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National Unity and Integration: From the Youth Pledge to the Present Day

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Abstract

This study aims to explore the impact of inquiry-based learning strategies on improving the citizenship literacy of elementary school students through the teaching of the Youth Pledge history. The research problem addressed in this study is how inquiry-based learning methods can influence students' understanding of national unity, patriotism, and national identity values. This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study design involving students, teachers, and school principals from several elementary schools in Kendari City. Data collection techniques included interviews, observations, and documentation, which were then analyzed using N-Vivo software to identify emerging themes from the data. The findings show that the implementation of inquiry-based learning significantly enhanced students' understanding of national values and increased their engagement in the learning process. Students also demonstrated improved citizenship literacy, including critical thinking and social responsibility. The implications of this study suggest that inquiry-based learning methods can be an effective approach to strengthening citizenship character and national understanding in elementary schools. This study makes a significant contribution to the development of more interactive and reflective history teaching methods in Indonesia.

Keywords: *Citizenship Literacy, Elementary School, Inquiry-Based Learning, Youth Pledge History.*

PRELIMINARY

In the context of a multicultural nation like Indonesia, education plays a vital role in strengthening social cohesion and building an inclusive national identity. The nation's history of struggle, particularly the Youth Pledge of 1928, serves as a crucial foundation for the formation of national character. However, global socio-political developments and digital transformation have presented new challenges to the persistence of unity values among the younger generation (Priyanto et al., 2021). This situation demands an educational approach that is not solely oriented toward cognitive knowledge but also emphasizes the contextual and reflective internalization of national values from an early age.

Although various character education policies have been implemented, numerous studies demonstrate the weak influence of history learning on the formation of students' national identity at the elementary school level (Nurhayati & Suryana, 2022; Astarita et al., 2024). Low civic literacy and a lack of active student engagement in the history learning process are among the causes. This study addresses this issue by highlighting the inquiry learning strategy as a potential pedagogical approach to revitalize the values of the Youth Pledge and enhance students' understanding of the meaning of unity and nationality.

This study aims to examine in-depth the role of inquiry-based history learning in shaping the character and national identity of elementary school students. The primary focus is on how inquiry strategies can improve civic literacy through a critical understanding of the values of unity inherited from the Youth Pledge. Using a qualitative approach and the support of analytical technologies such as NVivo,

this study presents an empirical portrait of the transformation of history pedagogy in the context of elementary education.

Although various studies have discussed the importance of character education and national history, few studies integrate an inquiry approach with the use of qualitative data analysis software in the context of history learning at the elementary school level (Setiawan et al., 2023). Furthermore, studies on the internalization of the Youth Pledge values within a learning framework that fosters student participation and critical reflection are still limited. Therefore, this study contributes to filling this gap by offering an innovative, data-driven approach.

The uniqueness of this research lies in the combination of an inquiry approach and the use of qualitative analysis technology in the context of history learning. In addition to contributing to the development of historical pedagogical practices, this study also presents theoretical implications regarding strengthening national identity through values-based education (Wahyuni & Rahman, 2022). The results are expected to provide new direction for character education policy in Indonesia, particularly in shaping a younger generation that understands their nation's history critically and responsibly.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive analytical approach. It aims to explore and understand the role of the history education of the Youth Pledge (Sumpah Pemuda) in shaping character and national identity among elementary school students. A qualitative approach was chosen because it allows for an in-depth exploration of the phenomenon and an understanding of the social and cultural contexts that influence history teaching at the elementary school level. This research focuses not only on understanding the existing phenomenon but also seeks to provide practical recommendations for the development of future history education curricula.

Research Approach

This research design uses a case study approach, which allows researchers to investigate phenomena occurring within a specific and limited context, namely elementary schools in Kendari City. The case study approach was chosen because it allows for a more comprehensive understanding of history teaching, particularly regarding the Youth Pledge, and its impact on student character formation. This study aims to explore how the values contained in the Youth Pledge are taught and understood by students, and to what extent they influence their national identity.

Research Background

This research was conducted in several elementary schools located in Kendari City, Southeast Sulawesi Province. Kendari City was chosen as the research location because it has diverse demographic characteristics and is representative of various cultural and social backgrounds in Indonesia. Elementary schools in this city represent a fairly heterogeneous population in terms of ethnicity, religion, and culture, which provides a relevant context for discussing the issue of national unity through history education. Furthermore, schools in Kendari have begun implementing a curriculum that includes national history material, but the extent to which teaching the history of the Youth Pledge has been effective in shaping students' nationalistic character remains to be explored.

