

Transformative Curriculum: Concepts, Implementation, and Challenges in History Education

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Abstract: Transformative Curriculum: Concepts, Implementation, and Challenges in History Education. Objectives: This study is designed to investigate the Transformative Curriculum's concept and implementation in the field of history education, as well as to pinpoint the obstacles that teachers and students face when implementing it in secondary schools. This research offers a comprehensive analysis of the Indonesian secondary education system's interpretation, practice, and challenge of Transformative Curriculum, unlike previous studies that primarily concentrated on curriculum theory or case studies in Western contexts. It emphasizes the local pedagogical, cultural, and policy-related dynamics that influence its implementation. **Method:** A qualitative approach with a phenomenological design was employed. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with teachers and students, classroom observations in history lessons, and document analysis. **Findings:** The results suggest that the Transformative Curriculum's implementation fosters students' reflective thinking, the development of empathy and awareness of social issues, and the connection between historical events and contemporary social contexts. Nevertheless, its implementation is impeded by a variety of challenges, such as inadequate learning resources, inadequate teacher training, and a curriculum structure that continues to prioritize rote memorization. **Conclusion:** The Transformative Curriculum has the potential to significantly improve the critical and contextual comprehension of history among students. This study contributes to the literature by demonstrating the interaction between transformative learning theory and Indonesian cultural norms (e.g., reverence for authority, exam-oriented education) and by providing context-sensitive strategies for cultivating reflective historical thinking. Consequently, in order to optimize its implementation, educational policies should provide support for the continuous development of critical reflection-based learning resources and teacher training.

Keywords: transformative curriculum, history education, critical thinking, social awareness, reflective learning.

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■ INTRODUCTION

History education in the 21st century is confronted with the challenge of not only providing information and facts, but also fostering students who are capable of adapting to rapid social changes, possess critical thinking skills, and have a sense of social awareness. The study of

history is essential to help students develop a critical perspective on past events and their relevance to current conditions, as a result of technological advancements that transform the ways people learn and interact and globalization, which promotes intercultural interaction. Nevertheless, the majority of history curricula that

are in use in numerous schools are still traditional and normative, with a greater emphasis on the memorization of facts and dates than on the cultivation of social awareness, empathy, and reflection. Freire (2001) underscores the importance of education as a means of liberation, rather than oppression. Conscientization must be fostered through meaningful dialogue and lived experiences through education.

In order to address these requirements, the Transformative Curriculum concept is introduced. The transformative learning theory, which was first introduced by Jack Mezirow, is the foundation of this approach. This theory underscores the significance of a paradigm shift in students' thinking, as well as critical reflection on the values and beliefs that influence their frame of reference (Mezirow, 2009). According to him, genuine learning is not limited to the acquisition of knowledge; it also involves profound transformation through critical reflection on experiences that challenge or disrupt existing assumptions, resulting in the development of new perspectives. In the context of history education, which endeavors to foster a connection between the past and the present, this process is exceedingly pertinent (Calleja, 2014). In addition, Fleming (2022) emphasizes that education must be viewed as a political and ethical process that empowers students to comprehend and modify their social environment.

Axel Honneth's theory of social recognition, which emphasizes the psychosocial aspects of transformative learning, is incorporated into this study in addition to Mezirow's emphasis on critical reflection. According to Honneth (Fleming, 2022), the experience of being socially and emotionally acknowledged by others is inextricably linked to personal transformation. This study is distinguished from previous research in that it is theoretically grounded on the integration of Mezirow's and Honneth's ideas, which tends to view transformative learning as a cognitive process.

An understanding of cultural heritage and the values that have shaped it is a strategic function of history education in shaping national character. According to Suparjan (2019), history education is not limited to the transmission of facts; it also helps students develop a comprehension of national identity and moral values. According to this framework, the curriculum must serve as an environment for social reconstruction, reflection, and liberation. According to Clifford and Clifford & Montgomery (2015), the curriculum should serve as a tool for the internalization of the principles of global solidarity, social justice, and democracy, rather than a neutral vehicle that perpetuates systemic inequality. Similarly, Lockett and Shay (2020) underscore the significance of establishing a space in the curriculum for marginalized voices and lived experiences.

The application of transformative learning in history education in Indonesia remains, however, restricted to this day. It is common for the dominant history curriculum to fail to provide students with the opportunity to cultivate social awareness and critical reflection. In this research, the novelty is in the conceptual and implementative examination of the Transformative Curriculum approach in history education. The challenges and opportunities that instructors and students encounter when implementing this approach are also examined in this research. transformative education is instrumental in the development of change agents who are concerned with sustainability and social justice, as stated by Arbeiter and Buèar (2021). In addition, Naeini and Shakouri (2016) contend that this methodology empowers educators to modify the curriculum in accordance with the life experiences and local requirements of students (Alenezi, 2023; Petousi et al., 2022).

