



Implications of the Cambridge Curriculum for the Development of Analytical Thinking Skills among Seventh-Grade International Class Programme Students in Social Studies Learning

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Abstract

21st-century education demands highly analytical thinking skills from students, particularly in social studies learning, to enable them to logically understand the dynamics of various social problems. However, data indicates that the analytical thinking skills of seventh-grade International Class Programme (ICP) students at MTsN 2 Ponorogo were still not fully developed. This study aims to describe the implementation of the Cambridge Curriculum and analyze its real-world implications for the development of students' analytical thinking skills. The study employed qualitative with a case study. Data collection was conducted through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Interactive data analysis included data collection, data condensation, data display, and drawing conclusion. The results showed that the curriculum implementation was carried out through framework planning, student-centered learning with English as the medium of instruction, and formative and summative evaluations. The implications of implementing this curriculum were proven to improve students' cognitive abilities in identifying important information, distinguishing facts from opinions, strengthening logical argumentation structures, and connecting concepts with real phenomena. In conclusion, the implementation of the Cambridge Curriculum supports the development of students' analytical thinking skills through meaningful learning experiences.

Pendidikan abad ke-21 sangat menuntut kemampuan berpikir analitis peserta didik, khususnya dalam pembelajaran Ilmu Pengetahuan Sosial (IPS) agar mereka mampu memahami berbagai dinamika masalah sosial secara logis. Namun, data menunjukkan bahwa kemampuan berpikir analitis siswa kelas VII ICP di MTsN 2 Ponorogo masih belum optimal dalam pembelajaran. Penelitian kualitatif dengan jenis studi kasus ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan implementasi Cambridge Curriculum serta menganalisis implikasi nyata terhadap kemampuan berpikir analitis. Pengumpulan data lapangan dilakukan melalui teknik observasi, wawancara mendalam, dan dokumentasi. Analisis data dilakukan interaktif meliputi pengumpulan data, kondensasi data, penyajian data, hingga penarikan kesimpulan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa implementasi kurikulum dilakukan melalui perencanaan framework, pembelajaran berpusat pada siswa dengan pengantar bahasa Inggris, serta evaluasi formatif dan sumatif. Implikasi penerapan kurikulum ini mampu meningkatkan kemampuan kognitif siswa dalam mengidentifikasi informasi penting, membedakan fakta dan opini, memperkuat struktur argumentasi logis, serta menghubungkan konsep dengan fenomena nyata. Kesimpulannya, implementasi Kurikulum Cambridge mendukung pengembangan keterampilan berpikir analitis siswa melalui pengalaman belajar yang bermakna. © The Authors.

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1. Introduction

Education in the 21st century requires students not only to master knowledge but also to possess higher-order thinking skills, one of which is analytical thinking. Analytical thinking is considered an essential cognitive skill in modern education. This ability includes identifying and solving problems, interpreting information, evaluating various facts, recognizing changes in patterns of argumentation, and drawing logical conclusions [1]. In the context of Social Studies (IPS) learning, this skill is crucial because the subject matter is closely related to various social phenomena that require deep understanding and the ability to analyze issues occurring in society.

However, in classroom practice, Social Studies learning is still often oriented toward the delivery of content and memorization of concepts. This condition causes students to be less accustomed to analyzing social problems critically and systematically. As a result, students' analytical thinking skills have not yet developed optimally. Therefore, a learning approach is needed that can encourage students to be more active in thinking, discussing, and solving problems related to social phenomena [2].

One effort to improve the quality of learning and develop students' thinking skills is through the implementation of an international curriculum, such as the Cambridge Curriculum. The Cambridge Curriculum emphasizes student-centered learning, inquiry-based learning, and the development of higher-order thinking skills. Through this approach, students are encouraged to develop critical and analytical thinking skills, as well as independent problem-solving abilities. Several studies have shown that the implementation of the Cambridge Curriculum can enhance student engagement and promote the development of higher-order thinking skills in the learning process [3].

Nevertheless, research on the implications of implementing the Cambridge Curriculum in developing students' analytical thinking skills in Social Studies learning is still relatively limited. Most studies tend to focus on the application of the Cambridge Curriculum in other subjects. Therefore, further research is needed to specifically examine how the Cambridge Curriculum is implemented in Social Studies learning and how it impacts the development of students' analytical thinking skills.

