

Aligning or Vanishing: A Case Study of History as a Subject at SMKN 9 Surakarta

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the implementation of history learning in secondary vocational schools under *Kurikulum Merdeka*, Indonesia's national curriculum. A qualitative case study approach was employed to investigate the extent to which history as a school subject is aligned with vocational competencies at SMKN 9 Surakarta. The findings indicate that history teachers have made efforts to align history instruction with vocational competencies. This alignment is reflected in lesson planning, the selection of appropriate learning models and instructional activities, and project-based assessment practices. The study highlights the integration of vocational competencies into history learning through a systematic process encompassing planning, implementation, and evaluation, in which teachers' creativity and initiative play a central role. The findings suggest that history learning and vocational competencies can be integrated through various instructional approaches. The study recommends enriching historical content that is relevant to students' vocational fields and emphasizing the practical application of history as a third-order concept in history learning. These aspects should be explicitly incorporated into the history curriculum for secondary vocational schools.

KEYWORDS

history learning; secondary vocational school; vocational education; practicality of history; school subject

Introduction

Public concern about the future of History as a subject in secondary vocational education started to emerge after the leak of the draft of the simplified national curriculum in August 2020. The draft removed History as a mandatory subject and integrated the subject into social science. The draft was then criticized by History teachers and academics, emphasizing the importance of learning history to strengthen national integration and nation-building. The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education responded to the situation by clarifying that the draft was not official and by committing to keep History as an independent subject in secondary schools. This commitment was proven by including History as a single subject in the structure of *Kurikulum Merdeka* (Nua, 2022).

This issue, however, highlights the uncertain future of History as a subject in secondary vocational schools. Teaching and learning History in this context is challenging. Despite these challenges, teaching History as a subject plays an important role in constructing historical understanding, self-identity, and nationalism (Gautschi & Buff, 2022; VanSledright, 2008). Arguably, the subject may be irrelevant to the objectives of secondary vocational schools, which require more technical skills rather than common academic subjects (Abidin, 2020; Tian

& Zhao, 2023). This gap raises a critical question regarding whether History should be taught independently or integrated into other subjects in secondary vocational schools.

The future of the History in secondary vocational schools can be projected from the perspectives of policymakers, academics as the producers of knowledge and scientific concepts, and History teachers as facilitators in the classroom. From the policymaker's perspective, History is a powerful tool to govern the citizens. Curriculum and History textbooks produce official narratives representing the ideology of the rulers (McGregor, 2007; Purwanta, 2018; Suwignyo, 2014). The policymaker also shapes the politics of education in higher education by mainstreaming the official narrative, such as the policy of *Pendidikan Sejarah Perjuangan Bangsa* (PSPB) or Education in the History of the National Struggle (Purwanta & Novianto, 2022). These policies have tremendously impacted the binary logical thinking of teachers and students (Abidin, 2017). From this point of view, the existence of History in secondary vocational schools as well as in higher education, even in history education in general, depends on the interest and willingness of the ruler.

Academics, as producers of scientific concepts and knowledge, contribute to the presence of History in secondary vocational schools. Universities act as reservoirs of knowledge, where epistemological thinking is fostered and developed. They also possess discursive power to produce scientific discourse (Bevir, 1999; Rajan, 2007). Based on this framework, the work of academics affects the existence of History as a subject in secondary vocational schools. The impact of academics is reflected in the implementation of practical aspects of History in *Kurikulum Merdeka*. The concept is rooted in Michael Oakshott (1999) and Hayden White (2014) thoughts as a practical framework for doing history in daily life. In the future, the existence of History in secondary vocational school is inseparable from academics' work to keep it relevant through the production of historical knowledge and concepts.

