



Enhancing History Learning Effectiveness through Teacher Pedagogical Strategies

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Abstract: The effectiveness of history learning is strongly influenced by teachers' pedagogical strategies in creating meaningful, interactive, and student-centered learning experiences. However, history instruction in many Indonesian secondary schools continues to face challenges related to teacher-centered practices, limited student participation, and insufficient classroom engagement. This study aims to analyze teachers' pedagogical strategies in enhancing the effectiveness of history learning at SMA Negeri 1 Parigi Tengah, Indonesia. The study employed a qualitative case study design involving history teachers, students, and school administrators selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, non-participant observations, and document analysis, and were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, including data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings indicate that effective history learning is achieved through the integration of classroom discussion, contextual learning, collaborative activities, questioning techniques, multimedia resources, and reflective learning. These pedagogical strategies foster active student engagement, strengthen historical understanding, improve communication skills, and encourage critical interpretation of historical events. The study further reveals that instructional effectiveness is reinforced by institutional support, including instructional leadership, collaborative professional culture, and systematic instructional planning. This study contributes to history education by conceptualizing teacher pedagogical strategies as an integrated pedagogical ecosystem rather than isolated instructional methods. The findings provide theoretical insights into effective history learning and offer practical recommendations for teachers and school leaders in implementing student-centered pedagogy within the context of the Merdeka Curriculum.

Keywords: History Education; Teacher Pedagogical Strategies; Learning Effectiveness; Student Engagement; Historical Thinking.

Abstrak: Efektivitas pembelajaran sejarah sangat dipengaruhi oleh strategi pedagogis guru dalam menciptakan pengalaman belajar yang bermakna, interaktif, dan berpusat pada peserta didik. Namun, pembelajaran sejarah di berbagai sekolah menengah di Indonesia masih menghadapi tantangan berupa dominasi pembelajaran berpusat pada guru, rendahnya partisipasi peserta didik, serta terbatasnya keterlibatan mereka selama proses pembelajaran. Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis strategi pedagogis guru dalam meningkatkan efektivitas pembelajaran sejarah di SMA Negeri 1 Parigi Tengah. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain studi kasus. Partisipan penelitian terdiri atas guru sejarah, peserta didik, dan pimpinan sekolah yang dipilih

melalui teknik purposive sampling. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara semi-terstruktur, observasi nonpartisipan, dan studi dokumentasi, kemudian dianalisis menggunakan model interaktif Miles, Huberman, dan Saldaña yang meliputi kondensasi data, penyajian data, serta penarikan dan verifikasi kesimpulan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa efektivitas pembelajaran sejarah dibangun melalui integrasi diskusi kelas, pembelajaran kontekstual, aktivitas kolaboratif, teknik bertanya, pemanfaatan multimedia, dan pembelajaran reflektif. Strategi tersebut meningkatkan keterlibatan peserta didik, memperkuat pemahaman sejarah, mengembangkan kemampuan komunikasi, serta mendorong interpretasi kritis terhadap peristiwa sejarah. Penelitian ini juga menunjukkan bahwa efektivitas pembelajaran diperkuat oleh dukungan kelembagaan berupa kepemimpinan pembelajaran, budaya kolaboratif guru, dan perencanaan pembelajaran yang sistematis. Penelitian ini berkontribusi pada pengembangan kajian pendidikan sejarah dengan menawarkan perspektif bahwa strategi pedagogis guru merupakan suatu ekosistem pedagogis yang terintegrasi, bukan sekadar kumpulan metode mengajar, sehingga memberikan implikasi bagi pengembangan pembelajaran sejarah yang lebih efektif dalam implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka.

Kata Kunci: Pendidikan Sejarah; Strategi Pedagogis Guru; Efektivitas Pembelajaran; Keterlibatan Peserta Didik.

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Introduction

History education has experienced a substantial paradigm shift over the past decade in response to the demands of twenty-first-century education (Anwar, 2026; S. H. Hasan, 2019). Contemporary history learning is no longer oriented toward memorizing chronological events and historical facts but toward developing historical thinking, critical inquiry, evidence-based reasoning, and students' ability to connect historical events with contemporary social realities (Ahdillah et al., 2026; Alfian, 2011). This transformation positions history as a medium for cultivating critical citizenship, reflective thinking, and informed decision-making rather than merely transmitting knowledge about the past (Miskawi, 2025). Consequently, effective history learning requires pedagogical approaches that actively engage students in historical inquiry, interpretation, and collaborative learning rather than passive reception of information (Seixas & Morton, 2013; Wineburg, 2001). The implementation of Indonesia's Merdeka Curriculum further reinforces this paradigm by emphasizing student-centered learning, contextual experiences, higher-order thinking skills, and meaningful participation throughout the learning process (M. S. Hasan & Sintasari, 2025). Recent studies also indicate that the curriculum encourages teachers to redesign instructional practices that foster critical thinking, collaboration, and contextual understanding in history classrooms (Azizah, Budiyo, et al., 2025; Azizah, Hasan, et al., 2025).

