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Implementation Of The Problem Based Learning Model From The Perspective Of Vygotsky's Social Constructivism Theory In Sukorambi State Junior High School, Jember

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Abstract*: This study aims to analyze the implementation of the Problem Based Learning (PBL) model in Social Studies (IPS) at Sukorambi State Junior High School, Jember, from the perspective of Vygotsky's social constructivism theory. The approach used was qualitative with a descriptive method with a case study type. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation. The results of the study indicate that the implementation of PBL has reflected the principles of social constructivism, especially the concept of Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and scaffolding, where teachers act as facilitators who help students develop critical thinking skills through collaboration and social interaction. However, several obstacles were found such as time constraints, different student readiness, and a lack of contextual learning resources. This study emphasizes the importance of implementing PBL based on social constructivism to improve the quality of IPS learning.*

Keywords: Problem Based Learning, Social Constructivism, Vygotsky, Social Studies Learning

1. INTRODUCTION

Developments in 21st-century education demand learning strategies that position students as problem solvers, collaborators, and active builders of knowledge. One strategy relevant to the demands of 21st-century education is the use of Problem Based Learning (PBL). This learning model places students at the center of learning through investigations into real-life problems (Arends, 2012). From the perspective of Vygotsky's social constructivism theory, Vygotsky asserted that higher-order cognitive functions develop through social interaction and are mediated by language and cultural symbolic tools; two core concepts are the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and scaffolding (gradual assistance from "more experts"). (Vygotsky, 1978). The two main concepts—ZPD and scaffolding—explain how students develop through the assistance of more experienced people, such as teachers or peers. In the learning context, teachers act as facilitators who help students construct knowledge through social and collaborative activities.

Several previous studies have shown that the implementation of PBL can improve students' critical thinking and collaboration skills (Hmelo-Silver & Barrows, 2020; Lee et al., 2021). However, field findings indicate that the implementation of PBL in junior high schools in Indonesia still faces various obstacles, such as limited time, student readiness, and teachers' understanding of providing scaffolding appropriate to students' learning needs (Suryani, 2023; Wibowo, 2025). Thus, there remains a gap between the ideals of theory and the reality of classroom learning practices.

Sukorambi State Junior High School in Jember Regency is one of the schools that has begun implementing a problem-based learning approach in Social Studies (IPS). However, initial observations indicate that the implementation of PBL is still suboptimal. Teachers face difficulties in facilitating effective student collaboration and in appropriately applying the principles of the Zone of Proximal Development. Therefore, an in-depth study is needed to understand how the implementation of the Problem-Based Learning model at this school reflects the principles of Vygotsky's social constructivism theory and the factors that influence it.

Based on the description above, this study aims to describe the implementation of the Problem Based Learning (PBL) model in social studies learning for grade VII at SMPN Sukorambi, Jember, analyze the suitability of the application of PBL with the principles of Vygotsky's social constructivism theory, especially the concept of Zone of Proximal Development and scaffolding, and identify the obstacles and efforts of teachers in implementing social constructivism-based PBL in the junior high school learning environment.

2. LITERATUR REVIEW

2.1 Vygotky's Social Constructivisme Theory

The theory of social constructivism developed by Lev S. Vygotsky emphasizes that knowledge is constructed through social interactions and the cultural context in which individuals live (Vygotsky, 1978). According to Vygotsky, the learning process does not occur individually, but through dialogue and collaboration with others who are more competent. Two key concepts that are highly relevant in modern learning are the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and scaffolding.

The Zone of Proximal Development describes the range of abilities between what a student can do independently and what can be achieved with the help of others (teachers or peers). In this process, scaffolding is provided to help students move toward independent learning (Vygotsky, 1980; Chaiklin, 2003). This theory emphasizes the importance of social interaction as a primary means of knowledge formation and cognitive development.

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In the classroom context, the application of social constructivism theory means that teachers act as facilitators, creating a collaborative environment where students interact with each other and collectively construct meaning from their learning experiences. This type of learning emphasizes not only the final outcome but also the thinking and collaborative processes that occur within it (Daniels, 2020).

2.2 Problem Based Learning (PBL) Learning Model

The Problem-Based Learning (PBL) model is an approach that places real-world problems as the starting point of the learning process (Hmelo-Silver, 2019). In PBL, students not only receive information but are actively involved in finding, organizing, and analyzing it to solve authentic problems. This model is considered effective for developing critical thinking, communication, and collaboration skills (Arends, 2012; Barrows & Kelson, 2021).

The main steps in PBL include: (1) orientation to the problem, (2) organizing students to learn, (3) guiding individual and group investigations, (4) developing and presenting the results of the work, and (5) analyzing and reflecting on the problem-solving process (Arends, 2012). Through this process, students play an active role in building conceptual understanding and social skills that are relevant to real life.

