



Effects of Project-Based Learning with Project Guide E-book on Critical Thinking and Metacognitive Skills: A Case from Undergraduate Biology Students in Genetic 1 Course

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Abstract

Critical thinking skills bears a fundamental role in students' thinking process and achievement. Meanwhile, the cornerstone of critical thinking is a metacognitive activity that has a substantial function in measuring and evaluating the obtained information, as well as learning from the experience. This study aims to examine students' critical thinking and metacognitive skills before and after they participate in the PBL classroom using a project guide e-book for the genetic one course. The student's critical thinking skills were assessed using written tests using open-ended question items. Further, the obtained scores were analyzed using paired t-test. The data analysis suggested an increase in students' metacognitive and critical thinking skills after they attended the PBL class using the PBL-based project guide e-book for genetic 1. This increase was shown from the $0.000 < \alpha$ ($\alpha = 0,05$) significance score of paired t-test. Thus, the PBL-based project guide e-book for the genetic 1 course is capable of enhancing students' metacognitive and critical thinking skills.

Keywords: project-based learning; project guide e-book; genetic; critical thinking skills; metacognitive skills

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INTRODUCTION

In order to face the 5.0 industry, students have to present great knowledge mastery, along with 21st-century skills, to broaden their ideas and solve their daily issues (Heong et al., 2012; Rahman, 2019). Critical thinking skills are one of the primary 21st-century skills (Alahmad et al., 2021). It is one of the cognitive skills with a particular function in the decision-making and assessment processes (Chartrand & Flander, 2013). Critical thinking skills are a crucial element in comprehending reliable information and formulating opinions after considering different viewpoints (Saadé et al., 2012; van Laar et al., 2019). It is also reported as an essential aspect of students thinking progression (King et al., n.d.), as well as students' effective problem-solving skills in social, scientific, and practical issues (Mahanal et al., 2019).

Experts have provided different definitions of critical thinking. Critical thinking is defined as the skills that develop from cognitive processes, such as implementing, analyzing, synthesizing, and evaluating information gathered through active observation, experience, reasoning, and communication (Facione, 2015). It is also described as the process of examining, organizing, clarifying, selecting, and prioritizing ideas in just, constructive, and thorough means (Treffinger & Isaksen, 2013). Besides, another study defines it as activating skills in analyzing evidence, evaluating evidence, identifying a question, and constructing

logical conclusions (Mahanal et al., 2019). Therefore, critical thinking is a crucial talent that aids the learning process and empowers individuals to contribute creatively to their selection of professional path (Aizikovitsh-Udi & Cheng, 2015). This skill is significantly required due to the increasing number of complex issues faced by individuals during this rapid technological advancement and social movement (Ulger, 2018). Critical thinking skills can be measured through essay tests and scoring rubrics (Finken & Ennis, 2013; Zubaidah et al., 2018).

According to a number of research, Indonesia still struggles with critical thinking ability (Corebima, 2016; Kurniawati et al., 2016). Linearly, our preliminary observation suggested that the critical thinking skills of Biology students in the genetic 1 course are still categorized as low (level 1-2, underdeveloped or unobserved). Additionally, metacognitive activities are the fundamental aspect of critical thinking skills. These activities reflect students' thinking level in evaluating their reasoning and learning from experience (Corebima, 2009; Vezzosi, 2004).

The empowerment of metacognitive skills substantially influences students' critical thinking and cognitive skills (Amin et al., 2020; Warni et al., 2018). Metacognitive skills are essential as it impacts the acquisition, comprehension, retention, and implementation of the obtained skills and knowledge, along with students' learning efficiency, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills (Hartman, 1998). With high metacognitive skills, students can identify the ways to select and implement learning strategies, evaluate their effective individual strategies, and usage of evaluation in designing their future learning design (Stanton et al., 2019). The metacognitive skills can be measured from students' ability to present their work for a conceptual test analyzed using a scoring rubric (Corebima, 2009).

Even if cognitive skills are placed as essential skills, studies reported that Biology students still have low metacognitive skills (Erlin & Fitriani, 2019; Herlanti et al., 2019; Hilpert et al., 2021; Lestari et al., 2019). The results of our preliminary study also suggested that Biology undergraduate students' metacognitive skills in the genetic 1 course are still low. One of the viable alternatives for empowering students' critical thinking and metacognitive skills is the implementation of a learning model involving high-order thinking skills, such as project-based learning (PBL) (Amin et al., 2020; Corebima, 2016). PBL-based learning enhances students' metacognitive and critical thinking skills since they are given the opportunities to construct their beliefs, collaborate with other people, and conduct effective self-regulation (Cortázar et al., 2021; Rahmawati & Haryani, 2016).