Despite these pedagogical reforms, achieving effective history learning remains a significant challenge in Indonesian secondary schools. Numerous classroom practices continue to be characterized by teacher-centered instruction, factual memorization, and limited student participation, reducing opportunities for learners to develop historical

reasoning and critical analysis (Maggioni, 2010; Reisman, 2015). Studies examining the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum reveal that although history teachers have begun integrating historical thinking and inquiry-based learning into instructional planning, variations remain in classroom implementation, instructional quality, and assessment practices (Jufri et al., 2025; Musyaffa & Atno, 2025). Teacher readiness, pedagogical competence, and instructional design continue to influence the success of curriculum implementation and students' learning experiences.

Teacher pedagogical strategies therefore become one of the most decisive factors influencing the effectiveness of history learning (Husbands et al., 2003; Mvenene, 2025). Effective teachers are expected not only to master historical content but also to design learning environments that encourage inquiry, discussion, collaboration, reflection, and active student engagement (Azizah & Usman, 2023; Kamali & Sugiyanto, 2024; Paniagua & Istance, 2018). Pedagogical strategies involving contextual learning, project-based activities, questioning techniques, collaborative discussion, and the integration of local historical sources have been shown to increase students' participation and improve historical understanding. In addition, recent innovations in history education emphasize that teachers should function as facilitators who guide students in constructing historical knowledge rather than simply delivering information. Such instructional transformation aligns with the broader objectives of the Merdeka Curriculum, which seeks to develop independent learners capable of critical and reflective thinking (Hunaepi & Suharta, 2024; Rokayah et al., 2023).

Previous research has provided valuable insights into history learning and teacher pedagogy. Studies have examined the implementation of inquiry-based learning, problem-based learning, project-based learning, and Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) within history classrooms, demonstrating positive effects on students' analytical abilities and classroom engagement (Firmansyah, 2024; Wijayanti et al., 2024). Other studies have focused on curriculum implementation, teaching modules, and historical thinking competencies under the Merdeka Curriculum (Kuwoto et al., 2024; Rosanawati et al., 2025). However, most of these studies investigate instructional models, curriculum documents, or learning media separately. Comparatively little empirical attention has been devoted to understanding how history teachers integrate multiple pedagogical strategies simultaneously to create effective classroom learning in authentic school contexts. Furthermore, few qualitative studies have explored how teachers adapt their instructional strategies in response to contextual classroom challenges while implementing the Merdeka Curriculum.

This study addresses that gap by examining teacher pedagogical strategies implemented in history learning at SMA Negeri 1 Parigi Tengah. Preliminary observations indicated several instructional challenges, including students' passive participation, the continued dominance of lecture-based instruction, limited utilization of learning media, and varying levels of student engagement during classroom activities. At the same time, teachers demonstrated adaptive pedagogical practices through classroom discussion, questioning strategies, visual learning resources, collaborative activities, and reflective learning tasks designed to improve students' participation and learning effectiveness. These classroom

dynamics provide an important context for understanding how teachers negotiate curriculum expectations with actual instructional realities.

Accordingly, this study aims to analyze teacher pedagogical strategies for enhancing effective history learning at SMA Negeri 1 Parigi Tengah. Unlike previous studies that primarily focus on instructional models or curriculum implementation, this research conceptualizes teacher pedagogical strategies as an integrated process involving instructional planning, classroom interaction, student engagement, classroom management, and contextual adaptation. The findings are expected to contribute theoretically to the growing scholarship on history education and pedagogical practice while providing practical recommendations for teachers seeking to create more engaging, meaningful, and effective history learning environments within Indonesian secondary schools.

Methods

This study employed a qualitative case study design to examine teacher pedagogical strategies for enhancing effective history learning at SMA Negeri 1 Parigi Tengah, Central Sulawesi, Indonesia. A qualitative approach was selected because the study sought to explore teachers' instructional experiences, classroom practices, and contextual factors influencing learning effectiveness within their natural educational setting (Yin, 2018). Rather than testing predetermined hypotheses, qualitative research enables researchers to develop an in-depth understanding of participants' perspectives and the meanings they attribute to educational phenomena (Creswell & Poth, 2016). The case study design was adopted because it facilitates an intensive investigation of a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, particularly when the boundaries between the phenomenon and its context are not clearly evident (Yin, 2008).

