

TEACHER PROBLEMS IN CONTROVERSIAL HISTORY LEARNING IN SENIOR HIGH SCHOOLS IN MALANG CITY: A MULTISITES CASE STUDY

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Abstract

This study aims to identify the problems faced by teachers in teaching history involving controversial events or narratives in Senior High Schools (SMA) in Malang City. Learning history with sensitive issues often poses challenges for teachers from both pedagogical and social aspects. The method used in this study is qualitative with a case study approach according to Robert K. Yin. Data were obtained through interviews and observations in several senior high schools in Malang City. The results of the study indicate that the obstacles faced by teachers include unclear curriculum, lack of training support, and pressure from parents and certain community groups. In addition, students' diverse attitudes towards controversial historical topics are also challenges in creating a conducive learning environment. This study recommends increasing the professional capacity of teachers in managing history learning objectively and critically, as well as the importance of improving the curriculum that supports various perspectives in teaching history.

Keywords: Case study; Problems; History learning; Controversial history.

INTRODUCTION

History is an event or activity carried out by humans in the past that brings about continuous change and development. History is something that continues to process, because in its writing it cannot be finished at that time but will continue to be sustainable, so it tends to add new facts and new perceptions and new interpretations. History as a science that studies the past studies an important role in shaping the understanding and identity of a nation, but not all historical materials are presented in the same way, especially when dealing with controversial materials or events. Controversy in History often arises due to differences in perspective, interpretation and political interests that influence it. In history, the more the past is interpreted with the help of the present mass, the greater the possibility of finding controversial issues (Kochhar, 1984). Thus, controversial history can be interpreted as history whose writing is still in process which ultimately gives rise to several different opinions related to a historical event.

In the world of education, history learning in schools has a very important role in shaping students' character and understanding of past events that shape current social, political, and cultural conditions. However, one of the biggest challenges in teaching history is material related to controversial events. These topics often involve different interpretations depending on the political, social, or cultural background of certain individuals or groups. In this context, teachers are faced with a major challenge to convey historical material involving controversial events in an objective and impartial manner. This can cause tension, especially when the history being taught touches on sensitive issues related to politics or policies that have or are ongoing. Teachers must be able to manage these differences carefully, ensuring that every viewpoint is respected without sacrificing the principles of objectivity in history education (Harun, 2019).

In addition, in teaching controversial historical material, teachers also need to create space for students to participate in open discussions. Such discussions are important to help students understand diverse perspectives and learn to think critically, without being trapped in dogmatic or

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biased attitudes (Ahmad, 2016). Teachers are expected not only to convey historical facts, but also to guide students to understand the complexity and diversity of views in history, as well as how to respond to controversial historical events critically and objectively. Therefore, it is important for teachers to be trained in the skills of managing history learning involving controversial events. Proper management can help create a safe and open learning environment, as well as enrich students' insights into how history can be understood from different perspectives. Critical thinking skills are thoughts that are always curious about various information that exists to achieve a deep understanding. Critical thinking skills include interpretation, analysis, inference, evaluation, explanation. Critical thinking skills and creative thinking skills are very necessary considering that today science and technology are developing very rapidly and allow anyone to obtain information quickly and easily in abundance from various sources. However, historical materials often contain controversial elements that trigger debate among the public. For example, materials on post-independence movements, G30S/PKI, learning about the Indonesia-Malaysia confrontation, then the world war and continuing to the cold war are often sensitive themes and invite various new perspectives (Kiptiyah, Sukarno, & El Widdah, 2021).

History teachers as educators and facilitators have an important and crucial role in processing and delivering this controversial material. According to Tsabit Azinar Ahmad, the biggest challenge in teaching history is how to deliver historical facts objectively without siding with a particular group or ideology. History teachers are required to be able to balance between delivering accurate material and managing the sensitivity that Teachers must also be able to present various perspectives on history so that students can develop critical thinking without getting caught up in polarization or biased narratives. The existing education curriculum often does not provide clear guidance on how to teach sensitive material. This creates a gap in the teaching approach and can affect students' understanding of history. Students need to be trained to think critically and be able to provide analysis of various perspectives in order to understand the broader context of the historical events being studied (Kuntowijoyo, 1995).