Along with the policymakers and academics, History teachers are key actors in determining the presence of History in secondary vocational schools. The implementation of history learning at the school level and the role of History teachers have received more attention in academic research. Previous studies have focused their analysis on various aspects of history teaching and learning in the classroom, such as the implementation of history learning in secondary vocational schools (Nurhasanah et al., 2023; Widayati & Witasari, 2023); classroom action research (Ahdar & Nurdiansyah, 2023; Zarmin, 2022); experimental research (Syamsuriyanti & Aditya, 2023); and the developmental process of learning media (Cahyani & Jati, 2023; Wibowo & Renando, 2022). However, the role of teachers in the calibration of History as a subject and vocational skills in secondary vocational schools has not yet been thoroughly examined. The process of calibration means not only contextualizing, but also aligning History with the objective of vocational schools.

Based on aforementioned backgrounds, this research aims to examine the efforts of History teachers in aligning History with the distinctive characteristics of secondary vocational schools under *Kurikulum Merdeka*. The research questions are: (1) To what extent do History teachers in secondary vocational schools integrate and calibrate History through planning, implementation, and assessment of the learning process? (2) If the subject can be calibrated, what specific abilities are encompassed within historical practicality as a third-order concept in History at secondary vocational schools?

To answer the question, a study in Secondary Vocational School (SMKN) 9 Surakarta was conducted to portray the efforts of History teachers to integrate and calibrate History with vocational skills. The school was selected as the research site based on the fact that History has been calibrated with one of the majors, Information Technology and Art and Creative Economy. Thus, the calibration serves as an example of how teachers align History within the context of secondary vocational schools.

Literature Review

Previous studies have shown the important role of History teachers' creativity in managing history learning in specific contexts. As mentioned earlier, teachers' ability to contextualize or align the objectives of History as a subject with vocational education may be influenced by their creativity. In the educational studies, creativity has been recognized as one of the determinants

of pedagogical process (Patston et al., 2021). Creativity can be defined as an acquired behavior, a complex set of individual qualities, the very act of generating new ideas, a meaningful human activity, a type of interaction between individual and society, a vector of solutions, and an opposition to linearity (Muñoz-Salinas et al., 2025).

Four major themes regarding creativity have been identified: the conceptualization of creativity, teachers' beliefs about creativity, studies on creative learning environments, and methods for assessing creativity (Hernández-Torrano & Ibrayeva, 2020). From a general perspective, these themes can be divided into two domains: creative teaching, which emphasizes teachers' ability to teach creatively and teaching to develop creativity, which focuses on the learning process that fosters creativity (Muñoz-Salinas et al., 2025). In the first domain, creativity is conceptualized as teachers' abilities, personal traits, and attributes that influence the creative process (Vuichard et al., 2023). In the context of history teaching, teacher creativity has also been discussed as part of 21st-century history education.

Cooper (2013) stated that creativity consists of teachers' psychological and neuroscientific processes. Creativity is an integral part of historical inquiry which is related to the multiperspectivity and uncertainty of history in the classroom that can be applied to social science subjects (Cooper, 2013; Watson & Hill, 2025). To be creative, History teachers must be imaginative, self-reflective, pedagogically aware, and innovative risk-takers. It can be noted that creativity reflects personal development and pedagogical innovation (Matthews-Jones, 2025).

Recent studies have shown that teachers' understanding and beliefs are fundamental for their ability to become creative teachers and for their implementation in the classroom (Anderson et al., 2022). History teachers can present different perspectives based on their epistemic beliefs and prior knowledge (Elmersjö & Zanazanian, 2022; Joebagio et al., 2019). They can also offer an alternative narrative and strategy to teach history based on their critical thinking on controversial topics (Abidin, 2022; Elmersjö & Zanazanian, 2022). Epistemic beliefs refer to History teachers' beliefs about the nature of history and have implications for the teaching and learning process, including copier, borrower, and criterialist stances (Maggioni et al., 2009).

Based on these sources, the difference in epistemic beliefs, prior knowledge, and critical thinking of History teachers creates a space for deconstructing history. To a certain degree, History teachers can improvise teaching history, whether strictly following curriculum standards or adjusting based on local contexts and specific objectives. This becomes very critical for the future of History as a subject in secondary vocational schools. As previously explained by Abidin (2020) and Elmersjö and Zanazanian (2022), the calibration can serve as a foundation for alternative strategies or narrative that represents teachers' creativity and critical thinking depending on their epistemic beliefs and perspectives on the curriculum. As pointed out previously by Maggioni et al. (2009), teachers may be transferring concepts endorsed in the curriculum into classroom practice or borrowing other concepts that are relevant to the curriculum for the classroom.

