



The Challenges of Learning Social Science in the "Merdeka" Curriculum in Elementary Schools

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Abstrak: The "Merdeka" curriculum is an educational approach that aims to pay attention to individual needs and encourage independence in learning. In the social studies learning context, Their Curriculum recognizes the importance of developing a comprehensive understanding of social, political, and economic issues that affect everyday life. Social science learning covers various aspects such as history, geography, economics, politics, and sociology. The challenge faced in social studies learning is to ensure that students understand the complexities and relationships between various concepts and phenomena in social studies. Students also need to learn about analytical and problem-solving skills that are relevant in social contexts. Another challenge is facing technological developments and globalization which can affect the way students obtain information and interact with the outside world. Social science learning needs to consider the integration of technology in the learning process to ensure students can understand and deal with social changes that occur. In addition, it is also important to ensure that social studies learning includes different perspectives and social experiences. In an increasingly heterogeneous society, students need to understand and appreciate the diversity of cultures, values and social systems that surround them. In facing this challenge, an active, collaborative, and problem-based learning approach can be an effective solution. Through this approach, students can engage in discussions, research, and real projects that are relevant to their daily lives. This will help them develop the deep understanding and skills needed to participate actively in society. In conclusion, Social Studies learning under the "Merdeka" Curriculum approach faces challenges in understanding the complexity of social issues, integrating technology, respecting diversity, and developing relevant skills. However, with an appropriate learning approach, students can overcome these challenges and become socially skilled and informed individuals.

Keywords: Elementary school; Learning challenges; Merdeka curriculum; Social science

Introduction

The "Merdeka" curriculum refers to concepts or learning ideas that are more independent and flexible. Learning Social Sciences in elementary schools is based on the broader goals in Education in the "merdeka" curriculum, especially in elementary schools which are based on the notion that education must be relevant, contextual, and prepare students to be involved in social, economic, and political life in diverse societies (Sulistiyosari et al., 2022). So social studies learning in that context can follow a similar approach. Independent and flexible social studies learning can provide space for

students to explore various topics relevant to their lives, involve them in discussions, research, and independent projects that interest them (Sardiman, 2010).

The need for relevant education must provide knowledge and skills that are relevant to students' lives. Social Studies provides an understanding of the social, historical, geographic, and civic aspects that are important for students in interacting with society. Social studies learning also involves systemic thinking skills, where students can see the bigger picture and connect various aspects in a wider context (Maryani, 2009). The formation of Identity and Citizenship in social studies learning can help students understand their identity as members of society and the state. They will learn about

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history, culture, values and norms that can shape their identity and their rights and obligations as citizens (Indraswati et al., 2020). Learning can encourage active learning methods that involve students directly in the learning process. This can be done through group discussions, independent research, field projects, simulations, role plays, and applying ITE. Active learning methods can provide assistance for students to be able to participate in developing collaborative skills, critical thinking, and linking concepts to real-life contexts (Susrianto & Putra, 2022).

Social studies can also assist in developing critical thinking skills. Social studies involve developing critical, analytical, and evaluative thinking skills. Through Social studies, students will be invited to analyze information, understand different perspectives, connect concepts, and make decisions based on critical thinking (Ibrahim, 2016). Then social studies can also increase social awareness providing an understanding of social, political and economic issues that exist in society. It aims to increase students' social awareness, strengthening understanding of social justice, human rights, and global issues. Learning that is integrated with the independent curriculum which can encourage integration between fields of learning (Hendri, 2020). Social studies allows integration with other subjects, such as language, mathematics, art, and science, so that students can see the close relationship between social studies and everyday life. Social studies learning involves discussing contemporary issues that are currently happening in the real world (Priantini et al., 2022). This can cover social issues such as poverty, climate change, human rights, international trade, global politics, and so on. Students are invited to understand these issues from various perspectives, and involve them in discussions and debates that involve arguments based on the knowledge and understanding they gain.

