

# Analysis of the Reasons of Teaching Controversial Issues on Public Policy to the Senior High School Students

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## Abstract

The aims of this research are to get a description about the condition of civics teaching and learning process in senior high schools, and to describe the reasons of integrating the teaching of controversial issues on public policy into civics instructional materials.

This descriptive research uses questionnaire to collect the data, and the subjects of the research are thirty students and eight teachers from three different schools with different categories. The data then analyzed using descriptive quantitative technique with percentage scoring.

It can be found that the teachers and the students admitted that it is important to integrate the materials about controversial issues on public policy into the civics lesson. In spite of contextualism reasons, it is also hoped that this integration will elevate the students' ability. Through the use of these materials, teachers can develop their knowledge about public policy, basic knowledge about its orientation, perception, emotion, communication, attitude and belief, and the skills to analyze the issues of public policy.

**Keywords:** controversial issue, public policy, civics

## 1. Introduction

The teaching of controversial issues on public policy aims to prepare the students to be a good, democratic and responsible citizen (Harwood et al.,1990), (Hess & Posselt, 2001). Students have to be trained to solve problems (Oxfam, 2006), when they face conflicts caused by controversial issues on public policy that its intensity increases as the development of the democracy process recently (Perry,1999).

Globalization has influenced the emergence various kinds of changes that demand the availability of public policy that are able to hold the existence, growth, development of the national life system and also the sustainability of the nation. Democracy process as one of the globalization consequences is also about the citizen participation in political process. So preparing the students as the young generation to be able to participate well and to be responsible citizen is also important issue in the democracy process (Cogan, 1999).

The changes of the practical paradigm on the national organization in term of the public policy, arising the consequence of the numbers of public policy issued by the government that are responded by the people in many different ways. It is because the increasing of the people knowledge and also the government officers are supposed to conduct their functions professionally. (Dunn,1990). This conditions stimulate the emergence of the controversial issues on the public policy whose intensity grows higher and higher.

The people responses toward the public policies, both pro or contra position, are often realized in the forms of contra productive responses, even in anarchy and destructive ways. So it needs a serious efforts to make the students understand about how the process or the mechanism system of the public policy in making a democratic nation. (Hess & Posselt, 2001). It is important to be given to the students who haven't truly understood about the system of the public policy. It is the important role of the civics lesson as the means of the political education and democracy education.

## 2. Research Method

This research was conducted in states and private senior high schools in Kediri, East Java, Indonesia. It is a descriptive research that aims to identify the reasons and how the integration of the teaching of controversial issues about public policy into civics instructional materials.

The samples of this research were from three different schools that had been selected well before being chosen as the sample of this research. The schools are; one state senior high school which has good category, then one state senior high school which has average category, and the last is one private senior high school which has average category. The subjects of this research were thirty students and eight teachers.

The data were collected using questionnaires for the students and the teacher. The questionnaire for the students aims at knowing the students' response toward the civics teaching learning process, the students' interest toward the actual issues about public policy that became debate topics in public, and also the desired teaching learning process. The questionnaire for the teachers is aimed at knowing the efforts that the teacher have done to elevate the quality of the civics teaching learning process, the teacher point of view about the importance of discussing actual issues about public policy that was debated by the people into the lesson, the aspects that are going to be developed in the teaching of controversial issues on public policy, and the management of the forms of the students learning (both individual or in group).

### 3. Results and Discussion

#### 3.1 Description of Questionnaire for the Students

Description of the results of questionnaires for students consists of a description of, (a) the response to civics learning that had been carried out, (b) The interest of students to actual issues of public policy that is currently being debated in the community, and (c) process and kinds of learning activities are desired by students.

Civics students' responses to learning that had been conducted showed 47% of students say quite enjoyable, 20% say fun and 20% say very enjoyable, the rest of the students which is 13% admit unpleasant.

The interest of students to actual issues of public policy which is being debated in the community can be seen from the students response about whether teachers have associated the subject matter with the actual issues of public policy that draw community attention, the results show 50% say often associate, 30% say always associate, 20% say sometimes associate, and none (0%) admit never associate. The necessity of civics learning to discuss controversial issues of public policy, it is known 67% say necessary, 20% say less necessary, really necessary 10%, and 3% are not necessary.

