

Application of Lev Vygotsky's Theory in Social Studies Learning Using Social Action Projects Based on Creative Pedagogy to Increase Student Engagement

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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

creative pedagogy;
social action project;
Social Studies;
Vygotsky theory

Article history:

Received 2023-01-19

Revised 2023-02-11

Accepted 2023-09-05

ABSTRACT

Teachers were forced to manage long-distance learning during the Covid-19 pandemic, but student's engagement was less satisfying. This situation would impact on students' learning achievement. In responding to these challenges, lesson design using the social action project based on creative pedagogy models can be used as an alternative to activate students' engagement in post-pandemic Social Studies learning in junior high schools. This study aimed to explore the application of Lev Vygotsky's theory, especially related to the use of social action project based on creative pedagogy in social studies learning. The research model used is descriptive qualitative from the results of interviews and observations. The data sources are a social studies teacher and 5 students who are the group leader. The results showed that application of Lev Vygotsky's theory occurs at every step in social action project based on creative pedagogy models. Scaffolding and the role of more knowledgeable others in social studies learning using that models help student development, increases student engagement, and also helps the teacher to manage class more effectively. It is concluded that the application of Lev Vygotsky's theory in Social Studies learning using social action project based on creative pedagogy performs in student's creative learning supported by a teacher's creative teaching can increase students engagement.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Distance learning during the Covid-19 pandemic was not fully running optimally. Various ways have been done to support the implementation of learning. The school closing policy followed up with online learning requires students and teachers to adapt quickly to the use of technology. The use of technology plays an important role in distance learning. Learning using technology is not limited to the classroom, but can be done remotely (Afianti et al., 2022). There are technical obstacles to the use of e-

learning in pandemic learning (Ramadhan & Herwin, 2022). So much research investigate problems and obstacles in distance learning (Efriana, 2021; Ozudogru, 2021; Lassoued et al., 2020; Maqbulin, 2021; Malelak et al, 2021; Apriyanti, 2020). Many teachers experience problems managing distance learning due to their lack of mastery of information technology as an intermediary. Research conducted by Efriana (2021) in an EFL classrooms showed that so many problems during distance learning are faced by teachers and students. The problem teachers face is that not all teachers can operate ICT for supporting teaching, and are limited in controlling online learning. On the other hand, the problem is face by students in the form of, some students are not fully active, and less enthusiastic to participate in online learning. Lassoued et al. (2020), stated that the one of personal obstacles to distance learning is the weak motivation of students. Pohan & Murti (2022) emphasize that several obstacles cause a decrease in interest in learning from some students. A study conducted by Suwarno et al. (2021) showed that 69.95% of students were not happy study in online learning. Not much different from that research, many junior high school Social Studies teachers experience similar problems.

Social Studies is one of the subjects at the junior high school level in Indonesia that is closely related to social life. By studying Social Studies, students are expected to be able to understand their role as members of society and contribute positively to the development of the nation and state. Social Studies is a strategic subject as a means to create the next generation with a national vision and globally and realize the profile of Pancasila students as Indonesia's educational goals (Nursaban et al 2021). The achievement of these goals is inseparable from the teacher's ability to teach.

Teaching is a multi-dimensional activity that includes designing, organizing and supervising harmonious activities, as well as planning and implementing delivery and assessment techniques, all of which aim to ensure student learning (Helou & Newsome, 2018). However, not all of these activities run well in Social Studies learning during the Covid-19 pandemic and it has an impact on the lack of student enthusiasm (Adha et al., 2021), delays in sending daily assignments by students (Beta & Segara, 2021), and the lack of student interaction (Indawati et al., 2020). It all shows the low engagement of students in Social Studies learning. Student engagement influences student learning experience, which ultimately influences learning outcomes. Student engagement can be seen from how interaction is built in the learning process, both between students and teachers and with other students. The lack of student interaction during the COVID-19 pandemic will affect student development, as stated by Vygotsky that children gain knowledge, at least complex thought, from social interactions with adults and wiser children (Barnett, 2019). Vygotsky's theory states that social interaction plays an important role in one's development through collaborative dialogue with more knowledgeable people (Vygotsky, 1978). Education must support the role of social interaction between students and adults (teachers, educators) or more capable peers (Topciu & Myftiu, 2015).