Implementation of social studies learning using the Problem Based Learning (PBL) method can be achieved because at the elementary school level, teachers introduce social, economic, cultural, ethnic and religious diversity, as well as the identity of the Indonesian nation. Meanwhile, at the junior and senior high school levels, the focus began to shift to critical education, where teachers divided students into several groups to analyze problems or problems in society. It is the unique diversity of the Indonesian nation that causes conflict (Hanafy, 2015). For this reason, students are asked to identify the causes, effects, and ways of resolving conflicts (Rufaida, 2017). The group discussion process aims to develop the ability to carry out joint activities and form independence and responsibility in carrying out work. In social studies learning, it involves an introduction to the diversity of the Indonesian nation to consider issues that arise in community settings, this

aims to explore the potential for critical reasoning. Students are asked to analyze information, evaluate by reflecting on their thoughts, and draw conclusions. In the process of studying sociology subjects, students must develop a creative attitude in analyzing community problems (Muslimin, 2012). So that students can create learning works that are unique, meaningful, useful and have an impact on society in the development of science. Based on the description that has been presented, it can be concluded that through social studies learning students can be equipped with knowledge of skills, attitudes, oral and several other social values that are useful for the community environment. Social science learning also teaches respect for diversity and tolerance for any differences (Adhani, 2014). In addition, it is also necessary to develop social awareness and social involvement of students so that they can find, understand and be able to solve various problems in their environment by thinking critically and assessing.

Method

This research method uses qualitative research, the approach used is descriptive which originates from literature studies which produce information on types of research that use notes and descriptive data (Zed, 2018). Data collection techniques were carried out by reading and reviewing various accurate literary sources, using the internet and social media which can be used to search for existing e-books, articles and journals.

Results and Discussion

Implementation of the Independent Curriculum in Social Studies Education Learning in Elementary Schools

Implementation of the independent learning curriculum project can be integrated with social learning at various levels of education, starting from elementary school, junior high school, senior high school, to tertiary level (University). Social studies learning objectives are to develop social values in everyday life (Setiwan, 2013). The formation of social sciences on the basis of reality and symptoms which is an interdisciplinary approach to aspects and disciplines of social science, namely politics, geography, economics, sociology, history, culture, and law. Therefore, social studies learning is essentially a process of developing the potential in the form of knowledge, skills, values, the process of developing students' knowledge, values, and social attitudes. With social courses, the importance of instilling values becomes a provision for students to be able to integrate and interact with the community environment. The achievement of social studies learning can be seen in various activities that show the use of various existing studies, analysis, criticism, application of thoughts,

relationships, designs, and modern values, implementation, current values, design, development, implementation construction, and most importantly, every student learning process must be guided by the most important process in order to integrate basic concepts through learning principles (Zoher, 2017). Application can help free and create space for thought. The principle of learning provides freedom of space for thinking. Developing students' abilities to achieve the desired learning outcomes. Every learning in the classroom, both theoretical and practical, of course, must focus on students. The principle of learning by creating freedom of thought will encourage students to specialize in learning according to their interests, talents and potential. Then also in social studies learning related to four dimensions, namely cognitive dimensions (knowledge), psychomotor dimensions (skills), affective dimensions (attitudes), and room for maneuver (Yulanda, 2018).

To achieve social studies learning aspects, social studies teachers must design lesson plans and choose methods, media and learning resources so that students can easily understand them. In accordance with freedom of thought, in this case the teacher can apply problem based learning (PBL) in the learning process of sociology subjects (Andayani et al., 2020). This method includes student activities to think critically and provide guidance on student skills in solving problems that are being faced both in the home, school and community environment. Then the Problem Based Learning (PBL) approach succeeded in providing space and freedom for students to gain new knowledge, new skills and social attitudes that will become the mainstream in the future. Education is a bridge to increase the value in students. Therefore, the teacher plays a role as a determinant of educational success in educating their students. The main thing that can be done, teachers must teach in the free school program by instilling spiritual values so that children become Indonesian students who believe in God Almighty and have good morals and ethics. From this point of view, studying social sciences contains spiritual values to shape the personality of religious students. Spiritual values are the main foundation for building a generation of supporters with personality. As an archipelagic country, Indonesia presents a diversity of ethnicities, cultures and religions. Such a rich diversity creates many conflicts within the community.

Therefore, through independent study of social sciences, teachers must cultivate diversity as a whole. So that in this case students as Indonesian students must be careful to maintain a noble cultural identity and develop an attitude of tolerance. There are 3 most important factors in building a plural profile of Pancasila students, namely knowledge of Pancasila and cultural appreciation, intercultural communication skills in

interactions with others, reflection and responsibility for diverse experiences (Andayani et al., 2020). This diversity creates a big difference in the community environment. Social studies studies focus more on diversity, especially national values, the diversity of ethnicities, races, religions, cultures and languages in Indonesia. Social studies learning implementation uses the Problem Based Learning Method. This can be achieved because at the elementary school level teachers can provide information about diversity, both covering social, ethnic, cultural, economic and religious aspects as well as providing knowledge about nationalism. Meanwhile, at the junior and senior high school levels, they switch to critical education, where educators can form students into groups to study various existing problems. The Indonesian nation has a unique diversity that makes it easy for conflicts to occur (Ibrahim, 2016). Thus, students are expected to be able to identify the causes, effects and ways of resolving conflicts. The purpose of the group discussion process is to try to develop joint activity skills and practice independence and responsibility in doing work.

