

THE APPLICATION OF SOCIAL STUDIES LEARNING IN JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL FOR UNDERSTANDING INTERNATIONAL CHALLENGES

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ABSTRACT

This study examines social studies (IPS) teaching strategies in junior high schools to understand the international challenges posed by globalization. The aim is to explore how IPS teachers integrate global issues into learning to foster students' awareness and understanding of international matters. A qualitative descriptive method, utilizing semi-structured interviews, was employed with three IPS teachers in a junior high school. The findings indicate that teachers employ contextual and problem-based approaches, such as incorporating current news, facilitating reflective discussions, and implementing group projects. Local cultural values and Pancasila remain foundational in teaching. Although implementation varies according to teacher initiative and resources, there is a positive trend towards IPS education that is more responsive to global issues. The study recommends developing more interactive curricula and enhancing teacher competencies to help students critically engage with global challenges.

Keywords: *Social Studies Learning, International Challenges, Globalization, Teaching Strategies, Junior High School.*

INTRODUCTION

Social Studies (IPS) education at the junior high school level has yet to fully support students in understanding the complex international challenges posed by globalization. One major challenge is that students often have a limited grasp of globalization in IPS, so there is a need for curricula and teaching approaches that are flexible and globally oriented to help students face future challenges more effectively (Agustin et al., 2023). As a result, teachers need to continuously explore and apply various teaching methods to make IPS lessons more engaging and meaningful for their students (Azril et al., 2023).

To ensure IPS remains relevant amid global changes, teachers must consistently seek out innovative teaching approaches and evaluate which methods resonate most effectively with their students. Globalization has interconnected countries socially, economically, and politically, therefore, IPS education should guide students in exploring these relationships through themes such as diplomacy, migration, and technological progress. Incorporating global issues into IPS is crucial for preparing students to address worldwide problems such as climate change and social inequality (Qasaye, 2023). Building teachers' understanding of global contexts is important, as it enables them to help students engage more deeply with international issues (Carter, 2020).

While theory suggests that IPS should integrate current and relevant global issues, teachers often face real-world challenges when applying this in classrooms. Many junior high school IPS teachers struggle to effectively utilize technology in their teaching, which hinders students' ability to grasp international topics fully. Limited access to technological resources in many Indonesian schools, especially in remote areas, restricts the use of digital learning tools that could expand students' global perspectives (Yustinus, 2023). Many teachers still find it challenging to try out fresh and meaningful teaching approaches that connect what students learn locally with what is happening globally, partly because they

rarely get access to proper training or workshops (Azahra & Susanti, 2025). The gap between theory and actual classroom practices clearly shows that teachers need more support. With the proper assistance, they can adapt IPS lessons in ways that better align with the global changes occurring today.

Encouraging teachers to use teaching strategies that connect local experiences to broader global themes can address these issues. Through this, students are more likely to engage with international challenges in relevant and thoughtful ways. Collaborative project-based learning offers a practical solution by fostering stronger relationships between teachers and students, encouraging critical thinking and teamwork, and increasing student participation in IPS (Sudarsono & Nur, 2023). Schools and teachers need to focus on updating the curriculum and enhancing teacher skills so education can keep pace with global changes (Utami et al., 2024).

Therefore, this study aims to explore the teaching methods used in Social Studies to support students in critically understanding global challenges. One practical approach is to integrate innovative team-based project learning with global citizenship education, which equips Indonesian students with the skills and perspectives needed to navigate complex global issues (Nugraha et al., 2024). Additionally, problem-based learning plays a key role in nurturing students' critical thinking skills, enabling them to independently analyze and respond thoughtfully to international topics (Lusmianingtyas & Sriyanto, 2022).

This research aims to design effective IPS teaching approaches that address global issues, assess the extent to which the IPS curriculum covers international topics, and propose teaching strategies aligned with a global context. To achieve this, educators need to develop contextual curricula, apply interactive teaching methods, integrate global perspectives, and continually improve teacher competencies to help students critically engage with the impacts of globalization (Agustin et al., 2023). By combining meaningful learning with goal-oriented curricula, this study hopes to offer sharper and more relevant evaluations of the Social Studies curriculum's ability to prepare students for challenges such as sustainability and social justice on the global stage (Markwick & Reiß, 2024).

METHODS

The study was conducted at a junior high school in Indonesia, with three Social Studies teachers serving as subjects who were selected due to their experience teaching international topics. This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach to gain a deeper understanding of the application of Social Studies (IPS) instruction in junior high schools (Septiana & Humaisi, 2022). The researcher employed semi-structured interviews to collect flexible and relevant information.