Based on these issues, this study aims to analyze the implementation of the Cambridge Curriculum and its implications for developing students' analytical thinking skills in Social Studies learning within the International Class Programme (ICP) at MTsN 2 Ponorogo. This research is expected to contribute to the development of more innovative Social Studies learning and provide insights into the application of an international curriculum in enhancing students' analytical thinking skills.

2. Method

Data collection in this study consisted of observation, interviews, and documentation. The observation technique applied by the researcher was non-participant observation, in which the researcher acted solely as an observer and did not participate in the activities being studied [5].

The next data collection technique was interviews. This method provided direct results, allowing the researcher to elaborate questions and clarify unclear information directly. The interviews were conducted with Social Studies (IPS) teachers of the ICP class and seventh-grade ICP students [6]. In addition, documentation was used to collect secondary data in the form of relevant documents. These included school history, geographical location, organizational structure, school vision and mission, and data on teaching and administrative staff of the International Class Programme. Furthermore, documentation related to the planning and implementation of the Cambridge Curriculum was also collected, such as teaching modules, photos of pre-learning activities, learning activities, instructional media, and the textbooks used.

The participants in this study consisted of the coordinator of the International Class Programme, Social Studies teachers, and two representative students from the seventh-grade International Class Programme. The data analysis technique used in this study was interactive analysis, which includes data collection, data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. The validity of the data was ensured through triangulation, member checking, and prolonged engagement to enhance the credibility of the research findings [7].

3. Results

Analytical thinking skills refer to students' ability to break down information into parts, identify relationships among those parts, and connect related elements to real-life phenomena [8]. In this context, analytical thinking is often considered a comprehensive (complex) thinking skill, as it encompasses students' knowledge, their understanding of that knowledge, and how they apply it,

particularly in Social Studies (IPS) learning. Based on the explanation above, analytical thinking is regarded as a higher-order skill in achieving learning outcomes in Social Studies.

Analytical thinking means that students are able to identify various problems, analyze and deconstruct those problems, distinguish unrelated aspects, establish relationships among issues with similar concepts, and ultimately determine appropriate solutions. It is also a skill that involves expressing one's thoughts clearly. Furthermore, analytical thinking can be considered a complex skill because achieving it requires prior mastery of other thinking skills, such as creative, innovative, and reconstructive thinking [9].

The indicators of analytical thinking skills in the learning context generally include a set of cognitive abilities that require students to think deeply and systematically about a problem. These indicators include the ability to distinguish between relevant and irrelevant facts, ideas, and concepts so that students can focus on essential information; the ability to group or classify information based on specific criteria to better understand relationships among elements; the ability to organize and connect various pieces of information to identify patterns, relationships, or cause-and-effect connections within a phenomenon; the ability to construct logical arguments and formulate hypotheses as a form of reasoning; and the ability to evaluate evidence and draw rational and logical conclusions based on available data or facts. Therefore, analytical thinking not only requires students to understand information but also to process, evaluate, and apply it critically within meaningful learning contexts [10].

However, evidence from the field indicates that students' mastery of these analytical thinking indicators remains suboptimal. Several studies in secondary schools show that tasks and assessments provided by teachers are still largely focused on Lower Order Thinking Skills (LOTS), such as understanding and memorization. Analytical activities are rarely implemented, resulting in limited opportunities for students to practice analytical thinking. In addition, teachers are not yet fully accustomed to designing learning activities and assessments that stimulate analysis, leading to a gap between learning objectives and students' achievement outcomes [11].

The implementation of the Cambridge Curriculum in the International Class Programme has been shown to enhance students' analytical abilities, as its curriculum structure provides opportunities for exploration and in-depth reasoning. However, its implementation still faces challenges, particularly in terms of teacher readiness and alignment with the national curriculum. Therefore, the adoption of the Cambridge Curriculum at MTsN 2 Ponorogo is expected to serve as a solution for developing students' analytical thinking skills in Social Studies learning.

