The Implementation of Problem-Based Learning in a Basic Concepts of Social Studies Course

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji penerapan model Problem-Based Learning (PBL) pada mata kuliah Konsep Dasar IPS di Program Studi Pendidikan Guru Sekolah Dasar (PGSD) Universitas Jember. Tujuan penelitian ini adalah menganalisis penerapan model PBL pada mata kuliah Konsep Dasar IPS, menjelaskan keunggulan PBL dalam pembelajaran, dan mengidentifikasi tantangan yang dihadapi dalam penerapan model PBL. Penelitian ini menggunakan metodologi kualitatif dengan teknik pengumpulan data meliputi observasi, wawancara, dan dokumentasi. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa model PBL meningkatkan keterampilan berpikir kritis mahasiswa dengan melibatkan mereka dalam menganalisis dan memecahkan masalah dunia nyata yang dihadapi dalam kehidupan sehari-hari. PBL juga membuat pembelajaran lebih bermakna dan interaktif, memungkinkan mahasiswa untuk berdiskusi dan bertukar pikiran dalam kelompok. Terdapat beberapa tantangan teridentifikasi dalam pelaksanaan PBL, seperti pemahaman tentang masalah sosial masih terbatas, dan ketergantungan mereka pada informasi mentah dari internet. Penelitian menyimpulkan bahwa model PBL efektif dalam meningkatkan pemahaman mahasiswa terhadap materi dan kemampuan berpikir kritis mereka, serta merekomendasikan penggunaan PBL yang didukung oleh media pembelajaran yang menarik dan inovatif.

Kata Kunci: Berpikir Kritis, Keterlibatan Mahasiswa, Problem-Based Learning (PBL)

Abstract

This study examines the implementation of the Problem-Based Learning (PBL) model in the Basic Concepts of Social Studies course within the Elementary School Teacher Education (PGSD) program at the University of Jember. This research aims to evaluate the application of the PBL model in the course, explain the advantages of PBL in learning, and identify the challenges encountered in its implementation. The research employs a qualitative methodology with data collected through observation, interviews, and documentation. The findings indicate that the PBL model enhances students' critical thinking skills by engaging them in analyzing and solving real-world problems encountered in daily life. PBL also makes learning more meaningful and interactive, allowing students to discuss and exchange ideas within groups. However, several challenges were identified in implementing PBL, such as students' limited understanding of social issues and reliance on raw information from the internet. The study concludes that the PBL model effectively improves students' comprehension of the material and their critical thinking skills, and also it recommends using PBL supported by engaging and innovative learning media.

Keywords: Critical Thinking, Student Engagement, Problem-Based Learning (PBL)

1. Introduction

Social Studies (IPS) is the name of a school subject and university curricula (Sapriya, 2017; Sudrajat & Mujadidi, 2023). Social Studies is one of the subjects that studies humans and their surrounding world (Solihatin & Raharjo, 2008). Furthermore, Supardi (2011) explains that IPS emphasizes the development of students' skills in solving problems ranging from personal issues to complex problems. According to the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) in 1992, IPS is an integration of various social sciences and humanities aimed at enhancing citizenship competence as a provision for everyday life. IPS itself is a subject at the school level that involves the systematic study of various disciplines such as economics, geography, history, sociology, anthropology, archaeology, law, philosophy, politics, religion, and even mathematics (Savage & Amstrong, 1996). This certainly provides the foundation for understanding that IPS encompasses various branches of knowledge that are useful in different areas of community life.

In practice, IPS should be taught integratively in schools, not as separate disciplines. It should not only be taught based on theory but also with real-life examples to make learning more meaningful. Teaching with real-life examples can help students understand the material presented by the teacher and can simultaneously encourage students to solve problems they encounter in their daily lives according to their developmental stage and level of cognitive development. IPS is a compulsory subject that must be included in the elementary and secondary education curriculum, derived from the content of social science branches Undang-Undang Sistem Pendidikan Nasional Tentang Sistem Pendidikan Nasional, 2003). As stated by Banks (1990), IPS is part of the elementary and middle school curriculum that emphasizes responsibility so that students can enhance their abilities and knowledge. This responsibility is crucial for students as it prepares them for participation in local, national, and even global life. IPS has been structured in calendars, units, and lessons that include objectives, content, and concepts that: 1) promote social skills; 2) enhance inquiry; 3) convey differing opinions; 4) address various controversial issues; 5) seek connections; and finally, simulate actions (Singer, 2009).

