

Simulation Learning in Economics Education: Empowering Critical Thinking and *Rahmatan Lil Alamin* Value

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Abstract

This study explores the application of critical education paradigms, particularly *Rahmatan Lil Alamin*, to enhance critical thinking skills in economics subjects through simulation learning methods. Critical education aims to challenge unjust social structures and systems by cultivating critical consciousness and empowering individuals. Simulation learning is employed as a means to promote active student engagement and stimulate critical thinking. Drawing upon literature reviews highlighting the effectiveness of simulation methods in improving critical thinking, the study investigates the impact of these methods on high school students' critical thinking skills. The literature underscores the importance of interaction, communication, and role-playing in the learning process, aligning with the goals of critical education. The research delves into understanding how simulation methods can enhance critical thinking skills in economics subjects and the effects of such methods on student learning. The study is conducted in a Madrasah Aliyah Negeri in Batang, Indonesia, where learner-centered education is practiced, providing an ideal setting for implementing simulation-based critical education. Data collection methods include observation, interviews with teachers and students, and documentation analysis. The research employs a qualitative case study approach to gather rich data and insights into the implementation of simulation methods in economics education. Preliminary findings indicate that the simulation method fosters active participation, stimulates critical thinking, and raises awareness of real-world societal issues. Students engage in respectful discussions, considering diverse viewpoints and demonstrating tolerance, aligning with the *Rahmatan Lil Alamin* concept.

Keywords: Critical thinking, *Rahmatan Lil Alamin* value, simulation method

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Introduction

Education, both in its formal and informal manifestations, plays a profound role in shaping and perpetuating social systems and structures. While education can be instrumental in legitimating and reinforcing existing power dynamics, it also holds the potential to catalyze social change towards a more equitable and just society. The extent to which education can foster social transformation is significantly influenced by the adopted educational paradigm (Rahardjo, 2010).

Emerging as a counterpoint to the conservative and liberal educational paradigms, the critical education paradigm offers a transformative approach to education. As articulated by Mansour Fakih, critical education is an educational paradigm that directs education towards

critical reflection on dominant ideologies, ultimately aiming for social transformation (Fakih, 2001). Critical education seeks to create a space where students can freely and critically identify and analyze their potential, thereby enabling them to become active participants in the process of social transformation (Lubis, 2006; Fakih, 2001).

At its core, critical education is a process that seeks to rehumanize individuals who have been dehumanized by unjust structures and systems. This dehumanization is achieved by fostering critical, creative, and active patterns of learning among all students. Critical education finds its roots in various liberation movements, emphasizing the inseparable relationship between liberation and criticality (Al-Husayn, 1999; Fakih, 2011).

Paulo Freire, a renowned educational philosopher, played a pivotal role in laying the philosophical foundation of critical education. His concept of liberation emphasizes the awakening of people's critical consciousness. Community liberation, according to Freire, extends beyond material aspects such as food security, clothing, shelter, and health, encompassing the creation of spaces for freedom in spiritual, ideological, socio-cultural, and political spheres. Freire believed that people not only need freedom from hunger but also the freedom to create and construct their own realities and those of their world. Moreover, people need the freedom to aspire for the future of themselves and their communities (Fakih, 2001).

The literature on critical education and simulation methods provides valuable insights into the effectiveness of simulation-based approaches in fostering critical thinking skills. A study by Achmad Vindo Galaresa and Sri Sundari (2019) explored the use of simulation methods in improving critical thinking skills. Their findings suggest that simulation methods can indeed enhance critical thinking skills when attention is paid to aspects such as the type of simulation, simulation duration, and simulation timing (Galaresa & Sundari, 2019).

Another study, conducted by Elva Setiawan, Liliasari, and Ijang Rohman (2014), investigated the development of critical thinking skills of high school students through interactive simulation using PhET Molecule Shapes. The results revealed that PhET MS can effectively enhance mastery of certain critical thinking skills indicators, particularly in making inductions, considering the results of induction, and analyzing arguments (Setiawan et al., 2014).

Furthermore, a study by Hasbullah (2021) examined the role of simulation methods in teacher education during a pandemic. The findings indicate that simulation-based learning fosters students' interaction and communication skills within groups. Additionally, simulation methods encourage students to take on roles that align with specific learning objectives (Hasbullah, 2021).