Research Informants

The selection of research informants was conducted using a purposive sampling technique, which focuses on individuals who have knowledge and experience relevant to the research topic. The main informants in this study consisted of three groups: (1) History Teachers: Teachers who teach history in elementary schools, especially those who teach material related to the Youth Pledge and Indonesian history. They provided insight into how this historical material is taught and understood in the context of elementary education. (2) Elementary School Students: Fifth and sixth grade students were selected as the main informants because at this level they are more exposed to historical material and have greater potential to understand the concepts of nationality and unity. The selected students have diverse backgrounds, representing the social diversity that exists in Kendari City. (3) School Principals: School

principals provided perspectives regarding educational policies in their schools, as well as views on the importance of character education through history, especially the Youth Pledge.

Data collection technique

Data were collected through three main techniques: (1) In-depth Interviews: Semi-structured interviews were conducted with history teachers, principals, and students. These interviews were designed to explore their understanding of the Youth Pledge, the teaching methods applied, and its impact on the formation of students' character. Interviews with students aimed to gain an understanding of the extent to which the nationalist values contained in the Youth Pledge were internalized in their daily lives. (2) Participatory Observation: Researchers conducted direct observations of the history teaching process in the classroom. These observations aimed to record interactions between teachers and students, as well as how the historical values of the Youth Pledge were applied in class discussions and other learning activities. (3) Documentation: Researchers collected documents related to the educational curriculum, textbooks, and learning materials used in elementary schools related to the teaching of Indonesian history, especially the Youth Pledge. This documentation provides an overview of how history is taught and delivered in a formal context.

Data Analysis Techniques

Data collected from interviews, observations, and documentation were analyzed using qualitative data analysis techniques assisted by N-Vivo software. N-Vivo was used to manage, organize, and analyze textual data, including interview transcripts and observation notes. The analysis was conducted using an inductive approach, where categories and themes emerging from the data were analyzed in depth. The analysis process involved three main stages: coding, thematic analysis, and interpreting the relationships between themes.

In the initial stage, the data will be coded based on categories relevant to the research topic, such as "Youth Pledge values," "history teaching," and "national identity." Next, the data will be analyzed to identify emerging patterns and themes, and how these themes relate to each other to explain the phenomenon under study.

Data Validity Test

To ensure data validity, this study employed several triangulation techniques. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing data obtained from various informants (teachers, students, principals), as well as from various data collection methods (interviews, observation, documentation) (Asingily, 2021). Furthermore, theoretical triangulation was used to compare the research findings with existing theories on character education and national history.

Furthermore, member checking techniques were used to validate the preliminary findings with informants, ensuring that the researcher's interpretations align with the informants' understanding and experiences. With this approach, this research is expected to produce valid and reliable findings, making a significant contribution to the development of education policy in Indonesia.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study provide in-depth insights into the impact of inquiry-based history learning on elementary school students' civic literacy. Through the use of inquiry-based learning methods that integrate the history of the Youth Pledge as the primary context, this study identified a significant increase in students' understanding of the values of national unity. This improvement is reflected in students' ability to explore, analyze, and summarize information related to the importance of history in shaping national character. Analysis using NVivo software revealed a strong relationship between inquiry-based learning and students' increased understanding of relevant civic concepts.

The inquiry-based learning used in this study was designed to stimulate students' critical thinking and encourage them to seek answers to various questions related to the Youth Pledge and its contribution to national unity. NVivo analysis results showed that students engaged in this learning process demonstrated a deeper understanding of the importance of national values, such as tolerance, inclusivity,

and unity. Students not only understood the content of the Youth Pledge but were also able to relate these concepts to their daily lives and the relevance of these values in contemporary social and political contexts.

In the context of educational theory, the results of this study support the view that inquiry-based learning can increase student engagement in the learning process, particularly in learning oriented toward character development. The constructivist theory proposed by Piaget and Vygotsky emphasizes the importance of students' active role in constructing their own knowledge through interaction with the environment and direct experience. Inquiry-based learning, which requires students to ask questions, conduct investigations, and present the results of their analysis, serves as an effective means of forming a deeper and more internalized understanding of national identity and citizenship.