According to the objectives of IPS as stated by BSNP (2006), the goals include enabling students to understand various concepts related to societal life and their environment; developing basic critical and logical thinking skills; fostering a high level of curiosity and inquiry; enhancing problem-solving abilities; acquiring skills for social life; having a commitment to and awareness of social and humanitarian values in society; and being able to develop communication, cooperation, and competition skills in a pluralistic society at national and even international levels. While the objectives of IPS are excellent, in practice, these goals have not been fully achieved in daily life. Many IPS curricula often lack clear and defined purposes, resulting in ineffective teaching practices (Iwegbu & Ossai, 2011). In Turkey, the implementation of the IPS curriculum is further hindered by insufficient extracurricular activities and inadequate strategies (Akman & Alagoz, 2018).

Similarly, Ghanaian IPS education faces challenges in conceptualization and examination methods, impeding effective citizenship education (Abudulai, 2020). Compounding these issues, traditional teaching methodologies still emphasize rote memorization rather than critical thinking and real-world application (Wrightstone, 1935). Textbooks also often prioritize isolated facts over integrated social learning, failing to align with long-term educational goals (Wrightstone, 1935). To align with the national educational goals, there is a need to produce graduates in the field of education who possess four key teacher competencies: professional competence, social competence, personal competence, and pedagogical competence. A teacher must understand the material being taught to the students. Therefore, a teacher needs to have professional competence, which refers to the teacher's ability to master the learning material broadly, comprehensively, and deeply to meet the competency standards outlined in the National Education Standards.

For graduates of elementary school teacher education, there is a greater responsibility to master the material in five subjects: Social Studies (IPS), Science, Mathematics, Indonesian Language, and Citizenship Education (PKn). These subjects are implemented in elementary school learning as part of the professional competence of teachers. One of these subjects is IPS,

where a teacher must understand the IPS material to be delivered to students. Understanding IPS material means studying various IPS concepts. These various IPS concepts can be learned through the Basic IPS Concepts course for prospective elementary school teachers to understand how to apply IPS in teaching, as well as the various IPS concepts that need to be understood more deeply as a foundation for becoming a professional teacher or educator. Professional teachers are the spearheads of the learning process in schools, influencing the quality of classroom learning, and on a larger scale, can affect the quality of national education. This is also an effort to achieve national educational goals.

The objectives of IPS are well-directed, but the results achieved have not been optimal. There is a need not only for the transfer of knowledge but also for the transfer of values and the application of both in the school and community context. The Basic IPS Concepts course can provide students with the knowledge to explain not only the concepts but also the application and the values developed. The Basic IPS Concepts course contains material about the nature, characteristics, and scope of IPS, basic IPS concepts including history, geography, economics, anthropology, sociology, politics, and social psychology, as well as the interrelationships between these fields. The ultimate goal is to enable students to design and apply these concepts as a foundation for becoming elementary school teachers. The implementation of this course is expected to emphasize 21st-century skills, one of which is critical thinking.

The Basic IPS Concepts course is conducted using varied lecture methods and the Problem-Based Learning (PBL) model. Varied lectures tend to make the lecturer play a more significant role, which can limit students' ability to maximize their critical thinking skills, resulting in slower problem-solving. For example, in the Basic IPS Concepts course, students understand the material better when they participate in solving real-world problems, such as analyzing and resolving cases or events based on various sources they have read. This can be achieved by applying the Problem-Based Learning (PBL) model to optimize critical thinking, especially in the Basic IPS Concepts course. A lack of critical thinking skills can also affect the understanding of the material presented. Students' suboptimal comprehension of lecture material can be caused by the chosen learning model, inappropriate media, insufficient student literacy, or other factors that influence cognitive outcomes.