According to the students about the freedom to express personal opinion shows 60% of them say sometimes, 17% of them say often and 17% of them say always, and 6% of them say never. Freedom to argue in group activities shows that 43% of students say sometimes, 30% of students say often, 17% of the students say never, and 10% of the students say always. When the students are given the freedom to seek their own learning materials, it shows that 47% of students say not really happy, 37% of the students say happy, 16% of the students say not happy, and no one said very happy. The students say about the lecture method used by teachers, 53% say they do not really like it, 30% say they do not like it, 17% say they like it, and no one say like it very much. Related with the variation of the teaching method used, 50% state need, 47% say definitely need, 3% say do not need, and no one say it does not need it. Related with the students' concern whether the various learning resources that teachers used, 47% say various learning resources, 33% say less various learning resources, 13% say many various learning resources, and 7% say is not various learning resources.

Related with students' willingness on assessment method, 70% want the assessment on individual learning activities, group activities, outcome portfolio, and test. The total of 20% want assessment on individual learning activities, group activities, and test only. The total of 7% of students want test only. And the rest of 3% of students want the assessment on individual learning activities, group activities, and portfolio only.

#### 3.2 The Description of the Questionnaire for Teachers

The results of the questionnaire for teachers consist of questions with closed answers and questions with open answers. Based on the tabulated results, they are described as clear as possible and in order, (a) priority efforts or ways have been done to improve the quality of civics learning in high school, (b) the necessity of civics learning using controversial public policy issues that is being debated in the community, (c) type of learning activities to develop individual and group learning activities.

Teachers' opinions of teachers about the efforts that have been done to improve the quality of civics learning as follows: (a) Improving the quality of teaching preparation, 75% of teachers say very important, 25% say important, no one says important and unimportant. (b) Increasing students' involvement in learning, 50% of teachers say very important, 50% say important, no one says important and unimportant. (c) Selecting contextual material, 37.5% say very important, 62.5% say important, no one says are important and unimportant. (d) Implementing new learning models, 12.5% of teachers say very important, 87.5% say important, no one says important and unimportant. (e) Using a variety of learning methods, 50% of teachers say very important, 50% say important, no one says important and unimportant. (f) Using multiple sources and media, 62.5% of teachers say very important, 37.5% say important, no one says important and unimportant. (g) Improving the quality of the evaluation, 25% of teachers say very important, 75% say important, no one says important and unimportant. The necessity for civics learning using public policy issues and controversial that are being debated in the community, 87.5% of teachers say very important, and 12.5% say not really important, no one says important, and not important.

The description of the relevance of the public policy controversial issues for developing students' skills as follows:

##### 3.1.1. The Relevancy of Public Policy Controversial Issues for Developing Basic Skills.

The relevancy of public policy controversial issues for developing basic skills can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. Relevancy for developing basic skills

Aspect	Percentage			
	SP	P	TP	Σ
1. To train orientation skill (value, attitude, and beliefs)	70	25	5	100
2. To train perception skill	50	40	10	100
3. To train emotional management skill	25	72	3	100
4. To train communication skill	63	37	0	100
5. To train critical and creative thinking skill	72	24	4	100
Total	280	198	22	
Mean	56	39,6	4,4	

SP = very important; P = importan; TP = not important

The above table shows that the number of extremely important that states 280, 198 is important, and not important 22. If the calculated value 56% said very important, 36.6%, 4.4% said it was important and not important.

### 3.1.2. The Relevancy of the Material on Public Policy Controversial Issues for Developing Public Policy Knowledge.

The relevancy of the material on public policy controversial issues for developing public policy knowledge can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2. The relevancy for developing public policy knowledge

Aspect	Percentage			
	SP	P	TP	Σ
1. Understanding public policy	37,5	50	12,5	100
2. Understanding public policy system	37,5	62,5	0	100
3. Understanding the linkage between implementation form and public policy evaluation	36	58	6	100
Total	111	170,5	18,5	
Mean	37	56,8	6,2	

SP = very important; P = important; TP = not important

The above table shows that its relevance to developing knowledge about public policy obtained by the average value of 37 which states very important, 56.8 said it was important, and 6.2 said it was not important.

### 3.1.3. The Relevancy of Controversial Issues on Public Policy for Developing Positive Attitude or Belief in Public Policy Issues.

The relevancy of controversial issues on public policy for developing positive attitude or belief in public policy issues can be seen in Table 3.

Table 3. The relevancy for developing attitude and belief.

Aspect	Percentage			
	SP	P	TP	Σ
1. The development of belief that public policy has two sides( accepted or rejected)	50	37,5	12,5	100
2. The development of belief that controversy on public policy can be solved without violence.	62,5	36,5	1	100
Total	112,5	74	13,5	
Mean	56,3	37	6,8	

SP = very importantG; P = importan; TP = not important

The above table shows that its relevance to developing attitudes and beliefs, obtained a very important amount of 112.5 states, 74 states is important, and 13.5 said it was not important. The average value 56.3 is critical, 37 important, and not important 6.8.