In practice, the transformative approach to history education is particularly effective when applying it to contentious subjects. Hartono & Huda (2020) demonstrate that this method can dismantle dominant historical narratives and

replace them with a variety of more equitable perspectives, as demonstrated in the instruction of the G30S/PKI topic. The utilization of controversial historical materials as a pedagogical instrument to cultivate critical thinking skills and social awareness is also underscored by Katyeudo and de Souza (2022). In accordance with this, Sleeter (2018) emphasizes that transformative education is not sufficient to merely incorporate multicultural content; it must be capable of reconstructing meanings from subordinated perspectives and challenging exclusive power structures.

Thus, the objective of this research is to investigate the theoretical underpinnings and concept of the Transformative Curriculum in the field of history education, evaluate its implementation in secondary schools, identify the obstacles from the viewpoints of educators, students, and educational policies, and offer suggestions for enhancing its implementation. In addition to examining the implementation of the Transformative Curriculum, this research also examines the potential of this approach to alter the cognitive processes of students, enhance their comprehension of history, and influence their social character in the context of a world that is perpetually evolving.

Accordingly, this study is guided by the following research questions: (1) What are the conceptual and theoretical foundations of the Transformative Curriculum in history education? (2) How is the Transformative Curriculum implemented in secondary schools? (3) What challenges are encountered by teachers and students in applying this curriculum? and (4) What recommendations can be proposed to enhance its implementation?

■ METHOD

Participants

The participants in this study consisted of 10 history teachers and 30 students selected from five secondary schools in Pontianak: SMA N 1,

2, 3 and MAN 1, 2. These schools were chosen purposively based on their reputation for adopting innovative or reflective teaching practices, as recommended by the local education office. The selection also considered school diversity in terms of public and Islamic education.

Participants were selected using purposive sampling with inclusion and exclusion criteria. For teachers, the inclusion criteria included: (1) minimum of two years teaching history using approaches aligned with transformative learning, (2) experience participating in training or workshops related to critical pedagogy or reflective teaching, and (3) recommendation by school principals based on their innovative practices. For students, the inclusion criteria were: (1) currently enrolled in classes taught by participating teachers, (2) active engagement during lessons, and (3) representation of diverse levels of reflective ability. Students who had less than three months of participation in transformative curriculum-based classes were excluded.

Research Design and Procedures

This research applied a qualitative design with a phenomenological approach, aimed at deeply understanding the lived experiences of both teachers and students related to the implementation of the Transformative Curriculum in history education. The research was conducted over four months (March–June 2024). The research procedure involved four steps: Preliminary visits and school selection, Obtaining research permissions and informed consent, Data collection (interviews, observations, FGD, document analysis), and Data transcription and analysis.

Instruments

The instruments used in this research were: (1) semi-structured interview guides, (2) classroom observation protocols, (3) FGD protocols, and (4) document analysis checklists.

The interview and FGD guides were developed based on themes from Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory and Honneth's theory of recognition, and adapted from instruments used by Christie et al. (2015).

To ensure validity, the instruments underwent expert review by two qualitative education researchers. Reliability was established through triangulation across interviews, observations, and documents. Teachers were interviewed on the following questions: "What are the specific strategies or practices you employ that reflect a transformative approach?", "How do you conceptualize the Transformative Curriculum in history education?", and "What challenges do you face in implementing it?" Additionally, students were interviewed on the following topics: "How do you handle history lessons that involve discussion and reflection?", "Has a specific moment in history class altered your perspective on a historical or social issue?", and "What aspects of this method are easy or difficult for you?"

Three Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were conducted with 6–8 participants per group (two groups of students and one of teachers), maintaining a balance between homogeneity (experience with the curriculum) and heterogeneity (gender and academic performance) to encourage productive discussion.

Data Analysis

A thematic analysis was implemented to recognize recurring patterns throughout the data. Use of open and axial coding was implemented to manually code all interview and FGD transcripts (Miles et al., 2014). The comparison of teacher and student perspectives on (1) teaching strategies, (2) student engagement and reflection, and (3) implementation barriers allowed themes to emerge. The classroom observations were centered on the following: the

teacher-student interaction, the teaching methods employed, the utilization of learning resources, the levels of student participation, the types of questions posed, and the classroom atmosphere in which reflection was encouraged. A total of ten classroom sessions were observed, with two sessions per school, each lasting 80 minutes. In order to facilitate triangulation with interviews and documents, field notes were recorded using structured observation sheets and chronologically organized.

■ RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Concept and Theoretical Foundations of the Transformative Curriculum in History Education

The findings of this study indicate that the manner in which teachers and students interacted with history as a subject underwent a substantial transformation. The transition from traditional expository methods to dialogical and reflective pedagogies was described by teachers. A teacher once stated, "In the past, I would merely provide a chronology and the causes of historical events. However, I now encourage students to contemplate the implications of these events for their lives today." Teacher B, SMAN 2. Similarly, students attested to their intellectual and affective involvement in their historical studies. "When we discussed colonialism, it made me realize that injustice continues to occur in various forms today," stated one student. student Y, MAN 1.

Transformative Learning, which was devised by Jack Mezirow, serves as the primary theoretical foundation of the Transformative Curriculum in history education. Mezirow (2000, 2006) defines transformative learning as a learning process that has a significant impact on the way individuals perceive themselves and the world. Underlying assumptions that were previously unexamined are challenged by critical reflection on life experiences that initiate this process. In the realm of history education, this implies that

students are not only instructed to memorize historical facts but are also encouraged to cultivate critical thinking skills and a more profound comprehension of historical events, as well as their relevance to contemporary social and political circumstances (Mezirow, 2009; Taylor, 2008).

In Indonesia, transformative approaches have begun to emerge in models such as Culturally Responsive Transformative Teaching (CRTT), which incorporates local cultural contexts to promote critical reflection and identity formation among learners (Rahmawati, Ridwan, & Agustin, 2020). The implementation of Kurikulum Merdeka is characterized by the framing of transformative education as a means of fostering critical awareness, personality development, and equality through contextual engagement with real-life issues and project-based learning (Anggraeni & Sunarso, 2025).

This became apparent when a student reflected, "I used to believe that history was solely about memorization, but now I understand that it is about questioning the implications of the facts." (1) Student A, SMA N 1. The occurrence of a disorienting dilemma, as Mezirow (2009) characterizes it, is confirmed by these expressions. This experience prompts critical reflection and challenges one's frame of reference. The transformative learning process, as per Mezirow, is characterized by ten phases, beginning with a disorienting dilemma, followed by a deep reflection process, exploration of new roles, and ultimately the reintegration of new perspectives into daily life. A secure environment for reflection and non-coercive discourse is necessary during these stages, which are not only cognitive but also emotional and relational (Christie et al., 2015).

As a result, the Transformative Curriculum emphasizes that history education is not solely about memorizing facts; rather, it is about enabling students to derive significance from historical events and connect them to the social issues that confront modern society. This change was also

recognized by another educator, who declared, "I am no longer merely a knowledge transmitter." As a facilitator, I assist students in establishing connections between the past and the present by means of dialogue and inquiries. Teacher E, MAN 2.

By incorporating Axel Honneth's social recognition theory, this method enhances the concept of transformative learning by emphasizing the significance of recognizing social, emotional, and moral identities in the transformative learning process (Fleming, 2022). As a result, transformative learning encompasses not only rational dimensions but also intricate psychosocial dynamics, such as the necessity for justice, recognition, and affiliation. Numerous students noted that they experienced a sense of appreciation for the first time in their history classes. "My perspective was important in our discussions," stated one student. No, that has never occurred before. Student F, SMA N 2. Fleming (2022) posits that this transformative learning encourages students to develop new understandings about their role in a broader social world, in addition to understanding history from an objective perspective.

The Transformative Curriculum endeavors to alter the values, perspectives, and patterns of thought of students by facilitating reflective, critical, and meaningful learning. The objective of this curriculum is to cultivate social consciousness and self-awareness, providing students with the opportunity to undergo personal transformation, rather than solely transmitting content or information. Students are encouraged to examine the fundamental assumptions that have influenced their worldview and, consciously, to develop a new understanding that is more transformative, rational, and inclusive (Mezirow, 2009; Taylor, 2008).

Open dialogue was, however, impeded by cultural constraints in Indonesia, such as the value of "ewuh pakewuh" (hesitation to speak critically

or oppose authority). A teacher observed, “Initially, they were reluctant to speak up.” It was their belief that expressing disagreement was disrespectful. Teacher C, SMA N 1. The complete realization of Mezirow’s emphasis on critical discourse and non-coercive dialogue is restricted by this cultural dynamics.