Based on the problems above, post-pandemic Social Studies learning must be designed to be able to increase student engagement and instill a cooperative and collaborative attitude. Why is engagement important to increase? Research conducted by Ruhendi & Marta (2022) shows that academic engagement statistically has a positive effect on learning achievement. To increase student engagement in learning can be done by applying Lev Vygotsky's theory as a result of research conducted by Connolly et al. (2022) in Introduction to Management Information System course. Furthermore, engagement is important, including in Social Studies learning so that students' learning achievement is satisfying. Social Studies teachers must be able to arrange learning at an appropriate level of attainment for junior high school students, not just below the level of attainment of students or even too far above the level of attainment of students. If an educator attempts to teach at a level that is beneath the students' attainment level, per the theory, they will become bored and less motivated. The other side of the spectrum is a classroom that challenges the students above their level of capability which can also have adverse effects (Barnett, 2019). Therefore, Social Studies learning must make students feel challenged, especially in solving social problems as the characteristics of Social Studies learning are closely related to social phenomena.

The teaching style that can be applied as an alternative solution to the problems above is a student-centered learning approach that emphasizes collaboration, prioritizing group learning, and interaction. Student-centred learning that has collaborative, cooperative characteristics, and can increase

student engagement is project learning. From several observations and interviews with Social Studies teachers at junior high schools in Yogyakarta Province, Indonesia, not all teachers understand and have ever applied this model. The project learning in this study is realized in the "Social Action Project Based on Creative Pedagogy" model. This model is relevant to be applied in Social Studies learning where the goal is bringing students closer to social life.

It is important to analyze the application of Social Action Based on Creative Pedagogy in Social Studies learning so that the teachers can arrange learning effectively and activate the student's engagement by applying Vygotsky's theory. Many studies are related to Vygotsky's theory, however, there is no research that is explicitly about the application of Vygotsky's theory in Social Studies learning. The research question of this study are: 1) how is Social Studies learning using the Social Action Project Based on Creative Pedagogy? 2) how is the application of Vygotsky's theory in Social Studies learning? 3) what is the implications of Vygotsky's theory for the Social Studies teacher's tasks in learning using this model? Therefore, this study was conducted to analyze Lev Vygotsky's theory in Social Studies learning using a "Social Action Project Based on Creative Pedagogy" and discusses its implications for teacher tasks. The novelty of this research is in the form of a learning model that can be applied to increase student engagement through the application of Vygotsky's theory. This research will provide benefits for teachers so they can design their tasks effectively to optimize student engagement in learning.

2. METHODS

This research was conducted on class VII students of Junior High School in Yogyakarta Indonesia. The method developed is descriptive qualitative. This research is identified as appropriate for research questions that focus on discovering the who, what, and where of events or experiences to get insight from informants about the desired phenomenon or information sought to be developed and refine the questionnaire (Kim et al., 2017).

Data collection was obtained in the "Social Action Project Based on Creative Pedagogy" process with the steps "problem", "networking", "action", "guiding", and "share". Data collection was carried out from January 2022 to June 2022 through interviews and observations. The data sources in this study were a teacher and 32 students. Respondents were selected purposively based on the category of schools that were used to implementing project-based learning models and were prospective driving schools. Schools' willingness to do research during the post-Covid-19 school opening policy was also a consideration in selecting respondents.

The assessment is directed at the Social Studies learning process that occurs in class VIIA. Observational data are categorized and then described as needed. Observation carried out on student and teacher activities during teaching and learning using a "Social Action Project Based on Creative Pedagogy model". The interviews were conducted face-to-face and also online via zoom after learning, because the learning was carried out in a blended learning manner. Interviews with teachers were conducted individually. While interviews with students were conducted in the form of small group discussions so that students were more relaxed. The research data obtained were analyzed qualitatively through several stages of data collection, data reduction, data display, and verification or conclusion. Data collected from interviews, and observations, were reduced according to research needs. The reduced data is displayed in the form of narrative text and then interpreted to draw conclusions and verify.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The learning process is carried out on Social Studies subjects with material on the role of entrepreneurship in building the Indonesian economy. The study was conducted in class VII A Junior High School from January to June 2022.