In addition, the greatest fear of discussing controversial topics can lead to homogenization of narratives in history education, where critical discussion is suppressed in favor of a more sterile version of history. Avoiding controversial discussions in the classroom eliminates important learning experiences that prepare students for informed civic engagement. Equally important, teachers also need to be aware of the social and cultural context in which they teach. This understanding will help teachers deliver material with sensitivity and empathy, and avoid potential conflicts or misunderstandings among students. Thus, teaching history can be a tool for building tolerance and intercultural understanding. Finally, the results of this study are expected to be a guide for developing a curriculum that is more responsive and adaptive to the dynamics of society (Hana & Azis, 2023).

By considering the needs and perspectives of teachers, and prioritizing effective teaching methods, it is hoped that history learning can produce a generation that not only understands the history of its nation, but also has high critical thinking skills in facing future challenges. Therefore, it is important to realize that quality history learning must dare to present complex realities (Ahmad, 2016). Improvement of the education system that supports academic freedom and more inclusive and objective teaching is needed to ensure that the history taught reflects the complete reality and is not distorted by certain interests (Fitrianto, 2024).

The reality requires a special approach in its implementation so that history learning can be in accordance with the development of students' thinking who have been able to think critically. Therefore, it is very important to explore how history teachers interpret the existing curriculum and how they adapt learning methods to overcome the challenges that arise. In essence, good history learning is history learning that can provide an increase in the sense of love for the homeland and awareness of the nation itself, and foster critical and creative thinking patterns. However, due to inadequate facilities and the ability and strategy of teachers in implementing history learning, history learning becomes less effective, for that teachers must be more varied in providing learning sources and references to students (Nugroho, 2020).

Teachers must be braver and more creative in preparing students to understand the aspects to be learned. This is related to the main question "what do teachers do in controversial history learning?" The aspect considered is how teachers should behave towards controversial history. The results of this study are expected to provide new aspects or perspectives for teachers and researchers who are more responsive to the needs of history teaching, as well as support the improvement of teachers' abilities in delivering complex and controversial materials. With a better understanding of teacher problems, it is hoped that this study can provide a more significant contribution in shaping students' critical thinking and historical awareness. In this way, students not only learn about historical facts, but are also trained to evaluate and analyze existing information, so that they can build a more holistic and in-depth understanding. The use of various learning sources, such as historical documents, books, articles, and audiovisual media, is also very important. These sources can provide a broader perspective and help students understand the complexity of historical events. In addition, teachers can use active learning methods, such as case studies or collaborative projects, to encourage students to actively participate in the learning process (Mulyana et al., 2017).

RESEARCH METHOD

This study was conducted to determine the problems faced by teachers in controversial history learning in Senior High Schools in Malang City. The method used in this study is a qualitative method with a case study approach using the Robert K. Yin model. While Multisites is a research method that involves collecting data from various different locations or sites to understand the same phenomenon or problem. This approach allows researchers to examine and analyze various contexts, so that researchers can gain deeper insight into how an issue is influenced by various contextual factors. The main purpose of this method is to gain a broader understanding by comparing the results from several sites, and to find out whether the phenomenon being studied can be applied generally or if there are unique factors in each location. The reason for choosing a case study as the main approach in this study is because a case study is an appropriate strategy in completing research that focuses on the questions of how and why. The data collection techniques used are interviews with primary sources, observation and documentation. Yin (Yin, 1996) (Yin, 2014) explains that in-depth interviews are the main technique in case studies, where researchers dig up information from several informants who have direct understanding or experience of the case being studied. This interview process can be conducted in a structured, semi-structured, or unstructured manner, depending on the purpose of the research (Abdurrahman, 2011).