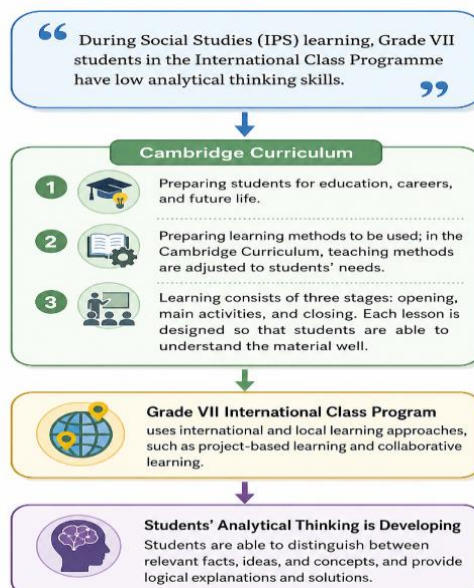


Figure 1. Analytical Thinking

4. Discussion

4.1. The Implementation of the Cambridge Curriculum to Develop Analytical Thinking in Social Studies Learning for Grade VII Students in the International Class Programme

According to Oemar Hamalik, as cited in Curriculum Development by Nurhayati et al., the success or failure of an educational system is strongly influenced by planning, design,

implementation, and evaluation processes in learning [11]. Based on the interviews conducted with informants, this statement is consistent with the researcher's observations in the field, which indicate that teachers carry out careful planning and preparation before the learning process to facilitate effective teaching and learning activities.

This is further supported by the presence of the Cambridge Curriculum, which complements the *Kurikulum Merdeka* in the implementation of learning within ICP classes. The integration of these two curricula creates a more adaptive, student-centered, and globally oriented learning environment that encourages active student participation during the learning process. Through the Cambridge Curriculum, students are not only encouraged to master conceptual knowledge, but are also trained to develop higher-order thinking skills, particularly analytical thinking, critical reasoning, problem-solving, and the ability to connect theoretical concepts with real-life social phenomena.

In practice, the implementation of the curriculum emphasizes inquiry-based and discussion-oriented learning activities, enabling students to analyze information critically, distinguish between facts and opinions, construct logical arguments, and communicate ideas systematically. Furthermore, the integration of international learning standards with the flexibility of the *Kurikulum Merdeka* provides wider opportunities for teachers to design contextual and meaningful learning experiences that suit students' needs and characteristics.

The curriculum integration also supports the implementation of comprehensive assessment practices. Through formative and summative evaluations, teachers are able to identify the extent of students' understanding, monitor their cognitive development, and measure the improvement of their analytical thinking skills throughout the learning process. As a result, the learning process in ICP classes not only focuses on academic achievement, but also fosters students' intellectual readiness to face the challenges of 21st-century education and global social dynamics.

4.2. The Implications of the Implementation of the Cambridge Curriculum in Developing Analytical Thinking in Social Studies Learning for Grade VII Students in the International Class Programme

According to Mattew Sanangsa, analytical thinking is the ability to analyze, break down, and understand a problem or situation in a systematic and logical manner. This ability involves solving problems in a structured way, selecting relevant information, identifying problems, and breaking them into smaller parts to find appropriate solutions [12].

Based on these indicators, this study demonstrates that the implementation of the Cambridge Curriculum in Social Studies learning for Grade VII students in the International Class Programme is strongly aligned with Mattew Sanangsa's theory, which emphasizes the importance of active learning processes in developing students' higher-order thinking skills. The curriculum implementation does not merely focus on the transfer of knowledge, but also encourages students to become active participants in constructing understanding through exploration, discussion, and critical reflection.

The learning process is designed through various student-centered approaches, such as group discussions, collaborative learning, problem-solving activities, project-based learning, and case study analysis related to real social issues. These learning models provide opportunities for students to examine problems from multiple perspectives, evaluate information critically, and formulate logical conclusions based on evidence. In this context, students are trained not only to memorize concepts, but also to interpret, analyze, and apply them in meaningful ways within real-life situations.

Furthermore, the use of English as the medium of instruction in ICP classes contributes significantly to students' cognitive and communicative development. Students are encouraged to express opinions, defend arguments, ask analytical questions, and communicate ideas systematically in an international academic environment. This process indirectly strengthens students' confidence, reasoning abilities, and intellectual independence in classroom interactions.

