

Debate Learning Through Facebook and Blog : a Study of Information Technology Based History Learning

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Abstract. The aim of this study is the development of models to enhance historical thinking skills through IT. It is obvious that history learning mastery based on memorizing aspect is common problem appears in everywhere. There are very few percentage of students who concern with thinking skills development, especially in historical thinking. To be developed think over historical facts/events, it is important to consider to create a history learning condition that can guide students in developing their thinking skills. Methode of learning used with debate through IT which is Facebook and Blog. The results are development of communication skills and ability to find reference; for all expands the field of historical insight. IT emphasize on the development of classroom teaching learning activities pursuing on classroom atmosphere that supports the needs of thinking skills development. Debate learning through IT, that is facebook and blog, can develop three skills as the ability to expand the subject content, communication skills, and the ability to search source/reference through internet.

Keywords: History learning, Debate, Information technology

1. Introduction

It has been a stereotyping case that history is an undesired subject within its burden towards students particularly on giving excessive weights to the students, emphasizing on rote aspects, without giving any significant contribution to the students daily lives. As taken from Wikipedia statement (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historical_thinking) that *“the process of learning history by sacrificing thinking skills for content--that textbooks allow teachers to cover vast amounts of names, dates and places, while encouraging students to simply memorize instead of question or analyze”* it is obvious that history learning mastery based on memorizing aspect is common problem appears in everywhere. On the other side, regardless any negative evidence on history teaching and learning activity, government has stated that history is an obligatory subject for students since 4th grade of primary school until they graduate high school.

In higher education, students of History education department focusing on history learning, are still using rote learning approach on their activity. There are very few percentage of students who concern with thinking skills development, especially in history way of thinking. National Center for History in the School (UCLA) developed History Thinking ability into (a) *chronological thinking*, (b) *historical comprehension*, (c) *historical analysis and interpretation*, (d) *historical research capability*, (e) *historical issues-analysis and decision making*. (Cooper, 1992)

Of these five historical thinking skills, it appears that the aspect of memorization (history facts) is the lowest level to develop cognitive skills. Therefore, history learning does not stop to memorizing historical events, but it has to be developed to think over those historical facts/ events.

Addressing the unconformity of History subject goals with reality, it is important to consider to create a history learning condition that can guide students in developing their thinking skills. IT emphasizes on the development of classroom teaching learning activities pursuing on classroom atmosphere that supports the needs of thinking skills development.

2. Debate Learning

If we put on more consideration, past historical events cannot be reconstructed completely. Reconstruction relies heavily on author background (in this case the person who is in charge in constructing

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history) and the purpose of making the detail of history. History cannot be fully developed due to the limitations of the historian as based on the fact that these actual events are over (happened in the past). Thus the historian can assemble the events in a story of history adapted to the purpose, collected facts, and his/her background. If at any time found other facts relating to the revealed historical narratives, it is also possible to interpret the controversies of these series of historical events.

In the study of history, controversies do not mean lack of objectivity, in fact, it will broaden history study (Eko R., 2011; Ramlan, 2011, Graff, 2010). Gerald Graff, in Wikipedia ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ Teach the Controversy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Teach_the_Controversy)) stated, "*established knowledge is not simply given as a settled matter, but that it is created in a crucible of debate and controversy.*" It is apparent that someone knowledge (in complete) if it has been through debating phases or through discovering and examining controversies. It is important to make students of history learning, to understand that history is not the final picture of the events, but it is events that are likely to change. This is inherent the meaning that learning history is more directed to the development of historical thinking skills. To create such conditions, someone have to accustom to be skeptical, it means not to straightly believe and to question again the truth of the story.

Debate learning in history study is one of developing learning by raising controversial issues in the story/history writing. Debate learning starts from the learning development by exposing controversial issues (Eko R, 2011; Ramlan, 2011). Through this debate method learning, the ability of thinking and to be skeptical is developed. In addition to developing thinking ability and be skeptical, debate learning also leads students to use communication tools good and proper. Ramlan (2011) stated that debate learning directing students to speak and argue from two set opposite sides to be always different in argument; while Wikipedia ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Active learning](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Active_learning)), wrote, "*A student debate is an active way for students to learn because they allow students the chance to take a position and gather information to support their view and explain it to others. These debates not only give the student a chance to participate in a fun activity but it also lets them gain some experience with giving a verbal presentation.*"

Thus learning through debate method only develops subject content (in this case the history subject discipline) but also develops communication skills and the ability to search and find reference sources for argument basis. There are three skills developed through debate learning as (a) the ability to expand the horizon of subject content, (b) communication skills and (c) the ability to search and locate sources as references.

