

## STUDENTS' CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS IN THE REFLECTIVE CLASS OF ISLAMIC CULTURAL HISTORY

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### ABSTRACT

This study investigates students' critical thinking skills in the subject of Islamic cultural history, built within reflective teaching. It applied a qualitative method using descriptive analytic. The study involved students from Year 11 aged 16-17 years old in MAN 1 and MAN 2 in Bandung, West Java, Indonesia. The data were collected using observation and documentation for the contemplative teaching and learning process. The data then were analyzed using Miles and Huberman's method covering data reduction, presentation and conclusion. The results show the reflective class supported the students' learning development and critical thinking. The students prepared well for learning, engaged in the learning activities, contributed to the discussion and enthusiastically compiled personal journals. When it comes to their critical thinking development, the students showed progressive capacities in building their ideas, evaluating theirs and others' arguments, and working together to solve problems.

Keywords: Reflective Classroom, Islamic Education, Critical Thinking Skills

### ABSTRAK

*Studi ini menganalisis keterampilan berpikir kritis peserta didik dalam mata pelajaran Sejarah Kebudayaan Islam, yang dibangun dalam pengajaran reflektif. Penelitian ini merupakan penelitian kualitatif menggunakan metode deskriptif analitik yang melibatkan peserta didik Kelas XI usia 16-17 tahun di MAN 1 dan MAN 2 Bandung, Jawa Barat, Indonesia. Pengumpulan data menggunakan teknik observasi dan dokumentasi proses pembelajaran kontemplatif. Analisis data menggunakan model analisis interaktif Miles Hubeerman mencakup pengumpulan data, reduksi, penyajian, dan penyimpulan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kelas reflektif mendukung perkembangan belajar dan berpikir kritis peserta didik. Peserta didik mengikuti pembelajaran dengan persiapan yang baik, terlibat dalam kegiatan pembelajaran, berkontribusi dalam diskusi, dan antusias menyusun jurnal pribadi. Peserta didik dalam pengembangan berpikir kritis menunjukkan kapasitas progresif dalam membangun ide, mengevaluasi argumen, dan bekerja sama dalam memecahkan masalah.*

*Kata Kunci: Kelas Reflektif, Keterampilan Berpikir Kritis, Pendidikan Islam*

### INTRODUCTION

Critical thinking (CT) is very important for students. They must acquire CT to withstand the challenges in their 21<sup>st</sup> century lives. CT has been adopted in the curriculum and instructions in Indonesian schools, including in the Islamic cultural history classroom. Teachers use various models, strategies and talk moves to build their students' CT (Kowalczyk, Hackworth & Case-Smith, 2012). However, many students are less engaged in learning activities and discussions. This may be because of the teachers' attitudes and capabilities in intervening the students' learnings (Hariyanto & Esser, 2018). CT is also a reflective and reasonable activity for students directed at deciding what to believe or do. Strategic effort is needed to understand the lesson on Islamic cultural history. Students can read and remember, but it is necessary to build CT about why and how history occurred.

The Islamic cultural history classroom seemed boring for students (Hutami, 2019). Many classrooms were done in conventional learning, making students depressed (Rosyidah & Maryati, 2019; Royyan, 2017; O'Hare, & McGuinness, 2009). The other factors may include lack of class hours, less desirable topics and teachers' irrelevant educational backgrounds. Based on this phenomenon, learning innovation is needed to improve the quality of the Islamic cultural history classroom. Willingham (2007). offered solutions to overcome the problems, including the teacher summarizing the material, creating keywords, holding practice questions and motivating students.

The ability to think critically occupies a strategic place for Islamic high school students in living their lives as individuals, community members and citizens (Ahyani, 2014). As good citizens with the ability to think critically, they can contribute effectively and responsibly to various societal issues and take a role in them. Islamic high school students have been able to complete elementary and middle school levels. In their further study and education, they will face various challenges and obstacles. CT uses higher-level analytical skills to understand a problem and work towards a solution (Belecina & Ocampo Jr., 2018; Pithers, & Soden, 2000). Islamic high school students need to understand the importance of having CT skills, especially in facing further competition and demands. Students have different learning enthusiasm and varied abilities, especially metacognitive abilities, which influence their CT skills (Magno, 2010; Paul, & Elder, 2006). To sum up, CT is an essential skill that students need to develop while at university to make well-informed judgments, explain their reasons and solve unknown problems (Thomas, 2011; Abrami, et al., 2008; Bailin, 2002).