Initial observations and interviews with several Elementary Teacher Education (PGSD) students in the Basic IPS Concepts course indicated that they understood the material better when analyzing specific cases occurring in daily life. They were able to respond and find solutions to these problems using various theories. Varied lectures often make students sleepy and less likely to explore their potential, which is why critical thinking and understanding of lecture material cannot be maximized using this method. One option to optimize critical thinking skills and students' understanding of the Basic IPS Concepts course material is to use an innovative learning model that suits the characteristics of the students, namely Problem-Based Learning (PBL). Qomariyah (2017) reinforces this by explaining that PBL emphasizes learning in real contexts and is considered capable of empowering thinking skills. Lectures that include real-life examples are expected to enhance the meaningfulness of learning.

Based on the aforementioned explanation, the researcher directs this study to analyze the PBL model's impact on understanding the material in the Basic IPS Concepts course within the Elementary Teacher Education (PGSD) program. This leads to the formulation of research problems, including: 1) How is the implementation of the Basic IPS Concepts course conducted in the PGSD program at the University of Jember?; 2) What are the advantages of the PBL model in learning?; 3) What obstacles are encountered when applying the PBL model in the classroom? This research is necessary to improve the quality of classroom lectures, particularly in the Basic IPS Concepts course. Furthermore, the objectives of this study include: 1) To analyze the conduct of the Basic IPS Concepts course using the PBL model in the PGSD program at the University of Jember; 2) To explain the advantages of the PBL model in learning; 3) To describe the obstacles encountered when implementing the PBL model.

2. Method

A qualitative method is used in this research to understand the various phenomena experienced by the research subjects. Case study approach used to investigate the first-semester students of the Elementary Teacher Education (PGSD) program at the University of Jember. Case study approach is used to gain a deep understanding of the phenomena experienced by the research subjects, such as behaviors, perceptions, motivations, and various holistic actions described in words and language within their natural context (Moleong, 2018). This research is located in the PGSD program at the University of Jember. The data focused on in this research includes the implementation of PBL among PGSD students, the advantages of the PBL model, and the obstacles encountered when using the PBL model.

The research subjects are undergraduate students enrolled in the Primary School Teacher Education program at the University of Jember (UNEJ), who are currently taking the "Basic Concepts of IPS" course. The data collection methods used include 1) Observation, conducted with first-semester PGSD students of the 2023/2024 academic year at University of Jember; 2) Interviews, using semi-structured techniques to explore the interview subjects' ideas related to the research object; and 3) Research documents, used to complement observational and interview data and to strengthen the research findings. These documents can include articles, educational guidelines, audio recordings, and so on.

The data used in this research consists of two sources: primary and secondary data sources. The primary data sources are individuals who provide information, specifically the first-semester students taking the Basic IPS Concepts course. The secondary data includes documents used during the lectures. The data processing involves data condensation, data presentation, and drawing/verifying conclusions. Data condensation is aimed at simplifying and detailing the data to facilitate understanding. Next is data presentation, done through visualization to organize and group the data according to the research objectives.

3. Result and Discussion

The PBL model, often referred to as problem-based learning, helps students stimulate critical thinking processes to solve real-world problems. The ultimate goal of this model is not confined to the classroom but extends to everyday life. The PBL model utilizes real-world problems as learning materials for students, particularly for university students, to teach them how to think critically, solve problems, and acquire essential knowledge and concepts from the given material.

The PBL model is effective in the lecture process. Its use is aligned with the lesson plans prepared by the lecturer. In this study, the PBL model is applied in the Basic IPS Concepts course, where fundamental concepts related to IPS are comprehensively studied. Through the PBL model in this course, students become more active in groups and can delve deeper into critical thinking about a case or event being studied, aligned with the course material. Critical thinking about a problem can be a benchmark for meaningful learning implementation, indicating that students have a better understanding of the material presented.