In the Biology Department of Universitas Negeri Malang, the genetics course is one of the courses which adopts the PBL learning model. Project-based learning (PBL) has been reported present a more significant contribution in enhancing students' critical thinking and metacognitive skills, compared to conventional learning, since PBL facilitates students to collaborate in groups and feel content with their communal achievement (Yalçın, 2017). Accordingly, the usage of PBL-based learning material is recommended since it aids teachers in realizing students' active participation and improves students' critical thinking (Hayati & Syaikhu, 2020; Ngurah et al., 2018; Sianturi et al., 2021). Another research also uncovered that the PBL-based learning model is capable of facilitating students to construct their knowledge with unambiguous planning, observation, and behavioral evaluation (Pulmones, 2008).

In Universitas Negeri Malang, the genetic course is divided into genetic 1 and genetic 2 courses. Both courses adopt project-based learning. Their only difference is the type of materials, with fundamental materials in genetic 1 course and applicative materials in the genetic 2 courses. The topics of the genetic 1 course include the matting duration of *Drosophila melanogaster*, Mendel law 1, Mendel law 2, crossing over, error in meiosis, gen interaction, sex ratio, and effects of colchicine on the onion root mitosis. However, our observation results showed that the PBL-based learning in the genetic 1 course during the 2018/2019 academic year had not been carried out optimally, with less than 50% reported

project data and low cognitive learning results. One of the causes of this problem is the absence of a project guidebook. The project guidebook enables the realization of optimum learning and helps students identify the authentic inquiry principle during the research process (Fauzi, 2017).

As a consequence, in this study, we used a guidebook in the form of an e-book since e-book presents quick distribution, low cost, and extensive accessibility through the internet connection. Our project guide e-book integrates the structure of a classical guidebook with electronic features and display [30]. A previous study reported that the use of a project guidebook with authentic context motivates students to complete a project (Susanti & Trisusana, 2018). Implementation of PBL-based learning with digital learning material stimulates students to read numerous different resources, as well as be more enthusiastic in attending to learning and completing the project (Lubis et al., 2020). Besides, a study proposed that genetic course should be regulated following the relevant learning resources with practicum activities that facilitates students' physical and psychological active participation (Sukmawati et al., 2016).

Therefore, this study aims to investigate the Biology undergraduate students' critical thinking and metacognitive skills after attending the PBL learning with project guide e-book in the genetic 1 course. The adoption of PBL-based learning with the project guide e-book is forecasted to promote students' meaningful learning experiences.

METHOD

This pre-experimental study used one group pretest-posttest design. As many as 30 undergraduate Biology students participated in this study. As for the learning process, it contained three stages, namely, pretest, PBL-based learning with the e-book, and posttest. For the research instrument, we used a learning plan in one semester, a course unit, and a project guide e-book for the genetic 1 course. The student's critical thinking and metacognitive skills were assessed using an open-ended assessment in the form of an essay test. Meanwhile, their test answers were analyzed using the special rubric of critical thinking skills, modified from the rubric developed by Finken and Ennis (Zubaidah, 2018) and Corebima (2009). The results were further calculated using Formula 1.

$$Y2 = \frac{Y1 + 2X}{3} \dots\dots\dots(1)$$

Description:

Y1 = metacognitive skills score (from rubric)

Y2 = conceptual understanding score (non-rubric)

X = combined metacognitive skills and conceptual understanding scores

The results of the pretest and posttest on critical thinking and metacognitive skills were assessed using a normality test, followed by paired t-test using SPSS for windows 25.0. The treatment and measurement instruments had undergone validity and reliability test, attaining scores of 99.06 and 0.844, respectively. Therefore, the instruments are classified as valid and reliable to be implemented in the genetic 1 course.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of our descriptive analysis signified increasing critical thinking and metacognitive skills in students before and after they participated in the PBL-based classroom using the project guide e-book. Detailed of the students' average pretest and posttest scores are listed in Table 1 and illustrated in Figure 1.