3.1. Students' engagement in Social Studies learning using Social Action Project Based on Creative Pedagogy Model

Social Studies learning in this research was carried out for eight meetings. Student engagement is supported by the teacher's creative teaching. Learning activities begin with the teacher showing a video containing daily problems that can be solved through entrepreneurship. Students are asked to write down a problem that students think is the most interesting to solve. Then the teacher groups students according to the problem they choose, into 5 groups. Each group is challenged to carry out social action projects as an effort to solve problems through entrepreneurship activity. The social action projects are presented in the following table:

Table 2. List of social action projects

Group	Problem	Social Action Project
1	Muddy water	Water purification project
2	Plastic waste	Eco chair project made from plastic waste
3	Plastic bag	Flower decoration from plastic bag
4	Old bottle	Old bottle pencil case
5	Mineral water bottles waste	Pot from a used mineral water bottle

The Social Studies learning process using Social Action Project Based on Creative Pedagogy can be presented in the learning steps in the table below:

Table 3. Steps in the Social Action Project Based on Creative Pedagogy

Step	Student Activities (Creative Learning)	Teacher Activities (Creative Teaching)
Problem: Identifying and analyzing social problems of everyday life in the surrounding environment	Students carry out individual inquiries, ask questions in pairs, and brainstorm classically about social problems found in their environment.	Teacher bridges the problem gaps that students have found and encourages the brainstorming process with trigger dialogues
Networking: collaborating to find sources by observing social media owned by related organizations or institutions so that there is a modeling process that can be imitated	Students in groups collaborating and searching institutions (government, NGOs, communities, organizations, etc.) to explore relevant activities as solutions to problem-solving by observing their social media or direct visits.	Teacher provides recommendations and alternative sources, partners, and various social media to find solutions to problems, and directs students to imitate relevant activities that have been carried out by the observed institutions by tabulating a list of the results of problem-solving observations
Action: designing and experimenting the social action projects in groups as solutions to social problems in everyday life	Students make a social action project design by imitating one of the institution's activities which is relevant as a result of social media observations or direct visits and then dividing the tasks of group members. Students formulate a social action project in the form of a mini proposal/mind-map/timeline/video/business plan written on worksheets according to a group agreement. Students conduct social action project experiments and create video documentation.	Teacher shows an open attitude towards students' creative ideas by asking each group to present the results of the social action project in their way. Teacher shows an interest in new things, unique findings from the results of social action projects, and their benefits for the welfare of society.

Guiding: students are guided to complete social action projects and directed to focus on the benefits of community empowerment	Students are guided to finish and perfect the social action project, then directed to imagine and self-reflect to find interesting experiences. Students think reflectively and give reasons for choosing a social action project as the most creative problem-solving solution so that it can benefit the welfare of society.	Teacher respect-to independent thinking to choose social action projects that students put forward as different ways of thinking. Teacher provides support in the form of rewards to social-creative groups, namely groups whose social action projects give unique social impacts for community empowerment.
Share: socializing the results of social action projects by utilizing social media so that they can become "models" and have a social impact on society	Students make a list of various possible efforts to persuade the public based on experience in carrying out social action projects and then disseminate it through social media.	Teacher motivates students to use social media as a medium for sharing social action project experiences with the community

3.2. *Lev Vygotsky's theory in Social Studies Learning using Social Action Project Based on Creative Pedagogy*