Unlike conventional curricula, which emphasize cognitive mastery of the subject matter, the Transformative Curriculum fosters an environment in which students are engaged in the learning process. Teachers are frequently the focal point of information in conventional curricula, which are transmission-based. Students are passive recipients of this information. In traditional curricula, the primary focus of assessment is on numerical grades and exam results. In contrast, the Transformative Curriculum emphasizes contextual, participatory, and dialogical learning. Students are afforded the opportunity to pose inquiries, participate in discussions, and establish connections between the learnings and their personal and social experiences (Christie et al., 2015). “It required time, but I now enjoy articulating my opinions, even if they differ from those of others,” as one student observed. (1) Student Z, MAN 1. This highlights the significance of secure classroom environments and trust-building in order to foster genuine participation.

Creating a learning process that liberates, empowers, and transforms students is the primary objective of the Transformative Curriculum. Liberation in this context refers to the liberation of students from outdated assumptions, dogma, and limited perspectives. The concept of empowerment involves the development of critical thinking skills, empathy, and the ability to make independent decisions. For students, self-transformation represents a significant shift in their perceptions of their identity, social relationships, and societal obligations. This corresponds with the perspectives of Fleming (2022) and Hoggan & Kloubert (2020), who underscore that transformative learning has an impact on not only

the cognitive domain but also the affective and social dimensions, resulting in identity changes that are embedded in life experiences and social recognition.

The Transformative Curriculum necessitates a profound comprehension from educators in practice, as it not only alters content but also impacts upon epistemology, pedagogy, and the values that underpin the relationship between teachers and students. In order to facilitate open discussions on controversial topics or to address social issues that are pertinent to students’ life experiences, this curriculum necessitates the establishment of a psychologically and socially secure learning environment. In accordance with the perspectives of Duckworth & Smith (2019) and Ghatak et al. (2021), this methodology encourages more democratic, liberating, and inclusive learning. These authors emphasize the significance of acknowledging students’ lived experiences in context-based and personal learning.

At the heart of the Transformative Curriculum is Transformative Learning, and Mezirow (2009)’s stages offer a critical framework for the development of effective learning. According to Mezirow, transformative learning is a process that occurs over the course of ten stages. The process commences with a disorienting dilemma that challenges students’ preconceived notions or perspectives. This is followed by a sequence of reflection stages that enable students to reevaluate their assumptions. The following stages are encompassed: self-examination, critical assessment of assumptions, recognition of connections, exploration of options, planning a course of action, acquisition of knowledge and skills, trying new roles, building confidence and competence, and ultimately reintegrating with a more mature perspective in daily life.

Disorienting dilemmas are crucial components of transformative learning, as they serve as the foundation for developing a new perspective. When students encounter an event

or experience that challenges their comprehension, they initiate a period of introspection that leads them to reevaluate the values and assumptions they have long held. Mezirow (2009) and Taylor (2008) have both observed that this process enables students to investigate novel options, acquire a more profound understanding, and experiment with new responsibilities in their daily lives. Fleming (2022) enhances this theory by introducing the concept of social recognition, which underscores the necessity for individuals to receive social and affective recognition for their identity changes in order to truly undergo transformation. This research provides evidence that learning not only alters students' knowledge but also reshapes their identity within a broader social context, particularly when culturally responsive pedagogy is implemented.

Implementation of the Transformative Curriculum in History Education Practice in Secondary Schools

Secondary schools in Pontianak have initiated the implementation of the Transformative Curriculum in their history teachings, albeit with varying degrees of consistency and depth. Teachers characterized a shift from traditional lecture-based methodologies to more interactive and reflective strategies. According to one educator, "I no longer depend on merely communicating chronology or events." I encourage students to connect the knowledge they acquire with their current experiences. Teacher A, SMA N 1.

This transition is apparent in the implementation of digital media, project-based learning, and group discussions, which facilitate active student engagement. Students were encouraged to query dominant narratives, analyze historical materials, and contemplate their relevance in the present day. One pupil expressed, "I was reminded of the ongoing struggle with injustice that we face today when we discussed

independence." That enhances the authenticity of history. (Student X, MAN 2). These reflections substantiate Mezirow's (2009) notion that transformative learning is based on students' capacity to critically reassess assumptions and develop new meanings. In this instance, students not only acquired a more profound comprehension of historical content but also began to establish connections between it and topics such as identity, civic engagement, and social inequality. Nevertheless, teachers reported numerous implementation challenges, predominantly associated with training and resources, despite these gains. They reported experiencing challenges transitioning from transmissive to dialogical teaching methods as a result of inadequate preparation. One educator elaborated, "I have been instructing in this manner for many years." Suddenly, I am instructed to allow the students to assume control of the conversation. However, I have never received instruction on how to facilitate that. Teacher D, SMA N 2.