Table 1. Average, Friction, and Percentage of Students’ Average Pretest and Posttest Scores

Variable	Average		Increase (%)
	Pretest	Posttest	
Critical Thinking Skills	26.33	68.33	159.51
Metacognitive Skills	38.76	79.60	105.37

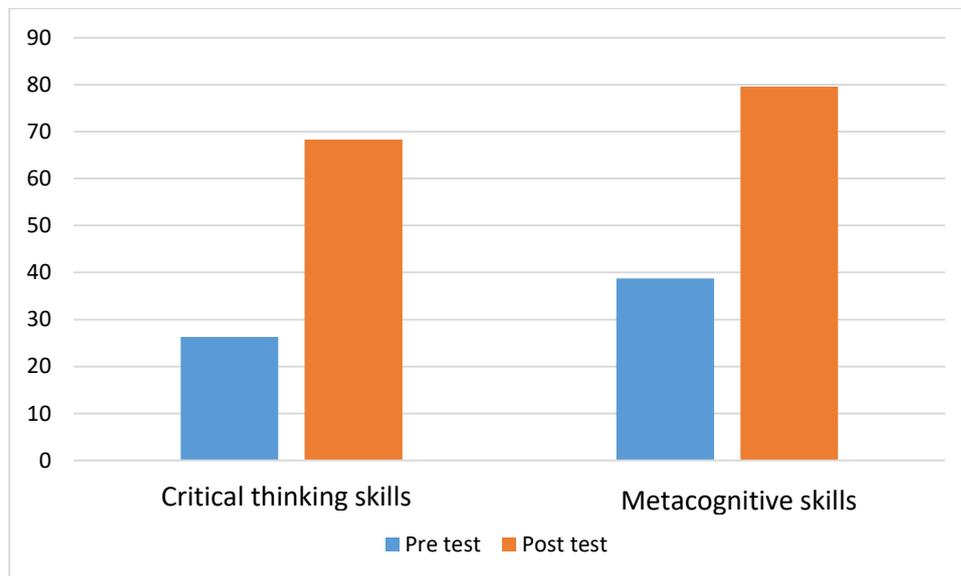


Figure 1. Average Students’ Pretest-Posttest Scores on Critical Thinking and Metacognitive Skills

Prior to the paired t-test, we conducted a data normality test. The results of the data normality test presented in Table 2 suggested that the significance scores for the critical thinking and metacognitive skills are $(0.375) > (0.05)$ and $(0.428) > (0.05)$, respectively. The results indicated that our data have a normal distribution and were further analyzed using paired t-tests.

Table 2. Results of the Normality Test

	Statistic	df	Sig.
Metacognitive Skills	0.961	28	0.375
Critical thinking skills	0.964	28	0.428

Table 3. Results of Paired T-test

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	
				Lower	Upper				
Pair 1	KBK*	-41.8	17.3	3.3	-48.5	-35.1	-12.8	27.0	0.00
Pair 2	KM*	-42.0	10.2	1.9	-45.9	-38.1	-21.9	27.0	0.00

*KBK= Critical thinking skills; KM=Metacognitive skills

According to Table 3, the results of paired t-test showed a significant score of $(0.00) > (0.05)$ for both critical thinking and metacognitive skills. Thus, the H_1 is accepted, suggesting the increase of students’ critical thinking and metacognitive skills after they attended the PBL-based genetic 1 project using the project guide e-book.