The findings of this study indicate substantial improvements in students' patterns of argumentation and ways of thinking. Students demonstrate a greater ability to distinguish between facts and opinions, identify causal relationships in social phenomena, and develop more structured and evidence-based arguments. In addition, they become more capable of identifying problems, analyzing possible solutions, and making reasoned decisions during the learning process. These improvements reflect the successful integration of international curriculum standards with contextual Social Studies learning, which ultimately supports the development of analytical thinking skills as one of the essential competencies required in 21st-century education.

4.1.1. Cambridge-Based Learning Planning in Social Studies

Cambridge-based learning planning in Social Studies for Grade VII students in the International Class Programme (ICP) at MTsN 2 Ponorogo is systematically developed through the integration of the **Kurikulum Merdeka**, the Love-Based Curriculum (*Kurikulum Berbasis Cinta/KBC*), and the educational framework established by Cambridge Assessment International Education, particularly the **Framework** and **Lesson Plan**. This integration reflects the school's commitment to combining national educational values, character-based education, and international academic standards in order to create holistic and meaningful learning experiences for students.

The **Kurikulum Merdeka** serves as the primary national curriculum foundation, emphasizing flexibility in learning, competency-based achievement, and student-centered instruction. Through this curriculum, teachers are encouraged to design contextual learning activities that accommodate students' interests, learning styles, and developmental needs. In addition, the curriculum promotes the strengthening of critical and analytical thinking skills, creativity, collaboration, and communication as essential competencies in 21st-century education.

At the same time, the implementation of the Love-Based Curriculum (*Kurikulum Berbasis Cinta/KBC*) reinforces the moral, emotional, and spiritual dimensions of learning. This curriculum emphasizes values such as empathy, respect, responsibility, tolerance, and compassionate interaction between teachers and students. In Social Studies learning, these values are integrated into discussions of social issues, cultural diversity, and societal dynamics, enabling students not only to develop intellectual competence but also to cultivate social awareness and positive character formation.

Furthermore, the Cambridge Assessment International Education framework provides an international academic structure that guides the organization of learning objectives, teaching strategies, classroom activities, and assessment systems. Through the use of the **Cambridge Framework** and structured **Lesson Plans**, teachers are able to design learning activities that emphasize inquiry-based learning, analytical discussion, problem-solving, and active student engagement. The lesson plans are carefully arranged to ensure that each learning stage opening activities, core learning activities, and reflection or closing activities supports the development of higher-order thinking skills.

In practice, this integrated planning process enables teachers to combine local educational values with global learning perspectives. Teachers prepare learning materials that are relevant to real social phenomena while simultaneously encouraging students to analyze issues critically using international academic approaches. As a result, the planning process not only focuses on achieving curriculum targets, but also aims to develop students' analytical thinking skills, communication abilities, and character development in a balanced and sustainable manner.

Based on interviews with Social Studies teachers, planning is documented in teaching modules that emphasize learning outcomes based on Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) and literacy development. From a theoretical perspective, the Cambridge Curriculum emphasizes learner-centered learning, inquiry-based learning, and the structured development of critical and analytical thinking as outlined in official frameworks and lesson plans. This aligns with the *Kurikulum Merdeka*, which promotes differentiated learning and higher-order thinking processes [13].

Adjustments to learning tools are also an important part of the planning stage. Teachers design student worksheets (LKPD) based on the Team Games Tournament (TGT) model, develop assessment rubrics that focus on thinking processes, and integrate socio-emotional assessment. This indicates that evaluation is designed not only to measure final outcomes but also students' abilities to connect concepts, construct logical arguments, and draw data-based conclusions. Such authentic assessment approaches are consistent with recent studies emphasizing the importance of performance assessment in measuring analytical thinking [14].

4.1.2. Implementation of Student-Centered Learning in Social Studies

The implementation of Social Studies learning in the ICP class at MTsN 2 Ponorogo reflects the characteristics of Student-Centered Learning (SCL). SCL emphasizes collaboration and interaction among students in groups, where each individual has specific roles and contributes to collective outcomes [15].

