

Proposing Indonesia History Teaching that Transcends Political Ideologies

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Abstract

The teaching of Indonesian history, in many cases in school, remains dominated by history of politics and political indoctrination, underscoring the need for critical and holistic learning. This paper aims to analyze the Indonesian National History textbooks used in schools, and to examine the possibility of teaching Indonesian history that goes beyond political indoctrination and is holistic. The method used in this paper is the analysis of an Indonesian National History textbooks that have been used as the main textbook for the history subject in schools. The teaching of Indonesian history in schools is still dominated by a single version of historical events. The narratives of Indonesian history lessons often ignore different perspectives, or other aspects of historical events that are of interest. Indonesian history does not only belong to the winners. A holistic approach to the teaching of history is expected to help enrich students' knowledge of past events and provide a clearer picture of the history of a multicultural society. For example, a discussion of the Benteng economic policy should not only revolve around the points of view of one ethnic group and ignore the suffering of others. In other cases, discussions on the PKI revolt often neglect human rights aspects, et cetera. Not only should students gain knowledge about past events based on the dominant interpretations, but are also exposed to the narratives of marginalized people. Not only that, history lessons should also cover aspects that include arts, literature, painting, music and other cultural products. In the end, a holistic approach enriches students' understanding of a historical event, foster a positive attitude and inspire them to learn about stories that have been under-heard or deliberately marginalized.

Keywords: Holistic Approach; Indonesian History; Indoctrination; Learning.

Introduction

Reconstruction of History is almost always partial and never complete. This is due to some limited access or incomplete sources on past events. People's understanding of the past depends on how they construct the past itself. Likewise, history teaching is a matter that always invites debate. In Indonesia, the debate is generally related to the content of history lessons that are taught in schools, especially during the New Order

period. The content of history lessons is often one-sided and ignores other interpretations on a historical event.

The problem of teaching history in schools is not as simple as adding historiographical and methodological aspects in history teaching, nor is it enough to add historical interpretations, especially if there are many empty spaces that the existing dominant narrative cannot explain. In addition to problems with the methods of history teaching in the classroom, the content of history lessons in our country is still coloured by dominant stories of past events. The teaching of history has not given students the space to analyze that different historians will have different interpretations about the same historical event. An example of this is lessons related to the Cultivation System. In the history of Indonesia, it is described as a dark period in the nation's history as a result of Dutch colonial policies. But from another perspective, the Cultivation System policy formed the basis of the Indonesian economy.

George Orwell (2016) in his book, *Ministry of Truth* describes how governments use the teaching history to maintain power. They assume that control over the present and the future depends to a large extent on control over the past. In many countries, the main purpose of teaching national history is the political socialization of citizens. So, it can almost be said that there are no other subjects that are capable of serving the purpose of political socialization other than the teaching of history. This is because historical facts are like flexible clay whose interpretations can be formed and combined with one another (Faruk, 2018). The facts in question are never independent because they are always tied to the characters and language of the subjects involved in the narrative. Facts that historians try to assemble are influenced by certain interests which are rooted in the interests of the speaker as well as the context of his speech situation. For example, the book *Indonesian National History* (Poesponegoro & Notosusanto, 1993), was written from the same facts but with a different narrative, which is considered the antithesis of colonial historiography.

Anti-colonial-oriented historical writing emerged as a result of the turbulent shift of power from the Dutch government to the new Indonesian government. And the plan for the the first Indonesian National History (SNI) book was adopted during the first national history seminar in 1957. The revolution spirit among Indonesians gave rise to anti-colonial perspectives.

The style of post-colonial historiography above emphasizes a history that aims to "break down and clean up colonial ruins." It was for this purpose that the national history seminar was held at that time. That is how the Indonesian National History with the ideology of independence was agreed based on the spirit of anti-colonialism. The cultivation of the spirit of nationalism was deemed very important at that time, in order to form the national identity of a new nation-state. The way in which nationalism was imbued was contained in SNI. Soedjatmoko raised concerns about the direction of Indonesian historiography, which he described as demagogic, during a national history seminar in 1957. Soedjatmoko's criticism showed that at that time there was a strong tendency for ideological history writing that ignored scientific aspects.