Social studies includes the introduction of the diversity of the Indonesian nation to control things that arise in society, the aim is to explore the potential for critical thinking. Students are asked to analyze and evaluate information by considering their thoughts and making conclusions. In the process of studying sociology subjects, students must develop a creative attitude in analyzing community problems. So that students can create something unique, meaningful, useful and influential in society in the development of science. From this explanation it can be seen that by following social studies lessons can train students to have knowledge, skills, attitudes and social values that are useful for social life in society. Social science Learning also teaches respect for diversity and tolerance for differences. In addition, it is necessary to develop students' social awareness and social involvement so that they can find, understand and be able to solve various problems in their environment by thinking critically.

Global Issues and Challenges for Social Studies Education Learning

Social science is learning given to elementary school and junior high school levels that is integrated with economics, geography, history, and other studies. As material taught in schools, teaching Sociology is a process of adaptation or habituation to learning humanities and social knowledge as well as basic human activities that are arranged scientifically with educational/psychological goals. Social studies is unique because it has properties that are combined with history, geography, economics and other social sciences. The purpose of integration is to make Social studies more

significant in grouping material according to environmental aspects, characteristics, and needs of students to make it easier to analyze problems comprehensively and from different perspectives (Sapriya, 2017). The objectives of social science are: a) Basic information includes basic concepts such as: interrelatedness, cultural transition, collaboration and others; common spelling; a specific fact. b) thought processes to form concepts, general increase by induction; implementation of biological principles for knowledge acquisition (facts, concepts, generalizations). Compared attitudes, feelings, and sensitivity. c) the ability to place oneself in a multicultural society, a sense of security in expressing opinions and an open attitude, being willing to accept change, tolerance and sensitivity to verifiable and humane democratic values. d) Experience: learning skills and ability for collaboration. It is hoped that through Social studies learning that has been implemented it can produce good citizens (Ridwan, 2016).

Affirmation of Concepts and Learning Objectives of Social Sciences

Social Science learning can examine concepts, facts, generalizations related to learning social sciences. Social science subjects at the elementary level include material on history, geography, economics and sociology (Susrianto & Putra, 2022). From the social studies subject, students are expected to become responsible, peace-loving citizens, and social studies learning is structured in a comprehensive, systematic and integrated manner in learning towards success and maturity in social life in the future. From this approach students are expected to gain broad and deep experience in related fields of science. Social studies learning objectives, social studies subjects have the goal of developing awareness and concern for the environment as well as developing students' abilities in state life and making students become democratic societies and able to work to develop thinking skills, social skills, inquiry, building human values, and pluralism both on a national and global scale (Mahardika & Ramadhan, 2021). Other social studies learning objectives are for students to have concern and awareness for the environment and society, know basic concepts and be able to use methods from the social sciences which can then be used to solve problems that occur, be able to use models and thinking processes and be able to make decisions that can solve problems and problems in society, be able to pay attention to social issues and problems, and be able to make critical analysis and be able to take appropriate action, be able to develop their potential so that they are able to develop themselves so that they will be responsible for building society, motivate someone to act based on morality,

prepare students to become good citizens and develop their ability to make decisions (Setiwan, 2013).

Social science in character education in the "Merdeka" Curriculum

Character education comes from two words namely education and character. Education means effort that is carried out in a planned manner in creating a learning atmosphere that can develop the potential of students. Education aims to balance students' cognitive, affective, and psychomotor in accordance with national education goals. According to (Purnomo, 2014) character is a person's character, attitude or personality which is formed from the results of internalizing views and thinking. Character is formed from the community, family, peers and the school environment. Character education is an education system by cultivating the nation's cultural values which consist of aspects of knowledge, attitudes, actions, both towards God Almighty, both for oneself, society and the nation (Anshori, 2014). Character education is very important to form for the survival of a person in the long term and succeed in the future. Careful planning, appropriate learning approaches and methods are very important in education. Character education must be owned by all subject teachers and become an inseparable school culture. Character education must be taught to children because it is the first step to becoming a person who is intelligent, has good manners, is intellectually intelligent, emotionally intelligent and most importantly academic. From this explanation, with character education, students can place themselves in front of anyone and wherever they will be, and be able to respect and behave well towards others. All aspects of character have been listed in the educational curriculum that applies in schools.