Student-Centered Learning positions students as the primary subjects in the learning process, while teachers function as facilitators, guides, and learning motivators. In this approach, learning activities are designed to provide students with broader opportunities to actively participate in constructing knowledge, exploring ideas, and developing their analytical thinking skills independently. The teacher's role is no longer dominated by one-way information delivery, but rather

by creating meaningful learning situations that encourage students to think critically, communicate effectively, and collaborate with peers.

Based on interviews with Social Studies teachers in the International Class Programme (ICP), the learning process is systematically organized through several analytical stages, beginning with problem formulation, information gathering, cause-and-effect analysis, and conclusion drawing. At the initial stage, students are encouraged to identify social issues or phenomena related to the learning material. This stage stimulates curiosity and encourages students to formulate questions that become the basis for deeper exploration.

The next stage involves information gathering, where students search for data and supporting evidence from various learning resources such as textbooks, digital media, articles, classroom presentations, and group discussions. Through this process, students are trained to evaluate information critically, distinguish valid information from unreliable sources, and develop independent learning habits. This stage also strengthens students' literacy and research skills, which are essential competencies in 21st-century education.

After collecting information, students engage in cause-and-effect analysis to understand relationships between social events, issues, and phenomena. In Social Studies learning, this analytical process enables students to interpret social realities more logically and systematically. Students learn to examine why certain social problems occur, identify contributing factors, evaluate impacts, and propose possible solutions. Such activities encourage deeper cognitive engagement and foster higher-order thinking skills.

Finally, students are guided to draw conclusions based on the results of discussion, analysis, and reflection. At this stage, they are expected to synthesize information, formulate logical arguments, and communicate their findings clearly both orally and in written form. This reflective process helps students internalize concepts and develop more structured patterns of reasoning and argumentation.

This learning pattern demonstrates that students are no longer positioned as passive recipients of information, but rather as active participants who construct understanding through interaction, collaboration, and critical reflection. The classroom atmosphere becomes more dynamic because students are directly involved in questioning, discussing, analyzing, and solving problems related to real social contexts.

Several methods implemented within this Student-Centered Learning approach include small group discussions, collaborative learning, and cooperative learning. Through small group discussions, students are encouraged to exchange opinions, debate ideas, and jointly analyze problems from different perspectives. Collaborative learning emphasizes teamwork and shared responsibility in achieving learning objectives, while cooperative learning promotes structured interaction among students to support mutual understanding and collective problem-solving. These methods not only improve students' academic competence but also strengthen communication skills, social interaction, leadership, and teamwork abilities.

Overall, the implementation of Student-Centered Learning in Cambridge-based Social Studies instruction contributes significantly to the development of students' analytical thinking skills, intellectual independence, and active engagement in the learning process. The approach creates a learning environment that is interactive, reflective, and inquiry-oriented, enabling students to become more confident and capable of addressing academic as well as real-world social challenges.

4.1.3. Assessment and Evaluation System

Proses The assessment process is not limited to one or two methods but involves various types of assessment. These include formative and summative assessments. Based on observations, teachers conducted formative assessment through team recognition (group rewards) [16]. Meanwhile, summative assessment was carried out through assignments, performance assessments (based on students' analysis of information), and observation [17].

Interviews with Social Studies teachers also revealed that evaluation is a crucial component of learning design, as it helps determine the extent to which students can formulate problems, identify unclear material, and independently draw conclusions by explaining cause-and-effect relationships. Teachers aim for students not only to memorize concepts but also to think analytically [18].

4.2.1. Students Experience Changes in Argumentation Patterns and Thinking

Based on interviews and observations, there has been a noticeable change in the argumentation patterns of Grade VII ICP students after the implementation of the Cambridge Curriculum. Previously, during elementary school, students tended to listen passively and respond

only when asked. However, at MTsN 2 Ponorogo, students now provide more elaborate answers supported by logical reasoning and evidence.