The seminar revealed the need for a deeper thought on Indonesian historiography with the urgent need to write a national history textbook. Because of that, the National History Seminar I is considered to be the beginning of modern Indonesian historiography (Kartodirdjo, 1982). Even though writing the SNI book cannot be separated from political interests, historian Sartono Kartodirdjo (1982) reminded us that Indonesian historiography must still adhere to empirical science. The teaching of history is sometimes used to cultivate patriotism among citizens, create a sense of pride, or present events heroically. However, historians should not write the glorified version of history, but also present past events in a proportional way.

Politics of Education and Political Content in Indonesian History Books

The politics of education according to O'Neil (2008) is all efforts, policies, and tactics or strategies related to education. In subsequent developments, the the politics of education was determined by the authorities as agents to direct thought. Several researchers have studied the relationship between historical education and the politics of education, especially in Asia, the extent to which education politics is used in historical education. Most studies discuss political content as generally seen in history textbooks (Suwignyo, 2014; Fraenkel & Wallen, 2015; Lin & Jackson, 2019).

In writing the master book, National History of Indonesia, the powers that be were very dominant in shaping the content of Indonesian history according to their interests. The history of Indonesia during the Dutch colonial period was overshadowed by the politics of 'decolonization'. National historical narratives often function to mobilize the masses by to burnish the image of those in power and discredit the previous regime to incite public antipathy. Political legitimacy is the main reason for producing the Indonesian historical narrative. This is used to maintain power through the dominant interpretations of historical facts. Governments cultivate political ideologies in society in order to instill moral, political, and cultural values to maintain control and hegemony. Resink (1953), likens historical events and historical constructions to a portrait. As a consequence of being a portrait, the results of the photo shoot are certainly influenced by various factors, such as: 1. the tools of the portrait (capturing power, approach, ability to reach and process sources), 2. the photographer (the historian), the choice of point of view, the distance between the author and the object of study being written, ideological positions, experiences, and other interests.

The state often uses coercion through policy, education, publishing, broadcasting, and repetitive film production to influence society. The element of education is very important to create consent. Writing a national history book which is part of historical education is itself a manifestation of the ruler's pursuit of hegemony. Education is often used for pragmatic purposes to occupy or maintain control and the status quo. As Down (2004) points out, rulers have the authority to produce and reproduce history.

History education, as a bridge that connects the past, present, and future, is full of political interests. History education is often used to maintain and strengthen social structures. As Kan (2007) writes "For all subjects in school, history is perhaps the most

effective for instilling political ideology, and the one that best reflects the culture and politics of society because it serves legitimacy to define national identities and ideologies, and contributes to nation-building". According to him, historical education has three main political goals. First, uniting multicultural societies in various social strata in terms of their shared history; Second, constructing the history of citizens in a particular country (national level); and Third, building a history with mankind at the global level (global history).

Historical Awareness and Problem of Logocentrism Today

The digital era has the consequence of transforming society from a passive audience into an information producer (Ritzer, 2012). Today, the problem of people's orientation in viewing information is no longer in the position of objects that are determined by the mainstream mass media, but furthermore society can play a role in producing knowledge. Partial knowledge can lead to incomplete understanding. Partial knowledge encourages someone to be trapped in post-truth, where people are looking for justification rather than truth. As the Oxford Dictionary itself defines the term post-truth as a condition in which facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than emotions and personal beliefs (Ball, 2016). Post-truth is deliberately developed and becomes a propaganda tool with the aim of processing public sentiment so that those who are less critical will be easily influenced by logocentrism. Logocentrism refers to Jacques Derrida's concept of a fundamental error in assuming what constitutes arbitrary and artificial constructs for verifiable events.

The information conveyed creates a condition called an echo-chamber, in which a person receives homogeneous information and ideas continuously, while other perspectives do not fit into the space (Dubois & Blank; 2018). The notion of echo chamber metaphorically describes a situation in which only one narrative of belief in a particular knowledge discourse is shared (Dubois, 2018). These knowledge institutions create a single discourse so that there is only obedience or resistance as well as a means of implementing power strategies (Haryatmoko, 2016). Because of the relative value of reality contained in the discourse, the truth that we understand is limited by certain dominant discourses.

The science of history, as stated by Lukacs (1968) "History has become a thought" for modern humans makes it influential in human thinking. Historical awareness is a rational awareness tasked with providing explanations (Kuntowijoyo, 2004). Historical thinking functions as a foothold for modern humans to think rationally and guides humans to approach actual reality based on historical reality amidst the disruption of knowledge.

