

The Level of Application of Historical Thinking Skills (HTS) Based on Aspects of Knowledge, Skills and Attitudes of History Teachers in Sarawak

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Abstract

Historical Thinking Skills are important skills in helping improve student performance in history subjects. This study aims to identify the level of application of historical thinking skills from the aspects of knowledge, skills and attitudes of teachers in Sarawak secondary schools. This study uses a quantitative approach by using a questionnaire as a research instrument. The sample consisted of 50 history teachers who were selected using a random sampling technique. Data analysis using mean scores from SPSS software version 29.0. The findings of the study shows that the level of application of Historical Thinking Skills by history teachers is at a moderate level. In addition, this research also develops the learning theory of constructivism, Gagne and inquiry in applying Historical Thinking Skills in schools. This research is expected to contribute to the program to improve the knowledge, skills and attitudes of teachers in applying Historical Thinking Skills among students in secondary schools.

Keywords: Historical Thinking Skills, History Subjects, Secondary school, Knowledge, Skills, Attitude

Introduction

According to Soininen (2022), in western countries, history skills are assessed in every IBDP (International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme) final examination paper. Therefore, the application of historical thinking is very important so that students can answer history papers well.

In Malaysia, history is a core subject in secondary schools. The Australian Minister of Education stated that the history curriculum should be more inclined to ensure that students have the value of patriotism for the future of the country (Tudge, 2021). History subjects have been taught as a core subject in the Integrated Secondary School Curriculum (KBSM) and the Standard Secondary School Curriculum (KSSM) to promote historical knowledge in Malaysia

This research topic is important for history teachers in Malaysia. History teachers need to have high knowledge, skills and attitudes in applying historical thinking skills in history subjects. The application of Historical Thinking Skills is very important in improving the skills and competence of students in schools in learning history subjects. History teachers need to implement the elements of historical thinking skills in students. This is important because it can encourage the development of thinking skills and provide opportunities for students to analyze primary sources through the elements of exploring evidence, understanding chronology, making interpretations and rationalization. This research also states about historical thinking skills activities that are appropriate and can create an enjoyable learning atmosphere among students. Therefore, the implementation of historical thinking skills needs to be given attention because it can benefit educators in using various alternatives in learning, teaching and facilitation in line with the new norm.

History teachers need to implement the historical thinking skills elements in students. This is important because it can encourage the development of thinking skills and provide opportunities for students to analyze primary sources through the elements of exploring evidence, understanding chronology, making interpretations and rationalization. The HTS elements are implemented effectively among students with the guidance of history teachers.

According to Meral (2022), historical thinking skills for students aged 4-12 in American education system are chronological thinking, historical understanding, historical analysis and inference, historical research and analysis of historical problems and decision-making. The application of Historical Thinking Skills in the teaching and learning process of history is still at a low level (Kaviza, 2018). Therefore, to realize the aspirations of the Malaysian Education Development Plan (PPPM) 2013-2025 for the development of students, history teachers need to make changes. Therefore, history teachers must always be confident, interested and able to adapt to change, especially in implementing historical thinking skills in the subject of History.

Based on the discussion above, there are three study objectives as follows:

- 1) Identify the level of applying HTS based on aspects of teachers' knowledge in secondary schools.
- 2) Identify the level of implementing HTS based on teacher skills aspects in secondary schools.
- 3) Identify the level of applying HTS based on aspects of teachers' attitudes in secondary schools.

Literature Review

Learning Theory

In constructivist theory, in terms of learning, students need to reflect on the topics they have learned. Teachers only need to plan group learning activities to give students the opportunity to control their learning. For example, students can present their reflections in the form of cooperative presentations in the subject of history, allowing students to work together in small groups and help themselves and their group mates to learn the topics taught by the teacher.

Gagne's Information Processing Theory in teaching and learning history is able to help history teachers apply more effective teaching methods. Gagne's learning theory emphasizes a learning system that starts from the simple (basic level) to the complex. Therefore, teachers need to have higher skills to ensure that students can master the basic skills that need to be learned for new lessons.

Inquiry learning emphasizes activities that center students in the learning process. The purpose of inquiry learning is to develop students' ability to think systematically, logically and critically. The theory of inquiry learning is suitable for application in history subjects. Inquiry-based learning is student-centered. In inquiry learning, students play a major role in exploring evidence and sources to obtain answers to the questions posed, (Mansor, 2022).