In addition, direct observation is another technique that can provide important contextual data by observing events or behaviors that occur in the field. Documentation, such as reports or archives, is also used to provide additional information that cannot be obtained through interviews or direct observation (Suharsimi, 2010). The use of secondary data from other sources such as articles and journals, archives, curriculum documents, lesson plans prepared by teachers as part of teaching planning, media documents and news articles, social media documentation or reports from the mass media related to the controversy surrounding history learning in schools. The data analysis techniques used in this method are first, namely pattern matching, namely researchers compare and match various ideas that researchers have. Second, Explanation, namely a technique used to analyze and explain various data that has been obtained. Third, Time series analysis, namely a technique that presents data sequentially from the initial stage to the peak (Yin, 1996). By combining various data sources, methods, and theories, triangulation helps researchers gain a more holistic and reliable understanding of the phenomenon being studied. Triangulation provides additional strength in reducing bias and misinterpretation that often occurs in complex case study research. Triangulation techniques, which involve the use of multiple data sources and data collection techniques, are essential in case study research to ensure the accuracy and depth of analysis (Sugiyono, 2013).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Role of Teachers in Teaching Controversial History

In historical learning that contains controversial elements, the role of the teacher is crucial to ensure that the material is delivered objectively and does not cause conflict in the classroom. The teacher does not only act as a transmitter of information, but also as a facilitator who can create an inclusive and safe learning environment for students to express opinions and ask questions (Barton & Levstik, 2004). Teachers need to have skills in managing discussions and maintaining a balance between the various perspectives that may arise regarding sensitive historical topics. One of the main roles of the teacher is to develop students' critical thinking skills towards history. Teachers can encourage students not only to passively accept historical narratives, but to analyze and question the various points of view that exist. In this context, the teacher acts as a guide who helps students understand historical events from various perspectives, so that they can understand the complexity of the situation without being trapped in one particular view (Fakhrudin, Soekardjo, & Umasih, 2021).

In addition, teachers must also manage differences of opinion wisely. When discussing controversial issues, there are often differences of opinion among students. Teachers must be able to create an open and supportive classroom atmosphere, where differences of opinion are not seen as negative, but as an opportunity to enrich understanding of history. In this case, teachers need to keep the discussion focused on learning objectives and avoid polarization among students (Umamah, 2014). Teachers must also equip themselves with in-depth knowledge of the controversial topics taught, and pay attention to accuracy and balance in choosing the historical sources used. The use of diverse and accountable sources is very important to provide a more objective picture of the events being studied. Teachers who have broad insights and are open to various perspectives will be more effective in conveying controversial historical material fairly and impartially. Thus, the role of teachers in learning controversial history is not only as a conveyor of material, but also as a facilitator who guides students in developing a more critical, open, and tolerant understanding of differences (Megandarisari, 2021).

Based on the results of research and interviews with several History teachers at SMA Malang City, the role of teachers in teaching history involving controversial issues is very important. In addition to being a teacher, teachers function as facilitators who ensure that learning is carried out objectively and impartially. Given the various different views among students about controversial historical events, teachers must be able to present material in a balanced and neutral manner. Teachers are expected to have the ability to manage class dynamics, especially when debates arise in discussions. Given that controversial historical topics often trigger diverse views, it is important for teachers to maintain order and create a conducive atmosphere so that discussions continue to run smoothly without causing tension between students. Managing differences of opinion and student emotions is a key factor in ensuring the smooth running of the learning process (Mahdayeni, Alhaddad, & Saleh, 2019).

In addition, teachers have a role to encourage students to think critically. In dealing with controversial historical topics, teachers need to use teaching methods that encourage students to think more deeply, such as open discussions, case studies, and analysis of various historical sources. With this approach, students can understand the complexity of history and see it from various perspectives, without being trapped in one narrow perspective. The use of diverse and accountable historical sources is also the teacher's obligation. A fact-based approach using credible sources will help students gain a more comprehensive and in-depth understanding of controversial historical events. Thus, teachers not only teach historical facts, but also guide students to think critically and objectively, and understand historical events in a broader context.

Factors Inhibiting Teachers in Learning Controversial History

History learning that includes controversial events in schools often faces various obstacles. One of the main obstacles is the lack of clarity in the curriculum that regulates the teaching of

history, especially when it comes to material that contains sensitive or controversial elements (Sutrisno, 2019). In addition, pressure from external parties, such as parents or certain community groups, also becomes a barrier for teachers in delivering controversial history material. Some teachers worry that discussing sensitive issues could trigger tension or conflict between parties with different views.