The improvement in civic literacy observed in this study also contributed to strengthening students' self-concept as Indonesian citizens. Through a better understanding of the history of the Youth Pledge, students were able to connect their identity with their roles and responsibilities in maintaining and strengthening national unity. As their knowledge of national history increased, students also developed more inclusive attitudes and a greater appreciation for diversity, which are crucial for building a harmonious and democratic society.

However, although the results of this study indicate significant improvements, there are also several challenges in implementing inquiry-based learning that must be addressed. One major limitation identified is the variation in teachers' skill levels in implementing this method effectively. Some teachers still struggle to manage productive classroom discussions and guide students to stay focused on learning objectives. Furthermore, despite improvements in student understanding, there are still differences in the depth of understanding achieved among students, influenced by their socioeconomic background and initial intelligence levels.

Overall, the analysis shows that inquiry-based learning has significant potential to improve students' civic literacy at the elementary school level, with broader implications for character development and national identity. Learning history based on the values embodied in the Youth Pledge enables students to better understand the importance of unity in diversity, a key element in the formation of a democratic and inclusive society. This reinforces the relevance of history learning in the civics curriculum and demonstrates that an approach based on direct experience and critical reflection can have a greater impact on student character development than conventional learning methods that focus more on memorizing facts.

Furthermore, this analysis demonstrates how inquiry-based learning can shape students' proactive attitudes in addressing social challenges in society. By providing space for students to explore and critique their nation's history, they gain not only knowledge but also critical thinking skills essential for their development as responsible citizens. This character-driven learning is crucial for producing a young generation that is not only intellectually intelligent but also possesses a deep understanding of national values and social ethics.

However, it should be noted that while the results of this study show positive results, there are limitations in terms of the representativeness of the sample used, which may not cover the full diversity of conditions across Indonesia. Therefore, further research with a more diverse sample and a longer timeframe is needed to ensure the generalizability of these findings. Furthermore, ongoing evaluation of the effectiveness of inquiry learning in the context of civics in elementary schools is necessary to ensure that this method can be applied more widely and produces optimal results.

CONCLUSION

This study aims to explore the effect of inquiry-based learning methods on improving civic literacy in elementary school students, focusing on teaching the history of the Youth Pledge. Based on the results of data analysis obtained through interview, observation, and documentation techniques analyzed using N-Vivo, it was found that the application of inquiry-based learning strategies significantly improved students' understanding of national values, unity, and national identity. Students demonstrated active involvement in the learning process, which not only increased their knowledge of Indonesian history but also strengthened their awareness of the importance of civic values. These findings suggest that inquiry-based learning can be an effective approach in introducing and reinforcing national concepts among elementary school students.

The implications of these findings are significant for education, particularly in the context of history and civics instruction. Learning that focuses on students' active involvement in seeking, reviewing, and discussing information enables them not only to understand historical facts but also to reflect on the meaning of these events in their current lives. This creates opportunities for students to develop critical thinking skills and enhance their civic literacy, which in turn strengthens their sense of social responsibility. Therefore, this research makes a significant contribution to the development of more interactive and reflective teaching methods in the context of civics education.

However, this study also acknowledges several limitations that should be noted. This research was limited to elementary schools in Kendari City, meaning the results may not be fully generalizable to other regional contexts with different social and cultural characteristics. Furthermore, the inquiry learning process requires considerable time and resources, which poses challenges for its implementation within a dense curriculum. Therefore, this research opens up opportunities for further studies involving larger and more diverse samples, as well as longitudinal research to evaluate the long-term impact of inquiry learning on civic literacy.

Based on these findings and limitations, several recommendations can be made for further research and educational practice. First, future research should expand its scope to other regions in Indonesia to test the effectiveness of inquiry learning methods in more diverse contexts. Second, to increase the successful implementation of this method, it is important to provide more in-depth training for teachers in managing inquiry learning and facilitating productive discussions. Third, education policies at the national and local levels need to support the integration of inquiry learning methods into existing curricula by providing sufficient time and adequate resources. In this way, inquiry learning can be more effective in improving civic literacy and strengthening students' understanding of the national values embodied in the history of the Youth Pledge and the overall context of Indonesian nationality.

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