Curriculum is a very important plan, especially in achieving national education goals. The curriculum must be in accordance with the times and the needs of the community in which the curriculum is implemented. The character education curriculum is currently very much needed in the sense that the curriculum has a character that must be focused on building the character of students (Julaeha, 2019). In intracurricular learning, the Independent Curriculum is a curriculum that contains more optimal time for students to improve their competence (Mulyana, 2022). Teachers can apply various learning methods to meet the needs and interests of students. The agenda for building student character is a project to strengthen the Pancasila profile (Kurniati et al., 2022). The Pancasila Student Profile exemplifies Indonesian students for lifelong learning who have broad competencies and behave in accordance with the values contained in Pancasila. Social Sciences or often called social science is one of the same learning objectives

as character education. The purpose of social studies learning is to help students become good citizens who can help themselves and others by providing knowledge and social awareness. To achieve this goal, learning activities include aspects of morality (affective) and responsibility as well as having aspects of knowledge and skills. Divine values, educational values, practical values, philosophical values, and theoretical values are values that must be applied in social studies learning. Social science learning also includes values that must be instilled in students (Fitriyah & Wardani, 2022). Because the values taught in social studies are in line with those taught in character education, that is why a teacher must teach aspects of character education when learning social studies. Social science learning in the independent curriculum can be carried out by including character values in the lesson plan prepared by the teacher. Teachers are given the freedom to vary interesting learning for students so they don't get bored. In the independent learning curriculum, teachers and students have the freedom to innovate and learn creatively in every learning activity. Efforts made by the teacher when implementing character education in social studies learning in the independent curriculum are by being a role model for students, and knowing the characteristics of students so that learning can take place well.

Efforts made by the teacher in improving character in the social studies learning independent curriculum which consists of: a) The teacher is a role model for students. b) Always prioritize class agreements, c) Implementation of character values in social studies lesson plans that are interesting and student-centered, d) The teacher reflects at the end of the lesson, e) Establishes good communication with students and parents (Rahmadayanti & Hartoyo, 2022). A teacher must have a patient, kind, self-sacrificing, assertive attitude, and be able to keep students' attention. When going to school, it is there that children will meet and interact with classmates, teachers, and other students. Here, children must be responsible, good behavior, and they will learn manners, such as greeting teachers and friends and refrain from making fun of them. In addition, teachers must be able to listen effectively and empathize with students in all situations. Good communication with parents is as important as good communication with teachers and guardians of students. This is because children's education starts at home and continues throughout their lives. So that this ultimately becomes the basis for the growth of the child's character and personality. Based on this, it can be seen that the independent learning curriculum already includes character education that can be applied to social studies learning. although in the independent learning curriculum social science is combined with natural science subjects to become natural sciences, it does not

reduce the teacher's ability to implement character values in that learning (Kemendikbud Ristek, 2021; Indarta et al., 2022). This independent learning policy has the intention that education or schools, teachers and students have the freedom to innovate, learn independently, and be creative.

Social Studies Learning Challenges in the Independent Curriculum

Some of the challenges faced in the independent curriculum include, first, the lack of facilities and infrastructure to support social studies learning. Lack of learning facilities and learning is an obstacle in social studies learning such as learning media, books, facilities, and laboratories (Saleh, 2020). In some schools, most students do not have book handles due to the limited number of books available. So that students take turns using it and a combination of two or more people uses one book. This is what makes most teachers still use the lecture method rather than using other methods. To add student notes with a shortage of books, some teachers also give assignments to record material so students can learn from their notebooks from school books that are used. The lack of facilities for things like this is of course complained by some students. They are not enthusiastic in studying social studies learning and prefer to play than study. Therefore, teachers must create other methods in order to make students more diligent and enthusiastic in studying. Second, Difficulty Understanding material outside the field of science. Social science learning in the independent curriculum is a combination of history, geography, sociology, and economics. The combination contained in social studies learning makes it difficult for teachers in elementary schools to provide all of this material to students (Rahmadayanti & Hartoyo, 2022). As we know, when every teacher majors in college, not all social studies learning materials are studied thoroughly but one by one, like some who are majoring in history, geography, economics, and sociology. So that teachers majoring in sociology will have difficulty teaching about economics, that's what makes it difficult for teachers and the material given to students is not optimal and students' understanding of social studies learning is still very lacking.