In the "Social Action Project Based on Creative Pedagogy" model, students build their knowledge through interaction with their environment through a series of activities called social action projects. The social action project is student-centred learning, where students independently, and actively construct their knowledge through a series of project completion activities. Previous studies showed that student-centred learning had advantages for students' development (Rukmini, et. al, 2018; Beatrix, 2020; Marpaung & Azzajjad, 2020; Hasanah & Syafar, 2022). This model is a kind of project-based learning. A lot of research on the application of project-based learning shows success in the teaching and learning process (Omar et al., 2021; Darmaji, 2018; Sumarni et al., 2016; Almulla, 2020; Odell, et. al., 2019). Research conducted by Rahmawati et al. (2021) shows that the use of a project-based learning model with a scientific approach during a pandemic has led to an increase in student learning outcomes and enthusiasm. The quality of PjBL learning is better than conventional learning and the implementation of PjBL has a positive impact on the activity and critical thinking-based learning of students (Soedjono et al., 2022).

Social Action Project Based on Creative Pedagogy as a kind of project-based learning model helps develop mental and thought processes during and after students carry out social activities which are called social action projects. Working on projects allows students to experience the diversity of ideas in each group work so that each student does their best to solve problems (Omar et al., 2021). In the first step (problem) students interact with the social environment identify and analyze social problems. Students observe the environment, ask other people, discuss something about the actual situation that is not following the circumstances that should be, and then define it as a social problem. When students identify problems in the environment around where they live, they will interact with the environment and ask other people, it shows the occurrence of social interaction. That is when students then build their new knowledge with the knowledge they already have at that time. Complex thinking processes occur when children discuss events, objects, and problems with adults and other more knowledgeable people, then, gradually the results of these discussions will become part of the child's thinking structure (Omrod, 2012). In the "problem" step, students discuss events with friends and teachers in pairs and classical, which means complex thinking processes occur, becoming the structure of knowledge in students. Teachers who carry out gap-bridging processes and dialogue-triggering encourage students' thinking processes in constructing knowledge.

Vygotsky's theory can be interpreted that important knowledge and development are acquired in group settings where the more knowledgeable parties scaffold information for receiving students

which is done by creating collaborative learning or experiences (Barnett, 2019). In the "networking" step students collaborate with a group of friends and also with adults (organizational administrators, family at home) looking for solutions to problem-solving, so that is where the role of other people which in Vygotsky's theory is called More Knowledgeable Others (MKO) (Omrod, 2012). More knowledgeable others are often conceptualized as agents, such as teachers, adults, and peers (Abtahi et al., 2017). For example, students who discovered the problem of dirty water around their residence, held discussions with the leader of the youth organization and village administrators to find ways to purify the water. This is where the leader of the youth organization and village administrators play the role of MKO, likewise the teacher when directing students in class. During the "networking" process, occur cognitive apprenticeship, namely the process when someone is learning, and gain expertise through interaction with experts step by step (Suardipa, 2020).

In the "networking" step the teacher also instructs students to find out how to solve social problems by observing social media. The teacher provides examples of social media that students can access as a reference for problem-solving. Based on the observed social media, students imitate activities in social media that are considered appropriate for solving problems. And then, students work together in groups and share the tasks of each group member to imitate social media activities as social action projects. It means students learn in three ways, as stated by Barnett (2019) including, imitative, instructional, and collaborative learning. This was stated by group leader 3,

"Our group is interested in solving the problem of plastic waste, then we look for references from Instagram, Youtube, and Facebook on ways to process waste. In the end, we chose to process plastic waste into decorative flowers (R3)."

"Action" as the third step, requires students to be able to design and carry out social action projects as problem-solving. Many students stated that they were not sure that they could finish it according to the allotted time. However, with good cooperation between group members and teacher support in the form of reward points that will be given to groups that achieve the target, social action projects can be completed on time. Omrod (2012) stated, students are able to complete challenging assignments if given more challenging assignments from more competent individuals (which in this case is the teacher). It means that the social action projects carried out in groups help students achieve Zone Proximal Development (ZPD) because it is challenging. ZPD is defined by Vygotsky as the distance between levels of actual progress with the specified by solving problems independently and the level of development potential defined by the problem-solving under the guidance of people adults or in collaboration with colleagues more capable (Abtahi et al., 2017).

