

# Conducting Historical Literacies In History Classroom: *A Case Study at Senior High School in Jakarta*

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## ABSTRACT

This research aims to reveal how historical literacy is implemented in Senior High School. This research is qualitative in the form of case studies in Senior High School (SMA) in South Jakarta. Field research in the form of data collection, namely in-depth open-ended interviews, direct observation, and document analysis. The results of this study show that historical literacy at Senior High School has been going well. The teacher has demonstrated all sub-dimensions of historical literacy: knowledge, conceptual understanding, historical work sources or methods, contextualization, historical consciousness, and the language of history. The main difficulty in the application of historical literacy is a common understanding among students that learning history means memorizing information. The teacher also has difficulty in introducing students to verified historical sources because students are accustomed to relying on unverified sources such as blogs. Many students still tend to learn just to get good grades. Cultivating empathy is also a challenge for history teachers.

**Keywords:** *historical literacy, historical learning, historical sources*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In Indonesia, history subjects receive a sizable portion of the 2013 Curriculum. The 2013 curriculum is very accommodating to the hope that history is not just a lesson that emphasizes memorization. Historical thinking ability among students is very possible to be awakened through scientific learning that characterizes the 2013 curriculum. Historical thinking is the ability to think backward and forward in time. The ability to think backward and forward will enable students to think about time and change and connect between the past, present, and future [1]. Linking the past, present and future is crucial for students because it makes history relevant. Students who study history can achieve the ability to think history if they have historical literacy.

More recent historical education researchers have moved away from define historical literacy as mere knowledge of historical content or are the accumulation of facts about past events. Schleppegrell et al., [2], Veijola & Mikkonen [3], or Learned [4] have seen the importance of historical methods and

skills, historical thinking, and meaningfulness in studying history for students in school. However, observations on the practice of history learning in the field show the great dependence of teachers and students in schools on the use of textbooks. So as the results were a homogenization process that resulted in history teachers using the same language in teaching history that students not being able to grasp the meaning to study history [5].

Various topics of Indonesian history are controversial because many people consider what is taught in schools to be different from historical fact. Thus, mastery of historical literacy becomes very essential because of how well the teacher masters the method, and models of historical learning will not mean much if it does not present historical literacy in the classroom. This research is to answer the question of whether the history teacher presents history learning that is following historical literacy, how is history learning in class related to historical literacy, and what

obstacles are faced by history teachers in increasing historical literacy in their class?

## 2. METHOD

This study took place in Jakarta in one prestigious private school. This study uses qualitative methods that are said to be the most suitable for answering research problems whose variables are unknown and need to explore them. This study took one history teacher who became an informant so this study used purposeful sampling. Purposeful sampling in qualitative is the researcher deliberately selecting individuals and places to study the central phenomenon of research. The forms of data collection undertaken are observation, interviews and questionnaires, documents, and audiovisual material. Data analysis was conducted by coding and data validation.

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 3.1 Result

The study was conducted at one of the leading private high schools in South Jakarta conducted by a history teacher who had been teaching for fifteen years. The teacher has a prominent reputation among his colleagues. The history teacher in teaching was inspired by Todd Stiller's "Think like a genius", having a teaching method named as Rasyid I Method, Rasyid II Method, and Rasyid III Method. According to him, this method has proven effective as a method of learning history and social studies or other subjects in general.

The Rasyid I method is the most common in learning history, namely making a timeline for a historical event. However, it does not only describe the timeline, in Rasyid Method I, the concepts relating to the event, comparisons, and portraits/maps related to certain events are also formulated. In Rasyid Method I, one HVS folio size paper is needed which is then written horizontally or in a landscape that is cut and cut into one long row and then cut into three columns. The three columns become four squares. The longest line above is made inside the timeline. In the second part of the first column, it is filled with concepts that students must know. The concepts that students need to know can come from the assignment of the teacher or the students themselves. For example the concept of Japanese occupation, a vacuum of power, allies, and so forth. In the second part of the second column, it is the synchronous aspect of the events that have been written in the timeline. In the second part of the first column, it is filled with concepts that students must

know. The concepts that students need to know can come from the assignment of the teacher or the students themselves. In the second part of the second column, it is the synchronous aspect of the events that have been written in the timeline. To facilitate student understanding, synchronous aspects, the teacher calls it a comparison. The comparison column intends to provide information or a description of what happened in one place when an event occurred in another place. The teacher shows the importance of teaching synchronism on the subjects of history for example when comparing the Middle Ages in Europe with Indonesian History.

