FOSTERING STUDENTS' CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS IN ELEMENTARY SOCIAL STUDIES USING *SOCRATES QUESTION METHOD* (SQM)

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Abstract

In instructional activities, critical thinking can assist students in improving their understanding of the materials studied by critically evaluating arguments in textbooks, journals, peer discussion, and teachers' comments. Critical thinking is one of the high-level thought processes that can be used in the formation of students' conceptual system. By thinking critically, students can develop a meaningful experience, written and oral. To develop students' critical thinking, instructional activities can conduct a *Socratic Question Method*. This method is able to improve critical thinking skill in any subject materials, including social studies. Social studies designed to develop knowledge, understanding, and analysis capabilities of the social conditions in entering a dynamic social life. To achieve these learning objectives, teacher should be acknowledging with effective learning strategies that can encourage students' potential and the ability. Students who able to think critically would have better understanding the condition they live in. This paper aims to give clear description of how the Socratic Question method should be conducted in elementary social studies instructions. The step of this method are: 1) Dialectic, it means the method is carried out by two or more persons as pros and cons, or which have a difference of opinion; 2) Conversation, it means that the method is done in the form of a conversation or verbal communication; 3) Tentative, meaning the truth is sought temporary is not absolute, and the alternatives are open to all possibilities; 3) Empirical and inductive, means that all matters discussed and how the solution must be based on empirical matters; 4) Conceptual, means that methods aimed at the achievement of knowledge, understanding and concepts which better than before.

Keywords: Critical thinking, Socratic Question method, Elementary social study

INTRODUCTION

In a social context, Social Study is very important to be developed early on self-learners. Historically social study is a subject in school designed on the basis of phenomena and social reality with an interdisciplinary approach involving various branches of the social sciences.

Sardiman (2008: 4) said, through learning of social studies, students will be directed, guided and motivated to become citizens and citizens of the world are good with sensitivity, and the ability to understand, study and participate solving the problems of social and nationality, as well as inherit and develop the noble values of the nation's culture.

As the demands of the changing times in the world should be in the learning process of learning primary social studies is able to provide the best solution, but the reality on the ground is very different. Therefore, it appears some problem mentions that the social studies lesson too laden material, is rote and cognition, learners many accumulate facts and ideas from faculty, so that learning is not applicable social studies and less meaningful in the context of real community and social studies achievement tend to be low.

Utami Munandar (2004: 8), said that in education the emphasis is more on memorization and find the right answers to the questions given. Thinking processes including a high level of creative thinking are rarely practiced.

In an effort to create an atmosphere of learning and the learning process as mandated by Act 20 of 2003, the learning process should be reformed. In connection

with the reform of the learning process, the government through the Minister of National Education (game) No. 41 of 2007 has set the standard process. In *Permendiknas* (ministry of education' regulation) was stated that the learning process should take place in an interactive, inspiring, fun, challenging, motivating the students to actively participate and provide enough space for innovation, creativity, and independence in accordance with their talents, interests, and physical and psychological development of learners. Lecturers should make the shift in teaching that emphasizes low-level thinking skills to learning that emphasizes higher level thinking skills or critical thinking skills (Tsapartis & Zoller); Lubezki, Dori, and Zoller)

From the observation of students and teachers, there were low students' responses in social studies learning. One reason of low student response is that the learning presentation is unattractive and boring. The low response of students to social studies will hamper the process and outcomes of learning and lead students poorly trained to develop thinking skills critical to solve problems and apply the concepts they have learned in real life.

Assuming that condition, such a method which is needed to optimize the learning process is Socratic Question Method (SQM). Johnson, DW & Johnson, R.T. (2002) says Socratic Question Method (SQM) is one question and answer method which best used to guide and deepen the level of understanding of the subject matter being taught, so that learners get their own thoughts on the results of resolved cognitive conflict. Socrates method is also known as the dialectical method.

In line with Ahmad Qosyim, (2007: 11) who stated that the Socratic method is not a "question" but what is caused by the questions that stimulate people to think and work. This method is a method of learning that helps students to answer a wide range of problems in everyday life. This method requires that learners can think critically and have the ability to ask in high level then the final result obtained is a critical attitude.