Based on the results of interviews with students, it was found that social action projects were challenging because students rarely received such assignments, before. Quoting a student's statement:

"This social action project provides a new experience in Social Studies learning, because I can work in groups, can find out about problems in the surrounding environment, and can practice communicating with other people. I am also forced to think creatively to find solutions to problems. At first, I didn't know what to do with the dirty water, but after discussing it with the leader of the youth organization, asking my uncle, and observing social media for water purification, our group decided to make a simple water filter using simple tools and materials in the form of used pipes, charcoal, aquarium filter cotton, rocks, and sand. Tiring but fun (R1)"

The achievement of ZPD is through scaffolding where students solve problems with the help of others (peers or people who are more capable). Scaffolding, namely providing full assistance to students in the early stages of learning, then reduces gradually giving an opportunity to take on greater responsibilities as soon as he could (Suardipa, 2020). Scaffolding involves students learning from teachers, peers, and adults, in which students learn and not only receive answers but students learn through the teacher's guidance (Barnett, 2019). Students help each other in groups and devote their energy and knowledge to find solutions to problem-solving. Statement from the leader of group 2,

"We made an eco chair because of the large amount of mineral water bottle waste in the community. We use it as an eco chair because it's inspired by social media that makes eco bricks from used bottles. We struggled to make the eco chair series look good. We have friends who can sew. Finally, she made eco chair covers out of fabric she sewed herself. When sewing, we also ask for help from her mother (R2)".

The role of MKO (More Knowledgeable Others) is important in achieving ZPD. MKO play in children's learning, a fundamental feature of learning is creating ZPD because learning evokes internal development processes when children interact with the people around them (Abtahi, et al, 2017). A series of tasks that are difficult for students to master independently can be learned with the help of other people (group mates, teachers, parents, family, and community) so that mastery of the material can be achieved properly. It all proves that the results of this study support previous research conducted by Helou & Newsome (2018), that interactions with society and the environment affect the student's motivation and persistence in learning.

The fourth stage, guiding occurs with guidance from the teacher through class discussions and small group guidance so that students can complete the social action project on time and make some improvements. A student from group 5 stated,

"Actually the initial design of pots from used bottles that our group made was very simple, but when we brought the experimental results to school because these pots are a planting medium that requires an adequate supply of water, the teacher gave suggestions to improve it, and it turned out that after doing so the results were better (R5)"

Teachers provide guidance patiently, attentively, motivating, and respecting students' different ways of thinking. Step 4 "guiding" makes the learning atmosphere comfortable so that the guidance runs optimally. When a student acquires knowledge there is a limit to what he can learn on his own, but guidance allows students to complete more tasks and even students can try more difficult tasks (Barnett, 2019).

Social Studies learning in class VIIA uses "Social Action based on Creative Pedagogy" model, students are challenged to be able to utilize social media in the "networking" and "share" steps. In the "networking" step, social media is used to find models to imitate, and in the "share", as fifth step, it is used to share the results of social action projects so that they can be known to the general public. In general, social media is only used by students for communication and entertainment purposes, but in this model, social media is used to support learning so that students obtain predetermined social studies learning outcomes. Vygotsky's theory is always present in effective classrooms, which are classrooms that challenge students above their ability level (Barnett, 2019). For this reason, students must understand how to use social media properly, including how to create interesting content, how to edit content with appropriate applications, and how to upload content on social media to get lots of viewers and subscribers. This is done so that the social action projects that have been carried out can inspire the community to do the same in solving social problems in everyday life and have an impact on community empowerment.

