



Literature Review on Pre-Service Teachers' Understanding of Social Studies Learning in Elementary Schools

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Abstract: This study aims to identify and understand pre-service teacher candidates' understanding of the concept of social studies learning in elementary schools and find effective strategies to improve teacher creativity in the learning process. This study used a qualitative method with a literature study approach, collecting data from various sources such as articles, books, and other related research. The main findings show that a strong professional identity, continuous professional development, and supportive education policies are essential to improve the quality of social studies teaching. In addition, innovative teaching strategies such as gamification have proven effective in increasing student motivation and engagement. Diversification and inclusion in social studies teacher education and training were also identified as important factors. This research is expected to contribute significantly to improving the quality of basic education in Indonesia through more effective training and professional development programs for prospective teachers.

Keywords: Primary Education; Teacher Creativity; Social Studies Learning; Professional Development

Introduction

Primary school education is an important stage in child development that greatly affects the quality of Indonesia's human resources in the future. Children in primary school have the ability to deal with problems and complexity and an interest in understanding phenomena in a meaningful way. Creativity essentially involves noticing, knowing, and dealing with problems effectively and ethically (Rokmanah et al., 2022). Therefore, it is important to emphasize creative thinking at a basic level.

Supporting conditions are needed to develop learners' creativity, which includes creative teaching, creative schools (creative leadership), creative environment, and creative development in the national context. This is to save Indonesian citizens from problems, especially in the field of education. According to Sumantri et al (2023), one of the problems in education

is the lack of teacher creativity. Teacher creativity plays an important role in student motivation in the teaching and learning process. The purpose of developing creativity is to improve the quality of teaching. The development of creativity in teaching can be directed in three ways: encouraging teachers to participate in self-development activities, creating a creative and innovative environment, and encouraging students and teachers to create a conducive learning environment (Oktaviani, 2022).

Teaching is no longer about simply delivering information, but about creating an environment in which students participate to effectively achieve educational goals (Mayar et al., 2019). In the learning process, students need strategies that suit their goals to achieve optimal learning outcomes (Fitriyani et al., 2023). Therefore, it is necessary to increase and develop teacher creativity in managing educational programs with different teaching and learning strategies. Arwati

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and Oktaviani (2023) stated that creative teachers are scientific (expert) and independent individuals in the classroom.

Many factors must be considered in an effort to improve the quality of educators. These include teacher interest, student interest, methods, strategies, media, facilities and infrastructure, libraries, laboratories, environmental management, and the coaching model used. If teachers can implement more active, innovative, effective and fun learning models at every level of education, this will have an impact on the quality of learning and ultimately improve student academic achievement. The current condition of education in Indonesia is very concerning compared to other countries.

Primary school education is an important foundation in the formation of quality human resources. Teachers have an important role in developing students' creativity through innovative and participatory learning approaches. Enhancing teachers' creativity and creating a supportive learning environment are essential to achieving better education quality. Therefore, this research is important to identify and understand pre-service teachers' understanding of social studies learning concepts in primary schools. In addition, this study aims to find effective strategies that can enhance teachers' creativity in the learning process. Thus, the results of this study are expected to contribute significantly to improving the quality of basic education in Indonesia.

Method

This research is a qualitative research that produces descriptive data. To examine the problems that have been formulated, a literature study is used. Literature study involves collecting and reviewing data from articles, books, and other relevant sources. The problem-solving process in this research is carried out by critically and deeply examining the materials that support the research to present valid data.

According to Mestika (2014), there are several stages in conducting literature study research, namely: 1) listing the variables that need to be researched, 2) searching for variables on the subject of encyclopedia, 3) selecting the necessary materials, 4) checking the index of variables and topics, 5) searching for articles, books, and biographies, 6) reviewing and compiling library materials, 7) reading, recording, and organizing information, 8) writing the research, 8) writing the research, and 8) writing the research. Reading, recording, and organizing information, 8) Writing down research.

Result and Discussion

Result

This research revealed various important findings related to pre-service teachers' understanding and practices in learning social studies in elementary schools. Based on the literature review conducted, the following is a summary of the research results presented in Table 1.

1. *Teacher Professional Identity*

Hubbard (2019) suggests that a deep understanding of how professional educators develop and learn public scholarship is essential for pre-service teachers. Teachers' professional identity is formed through high-quality professional development, strong networks, membership in organizations, and recognition of their professional identity. This suggests that the formation of a strong professional identity can influence the quality of social studies teaching.

2. *Influence of Examination Policy and Curriculum*

Research by Heafner, Lipscomb, and Fitchett (2014) shows that state examination policies, curriculum content, teaching methods, and time allocation significantly influence students' opportunities to learn social studies. Existing educational policies can limit or expand students' learning opportunities and influence the pedagogical choices made by teachers, emphasizing the importance of policies that support effective and inclusive social studies learning.

