

Fostering Critical Thinking Through Continuous Reflection: Innovations in Sociology Education at SMA Eco Pesantren Daarut Tauhiid

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Abstract: This study aims to analyze the implementation of continuous improvement techniques based on reflective practices in sociology education at SMA Eco Pesantren Daarut Tauhiid. The background of this research is the importance of deep understanding of complex social issues in sociology learning. Reflective principles in sociology education emphasize the use of methods that encourage students to think critically and connect sociological theories with the social phenomena they experience. In addition, educators need to update learning media and models to align with technological advancements and shifting social contexts. This research employs a qualitative method with observation, interviews, and document analysis techniques to explore the continuous improvement cycle applied at SMA Eco Pesantren Daarut Tauhiid. The findings reveal that this cycle is implemented through stages of planning, execution, evaluation, and corrective actions. This approach not only enhances students' conceptual understanding but also helps them develop critical thinking skills and deeper social awareness. In conclusion, continuous improvement based on reflective practices in sociology education plays a crucial role in improving the quality of learning and fostering students' social consciousness.


1 INTRODUCTION


Sociology as a subject offers insights into various social and cultural aspects that affect everyday life. It helps us understand and participate in a complex, ever-evolving society. Sociology education aims to foster a change in mindset, using a sociological perspective to address global societal shifts. Achieving optimal learning objectives is the result of a process that includes effective evaluation and reflection (Yulianti et al., 2023). Educational reflection is a critical process that enables teachers to


connect theory and practice, enhance their professional development, and improve problem-solving skills in diverse educational contexts (Głowala et al., 2023). Learning reflection involves critically evaluating one's learning experiences to identify aspects that can be improved.


The role of reflection in sociology education is crucial, as it enables students to connect theoretical concepts with social phenomena they experience. Reflection not only aids students in understanding theoretical concepts but also encourages them to recognize their relevance in daily life. This process


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helps students build deep social awareness and develop essential analytical skills for understanding complex social issues. By applying the principle of reflection, sociology education can facilitate a more critical and holistic understanding among learners. Moreover, as technology advances and social contexts evolve, educators must update the media and learning models they employ. Adapting teaching methods is key to addressing contemporary challenges. Technological developments have broadened access to information, while social changes demand flexible and responsive understanding from students. Therefore, it is vital for educators to continuously evaluate and update their approaches to remain relevant and effective in supporting meaningful sociology education.

Reflective reports serve as an effective tool for implementing the principles of reflection and continuous improvement in learning. As noted in research by Savicki (Victor Savicki & Michele V. Price, 2021), reflection is a key component of the transformative learning process, demonstrating strong explanatory power in alignment with theories and observations of the reflective process. Through reflective reports, educators can identify strengths and weaknesses in teaching methods, design improvement actions, and create strategies that are more responsive to students' needs. The cycle of reflection and continuous improvement can enhance the quality of sociology education, fostering meaningful and relevant learning experiences. In the context of Islamic-based schools, such as SMA Eco Pesantren Daarut Tauhiid, reflection and continuous improvement through evaluation have unique characteristics. This approach encompasses not only academic aspects but also focuses on instilling Islamic values relevant to students' daily lives. This process is conducted reflectively and continuously, ensuring that each learning experience contributes to the development of students' Islamic character. Reflection at this school involves observing the effectiveness of teaching strategies, student engagement, and the challenges encountered during the learning process.

2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research method employed in this study is a mixed methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative techniques. The quantitative approach involved distributing Likert-scale questionnaires to

measure students' critical thinking skills and the impact of reflective learning on their social awareness. Meanwhile, the qualitative approach was carried out through observations, in-depth interviews, and document analysis. This study aims to understand the reflective system implemented at SMA Eco Pesantren Daarut Tauhiid, particularly through reflective reporting conducted by teachers every semester. The qualitative approach enables researchers to gather in-depth data, emphasizing the quality of information, including narratives and expressions from informants, thereby providing a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter (Sa'adah et al., 2023). Observations were conducted to directly examine the practices carried out by teachers in reporting their reflections, while document analysis focused on the content of these reflective reports to identify patterns, objectives, and outcomes of the reflection process. By combining both approaches, this research offers a holistic depiction of reflective practices and continuous improvement in the teaching and learning process at the school.