"To share the results of the social action project, we have to work with a group of friends to create content to post on social media in the form of videos, so like it or not we have to be able to use video editing applications and learn to make videos even though they are still simple videos (R4)"

3.3. Implication of Vygotsky's theory to the teacher's task in Social Studies learning using Social Action Project Based on Creative Pedagogy to increase student engagement

One of the most important in learning is student engagement, so the teacher must arrange appropriate activities. This is the task of the teacher as a designer, implementer, and evaluator of

learning. Vygotsky's theory has implications on the teacher's task in learning so that each student reaches the zone of proximal development as stated by Russefendi (Suardipa, 2020) in the form of 1) provide student learning environment; 2) organize assignments that must be done by students; and 3) provide dynamic support. In Social Studies learning using Social Action Project Based on Creative Pedagogy teachers carry out teaching tasks with creative teaching as part of creative pedagogy to build ZPD. If creative action forms the ZPD for those engaged in creative collaboration, so does it for teachers and students alike (Glaveanue, et al., 2015), and that is why creative teaching comes matters.

The learning environment in Social Studies learning is everything related to where the Social Studies learning process is carried out that supports teaching and learning activities. The creation of a student learning environment in Social Studies learning is done by giving freedom to students to inquiries, ask questions, and brainstorm during the process of identifying and analyzing everyday social problems in pairs, small groups, and classically. The teacher creates a pleasant learning atmosphere by building relaxed, not tense communication so that students are comfortable and do not hesitate to be fully engaged in the teaching and learning process. The teacher uses simple and easy-to-understand language and shows friendly facial expressions. The teacher provides various resources to help students when they have difficulty finding references for solving problems. When students convey ideas, the teacher shows an open attitude and respects different ideas, and also interest in what is presented by giving rewards in the form of "active stars".

Organizing the assignments that students have to do is done by providing group worksheets as a guide for implementing social action projects. Worksheets are the most frequently used written teaching materials and play an important role as a teacher's agent in effective teaching practice (Lee, 2014). Students follow the steps listed on the worksheet along with the time allotted. The teacher lists the time limit for each step so that it greatly facilitates students in completing social action projects. Learning by using worksheets helps students understand the subject matter more easily (Fauziah & Nurita, 2019).

Providing dynamic support in Social Studies learning using the "Social Action Project Based on Creative Pedagogy" model is carried out by teachers in the "problem" step by "gap bridging process" when students analyze social problems and provide creative opportunities to find solutions that are embodied in social action projects. The teacher provides positive motivation to students in accessing social media and utilizing gadgets in the "networking" and "share" steps. There have been many studies that reveal the success of social media use in the learning processes (Taylor, et al., 2012; Sopian et al., 2022; Malik & Asnur, 2019; Ibrahim, 2016; Safitri, et al., 2022). Based on previous research, teachers allow students to use social media in class with the condition that they are used as learning support tools wisely. The teacher also gives internet tethering when the school's wifi is not working so that students can access social media to find "modeling" as a solution to social problems.

4. CONCLUSION

Vygotsky's learning theory is one of the social learning theories so very suitable with the learning model "Social Action Project Based on Creative Pedagogy" because in this model the social interaction occurs between students and MKO (students, teachers, families, leaders of organizations, and social media) to find solutions to problems through social action projects. Application of Vygotsky's theory in Social Studies learning appears in every step of the "Social Action Project Based on Creative Pedagogy" model and has proven to increase student engagement in the form of creative learning. ZPD, scaffolding, and MKO appeared while students were doing social action projects. The teacher performs the role of MKO through creative teaching activities. As an implication of Vygotsky's theory, teachers also carry out tasks in the form of providing learning environments, organizing assignments, and providing dynamic support. Learning is student-centered in the form of creative learning. Students actively think and act to complete social problems through a series of social action projects, to acquire and construct their knowledge. When applying this model, social media plays an important role in MKO. The use of social media by students must be directed to support learning so that social action projects can provide solutions to social problems, and finally, support the achievement of Social Studies

learning outcomes. This research has limitations, namely it was carried out at the the beginning of learning new norms after the Covid-19 pandemic so that there was a reduction in time for each meeting and it was limited to only one class. It is recommended for further researchers to conduct a similar study with more than one class of respondents to students in higher classes so that differences between classes can be compared.

Acknowledgments: This research received no external funding. We want to thank the Language Center Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta for the translation and proofreading support.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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