The research was conducted at SMA Negeri 1 Parigi Tengah, a public senior high school located in Parigi Moutong Regency, Central Sulawesi, Indonesia. The school was purposively selected because history teachers had implemented various instructional strategies to improve classroom engagement while adapting to the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum. Participants were selected using purposive sampling, which allows researchers to identify information-rich participants capable of providing comprehensive insights into the phenomenon under investigation (Patton, 2014). The primary participants consisted of Grade XI history teachers, while supporting participants included Grade XI students who actively participated in classroom learning. To obtain broader contextual information, the school principal and vice principal for curriculum affairs were also involved as supporting informants.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, non-participant classroom observations, and document analysis. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore teachers' pedagogical strategies, instructional planning, classroom implementation, challenges encountered during instruction, and efforts to enhance learning effectiveness. Interviews with students focused on their learning experiences, classroom participation, perceptions of teacher practices, and responses to instructional activities. Classroom observations were undertaken to examine teacher-student interactions, classroom management, instructional techniques, and students' engagement during history lessons. Documentary evidence, including teaching modules (Modul Ajar), lesson plans, students'

assignments, assessment documents, and curriculum-related materials, was also analyzed to provide contextual information and strengthen data triangulation. The combination of these three techniques enabled the researchers to obtain a comprehensive understanding of teacher pedagogical practices while reducing the limitations associated with relying on a single source of evidence (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Data analysis followed the interactive model developed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), consisting of three interconnected stages: data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. During the first stage, interview transcripts, observation field notes, and documentary evidence were coded, categorized, and condensed into meaningful units representing emerging themes. The second stage involved organizing the categorized data into thematic displays to facilitate interpretation, comparison, and pattern identification across multiple sources of evidence. Finally, conclusions were continuously developed and verified through iterative comparison between empirical findings and emerging interpretations until consistent themes were established. This analytical process enabled the researchers to identify relationships among teacher pedagogical strategies, classroom interaction, and learning effectiveness while maintaining analytical rigor throughout the study.

To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, the study employed several validation procedures proposed by Lincoln & Guba, (1985), including credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility was established through source triangulation by comparing information obtained from teachers, students, and school administrators, as well as methodological triangulation by integrating interview, observation, and documentation data. Member checking was conducted by confirming preliminary interpretations with selected participants to ensure that the findings accurately represented their experiences. Transferability was enhanced through detailed descriptions of the research context, participants, and instructional practices, allowing readers to evaluate the applicability of the findings to similar educational settings. Dependability and confirmability were strengthened through systematic documentation of research procedures, field notes, coding processes, and analytical decisions, thereby increasing the transparency and consistency of the research process.

Ethical considerations were observed throughout the study. Formal approval to conduct the research was obtained from the school administration prior to data collection. All participants voluntarily agreed to participate after receiving explanations regarding the objectives of the research, data collection procedures, and their rights as research participants. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained by replacing participants' names with pseudonyms during data analysis and reporting. All collected data were used solely for academic purposes and stored securely to protect participants' privacy in accordance with established principles of qualitative research ethics (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Result and Discussion

Results

Teacher Pedagogical Strategies for Promoting Active History Learning

The findings indicate that history teachers at SMA Negeri 1 Parigi Tengah implemented pedagogical strategies designed to transform history learning from a teacher-

centered activity into a more student-centered learning experience. Rather than relying exclusively on lectures, teachers integrated classroom discussion, project-based learning, reflective learning, questioning techniques, and visual learning resources to encourage students' participation throughout the instructional process. These strategies were systematically planned through teaching modules and adapted to the characteristics of Grade XI students. Classroom observations further demonstrated that instructional activities were organized to provide opportunities for students to analyze historical events, exchange ideas, and communicate their interpretations during classroom discussions. Documentation of teaching modules also confirmed that learning activities were structured around collaborative learning, presentation sessions, and reflective exercises rather than rote memorization.

Interview data revealed that teachers intentionally selected instructional strategies capable of encouraging students to think critically about historical events instead of simply memorizing chronological facts. One history teacher explained:

"History learning should not merely require students to remember dates and historical figures. More importantly, students need to understand the meaning behind historical events and relate them to current social realities." (History Teacher Interview)

This statement reflects teachers' awareness that meaningful history learning requires instructional approaches that stimulate interpretation and critical reflection. During classroom observations, students were frequently invited to discuss historical issues in small groups before presenting their conclusions to the entire class. Such learning activities encouraged students to formulate arguments, respond to differing opinions, and develop confidence in expressing their historical understanding.