Students at Islamic high school must have the ability to think critically in preparing everything in a mature and organized manner that supports the achievement of the desired goals. High motivation is needed in learning Islamic cultural history and there is a very high correlation between students' perceptions of Islamic cultural history and their relationship with learning motivation (Maidah, 2018). The results of research on CT are usually in science subjects. There is an interactive effect between learning methods and essential skills of thinking on historical learning outcomes (Ember, & Ember, 2002; Rosana, 2014).

The history of Islamic culture is part of the historical subject. History belongs to the category of humanities, discussing matters relating to humans and society. History is considered the first source of knowledge because it is identical to human life (Hanafi, 2009). It can also be used as a model to determine attitudes and build the present and future. For example, the history of Islamic culture during the Abbasid dynasty can be used to demonstrate the paradigm of the triumph of Muslims in building an advanced, fair and prosperous society. At that time, the Abbasid dynasty became the mecca of civilization for the East and West. His fame is known throughout the universe. Its progress and success cannot fit. The advancement of science and technology during the Abbasid dynasty impacted the welfare of its people. Historical figures, such as Caliph Harun al-Rashid and his son Caliph al-Ma'mun, can be presented as models of just and wise leaders. Empowerment of metacognitive skills could be conducted within reflective learning. Reflective learning activities that can accommodate concepts, reflections and questions are learning journals (Kusuma, 2016; Setiawan, 2016; Sulaiman, 2012; Imkari, 2012). One alternative education that improves CT skills is learning using a reflective thinking process approach (Zulmaulida, 2012; Aprilia, 2016).

The CT ability of Madrasah Aliyah students in studying Islamic cultural history lessons needs to be improved because the materials require deep understanding to reveal the true meaning of historical events. The history of Islamic culture at Madrasah Aliyah involves the past's origin, development and role of Islamic culture/civilization. It discusses the *da'wah* of Prophet Muhammad in the Mecca and Medina periods, the leadership of the people after the Prophet died, and the development of Islam in different ages, including the Classical Period

(Golden Age) in 650 CE-1250 CE, the Middle Ages (Decline Period) in 1250 CE-1800 CE, and the modern era (Resurrection Era) in 1800 CE-present. It also includes the development of Islam in Indonesia and the world (Salim, Hamid, Ma'ruf & Sukino, 2014). The purpose of this study is to find out how reflective learning in classrooms improves students' CT skills and how to evaluate reflective learning in Islamic cultural history classrooms in promoting CT skills at two Islamic high schools in Bandung, West Java, Indonesia.

## METHOD

This research method is qualitative with a descriptive-analytic approach. The technique is to describe qualitative data and analyze it. The design of this research is the Non-equivalent Pre-test-Post-test Control Group Design. The population in this study were students from the 11<sup>th</sup> grade at MAN (*Madrasah Aliyah Negeri*/State Islamic Senior High School) 1 and MAN 2 in Bandung, West Java, Indonesia. This study took students from 11<sup>th</sup> grade social science B and D as samples in MAN 1. Meanwhile, the representatives in MAN 2 were students from 11<sup>th</sup> grade social science 3 and 4. These students were selected by cluster sampling (a technique for determining if the object studied or data source is comprehensive).

To select the experimental class and control class, the researchers used simple random sampling (a simple technique for randomly taking sample members from the population without regard to the population's strata), so members had the same opportunity to become the experimental and control classes. In MAN 1, the experiment group in reflective and conventional learning were 11<sup>th</sup> grade social science B and D, respectively. In MAN 2, the experiment group in reflective and conventional learning were 11<sup>th</sup> grade social science 3 and 4, respectively.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### The Process of Reflective Teaching and Learning in the Islamic Cultural History Classroom to Build Students' CT Skills

The reflective learning process was analyzed in the classrooms of Islamic cultural history in improving students' critical thinking skills at MAN 1 and MAN 2 Bandung. It took five meetings and each were well-conducted. Each learning implementation consists of three stages of activities: introduction, core and closing. The reflective learning process can occur when students experience confusion, obstacles or doubts when solving the problems they face. So, the ability to think reflectively is a student's ability to select the knowledge possessed and stored in memory to solve any problems faced to achieve its goals (Fuady, 2017). Therefore, to solve the problems given during reflective learning, it is necessary to design lessons so students form critical thinking skills. Reflective learning also encourages students to think creatively, question attitudes, gain independence and develop critical thinking (Aprilia, 2016).

For the preliminary stage, which is allocated for 10 minutes, the characters/skills expected to be possessed by students are showing character of caring for others and being active as good listeners, conscientious and responsible. At the five meetings, the activities were the same. The teacher started learning by greeting, checking student attendance, recalling previous material, conveying learning objectives to be implemented, motivating students to be involved in learning activities and explaining the reflective learning model to be implemented.