Attention to how historians put together words, as well as showing sensitivity to the language mastery possessed by historians. It is in some cases useful to reflect on the process of writing stories in the past. There is a connection between language and learning about the past. The past has become very much tied to the way historians use words and choose language. By depending on word construction, the main consequence of language choice is what Teeuw (1996) calls "the fact that it depends on

words". The science of history through historical sources such as memories of actors, witnesses to events is useful for establishing an encounter between the relationship between the present and the past, especially those that cannot be obtained from documents.

For Foucault (2002), lines of words in historical sources in the form of archives, for example, show a character of thought. If you want to understand the thoughts contained in the archives at a certain place and time, then find the words in the text that dominate. Foucault suggests that we are like archaeologists who trace the origins or context of the discourse produced.

Sigmund Freud, the founder of psychoanalysis as a psychological theory, first put forward his view of archives as a source of knowledge. For Freud, archives have an authoritative record in which the content as a whole is regarded as true and that the language of the archives is a stable thing. Derrida (1996) rejected the psychic structure introduced by Freud, which he considered strongly logocentrism. Derrida's argument to reject Freud's psychoanalysis is contained in the method of deconstruction and archives as a source of knowledge even though it cannot be separated from the context in which it is produced. Derrida's deconstruction starts with a strategy of shaking up the basic categories and assumptions on which our thinking is established. In other words, deconstruction is an attempt to radically criticize and dismantle various basic assumptions that support logocentric thoughts and beliefs that glorify a single narrative.

After the fall of the New Order, many historians have begun to deconstruct the discourse in history books. For one, the agenda stems from the critique that the New Order's national history was unidimensional, and militaristic (McGregor, 2007). Another criticism that exists is that the New Order regime has distorted historical facts (Adam, 2001, p. 23). However, this kind of criticism has the validity of a direct counter to the work of some historians (Adam, 2001; McGregor, 2007). But it is also inappropriate to blame all historiographical problems after the reformation on Suharto and the New Order regime. The roots of Indonesia's current historiographical problems did not basically stem from the legacy of the New Order, for which no one can fully blame the Suharto regime. On the other hand, most of the crucial problems stem from a national historiographical perspective (Suwignyo, 2014).

Every past event requires a chronological aspect to detail it continuously and assemble it into a memory to be presented in the present as a production of knowledge and experience from previous people (Vansina, 2014). However, people tend to prefer history with a single narrative. When historians start a counter-narrative by writing many alternative versions, the public cannot accept it. Rejection and prohibition of academic discussion, burning of history books, are representation of the inability of the public to distinguish between the academic realm and the public sphere. They are more accepting of history with a single narrative than to open a dialogue on alternative discourses.

Going Beyond Ideological History by Using a Holistic Approach in Teaching Indonesian History

Multicultural society characterized by grouping based on ethnicity always creates problems in the process of developing the nation state. It is also able to stimulate competition and at the same time ethnic conflicts that interfere with social integration. These conflicts result in the dominance and advancement of one people over another, thereby promoting domination over other groups (Weiner, 1987). Different and conflicting ethnic demands encourage competition in a multicultural society, a factor of instability in the state (Rabushka & Shepscale, 1972). A holistic approach in a multicultural society can be used as a strategy to write a more comprehensive history involving many parties who are mirrors of a multicultural society, such as Indonesia.

The holistic approach does not have a single definition, but can be explained through a number of recurring themes that appear in the literature (Forbes, 2003, p. 17; Miller, 1991, p. 3). A holistic approach can be interpreted as a method of writing a comparative history of society, especially the process of the meeting between local history (based on indigenous experience) with colonial history, national history, and global history to search for patterns and processes of encounters across continents and centuries. Comparative history starts from the fact that one's interpretation is tentative, thus trying to draw a diachronic line between chronological (time) and geographical (space) aspects.

The holistic approach significantly expands and connects people throughout the country both indigenous, migrants, and all historical activities, so there is speculation to continue to rethink the debate about the historical experience of mankind in the past that determines the future (Coates, 2004). Clark (1991) states that the ultimate goal of holistic education is to change the perspective of oneself to others and the world from a fragmented perspective to an integrative one.