The critical education paradigm, as articulated by Mansour Fakih, serves as a transformative approach directing educational efforts towards a reflective examination of prevailing ideologies for the purpose of social transformation. It is a pedagogical framework designed to facilitate the identification and analysis of students' potential in a free and critical manner, with the ultimate goal of fostering societal change. This paradigm emerges as a response to the dehumanization experienced by individuals within unjust structures and systems. In this context, critical, creative, and active patterns are applied to all students, positioning critical education as an extension of liberation movements. The inseparable nature of liberation and criticality in this educational paradigm is underscored by various scholarly perspectives (Al-Husayn, 1999; Fakih, 2011).

Critical education endeavors to rehumanize individuals by enabling them to identify, analyze, and transform unjust structures and systems. The paradigm provides a space for learners to actively engage in the creation of fundamentally new and improved societal structures. According to Jimmy Ph. Paat, the primary objective of critical education is to instill

critical consciousness, comprising power awareness, critical literacy, desocialization, and self-organization/self-education (Zainab, 2012). The methodology employed in critical education emphasizes a learning approach over a teaching approach, fostering a collaborative learning environment where teachers actively participate in the learning process alongside students.

The methodological underpinning of critical learning involves the process of ACTION-REFLECTION-ACTION, also known as dialectics. Reflection, encompassing contemplation and analysis, leads to heightened consciousness, prompting subsequent actions to address and navigate prevailing challenges (Sidi, 2001). Within the broader Islamic context of "*Rahmatan Lil Alamin*," which advocates for safety and peace not only for humans but also for the environment, critical education aligns with the principles of humanism, dialogical engagement, tolerance, and pluralism (Subakhan, 2016). This educational paradigm seeks to humanize individuals and offers a counterbalance to unchecked liberation, thereby creating a harmonious and compassionate learning environment.

Shifting focus to the realm of Economics subjects, the study concentrates on chapter 6, "State Budget and Regional Budget," within the context of Social Sciences (IPS) specialization classes. The comprehensive coverage includes understanding the State Budget, its functions, objectives, revenue sources, types of expenditure, preparation mechanisms, and its influence on the economy. Additionally, the study delves into the sub-chapter on Regional Budget (APBD), exploring its components and impact on the economy.

In implementing the study, the simulation method is chosen as the startup method. This method involves variables mimicking real-life systems and aims to imitate or engineer actual situations to elucidate specific processes or conditions. The simulation learning method serves the purpose of experiential learning, emphasizing doing, imitation, feedback, study, assessment, and repetition (Hamalik, 2002). The principles guiding the simulation method include explanation, supervision, training, and discussion, with various types such as soisodrama, psychodrama, role-playing, and peer teaching (Sanjaya, 2006). In this approach, the teacher acts as a facilitator, guiding and leading discussions to enhance the learning experience (Dahlan, 1984).

These studies provide compelling evidence that simulation methods can effectively enhance critical thinking skills and promote active engagement among students, making them valuable tools for implementing critical education practices.

This study addresses the central problem of examining the enhancement of critical thinking skills in economics through simulation methods. The specific inquiries guiding this investigation are twofold: firstly, an exploration of the endeavors made to augment critical thinking skills in economics subjects through simulation methods; and secondly, an examination of the influence of simulation methods in economics on the development of critical thinking skills. Aligned with these problem formulations, the research objectives are outlined as follows: firstly, to discern the strategies employed to enhance critical thinking skills in economics subjects through the utilization of simulation methods; and secondly, to ascertain the impact of incorporating simulation methods into economics education on the overall development of critical thinking skills.

Method

Research Design

The chosen research method for this study is qualitative research with a case study approach. A case study involves the exploration of a specific bounded system or case, collecting in-depth data from various rich sources over time within a particular context. The focal point of this research is an examination of efforts to enhance critical thinking skills in the

context of "*Rahmatan Lil Alamin*" through the application of simulation learning methods in economics subjects.

Research Site

The research was conducted at Madrasah Aliyah Negeri Batang. The selection of this location is grounded in several considerations. Firstly, the Madrasah Aliyah Negeri Batang has adopted a learner-centered learning approach. Secondly, the institution has actively implemented learning methods aimed at developing students' critical thinking skills, particularly in the field of economics.