The majority of educators identified three areas in which they lacked training: (1) pedagogical strategies that are specific to participatory and reflective teaching, (2) technical skills in the use of digital media for history instruction, and (3) a philosophical understanding of the implementation of a transformative curriculum. When prompted to elaborate, these areas were identified. For example, a senior teacher stated, "They provided us with PowerPoints and online resources, but they did not instruct us on how to assist students in posing meaningful questions or how to address sensitive historical subjects." Teacher B, MAN 1. Additionally, another educator stated, "I must comprehend the rationale behind this curriculum, rather than merely the technical aspects." (SMA N 3, Teacher C).

This suggests that training must encompass both technical and conceptual components. Mezirow emphasizes that educators must be

cognizant of the epistemological transition from transmission to transformation in order to facilitate transformative learning. This is also consistent with Christie et al. (2015), who contend that transformative education necessitates profound teacher preparation and pedagogical intentionality. Additionally, technological competencies were identified as deficiencies. Due to restricted access and proficiency, certain educators encountered difficulties in incorporating multimedia resources, including historical documentaries, digital archives, and virtual simulations. A teacher expressed, "I am aware of the significance of digital learning; however, I am uncertain about the process of editing videos or managing online discussion boards." (Teacher E, SMA N 2).

The majority of students expressed an increased sense of motivation and relevance in the study of history through project-based work and discussions. A student disclosed, "Previously, we merely documented our observations. We will now conduct an analysis. We even conducted interviews with our elders regarding the events of 1965. (Student Y, SMA N 3). This type of activity enhances both empathy and critical awareness by connecting historical knowledge with lived family experiences. However, students also encountered initial distress, particularly when transitioning from memorization to critical discussion. Some individuals expressed uncertainty regarding their ability to articulate their opinions or were apprehensive about making errors. "Speaking up is challenging for me, as I am accustomed to documenting my responses." Student M, MAN 1, acknowledged, "I am now required to express my own opinions." This emphasizes the significance of classroom culture and scaffolding in the facilitation of transformation.

Schools that had instructors who were more adequately trained demonstrated greater implementation fidelity, despite these obstacles. These educators established classrooms that

prioritized student engagement and dialogue. A critical determinant of success was the instructors' readiness to transition from the role of "content deliverer" to that of "co-learner." This change is consistent with the assertion of Hoggan & Kloubert (2020) that transformative learning not only alters the professional identity of the instructor but also that of the students.

This implementation is of considerable significance in the context of history education. It transitions history from an inert list of events to a reflective engagement with power, memory, and agency. Students begin to inquire about the identities of those whose narratives are recounted and those who are silenced. One student contemplated, "Why are certain aspects of history included in the textbook while others are disregarded?" I have never inquired about that before. (Student L, SMA N 2).

Consequently, the transformative curriculum in history not only promotes cognitive development but also cultivates a sense of critical citizenship and justice. It encourages students to perceive history as ethically fraught, dynamic, and contested. In doing so, it is consistent with Sleeter (2018), who contends that the curriculum must challenge structural exclusion and foster voice and agency.

The implications of these discoveries are evident: In addition to curriculum modifications, successful implementation necessitates systemic support in the form of professional learning communities, technological infrastructure, and teacher education. Policymakers must guarantee that training programs encompass both theory and practice, address the philosophical underpinnings of transformative education, and offer mentoring to facilitate long-term pedagogical transformation.

Challenges in the Implementation of the Transformative Curriculum

The Transformative Curriculum has the potential to significantly improve the quality of

history education; however, the obstacles to its implementation are substantial and necessitate attention. Several issues must be resolved to guarantee the effective implementation of this curriculum, as indicated by the data collected from interviews with instructors and students. The absence of contextualized and sustained professional development was a critical concern from the teachers' perspective. According to one educator, "We were instructed to encourage students to think critically; however, we were not provided with the necessary guidance to facilitate this process, particularly in the context of history, which is replete with interpretation." (Teacher A, SMA N 2). This underscores the necessity of training in historical thinking, critical inquiry, and the management of controversial topics skills that are unique to history education in addition to techniques.

