

Problems of Social Studies Learning at Elementary Education Level: What are the Recommended Solutions?

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Abstract: This study aims to examine the problems of implementing social studies learning at the elementary education level and describe the recommended solutions to the problems faced based on previous studies. The method used in this study is a literature study by collecting articles that are in accordance with the study and reducing and analyzing the data obtained to then draw conclusions based on the studies that have been conducted. The results of the study indicate that there are several problems faced in the implementation of social studies learning, including the implementation of social studies learning that has not been truly integrated, low student interest in learning social studies and inaccuracy in selecting social studies learning strategies. Recommendations for social studies learning that can be done are to implement contextual-based social studies learning, namely teaching social studies by linking it to students' social lives, so that students can feel the connection between social studies learning and everyday life.

Keywords: Problems, Social Studies, Recommendations

PRELIMINARY

Social studies learning has two main objectives, namely social understanding related to knowledge about human society and citizenship competency, namely, democratic citizenship (Parker, 2012). In addition, social studies learning also functions as a transmission of citizenship (or culture) as a science, as part of reflective inquiry activities, and as a container for social criticism information. As a transmission of citizenship, social studies education plays a role in encouraging students to learn nationalist or democratic values. As a science, social studies education functions to encourage students to master social sciences including mastery of social science concepts, generalizations, and processes to build a knowledge base for further learning. (Wayne Ross et al., 2004)

As a reflective inquiry, social studies education functions to hone students' abilities needed for decision making in certain socio-political contexts (eg, liberal democratic capitalism), especially those related to social and personal problems that

directly affect students. While as a container for social criticism information, social studies education functions to challenge injustice. against knowledge produced by supporting the elite of society; rooted in logical positivism; and consistent with social reproduction and replication of a classist, sexist, and racist society (Wayne Ross et al., 2004)

Social studies education in Indonesia is a combination of three disciplines, namely economics, geography, and history, so it is called integrated social studies. Since the 2006 KTSP curriculum, social studies have been taught as one unit both at elementary and junior high school levels. Furthermore, in the 2013 curriculum, social studies learning in elementary schools is carried out thematically, namely taught together with other subjects related to social studies, while at the junior high school level it is still implemented in an integrated manner. In the Merdeka curriculum, social studies at the elementary school level are taught in an integrated manner with science learning so that a new subject is formed, namely social studies. This is done based on the view that students at the elementary school level still see the natural and social world holistically, so it will be more effective if combined into one subject. While at the junior high school level, social studies are still implemented in an integrated manner. This change in the paradigm of the social studies curriculum has an impact on the implementation of social studies learning itself.

However, in accordance with the objectives that have been outlined, social studies learning needs to be implemented by considering the objectives that have been set. Social studies need to be seen as an alternative for students to get to know their social life and develop skills to socialize. However, in its implementation, social studies are still considered as material that must be taught so that it emphasizes mastery of material in the knowledge aspect. This is proven by the results of research (Susilowati & Utama, (2022) at SD Muhammadiyah Kota Bangun which shows that teachers teach social studies by means of lectures and questions and answers, so that students view social studies as concepts and materials alone. In addition, the implementation of social studies learning is also directly related to the teacher's pedagogical competence in teaching, one of which is the ability to understand student characteristics. The teacher's ability to understand student characteristics is still a challenge in presenting social studies learning (Deگو et al., 2019). Presenting material that ignores student characteristics will affect students'

perspectives on social studies learning. From the student's perspective, social studies are still considered as learning that is not very interesting, so this can affect their motivation (Dinamikawati, 2021). Several of these research results show that the implementation of social studies at the elementary education level still faces a number of challenges both in terms of teachers and students. So this study aims to describe 1. What are the problems of social studies learning at the elementary education level?, 2. What are the recommendations for implementing social studies learning at the elementary education level?

METHOD

This study uses a literature study method. Literature studies are conducted by collecting literature sources related to the topic discussed through the Google Scholar database from 2002 to 2022. From this literature, the most appropriate articles for the study are then reduced and selected. From the results of the reduction of articles with the search topic "social studies learning problems in elementary schools, social studies learning problems in junior high schools, 13 articles were obtained that were considered relevant. Meanwhile, for learning recommendations with the keyword, "contextual approach in social studies learning" 6 articles were obtained. Articles that are ready to be analyzed qualitatively for the study purposes that have been explained previously

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Social Studies Learning Problems

a. Implementation of Social Studies Learning that is not yet integrated

The curriculum design in Indonesia, especially starting from KTSP, Curriculum 2013 to independence for elementary education levels (SD & SMP), allows teachers to carry out integrated social studies learning activities, because the curriculum is designed by combining three social studies disciplines. In its implementation, teachers still have a tendency to teach social studies separately. (Nasution, 2012), stated that the reason teachers still teach social studies separately is because there are no examples of social studies learning practices that are considered ideal in the classroom that can be used as references by teachers..