The PBL model emphasizes problem-solving, where students are presented with an issue or case to analyze together with their group members, referring to various learning resources. Students feel that the PBL model is more meaningful because they analyze various social issues in society, linking them with the theories they study. The connection to real-life examples makes it easier for them to understand the course material. Additionally, students require new knowledge to solve these problems.
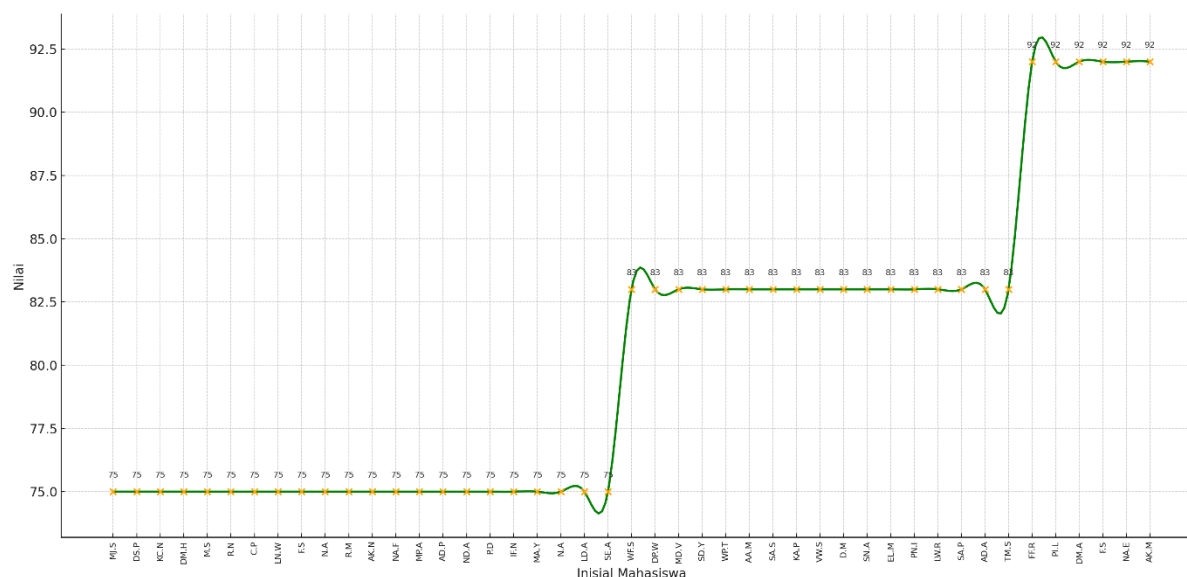
Figure 1. Cumulative Score of Problem-Based Learning (PBL)

The cumulative scores of students engaged in Problem-Based Learning (PBL) are depicted in Figure 1. This graphical representation, which orders students' scores from lowest to highest, illustrates a positive trend in students' comprehension and mastery of the lecture material. The data show that despite some variations, most students achieved scores above the midpoint threshold, indicating a generally satisfactory level of understanding and performance in PBL activities. This pattern also suggests the effectiveness of the PBL approach in fostering active learning and promoting better academic outcomes.

The extent to which students understand the lecture material is also reflected in their learning outcomes. Examining lecture documents related to learning outcomes, including assignments, quizzes, and final exams, reveals that the average results are satisfactory. This aligns with the research by Handayani & Muhammadi (2020), which indicates that the PBL model significantly affects students' learning outcomes. Similarly, Lenny et al. (2018) state that "The low learning outcomes of students cannot be separated from the learning process that has taken place," meaning that even low learning outcomes are intrinsically linked to the learning process. Research by Annisa et al. (2022) also shows similar results, indicating the influence of the PBL model on the improvement of students' learning outcomes.

Previous research by Oktaviyanti & Novitasari (2019)explains that in addressing the given problems, it is necessary to link problem-solving methods with social sciences to broaden students' thinking. Analyzing the encountered problems can stimulate students to think actively and critically, enabling them to respond to and provide solutions for the given issues. On a larger scale, it is hoped that students can utilize this critical thinking approach to solve problems in everyday life. The implementation of PBL in the classroom can also be integrated with various learning media, such as Kahoot, which significantly impacts confidence and academic achievement (Safitri et al., 2023). The findings are consistent with documentation data, indicating that applying the PBL model results in better material comprehension. Satisfactory assignment scores demonstrate this: out of 45 students, 22 received AB grades (75.00-79.99), and 23 received A grades (80.00-100). The integration of PBL in lecture activities can be combined with various media and learning resources, allowing students not only to focus on concepts but also to explore more in problem-solving.