Several educators who have been acclimated to traditional, more informational and transmissional teaching approaches that rely on the direct delivery of facts and material are finding it difficult to adjust to more reflective, critical, and interactive methods. They expressed a lack of clarity regarding the distinction between general "active learning" and more profound transformative pedagogy. One individual acknowledged, "I believed that group work was sufficient." However, the process of fostering critical discourse is distinct. I am not always aware of the best approach to encourage students to query the material. Teacher D, MAN 1. Additionally, certain educators expressed their lack of confidence in incorporating digital technology into the educational process. Educational technologies, which have the potential to enhance the learning experience through interactive historical simulations, online discussion platforms, and videos, are frequently perceived as complex and necessitate technical expertise that not all educators possess. "I am interested in utilizing online debates and documentaries," stated Teacher B, SMA N 1. "However, the internet

connection at our school is unreliable, and I am unsure of how to effectively organize online discussions."

Furthermore, the inability to organize more interactive learning processes and oversee classes due to a lack of time is an unavoidable obstacle. The quality of curriculum implementation is frequently impacted by the limited class hours, as discussion and reflection-based learning methods necessitate additional time for students to discuss, contemplate, and speak about historical events. "There is no room for slow, deep learning when we only have 90 minutes and 4 KD (Kompetensi Dasar) to complete," observed Teacher E, SMAN 3. Additionally, challenges in the optimal implementation of this curriculum are exacerbated by resource constraints, including inadequate technological devices and insufficient professional training. This infrastructural disparity exacerbates inequality among schools and complicates the process of sustained pedagogical transformation, particularly in under-resourced contexts.

The most significant obstacle faced by pupils was the challenge of cultivating critical thinking abilities in the field of history. Numerous students are more at ease with learning methods that emphasize the acquisition of historical facts without necessitating a comprehensive analysis, such as memorization and testing. "I am accustomed to memorizing the hero, the year, and the date." That is the subject of the examination. However, we are now instructed to "reflect." Student Y, MAN 2, stated, "I am unaware of the significance of that." Students frequently experience feelings of confusion and confinement within limited thinking frameworks when they are required to engage in critical thinking, deep reflection, or the connection between historical events and contemporary social conditions. According to one pupil, "I am apprehensive about being incorrect." Is there a single correct solution in history? (Student M, SMA N 2). This is indicative of a popular misconception that history is a fact-based,

confined discipline, rather than an interpretative and discursive one.

It is also noteworthy that the study demonstrated that instructors and students had varying perspectives on the definition of “critical thinking.” Teachers frequently associated it with “debating” or “asking questions,” while pupils associated it with “finding the correct answer.” This discrepancy emphasizes the necessity of explicit instruction in dialogical skills and historical reasoning. By progressively introducing open-ended questions and modeling reflective thinking, certain educators have attempted to surmount these obstacles. One individual stated, “I inquire of them: ‘What would you do if you were to live during the Japanese occupation?’” Initially, they maintained silence. However, there are now individuals who are willing to express their opinions. (Teacher C, SMA N 1). Various methods were employed by others to assist students in establishing connections, such as role play, timeline comparison, or the linkage of current events with historical analogies. Nevertheless, not all strategies were successful. Some students perceived reflective activities as “less serious” or “unhelpful for exams.” This once more exposes the structural tension between transformative pedagogy and summative assessment regimes. Even some students experienced distress with the learning approach that necessitates them to participate in group discussions with candor. This is the result of an educational culture that prioritizes silence and submission to the teacher’s authority. Critical open discussions, which are essential components of the Transformative Curriculum, necessitate the development of communication skills and the fortitude to express one’s opinions, which may not have been cultivated in more conventional educational systems. “I am hesitant to express myself for fear that the teacher will perceive it as inappropriate,” stated Student L, MAN 1. This hesitancy is consistent with the dread of invalidation within

hierarchical structures, which Mezirow (2009) identified as a barrier to transformative discourse.

The implementation of the Transformative Curriculum is impeded by educational policies, in addition to the obstacles posed by instructors and students. The assessment system, which continues to emphasize fact-based exams and the acquisition of knowledge, is a significant impediment. Written exams that emphasize the memorization of facts and figures are the primary method by which the majority of educational systems in Indonesia evaluate students’ success. According to one educator, students will prioritize memorization if the examination remains multiple-choice regarding dates, regardless of the classroom activities. (SMA N 3, Teacher F).