The holistic approach focuses on integrating various thoughts (Patel, 2003) and therefore, students are required to focus on the impact of their own actions on others in their environment. This is so that they can learn to take responsible action to solve the problems they face. Forbes (2003) suggests that in a holistic perspective, students are positioned as active, participative and critical learners who perceive and understand themselves in a changing world and in various local and global scenarios.

Some thinkers agree that a holistic approach can be useful for developing critical learners. The perspective of a holistic approach demands that the world around us be treated with kindness. Individuals are stewards of the environment and hold positions as stewards for others and future generations. The holistic approach orientation has a significant impact on the theory and practice of learning in the classroom. It also determines how the curriculum is understood and used from a societal perspective that focuses on the interrelationships between various subjects.

History may be a difficult science because it has to do with subjectivity, to the scattered evidence of relics, and what historians find. Even though historians have examined historical evidence, historical problems arise because too much evidence is selected in memory, and not all historical witnesses are still alive (Husbands, 1996).

Today, in the era of Liberal democracy, the discourse to change the formulation of a strict and uniform historical narrative becomes more elastic. This means that previously we only recognized historical stories from the dominating narrative, now we also recognize historical narratives with other versions, thus creating a different discourse. What happens in historical discourse will take into account the situation of certain groups of people, and those who have a different narrative from the dominant narrative, making history learning more interesting.

In history lessons about the Indonesian revolution, for example, local events which previously received less attention have a place to be discussed. This is as a result of the dominant discourse that places revolutionary events in the regions as limited to “a chorus that accompanies dominant themes” in national historiography (Lucas, 1989).

Teaching history involves a complex set of skills to make classroom learning more active and creative. History teachers are not only required to have professional competence, but also substance competence in what will be taught. With a holistic approach, it is hoped that teachers can further develop history learning by connecting it to real life.

The use of various social theories in studying historical events not only frames how history is written and taught, but also how events are constructed and written with various perspectives. Modern historians have begun to dare to expand their studies by filling in the blanks on assumptions about possible past truths. The issue of the use of social theory in historical studies has long been the subject of debate. Historian Peter Burke explains the need for the use of social science theory in historical studies, and comparisons in historical studies. By comparing two different community groups, the results obtained in describing one group will be clearer.

Within the framework of holistic history, many studies can be developed to allow children to better understand their society. An example is the study of Chinese Indonesians, which is still an area that still needs to be explored, because of the issue of identity that is still often questioned. Skinner (1951), Nio Joe Lan (1940), D.E. Willmot, Lea E. Williams, Claudine Salmon, were the first generation who were interested in the study of Chinese-Indonesians (Suryadinata, 1986). Skinner (1951) in his work *On the Chinese in Southeast Asia* highlighted the problem of the Chinese-Indonesian people and pinpointed critical aspects such as the characteristics of their minority and their separateness from the indigenous population. Nio Joe Lan, (1940) in his book clearly describes the first Chinese nationalist organization in Java that involved many local figures. Besides Nio, there are also other works such as the work of Liem Thian Joe (1933). In his work entitled *Riwajat Semarang*, Joe describes the condition of the Chinese community in Java from 1416-1931.

In holistic history learning, the theme of social movements can also be included. An example is a history of crime with a focus on resistance and social banditry. This focus was chosen so that students are able to reflect that banditry which was considered a criminal act by the colonial government was actually a form of resistance to repressive colonial power. The perpetrators of social banditry can be considered

both heroes and villains. Students are expected to be able to reflect that there are many perspectives on the issue of crime, including the perspective of banditry as a struggle for minorities and as a weapon of resistance for natives who were defeated by the repressive and discriminatory regulations of the colonial government.

Historical lessons on the theme of the 1965 PKI rebellion, for example, should not only focus on a single narrative, but also on the human rights of those who lost, their voices also need to be considered, the voices of their murdered families, the voices of their ostracized children, as if the problem was genetic, the voices of Indonesian students who happened to be studying in a Communist country, who were not allowed to go home and had to be separated from their relatives.

On other themes, such as the Benteng economic policy, the discussion should not only highlights the importance of protecting indigenous economic actors in accordance with the dominant narrative, but also has to listen to those who are expelled, killed, and so on. The discussion about the nationalization of Dutch companies, for example, should not ignore the voices of the Dutch owners of the Company. That way, students are invited to think and have another perspective on violence, about human rights and about arbitrariness to gain positive lessons.