3. *Marginalization of social studies learning*

Hubbard (2013) documents that pre-service teachers are often successful in planning and teaching social studies lessons during fieldwork practice, despite facing challenges of marginalization. This research shows that the importance of social studies integration in the primary school curriculum is often marginalized by an excessive focus on other subjects such as mathematics and literacy, which negatively impacts social studies learning.

4. *Social Studies Teacher Identity and Professional Focus:*

Research by Busey and Waters (2016) revealed that social studies teacher educators tend to mirror the social studies teacher population with a white male majority. Their research focused on democratic citizenship with little attention to multicultural issues. These findings suggest the need for greater diversification and inclusion in social studies teacher education and training to accommodate a variety of student perspectives and backgrounds.

5. *Motivation through Gamification:*

Yildiz, Topçu, and Kaymakci (2021) found that the implementation of gamification in pre-service social studies teacher education significantly increased participants' motivation and creative skills. Participants

reported that gamification made lessons more fun and competitive, showing great potential for increasing student engagement and understanding through this innovative teaching method. The Table 1 summarizes the findings from the literature reviewed.

Table 1. Research Results

Author	Article Title	Journal	Research Results
Janie Hubbard (2019)	K-6 pre-service teachers' emerging professional identities as social studies educators	The Journal of Social Studies Research	This research demonstrates the importance for pre-service teachers to understand how professional educators create and learn public scholarship. The relationship between high-quality professional development, networks, organizational membership, and professional identity was also identified as a key factor.
Tina L. Heafner, George B. Lipscomb, Paul G. Fitchett (2014)	Instructional practices of elementary social studies teachers in North and South Carolina	The Journal of Social Studies Research	This study found that state testing policies, curriculum content, delivery methods, and time allocation affect students' opportunities to learn social studies. These variables can limit or expand student opportunities and influence teachers' pedagogical choices.
Janie Hubbard (2013)	Social studies marginalization: Examining the effects on K-6 pre-service teachers and students	The Journal of Social Studies Research	Pre-service teachers reported success in planning and teaching social studies lessons during the practicum. This research documents the impact of social studies marginalization in K-6 schools.
Christopher L. Busey, Stewart Waters (2016)	Who are we? The demographic and professional identity of social studies teacher educators	The Journal of Social Studies Research	Findings suggest that social studies teacher educators tend to reflect a social studies teacher population with a white male majority, and a research focus on democratic citizenship with little attention to multicultural issues.
İsmail Yıldiz, Ersin Topçu, Selahattin Kaymakci (2021)	The effect of gamification on motivation in the education of pre-service social studies teachers	Thinking Skills and Creativity	The motivation of teacher candidates in the experimental group increased significantly after the gamification application, which was also assumed to improve their creative skills. Participants stated that gamification made lessons more fun and competitive.
Lydia Nganga, Amy Roberts, John Kambutu, Joanie James (2020)	Examining pre-service teachers' preparedness and perceptions about teaching controversial issues in social studies	The Journal of Social Studies Research	Research participants demonstrated limited critical awareness and conceptualization of teaching controversial issues before and after the Social Studies Methods course. The findings suggest the benefits of teaching controversial issues in a planned manner.
Ricky Dale Mullins Jr., Thomas Williams, David Hicks, Sara Brooke Mullins (2020)	Can we meet our mission? Examining the professional development of social studies teachers to support students with disabilities and emergent bilingual learners	The Journal of Social Studies Research	This research evaluates the average caseload of students with disabilities and bilingual learners and the utility of the professional development social studies teachers receive to support these students.
Sohyun An (2017)	Preparing elementary school teachers for social studies instruction in the context of edTPA	The Journal of Social Studies Research	The findings suggest a potential further decline in social studies in primary teacher education programs due to edTPA's focus on literacy and mathematics content pedagogy.
Timothy Patterson, Ishwar Bridgelal, Avi Kaplan (2022)	Becoming a social studies teacher: An integrative systems perspective on identity content, structure, and processes	Teaching and Teacher Education	Findings indicate interest in diverse teacher identities, including ethnic and cultural identities, sexual orientation, and civic values. This study proposes an integrative framework that conceptualizes social studies teacher identity as a complex dynamic system.

Author	Article Title	Journal	Research Results
Janie Hubbard, Oluseyi Matthew (2021)	Examining elementary social studies preservice teachers' dispositional thinking about museum pedagogy	The Journal of Social Studies Research	This research shows that prospective teachers' museum pedagogy dispositional thinking can be measured by three main dimensions, which support social studies teaching through the use of museum environments and artifacts.