Teachers reported that students are trained to explain “why” and “how” social phenomena occur. This shift indicates a transition from memorization-based learning to analysis-based learning, which aligns with the concept of Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) [19]. Class discussions have also become more dynamic, as students actively express their opinions with clear reasoning and compare their arguments with peers. This demonstrates that students are developing logical and systematic thinking structures. In Social Studies, such skills are essential for analyzing social phenomena objectively. Recent studies also indicate that HOTS-based learning significantly improves the quality of students’ argumentation [20]. Additionally, students show the ability to evaluate information before expressing their opinions by considering the credibility and relevance of sources. This indicates that their thinking process has become more analytical rather than spontaneous.

4.2.2. Students Show Improvement in Identifying and Solving Problems

Observations indicate that students are increasingly capable of identifying social problems in a structured manner. They can distinguish between main issues and less relevant supporting information. This reflects the development of analytical processes, particularly in breaking down complex problems into smaller, manageable parts [21].

Students are also able to relate theoretical concepts to real-life phenomena. They provide concrete examples from everyday life to support their analysis, indicating deeper understanding beyond memorization. In evaluation, teachers provide HOTS-based questions that require students to explain their reasoning processes. Continuous exposure to analytical tasks has been proven to enhance students’ ability to solve complex problems effectively.

4.2.3. Challenges and Adjustments in Developing Analytical Thinking

Teachers identified several challenges in the implementation process. One major constraint is the absence of specific Cambridge Curriculum textbooks for Social Studies. In the ICP at MTsN 2 Ponorogo, the Cambridge Curriculum is formally applied only to Science, Mathematics, and English, while Social Studies uses it as a complementary approach to the Kurikulum Merdeka.

Another challenge is limited instructional time. Cambridge subjects receive six lesson hours, while non-Cambridge subjects such as Social Studies receive only four. Analytical and discussion-based learning requires more time than conventional teaching, requiring teachers to adjust strategies to ensure all students can develop their analytical skills.

Teacher readiness in designing analytical questions is also a key factor. Not all teachers are accustomed to creating tasks that demand deep analysis. Therefore, professional development and training are necessary to enhance teachers’ ability to design effective HOTS-based learning.

Additionally, some students require time to adapt to analytical thinking. Initially, they tend to provide brief answers without detailed explanations. However, through gradual practice and teacher guidance, their analytical abilities improve. This process aligns with cognitive development theories in learning [22].

5. Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study regarding the implications of the Cambridge Curriculum in developing the analytical thinking skills of Grade VII students in the International Class Programme (ICP) in Social Studies learning at MTsN 2 Ponorogo, several conclusions can be drawn.

First, the implementation of the Cambridge Curriculum in Social Studies learning has been carried out systematically through comprehensive planning and well-structured instructional practices. This process includes the preparation of qualified human resources, the development of curriculum frameworks, lesson plans, and teaching modules that emphasize student-centered learning. The learning activities are implemented through a deep learning approach supported by the use of English in several classroom interactions and instructional activities. In addition, assessment and evaluation are conducted through formative and summative methods that are oriented toward the development of Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS). The use of analytical and reflective questions encourages students to identify problems, connect concepts, evaluate information, and analyze social phenomena critically and systematically. Within this learning process, teachers function as facilitators who design interactive learning activities such as discussions, case studies, and problem-solving tasks. As a result, students are not only able to understand conceptual material, but also gradually develop analytical thinking skills through active participation and reflective learning

experiences. Therefore, the integration of the Cambridge Curriculum with active learning approaches has proven to create a more critical, interactive, and reflective learning environment.

Second, the implementation of the Cambridge Curriculum has significant implications for the development of students' analytical thinking skills. The findings indicate improvements in students' abilities to identify and analyze problems, construct logical arguments, distinguish facts from opinions, and provide more in-depth and evidence-based explanations. Students also demonstrate greater confidence in expressing ideas and connecting theoretical concepts with real social phenomena encountered in daily life. Although the implementation process initially required an adaptation period for both students and teachers, and teachers experienced challenges in designing analytical learning activities and HOTS-based questions, these challenges gradually decreased through continuous practice, structured learning experiences, and ongoing professional development for teachers. Consequently, the implementation of the Cambridge Curriculum in Social Studies learning not only contributes to students' academic achievement, but also plays an important role in fostering sustainable analytical and critical thinking patterns that are essential for facing the demands of 21st-century education and increasingly complex social dynamics.

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