Another strategy consistently identified throughout the study involved the integration of contextual learning. Teachers attempted to connect historical events with contemporary social issues familiar to students, including nationalism, tolerance, democracy, and social change. According to the school principal:

"The implementation of these strategies makes history learning a medium for developing national identity. Students are encouraged to understand the values of historical struggles, think critically about past events, and develop moral responsibility toward the nation."

The findings suggest that history teachers no longer viewed historical knowledge as isolated information about the past. Instead, history learning was designed to facilitate students' understanding of present-day realities through historical perspectives. This contextual orientation encouraged students to recognize the relevance of historical learning in their daily lives and increased their willingness to participate in classroom discussions.

Observation data also demonstrated that teachers diversified learning media to improve classroom interaction. Digital maps, documentary videos, historical photographs, and visual presentations were regularly incorporated into instructional activities. Rather than functioning solely as supporting materials, these media were used to stimulate discussion and encourage students to analyze historical evidence collaboratively. Classroom observations indicated that students became more actively engaged when learning activities involved visual resources compared with conventional lectures. Teachers

also reported that multimedia resources reduced students' boredom while improving conceptual understanding of complex historical events.

Furthermore, project-based learning emerged as another important pedagogical strategy. Students worked collaboratively to investigate selected historical topics, prepare presentations, and communicate their findings before receiving feedback from teachers and classmates. This instructional practice encouraged students to develop not only historical understanding but also communication skills, collaboration, and responsibility for group learning outcomes. Classroom observations confirmed that collaborative learning activities created more interactive classroom environments in which students assumed greater responsibility for constructing historical knowledge rather than depending entirely on teacher explanations.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that teacher pedagogical strategies at SMA Negeri 1 Parigi Tengah emphasize active participation, contextual understanding, collaborative inquiry, and reflective learning. The integration of discussion, project-based activities, multimedia resources, contextual instruction, and questioning techniques transformed history learning into a more interactive educational experience. These strategies indicate a pedagogical shift from knowledge transmission toward learning environments that facilitate historical thinking, student engagement, and meaningful learning experiences.

Learning Effectiveness as Reflected in Student Engagement and Classroom Interaction

The findings further indicate that the implementation of diverse pedagogical strategies contributed positively to the effectiveness of history learning in Grade XI. Classroom effectiveness was reflected not merely in students' academic performance but also in the quality of classroom interaction, students' active participation, collaborative learning behavior, and their ability to interpret historical events critically. Classroom observations revealed that learning activities became increasingly interactive when teachers combined questioning techniques, collaborative discussion, reflective learning, and multimedia resources during instruction. Rather than remaining passive recipients of information, students actively exchanged opinions, analyzed historical issues, and participated in group presentations throughout the learning process. These observations demonstrate that instructional effectiveness was closely associated with the quality of teacher facilitation rather than the quantity of historical content delivered.

Students acknowledged that classroom discussions and collaborative learning activities enabled them to understand historical concepts more easily than conventional lecture-based instruction. During interviews, several students explained that opportunities to discuss historical events with peers encouraged them to express opinions more confidently while simultaneously improving their understanding of the lesson. One student stated:

"Learning history through discussion makes us more enthusiastic because everyone can express their opinions. We understand historical events better when we discuss them together rather than simply listening to explanations." (Student Interview)

This statement indicates that collaborative learning generated greater cognitive engagement among students while encouraging them to construct historical understanding through interaction with their peers.

Observation data also demonstrated noticeable improvements in classroom participation throughout instructional activities. During lesson introductions, teachers initiated learning by connecting historical issues with students' everyday experiences through contextual questions. Students responded actively to these introductory questions before participating in group discussions and classroom presentations. At the conclusion of each lesson, teachers facilitated reflective activities by inviting students to summarize the values and lessons derived from historical events. Such instructional sequences encouraged students to remain actively involved throughout the entire learning process rather than only during isolated classroom activities.

Learning effectiveness was further supported by the utilization of instructional media capable of increasing students' interest in history. Documentary videos, historical photographs, digital maps, and visual presentations enabled students to visualize historical events more concretely than textual explanations alone. Classroom observations indicated that students paid greater attention and demonstrated stronger curiosity whenever teachers integrated visual media into classroom instruction. Teachers also reported that multimedia resources reduced students' boredom and facilitated deeper understanding of complex historical phenomena.