Departing from previous research, this research focuses on examining the calibration of History as a subject and vocational schools by emphasizing the role of History teachers and their creative process. As mentioned earlier, History teachers can offer an alternative and creative design of learning in the classroom that is crucially important in calibrating History and vocational objectives. The research regarding the calibration of History as a subject in secondary vocational education becomes important for providing empirical evidence of the roles and creativity of History teachers in making history relevant for vocational education. In this research, calibration means aligning History as a subject to reach the objectives of vocational schools. Therefore, the calibration process covers the process of integrating and contextualizing History as a subject.

Research Methods

The research was conducted at SMKN 9 Surakarta, Banjarsari, Surakarta, from December 2022 to September 2023. The school offers two major programs: the Information and Technology Major and the Art and Creative Economy Major. The school has implemented the *Kurikulum Merdeka*. The *Kurikulum Operasional Satuan Pendidikan* (the Educational Unit Operational Curriculum) document of SMKN 9 Surakarta states that the teaching factory is a general learning approach in

collaboration with industry. Based on those documents, History teachers were allowed to design history curriculum along with the two major programs.

Qualitative research based on a case study approach (Yin, 2009) was conducted focusing on the implementation of History as a subject in the Information and Technology Major. This research focused on how History teachers calibrate History with the objective of vocational school. The data of the research was qualitative data from History teachers, curriculum documents, and field observation. The research subjects were two History teachers at SMKN 9 Surakarta, who played an important role in determining the calibration of History as a subject with vocational school objectives.

The first stage of data collection involved document analysis, including the Educational Unit Operational Curriculum and Learning Modules, to examine teachers' learning preparation. Then, in-depth interviews were conducted with two History teachers selected through purposive sampling. The informants had experience in calibrating History as a subject and vocational skills. The questions were related to how teachers prepare history lessons and what strategies they used to calibrate history with vocational skills. The results of the interviews were then transcribed and coded. Furthermore, class observations were conducted in two classrooms to observe the practice of calibration, particularly in the learning process and learning assessment.

Data validation was conducted through triangulation of document analysis, in-depth interviews, and classroom observations. The data analysis was then conducted based on Miles and Huberman (1994). The data focused on aspects relevant to the contextualization of History as a subject within vocational skills. The selected data were presented narratively to find the pattern and relationship of how teachers integrate and contextualize History as a subject and vocational skills. The data were then verified and interpreted based on identified patterns and relationships to provide a holistic understanding of teachers' integration and the contextualization of History as a subject.

Research Findings

The findings of the research consist of three sections: the analysis of learning preparation, the learning process, and students' tasks as part of learning assessment. Based on the data of interviews and teachers' learning plans, the learning preparation started with analyzing the *Kurikulum Operasional Satuan Pendidikan* (the Educational Unit Operational Curriculum) and *Capaian Pembelajaran* (Learning Outcomes), formulating *Tujuan Pembelajaran* (Learning Objectives), systematizing *Alur Tujuan Pembelajaran* (Flows of Learning Objectives), and designing *Modul Ajar* (Learning Module). Moreover, History teachers stated that they had already mastered the theoretical knowledge required for preparing lessons based on the *Kurikulum Merdeka*.

According to the interview, in preparing for the learning process, school-level forum discussion was conducted by History teachers to analyze the Educational Unit Operational Curriculum, the Learning Outcomes and then formulate the Learning Objectives. Based on the Educational Unit Operational Curriculum document, the proportion of normative to productive subjects was 30% and 70%, respectively. History was taught once every two weeks, with a four-hour time allocation. History teachers stated that the block system allowed students more time to complete long-term historical projects, such as creating video documentaries or digital posters. Moreover, the strategies employed by History teachers in history class aligns with the block system implemented at the school.