In-depth interviews were also conducted with school leaders and several teachers to gain their perspectives on the importance of reflection in educational development. These interviews helped the researcher uncover insights into the benefits of reflection for achieving better educational outcomes and identify potential challenges in its implementation. Based on these data collection techniques, this study provides a comprehensive overview of the role of reflection in the learning process at SMA Eco Pesantren Daarut Tauhiid. This research methodology refers to Creswell's work (2014) (Creswell, 2014), which suggests the use of multiple data sources in qualitative methods to achieve a deep and thorough understanding of the phenomena being studied.

3 RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Reflection and Continuous Improvement Based on Islamic Values

Learning at SMA Eco Pesantren Daarut Tauhiid has distinctive characteristics that set it apart from regular schools, particularly in its application of reflection and continuous improvement. In regular schools, reflection tends to focus more on pedagogical aspects

and content evaluation (Yuliyanto et al., n.d.). This is supported by research from Johannes König (König et al., 2020) which states that reflection among teacher-learners involves evaluating pedagogical content knowledge and lesson planning effectiveness. Teachers critically assess their lesson plans, focusing on content knowledge, student understanding, and teaching strategies. Thus, while reflection is effective in enhancing academic achievement, it does not emphasize in-depth character development. In contrast, at SMA Eco Pesantren Daarut Tauhiid, reflection and continuous improvement center on integrating Islamic values into every element of learning. Reflection at this school is directed towards the continuous cultivation of students' character, emphasizing the importance of Islamic values as the foundation of the teaching and learning process. According to Schön (1983) (Schön, 1983), reflection involves not only rational thinking but also affective engagement, which can help individuals gain a deeper understanding of the impact of specific experiences on their learning. This is supported by research suggesting that positive emotional conditions enhance meaningful learning experiences, leading students to enjoy the learning process (M. Husnaini et al., 2024).

Based on interviews with the vice principal of curriculum at this school, teachers are required to conduct learning reflections each semester through reflective reports. These reports serve not only as a tool for evaluating teacher performance but also as an essential instrument to ensure that every aspect of learning remains oriented toward Islamic values. The focus of reflection at SMA Eco Pesantren Daarut Tauhiid is on character development for students. The school, including the teachers, routinely evaluates the affective aspects of students' growth. One approach used is a weekly reflective report schedule, where teachers provide oral evaluations of the past week's learning activities to the school administration. This process aims to periodically review learning effectiveness and make necessary improvements. At the end of each semester, a more comprehensive reflective report is prepared as a cumulative assessment and evaluation of various learning activities. As explained in research by Anwar, A. S., Yasin, A. F., & Zuhriyah, I. A. (2024) (Syafiul Anwar et al., 2024), routine reflection allows learning to remain relevant to the demands of the times and the needs of society. This is also supported by research showing the readiness of Islamic Religious Education

(PAI) teachers at SMP Negeri 1 Sangatta Utara in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum, experiencing positive development through regular reflection (Auliyah et al., 2024). Ultimately, reflection plays a vital role in creating continuous improvement, ensuring the quality of education increases over time.

This reflection emphasizes cultivating critical attitudes and character development aligned with Islamic moral principles. SMA Eco Pesantren Daarut Tauhiid prioritizes the formation of students who excel not only academically but also possess a strong foundation of Islamic character. In this regard, the learning process is focused on fostering students' awareness of their social roles while adhering to values of goodness and moral strength, encapsulated in the school's slogan "BaKu" (Good and Strong). This serves as a crucial foundation in creating a learning environment aligned with the principles of BR3T (Clean, Neat, Orderly, Organized, and Maintained), adopted as the main pillar for building student character. Research by Mulang and Halim (Mulang & Putra, 2023) shows that instilling ethical and spiritual values in students is an integral part of character development, starting from the planning, implementation, and evaluation stages outlined in the Learning Implementation Plan (RPP) to produce students with noble character, faith, and piety. This indicates that a well-conducted reflection stage is essential for achieving accurate evaluation. Similarly, at SMA Eco Pesantren, teachers and school leaders emphasize that reflection is not a one-way process but involves active teacher participation in observing students' overall development. This reflection ensures that each teaching strategy applied in the classroom is not solely focused on academic achievement but also supports character building in line with the "BaKu" principles. Thus, this approach enables a continuous and relevant learning process, where students are expected to grow into individuals who are both good and strong, in accordance with the values upheld at SMA Eco Pesantren Daarut Tauhiid.