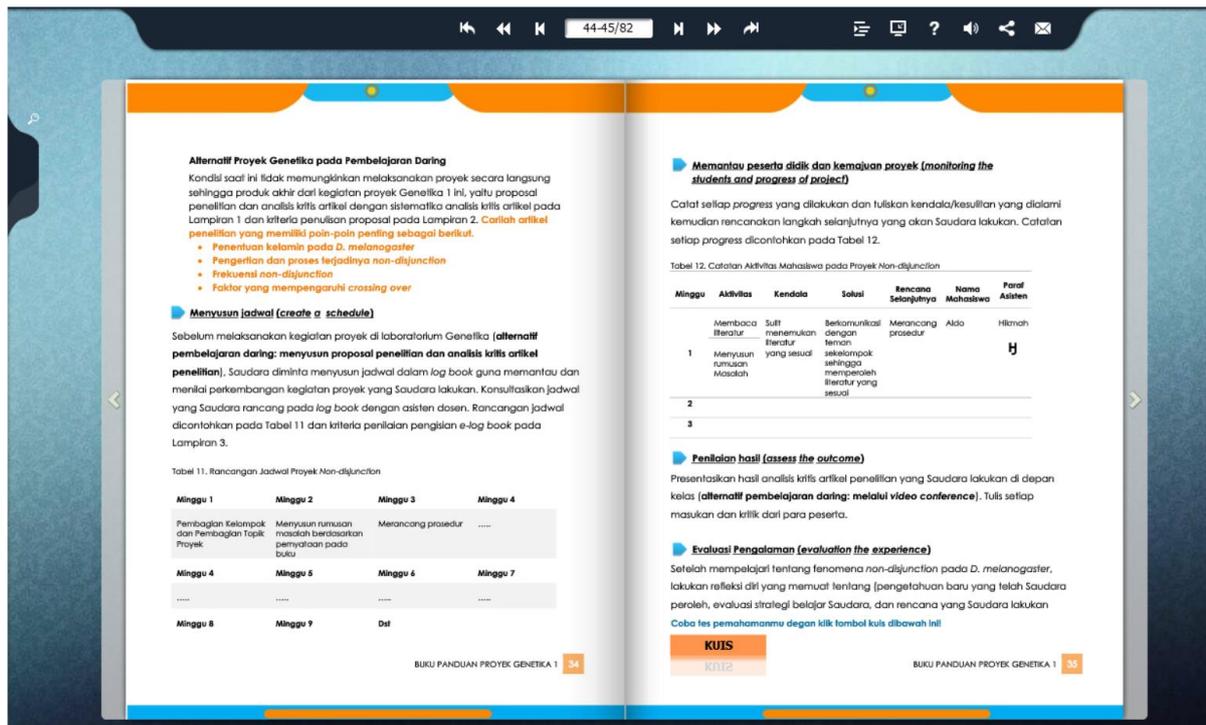


Figure 3. Stage of PBL in Designing Experience Evaluation Schedule from Genetic 1 Project Guide E-book

The PBL syntaxes promote students' critical thinking skills, starting from determining essential questions, designing a project plan, formulating a schedule, completing the project, assessing the project results, and evaluating experience after conducting the project, as illustrated in Figure 1-3. In PBL, students are obligated to collaborate and cooperate with their peers in exploring the knowledge during the project completion. PBL is one of the learning models that deepen students' independent and critical thinking through problem-solving, decision-making, investigation, presentation, and report formulation processes. Therefore, in PBL, students learning become more contextual. With this learning model, students can look for information from a number of sources, such as books and articles accessible on the Internet. Besides, the use of the project guide e-book also facilitates the PBL process during the genetic 1 course.

In addition, the PBL-based material e-book has been reported to improve students' critical thinking skills as it involves investigating examples from authentic daily life problems (Liana et al., 2021). A study carried out by Prihata et al. also uncovered that interactive e-book with a scientific approach develops students' critical thinking skill as it enables them to observe, ask a question, interpret, experiment, and present their work (Prihata et al., 2020). Meanwhile, (Ambarwati et al., 2019) described that interactive e-book assists students in analyzing, synthesizing, and evaluating information obtained during a learning

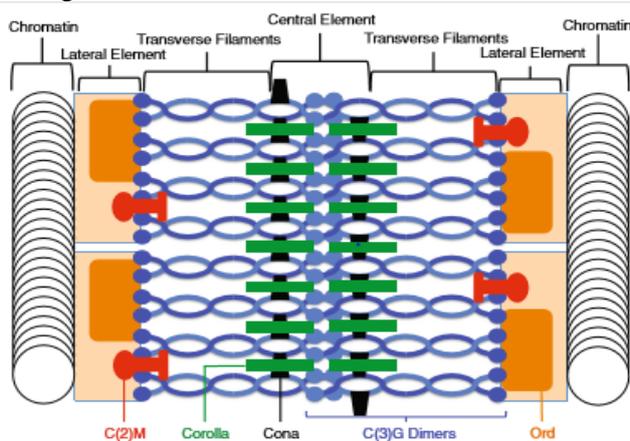
Students expanding critical thinking skills are observed from their essay test during the pretest and posttest. Table 4 illustrates question number 9 from the pretest. In this question item, many students had no capacity to answer the question. Following the implementation of the PBL-based learning with project guide e-book for the genetic 1 course, students showed better capacity in mentioning the components of the synaptonemal complex, along with each of their functions. Besides, students' increasing critical thinking skill was also observed from their answers in question item no 10 for the organization indicator. During the pretest, students gave the incorrect answer in this question with no supporting reason for their answers. Meanwhile, in the posttest, after students participated in the PBL-based learning using the genetic 1 project guide, they can provide reasoning for lower than 50% move values based on the crossing-over process. This finding signifies improved skills in supporting

reason indicators. Additionally, in item number 11, students provided less accurate answers during the pretest, showing their inability to construct and determine individuals with non-disjunction. After attending the PBL-based genetic 1 course with a project guide e-book, students presented sufficient skills in constructing the non-disjunction crossing and determining the descendants with ndj. From students' answers in item number 11, they presented the ability to identify the number of individuals percentage from the data obtained in question number 12. Students' answers to questions number 11 and 12 suggest their improved skills in focus and reasoning indicators.