The Learning Flow document showed that the formulated Learning Objectives consist of two compulsory dimensions: content and skills. There were four objectives stated in the document: (1) students understand the concept and definition of History as a subject according to the expert; (2) students understand the elements or scope of History as a subject, including humans as subjects and objects, space and time across local, national, and global contexts, as well as the temporal dimension of past, present, and future; (3) students understand the concept of change, continuity, and repetition; and (4) students understand the essence of history as an event and as a narrative.

Teachers stated that the Learning Objectives were organized chronologically, starting with introductory historical materials and progressing to the understanding of historical primary

sources. They added that, after arranging the Learning Objective, they formulate Learning Modules in accordance with the framework of *Kurikulum Merdeka*, including its elements and principles. The Learning Modules consist of the required elements of the *Kurikulum Merdeka*, such as Learning Outcome, Learning Objective, Learning Stages, and Assessment. The module was formulated based on the principles of student-center approach by emphasizing students' characters and majors.

The Learning Modules identified project-based learning and problem-based learning as proposed learning models, with discovery learning integrated as a supporting approach. As pointed out by History teachers in the interviews, the use of project-based learning based on discovery learning is part of their strategy to calibrate history into vocational skills. This alignment was further demonstrated through student projects, such as creating infographics, mind maps, digital posters, and videos, leveraging their existing skills in drawing or design. The aim of this approach is to encourage students to apply their vocational skills to complete assigned tasks effectively in the learning process.

Moreover, the Learning Modules also outlined three planned assessments, diagnostic, formative, and summative. History teachers explained that the diagnostic assessment was conducted at the beginning of the learning process to provide an early understanding of students' sociocultural backgrounds and prior knowledge. Teachers added that the second type of assessment was formative, occurring during the learning process in the form of questions or pre-tests to assess students' knowledge of the learning materials. At the end of the learning process, teachers conducted summative assessments, typically using multiple-choice questions.

The aim of the assessments is to measure students' achievement levels and is reflected in their final scores. According to the teachers, essays or multiple-choice questions were often preferred in summative assessments due to their practicality. The summative assessment evaluated two dimensions: knowledge (cognitive) and skills (affective and psychomotor).

The findings of classroom observations showed that the learning process aligned with the Learning Module, particularly the stages outlined in the syntax of the learning model. Teachers started the lesson by quizzing students on previous material. Then, they introduced a new topic and stated the learning objectives. During the introduction, teachers also provided a brief overview of the planned learning activities and the students' projects.

Notably, there were differences in projects assigned to students majoring in Information and Technology. For the students who enrolled in the Art and Creative Economy Major, the projects involved combining paper-based drawing with digital coloring techniques. Meanwhile, for students in the Information and Technology major, the projects focused on visualization and illustration using digital coloring techniques.

Based on the observations, the learning activity was started by discussing the project. In this stage of learning, students and teachers decided on the type of project to be conducted by students. After deciding on the project, the teacher delivered the learning materials through lectures, which concluded with a question-and-answer session. The next stage of learning involved group activities where students collaborate to complete their projects. Students were allowed to use various relevant resources, including internet sources, textbooks, and scientific books. Students were then assigned tasks within their group. For instance, when creating an infographic, one student acted as the group leader, while others were responsible for gathering data, creating illustrations, designing graphics, and finalizing the infographic.

From classroom observation, most students were proficient in using digital applications, such as ibis Paint and Canva, to support their projects. The students applied drawing and design skills throughout the process. First, students collected information from relevant resources. Next, the students began sketching a draft design of the sea trade, the topic that they were working on. The drafts of design were then scanned and refined using digital applications such as ibis Paint. Finally, the sea trade infographic was uploaded to Canva, where students added text and visual elements and finalized the design. Based on these activities, students effectively applied their foundational skills to complete the task of drawing a sea trade map.