3.2 Reflection and Continuous Improvement in Sociology Learning

The application of reflection in sociology learning at SMA Eco Pesantren Daarut Tauhiid is based on a comprehensive reflection model to analyze the effectiveness of learning. One relevant model is Gibbs' Reflective Cycle (1988) (Gibbs, 1988), which includes six steps: description of experience, feelings,

evaluation, analysis, conclusion, and action plan. Research by Noor (Aneeis Hashim et al., 2023) indicates an improvement in teacher reflection, providing clearer guidelines and enhancing their evaluation, analysis, and action planning over an eight-week period using Gibbs' reflective model. Further research by Abdul (Muwafaq Abdul Zahra Abdul Ridha, 2023) demonstrates the effectiveness of Gibbs' model in educational sociology, particularly in modifying students' perceptions and cognitive beliefs, showing that the experimental group outperformed the control group in developing social concepts. Thus, Gibbs' model is highly applicable in sociology learning, especially for exploring and understanding complex social issues such as social injustice, social change, and class conflict. Through these reflective steps, teachers and students can thoroughly evaluate and review the learning process and its outcomes.

Based on interviews with sociology teachers at SMA Eco Pesantren Daarut Tauhiid, the evaluation process conducted is comprehensive and supported by concrete data. This data includes students' exam results, their participation during lessons, and feedback provided by students regarding the teaching and learning activities. This aligns with the findings of Azhari (Azhari et al., 2019), who explained that reflective practices encourage independent and deep learning through outcome evaluation involving the analysis of final scores. This data analysis enables teachers to identify needs and shortcomings in the learning process, allowing them to develop more effective improvement plans for the following semester. Furthermore, survey data indicate that 80% of students reported that reflective learning helped them better understand the relevance of sociology concepts to their daily lives. This was achieved as students were given the freedom to provide feedback on learning activities, such as asking questions, requesting additional teaching media like videos to make the material more relatable, and recommending learning methods they found easier to understand. The survey also revealed that 78% of students experienced increased awareness of social issues, such as injustice, as a result of reflective learning. These findings affirm that reflective learning not only enhances students' understanding of academic material but also fosters a deeper awareness of social issues.

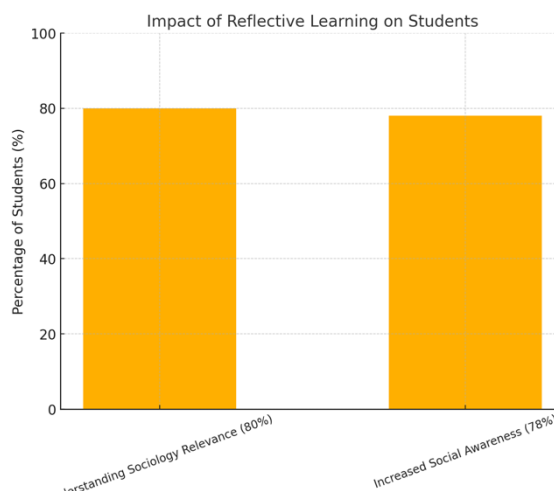


Figure 1: Impact of Reflective Learning on Students.

The process of reflection and continuous improvement at SMA Eco Pesantren Daarut Tauhiid is implemented through the PDCA (Plan-Do-Check-Act) cycle proposed by Deming (Deming, 1988). This cycle has also been applied for continuous improvement at Pesantren An-Nahdlah Kebumen by planning, implementing, monitoring, and refining student discipline rules, ensuring ongoing evaluation and enhancing institutional quality and adherence to regulations (Inganah & Chamidi, 2023). The *Plan* stage involves planning the learning process based on evaluations and findings from the previous semester. In the *Do* stage, teachers implement the new teaching methods that have been planned, such as changing the group discussion format or using more interactive and engaging visual aids. The *Check* stage focuses on evaluating the results of implementation, where teachers observe student engagement and the effectiveness of the strategies used. Finally, in the *Act* stage, the evaluation results serve as a basis for further improvements, ensuring that learning in the following semester is more optimal and relevant. In addition to applying PDCA-based reflection, teachers at SMA Eco Pesantren Daarut Tauhiid also consider multicultural media and approaches in sociology instruction. This is important due to the diverse backgrounds of students, who come from various regions with different cultural backgrounds. According to the vice principal of curriculum, teachers must plan inclusive lessons, using case examples relevant to students' cultural backgrounds and avoiding dominance by any particular culture. This approach ensures that the content is accessible to all students and avoids cultural bias.