Lectures using the PBL model, according to students, are more dynamic and make the discussion of lecture material more effective. Students not only think and understand the material individually but also engage in group discussions.

"Pembelajaran lebih kooperatif, jadi dapat meningkatkan kemampuan yang bukan hanya pemecahan masalah tetapi komunikasi dan kerjasama dalam kelompok - DP feedback."

This student feedback is supported by Sanjaya (2011), who explains that conventional learning often positions students as passive recipients of information, with the teacher determining the course of the lesson. In traditional lectures, students merely receive the material and do not actively participate in the classroom process. The implementation of PBL, with its emphasis on discussion and active group interaction, facilitates feedback among students, making it easier for them to make logical and effective decisions. Additionally, within the classroom setting, students can exchange ideas with other groups during class discussions and presentations.

According to Arends, the PBL (Problem-Based Learning) model broadly consists of the following steps: 1) Problem orientation; 2) Organizing for learning; 3) Assisting individual or group investigations; 4) Developing and presenting the final product; and 5) Analyzing and evaluating the problem-solving process (Mudlofir & Rusydiyah, 2017). These steps in PBL guide students through an active learning process involving discussion. Many students have expressed that PBL courses make them more confident in presenting arguments, responding, and answering questions from other groups, and they find it easier to understand the material presented.

The statements made by the students are consistent with the research conducted by Juang Nugraha et al. (2017), which found that learners with high learning motivation tend to have high critical thinking skills. Learners with high motivation and critical thinking skills show an interest in solving problems. Generally, students have stated that PBL courses make it easier for them to understand the material, as they not only study theory but also engage in practical discussions with their peers regarding real-life problems. This is further supported by research conducted by Qomariyah (2017) which showed significant differences in the critical thinking abilities of students in social studies subjects. This indicates that critical thinking skills can be enhanced when applying the PBL model in the classroom. Critical thinking skills can be improved using the PBL model because it is based on authentic problems, requiring students to not only understand the problems but also collaborate to solve them, thereby stimulating their skills, such as critical thinking (Masrinah, 2019).

The research by (Helaluddin et al., 2023) also supports the students' statements regarding the implementation of PBL courses, stating that the PBL model can improve writing skills, critical thinking skills, and creative thinking skills compared to conventional models. Critical and creative thinking skills are better in groups of students who learn through PBL compared to those who learn through traditional teaching models (Armana et al., 2020). The primary objective of this research, based on the provided explanation, is to highlight that the PBL model can be an alternative and innovative learning model that actively involves students in developing their abilities to understand course material, solve real-life problems, and make decisions. Implementing the PBL model in groups can ultimately train students in interaction, discussion, and expressing opinions and responses. Therefore, research on this matter is necessary to improve the quality of education.

The PBL model is applied to improve the quality of learning, specifically in the subject of Social Studies Education. The PBL model is a learning model focused on problem-based learning, with the expected outcome being that students can find solutions to the problems they face. These problems are not limited to classroom issues but also include real-life problems. Often, students only understand the material, while the PBL model aims to guide students on how to apply the concepts or material.

Implementation PBL model to support for finding the result of the problem can be inspiring to enhance students' activity in critical thinking skills (Hutami et al., 2023; Hutami & Azizah, 2024). The application of the PBL model in problem-solving efforts can trigger and enhance students' critical thinking activities. Emphasis on problem-solving requires students to read extensively from various sources, such as books, television news, the internet, and others. This activity provides a positive value to students by broadening their knowledge. Through this model, students' sensitivity to responding to problems in their surroundings also increases, making them more aware of issues around them and capable of discussing and seeking solutions with their peers. This is reinforced by Trianto's opinion that the PBL model has several advantages, namely:

(1) realistic to students' lives; (2) suitable for students' needs; (3) enhances students' discovery abilities; (4) strengthens concept memory; and (5) improves problem-solving skills (Taufina & Muhammadi, 2011; Gunawan, 2023).