3. Debate Learning Development Through Facebook and Blog

Debate learning can be conducted directly in the classroom by using discussion method or cooperative approach. If using this method, elaborated ability rests on communication ability. Often content aspect does not happen to be the main target, because at this position, debate is developed to familiarize students' talking. Debate learning would be different if it is used through internet based technology media (facebook and blog), because as has been discussed in the previous section, learning development for history over debate method that use internet technology, can be developed through three abilities. Expanding subject content capacity is obtained through debate method, communication skills is achieved through group discussion to answers the objections of the opponents, and the ability to search and locate references from internet browsing activities to complement the material against rivals' arguments.

Why can information technology (internet technology) develop more abilities in history learning? Basically, internet technology develops creating network that connect people globally. Not only for the technology, but also for the application that is developed through internet technology to bring human closer to his kinds, check the features in Facebook social networking: *Chat, Friending, Message and Inbox, Networks & Groups, News Feed, few of parts of Facebook features* ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Facebook features](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Facebook_features)). Hence, blog sites have the power to share information as revealed in Wikipedia *blogs can be important tools for sharing useful information and tips among co-workers, dispersing information to students, or keeping in contact with parents.* (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edublog>).

Technically, history learning development by using information technology based debate method can be illustrated as follow:

First, class is divided in two groups, pro and con arguments (debate learning). Teacher or instructor gives controversial history content, and both groups take action as pro and con group towards the issues.

- Each group discuss on looking for supporting data and making conclusion along with its point of view. In this part, group discussion learning is operated and Facebook social networking becomes media for discussion. Students are trained to express ideas and thoughts by writing his/ her own opinion. Writing communication skill by using good and proper Indonesian Language becomes part of expected development. Besides, the ability to search data/ information in internet is the skills from heuristic and critical aspects in history methodology that students should develop. Reference findings become the basis for broaden students knowledge on discussed history contents. News feed, message/inbox, and chat features from Facebook site is used as a tool for communication in group discussion.
- After each group has strong arguments as based on references that gained from information internet searching, then the pro group reveals arguments and references to the available blog. Con group read and understand arguments from pro group, then they try to break pro group, as based from references, argument by inputting answers to the same blog.
- Thus the arguments are contrasted in groups. To avoid an endless debate, teacher (or instructor) limits the answers to three times. Then attempted to restore the classroom condition to form preliminary findings. In this position, students are inculcated that differences of opinions can usually happen. If they are still dissatisfied, then the debate can still be done by posting arguments individually.

History learning by using Communication and Information Technology debate method has been tried and based on the obtained tests, the result is satisfying.