Despite these positive findings, several challenges affecting learning effectiveness were also identified. Teachers acknowledged that differences in students' academic readiness, varying learning motivation, limited instructional facilities, and classroom discipline occasionally constrained the implementation of innovative pedagogical strategies. Some students remained reluctant to participate actively in classroom discussions and preferred listening to more confident classmates. In addition, limited technological facilities sometimes reduced teachers' opportunities to integrate digital learning resources consistently throughout instructional activities. Nevertheless, teachers attempted to overcome these constraints by adapting instructional strategies according to classroom conditions and students' learning characteristics.

Overall, the findings indicate that effective history learning emerged through continuous interaction between appropriate pedagogical strategies, active student participation, supportive classroom environments, and contextual instructional practices. Rather than relying solely on teacher explanations, effective learning was characterized by students' increasing engagement in inquiry, discussion, reflection, and collaborative knowledge construction. These findings suggest that learning effectiveness should be understood as a multidimensional process involving cognitive, behavioral, and social dimensions of classroom learning rather than merely students' achievement scores.

Institutional Support for Effective History Learning

Beyond classroom pedagogy, the findings demonstrate that institutional support played a significant role in strengthening the implementation of effective history learning. School leadership contributed by establishing policies that encouraged instructional innovation, providing learning facilities, and creating an academic environment that supported teachers' professional development. Teachers acknowledged that support from the school principal facilitated greater flexibility in designing learning activities, utilizing

instructional media, and implementing collaborative learning strategies aligned with the objectives of the Merdeka Curriculum.

The school principal emphasized that history education should contribute not only to students' academic achievement but also to character formation and national identity development. According to the principal:

"History learning should become a medium for developing students' national identity. Through appropriate instructional strategies, students learn responsibility, patriotism, and critical understanding of the nation's historical journey."

This perspective was consistently reflected in classroom practices where teachers integrated historical values into learning activities. Rather than emphasizing memorization of historical facts, teachers encouraged students to examine the moral lessons embedded within historical events and relate them to contemporary civic life.

Teachers further reported that collaboration among school leaders, fellow teachers, and students created a supportive learning culture that facilitated instructional improvement. Regular discussions regarding lesson planning, curriculum implementation, and classroom challenges enabled teachers to evaluate instructional practices and continuously refine their pedagogical approaches. Such collegial interactions contributed to greater consistency in implementing active learning strategies across history classes.

Documentary evidence also demonstrated that instructional planning had been systematically organized through teaching modules aligned with curriculum objectives. Learning activities were designed to integrate discussion, collaborative learning, presentation, reflection, and authentic assessment within a coherent instructional framework. These documents confirm that pedagogical strategies implemented in classrooms were supported by structured instructional planning rather than spontaneous teaching decisions.

Taken together, the findings reveal that effective history learning resulted from the interaction between teacher pedagogical competence and institutional support. Teachers' instructional creativity became more sustainable when reinforced by supportive school leadership, collaborative professional culture, and adequate instructional planning. Consequently, effective history learning should be understood not solely as an individual teacher's achievement but as the product of a supportive educational ecosystem that enables innovative pedagogy to flourish.

Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that teacher pedagogical strategies play a decisive role in determining the effectiveness of history learning at SMA Negeri 1 Parigi Tengah. Rather than functioning merely as instructional techniques, these strategies represent an integrated pedagogical process through which teachers organize learning experiences, facilitate classroom interaction, and encourage students to construct historical understanding actively. The empirical evidence obtained from interviews, classroom observations, and documentation indicates that teachers no longer relied exclusively on lecture-based instruction but attempted to integrate classroom discussions, contextual learning, collaborative activities, questioning techniques, project assignments, and multimedia resources into classroom practice. Such findings indicate a pedagogical

transformation from teacher-centered instruction toward a more student-centered approach in which students become active participants in constructing historical knowledge.

This transformation is consistent with constructivist learning theory, which argues that meaningful learning occurs when learners actively construct knowledge through interaction with their social environment rather than passively receiving information from teachers (Vygotsky, 1978). From this perspective, the teacher's primary responsibility is not simply to transfer historical information but to facilitate learning experiences that enable students to interpret evidence, negotiate meaning, and develop historical understanding independently. The present findings confirm this theoretical assumption. Students demonstrated greater participation and stronger conceptual understanding when learning activities encouraged discussion, collaborative inquiry, and contextual interpretation rather than factual memorization (Coleman, 1998). Therefore, the effectiveness of history learning should be interpreted not as the successful transmission of historical facts but as the successful facilitation of students' intellectual engagement throughout the learning process (Anggita et al., 2026).