Historical Thinking Skills

Historical Thinking Skills are a form of cognitive process. There are five main elements emphasized in Historical Thinking Skills, namely the process of understanding the chronology of events, exploring evidence, making interpretations, creating imagination and rationalizing critically and empathetically to see the era from various perspectives.

In the German education system, historical thinking is discussed as a form of asking historical questions using sources based on a methodological approach, making views about the present based on historical events, synthesizing and organizing historical information (Levesque & Clark, 2018).

In the skill element of understanding chronology, it is related to the sequence of time and historical events. Students will be educated by teachers with the skill of understanding the period of time that refers to the progress of a civilization. This skill helps students answer the four Ws in the 5W 1H principle, namely When, Where, Who and What. Therefore, understanding chronology can help students obtain historical facts when given an event.

Exploring evidence involves the skills of identifying and comparing primary and secondary sources to obtain historical information. These sources can be obtained through oral methods, written methods and archaeological methods. In the process of making an interpretation, students need to make an interpretation of an event by providing comments based on evidence. Students will also be guided to distinguish between historical facts and historical interpretations. The step of making an imagination is an effort that brings together historical facts and requires the skill of imagining something. This skill encourages students to put themselves in the event being studied and allows them to imagine themselves in the event. Imagination skills can be done visually and empathetically.

Historical Thinking Skills can also encourage inquiry-based learning to be implemented among students. There are studies conducted by researchers that prove that inquiry-based learning has a positive effect on students' cognitive, psychomotor and affective abilities, (Nurul, 2022). Inquiry-based learning is student-centered learning. In addition, inquiry-based learning methods also encourage students to actively participate in the learning process in the classroom. According to the DSKP KSSM History Form 3 (2017), through inquiry skills, teachers can also act as guides to stimulate students to become more confident in history learning activities.

In addition, the aspect of pedagogical skills and knowledge is the most important aspect for a teacher in implementing historical thinking skills among students in schools, (Muhammad, 2021). Mastery of historical thinking skills is a very important element among all history teachers and needs to be implemented in the teaching and learning of history. Therefore, history teachers need to follow current developments, especially in mastering pedagogical skills in teaching history and be prepared for changes in order to meet the needs of national educational development.

History Subject

History is a core subject that must be studied by students in secondary schools in Malaysia. History is a subject that teaches about the development of humans from ancient times to the present day. According to the KSSM History DSKP Form 3 (2017), the goal of history is to create a spirit of unity, a sense of belonging, national awareness and strengthen the feeling of love for the homeland among students. History also aims to form Malaysian citizens who have a sense of identity and values of patriotism towards the country.

Knowledge

According to Anderson (2001), in Bloom's Taxonomy, knowledge includes things related to recalling lessons learned and stored in memory. Knowledge is also information that a person knows. In the field of education, knowledge is about a field and has a certain method that can convey that knowledge.

Skills

In the field of education, skills are often associated with teachers having knowledge and using strategic approaches, teaching techniques based on teaching and learning theories. Teachers need to master teaching skills so that they can implement teaching and learning with better quality and increase students' interest in learning the subject.

Methodology

Study Design

This research uses a quantitative research method in the form of a survey using a questionnaire as the research instrument. The quantitative method was used in this research for the purpose of examining the level of mean scores on the application of historical thinking skills based on the knowledge, skills and attitudes of history teachers in Sarawak.

Population and Sampling

The scope of the research only involves the subject of History in secondary schools, meaning it will involve history teachers from Form 1 to 5. For this study, the target group focused on history teachers teaching in Sarawak only. There were only 50 history teachers randomly selected for the study.

Data Collection Methods

The researcher will use a survey research method, namely a questionnaire, to test the study objectives. The researcher will use an online questionnaire using the Google Form platform. The Google Form link will be shared to be filled out by 50 teachers randomly. The respondents of this study consist of male and female teachers who teach History subjects in secondary schools. The random sampling technique is used to facilitate the research process and save

costs. The instrument in this section consists of three parts, namely Part A, Part B and Part C. Part A contains the demographic characteristics of the respondents to be studied. Parts B and C are questionnaires that aim to study the level of history teachers in schools in terms of knowledge, skills and attitudes in historical thinking skills.