Table 4. Examples of Critical Thinking Question Items

Item No	Question
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9. The following is an illustration of the synaptonemal complex that facilitates crossing over.



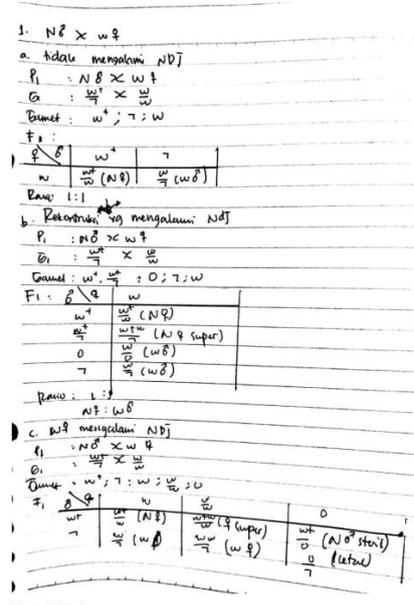
The synaptonemal complex contains a number of proteins, but not all of those proteins contribute to the crossing over. Do you agree with this statement? Please describe your reason.

10. Crossing over is a process of exchange of genetic material from the non-sister chromatids of homologous chromosomes. The value of crossing over has never been more than 50%. Is this statement correct? Please explain your analysis.
11. The crossing over between ♂N << ♀w may show the *non-disjunction* occurrence. Please describe that statement using the construction of crossing over and determine the individual experiencing ndj.
12. Andi and Nisa conduct a crossing over between ♂N << ♀w. They obtain F1 descendants as described in the following table.

Fenotip	U1	U2	U3	U4	U5	U6	Total
♀N	22	23	17	27	11	15	115
♂N	2	1	1	2	1	2	9
♀w	1	2	0	0	2	1	6
♂w	13	12	17	18	15	15	90
Total							220

From the data obtained by Andi and Nisa, please estimate the non-disjunction frequency on the ♂N << ♀w crossing over!

Table 5. Example of HZ Students' Answer to Critical Thinking Question
Answer from Pretest **Answer from Posttest**