2.3 The Relationship between Problem Based Learning and Social Constructivism Problem

Theoretically, PBL aligns strongly with Vygotsky's theory of social constructivism. In PBL, students work in small groups to discuss problems and find solutions together. This interaction and collaboration is a direct application of the ZPD principle, where students provide scaffolding to each other to achieve higher levels of understanding (Hmelo-Silver & Barrows, 2020; Lee et al., 2021).

Furthermore, the teacher's role in PBL also reflects the role of the more knowledgeable other (MKO) as described by Vygotsky. Teachers serve not only as sources of information but also as facilitators who guide students' thinking processes, provide encouragement, and adjust support as needed. Thus, learning becomes more meaningful as students construct their own knowledge through social activities and reflection.

Several recent studies support the integration of social constructivism theory and the PBL model. For example, research by Suryani (2023) found that implementing social constructivism-based PBL increased student participation and strengthened collaborative skills in social studies classes. Similar results were reported by Wibowo (2025), who confirmed that this approach helps students internalize concepts through meaningful social interactions.

Thus, it can be concluded that Vygotsky's social constructivism theory provides a solid conceptual basis for the application of PBL in modern educational environments, because both emphasize the importance of social activities, collaboration, and the construction of knowledge through direct experience.

3. METHODOLOGY

This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach with a case study type with the aim of understanding in depth the implementation of the Problem Based Learning (PBL) model from the perspective of Vygotsky's social constructivism theory in Social Studies learning at the junior high school level. This approach was chosen to enable researchers to can explore phenomena contextually and understand the meaning of behavior, interactions, and experiences of participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

This research was conducted at Sukorambi State Junior High School, Jember Regency, East Java Province. The location was selected using a purposive sampling technique because this school has implemented the Problem Based Learning model in several subjects, including Social Studies, but there has never been an in-depth study regarding the suitability of the implementation of Problem Based Learning with Vygotsky's Social Constructivism principles. The research subjects consisted of a Grade VII Social Studies teacher as the implementer of Problem Based Learning, Grade VII students who participated in Social Studies learning using the Problem Based Learning model, the principal and the Deputy Curriculum as supporting informants who provided institutional and policy perspectives. The number of informants was determined based on the principle of data saturation, namely when the information obtained has shown a recurring pattern and there is no significant new data (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2018).

Data collection techniques used: 1. Observation, researchers conducted direct observation of social studies learning activities in class VII observing the interaction between teachers and students, group collaboration, and the application of scaffolding principles in problem-based learning activities. 2. In-depth interviews, interviews were conducted semi-structured with teachers, students, and principals to obtain in-depth information about their experiences, perceptions, and understanding of the implementation of problem-based learning with Vygotsky's Social Constructivism perspective. 3. Documentation, documents include teaching modules and photos of learning activities.

Data analysis in this study uses the Miles and Huberman (2014) model which includes 3 stages: 1. Data reduction, to selecting, simplifying, and grouping data that is relevant to the research focus. 2. Presenting data, presenting data in the form of descriptive narratives to facilitate interpretation, 3. Drawing conclusions and verification, drawing meaning and patterns of data that have been analyzed, then verifying by member checking with participants to ensure validity findings.

The validity of the data was tested using four criteria with the theory of Lincoin and Guba (1985), namely: 1. Credibility is carried out through triangulation of techniques, sources, and time, 2. Transferability, maintained by providing a systematic description of the research context so that it can be applied to similar situations, 3. Dependability, achieved by documenting the research process systematically so that it can be input, and 4. Confirmability, carried out through comparing data with documents, and the results of interviews from various informants.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Implementation of the Problem Based Learning Model at Sukorambi State junior High School, Jember

Based on the results of observations and interviews, the application of the Problem Based Learning (PBL) model in the Social Studies subject for grade VII at Sukorambi State Middle School shows that teachers have attempted to start learning by raising issues that are relevant to students' social lives, such as environmental issues, local economic activities, and the impact of social media on community interactions.

The learning process begins with a problem-orientation stage, where the teacher presents a contextual situation and asks trigger questions. Students are then divided into small groups to discuss solutions. At this stage, students are seen actively participating in identifying problems and seeking additional information through various learning resources, including textbooks and digital media.

However, observations revealed that student engagement levels varied. Some students demonstrated independence in exploring information, while others awaited direction from the teacher. This indicates differences in student readiness to learn, as explained in Vygotsky's (1978) concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD).

4.2 Application of the Zone of proximal Development (ZPD) dan Scaffolding Principles

Based on interview data, teachers stated that assistance was provided through guiding questions, structured group discussions, and direct feedback on student ideas. This practice reflects the principle of scaffolding, which is temporary assistance provided to students until they are able to complete tasks independently (Chaiklin, 2003).

