

The Influence of Problem Based Learning Models in Elementary Schools on Social Studies Subjects

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Abstract: This research investigates the use of the Problem-Based Learning (PBL) method to improve student achievement in social studies learning in elementary schools. The PBL method is a student-centered learning approach where they learn through solving real problems. In this study, qualitative methods were used, including interviews and descriptive questionnaires with teachers. The research results show that PBL improves student learning outcomes, critical thinking skills, analytical skills, and problem solving abilities. Increasing student achievement is one of the main findings of this research. Students who are involved in learning using the PBL method show a better understanding of the subject matter and are able to apply their knowledge in real situations. Apart from that, students' critical thinking skills also experienced significant improvement. They become better able to evaluate information critically and make decisions based on in-depth analysis. Student motivation also increases as a result of implementing the PBL method. Students become more enthusiastic and motivated to learn because they feel more involved and have an active role in the learning process. PBL also contributes to improving the quality of student behavior and education, creating a more positive and productive learning environment. Overall, this study concludes that the PBL method is an effective strategy for social learning studies in elementary schools. By improving learning outcomes, critical thinking skills, and student motivation, PBL can help create a more meaningful and sustainable learning experience for elementary school students.

INTRODUCTION

Problem-Based Learning (PBL) engages students in active discovery activities, enhancing their problem-solving skills. The current educational approach in Indonesia is predominantly

teacher-centered, which leads to passive student behavior. To prioritize competency mastery, a shift towards student-centered learning with real-life contextual experiences is essential. Teachers must design activities that develop competencies across cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains. PBL aims to foster thinking skills, problem-solving abilities, and an understanding of community development in Indonesia. Previous research indicates that PBL increases student motivation and learning outcomes (Gunantara, Suarjana, & Riastini, 2014; Ningsih, Arif Hidayat, & Kusairi, 2018) and facilitates easier learning (Dwi et al., 2013; Rozhana & Harnanik, 2019; Winursiti, 2017). Piaget's theory of cognitive development, a cornerstone of constructivism, emphasizes active knowledge construction through experiences and interactions (Trianto, 2009: 30). Piaget also links cognitive development with moral understanding (Jean Piaget, 1932: 7). Social studies learning, closely tied to values and morality, fosters self-concept and social role understanding (Trianto, 2009: 30). Social cognition, influencing student morality, shapes their perceptions of the social world (Trianto, 2009: 30). The application of the PBL model enhances student engagement and facilitates effective learning processes, demonstrated by increased student activity levels and teacher guidance (Gunantara, Suarjana, & Riastini, 2014; Ningsih, Arif Hidayat, & Kusairi, 2018; Dwi et al., 2013; Rozhana & Harnanik, 2019; Winursiti, 2017). Piaget's theory underscores the importance of active engagement with the environment in shaping children's understanding, with implications for moral development (Jean Piaget, 1932: 7; Trianto, 2009: 30).

METHOD

This study employs qualitative methods to gain comprehensive insights into the effectiveness of PBL in social studies at the elementary school level. Through unstructured interviews and response statements collected via Google Forms, we gathered detailed information from respondents. This approach allows for a broader and more accurate understanding of PBL's effectiveness. Teachers can use PBL to explain social problems and have students work in groups to find solutions, training them to solve real-world social issues as future members of society.

The study focuses on teachers as respondents, given their role as facilitators and sources of knowledge in the classroom. Teachers can assess and demonstrate students' abilities, explaining how the PBL method impacts student engagement and problem-solving skills. The teacher's perspective is crucial in evaluating whether PBL effectively helps students solve real-life problems and become competent members of society.

Interviews are the primary research instrument. According to Denzin and Lincoln, interviews provide an understanding formed by situational interactions. Arends describes PBL as a learning approach that exposes students to authentic problems, enabling them to construct knowledge, develop high-level skills, and increase self-confidence.

Data collection involved interviewing teachers to assess student interaction and engagement in class. The collected data were analyzed to determine the effectiveness of PBL in addressing real-world social problems and enhancing students' problem-solving abilities. Successful PBL implementation is indicated by students actively discussing and solving social issues, demonstrating its effectiveness in elementary social studies.

