and closing activities. Whether the learning process leads to critical thinking and problem solving of learners. And the use of implemented learning models. Observation is also carried out to

students to find out the activities carried out by students during The learning process is carried out.

Data collection techniques with documentation are carried out by researchers to obtain information in the form of documents related to the implementation of the social studies learning process in the classroom. The document was obtained by researchers from the results of interviews and other documents that support and are related to the social studies learning process in the classroom such as: Education Unit Curriculum (KOSP) Learning Outcomes (CP). Flow of learning objectives, teaching modules, guidelines and assessment instruments, reports on student learning outcomes in the form of report cards, and photos of activities during the research.

Data processing is carried out by testing the validity of data using triangulation techniques, while the data analysis process is carried out through a data reduction process. Stages of reducing data by collecting data (*Data Collection*) obtained from interviews, observations and documentation. After all the data is collected, researchers classify the data based on their characteristics. Data collection was carried out during July 2023 at SDN 1 Kersamenak with a total of 30 students, data collection to find out how teachers improve critical thinking and problem-solving skills as a source of data in compiling preliminary research as a source for future research.

Furthermore, researchers reduce data (*Data Reduction*) by selecting and summarizing and focusing on the research objectives. Then researchers compile the data systematically to get information and a picture of the real conditions carried out by teachers in elementary schools to improve critical thinking and problem-solving skills in social studies learning. Researchers reduce data by focusing on strategies or steps taken by teachers in improving critical thinking and solving skills in social studies learning

Lastly, the researcher presents the data (*Display Data*) through organizing data in order to make it easier to understand and describe descriptively for data verification (conclusion drawing) in drawing conclusions by clarifying and verifying data during research.

## RESULTS

The results of this interview that social studies learning has not reached the ability to think critically or solve problems, because so far social studies learning has only been taught only limited to how children are able to mention or redescribe what has been taught. And the results obtained by the new students touch the realm of knowledge only. While the use of learning methods such as lectures, questions and answers, sometimes we use role playing or watching videos, while the model used is like a contest Learning structures or models that are similar to those designed in the source book. However, from the methods and models used, the results obtained have not reached the ability to think critically and solve problems, the results obtained are only in the form of memorization, data and facts in the learning material.

Learning materials are adjusted to the KD in the book, have not been able to explore the depth of the material that occurs in the environment, but only limited to when the material is delivered associated with events in the surrounding environment, problems in the surrounding environment have not become the main source of material in the implementation of the learning process. With regard to critical thinking in the field, teachers do not yet understand very well what and how to think critically and solve problems. Troubleshooting already exists but has not been systematized according to the expected procedure. Teacher efforts to improve critical thinking skills by asking several questions that must be answered by students, providing several cases in the form of stories then students are expected to provide solutions to the cases presented. The source or learning media used is books from source books issued by the Ministry of Education and Culture and other source books from other publishers, with browsing from Google, learning videos of needed images and photos of activities. While the response of students when the learning process takes place varies, some are enthusiastic about participating in learning, some are mediocre and some are even ignorant. But when using media in the form of video shows, student enthusiasm is better and different from the assignments or LKS used.

Teachers carry out learning evaluations using written tests in the form of social networks that students must answer and also assignments in making a product such as students being told

to make a map of the island of Java, Here are the aspects carried out by teachers in the implementation of social studies learning in schools in improving critical thinking and problem solving skills in social studies learning at SDN 1 Kersamenak.

Table 1. How teachers improve the implementation of the learning process in the classroom

Question aspect	Patterns performed	Instruments used
Steps taken in social studies learning	Steps taken Prepare lesson plans or modules to determine core competencies, learning objectives, media and resources, activity steps and learning evaluation	Interview instruments
Use of methods	Methods used lectures, questions and answers, discussions	Interview instruments
Model Usage	Cooperative learning, asking questions and presenting problems	Interview instruments
IPS Material Development	The material is in accordance with the source book from the Ministry of Education and Culture and other sources	Interview instruments
How to teach critical thinking and problem solving	Provide cases / problems that are sought solutions and provide questions	Interview instruments
Media used	Sourcebook, video, image	Interview instruments
Obstacles Faced	Material that is always adjusted to teaching materials / source books Cognitive-focused material	Interview instruments