<p>9.</p> <p>10. Nilai Pindah Silang (NPS) tidak dapat melebihi dari 50%, karena bila nilai NPS lebih dari 50% tidak akan terjadi <i>crossing over</i> pada antar gen di dalam kromosom. Komparasi masing-masing kromosom dari induk jantan dan betina adalah maksimal 50% untuk membentuk variasi individu baru. Jika lebih dari 50% tidak memungkinkan terjadinya pindah silang antar gen, sebab melebihi kapasitas maksimal pembentukan kromosom.</p> <p>11. Rekonstruksi yang mengalami nondisjunction $P1 : N^{\delta} \times w^{\ominus}$ Genotip : + - \times Gamet : w+, - ; w , , 0</p> <p>12. Frekuensi NDJ: $N^{\delta} = 9/220 \times 100\% = 4,09\%$ $w^{\ominus} = 6/220 \times 100\% = 2,72\%$</p>	<p>9. Protein :</p> <p>a. Protein ORD membantu dalam segregasi dan membantu secara tidak langsung proses rekombinasi pada meiosis akan tetapi fungsi ORD lebih cenderung pada kesetabilan synaptonemal complex.</p> <p>b. Protein C(2)M berperan dalam membantu pembentukan lateral elemen.</p> <p>c. Protein COROLLA dan CONA menyokong struktur tengah yang utama dari Synaptonemal complex. COROLLA dan CONA berfungsi promoter pematangan DSB dan membantu kinerja dari protein C(3)G.</p> <p>d. Protein C(3)G inilah yang berperan langsung dan memfasilitasi terjadinya rekombinasi.</p> <p>e. Hemmer (2016) juga menyatakan bahwa C(3)G merupakan protein dalam bentuk dimer pada bagian Transverse Filaments yang bertanggung jawab untuk pembentukan synapsis, mengkonversi celah pada strand menjadi crossingover dan memfasilitasi perpindahan gen untuk berekombinasi.</p> <p>10. Karena hanya dua dari empat kromatid saja yang ikut mengambil bagian pada peristiwa pindah silang dan pindah silang ganda akan mengurangi banyaknya tipe rekombinasi yang dihasilkan.</p> <p>11. Rekonstruksi</p>  <p>1. $N^{\delta} \times w^{\ominus}$ a. tidak mengalami NDJ $P1 : N^{\delta} \times w^{\ominus}$ $G1 : \frac{w^+}{N^{\delta}} \times \frac{w}{w}$ Gamet : w+ ; - ; w , , 0 F1 : <table border="1" style="display: inline-table; margin-left: 20px;"> <tr><td>$\frac{w^+}{N^{\delta}}$</td><td>$\frac{w^+}{w}$</td><td>$\frac{w}{w}$</td></tr> <tr><td>$\frac{w}{N^{\delta}}$</td><td>$\frac{w^+}{w}$ (N^δQ)</td><td>$\frac{w}{w}$ (w^δ)</td></tr> </table> Rasio 1:1 b. Rekonstruksi yg mengalami NDJ $P1 : N^{\delta} \times w^{\ominus}$ $G1 : \frac{w^+}{N^{\delta}} \times \frac{w}{w}$ Gamet : w+ ; 0 ; - ; w F1 : <table border="1" style="display: inline-table; margin-left: 20px;"> <tr><td>$\frac{w^+}{N^{\delta}}$</td><td>$\frac{w^+}{w}$</td><td>$\frac{0}{w}$</td></tr> <tr><td>$\frac{0}{N^{\delta}}$</td><td>$\frac{w^+}{w}$ (N^δQ)</td><td>$\frac{0}{w}$ (N^δstori)</td></tr> <tr><td>$\frac{w}{N^{\delta}}$</td><td>$\frac{w^+}{w}$ (N^δQ super)</td><td>$\frac{w}{w}$ (w^δ)</td></tr> <tr><td>$\frac{w}{N^{\delta}}$</td><td>$\frac{w}{w}$ (w^δ)</td><td>$\frac{w}{w}$ (w^δ)</td></tr> </table> Rasio 1:1:1:1 c. N^δ mengalami NDJ $P1 : N^{\delta} \times w^{\ominus}$ $G1 : \frac{w^+}{N^{\delta}} \times \frac{w}{w}$ Gamet : w+ ; - ; w ; 0 F1 : <table border="1" style="display: inline-table; margin-left: 20px;"> <tr><td>$\frac{w^+}{N^{\delta}}$</td><td>$\frac{w^+}{w}$</td><td>$\frac{w}{w}$</td><td>$\frac{0}{w}$</td></tr> <tr><td>$\frac{w}{N^{\delta}}$</td><td>$\frac{w^+}{w}$ (N^δQ)</td><td>$\frac{w}{w}$ (w^δ)</td><td>$\frac{0}{w}$ (N^δstori)</td></tr> <tr><td>$\frac{w}{N^{\delta}}$</td><td>$\frac{w^+}{w}$ (N^δQ super)</td><td>$\frac{w}{w}$ (w^δ)</td><td>$\frac{0}{w}$ (N^δstori)</td></tr> <tr><td>$\frac{0}{N^{\delta}}$</td><td>$\frac{w^+}{w}$ (N^δQ)</td><td>$\frac{w}{w}$ (w^δ)</td><td>$\frac{0}{w}$ (N^δstori)</td></tr> </table> Rasio 2:1:1:1 Individu yang mengalami NDJ adalah</p> <p>12. Frekuensi NDJ: $N^{\delta} = 9/220 \times 100\% = 4,09\%$ $w^{\ominus} = 6/220 \times 100\% = 2,72\%$</p>	$\frac{w^+}{N^{\delta}}$	$\frac{w^+}{w}$	$\frac{w}{w}$	$\frac{w}{N^{\delta}}$	$\frac{w^+}{w}$ (N ^δ Q)	$\frac{w}{w}$ (w ^δ)	$\frac{w^+}{N^{\delta}}$	$\frac{w^+}{w}$	$\frac{0}{w}$	$\frac{0}{N^{\delta}}$	$\frac{w^+}{w}$ (N ^δ Q)	$\frac{0}{w}$ (N ^δ stori)	$\frac{w}{N^{\delta}}$	$\frac{w^+}{w}$ (N ^δ Q super)	$\frac{w}{w}$ (w ^δ)	$\frac{w}{N^{\delta}}$	$\frac{w}{w}$ (w ^δ)	$\frac{w}{w}$ (w ^δ)	$\frac{w^+}{N^{\delta}}$	$\frac{w^+}{w}$	$\frac{w}{w}$	$\frac{0}{w}$	$\frac{w}{N^{\delta}}$	$\frac{w^+}{w}$ (N ^δ Q)	$\frac{w}{w}$ (w ^δ)	$\frac{0}{w}$ (N ^δ stori)	$\frac{w}{N^{\delta}}$	$\frac{w^+}{w}$ (N ^δ Q super)	$\frac{w}{w}$ (w ^δ)	$\frac{0}{w}$ (N ^δ stori)	$\frac{0}{N^{\delta}}$	$\frac{w^+}{w}$ (N ^δ Q)	$\frac{w}{w}$ (w ^δ)	$\frac{0}{w}$ (N ^δ stori)
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Improved Metacognitive Skills after Participating in PBL-based learning using Project Guide E-book