Furthermore Qosim (2007: 15) also said that the learning process which apply the Socratic method is a learning by providing a series of questions which aim to know something related contents in question a particular material. The general implementation of learning consists of three main stages, namely the initial activities, core activities and closing activities. While six stages of the procedural method of Socrates, namely: 1) Determining the topic of the subject matter of discussion will be learned, 2) Developing two or three general questions and start implementing of qustion-answer activities, 3) View or observing whether there are possibility of incompatibility, disagreement, or cognitive conflict in student minds, 4) Inquire back on the things that lead to cognitive conflict, 5) Continuing questions and answers so that students can solve the conflict to move to a deeper analysis level, and 6) Summing up the results of a question and answer by pointing out the important things that should be obtained by students.

By applying the Socratic method, it is expected to help improvement the ability of students' question and able to produce critical attitude which is very needed in learning. So as to improve the ability of teachers to manage teaching and learning activities in the classroom, and help students to be active in developing the ability to ask/give question and think critically.

According Yuniarti (2009: 11), the importance of given question or problem in learning based on the fact that someone would think and determine the attitude when confronted by a question as stated by the thinkers of The Critical Thinking Community that " Thinking is not driven by answers but by questions ". To be able to think, someone has to deal with questions that stimulate his thinking. In learning , these questions can be raised both by teachers and students.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Learning can be held if there is cooperation between teachers and learners in achieving the learning objectives. Utami Munandar (2004: 24) stated that: ".... in the

learning process, teacher should be able to pay attention to diversity in interaction during the learning process so that information can be received easily by the students".

The study of critical thinking has been started since the last hundred years. The learning approach thus began to develop more than 2,000 years ago by Socrates. However, an American educator, John Dewey, is widely regarded as the father of modern tradition of critical thinking. John Dewey instills a tradition of critical thinking by think reflectively. Dewey provide an understanding of critical thinking as an active consideration, persistent, and meticulous about a belief or a form of knowledge that is taken for granted in the light of reason and the reasons supporting the conclusion that continued into tendencies (Atkinson, D. 1997).

Edward Glaser in the books Watson-Glaser Critical Thinking Appraisal defines critical thinking as (1) An attitude which would think deeply about the problem issues and things that are within the reach of one's experience; (2) Knowledge of the methods of inspection methods and logical reasoning; (3) the skills to apply such methods. Therefore, critical thinking requires hard effort and checked every confidence and assumptive knowledge based on supporting evidence and advanced conclusion (Qiufang, W. 2009).

Critical thinking is a focused and clear process used in mental activities such as problems solving, decisions making, persuading, assumptions analyzing, and conducting scientific research. The ability of a person to be successful in life, among others, determined by the skills of thinking, especially in efforts to solve the problems of faced life issues (Facione, PA 2007). Critical thinking means: (1) Aiming to achieve a critical assessment of what we will receive or what would we do with a logical reason. (2) Using the standard assessment as a result of critical thinking in making excuses. (3) Implementing various strategies arranged and give a reason to define and implement these standards. (4) Finding and collecting trusted information to use as the supporting evidence.

According Schraw, G., Crippen, KJ, & Hartley, K. (2006) critical thinking is a mode of thinking-recognizing, any substance or matter in which the thinker improve the quality of his thinking with skilful handling inherent structure thinking and applying her intellectual standards. Neilsen, A. R. (1989) defines critical thinking as an attitude of thinking deeply about problems and things that are within the reach of a person; knowledge of the methods of examination and logical reasoning; and a kind of a skill to apply these methods

Norris, S. P., & Ennis, R. H. (1989) argues critical thinking as reasonable and reflective thinking that is focused on making the decision on what to do or believed. Reasonable means thinking based on facts to make the best decision, reflective means to seek consciously and unequivocally the best possible solutions. Thus critical thinking, according to Norris and Ennis is thought that leans toward the goal. The purpose of critical thinking is to evaluate the best actions or beliefs. Norris and Ennis focused on the thought process that involves gathering information and applying criteria to consider a series of actions or a different point of view.