Students never imagined that at a time when Europe was experiencing the bleakest times in its history in the Middle Ages, it was precisely in Indonesia that great civilizations were growing. By knowing these comparisons the teacher hopes to grow from students' great self-esteem. The teacher added by comparing the 1945 period, for example, students knew that Indonesia was one of the pioneers of an independent country in the world after the Second World War ended. By knowing this information students are expected to emerge appreciation for their country. In the third column the second part of Rasyid Method I, contains portrait/picture or map information. Students are asked to look at portraits or pictures of figures or maps discussed in the history lesson material. The teacher considers it important that students know the portraits of the characters because many students only know but do not know the figure of the character. The teacher emphasizes the importance of maps in learning history.

In Rasyid Method II, take ideas from the Cartesian quadrant commonly found in mathematics. Through Rasyid Method II, the teacher included in it the content of moral education. Students can assess approximately how the characters, behavior, or attitudes that occur in previous figures according to the given variable. Students through the Rasyid II Method can also make gradations or rankings of figures. According to the teacher, in general, students find history subjects interesting but things that seem contradictory occur at the time of student measurement.

The teacher believes students do not have to like history. The teacher only hoped that what students studied from the process of learning history could be useful for them in the future. According to him, not all students consider the history lesson important because according to him, not all students have an understanding that for example when students study Biology, they are also studying history through Biological theories. This misunderstanding, according

to the teacher, comes from the assumption that history is only related to politics, as in textbooks. So students, who want to go to medical school as an example, feel reluctant to study history laden with politics. Another case with students who want to enter the Department of International Relations considers the lesson of history that they can be lacking because it is limited to Indonesian History alone not studying world history. According to the teacher, the main difficulty in learning history at school comes from students' understanding of historical subjects that have been formed previously, namely history is memorization. According to him, understanding to change the mindset that has been firmly planted is very difficult and takes a long time to change. The mindset that learning history is memorization so closely in the minds of students that they continue to memorize historical facts that arise rather than linking one event with another.

Another difficulty is the influence of media such as blogs which students use as a source of learning history even though these sources are still doubtful or have not been well verified by historians. These problems, in turn, have another impact, making the scope of teaching too broad or become unfocused because students question various things. Another difficulty felt by the teacher is that students' preference for instant learning to get good grades is also a problem. The teacher added that the history subjects he taught also aimed to foster student creativity for example by inviting students to create learning media. Activities to foster creativity in the history of learning that teachers have done are fossil-making projects. The teacher also once invited students to make autobiographies for historical methods topic. Students are asked to make an autobiography of themselves by involving people who are several generations above them. The teacher hopes the task of making autobiography indirectly makes students learn social history, apply historical methods, and try to bring historical consciousness to students. The task of making autobiographies considered as the application of historical methods because students are designed to interview primary sources related to themselves such as their parents, grandparents, and caregivers.

### 3.2 Discussion

Following the concept of historical literacy by Maposa & Wassermann [6] that historical literacy is to have a dimension/benchmark that is knowledge, the conception of understanding, work resources, historical consciousness, and historical language. Knowledge of historical content has sub-dimensions,

namely historical events, and narratives. The dimension of knowledge of historical content is the ability of people who study history to remember past events. From the aspect of the dimension of historical content knowledge, it can be said that the history teacher has very good knowledge of historical content. Excellent knowledge content can be seen from the detailed answers given by the teacher when asked by students or when answering the historical material that cannot be answered by students. The teacher does not only master the great narratives in history on the National History stage but also shows the ability in mastering Local History.

The mastery of historical content knowledge is also demonstrated by the teacher with the application of the Rashid Method which is the application of high-level thinking by the teacher in the realm of analyzing, evaluating, and creating. Conceptual understanding consists of understanding time, understanding cause and effect, motivation, significance, moral judgment, change and continuity, and empathy. The history teacher in teaching in the class and the interview show that the teacher master all the sub-dimensions of the conceptual understanding. The concept of time is shown by the teacher with Rasyid I Method which he developed. One of Rasyid I's methods is based on making a timeline of a historical event which is the topic of discussion. Through the timeline, students can see sequences of events in an event. The method used by history teacher correspond with Galán [7] who point out in his research that images are essential for the initiation and development of the sense of historical time.

The Cartesian diagram which consists of two assessment variables can be used as a foundation for moral education. Each student can be different in assessing a character but that's where the important role of the teacher in entering good characters can be emulated by students. Moral education in historical education is a contentious aspect. However, most teachers support the purpose of historical education one of which is for moral education [8]. As in Indonesia, history lessons are considered as a means of national character education. The enlarged portion of history lessons in the 2013 Curriculum, among others, was motivated by government concerns on the symptoms of concern for the low nationalism and national character.

The concept of change and continuity appears in Rasyid Method I which besides asking students to draw a timeline which is a diachronic aspect also asks them to make comparisons or study synchronous aspects at the same time as other regions around the place of occurrence historical events discussed. By

knowing the synchronous aspects students can better understand change and sustainability.