Our data analysis suggested a 105.37% increase in metacognitive skills after students learned using the PBL-based method with the project guide e-book. This increase in metacognitive skills was also observed from the results of paired t-test. Therefore, the phases of PBL syntax with project guide e-book aid students in enhancing their metacognitive skills. Those phases include determining the essential question, designing a project plan, arranging the schedule, conducting the project, assessing the project results, and evaluating the experience after conducting a project. The completion of a project assists students in developing their research, gathering information, correlating information, formulating a conclusion, and constructing an evaluation of the project's findings, independently (Aldabbus, 2018).

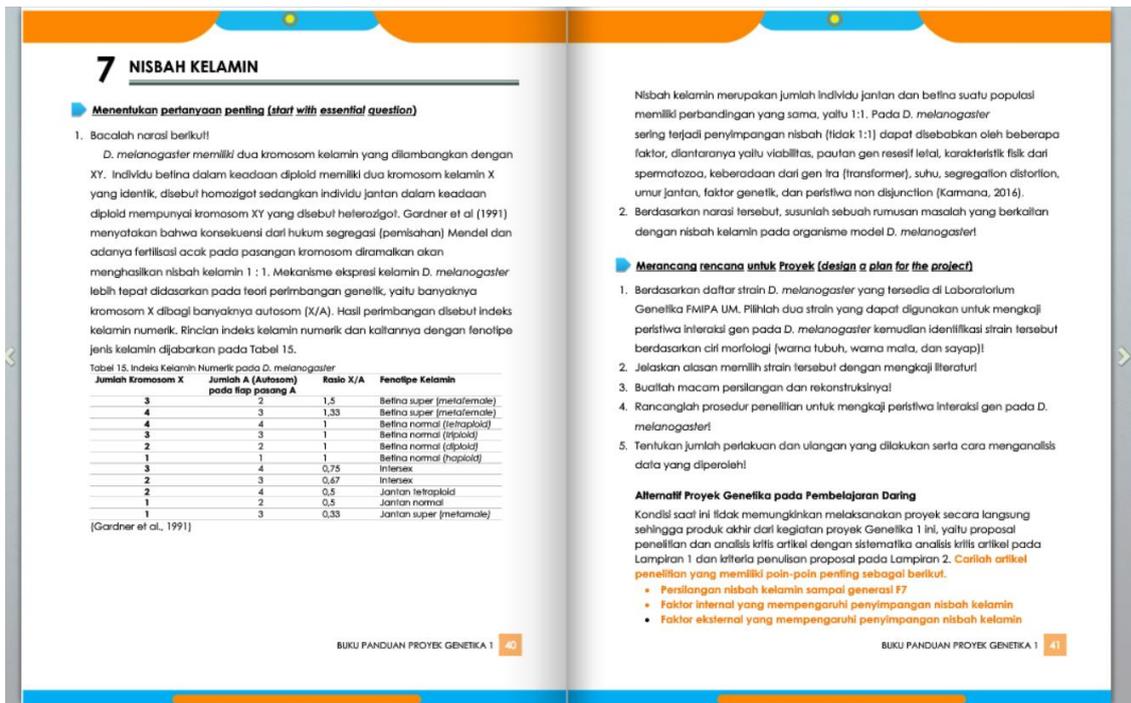


Figure 4. The phase of Determining Important Questions and Designing Research from the PBL-based Project Guide E-book for Genetic 1 Course