Data Sources:

Primary data was collected from two main sources: teachers and students. The selected teachers must be registered at Madrasah Aliyah Negeri Batang and have applied the critical learning paradigm. One such teacher, EN, specializing in economics, will serve as a key informant. Students from Class XI Social Studies 1-3 at Madrasah Aliyah Negeri Batang will also be interviewed to gather valuable insights.

Secondary data was obtained from an extensive literature review, including books, research findings, scientific journals, internet sources, and relevant documents. These secondary sources will provide additional context and support the primary data collected through observation and interviews.

Data Collection Techniques

Observation involved closely monitoring the economics learning process using simulation methods to understand how students develop critical thinking skills aligned with "*Rahmatan Lil Alamin*."

Interviews were conducted with economics teachers and students from Class XI Social Studies 1-3. Teachers will provide insights into efforts to improve critical thinking skills through simulation methods, while students will share their perspectives on the impact of simulation methods on their critical thinking skills.

Documentation involved collecting data through photos, documents, videos, and social media uploads related to the economics learning process. These materials will serve as secondary data, supporting observations and interviews.

Data Analysis Techniques

The study utilized a descriptive analysis technique, aiming to describe and interpret the research objects as they are. The chosen data analysis model is the interactive model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldana. This model encompasses data condensation, data presentation (data display), and drawing conclusions.

Results and Discussion

Simulation Learning Method in Macroeconomic Material

The implementation of the learning process for class XI economics subjects at Madrasah Aliyah Negeri Batang during the second semester involves the utilization of simulation methods specifically focusing on the APBN (National Budget) and APBD (Regional Budget) materials. The primary objective of incorporating simulation methods into the study of APBN and APBD is to enhance students' critical thinking skills, as highlighted by EN, the economics subject teacher, who stated, "... *To improve and spur students to think critically, we use the simulation method.*"

The stages involved in the execution of the simulation method within the framework of learning macroeconomics are outlined as follows.

Orientation

The orientation stage initiates with a teacher-led preliminary assessment based on students' previous material achievements. This assessment aims to identify students' cognitive, psychomotor, and learning style strengths and weaknesses. Subsequently, a tailored learning strategy is developed using simulation methods for APBN and APBD materials based on the gathered insights. EN emphasizes, *"From the value data in the previous material, we can know the abilities and learning styles of students. From there, we developed a learning strategy using simulation methods for APBN and APBD materials."*

Once the learning strategy is established, the teacher conveys the objectives and methods to the students in the first meeting. The teacher describes, *"The first meeting, we directly conveyed to the APBN material and the APBD will use simulations. Later, some of you will play a role as the compiler of the APBN and APBD, while others will act as the House of Representatives to criticize the APBN and APBD that have been prepared by your friends."*

In the same meeting, the teacher provides an overview of the understanding and mechanisms for preparing the APBN and APBD materials through lecture and question-and-answer sessions. The teacher elaborates, *"If my material delivery uses the lecture and question-and-answer method, I explain what the APBN is, what is the APBD, after that, we teach the mechanism in compiling the APBN and APBD."*

Towards the end of the orientation stage, students are assigned the task of finding examples of APBD on the internet. Endon Nurcahyati adds, *"The first meeting, delivery of objectives and initial material, then gave the task of finding examples of APBD on the internet."*

Learner Exercises

The second meeting involves learners engaging in exercises related to the previously assigned task of finding examples of APBD on the internet. This learning session commences with an apperception, followed by a comprehensive discussion of the examples found. Subsequently, the teacher divides students into groups of four to five, encouraging deep discussions and considerations.

"In the second meeting, we discussed the task of the previous meeting, namely the example of the regional budget. We peel thoroughly starting from the source of regional income to the allocation of regional expenditures. Questions and answers with students are very intense, even students begin to be critical of the reality that exists in society."

After in-depth discussions on the sample APBDs, the teacher conducts a training session where each group is provided with capital to compile a RAPBD (Regional Annual Budget) for a specific city. *"After peeling, my students gave capital to make a RAPBD, according to the city they chose."*

Each group is allotted thirty minutes for this task, during which students enthusiastically engage in preparing their RAPBD, presenting arguments for each allocation. Endon Nurcahyati explains, *"Those thirty minutes, the children were amazing, they were really all experts, all the allocations they gave arguments, so the discussion in the group was very interesting, amazing."*

Simulation Implementation:

The last hour of the third meeting is dedicated to simulations or presentations. One group presents the RAPBD they compiled for the Plenary Meeting of the Regional People's Representative Council. Other students, acting as council members, raise hands to criticize and engage in arguments.