A person who have the ability to think critically if he/she has some ability. Indicators that can be used to determine the critical thinking skills of students referring to Norris, S. P., & Ennis, R. H. (1989), which outlines seven categories of critical thinking skills.

Table 1. Critical Thinking Skills Indicators According to Ennis

No	Team	Indicator	Sub Indicator
1	Give a simple explanation	focusing questions	Identify or formulate questions
			Identify or define criteria for consideration of possible answers
			Maintaining the condition of thinking

No	Team	Indicator	Sub Indicator
		Analyzing argument	identify conclusions Identifying sentences question Identify the sentences is not the question Identifying and addressing an inaccuracy See the structure of an argument make summaries
		Ask and answer questions	Give a simple explanation mentioning examples
2	Build basic skills	Consider whether the source is reliable or not	consider membership Considering the attractiveness of the conflict Consider the suitability of resources consider the reputation Consider the use of proper procedures Consider the risks to reputation The ability to give a reason Habits cautious
		Observe and consider the report of observation	Involves a bit of conjecture Using the short time between the observations and reports Report the results of observation Recording the results of observation Using the correct evidence Using good access using technology Accountable for the results of observation
3	Conclusion	Deducing and consi-	Identify or formulate questions Identify or define criteria for
		der Deduction	consideration of possible answers Maintaining the condition of thinking
		Induce and consider the outcome of the discussion	identify conclusions Identifying sentences question Identify the sentences is not the question Identifying and addressing an inaccuracy See the structure of an argument make summaries
		Defining the term and consider a definition	Give a simple explanation mentioning examples
4	Further explanation	Determine a course of action	consider membership Considering the attractiveness of the conflict Consider the suitability of resources consider the reputation Consider the use of proper procedures Consider the risks to reputation The ability to give a reason Habits cautious
		Interact with others	Involves a bit of conjecture Using the short time between the observations and reports Report the results of observation Recording the results of observation Using the correct evidence

N o	Team	Indicat or	Sub Indicator
			Using good access using technology Accountable for the results of observation
			Condition logic stating interpretation
			Suggests a common thing Suggests conclusions and hypothesis put forward a hypothesis designing experiments Drawing conclusions fit the facts
			Creating a form definition The strategy makes definitions Acting by providing further explanation identify and handle deliberate untruth Creating a definition contents
			Revealing the problem Select criteria to consider possible solutions Formulate alternative solutions Determine a temporary measure Repeat Viewing **application**

From the opinions of experts on the definition of critical thinking, it can be concluded that the critical thinking is a mental process to analyze or evaluate information. Such information can be obtained from observations, experiences, common sense or communication. Universal intellectuals standards is standardization, which should be applied in thinking that is used to check the quality of thinking in formulating the problems, issues, or certain situations. Critical thinking must always refer to and is based upon these standards.

Socratic method is a learning method that is done with conversation, debate conducted by two or more people who talk to each other and faced with questions, which is a series of questions which expected to be answered by the students, help each other in finding an answer to difficult questions. The Socrates method is not a way to explain, but by asking questions, exposing the logic of the answer, as well as to inquire further, so that students are trained to be able to clarify the ideas of their own and be able to define the concepts they mean in detail,

Socrates, is a very famous philosopher and influential in the development of critical thinking skills. For centuries, he was admired as a man of integrity and intellectual inquiry and regarded as an ideal critical thinkers. Because of its ability to think critically, then the name is immortalized as the Socratic question to critical questions.

According to Paul, the Socratic question is a critical question that aims to develop students' critical thinking skills. These questions help students develop ideas or materials that have been studied so that the students' understanding of the subject matter becomes more profound. Socratic question is composed of six types: (1) a question that asked for clarification; (2) questions that probe assumptions; (3) questions that probe reasons and evidence; (4) the question of opinion or perspective; (5) questions that investigate implication or consequence; and (6) and the question of questions.