### 3.1.4.The Relevancy of Controversial Issues on Public Policy for Developing Skill on Analysing Public Policy.

The relevancy of controversial issues on public policy for developing skill on analysing public policy can be seen in Table 4.

Table 4. The relevancy for developing skill on analysing public policy

Aspect	Percentage			
	SP	P	TP	Σ
1. To train listening skill	35,5	62,5	2	100
2. To train reading and comprehending text skill	37,5	37,5	25	100
3. To train finding more about information source skill	50	37,5	12,5	100
4. To train problem solving skill	62,5	25,5	12,5	100
Total				
Rerata				

SP = very important; P = important; TP = not important

The above table shows that its relevance to developing the skills to analyze public policy, which states very important 185.5, 163 important and unimportant 52. Averaged 46.38 states is very important, 40.8 said it was important, and 13 is not important.

### 3.1.5 The Setting of Learning Activities

The Setting of individual learning activities that has done by teachers almost all of activities using individual assignments. While the tasks are different relate with the problem that is being discussed. Settings of group learning activities, most teachers use a discussion group or class discussion. Few teachers use cooperative learning models, such as Jigsaw and STAD.

The setting of individual and group learning activities at the same time, according to most of teachers have been done continuously. Means, individual learning activities that have been done by students continued with group learning activities to deepen or broaden students' understanding of a subject matter or problem. The time of implementation, most teachers say for individual activities done outside the school, while in the school, used for group learning activities, as well as for explaining other explanations that are considered important.

## 4. Discussion

The civics teachers admit that learning process quality needs to be improved and cannot be done maximally by the teacher. Many problems faced by teachers, including the students and teachers' perception on civics. It has been known that the non exact subjects such as civics considered less important. Further more because there is no national exam, civics is considered only as a supplement only. These perceptions will affect the interest of the lesson, and motivation to learn civics. As a result of student learning activities are difficult to be enhanced or to be maximized.

The efforts to improve the quality of Civics learning are also constrained by teachers' perceptions about the civics material which is easy and must be memorized. Teachers thought it is not necessary to create innovative learning; the lecturing model is enough to make students understand the material easily. Regarding the teachers' assumption that the subject matter must be memorized by the students, it cause learning objectives is only the content. As a result, the teacher ignores the actual learning process which is more important than the content itself.

Another thing that should get the teachers' attention is the learning resources. Teachers must not only require students to use the textbook only as a source of learning. Civics has possibility to use a wide variety of learning resources, specially a society. Therefore it is reasonable if teachers should always associate the subject matter with real conditions or facts that occurred in the community. Moreover, at this time the information is transparent and accessible. By using contextual learning resources, students' motivation is also expected to increase, and civics learning outcomes can be realized.

Integrating controversial public policy issues into part of the subject matter in civics has many benefits. However, that should be considered is how its integration. Controversial public policy issues must be integrated into the civics material without interfering with the curriculum target as outlined in the standard competency and basic competency. Therefore, its integration must pay attention to the real situation faced by teachers in schools.

The teachers and students said that controversial public policy issues are important to be integrated into civics material. The reasons are contextualization of learning materials, is also expected to improve the students' ability. Through learning materials on controversial public policy issues, teachers will be able to develop the knowledge of public policy, basic skills on orientation, perception, emotions, communication, attitudes and beliefs, and also analyzing issues of public policy.

The development of knowledge about public policy, such as: definition of public policy, and public policy system (formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation). Development of basic skills regarding controversial public policy issues, such as: the ability of orientation (values, attitudes, and beliefs), perception skill, emotion skill, communication skill, critical thinking skill and creative skill about public policy issues. Development of positive attitudes or beliefs on controversial public policy issues, such as: positive attitude in responding to the issue, the belief that every public policy has two opinions (accepted or rejected), and the belief

that the controversy on a public policy can be solved without violence. Development of analyzing skills on public policy issues; such as: listening skills, reading skills and comprehend the text skill, exploring sources of information skill and problem-solving skills.

## 5. Conclusion

Integrating materials on controversial public policy issues into the subject matter of civics has many benefits. Teachers and students stated that the controversial public policy issues are important to be integrated into civics material. Furthermore, the reasons are for contextualization materials, learning material on controversial public policy issues will be able to develop the knowledge of public policy, basic skills on orientation, perception, emotions, communication, attitudes and beliefs, and also skill to analyze public policy issues.

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