"In the last hour I used it for simulation, the group of three commanded by Annyndra and friends came forward to present their RAPBD. They acted as regional governments, while the others would act as councilors. After group three finished presenting their

RAPBD, the other group immediately enthusiastically raised their hands to criticize or raise arguments, even though I had not invited it, and it went automatically."

Council members criticize allocations related to education, poverty alleviation, and unemployment, initiating a lively and critical debate. The presenter group is given the opportunity to respond to the criticisms, providing arguments based on economic equality and the intended impact on various segments of the population.

The day's meeting concludes with applause from students appreciating the presenter group, and the teacher invites the next group to prepare for their presentation.

Following presentations from all groups, each accompanied by notes summarizing criticisms and discussions, the teacher concludes the learning session. *"After all groups advanced, then the closing teacher concluded the learning results, the most important note is that with this simulation method children become very critical of the material and relate it to existing reality."*

The Impact of Simulation Methods in Economics Subjects on Critical Thinking Skills and Rahmatan Lil Alamin Value

Learners Are Active in Asking Questions and Arguing

The implementation of simulation methods has a significant impact on students' critical thinking skills within the framework of *Rahmatan Lil Alamin*. During the plenary meeting of the RAPBD, students acting as council members actively compete to ask questions and present arguments. "All are active, like the first simulation, there are Hanlan, Yanu, and others, they actively ask questions and give arguments."

Students Are Sensitive to Social Realities

The arguments generated during the simulation discussions primarily focus on the social reality prevalent in society. Students raise concerns about the allocation of resources, pointing out the need for a more balanced focus on areas such as education to address unemployment and poverty. "The group three RAPBD only focuses on infrastructure development... should focus more on education first." This sensitivity indicates a thoughtful consideration of the broader societal context.

Students Maintain Ethical Discussions

Even within the critical simulation discussions, students adhere to ethical standards, respecting each other's opinions and differences. This commitment to ethics aligns with the principles of *Rahmatan Lil Alamin* in critical education. "In the discussion, children pay great attention to manners, they respect each other's opinions, they also respect differences of opinion based on the idealism of each group."

After discussions, students shake hands and applaud each other, demonstrating a respectful and appreciative conclusion without any evident disappointment or imposition of opinions.

In summary, the implementation of simulation methods in the economics curriculum at Madrasah Aliyah Negeri Batang proves instrumental in enhancing students' critical thinking skills while aligning with the ethical principles of *Rahmatan Lil Alamin*. Through active engagement, sensitivity to social realities, and maintaining ethical discussions, students demonstrate a holistic development of critical thinking skills within the context of the curriculum.

Conclusion

Critical education, with its emphasis on critical, creative, and active learning patterns, serves as a transformative force, rehumanizing individuals who have been dehumanized by unjust social structures and systems. Critical education that embodies the spirit of *Rahmatan Lil Alamin*, meaning "mercy for all worlds," promotes liberation within a framework of pluralism, humanism, dialogue, and tolerance. This approach ensures that critical education does not fall into the trap of limitless liberation, but rather guides individuals towards responsible and compassionate action.

Simulation learning methods, with their emphasis on imitation, feedback, study, assessment, and repetition, provide an effective tool for fostering critical thinking skills within the framework of critical education. The interactive nature of simulation methods encourages students to engage actively, argue persuasively, and consider diverse perspectives.

The implementation of simulation methods in teaching economic concepts, such as APBN and APBD, in Madrasah Aliyah Negeri Batang yielded positive outcomes. Students demonstrated enhanced critical thinking skills, engaging in meaningful discussions and presenting arguments grounded in social realities. Their arguments reflected an awareness of pluralistic, humanistic, dialogical, and tolerant values, aligning with the principles of *Rahmatan Lil Alamin*.

In conclusion, the integration of simulation learning methods into critical education practices can effectively enhance critical thinking skills that embody the principles of *Rahmatan Lil Alamin*. This approach empowers individuals to become agents of positive change, contributing to a more just and compassionate society.

Conflict of interests

The author declares that he has no conflict of interest.

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