However, in the activity of recalling the previous material, there were differences, adjusted to the material of each meeting. (a) The first meeting discussed the material for the establishment of the Abbasid dynasty. Students were invited to recall material about the Umayyad dynasty, including the formation, development, progress, famous caliph, decline and destruction. (b) The second meeting discussed the material on the phases of the Abbasid

government in Baghdad. Students recalled the establishment of the Abbasids, which included the background of the birth of the Abbasids, the support of the Mawali and Shiites to the Abbasids, the steps of Abu Abbas to establish the Abbasids, the coup process of Abu Abbas al-Shaffah in Damascus and history of the Abbasid dynasty. (c) The third meeting discussed the general characteristics of the Abbasid system of government. Students recalled the material about the five phases of the Abbasid government: the first Persian influence, the first Turkish influence, the second Persian influence, the second Turkish influence and the Abbasids, which was free from the influence of other nations, but their power was only around Baghdad. (d) The fourth meeting discussed the development of civilization and science in the Abbasid period. Students were invited to recall the general characteristics of the Bani Abbasid government system, which includes the form of government, the political system of government, and the famous caliphs and their policies. (e) The fifth meeting discussed the factors that caused the collapse of the Abbasids. Students recalled the material on the development of civilization and science during the Abbasid period, including its background and characters.

Likewise, at the closing stage, which is allocated for 20 minutes, the character/skills that students must possess are that students display independent, responsible and trustworthy characters. In the five meetings, the activities were similar. The teacher clarified if there were mistakes and made conclusions from the lessons that had been learned. The teacher assessed the activities carried out by giving quizzes to students and gave home assignments.

For the core stage, the time allocation is 60 minutes. Each meeting adapts to the material discussed. Students must show the character of thinking, logically critical, creative, responsible and caring for others; actively answering questions and giving ideas or opinions and being independent and responsible; displaying a responsible, independent and trustworthy character and actively give opinions or ideas.

The reflective learning process at MAN 1 Bandung was carried out every Friday. The first meeting was held on January 12, 2018. The second meeting was held on January 19, 2018. The third meeting was held on January 26, 2018. The fourth meeting was held on February 9, 2018. The fifth meeting was held on February 23, 2018.

Meanwhile, the learning process reflection at MAN 2 Bandung was held every Monday. The first meeting was held on January 15, 2018. The second meeting was held on January 22, 2018. The third meeting was held on January 29, 2019. The fourth meeting was held on February 12, 2018. The fifth meeting was held on February 19, 2018.

Of the five meetings, the core activities include: (1) The teacher provides opportunities for students to reread and understand the teaching materials that have been distributed the day before. In this activity, students are invited to reread the provided materials. In this rereading activity, all students are given about 10 minutes to better understand the materials discussed at each meeting. (2) Students sit in heterogeneous groups of five or six members. In this activity, students are invited to sit in groups. In each group, the members are arranged heterogeneously. There is no difference between male and female students, who are intelligent, moderate and less intelligent based on the value of the previous semester's report cards. (3) Students pay attention to a video related to the material being studied.

At the first meeting, the video shown was the film *al-Zab* about the process of the birth of the Abbasids. The second meeting had a video about the phases of the Abbasid government in Baghdad. The third meeting had a video about the general characteristics of the Abbasid system of government. The fourth meeting's video was on the development of civilization and science in the Abbasid period. The fifth meeting's video was on the factors that caused the fall of the Abbasids. Students were given problems about the establishment of the Abbasid dynasty, which were resolved in discussion activities.

The problems in the first meeting about the establishment of the Abbasid dynasty related to the five indicators of critical thinking skills: (1) make at least two questions about the history of the birth of the Abbasid dynasty and answer them thoroughly and systematically! (2) detail the steps taken by Abu Abbas al-Shaffah in establishing the Bani Abbasid dynasty! (3) conclude about the history of the birth of the Abbasids! (4) audit the process of the coup carried out by Abu Abbas al-Shaffah against the Umayyads! (5) the Abbasids succeeded in coupling the Umayyads thanks to the support of what people?

The problems in the second meeting regarding the phases of the Abbasid government in Baghdad: (1) ask two questions about the phases of the Abbasid rule in Baghdad and answer them thoroughly and systematically! (2) detail the characteristics of each phase of the Abbasid rule in Baghdad! (3) summarize the phases of the Abbasid rule in Baghdad! (4) make a mindmap about the phases of the Abbasid government in Baghdad! (5) in the second phase, so the Turkish army did not rule the caliphate, the Abbasids had to be strong in what areas?