Research ethics emphasized the safety and comfort of teachers, ensuring data authenticity and validity. The findings were compared with expert theories on PBL's effectiveness for elementary students. The research adhered to ethical standards by respecting respondents' answers and ensuring the authenticity of the data collected.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The application of the Problem Based Learning (PBL) model in elementary schools is very significant in improving student learning outcomes, especially in social studies subjects. PBL method can increase students' interest and enthusiasm for learning, as well as help them understand the material presented well. By using PBL, students can think critically and have problem solving skills, as well as improving critical and creative thinking abilities. PBL can also help teachers provide more accurate grades and improve the quality of social studies learning in the learning process and learning outcomes. In some cases, PBL has been proven to increase students' average grades and help them solve problems related to social studies. Therefore, PBL can be considered as an alternative character development strategy that is really needed by students in solving problems, as well as helping them develop broader skills, including skills in solving problems, thinking critically, working in groups, communicating, and processing information.'

These advantages are in accordance with those described in the Ministry of Education and Culture (2013b) as follows: (1) the learning process is meaningful for students where students learn to solve problems through the application of the knowledge they have; (2) students integrate knowledge and skills simultaneously and apply them in relevant contexts; (3) improving critical thinking skills, fostering student initiative in working, internal motivation to learn, and being able to develop interpersonal relationships in group work. However, apart from the advantages presented, the Problem Based Learning learning model also has several weaknesses as expressed by Mustaji (2009) as follows: (1) when students do not have interest or do not have the belief that the problem being studied is difficult to solve, then they will find it difficult to try; (2) the success of learning strategies through problem solving requires sufficient time for preparation; (3) without understanding why they are trying to solve the problem being studied, they will not learn what they want to learn.

From the data that has been obtained regarding problem-based learning (PBL), it has shown a significant increase in report card scores at the elementary school level in social studies lessons. By using the PBL approach, students can be more active and involved in the learning process, solve problems relevant to social studies material, and develop critical thinking and analytical skills. This increase in report card grades can be attributed to an increase in students' ability to understand social studies material more deeply and broadly, as well as an increase in students' motivation and interest in studying social studies each semester. Thus, PBL can be considered an effective learning strategy in improving social studies learning outcomes and improving the quality of education at the elementary school level. And it can make students become good members of society and can help solve real problems in everyday life.

Interpretation of the results of Problem Based Learning (PBL) research shows that this learning model is significant, and can influence students' critical thinking abilities. The research results showed that students who took part in PBL had better critical thinking skills compared to students who did not take part in PBL. PBL also shows that students can be more active and involved in the learning process, solve problems relevant to the material, and develop analytical skills and solve problems. In this research, PBL is used to improve student learning outcomes, including critical thinking skills, analytical skills, and the ability to solve problems. The research results also show that PBL can increase students' learning motivation and improve the quality of students' behavior and education.

CONCLUSION

The application of the Problem Based Learning model in elementary schools shows significant results in improving student learning outcomes as well as fostering student initiative in working, internal motivation in learning, and being able to develop interpersonal relationships in group work, especially in social studies subjects. The Problem Based Learning learning model helps students to be able to think critically and have the ability to solve problems.

However, problem-based learning also has several weaknesses, such as when students have no interest or do not believe that the problem being studied is difficult to solve, then they will have difficulty trying it. In reality, in the field, Problem Based Learning has been proven to increase students' average scores and help them solve problems related to social studies. Therefore, Problem Based Learning can be considered as an alternative character development strategy that is really needed by students in solving problems.

The results of the research show that students who take part in problem-based learning have better critical thinking skills than students who do not take part in problem-based learning. Problem Based Learning also shows that students can be more active and involved in the learning process, solve problems relevant to the material, and develop analytical and problem solving skills. In this research, PBL is used to improve student learning outcomes including critical thinking skills, analytical skills, and problem solving abilities. The research results also show that Problem Based Learning can increase student learning motivation and improve the quality of student behavior and education. Therefore, to continue to support the improvement of student learning outcomes, teachers must be able to apply the Problem Based Learning model in learning systematically and regularly and be able to use interesting learning media so that students are always enthusiastic in participating in learning.

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