Based on the results of the study in the form of interviews with several History teachers at SMA Malang (Multisites), it shows that in teaching controversial history, teachers often face various complex problems. One of them is the unclear curriculum that does not provide clear guidelines in teaching sensitive or controversial topics. This uncertainty makes it difficult for teachers to determine the right approach in teaching the material. In addition, many teachers do not receive sufficient training or support in managing history learning that involves controversial issues. This causes them to feel less prepared to handle discussions that can trigger debate or tension in the classroom. External pressure is also a major challenge for teachers. They often have to face the views or demands of parents, community groups, or even schools who have certain opinions about how history should be taught. This pressure can limit teachers' freedom to teach history objectively and critically (Fakhrudin et al., 2021).

In addition, students very diverse attitudes towards controversial historical issues also complicate the situation. Some students may have strong personal or political views, which can affect the way they receive the history material. This can create classroom dynamics that are difficult to control and hinder the creation of a conducive learning atmosphere. In addition, controversial historical topics often touch students' feelings and can trigger emotional reactions. Teachers must be careful in managing discussions so as not to create tension or division among students. Not infrequently, history learning is also tied to cultural and political sensitivities that can influence how people view a historical event. Therefore, teachers need to be careful in presenting material so as not to appear biased or insensitive to existing cultural and political values (Irawan, 2024; Silvie, 2023). Based on the research results, the role of a teacher requires having the right skills and strategies, teachers often feel limited by the existing curriculum and are worried that if they deliver material that has the potential to cause controversy, this can have a negative impact on their image in the eyes of the school and parents. Next is pressure from outside parties, especially parents and community groups who have certain views on historical events. Several teachers expressed that they felt pressured to adjust the material taught so as not to offend certain groups or individuals, even though this has the potential to reduce the depth of students' understanding of real history. In addition, limitations in training and professional development were also identified as problems. Many teachers admitted that they did not have special training in handling controversial historical material with a wise and objective approach. Lack of mastery of appropriate teaching methods makes it difficult for some teachers to present historical issues critically and challenge students' thinking without causing polarization.

Student Responses to Controversial History Learning

Based on the results of research in several high schools in Malang City, it shows that students' responses to historical learning that contains controversial issues tend to vary, depending on the way the teacher delivers the material and the interactions that occur in the classroom. Students in this learning often show great curiosity and try to see a historical event from various perspectives, even though the topic can trigger debate. However, there are also students who feel awkward or even reluctant to discuss sensitive or controversial historical events. Some students express fear of expressing opinions or engaging in discussions that have the potential to cause tension. This generally occurs in students with more conservative social or cultural backgrounds, who feel that discussions about history that contain different views can offend them or conflict with the values they believe in. Some students also feel uncomfortable with the possibility of sharp differences of opinion among classmates, which can trigger divisions within the group.

Several factors that influence students attitudes towards controversial history learning include their readiness to accept different views, the teacher's ability to facilitate discussions wisely

and inclusively, and the social support they receive from peers and family (Rahmawati, 2022). Based on the results of interviews with History teachers at SMA Malang City, it shows that teachers who use a democratic approach, by involving students in the analysis of various different historical sources, can also increase students' interest and understanding of controversial topics. However, the main challenge in controversial history learning is creating a safe environment for discussion. Without good management, learning can turn into a source of conflict that exacerbates differences, rather than enriching students' understanding.

Therefore, it is important for teachers to have the ability to facilitate discussions with various views. Based on the interview results, there were several students who showed high interest and actively participated in discussions related to controversial historical events, such as political or social events that occurred in the past. They tend to want a deeper explanation and are critical of the various points of view that exist. However, not a few students feel awkward or even refuse to discuss topics that are considered sensitive. Several students expressed that they felt uncomfortable with learning that gave rise to sharp differences of opinion, so they preferred to avoid controversial discussions. This shows the importance of teachers' ability to create a safe and inclusive atmosphere for students to express their views, while keeping the discussion focused on broader educational goals (Nurfuadi, 2020).