The problems in the third meeting about the general characteristics of the Abbasid system of government: (1) Make at least two questions about the general characteristics of the Abbasid system of government and answer them completely! (2) explain the form of government of the Abbasids! (3) summarize the general characteristics of the Abbasid system of government! (4) describe the policies of the famous caliph of the Abbasids! (5) the war between the groups of al-Amin al-Rashid and al-Ma'mun al-Rashid caused Caliph al-Amin to be killed in 198 H/813 CE. How can that war not happen?

The problems of the fourth meeting on the development of civilization and science in the Abbasid period: (1) name two questions about the development of civilization and science during the Abbasids and answer them completely! (2) explain the factors that influenced the intellectual condition of the Abbasids! (3) conclude about the development of civilization and science during the Abbasid period! (4) identify the sciences that emerged and their characters during the Abbasid period based on the order of the centuries! (5) the decline of science during the Abbasid period because of the Mihnah incident. Al-Ma'mun should not require an understanding of his people. State that understanding!

The problems of the fifth meeting regarding the factors causing the collapse of the Abbasids: (1) ask two questions about the factors that caused the fall of the Abbasids and answer them completely! (2) detail the factors that caused the collapse of the Abbasids! (3) conclude about the background of the fall of the Abbasids! (4) make a chart about the factors that caused the fall of the Abbasids! (5) the Abbasids collapsed because they were attacked by Hulagu Khan and his troops on February 10, 1258 CE. So the Abbasid government did not collapse; should the Abbasids make improvements in what areas?

The group leader guides the discussion, each group member looks for answers and the secretary writes the results. A student representative of the group presented the group work classically, which was guided by the teacher. (1) the problems that have been resolved in group discussions are presented by students representing their groups. In this activity, the teacher is the guide. (2) the teacher asks questions that trigger reflective activities so students express their opinions. In this activity, the teacher questions the group representatives who have presented their group's results. It is done so students representing the group express their opinions, which trigger reflective activities. (3) the teacher provides opportunities for other groups to respond, express opinions, approve or reject the results submitted by the presenter. In this activity, other groups are given the opportunity by the teacher to respond, express opinions, approve or reject the answers submitted by the presenter. The presenter is required to provide feedback and answer the opinions and objections from the students in the other groups. (4) the teacher guides students to make personal journals to conclude the learning that has just been implemented. In this activity, students are guided by the teacher in making

personal journals to conclude the lessons they have just implemented about the establishment of the Abbasid dynasty. (5) students and teachers reflect. In this activity, the teacher invites students to ask questions if they have not understood the materials related to the establishment of the Abbasid dynasty.

Based on the learning process stages through reflective learning according to the procedure, students are enthusiastic about learning the Islamic cultural history with reflective learning because they are actively involved cognitively and effectively so learning is more challenged. Their critical power is facilitated so, according to students, learning Islamic cultural history is not saturated and dull. Creative and innovative learning methods, such as reflective learning in Islamic education to develop high order thinking skills, need to be designed and implemented so the students are more courageous, critical and creative in the era of globalization (Ernawati, 2017). Teachers need to adopt learning models that have the potential to empower their students' critical thinking skills as well as improve learning outcomes. Retention is a pattern of empowering thinking through questions so students feel challenged to answer high-level questions (Imkari, 2012). Students' thinking processes are higher, such as in reflective learning.

### **The Evaluation of Reflective Teaching and Learning in the Islamic Cultural History Classroom to Build Students' CT Skills**

The evaluation used during the reflective learning process on Islamic cultural history subjects in improving students' critical thinking skills at MAN 1 and MAN 2 Bandung consisted of tests and non-tests. The test consists of a pre-test, post-test and daily tests, while the non-test is a personal journal. The pre-test was conducted to measure students' critical thinking skills before implementing reflective learning. After the reflective learning was completed, the post-test was carried out to measure students' critical thinking skills seen from the overall indicators. In a sense, the purpose of this pre-test and post-test assessments is to improve students' critical thinking skills after going through reflective learning treatment. Therefore, instruments and rubrics have been prepared to measure the improvement of critical thinking skills in the experimental and control classes.

The pre-test at MAN 1 was held on Friday, January 5, 2018, and the post-test was held on Friday, March 2, 2018. The results of the pre-test mean score were 17.59 and the post-test mean score was 69.47. The daily test was carried out twice – on Friday, February 9, 2018 and March 2, 2018. The average score for the first daily test was 36 and the average result for the second daily test was 49.7. Meanwhile, the pre-test at MAN 2 was held on Monday, January 8, 2018 and the post-test was held on Monday, February 26, 2018. The average score for the pre-test was 16.64 and the post-test average was 63.12. The daily test was carried out twice – on Monday, February 5, 2018 and February 26, 2018. The average result for the first daily test was 81 and the average result for the second daily test was 71.