Research (Wijayati et al., 2016) shows that the social studies material itself still stands separately. From the review of the lesson plans and interviews conducted by the researcher, it shows that the teaching materials developed in the lesson plans are still partial (stand alone) or do not show the integration of a theme. In addition, the background or background of social studies teachers is also an obstacle to why social studies are not taught in an integrated manner. The results of the study (Supianto et al., 2020) involving 20 junior high school social studies teachers from 10 provinces in Indonesia showed that social studies teachers have various educational qualifications, such as geography education, economics education, history education, and sociology education. Of the twenty teachers, none had qualifications with a social studies educational background. This affects the teacher's ability to integrate materials into a complete theme, because it could be that the mastery of basic theories by each teacher is different. At the elementary school level, the problem of teacher qualifications is actually not a significant problem, because most elementary school teachers have competence in all subjects. However, in the independent curriculum, where teachers are given the freedom to determine and combine materials according to needs, elementary school teachers also need to have specific expertise, especially in social studies competencies. When teachers experience difficulties, they will seek references through textbooks published by the government. The results of the analysis of grade IV textbooks written by (Amalia Fitri Anggayudha A., et al., 2021) which contain not only social studies material content but also science material. In the textbook, although the concept is to combine science and social studies material, in practice or the content of the learning is still separated between materials, so that it can still be seen which are included in geography, social studies and history materials. Meanwhile, the results of research conducted by (Andreani & Gunansyah, 2023) showed findings that teachers implement science and social studies learning separately, namely science in semester 1 and social studies in semester 2 and some implement it in an integrated manner, meaning that there are differences in understanding in the implementation of the science and social studies material. This difference shows that science, especially social studies at elementary school level, has not been implemented holistically as was the initial aim of the merger.

b. Low Student Interest in Social Studies Learning

Social studies learning is perceived as learning that requires someone to memorize various very dense materials. In Indonesia, social studies is a subject that is less popular because the culture of Indonesian society tends to be pragmatic, formalistic, and technical materialist. Social studies are considered directly related to efforts to earn money, so that people have low awareness of the importance of studying social studies for national life (Sardiman, 2012). In addition, social studies are considered boring, one of the reasons could be because teachers have not implemented student-centered learning activities, as shown in research (Sutrisna & Wasino, 2011) which shows that teachers still apply expository methods in social studies learning. Teachers have not implemented student-centered learning because student-centered learning requires more complicated planning, takes a relatively longer time so it is less efficient, besides that the exams that are carried out measure the cognitive domain more, and students are considered not yet capable of following active learning-based learning. The results of this study are reinforced by the opinion (Kaulan & Ramadhani, 2018) that the tendency of social studies learning is carried out with a teacher-centered approach, the growth of a learning culture; verbalistic; Teaching based on textbooks; (Textbook Centered). Evaluation oriented to low-level cognitive; and The position of the teacher who is still transferring knowledge. The selection of inappropriate learning methods also affects students' interest in social studies learning as expressed in research (Rahayu et al., 2021) which examines the interest of elementary school students in social studies learning which shows that one of the factors that influences student interest is the frequent use of lecture methods by teachers, making students bored. The problem of low student interest in social studies learning can also be influenced by the low number of local-based learning resources utilized in learning activities (Rajendra Kumar Shah, 2016) so that social studies learning activities tend to seem abstract and less close to the students' surroundings. This makes students feel that social studies is not close to their daily life environment.

c. Inaccuracy in Choosing Learning Strategies

The use of learning strategies will affect the course of all learning activities in the classroom. Teachers need to conduct a needs analysis before determining a learning strategy. Mistakes in choosing a strategy will decrease students' interest in learning social

studies. The results of the study (Fitri Rahmawati & Zidni, 2019) show that teachers often lack a variety of learning strategies. Learning is often dominated by lecture activities. (Hernawan, 2018) emphasized that in choosing a learning strategy, it is necessary to consider environmental arrangements that include analysis of student needs, student characteristics, formulation of objectives, and determination of subject matter. Mistakes in choosing a learning strategy often occur because teachers have not conducted a needs assessment related to the characteristics or learning needs of students so that there is a difference in understanding between teachers and students. In addition, according to (Wedi, 2016) it is not uncommon for teachers to carry out learning without being based on a definite plan regarding the method to be used. The orientation of learning is only on mastering the subject matter. This causes teachers to focus on trying to finish the material that has been prepared without realizing how students learn when receiving the subject matter.