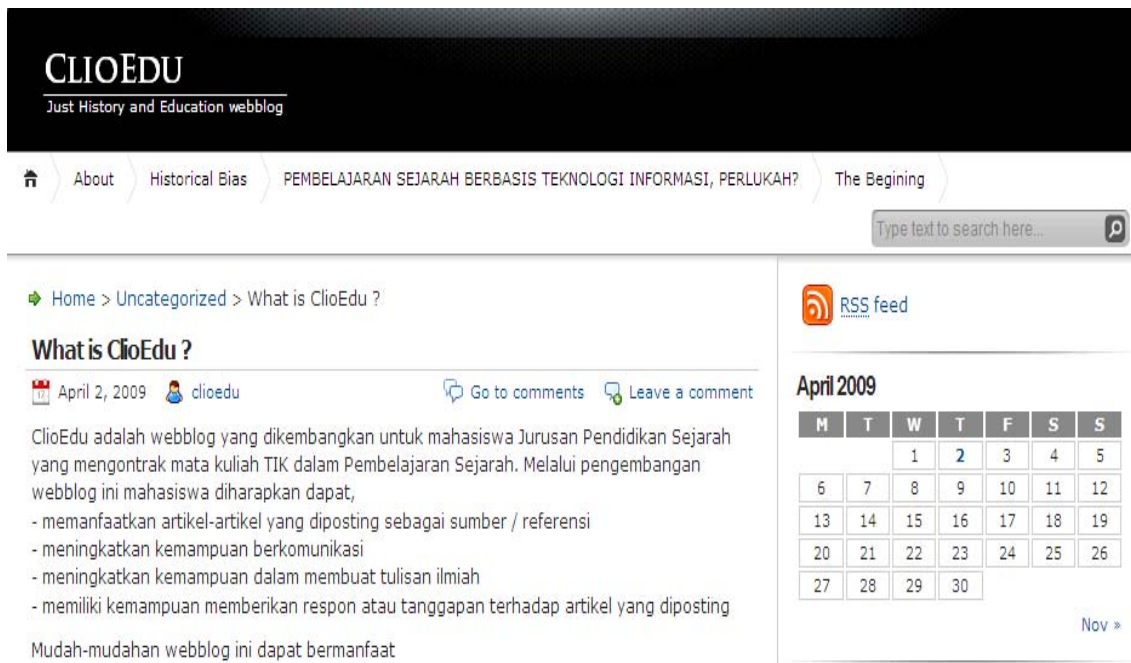


Fig. 1: Site for Learning: <http://clioedu.wordpress.com/2009/04/02/what-is-clioedu/>

This blog site is used to fulfill the needs for higher education students who take ICT subject in History Education Department. Through this blog, various learning methods are developed (debate, resource finding, group discussion, etc.). for debate method learning activity, topic is extend to the meaning of Youth Pledge; whether students as young men still have to fight for his nation, or the struggle is enough and have the duty as the next generation to look for a better living. The learning outcomes in the course of debate method can be shown in the following pictures. The first picture shows the task given by lecturer to the students for classroom learning activity. The task is in the form of group task with topics that have been determined.

Students are divided into two groups and they have to do group discussion to find references for argument basis. Facebook is utilized as discussion tool. Therefore, classroom does not appear to sound noisy, as students face their own computer. They use facebook and go into internet (browsing/surfing) to find information sources.

After each group produces arguments, later on a representative of each group posts arguments to the available blog. The pro group has the first turn to post their arguments, then the con group review the arguments. Con group try to counter the pro group arguments; that is through the same process, group discussion, reference finding, and blog posting.

As appears in blog writing, debate students try to fulfill the three abilities as previously discussed in introduction section. The expansion of insight is gained through discovering activity (heuristic and critics), and writing communication skill can be observed through argument postings by each group. There are some colloquial writing style appeared, but this can be reduced if they get used to these exercises (*developmental objectives*).

4. Basic Learning Theories

The Constructivism main idea is that someone is reconstructed, building knowledge based on what he has. There are two meanings, here: (a) students construct new understanding on what they have known previously, and (b) learning is an active process, where students face what they understand and meet new situation (Bransford, 1979; Chen, 1996; Ausubel, 1998).

As based on cognitive theory, the best way for human to find understandings and to develop is by knowing how to think. In relation to learning, it refers to use and develop thinking mental process. Learning is not only transmit knowledge verbally but also students construct and reconstruct activity.

Here can be seen that the rationale for constructivists about learning is that learning refers to understanding mentally information process, meaning that students organize or associate new information with the knowledge they already have. In this case, they construct and reconstruct cognitive structure. When dealing with history material, then what will happen is the process of historical thinking. History thinking involves concluding aspects in history and imagination in history (Cooper, 1992).

History learning development through ICT based debate method is supported by cognitive and constructivist learning theory; and this is in line with the spirit of primary and secondary education curriculum that requires teachers to develop child centered oriented learning.

5. Conclusion

The thought of history learning on improving thinking ability, and developing through ICT based debate method as described in this paper is still a theoretical idea and it was just tested in classroom activities. Preliminary results show the tendency of students to change the perception of learning history. Nevertheless, this idea has not been through a research phase, so the results shown cannot be validated yet. It is better if this idea is followed in the form of research, so that the result obtained will be accounted for reliability.

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