Data Analysis Methods

The data obtained will be analyzed using Statistical Packages for The Social Science (SPSS) software version 29.0 according to the type of data. For questionnaire items, the data will be analyzed according to mean and standardized analysis and determined as high, medium or low.

Based on table 1, to analyze the data, the interpretation of the mean score was divided into 3 parts according to the following provisions.

Table 1:

Interpretation of Mean Scores

MEAN SCORE	MEAN SCORE INTERPRETATION
1.00-2.33	Low
2.34 – 3.66	Medium
3.67-5.00	High

Source: Pallant (2007)

Study Findings

Table 2

Respondent Demographics

ITEM	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Gender		
Male	16	32%
Female	34	68%
Race		
Malay	20	40%
Chinese	12	24%
India	3	6%
Iban	15	30%
Others	0	0%
Options		
History	47	94%
Not History	3	6%
Teaching Experience		
1 to 5 years	3	6 %
6 to 10 years	18	36%
11 to 15 years	26	52%
16 to 20 years	3	6%
21 years and above	0	0%

Based on table 2, there were 50 respondents involved in the study that was conducted. A total of 34 respondents consisted of female teachers while 16 respondents were male teachers. Respondents consisted of Malays, Chinese, Indians, Ibans and others. The Malays consisted of 40% while the Chinese were 24%. There were 15 respondents who were Ibans and only 3 respondents who were Indians. Next, most of the respondents were History education options, which were 47 people, while only 3 people were not history education options. In terms of teaching experience at school, respondents who had 11 to 15 years of teaching experience were the highest, which was 26 people. There were 18 respondents who had 6 to 10 years of teaching experience. In addition, there were 3 respondents who had 1 to 5 years of teaching experience and also 3 respondents with 16 to 20 years of teaching experience.

Table 3

Level of Knowledge of History Teachers in Applying Historical Thinking Skills

ITEM	MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION	INTERPRETATION
1. I can use inquiry skills confidently.	3.18	0.48	Medium
2. I can state the chronology of historical events that have occurred.	3.4	0.6	Medium
3. I know how to use appropriate historical sources to explore evidence.	3.42	0.62	Medium
4. I have knowledge in using imagination methods for the teaching and learning process of History.	3.18	0.52	Medium
5. I have the knowledge to apply rationalization skills in the teaching and learning of History.	3.12	0.56	Medium
6. I often use HTS elements in History subjects.	2.92	0.67	Medium
7. Knowledge of inquiry methods increased my interest in using them in History subjects.	3.24	0.43	Medium
8. I can design interesting History learning activities by applying HTS elements.	3.34	0.59	Medium
9. I always look for opportunities to learn how to apply HTS elements to improve my knowledge.	3.32	0.65	Medium
10. I can create a sequence of importance for the content of History subjects using chronological skills.	3.38	0.60	Medium

Based on table 3, there are 10 items related to history teachers' knowledge in applying historical thinking skills in history subjects in secondary schools. The teacher's knowledge aspect item with the highest mean score is 'I know how to use appropriate historical sources to explore evidence' (mean=3.42; s.d = 0.62). Next, the item I can state the chronology of historical events that have occurred. (mean=3.4; s.d = 0.6). The knowledge-related item with the lowest mean score is 'I often use HTS elements in the History subject' (mean=2.92 s.d = 0.67). Based on table 3, the level of teachers' knowledge in applying historical thinking skills is medium.

Table 4

Level of History Teachers' Skills in Applying Historical Thinking Skills

ITEM	MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION	INTERPRETATION
1. I am skilled at using chronological elements to explain the dates of historical events that have occurred.	3.26	0.56	Medium
2. I was able to create an interesting and active History learning environment among students while using the skills of exploring evidence and creating imagination.	3.42	0.54	Medium
3. I can provide more interesting History teaching content by applying HTS elements.	3.2	0.45	Medium
4. I am skilled at applying rationalization when explaining historical events to students.	3.0	0.67	Medium
5. I can choose more interesting teaching and learning activities by applying elements of exploring evidence and using imagination.	3.4	0.57	Medium
6. I am skilled at making interpretations based on exploring evidence.	3.34	0.69	Medium
7. I have skill in fostering a constructivist attitude among students through activities exploring evidence based on the History topics they are studying.	3.5	0.54	Medium
8. I can help students memorize historical facts more effectively through understanding chronology.	3.22	0.68	Medium
9. I can use HTS in teaching other subjects.	2.28	0.73	Medium
10. I can implement activities and provide exercises that can strengthen students' understanding after implementing chronological teaching and exploring evidence.	3.56	0.58	Medium