On the theme of historiography, for example, a history teacher does not only teach the stages of historiography, such as heuristics, criticism, interpretation, and historiography, for example. The teacher must introduce new perspectives to approach past facts, that a historical fact can be produced in various historical narratives depending on the ideology, ethnic group or point of view of the historical writer. In a holistic historical study, the lives of marginalized people who have not been presented or have been deliberately marginalized, become very important. Simply put, a holistic understanding of history can be achieved if we present various perspectives in history learning. In a holistic historical approach, historical narratives belong to all groups.

Historians have the task and challenge to prove the existence of all groups. Stereotyped images of traditional, parochial, patrimonial, racism, etc. have become the center of permissive campaigns that are dangerous for the life of a multicultural world. This kind of stereotype dominates the dominant discourse and can only be countered by giving the marginalized people a space to enter into historiography.

Many of us recognize the problem of perpetuating the dominant narrative, but discussion of the stories of the “others” is often separate from the discourse of the dominant narrative. In fact, the story of the “others” is more needed to get a comprehensive understanding of the dominant discourse narrative. Efforts to reshape the historical teaching diktats that fill the void of dominant discourse spaces are carried out by integrating the stories of the “others” into the curriculum, in weaving them together to contribute to a “more authentic” history. This is what is known as holistic learning.

The presence of more serious Indonesian culinary studies or food studies in early academic circles such as the work of Rahman (2011) and the work of Ariwibowo (2011) has enriched the discourse on cultural history. There are also interpretive narratives

on historical data from cookbook texts, government and individual records about the culture of Indonesian flavors and food scientists in the past. People do not just talk about the history of food only from a cultural perspective, but also become more comprehensive with an economic approach such as how commercial activities in the culinary field are a source of people's income, social approaches such as the variety of people's tastes that are shaped by social status. In addition, the study of holistic history raises new themes, such as maritime history, the history of old cities and ports, and many essays have been produced. Even special seminars are often held to discuss the theme of port cities.

Some of them are "Scientific Discussion of Silk Road Cities: Collection of Discussion Papers (1998) designed by the Ministry of Education and Culture (Depdikbud) in 1994. The scope of scientific discussion covers the general description of the 1400-1600 period regarding port cities on the Silk Road, as well as commercial ports around the Malacca Strait, Sumatran waters, and Maluku waters. But little has been said about local ports, especially those that are now defunct. However, most studies of the history of local ports often escape scrutiny because historical writing tends to be dominated by major events on the mainland, especially in the center. Historiography focusing on the history on land often ignores experiences from the periphery. In fact, the writing of Indonesian history must be able to combine land and sea domains, or what is known as the history of "Motherland" as seen in the monumental work of Lopian (2004).

J. Burchard, suggested that national historical research, the standard is that which views the homeland in a perspective that can view the homeland within the framework of world history, which views the homeland as part of the universe. One of the hallmarks of a holistic approach is that it creates a comprehensive narrative. So that it touches the niches, and explores the uniqueness in historical studies.

Therefore, a holistic approach always gives special space to local history. In addition to the aspect of locality which is always unique and different in each region, local history must also be able to explain the problem of social dynamics and see whether there is a connection between the events or phenomena studied with economic, political and cultural structures as causal relationships (Abdullah, 1979). The holistic approach in social history has the advantage of considering well the structural ties, namely the interconnected network of social roles, between historical actors and society.

Conclusions

Indonesian history does not only belong to the winners. A holistic approach to the teaching of history is expected to help enrich students' knowledge of past events and provide a clearer picture of the history of a multicultural society. For example, a discussion of the Benteng economic policy should not only revolve around the points of view of one ethnic group and ignore the suffering of others. In other cases, discussions on the PKI revolt often neglect human rights aspects, et cetera. Not only should students gain knowledge about past events based on the dominant

interpretations, but are also exposed to the narratives of marginalized people. One of the hallmarks of a holistic approach is that it creates a comprehensive narrative. So that it touches the niches, and explores the uniqueness in historical studies. In the end, a holistic approach not only enriches students' understanding of a historical event, but also foster a positive attitude and inspire them from learning it.

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