The next challenge is the social science learning system in the independent curriculum. Most teachers today find it very difficult to get out of their comfort zone or many still use the previous method, namely the lecture method, notes, repetition, presentation throughout teaching hours (Jannah & Rasyid, 2023). This is what makes students more passive in the classroom and of course bored with a lesson. In addition, most social studies teachers still have no independent curriculum experience (Kurniati et al., 2022). The lack of

teacher experience in this curriculum is of course a problem in itself. There are two obstacles experienced by teachers so that this happens, namely first, most teachers only hear explanations at school and do not immediately implement them, this makes it difficult for them to control their class when teaching. Second, they lack learning in college or it can be said that they are lazy to develop things they should be able to do and that is what makes most teachers lack the experience to follow the development of the existing curriculum. Regarding the lack of experience of an independent curriculum due to the experience of teachers while in college and also the way of teaching this independent curriculum was not carried out when the teacher was a student, student and student so that is what makes today's teachers do not understand the teaching methods used in this independent curriculum and also today's teachers are very minimal to read so they can become teachers who can use this method. The final challenge is the social studies teacher's learning skills in the independent curriculum. Nowadays there are still many social studies teachers who are lacking in upgrading themselves to more so that they are still unable to choose questions that are very capable of making students think logically because most of the teachers now still don't understand what the current hot question model means (Suryaman, 2020). And many teachers still use simple problem models such as repeating material from notes given and not developing the questions again.

Social Science learning strategies can increase the motivation of students to always be involved in learning and are encouraged to focus on understanding it, not just memorizing a subject matter so that students can achieve learning goals with appropriate competencies. Social science learning system in the independent curriculum. By using the independent curriculum students will be more active than the teacher. Therefore, teachers must always create a cooperative learning model that is in the form of group work so students can argue and think broadly not only from book material. Teachers play an important role in increasing students' understanding (Smith et al., 2016). If the social studies teacher can convey learning using a variety of methods, of course students will not get bored studying social studies and also don't feel sleepy, on the contrary, they will be enthusiastic and enthusiastic. Therefore, the teacher must be able to use all methods both in the form of discussions, questions and answers, and demonstrations. In the context of the independent curriculum, many social studies teachers have used this method to build an active classroom atmosphere because if students are in pleasant conditions while learning, it will have a good impact on students and they tend to want to study the material provided by the teacher and can follow the lesson until the time is over without

feeling bored and sleepy when given questions that are difficult or difficult, but instead their thoughts will emerge and be creative. The Ministry of Education and Culture explained that independent learning is a process that gives authority and freedom in learning for every educational institution. This means that the independent learning curriculum designs all learning strategies by providing educators and students in the process of achieving an education. Merdeka is a learning process carried out on a project-based basis that develops soft skills and the character of students so that they are in line with Pancasila lessons.

Conclusion

The implementation of the independent learning curriculum project can be integrated with social learning at various school levels. Social Studies Learning Objectives are to develop social values in everyday life. In the curriculum, social studies is one of the subject names given at elementary and junior high school level which is integrated with history, geography, economics and other subjects. As a school subject, teaching Sociology is a simplification or adaptation of the humanities and social sciences as well as basic human activities compiled and presented scientifically for educational/psychological purposes. Social studies learning objectives are to develop awareness of the environment and to make students a democratic society and able to work to develop thinking skills and other skills. The concept of an independent learning curriculum in line with national education goals and character education is increasingly being strengthened. In addition, social studies learning has an important role in shaping student character. Social studies learning forms students into good personalities, cares about the environment and society, and has a high sense of nationality. Character education in social science learning in the independent curriculum can be done in a simple way, namely making the teacher a good role model for his students and being able to implement character values in the lesson plans that have been made by the teacher. Character values can be implemented in lesson plans that have been considered according to the learning objectives to be achieved. Social studies learning challenges in the independent curriculum; (1) Lack of facilities and infrastructure in supporting social science learning. (2) Teachers' difficulties in understanding material outside the field of science. (3) The social studies learning system is still lacking to be developed in the independent curriculum. (4) Most social studies teachers still do not have independent curriculum experience. (5) Social studies teachers' learning skills in the independent curriculum are still lacking. As for social studies learning strategies in the independent curriculum; (1) Social

science learning system in the independent curriculum. (2) The methods used by educators must be varied. (3) And the teacher must be able to create a pleasant classroom atmosphere.

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