After completing their tasks, students in groups presented their work in front of the class. The observations show that students completed their projects with high-quality outcomes that are aligned with their skills and interests. During the presentation, a question-and-answer session

was conducted, in which the teacher provided additional insights. Students actively engaged in the learning process through peer discussions and interactions with the teacher. At the end of the lesson, both teachers and students collaboratively evaluated the learning process and reflected on the historical values explored.

As it was portrayed during classroom observation, the assessment of learning was conducted along with the stages of project-based learning. Formative assessments, as part of monitoring and evaluation of the project, were conducted when students were working on their projects. Based on the observations, teachers conducted formative assessment by using the taking-note technique in the classroom by reporting and responding to specific events when students were working on their projects or when presenting their project in front of the class. The formative assessment was typically accompanied by feedback intended to improve the quality of the project, for instance through teachers' revisions of the historical content in the designed posters. Summative assessment was conducted at the end of the learning process. The teachers stated that they typically used student portfolios as a form of summative assessment.

Teachers categorized the outcomes of these projects as assessments of skills. Thus, two aspects were evaluated: historical content and the artistic/visual design of the learning outcomes. Both aspects contribute to the student's portfolio scores, which are assessed at the end of the learning process. The teachers added that the students' portfolios allowed teachers to assess students' skills and knowledge holistically. Unfortunately, the researcher was unable to observe diagnostic assessment in practice during classroom observations. In the interviews, the teachers explained that diagnostic assessment was conducted at the beginning of the semester as part of school-level assessment. The diagnostic assessment included information on students' learning style and students' social background. The diagnostic assessment data were then used as input to formulate the Educational Unit Operational Curriculum.

Based on the above findings, it can be concluded that History teachers had calibrated History with vocational skills. The history education at SMKN 9 Surakarta is designed in accordance with the *Kurikulum Merdeka*. This process allowed History teachers to align the objectives of History as a subject with the developed specific skills in the framework of vocational schools. The calibration of History as a subject involved selecting appropriate learning models and evaluation methods. In the learning process, the calibration appeared in the selection of appropriate learning models and student projects.

The integration of history and vocational skills was reflected in the selection of learning models and assessments. Teachers designed assessments based on students' vocational majors, taking into account their vocational competencies. As previously mentioned, students were required to complete projects that utilized their vocational skills.

Discussion

The research findings highlight the efforts of History teachers in aligning History with vocational competencies. This alignment is demonstrated through the formulation of learning plans, the adoption of appropriate learning models that support students' historical knowledge and vocational skills, and the assignment of tasks aligned with students' majors. These findings corroborate previous studies (Nurhasanah et al., 2023; Widayati & Witasari, 2023), which emphasize various efforts to implement History in secondary vocational education. To some extent, the findings highlight the role of History teachers in bridging History as a subject and vocational competencies by formulating learning plans, integrating history-based vocational competencies into history learning, and conducting portfolio-based assessments. The implementation of project-based learning and portfolio-based assessments emerge as a key strategy for integrating historical content with vocational skills, particularly in the context of secondary vocational schools. Overall, these findings provide compelling evidence of how History as a subject is integrated into vocational education through processes of alignment and integration.

The decision of History teachers to implement project-based learning and portfolio-based assessment in the classroom can be seen as the outcome of a creative process (Muñoz-Salinas et al., 2025). Considering the results of teacher-group discussions during the planning stage, teachers were able to calibrate the objectives of History as a subject and vocational skills. This

reflects their ability to identify learning-related challenges and critically interpret curriculum documents, which are essential attributes of the teachers' creative process (Vuichard et al., 2023). By using project-based learning that incorporated historical content and visual design skills, teachers demonstrated pedagogical innovation. The learning outcomes may not be reached if the teachers were not able to calibrate historical content and vocational skills appropriately. Therefore, the teachers have also demonstrated their individual ability as innovative risk-takers as part of their creative process (Matthews-Jones, 2025; Hernández-Torrano & Ibrayeva, 2020).