2. Recommendation: Clinical Supervision and Contextual Approach-Based Learning.

a. Supervision to Improve Teachers' Understanding of Integrated Social Studies Learning

The implementation of integrated social studies learning should start from a change in the mindset or perspective of teachers regarding how to teach social studies. In addition, social studies, especially at the junior high school level, are still viewed separately because many social studies teachers have diverse educational backgrounds such as geography, economics, and history. There needs to be a sustainable teacher competency improvement program to increase the scientific capacity of social studies teachers, especially in terms of preparing learning implementation plans and teaching materials. The results of Mursini's research, (2018) show that clinical supervision of social studies teachers in preparing learning plans can improve teacher competence. These results are also in line with Simbolon's research, (2022) which shows that academic supervision can improve the ability of social studies teachers in preparing social studies learning plans. This form of supervision can be carried out by forming learning communities, training, both online and offline combinations (Awaluddin, 2018) training or implementing lesson studies to find out problems and efforts to solve these problems (Kurniawan et al., 2020; Nugraha, 2023)

b. Contextual Approach as a Comprehensive Strategy to Increase Student Interest

As previously explained, social studies is a lesson that is close to the social environment around students. Teaching social studies should make students understand their position in society which is studied through space and time. Students go to school with different social backgrounds, for that it is important for students to know the state of society where they have been colored by that society, schools have a very important role in developing and integrating what is known in their environment and what they have learned through various sources (Ariesta, 2018). That is why a contextual approach must be used in teaching social studies. The contextual approach is one approach that can help students associate lessons with the context of their lives and give meaning to the things they learn (Kristidhika et al., 2020) In line with this opinion (Perdana, 2020) states that contextual teaching and learning is a concept that can help teachers learn to relate the material to be learned with students' real-world situations and encourage students to make connections between the knowledge they have and its application in their lives as family members and families and communities. The contextual approach is built on the assumption that learning is an interactional process, learning is a developmental process that lasts throughout life, students must decide to learn and engage in the attention, intellectual and emotional processes needed to do so, and teaching will not be created if learning does not occur (Sears, 2002)

When students learn based on the environmental conditions that they already know, the lesson will no longer feel abstract, but they can explore starting from what they already know. This is reinforced by the results of research (Widodo, 2018) which conducted classroom action research in elementary schools, the results of the study showed that through a contextual approach by presenting social problems for students to discuss, it can improve students' social participation skills.

The results of other studies on the Implementation of a contextual approach to social studies learning in grade III related to increasing ecoliteracy show that there is an increase in student ecoliteracy in terms of knowledge, skills and attitudes. In terms of knowledge, students show a good understanding of the importance of maintaining cleanliness at school. In terms of attitude, students show awareness to protect their environment. This is also practiced, among others, by getting used to sorting organic and inorganic waste, and maintaining plants around the school.

Research (Miller & Sessions, 2005) proves that a contextual approach can also be used to instill tolerance and diversity in social studies learning. This means that a contextual approach can help improve students' social studies competencies in various forms. From several studies, it has been proven that the contextual approach is one of the solutions to overcome the problems of social studies learning in the classroom. Teachers can relate the material contained in the curriculum to the real life of students. Students can begin to explore the material according to what they know is related to life in the social context that they know. When students state that social studies learning is boring, the main problem is not in social studies learning or the students themselves, but rather how the teacher presents the social studies material. Social studies learning is felt as abstract learning because students do not know or understand what is in the material. The material feels far from students' daily lives. Through a contextual approach, it can increase students' learning motivation (Akbar, 2018). For this reason, a contextual approach in learning can help students conceptualize their own knowledge by utilizing what they already know.

CONCLUSION

Although social studies has become a discipline, its teaching still seems separate, this is due to several factors including because teachers do not yet have good examples of integrating social studies in a particular topic, the qualifications of social studies teachers who still have diverse educational backgrounds even though they are in the same social studies group, and the presentation of material in the curriculum that has not integrated social studies in an integrated manner. Social studies is considered a boring learning and does not attract students' interest because the culture of society still considers social studies as a lesson that is less profitable or not directly related to money, in addition, the way teachers teach is still not student-centered, tends to be textbook and seems like an abstract lesson. For this reason, supervision is needed for teachers to improve competence and implement social studies learning based on a contextual approach can be one solution to this problem, namely students learn according to the environment they already know, so that learning social studies is no longer teacher-centered, using the environment as a source of learning and learning from students' own experiences.

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