Based on Table 4, there are 10 items related to the skills of history teachers in implementing historical thinking skills in history subjects in secondary schools were given to respondents. The teacher skill aspect item with the highest mean score is 'I can implement activities and provide exercises that can strengthen students' understanding after implementing chronological teaching and exploring evidence' (mean = 3.56; s.d = 0.58). The second highest skill item is 'I am skilled in fostering a constructivist attitude among students through activities exploring evidence based on the History topic studied' (mean = 3.5; s.d = 0.54). History teachers need to foster a constructivist attitude among students when implementing activities exploring evidence through learning outside the classroom. In addition, the item in terms of history teacher skills with the lowest mean score is 'I can use HTS in teaching other subjects' (mean = 2.28; sd = 0.73).

Table 5

Level of History Teachers' Attitudes in Applying Historical Thinking Skills

ITEM	MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION	INTERPRETATION
1. I am interested in learning how to use evidence exploration skills and inquiry methods in History subjects.	3.56	0.50	Medium
2. I feel that using evidence exploration skills and inquiry methods in planning teaching and learning activities requires a lot of time.	3.6	0.53	Medium
3. I am diligent in applying historical thinking skills in history subjects.	3	0.67	Medium
4. I hope there is an opportunity to take a course on methods of applying historical thinking skills in history subjects.	3.56	0.50	Medium
5. I always apply the skill of creating imagination by involving students in becoming certain characters in the History topics they are studying.	3.5	0.51	Medium
6. I feel that the skills of understanding chronology and exploring evidence can increase students' interest in the subject of History.	3.62	0.49	Medium
7. I am ready to face new challenges related to the use of HTS elements in the History subject.	3.32	0.68	Medium
8. I always collaborate with other History teachers in using the inquiry method.	3.02	0.59	Medium
9. My colleagues always hold knowledge sharing sessions on methods of using KPS elements to increase students' interest in the subject of History.	2.9	0.68	Medium
10. I feel that courses related to inquiry methods can help History teachers' teaching methods.	3.92	0.34	High

Based on Table 5, there are 10 items related to the attitude of history teachers in implementing historical thinking skills in history subjects in secondary schools were given to respondents. The teacher attitude item with the highest mean score is 'I feel that courses related to inquiry methods can help history teachers' teaching methods' (mean=3.92; s.d = 0.34). The item is I feel that the skills of understanding chronology and exploring evidence can increase students' interest in the subject of History. (mean=3.62, s. d=0.49). There are two items with the same mean score, namely the item I am interested in learning how to use evidence exploration skills and inquiry methods in History subjects (mean=3.56; s. d=0.50) and I hope there is an opportunity to take a course related to methods of applying historical thinking skills in history subjects. (mean= 3.56, s.d = 0.50). However, the lowest item was my colleagues always hold knowledge sharing sessions on methods of using HTS elements to increase students' interest in the subject of History (mean= 2.9; s. d=0.34).

Discussion

The findings of the research show that the level of knowledge, skills and attitudes of history teachers in implementing Historical Thinking Skills is at a medium level. This moderate level needs to be further improved to ensure the effectiveness of implementing historical thinking skills in history subjects in secondary schools.

In terms of the level of knowledge of teachers in applying historical thinking skills in history subjects, it should be improved. Most of the respondents were history teachers with 11 to 15 years of teaching experience. The teacher should have in-depth knowledge regarding methods of applying Historical Thinking Skills through fun activities such as using historical sources to explore evidence. Historical sources consist of primary and secondary sources. Learning activities outside the classroom can be carried out by teachers through exploring historical evidence through primary sources such as monuments, historical places. History teachers also need to use appropriate historical sources in order to increase students' interest in learning history. Therefore, the Ministry of Education Malaysia through the Teacher Education Institute and State Education Departments need to reveal methods of applying Historical Thinking Skills to history teachers so that they have confidence in using historical thinking skills.