Teachers' role and ability to bridge history and vocational skills also reflect their critical thinking ability, which constitutes an essential component of their creative thinking in interpreting curriculum documents and school contexts. This ability relates to teachers' perspectives on history teaching (Elmersjö & Zanazanian, 2022; Joebagio et al., 2019) that encourages teachers to develop an alternative strategy to contextualize history teaching (Abidin, 2022; Elmersjö & Zanazanian, 2022). From the perspective of Maggioni et al. (2009), the teachers in this study tend to adopt copier and borrower positions when they incorporate relevant vocational skills and activities into history classes within the framework of project-based or problem-based learning with portfolio-based assessment. This alternative model becomes very critical for the implementation of History as a subject in secondary vocational schools. Therefore, an integrated model combining historical content with vocational skills is necessary.

According to the research findings, History teachers tend to position History as the core of the learning process, while vocational skills are primarily addressed in assessments and learning outcomes. This current practice could be expanded into a deeper integration of history and vocational skills. As Abidin (2020) suggests, History teachers should be bold in tailoring historical content to the specific vocational majors offered in these schools. Learning objectives can be designed to align with vocational majors and learning outcomes can be structured into two dimensions of knowledge: national history and thematic history content. These dimensions require the enrichment of learning material in which national history can be expanded through thematic approaches, such as the history of fine arts, history of automobiles, history of technology and information, history of industry, history of fashion or other specific themes related to vocational education.

Such thematic approaches make History more relevant to the needs of students in vocational schools by providing intersectionality between History and vocational subjects. According to Lienau et al. (2025), intersectionality can provide an opportunity for students to have an analytical tool to learn interdisciplinary subjects. In this research, intersectionality enables students to learn history and vocational skills simultaneously by thinking historically and acting vocationally in the classroom.

Alongside the enrichment of historical content, the practicality of history in secondary vocational school should be emphasized as a third-order concept in history education. The conceptual hierarchy in history learning is recognized in the Western and German-speaking epistemic communities as the categorization of the level of students' cognitive thinking in history. The first-order concept refers to students' historical knowledge about historical events, including figures, time, and place, that becomes the basis to learn history at a more advanced level. The second-order concept refers to complex thinking about history by using historical thinking, historical reasoning, or historical literacy. At this level, students critically examine historical knowledge at a conceptual level. The second-order concept provides an opportunity for students to think critically to reconstruct or deconstruct history. The third-order concept refers to meta-analysis of history that leads to the application of history to contemporary contexts (Hasberg, 2021).

As Alven (2021) and Kitson (2021) argue, the third-order concept is ontological, serving as powerful knowledge that helps students discover new ways to understand the modern world, engage in societal discourse, and critically evaluate knowledge claims. The practicality of history extends beyond traditional domains such as the military, politics, and diplomacy into the history of everyday life. In comparison with the revised Bloom's Taxonomy (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001), which is mostly acknowledged by Indonesian teachers, the first-order concept can be equal to factual knowledge. The second-order concept can be equal to conceptual and procedural knowledge. The third-order concept can be associated with metacognitive knowledge.

If the findings of the research show that history and vocational skills can be integrated in the class, then what role can History play in secondary vocational school? Can History function only as a normative subject, or can it also serve a practical function? Drawing on Child's (1954) perspective, History can provide guiding principles for action. While History does not directly enhance students' technical skills or knowledge, it offers essential principles derived from the historical trajectories of specific fields.

Perry (1967) further distinguishes between "objective history," which focuses on pure historical facts, and "practical history," which applies those facts to contemporary contexts. For instance, in the history of fashion, students can explore historical fashion trends to gain insights into potential future trends, providing inspiration and fostering a temporal vision. These historical trajectories serve as a repertoire of reference that helps students navigate contemporary challenges and make informed decisions.