The non-test assessment was carried out by writing a personal journal as a conclusion to the learning that had just been carried out. After learning Islamic cultural history, students were assigned to make journal entries to reveal their learning experiences. Personal journals are made by students based on a format given by the teacher/researcher. Furthermore, the personal journal is assessed as a characteristic form of reflective assessment. It is necessary to explore the students' emotional aspects, how they feel, motivation, hopes and obstacles felt when participating in the reflective learning. The acquisition of personal journal scores in 11<sup>th</sup> grade social science B at MAN 1 Bandung averaged 80, including excellent criteria, in the range of 76-100. Meanwhile, the results of obtaining personal journal scores in 11<sup>th</sup> grade social science 3 at MAN 2 Bandung averaged 82, including excellent criteria, in the range of 76-100.

Based on the evaluation of reflective learning results, students' thinking skills develop because, through this learning, they can enrich meaningful experiences through problem-solving problems that have implications for their thinking abilities to be developed. By developing students' awareness of learning and interpreting the nature of their SKI (Sejarah Kebudayaan Islam/Islamic Cultural History) learning in which there is a reflection on themselves, students will always be trained to design the best strategies in selecting, organizing available information, remembering and finding solutions. In addition, students' independence and critical attitudes are well-developed because thinking is a product of a process or the process of thinking is a product. Reflective learning is one type of learning that constructs the nature of the learner's mind in understanding learning problems (Van Gelder, 2005; Rais & Aryani, 2019). The reflective learning model trains students' analytical power with their everyday experiences and trains them to conclude the teaching and learning process (Tsang, 2011; Zainuddin, 2018; Mahmudah, 2017).

Critical thinking should be demonstrated by students at the high school level (*madrasah aliyah*) in the subjects they learn like SKI. Their ability to interpret and evaluate skillfully the learning material can be shown in their activity of observation, communication, information and argumentation. It can be done reflectively and rationally which is oriented to a decision to be trusted or carried out (Ennis, 2011; Facione, 2000; Fosso-Kankeu, 2019). This has something to do with their higher order thinking skills. These skills require not only the ability to recall, restate or recite, but also the ability to analyze, reflect, provide arguments (reasons), apply concepts to different situations, compile, and create. In the 21st century, critical thinking is important. Students who think critically as in the history of Islamic culture have the potential to increase students' critical analytical power. Students in the 2013 curriculum are required to have the skills to think and act effectively and creatively in the abstract and concrete realm as a development from observing, asking, trying, processing, presenting, reasoning and creating independently according to their talents and interests (Umam & Cahyadi, 2020).

The critical thinking skills of *madrasah aliyah* students in learning SKI need to be developed because this can be used as a milestone in shaping the character and personality of Muslims. Learning SKI requires students not only to memorize important events but also to train perseverance in critical thinking skills. History must be studied with high imagination because it emphasizes knowledge of the way experiences are written and shaped, especially the early history of Islamic culture. SKI learning in this context requires a creative effort to display historical meaning.

The SKI subject is aimed at building students' awareness about the urgency of studying the basic teachings, values and Islamic norms that have been built by Prophet Muhammad. In the context of SKI learning, the subject is aimed at building students' awareness of the urgency of time and place as a process of the past, present and future. It trains students' critical power to understand historical facts correctly based on a scientific approach, fosters their appreciation and appreciation of the historical heritage of Islam in the past, develops their ability to imitate various historical events (Islam), imitates outstanding figures, and relate them to social, cultural, political, economic, science and technology phenomena, arts and develops Islamic culture and civilization.

## CONCLUSION

The reflective learning process on Islamic cultural history in improving students' critical thinking skills at MAN 1 and MAN 2 Bandung has been carried out well. Students actively studied and understood teaching materials before the learning process. In the class, they sat in heterogeneous groups, paid attention to the material displayed using video learning media and

actively discussed the topics to solve problems. Moreover, student representatives presented the results of group work classically guided by the teacher; the teacher posed questions to the presenters that triggered reflective activities so students expressed their opinions; and students made a personal journal as a conclusion about the learning that has just been carried out. Evaluation of reflective learning on Islamic cultural history subjects in improving students' critical thinking skills at MAN 1 and MAN 2 Bandung was carried out through pre-test and post-tests based on indicators of critical thinking skills and the materials taught through daily tests and personal journals.

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