Recommendations for Strengthening Controversial History Learning

History learning involving controversial topics requires a careful approach in order to create a meaningful learning experience for students. One important step in this regard is to provide professional training for teachers. This training aims to improve teachers' skills in managing classes and discussions involving various views. With the right skills, teachers can create an open, inclusive, and objective learning atmosphere, and guide students to think critically about controversial topics without feeling pressured or provoked. Thus, it is important for teachers to be trained to have adequate knowledge in handling sensitive issues wisely (Silvie, 2023). In addition, history curricula need to be designed to be more flexible to allow for the teaching of diverse historical perspectives. Curricula that not only focus on historical facts, but also allow for deeper discussion of differing views and their impact on society at the time, will provide students with the opportunity to understand the complexity of history. This will also encourage students to think more critically and not just accept existing historical narratives (Kochhar, 1984). The use of a variety of valid and objective sources is essential in teaching controversial history. Teachers need to introduce a variety of sources, both from local and international perspectives, that provide a complete and balanced picture of the historical event. By utilizing a variety of sources, students will gain a more holistic understanding, which is not limited to a single narrative or view.

The role of teachers is also very important in developing students' critical thinking skills. History learning should not only focus on memorizing facts, but also involve students in the process of analyzing and reflecting on various historical events. Teachers who are able to guide students to question, analyze, and understand various perspectives will help them develop sharper thinking skills (Bahri*, Fajar, Najamuddin, & Riang Tati, 2023). Collaboration with various parties, such as higher education institutions or historical expert communities, can enrich students' learning experiences. By inviting external speakers or carrying out joint activities related to controversial topics, students will gain a deeper understanding and broader context of the history they are studying. All of this will support the strengthening of history learning that teaches students to understand and appreciate different views and develop a broader perspective on history (Alvén, 2024).

Based on the research results, there are several recommendations that can be taken to improve controversial history learning in high schools in Malang City. First, regular training is needed for history teachers to strengthen their ability to manage classes that discuss sensitive issues. This training should include pedagogical, methodological, and understanding aspects of various historical perspectives. Second, there needs to be a more flexible curriculum adjustment, which allows teachers to integrate various perspectives in teaching history, so that students can

gain a more comprehensive understanding. The curriculum must also support the development of critical and analytical thinking skills among students. Third, it is important to create a safe and open discussion space in the classroom, where students can interact freely but still respect differences of opinion. Teachers need to act as facilitators who can direct discussions so that they remain productive and avoid potential conflicts. With these steps, it is hoped that controversial history learning can be well received by students, provide a broader understanding, and form a critical and tolerant attitude among the younger generation (Elmersjö & Persson, 2023).

CONCLUSION

From the results of the study on the challenges faced by teachers in teaching controversial history in high schools in Malang City, it can be concluded that there are various obstacles faced, such as unclear curriculum, pressure from external parties, and lack of professional training for teachers. This makes it difficult to deliver historical material that has sensitive elements objectively and in a balanced manner. Students' responses to controversial historical material show differences, with most students interested in discussing critically, while others feel uncomfortable or reluctant to discuss sensitive issues. The role of teachers in managing discussions and creating a conducive environment is very important in facing these challenges. In order for controversial history learning to be well received, an inclusive approach, appropriate teaching methods, and a curriculum that allows for the delivery of different perspectives are needed. This study found new facts that teaching controversial history requires special attention from teachers and schools, to deal with it in a wise and professional manner. Adequate training is needed for teachers to improve pedagogical and methodological skills in delivering historical material appropriately. A more flexible curriculum that supports teaching from various perspectives will be very helpful in creating a richer and more meaningful learning experience for students. Therefore, it is very important to continue to provide support for the development of teacher competencies and adjust educational policies so that history can be delivered objectively and critically, while avoiding polarization among students. In this way, history learning can play a role in forming a young generation that is more open, critical thinker, and respectful of differences.

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