An important contribution emerging from this research is the finding that teacher pedagogical strategies operate as an integrated instructional system rather than isolated teaching methods (Niess & Gillow-Wiles, 2017). Previous studies have frequently investigated discussion methods, project-based learning, inquiry learning, multimedia instruction, or contextual learning as independent pedagogical interventions (Kokotsaki et al., 2016; Liu & Hsiao, 2002). However, classroom observations undertaken in this study demonstrate that effective history learning rarely depends on a single instructional strategy. Instead, teachers continuously combined questioning techniques, classroom discussion, collaborative learning, contextual examples, multimedia presentations, and reflective activities within a single lesson. Such instructional integration enabled students to experience history learning as a coherent process through which they investigated historical issues, exchanged interpretations, evaluated evidence, and communicated conclusions collaboratively. Consequently, learning effectiveness emerged from the interaction among multiple pedagogical components rather than from one particular instructional method.

This finding extends previous scholarship concerning effective history education. Existing research generally emphasizes the superiority of one instructional model over another, such as inquiry-based learning, problem-based learning, or project-based learning. Although these studies have demonstrated positive effects on students' historical understanding, they often overlook the reality that classroom instruction is inherently dynamic and adaptive. Teachers continuously modify instructional approaches according to classroom situations, students' learning readiness, available learning resources, and institutional conditions (Rokhib & Susarno, 2026). The present findings therefore suggest that pedagogical effectiveness should be understood as teachers' adaptive capacity to integrate multiple instructional strategies according to contextual learning needs rather than simply implementing predetermined teaching models. Such an interpretation provides a broader perspective regarding teacher professionalism because effective pedagogy depends upon continuous instructional decision-making rather than methodological consistency alone.

The implementation of these pedagogical strategies also reflects the broader objectives of Indonesia's Merdeka Curriculum, which emphasizes learner autonomy, meaningful learning experiences, higher-order thinking skills, and differentiated instruction. The findings indicate that history teachers have gradually shifted their instructional orientation from emphasizing content coverage toward facilitating students' active participation during classroom learning. Students were encouraged to investigate historical events, formulate arguments, discuss different interpretations, and connect historical experiences with contemporary social realities (Burgos-Videla et al., 2025). Such instructional practices correspond closely with the curriculum's expectation that teachers function as facilitators of learning rather than transmitters of information. Consequently, this study provides empirical evidence that curriculum reform can contribute positively to classroom learning when teachers possess sufficient pedagogical competence to translate curriculum principles into authentic instructional practice.

Another noteworthy finding concerns the relationship between pedagogical strategies and student engagement. Classroom observations consistently revealed that students became considerably more active when teachers utilized discussion-based instruction, contextual questioning, multimedia resources, and collaborative learning activities. These instructional practices created opportunities for students to express opinions, formulate arguments, evaluate historical evidence, and respond critically to classmates' ideas. Such participation indicates that effective history learning extends beyond cognitive achievement and includes behavioral, emotional, and intellectual engagement throughout classroom activities. In this regard, student engagement should be understood as one of the primary indicators of instructional effectiveness because active participation reflects meaningful interaction between learners, teachers, and learning materials.

The findings correspond with the multidimensional concept of student engagement proposed by Fredricks, Blumenfeld, and Paris (2004), who argue that engagement consists of behavioral, cognitive, and emotional dimensions. Behavioral engagement refers to students' active participation during classroom activities, cognitive engagement reflects intellectual investment in learning, whereas emotional engagement concerns students' interest, enjoyment, and sense of belonging within classroom environments. Evidence obtained in the present study demonstrates that these three dimensions developed simultaneously during history instruction. Students actively participated in collaborative discussions, demonstrated curiosity toward historical issues, and expressed greater confidence when communicating ideas before classmates. Such findings indicate that engagement emerges through the interaction between pedagogical practice and supportive classroom environments rather than through students' individual motivation alone.

The development of student engagement observed in this research may also be explained through Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000), which proposes that intrinsic motivation develops when learners experience autonomy, competence, and relatedness. History teachers provided opportunities for students to make interpretations, discuss historical evidence, and communicate conclusions independently while simultaneously receiving constructive feedback from teachers and peers. These instructional experiences strengthened students' perceptions of competence and autonomy,

thereby increasing their willingness to participate actively throughout learning activities. Consequently, student engagement should not merely be interpreted as classroom participation but as evidence that instructional practices successfully satisfy students' psychological needs for meaningful learning.