Empathy is one aspect that is also often discussed by history education experts. Endicott & Brooks [8] say that identity and empathy are closely related. Empathy does not eliminate a person's ability to nurture a different feeling from the person or society that gets sympathy. In the case that occurred at school, students could have felt sympathy for the 1998 demonstrators in Indonesia but because they came from the middle class which precisely became the target of mass anger at that time, the feeling of being a middle class who was worried about the event could have occurred. The situation becomes energy that allows students to explore these thoughts and actions of historical figures by finding similarities between past and present actions so that the contextualization of the figures' thoughts occurs while critically examining aspects of their historicity. Asking students to empathize without involving fully half of the core empathy dispositions, will cause students to fail to understand all the feelings inside those who make decisions. The ability to empathize enables students to judge why people who seem rational at certain times can be irrational.

Historical work methods or methods are the most essential things in history. This source work is the essence of the work of a historian. Sub-dimensions of this source work are sourcing, corroboration, contextualization, analysis, evaluation, and explanation. From the review of the Learning Plan made by the teacher, the teacher uses the source of textbooks and electronic books. At the time of observation, the teacher asks students to read textbooks or googling from the internet. The corroboration process is not seen in the class as a step undertaken by historians in comparing existing documents to determine whether they provide the same information. This step is also used to test the validity and authenticity of the data in the data verification stage. The researcher considered that corroboration and evaluating the sources was indeed difficult for the teacher because of the students' reluctance to read. The corroboration process will require students to read many sources both primary and secondary. As the results of the interview, information is obtained that the teacher has difficulty with an understanding that is already firmly embedded in the minds of students who come from past learning experiences, namely learning history is memorizing historical facts. Faced with this situation the teacher chooses easy sources such as textbooks that are not too thick. The teacher through an interview said that he has tried to introduce historical sources, for example

through autobiographical writing assignments. Even so, the teacher knows the importance of sources and studies the sources well. As revealed in the interview the teacher criticized the practice of students who often took sources circulating on the blog which were of doubtful accuracy because they had not been verified by the historian.

Grant [9] highlights students' prior knowledge. There are two conditions related to this initial knowledge. First, to learn something new, students must have initial knowledge; Second, it is a consequence of the first condition, so old knowledge can influence new knowledge being learned. In this case, history teachers find it difficult because of students' understanding of learning history which they think is memorized. It is difficult for the teacher to change the mindset that is already attached to the student.

For contextualization, the teacher has no difficulty in applying it. Contextualization is the activity of identifying the time and place of the event. The teacher has applied it by using a timeline which means students are invited to identify the time and place of the event. Not only the timeline but the teacher completes the explanation of time with synchronous aspects, namely comparing events in one place with other places at the same time so that students understand the context in which the events occur. Similarly, the contextualization of explanation is also an aspect that is not an obstacle for teachers. The teacher can explain to students about an event in history as confirmed in field observations.

The term Historical Consciousness as a separate concept has often been heard since the 1980s. Today the term historical consciousness is often juxtaposed with historical cognition or historical thinking even with historical literacy itself. Historical consciousness is a concept influenced by the German philosopher Hans-George Gadamer who proposed concepts such as the horizon and ideas about understanding history and tradition. However, Historical Consciousness is one dimension in historical literacy and related to mental orientation across generations.[6], [11] People who have historical consciousness can think back and forth in time. Time here is not something technical, but rather a substance that contains the meaning given by humans and moral issues. In line with prior explanation, it can be said that the teacher already has a historical consciousness because it has been put forward through the study of the history of events that occurred in the past, present aspects. The teacher has brought students to think back and forward primarily through the Rasyid II method. Rasyid II Method

invites students to make judgments about certain figures. The steps taken by the characters are seen from a contemporary perspective, for example, to determine how a leader should act. Maposa and Wasserman's placement of historical languages as one dimension in historical literacy is based on the idea that history can have a unique language [6]. History can use language that is related to other disciplines such as mathematics. Research in the field shows that the application of other disciplinary languages such as mathematics can be applied in history lessons. The teacher in Rasyid II's method uses a Cartesian diagram which is a mathematical language into history.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The historic literacy applied by the teacher in learning history can be concluded to have gone well. This conclusion refers to benchmark/dimensions and sub-dimensions namely knowledge, conceptual understanding, historical work sources/methods, historical consciousness, and historical language. Nevertheless, the teacher had some difficulties to apply all historical literacy mainly in practicing the historical method in the classroom. The main difficulty in learning history which in turn complicates the application of historical literacy in schools is students' misunderstanding of a history lesson. The misconception is the assumption that history lessons are merely memorizing numbers and years. Another difficulty is in introducing students to verify historical sources. Students are still very influenced by the source of the blog which is still doubtful. The use of this blog source is an example of another difficulty faced by the teacher, namely the tendency of students to learn instantaneously. Cultivating empathy for certain topics in historical events also becomes an obstacle for the teacher.

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