This framework raises an important question regarding the specific abilities encompassed within historical practicality as a third-order concept. As mentioned earlier, the first-order concept addresses how students engage with historical narratives to answer fundamental questions such as who, what, when, where, why, and how (5W+1H). The second-order concept pertains to the methods historians use to interpret, structure, and assign meaning to the past, encompassing elements such as historical evidence and significance. The third-order concept, however, involves a deeper mental process—self-reflection on the past combined with emotions and values that culminate in powerful knowledge. Rather than existing independently of the first- and second-order concepts, the third-order concept functions as an integrative framework that integrates these two layers of historical understanding (Hasberg, 2021; Christensen, 2013). The findings suggest that the practicality of history as a third-order concept can be demonstrated in classroom practice.

The third-order concept can be implemented in the classroom through well-designed work orders for students. Departing from Hasberg's (2021) ideas, work orders function as a bridge that brings historical narratives to life and fosters meaningful interactions between students and learning materials. In the context of historical practicality, work orders can bridge historical narratives and second-order concepts through clear and specific instructions. These instructions should integrate the concept of historical practicality while enriching historical narratives and applying second-order concepts in history learning. As suggested by Hasberg (2021), the purpose of a work order is to address essential questions by guiding students to transfer historical findings into real-life contexts and encouraging them to incorporate historical perspectives in solving contemporary problems. These principles can be translated into student worksheets or classroom tasks, enabling a hands-on application of historical learning.

In the context of history education in secondary vocational schools, it is crucial to expand historical content to include specific histories tailored to the students' vocational majors. Furthermore, second-order historical thinking should be emphasized to support the integration of History as a subject with vocational skills. Practically, this framework requires teachers in secondary vocational schools to incorporate thematic histories relevant to vocational majors into their learning objectives and to develop learning materials aligned with these specific themes. By doing so, the practicality of history as a third-order concept can enhance students' understanding and skills. If these requirements are met, the future of History as a subject in secondary vocational schools can be sustained, ensuring its continued relevance and value in vocational education.

Based on the above discussion, it can be highlighted that teachers' ability to align History with vocational skills in the classroom plays an essential role to ensure the implementation of History in secondary vocational schools. The intersectionality between History and vocational skills provides teachers with opportunities to facilitate history learning in which students learn and think historically while acting vocationally. This can be implemented through appropriate learning models such as project-based learning or problem-based learning, as well as through the enrichment of historical content especially national and thematic histories aligned with students' vocational majors. In addition, teachers' capacity should be strengthened through pedagogical empowerment that recognizes the importance of the third-order concept in history learning at secondary vocational schools. The third-order concept relates to students' ability to apply historical knowledge to their everyday lives, including their vocational skills.

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

The research highlights the efforts of History teachers at SMKN 9 Surakarta to align History with the demands of vocational skills under *Kurikulum Merdeka*. The teachers have applied creative historical learning methods to integrate History into vocational education in the form of project-based learning with adaptive learning assessments based on the specific vocational skills. Their efforts reflect a grassroots initiative to preserve the relevance of History within vocational education.

This research also highlights the importance of History in vocational education, as evidenced by teachers' calibration efforts. Beyond calibration practices, the research introduces an advanced framework for integrating History into vocational education, emphasizing the enrichment of historical narratives and the practical application of History as a third-order concept. The findings suggest that the future of History in secondary vocational schools remains relevant, thus reducing practical justification for regrouping or relegating the subject.

Based on the research findings, it is recommended that the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education strengthen the role of History in secondary vocational schools. This can be achieved through an appropriate curriculum that supports teachers' creativity and provides freedom to adapt and integrate History with vocational education. Teachers' creativity has been essential in the effective implementation of History in secondary vocational schools.

While the *Kurikulum Merdeka* grants teachers' greater independence, the curriculum should more explicitly emphasize creativity, particularly in essential learning materials and lesson planning. The recognition of teachers' independence and creativity in preparing, implementing, and assessing learning is crucial. Without a strong curricular foundation, it is challenging for teachers to align History with vocational skills. Additionally, History teachers are encouraged to maximize the curricular flexibility and creativity provided under *Kurikulum Merdeka*. They should take a proactive role in integrating History with vocational skills in ways that are practically reflected in both learning activities and students' work. These recommendations provide a solid foundation for sustaining the future of History in secondary vocational schools in Indonesia.

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