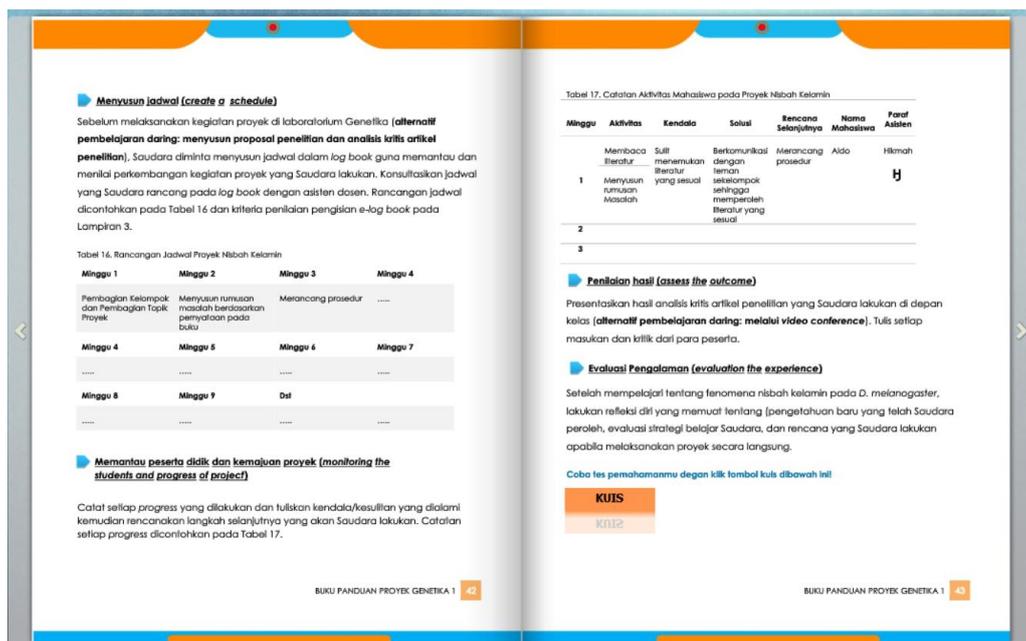


Figure 5. Stage of Arranging Experience Evaluation Schedule from the PBL-based Project Guide E-book for Genetic 1 Course

In this study, students’ accelerated metacognitive skills were characterized by their higher scores in the post-test than in their pretest. The pretest and posttest instruments used for measuring the participants’ metacognitive skills were adopted from the academic achievement test developed by Corebima (2009). The participants’ metacognitive skills were enhanced through the PBL syntax, starting from arranging important questions, designing the project plan, arranging the schedule, completing the project, evaluating the project results, and assessing the experience obtained during the projects, as illustrated in Figures 4-5. The learning activities in PBL-based learning encourage students to acquire information and correlate their new knowledge with their existing knowledge. This learning also allows

students to present their work and exchange information with their peers. Further, through presentation and discussion, students can transfer information and communicate their meaningful findings obtained from the project (Fini et al., 2018). From this activity, students interpret, compare, and make a conclusion from the project (Indrawan & Jalinus, Nizwardi, 2018). Additionally, in the stage of experience evaluation, students are allowed to reflect deeply on their strategies and assumptions during the project completion (Hamidah et al., 2020). Besides, in this experience evaluation, students contemplate their new knowledge, analyze their lacking, and reflect on their enhancement for future learning (Afriana et al., 2016; Jumaat et al., 2017).

Students' enhanced metacognitive skills are also inseparable from the adoption of an interactive e-book that facilitates students in completing their projects. The features of the project guide e-book for the genetic 1 course assist students in improving their metacognitive skills, as the e-book contains a summary of materials, videos, and quizzes. With the features provided in the project guide e-book for the genetic 1 project, students can learn the fundamental concepts of a project, design a project, and evaluate the experience obtained from the project completion processes. The PBL-based learning with genetic 1 project guide e-book also helps students become interactive learners with great skills in exploring new knowledge (Indrawan & Jalinus, Nizwardi, 2018). Additionally, PBL-based learning with a project-guide e-book for the genetic 1 course also offers excellent flexibility, accessibility, and interactivity in establishing an independent learning environment (Kim & Jung, 2010). The comprehensive facilities provided by this interactive multimedia also help students realize independent learning and enhance their metacognitive skills (Ko et al., 2011). Lastly, this interactive e-book also expedites the syntax of PBL-based learning that promotes students' knowledge and skills to get involved directly during the learning process.

CONCLUSION

Results of our data analysis suggested that the PBL-based learning with project guide e-book for the genetic 1 course improves students' critical thinking and metacognitive skills. However, this study also has limitations, primarily on the usage of the pre-experiment design. Nevertheless, this PBL and project guide e-book for the genetic 1 course is still capable of empowering students' critical thinking and metacognitive skills.

RECOMMENDATION

Future studies are recommended to use a quasi-experiment design to ensure the accurate measurement of the effects of PBL-based learning with the project guide e-book in the genetic 1 course.

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