Another advantage of PBL is that it is conducted in groups. Group discussions allow students to exchange ideas and actively discuss the topics given by the lecturer, making students more active in class activities. Students who do not fully understand the material can learn together with those who grasp it better, with the lecturer's guidance. Besides exchanging ideas and opinions, each group can teach each other and create an independent learning environment. For instance, the use of Candi Asu as a resource for social studies education (Sudrajat, 2021) has the potential to connect students with their social surroundings, making the learning of social studies enjoyable.

Social Studies Education emphasizes contextual learning, focusing on both conceptual understanding and practical application in real-world scenarios. The significance of the material lies in how students apply their knowledge in everyday life, and the PBL model facilitates the meaningful delivery of this material. Alternatives for conducting such learning can include using short stories about conflicts (Amalia & Effendi, 2024), which embed specific intentional values based on societal norms (Falaq, 2023). Additionally, documentary films can serve as a problem or starting point for learning (Adi et al., 2021).

Learning with the PBL model has many advantages and can be an alternative learning model in the classroom. However, the implementation of the PBL model does not always go as planned. There are several obstacles in the application of the PBL model. These obstacles are caused by students' lack of insight into social issues and problems occurring in Indonesia, as well as the lack of information they possess. This finding is supported by research conducted by Auliah et al. (2023), which states that one of the obstacles in using the PBL model is that it requires a lot of time, and obstacles can come from the students themselves or from within the classroom.

The lack of insight causes the analysis of the material or problems given during the implementation of the PBL model to take longer, while class time is limited. The prolonged analysis affects the time taken to determine the solution to the problem. Often, students rely on the internet as their primary learning source in class, which, if not used correctly, makes students lazier to analyze together with their peers in a group, or to engage in discussions and question-and-answer sessions in the class forum, relying only on raw information obtained from the internet. Analyzing issues that frequently occur in society requires higher-order thinking skills; it is not enough to merely take raw information from the internet without linking it to real life and its meanings.

Another obstacle is during the group discussions. Discussions do not always go smoothly; sometimes they are not conducive. This is because there are several groups in a class with different opinions or arguments. Chaos occurs when each group insists on their opinion. Additionally, some students give opinions without a clear theoretical basis, making discussions sometimes unfocused and requiring re-confirmation. Another issue is when a small number of students are not yet confident in expressing their opinions, which affects the class discussion activities. Therefore, students in a group must take turns asking, responding, or giving opinions. This activity aims to improve students' discussion skills.

4. Conclusions

The PBL model is beneficial for students in terms of critical thinking, especially in solving everyday problems viewed from the application of various social studies fields. The PBL model is an alternative learning model that can enhance students' understanding of course material. Group discussions within the PBL model allow students to interact well with their group mates and within the class discussion forum, with the most important aspect being that students exchange ideas and jointly review the material discussed. Overall, the implementation of the Basic Concepts of Social Studies course in the Elementary School Teacher Education (PGSD) program at University of Jember using the PBL model has been effective, aligning with the learning objectives outlined in the course syllabus. The obstacles encountered in implementing the PBL

model include students' lack of insight into social issues and problems occurring in Indonesia; students relying on the internet as the primary learning source in class but only depending on raw information from it; discussions sometimes not being conducive; and students occasionally struggling to analyze problems when linked to the material in the Basic Concepts of Social Studies course.

To improve the implementation of the PBL model, it is suggested that lecturers provide additional references or real-life case studies related to social issues in Indonesia to enrich students' understanding. Furthermore, lecturers should guide students in analyzing and synthesizing information critically from multiple sources, not just relying on the internet. It is also important to establish clear guidelines for effective group discussions to ensure all students actively contribute and stay focused on the problem-solving process. Lastly, incorporating training in critical thinking and problem analysis skills as part of the course could help students become more adept at connecting the material with real-life social issues.

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