A concrete example of scaffolding is seen when a teacher provides a simple illustration of the concept of "social inequality" using an everyday life situation. Once students understand the example, the teacher directs them to identify similar cases in their environment. This process demonstrates a gradual progression of support from direct guidance to reduced teacher intervention, as suggested by Vygotsky (1980) and further developed by Daniels (2020).

Besides teachers, interactions between students also play a crucial role in supporting learning. In discussion groups, students with higher abilities often help their peers understand the material and develop arguments.

This shows how social collaboration functions as a form of peer scaffolding, in line with Vygotsky's view that social interaction is the basis for knowledge formation (Daniels, 2020; Lee et al., 2021).

Figure 1: Teacher provides *Scaffolding*

4.3 Impact of Implementing Problem Based Learning on Student Activities and Understanding

Interview results showed that students found problem-based learning more engaging and challenging than conventional learning. They reported understanding social studies material more easily because they learned through real-life cases and worked collaboratively in groups. Students also stated that discussion activities helped them understand different perspectives and improved their speaking skills in front of peers.

These findings support the research of Hmelo-Silver & Barrows (2020), which states that PBL not only improves critical thinking skills but also fosters social and communication skills. Within the context of social constructivism, this process reflects how knowledge is constructed through social interactions and self-reflection on learning experiences (Vygotsky, 1978; Arends, 2012).

However, several obstacles were also found, including:

1. Limited learning time means that the reflection stage is often not carried out in depth.
2. Some students still show high dependency on teachers.
3. Lack of contextual learning resources to support exploration of local social issues

These obstacles indicate that the successful implementation of PBL based on social constructivism requires teachers' readiness in designing relevant problem scenarios, providing sufficient time for reflection, and developing scaffolding strategies that are appropriate to students' characteristics.

4.4 Integration of Problem based Learning and Vygotsky's Social Contructivism Principles

The research results show that the implementation of PBL at SMPN Sukorambi has led to constructivist learning, but still needs to be strengthened in collaborative and reflective aspects. The learning process, which involves social interaction and gradual support (scaffolding), has been shown to support students' cognitive development, in accordance with the principle of the Zone of Proximal Development.

From Vygotsky's theoretical perspective, effective learning occurs when students actively participate in meaningful social activities. Teachers are not the sole source of knowledge, but rather act as mediators, guiding students to think and construct meaning through social interactions. This finding aligns with research by Suryani (2023) and Wibowo (2025), which confirms that implementing social constructivism-based PBL can increase student participation, responsibility, and independence in learning.

Thus, it can be concluded that the implementation of PBL at SMPN Sukorambi has demonstrated learning practices oriented towards the social construction of knowledge, although it still requires improvement in time management, scaffolding planning, and more equitable student involvement in collaborative activities.

Figure 2: ***Problem Based Learning Learning Activities***

5. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Based on the results of qualitative research that has been conducted regarding the implementation of the Problem Based Learning (PBL) model from the perspective of Vygotsky's social constructivism theory at Sukorambi State Middle School, Jember, several important things can be concluded as follows:

1. The implementation of the PBL model in social studies learning has been successful and has led to active, collaborative, and meaningful learning. Teachers have begun learning by raising authentic problems, encouraging students to work collaboratively in small groups, and facilitating discussions to find solutions to social problems relevant to everyday life.
2. The main principles of Vygotsky's social constructivism theory, namely the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and scaffolding, are reflected in learning practices. Teachers act as facilitators, providing gradual assistance to students until they are able to understand concepts and solve problems independently. Social interactions between students also serve as a form of peer scaffolding that strengthens understanding and critical thinking skills.
3. The impact of implementing social constructivism-based PBL is seen in increased student participation, critical thinking skills, and communication and collaboration skills. However, obstacles remain, such as limited learning time, varying student readiness levels, and a lack of contextual learning resources.
4. Overall, the implementation of PBL at Sukorambi State Junior High School has reflected Vygotsky's social constructivism principles in the context of social studies learning. PBL has proven effective in building understanding through social experiences, although strengthening in terms of scaffolding strategies and learning reflection is still needed for more optimal results.

Based on the conclusions above, some suggestions that can be given include:

1. Teachers need to strengthen their understanding of social constructivism theory and scaffolding strategies to be able to tailor learning support to individual students' needs. Teachers are also advised to set aside dedicated time for reflection activities so students can internalize learning outcomes.
2. For schools, it is hoped that they will provide support in the form of training and professional development for teachers related to the implementation of PBL based on social constructivism, as well as providing learning resources that are contextual and relevant to students' social lives.
3. For future researchers, it is recommended to expand the research to other subjects or use a classroom action research design to examine in more depth the effectiveness of PBL in improving students' social and cognitive abilities based on Vygotsky's theory.

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