Another significant aspect emerging from the findings concerns teachers' utilization of contextual learning. Rather than presenting historical events as isolated facts requiring memorization, teachers attempted to relate historical experiences to students' contemporary social realities, including nationalism, democratic values, social responsibility, and cultural diversity. Such contextualization enabled students to understand the relevance of historical knowledge for interpreting current societal issues. Johnson (2002) argues that contextual teaching facilitates meaningful learning because learners construct understanding by connecting new knowledge with previous experiences and everyday situations. The present findings reinforce this perspective by demonstrating that contextual history instruction encourages students to perceive historical events not simply as narratives about the past but as valuable resources for understanding present-day realities and making responsible civic decisions.

The contribution of contextual learning identified in this study is further strengthened by the integration of multimedia resources throughout classroom instruction. Observation data indicated that teachers utilized historical photographs, documentary videos, digital presentations, maps, and visual illustrations to support students' understanding of historical events. Rather than serving merely as complementary teaching aids, these resources functioned as instructional stimuli that encouraged students to examine historical evidence, formulate interpretations, and participate actively in classroom discussions. Students demonstrated greater enthusiasm and concentration whenever visual materials were incorporated into the lesson, suggesting that multimedia enhanced not only cognitive understanding but also emotional engagement during learning activities.

This finding is consistent with Mayer's (2021) Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning, which explains that meaningful learning occurs more effectively when verbal explanations are integrated with appropriate visual representations. Multimedia enables learners to process information through both verbal and visual channels, thereby reducing cognitive overload while strengthening conceptual understanding. Within history education, this theoretical perspective is particularly relevant because many historical events involve abstract concepts, complex chronological relationships, and socio-political contexts that are often difficult for students to imagine through textual descriptions alone. Consequently, multimedia resources become an important pedagogical tool for transforming abstract historical narratives into concrete learning experiences that are easier to comprehend and analyze critically.

Beyond facilitating conceptual understanding, multimedia also contributed to improving students' historical thinking. Rather than memorizing historical facts presented in textbooks, students were encouraged to observe documentary evidence, identify historical actors, analyze causal relationships, and discuss the significance of historical events. Such learning experiences correspond with the concept of historical thinking proposed by Seixas and Morton (2013), who argue that history education should develop

students' abilities to evaluate evidence, identify historical significance, recognize continuity and change, analyze causes and consequences, and understand historical perspectives. The present findings indicate that these competencies can be cultivated more effectively when teachers integrate visual evidence with collaborative discussion and contextual inquiry. Thus, multimedia should not be interpreted merely as technological innovation but as a pedagogical instrument supporting the development of historical reasoning.

Although the findings demonstrate positive instructional outcomes, the study also identified several contextual challenges that influenced the implementation of effective history learning. Teachers reported differences in students' academic readiness, learning motivation, communication confidence, and classroom participation (Tomlinson et al., 2003). Some students actively contributed during discussions, whereas others preferred to remain silent despite receiving encouragement from teachers. Such diversity required teachers to continuously adapt instructional strategies according to students' characteristics and classroom dynamics. This finding indicates that effective pedagogy cannot rely on standardized instructional procedures but instead requires continuous professional judgment and flexibility in responding to varying educational situations.

These findings reinforce Shulman's (1986) concept of Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK), which emphasizes that effective teachers possess not only mastery of subject matter but also the ability to transform disciplinary knowledge into forms that are understandable and meaningful for learners. The history teachers observed in this study demonstrated this competence by selecting instructional approaches appropriate to students' needs, modifying learning activities when necessary, and integrating various instructional resources to facilitate historical understanding. Their pedagogical decisions illustrate that professional teaching involves continuous reflection and adaptation rather than mechanical implementation of predetermined lesson plans. Consequently, teacher professionalism should be understood as the capacity to make informed pedagogical decisions within authentic classroom contexts.

Another important finding concerns the contribution of institutional support to instructional effectiveness. The study revealed that teacher innovation was facilitated by a supportive school environment characterized by constructive leadership, collaborative professional relationships, and systematic instructional planning. School leaders encouraged teachers to implement innovative learning strategies while providing opportunities for professional discussion regarding curriculum implementation and classroom improvement. Such institutional conditions enabled teachers to experiment with different pedagogical approaches without experiencing excessive administrative constraints.