Instead of evaluating students’ capacity to think critically, analyze, or ruminate on historical events within a broader context, these assessments assess their memory of the material. The Transformative Curriculum’s objectives, which prioritize the learning process, the cultivation of critical thinking skills, and the reflective analysis of history, are at odds with the evaluation system, which places an excessive emphasis on ultimate results in the form of grades or exam scores. In Kurikulum Merdeka, a transformative approach is intended to redirect the educational focus from content delivery to reflective, student-centered practices that promote critical thinking and adaptability in the digital age, as emphasized by Hendrik, Riwu, and Hermanugerah (2023). Similarly, Nasution, Meldina, and Fitriyani (2024) contend that rigorous, exam-based assessment models are incompatible with outcome-based transformative curricula, particularly when attempting to cultivate 21st-century competencies such as creativity and problem-solving. Additionally, Rochmat (2018) emphasizes that the cultural-institutional inertia that neglects the integration of contemporary pedagogical principles into national education policy is reflected in the dominance of rote-based

systems in Indonesia. Consequently, the implementation of this curriculum necessitates a substantial overhaul of the assessment policy to prioritize critical reflection and the learning process, rather than placing a sole emphasis on exam results that are dependent on memorization.

Curriculum content, assessment standards, and teacher training must be aligned in order to overcome these systemic obstacles. Schools should be encouraged to establish a culture that prioritizes open inquiry and student voice, and policies should be implemented to promote authentic assessment (e.g., historical essays, reflective journals, debates).

The Impact and Implications of Transformative Curriculum in History Education

This research endeavors to ascertain the extent to which the Transformative Curriculum's implementation in history education can influence students' comprehension of historical events and their relevance in contemporary social contexts. The results indicate that this method has been effective in fostering student engagement by promoting critical thinking, reflection on historical events, and the connection of these events to pertinent social issues. Transformative Learning, which was developed by Jack Mezirow, contends that transformative learning leads to profound changes in the way individuals perceive the world through critical reflection on life experiences. This is consistent with the aforementioned. The findings confirm that students who participate in reflection-based and discussion-based learning tend to have a more profound comprehension of history, not only as a collection of facts but also as a social construct that is relevant to their lives (Mezirow, 2009).

This transformation is initiated by an increase in affective resonance and relevance, as indicated by empirical data from students. One pupil observed, "I no longer just regard

colonization as a historical event; I am filled with rage and contemplate the injustices of the present." For example, Student L, SMA N 1. In addition, another individual stated, "We discussed 1965, and I came to the realization that I had never previously heard my family's perspective on the matter." Because of that, my perspective on history was altered. Student M, MAN 2. In these statements, Mezirow's transformation is reflected in the early stages: self-examination and a disorienting dilemma.

On the other hand, not all pupils experience a lasting transformation. Many individuals exhibited indicators of increased motivation and engagement; however, fewer exhibited long-term perspective shifts. One teacher observed, "They are more engaged now, but I still observe them reverting to memorization during exams." Teacher C, SMA N 2. This implies that while emotional and cognitive engagement can be elicited, substantial ideological or identity-level transformation may necessitate extended, scaffolded interventions.

In this investigation, it was determined that the Transformative Learning-based approach can improve students' critical thinking skills. This finding is in accordance with Mezirow's theory, which posits that transformative learning commences with a "disorienting dilemma," an experience that disrupts traditional thinking frameworks and prompts in-depth introspection (Taylor, 2008). This emphasizes the significance of the reflective approach in the Transformative Curriculum, which offers students the opportunity to critique and query the knowledge they acquire and its relevance to contemporary social issues (Brink et al., 2024). The internationalization of the curriculum, as suggested by Clifford and Montgomery (2015), is a critical component of transformative pedagogy that significantly promotes transformative learning by fostering the development of critical perspectives among students.

In spite of this, the extent of transformation differed among students. At least a few individuals began to challenge the prevailing narratives and articulate their moral perspectives regarding historical injustices. However, others continued to exhibit performative behavior, demonstrating engagement solely during classroom assessments. This brings to light a challenge that Sinaga (2023) has identified: the most effective transformation occurs when learners participate in sustained, open-ended dialogue rather than surface-level duties.

Although these results corroborate prior research that has shown the efficacy of transformative learning-based instruction in history education (Hartono & Huda, 2020; Sleeter, 2018), this study also highlights significant obstacles associated with inadequate teacher training and students' challenges in transitioning from memorization-based learning to more analytical and reflective learning. The students who acknowledged, "It is simpler to recall the date and location," echoed this sentiment. Student Y (SMA N 3) stated, "It is more difficult to express one's perspective or engage in a debate regarding the significance of history."