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3.3 Case Study: Reflective Activities at SMA Eco Pesantren

Interviews with teachers and the curriculum deputy at SMA Eco Pesantren Daarut Tauhiid revealed that reflective learning activities are routinely conducted, involving various stakeholders, including students, teachers, and school leadership. One of the reflective practices includes verbal discussions between teachers and students after completing each chapter of the curriculum. These discussions aim to gather direct feedback from students regarding the learning process, including challenges they faced and the relevance of the materials to their needs. This process not only helps teachers evaluate the effectiveness of their teaching methods but also encourages students to think critically and actively express their opinions.

The survey results indicate that the majority of students experienced a high level of engagement in the reflective learning process. A total of 85% of students reported feeling actively involved in reflective learning activities. This demonstrates that reflective methods effectively encourage student participation, enabling them to contribute meaningfully to the learning process, whether through discussions or expressing their opinions.

Additionally, weekly reflections are conducted by the curriculum deputy to monitor classroom developments and identify challenges encountered

during the learning process. These weekly reflections provide an opportunity for teachers to report their observations, including students' academic and affective progress. Feedback from the curriculum deputy ensures that the learning process aligns with the school's vision, which integrates Islamic values into education. Teachers, however, face challenges in conducting in-depth evaluations and utilizing relevant digital teaching tools. As explained by the sociology teacher, students at Eco Pesantren are prohibited from using gadgets, which limits the use of digital tools and necessitates verbal discussions for reflective activities. While this method fosters direct interaction, it also presents limitations, such as the lack of time for more in-depth discussions. The school's strong emphasis on religious values sometimes reduces classroom hours, as prayer and worship activities are prioritized within the school schedule. These time constraints often prevent teachers from exploring reflective activities at a deeper level, which could further enhance the learning process.

Student Engagement Through Reflective Learning

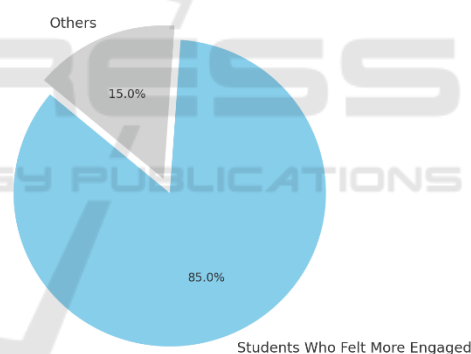


Figure 2: Student Engagement Through Reflective Learning.

Moreover, the sociology teacher routinely engages in discussions with teachers of other subjects to review classroom observations. These discussions aim to ensure that the teaching approaches used are relevant to students' needs from various perspectives. For instance, teachers of other subjects may provide insights regarding specific student characteristics that influence learning in the classroom. This information serves as a reflection and personal record for teachers to evaluate their teaching methods and adapt them to better meet student needs. This collaborative process highlights the importance of inter-teacher cooperation in creating a supportive learning

environment that fosters holistic student development. Through these reflective activities, SMA Eco Pesantren Daarut Tauhiid not only cultivates a strong culture of reflection but also ensures that the school's teaching practices are continually improved to meet the academic and character-building needs of students. By involving students, teachers, and school leadership in the reflection process, these practices lay a foundation for continuous improvement in education while reinforcing the alignment between the school's vision and its classroom implementation.

4 CONCLUSIONS

This study demonstrates that reflective learning implemented at SMA Eco Pesantren Daarut Tauhiid significantly impacts the development of students' critical thinking and social awareness. Through the application of reflective methods based on the PDCA (Plan-Do-Check-Act) cycle, students not only gain a deeper understanding of sociology concepts but also connect them with social phenomena in their surroundings. Survey data reveal that 85% of students felt actively involved in the reflection process, 80% stated that reflections helped them relate theories to everyday life, and 78% reported an increased awareness of social issues such as injustice.

However, the study also identifies several challenges, including limited time for in-depth evaluations and restrictions on gadget use, which limit the integration of digital learning tools. Additionally, the prioritization of religious activities often reduces class time. Despite these limitations, collaboration among teachers, students, and school leadership in reflective processes has fostered a learning environment that supports continuous improvement and the integration of Islamic values into education.

These findings affirm that reflective learning not only enhances students' academic achievements but also cultivates their social awareness, aligning with the core objectives of sociology education. Future research is recommended to explore the application of this reflective method in interdisciplinary contexts and diverse educational settings to expand its relevance and effectiveness.

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