The influence of school leadership on instructional quality has been consistently emphasized within educational leadership literature. Hallinger (2011) argues that instructional leadership contributes significantly to school improvement because effective leaders create organizational conditions that encourage teachers' professional growth, instructional innovation, and collaborative learning. Similarly, professional learning community theory highlights the importance of continuous collaboration among teachers for improving instructional quality and student learning outcomes (DuFour & Fullan, 2013).

The findings of the present study support these perspectives by demonstrating that teacher pedagogical competence develops more effectively when supported by institutional policies that encourage reflection, collaboration, and continuous instructional improvement.

An important implication emerging from this research is that improving history education requires a systemic rather than individual approach. Curriculum reform alone is insufficient to improve classroom learning if teachers do not receive adequate professional support, instructional resources, and opportunities for pedagogical development (Buabeng & Amo-Darko, 2025). Likewise, innovative teaching strategies cannot be implemented consistently when institutional environments fail to facilitate instructional experimentation and collaboration. Therefore, the effectiveness of history learning should be understood as the product of interaction among teacher competence, student participation, instructional resources, curriculum implementation, and school leadership. This systemic perspective provides a more comprehensive understanding of educational quality than approaches focusing exclusively on teacher performance or curriculum design.

Compared with previous studies, the present research offers several theoretical contributions. Existing literature has predominantly examined discussion methods, inquiry learning, project-based learning, contextual teaching, or multimedia integration as separate instructional variables influencing students' achievement or motivation. Such approaches are valuable but tend to simplify the complexity of classroom practice by isolating individual teaching methods from their broader pedagogical context. In contrast, the present study demonstrates that effective history learning emerges from the interaction among multiple pedagogical dimensions operating simultaneously during classroom instruction. Discussion activities become meaningful because they are supported by contextual questioning, multimedia resources, reflective learning, collaborative interaction, adaptive classroom management, and institutional support. Consequently, no single instructional strategy can independently explain learning effectiveness.

This integrated interpretation represents the principal theoretical contribution of the study. Teacher pedagogical strategies should be conceptualized not as independent classroom techniques but as components of an interconnected pedagogical ecosystem through which meaningful learning experiences are constructed. Such a perspective broadens current understanding of effective history education by emphasizing the interaction among instructional planning, teacher professionalism, student engagement, contextual learning, institutional support, and classroom communication. Accordingly, this research extends previous conceptualizations of pedagogical effectiveness from a method-oriented perspective toward a systems-oriented perspective, providing a richer analytical framework for future studies in history education.

From a practical standpoint, the findings suggest that professional development for history teachers should move beyond introducing isolated instructional models. Training programs should instead emphasize teachers' abilities to integrate multiple pedagogical strategies, facilitate classroom dialogue, promote historical inquiry, utilize multimedia resources critically, and adapt instruction according to students' diverse learning characteristics. School leaders should simultaneously strengthen collaborative professional cultures by encouraging lesson study, peer observation, reflective discussion, and

continuous curriculum evaluation. Such initiatives would enable teachers to improve instructional quality sustainably while responding more effectively to the challenges of implementing the Merdeka Curriculum. Ultimately, strengthening history education requires coordinated efforts among teachers, school leaders, curriculum developers, and educational policymakers to create learning environments that not only improve students' academic achievement but also cultivate historical thinking, civic responsibility, and lifelong learning competencies.

Conclusion

This research concludes that the high and low work motivation of teachers at the State Junior High School in Siak Hulu District is highly dependent on two main factors, namely the quality of academic supervision and how strong the organizational culture that lives in the school. Given that motivation is the driving force in the success of teaching and the formation of students' character, this study is deliberately designed to be a foothold in formulating strategic policies. The goal is clear, namely to boost the quality of educators' performance through a professional touch as well as managerial improvement within the school. The findings in the field again emphasized that teachers' work spirit cannot flourish if it is only triggered by one separate factor. This work ethic is the fruit of the right combination of technical guidance that builds and creates a harmonious and mutually supportive work atmosphere. Therefore, school principals are advised to change the direction of supervision policies. The old supervisory pattern that only places supervision as a control tool or fault finder must be replaced into a humanist means of professional mentoring, then strengthened by consistently instilling the noble values of the organization. For academics or future researchers who are interested in studying similar issues, there are still many gaps that can be explored more deeply. It is recommended to start testing new hypotheses regarding other variables that have not been discussed here, such as the wage or compensation system, the availability of physical infrastructure, to the influence of the principal's leadership style. The use of mixed research methods will also be very helpful to dissect the picture of the dynamics of work motivation in a more complete and in-depth manner at various other levels of education.

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