Discussion

This research is important to identify and understand prospective teachers' understanding of the concept of social studies learning in primary schools. This understanding is an important basis in efforts to improve the quality of basic education in Indonesia. This research also aims to find effective strategies that can enhance teacher creativity in the learning process. Teacher creativity plays an important role in creating an innovative and participatory learning environment, which in turn can improve the quality of student learning.

The results show that a strong professional identity, supported by continuous professional development, is essential for pre-service teachers. In addition, education policies that support inclusive and effective social studies learning are necessary to ensure students get optimal learning opportunities. The challenge of social studies marginalization must be addressed by ensuring that social studies lessons receive equal attention in the curriculum.

The research also revealed that greater diversification and inclusion in social studies teacher education and training is urgently needed to reflect the various perspectives and backgrounds of students. Innovative teaching methods such as gamification have been shown to be effective in increasing student motivation and engagement, demonstrating that creative teaching strategies can deliver significant results.

This research also shows that an in-depth understanding of education policies and how they affect classroom practices is essential. Teachers need to be trained to navigate and implement educational policies in ways that support overall student learning.

Furthermore, the results of this study emphasize the importance of technology integration in social studies learning. Technology can be used as a tool to support interactive and collaborative learning, which can increase student engagement and help them understand social studies concepts better.

Thus, the results of this study are expected to contribute significantly to improving the quality of basic education in Indonesia. The insights gained from this study can be used by policy makers, educators, and educational institutions to design more effective training and professional development programs for prospective teachers, resulting in students who are knowledgeable,

creative, and ready to participate in an increasingly complex democratic society.

Conclusion

Overall, this research confirms the importance of deep and strategic understanding in social studies learning to create a productive and inclusive learning environment. Thus, it is hoped that the results of this study can provide valuable insights to improve the quality of basic education in Indonesia, as well as assist in designing more effective training and professional development programs for pre-service teachers:

First, professionalism in social studies education requires educators to have a deep understanding of how to help students achieve didactic, reflective, and affective goals. This is essential for producing thoughtful, productive, and ethical citizens. Basic education must emphasize the importance of social studies as an integral part of the curriculum to prepare children to participate in an increasingly diverse democracy (Hubbard, 2018).

Secondly, students' opportunities to learn social studies are strongly influenced by the time allocation, teaching methods, and content focus provided by teachers. Teachers' perceived lack of expertise in social studies education is often due to limited training, suggesting the need for more comprehensive and continuous training for pre-service teachers. Research by Tina et al (2014) suggests that these variables limit or expand students' opportunities to learn social studies, and may influence teachers' pedagogical choices.

Third, effective professional development (PD) is essential, especially focusing on students with disabilities (SWD) and emergent bilingual learners (EBL). Identifying specific criteria for effective PD and good communication with school districts can build a strong support network for educators. Increasing teacher motivation and creativity through innovative strategies such as gamification has shown positive results in improving student engagement and understanding (Ricky et al., 2019; Ismail et al., 2021).

Fourth, pre-service teachers need a comprehensive training approach that includes developmental teaching methods and a deep understanding of social studies content. The lack of prioritization of social studies at the basic education level indicates the need for more emphasis on the importance of social studies education

in the curriculum. The consequences of this trend are complex and widespread, affecting a new generation of teachers and K-6 students who consider social studies education less important (Passe, 2006; Hubbard, 2013).

Fifth, an integrative framework that conceptualizes social studies teacher identity as a dynamic and complex system of interdependent role elements can help strengthen their professional identity. Dispositional thinking about museum pedagogy shows great potential in enriching social studies learning experiences in elementary schools (Timothy, 2022; Hubbard, 2021).

Overall, this study confirms the importance of deep and strategic understanding in social studies learning to create a productive and inclusive learning environment. The results of this study are expected to provide valuable insights for policy makers, educators, and educational institutions in designing more effective training and professional development programs for pre-service teachers. With a better understanding of the challenges and opportunities in social studies learning, it is hoped that the quality of basic education in Indonesia can be significantly improved, resulting in students who are knowledgeable, creative, and ready to participate in an increasingly complex democratic society.

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Author Contributions

Deni Puji Hartono: Responsible for the conceptualization of the study, data collection, and literature analysis. Author 1 also plays a major role in writing and editing the final manuscript. Yuli Setiawati: Instrumental in developing the research methodology and data processing. Author 2 also assisted in the literature review and provided valuable input during the data analysis process.

Agnes Amila Wigati: Provided support in literature collection and drafting the methodology section and contributed to the drafting and editing of the manuscript.

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Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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