Based on the results of interviews and observations, the implementation of social studies learning carried out at SDN 1 Kersamenak Tarogong Kidul has referred to the implementation of the curriculum independently changed. Learning activities begin with the process of preparing a learning plan, which is in the form of lesson plans or teaching modules. In the implementation of learning, learning outcomes become a reference for learning objectives, learning materials in accordance with the learning objectives of social studies content. The learning strategy still uses lecture, question and answer and discussion methods, while the learning model used is cooperative learning but still not syntax or learning steps. In exploring the potential skills and abilities of students in critical thinking and problem solving skills only by giving questions and providing problems that must be solved or found solutions. While the main learning resources are books from the Ministry of Education and Culture and other publishers as well as video or image media. Learning materials still follow the source book which is associated with the real conditions that exist in the environment.

## DISCUSSION

The research conducted aims to determine the real conditions in elementary schools to improve students' critical thinking and problem-solving skills in social studies learning. Social studies learning carried out at SDN 1 Kersamenak still refers to the 2013 curriculum because the status of SDN 1 Kersamenak implements the Independent Curriculum independently of learning, so it still uses the Basic Competency (KD) of Social Studies. To find out the real condition of researchers conduct interviews, observations and documentation to teachers and students. The results of the study are as follows:

The results of observations to teachers regarding teacher teaching preparation are by preparing Learning Preparation Plans (RPP) or teaching modules as a reference or guide in the implementation of the Learning process. The preparation of lesson plans is carried out by the class teacher himself by reviewing the Basic Competencies, learning objectives, material to be delivered, learning media, methods and models used, activity steps to evaluate learning.

During the learning process the teacher carries out learning activities in accordance with the lesson plan that has been prepared. The focus of research in the learning process is 1) the use of learning models, The results obtained that teachers teach using lecture methods, and contextual teaching learning models, 2) the ability of teachers to explore student potential in improving critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Based on the observations of researchers during the learning process, teachers have directed students' abilities and skills by providing a case that must be found a solution, providing questions that must be answered by students, and telling students to show a location of the island on a map, 3) Social studies material delivered to students. Based on the observations, the material presented is social studies material about geographical location, 4) media used in improving critical thinking and problem solving skills, namely source books issued by the ministry of education and other source books from other publishers. While the media used is a map displayed in the classroom.

Observations are also made to students during the learning process, researchers also make observations to students when the learning process is in progress. In observation to students, researchers will explore more emphasis 1) student responses when the teacher is teaching, based on the results of researchers' observations, student responses when the teacher is teaching are varied, some are enthusiastic, mediocre and some are lethargic, especially activities carried out during the day, 2) Student activities during the learning process, based on the results of the researcher's observations, namely students sit listening to the teacher's presentation, record what the teacher writes and are told by the teacher, answer questions and do assignments according to the teacher's instructions, the teacher provides opportunities to students only students no one asks interviews in an effort to explore information regarding the aim of knowing the real conditions in elementary schools in improving critical thinking and problem-solving skills in social studies learning.

The real condition of students when the social studies learning process tends to be able to follow learning. Activities carried out listen and pay attention to the teacher and do the tasks given by the teacher. Activities in improving critical thinking and problem solving skills are still not optimal, students only answer questions asked by the teacher and provide solutions to problems asked by the teacher. Basically, based on the results of observations and interviews with students. students are still not active and explore their potential when social studies learning is held.

## **CONCLUSION**

Learning strategies in improving critical thinking and problem-solving skills in social studies learning at SDN Kersamenak are carried out through the preparation of lesson plans or teaching modules, implementation of learning and evaluation of learning. The implementation of learning is carried out using lectures, questions and answers and discussions, a learning model used by cooperative learning as a way to improve critical thinking and problem-solving skills but not in accordance with the correct steps.

Improving critical thinking and problem-solving skills should ideally be comprehensive starting from the use of systematic learning models and providing opportunities for students to develop their potential, authentic and contextual learning materials in accordance with the real conditions that occur in the student environment so that what is learned is truly meaningful to students.

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