Characteristics of the Socratic method according Qosyim in Ningsih (2011: 7) are as follows. 1) Dialectic, it means that the method is carried out by two or more persons are pros and cons, or which have a difference of opinion; 2) Conversation, it means that the method is done in the form of a conversation or verbal communication; 3) Tentative, meaning the truth is sought temporary is not absolute, and the alternatives that are open to all possibilities; 3) Empirical and inductive, mean that all matters discussed and how the solution must be based on empirical matters; 4) conceptual, meaning that methods aimed

at the achievement of knowledge, understanding and concepts that have been obtained before.

The learning process that implements Socrates learning strategies is a learning which constructed with a series of questions that aim to know something related contents in question a particular material. This method allows students to get an understanding in series of question and answer form do. Forms of procedural stages in doing debriefing as practiced by Socrates in teaching materials.

According to Johnson, D. W. and R. T. Johnson (2002: 194). procedure in the method of Socrates are as follows: 1) Set up a row of the questions that will be posed to the students, with a mark or a specific code required; 2) The teacher asks questions to the students and the students are expected to find the correct answer; 3) Teach why knowledge is important and how that knowledge can be applied to solve the problem; 4) Lead student exploration. In the process of problem solving, the teacher role is to: allow the exploration of students unhindered and active participation, assist students in connecting new knowledge and knowledge of History, help students to form and live issues or tasks, help students identify the similarities between the problems new and past experience which contains similar problems; 5) providing feedback about the right or wrong way of thinking and problem-solving path. Emphasizing of Socratic questioning technique is the explanation of concepts and ideas by using of provocation questions; 6) If the questions were answered by the students, then the teachers can continue or assign the next question until all questions can be completed answered by students; 7) If on any question to questions apparently not meet the goal, then the teacher should be reiterated that question. By giving a few illustrations, apperception and simply improve and facilitate the student's thinking, in finding proper and carefully answers.

According Permalink (Yunarti, 2011: 48), Richard Paul has developed six types of Socrates questions and give examples. The sixth type of question is question of clarification, the assumptions of the investigation, the reasons and evidence of the investigation, a point of view and perceptions, implications and consequences of the investigation, and the question of questions .

Table 2. Types of the question Socrates and Relation to Critical Thinking Skills

No	Question Type	Example of Question	Critical Thinking Skills that may arise
1	Clarification	What do you mean by ... ? Can any other way ? Can you give me an example ?	Interpretation , analysis, evaluation , decision making
2	Assumptions investigation	What do you assume ? How can you choose those assumptions ?	Interpretation , analysis, evaluation , decision making
3	Reasons and evidence investigation	How do you know? Why do you think that's true ? What can change your thinking ?	Evaluation, Analysis
4	Point of view and perceptions	What do you think about that? What effect can be obtained ? What is the alternative ?	Analysis , evaluation

| 5 | Implications and Consequences Research | How can we find it? What is the key issue ? Generalizing what can we do? | analysis |
| 6 | Questions about questions | What does it mean? What was the point of this question ? Why do you think I can answer this question ? | Interpretation , analysis , decision-making |

In addition, Yunarti (2011 : 60) also said that the teacher should develop a strategy so that learning with Socrates method can work well. The strategies are:

a. Developing questions before learning begins
b. Stating the question clearly and precisely
c. Giving timeout
d. Keeping the discussion in order to stay focused on the main issues
e. Following up on students' responses
f. Scaffolding
g. Writing conclusions on the board
h. Involving all students in discussion
i. Do not give the answer "Yes " or "No " but replace them with questions that explore the understanding of students .
j. Giving the question in accordance with the level of students' abilities

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Based on teh description above, it can be concluded that the method of Socrates is a method in which the dialogue between teachers and students that includes the critical questions in order to establish critical thinking of students, lead to a new invention, makes students want to know more and understand deeper, examine the validity of students' beliefs and make the right

conclusions of an object.

This method is very advisable to be applied in studying subject matter, to optimize the learning process which is very needed in social study leaning. Using this method, the learning is instructed in the question and answer method which best used to guide and deepen the level of understanding of the subject matter being taught. This learning strategy will improve leaning process inefectifity in studying social science.

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