Next, the level of skills of history teachers in applying historical thinking skills also needs to be improved. History teachers do not have the skills to apply historical thinking skills in other subjects such as morale, geography. Most history teachers think that historical thinking skills are only suitable for application in history subjects. This is because these elements such as chronology are more suitable for implementation through subject-related activities. In terms of skills, most respondents have the skills in exposing the elements of historical thinking skills to students through activities outside the classroom or preparing practice questions. The practice questions need to be related to HOTS or chronological questions. According to Muhammad Ridzuan (2021), historical thinking skills should be understood and appreciated by history teachers to enable them to apply these skills in teaching and learning activities in the classroom. Therefore, history teachers must have solid skills and discuss with the head of the History committee together with other history teachers about the skills needed to apply historical thinking skills.

In addition, the level of attitude of history teachers in applying historical thinking skills should also be improved. According to Suhaida (2022), the teacher's attitude is a factor that contributes greatly to teachers' willingness to implement historical thinking skills in teaching. Most respondents stated that courses related to inquiry methods can help with the teaching of history. The Ministry of Education Malaysia and State Education Department also need to organize workshops or courses related to inquiry methods in teaching history subjects. These courses are important so that history teachers in secondary schools are exposed to knowledge of inquiry methods as well as activities related to inquiry. These activities will follow the grade level in secondary schools. Courses related to historical thinking skills are also very important so that history teachers can apply these skills in schools.

Time constraints or lack of knowledge in using historical thinking skills elements cause history teachers to hold fewer sharing sessions. Most teachers are still more comfortable with traditional teaching methods. According to Hanita (2024), history subjects are considered

boring by students due to teacher-centered teaching methods with traditional methods. The frequency of respondents implementing historical thinking skills is also quite low due to time constraints to complete many syllabuses. History teachers consider that implementing HTS requires planning and cannot necessarily help weak students answer tests. Therefore, the education department needs to hold courses and emphasize the use of HTS in history subjects. The head of the school history department also needs to arrange time to hold a sharing session on HTS elements with history teachers.

The frequency of colleagues holding knowledge sharing sessions on methods of using HTS elements to increase students' interest in history subjects is at the lowest level. This problem is often associated with the time constraints faced by history teachers in secondary schools. Most history teachers also do not implement HTS in class due to time constraints in completing many syllabuses. Therefore, the head of the history department needs to discuss with the school to invite HTS experts to hold workshops so that history teachers are exposed to how to implement HTS more effectively.

The Educational Implication

The research carried out has implications for secondary school students in studying history. History is a core subject that is mandatory to pass at the SPM level. According to DSKP Form 3, KPM History 2017, through historical thinking skills, students will be taught to understand the characteristics of history so that they can improve their thinking more critically and analytically. The application of HTS can help students improve academic achievement and master how to answer structured questions and essays better. Historical Thinking Skills can also be applied through activities such as watching movies. According to Maarof (2024), the results of the study found that more than 70% of the students in the study sample liked to watch movies with historical elements. In the study, HTS elements such as creative and innovative thinking skills can be applied among students.

Furthermore, the research also has implications for history teachers. This is because history teachers play an important role in implementing historical thinking skills in the classroom during history subjects. History teachers need to be proficient in the elements of historical thinking skills so that they can implement them effectively in the classroom. History teachers need to guide students through appropriate activities when implementing HTS. According to Jordan (2019), history teachers need to be alert to the reality when dealing with students' needs to have historical thinking skills.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the research overall shows that the level of knowledge, skills and attitudes of historical thinking skills among secondary school history teachers in Sarawak is at a moderate level. This research also states that more in-depth exposure should be increased among history teachers to implement historical thinking skills in the teaching and learning process. History teachers need to realize the benefits and importance of implementing historical thinking skills in history subjects. Historical thinking skills methods can increase student engagement and foster interest in learning history. This research has its own limitations. Therefore, more comprehensive research related to historical thinking skills should be carried out so that the elements of historical thinking skills can be applied among students in secondary schools.

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