Kandiko Howson and Kingsbury (2023) have elucidated that the transformation of the curriculum is frequently a substantial challenge for educational institutions, as many institutions continue to rely on conventional teaching methods that prioritize the delivery of facts and exams over critical reflection and skills-based learning (Kandiko & Kingsbury, 2021). Lockett and Shay (2020) have emphasized that the application of transformative pedagogy can significantly challenge traditional educational paradigms. However, this necessitates profound and collaborative learning between educators and students. This is consistent with their findings.

To be more precise, this investigation indicates that, despite the fact that numerous educators are prepared to implement the Transformative Curriculum, they encounter obstacles associated with inadequate training and

resources. Mezirow's theory on the significance of profound comprehension in transformative learning was further fortified by the superior outcomes of educators who underwent more comprehensive training in this methodology. In contrast, students who were habituated to memorization-based learning found it challenging to adjust to the reflective and discussion-based approach, which necessitates a higher level of emotional and social engagement.

Additionally, there was a disparity in the definition of "critical thinking" among students and instructors. Despite the fact that instructors prioritized historical empathy and open-ended questions, students frequently associated critical thinking with right-or-wrong reasoning. Explicit modeling of dialogical thinking and scaffolding in historical reasoning are necessary due to this discrepancy.

The traditional education system, which prioritizes academic grades, and the Transformative Curriculum's objectives, which prioritize the development of critical thinking skills and the comprehension of reflective processes, are at odds (Mezirow, 2009). Additionally, Sinaga (2023) demonstrates that the transformation of students is closely linked to their participation in critical discourse, a critical component that fosters a more profound comprehension of their societal obligations. Nevertheless, this work also critically recognizes that not all pupils experienced profound, enduring transformation. In numerous instances, the influence was gradual; students developed a greater inclination to engage in conversation, become more emotionally invested, and develop a greater interest in history, but they had not yet internalized a fundamentally new perspective. In the words of one educator, "They are beginning to ask more challenging questions." I believe that is a favorable indication. But is it truly transformation? Years are required to accomplish that. D. Teacher, MAN 1.

These results emphasize the necessity of incorporating more comprehensive teacher

training and implementing technology that facilitates media-based learning to address their practical implications. Moreover, educational policies must encourage the implementation of curricula that emphasize critical thinking and reflection skills, rather than solely emphasizing exam results and memorization. Theoretically, this study also enhances our comprehension of Transformative Learning and establishes a foundation for educators to create more inclusive and reflective learning experiences. In this context, this approach promotes a change in our perception of history, not only as information to be acquired but also as a tool to affect students' social awareness and identities (Chapman, 2007; Findlay, 1993). A more profound sense of social responsibility is developed by students as history is associated with ethics and identity. Historical consciousness has the potential to facilitate civic empowerment and reconciliation in postcolonial societies such as Indonesia. Nonetheless, this investigation is not without its constraints, such as a restricted sample size and a local context that may not accurately reflect the situation throughout Indonesia. Furthermore, the Transformative Curriculum has the potential to significantly enhance the learning experience. However, the results also suggest that the decrease in student engagement in reflective learning may be a result of their lack of preparedness to engage in more complex and emotive processing. Therefore, it is necessary to adopt a more incremental approach in order to adequately prepare students and establish secure environments for them to navigate this process (Mutegi, 2011). This is in accordance with Fleming's (2022) perspective, which underscores the significance of personal development processes. The latter should not be solely dependent on academic outcomes, but also on changes in students' values and identities.

Overall, the Transformative Curriculum's implementation in the field of history education has had a substantial positive effect on student

engagement and comprehension. However, in order to maximize its effectiveness, it is imperative to devote more resources to teacher training, the development of a more comprehensive assessment system that emphasizes students' comprehension and reflective processes, rather than merely mastering data. It is only through systemic alignment—including curriculum, assessment, and pedagogy—that a more profound and enduring transformation can be achieved. By addressing these challenges, the Transformative Curriculum has the potential to establish a more contextual, reflective, and relevant history education, which will be instrumental in the development of students' critical thinking skills and social awareness in the future (Brink et al., 2024; Duffy et al., 2022; Findlay, 1993; Kandiko Howson & Kingsbury, 2023).

■ CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the implementation of the Transformative Curriculum in history education at secondary schools in Pontianak has a positive impact on students' understanding of history by enhancing their critical thinking skills and social awareness. However, the main challenges in its implementation are limited teacher training, inadequate resources, and an assessment system that still focuses on memorization. Therefore, this study recommends improving teacher training, providing resources that support learning technologies, and revising the assessment policy to emphasize reflective processes and critical thinking skills. With the right support, the Transformative Curriculum can create a more relevant and meaningful history education for students.

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