Data were gathered through interviews conducted over two weeks and analyzed descriptively, which involved reducing the data, presenting the findings, and drawing inferences. This approach provides a comprehensive analysis of IPS teaching methods in the field, yielding results that are easy to understand.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on Constructivist Learning Theory (Piaget, 1955, Vygotsky, 1978), students build their understanding of globalization through direct experiences and social interaction. Social Studies teachers who begin their lessons with contextual issues (such as local economic topics or social media trends) help students form new mental “schemas,” allowing them to interpret information through the lens of their own experiences rather than passively receiving it. Piaget emphasized that children learn by assimilating and accommodating new

knowledge into existing cognitive structures (Piaget, 1955), while Vygotsky highlighted the role of teacher scaffolding in helping students move from the zone of proximal development toward independent understanding (Vygotsky, 1978). Thus, the use of case studies, reflective discussions, and simulations adopted by the three teachers aligns with constructivist principles that prioritize active and meaningful learning.

The concept of Global Citizenship Education (GCED) by UNESCO (2015) emphasizes the development of critical thinking, empathy, and social responsibility in the context of global challenges. Social Studies teachers who incorporate issues like climate change, conflict, or the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into project-based learning are applying the four GCED pillars: cognitive, socio-emotional, behavioral, and spiritual. This approach ensures that students not only understand global facts but are also encouraged to act as agents of change. UNESCO (2015) recommends the use of current media (news, videos, social media) to keep learning relevant to the dynamic global context. By instilling values such as solidarity, tolerance, and global justice as narrated by the teachers, the Social Studies learning process in junior high schools has effectively become a full embodiment of GCED practice.

Interviews with three Social Studies instructors at the junior high school level revealed that understanding globalization and international concerns has become an important aspect of education. Each teacher had a different approach to introducing the concept of globalization to students, but all began with contextually relevant events. The first teacher employed case studies and discussions to teach, the second encouraged critical thinking about current events, and the third utilized simulations and multimedia to facilitate student learning. Collectively, these strategies demonstrate that global challenges were addressed not only as educational content but also as opportunities to foster critical thinking and emotional connection.

In explaining the influence of technology and social media, all respondents agreed that these are the main gateways through which students experience globalization. The first and second professors emphasized the positive impact of easy access to knowledge, as well as the potential negative implications of social media algorithms that may limit students' perspectives. The third instructor emphasized the importance of creating space for reflection and value-balancing in the classroom by explicitly stating that the prevalence of foreign content runs the danger of influencing cultural consumption patterns that deviate from local identity.

All three professors used different approaches to incorporate global issues into their Social Studies lessons. The first and second teachers incorporated global issues into economic and social themes, such as international trade and global inequality. The third teacher explicitly stated that almost every chapter of the curriculum was infused with global issues to help students develop an international mindset. This implies that incorporating global issues requires both the curriculum and the initiative of teachers to extend their pupils' perspectives.

The instructors provided students with specific examples to help them understand the immediate effects of globalization on the local economy. The first and second teachers discussed MSMEs and digital technology as opportunities in the era of globalization. The third teacher added the example of local startups, such as Gojek, as evidence that globalization can also drive domestic innovation. Through this approach, students are encouraged to see not only the challenges but also the economic opportunities that globalization presents.

In terms of learning resources, all three teachers actively used current news, articles, videos, and even social media as learning aids. The first teacher mentioned using economic news to link with Social Studies topics, while the second frequently used visual media to spark discussions. The third teacher even assigned projects based on documentation or reflection on global news. Such an approach demonstrates that modern media plays a crucial role in integrating theory and practice while also enriching the dynamic and contextual aspects of education.

Teaching Social Studies also places a strong emphasis on how local culture is influenced by globalization. The first and third teachers noted that students tend to understand different cultures better than their own, making it essential to connect lessons with local wisdom and values. The second teacher attempted to balance this by highlighting the positive aspects of cultural acculturation while still emphasizing the need to preserve national identity—all three integrated Pancasila values as a filter for assessing the effects of globalization wisely.

They also incorporated global issues such as international trade, migration, conflict, and climate change into their lessons. The first teacher introduced them through case studies and debates, the second encouraged students to investigate current events, and the third strengthened their understanding with simulations and movies. These three approaches illustrate that global concerns were not only presented informatively but also in ways that develop profound knowledge and emotions.

To encourage critical and solution-oriented thinking, all three teachers applied problem-based learning approaches. Students were presented with real-world issues and asked to provide solutions through discussions, essays, and group projects. The first teacher mentioned weekly assignments that required analysis, the second provided case studies at the end of each unit, and the third assigned social campaign projects related to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This approach inspires students to become change agents in their communities rather than merely being passive observers. The learning process also included topics like international collaboration, world peace, and Indonesia's participation in international forums. The first and second teachers highlighted the importance of international collaboration and Indonesia's participation in ASEAN and the UN.

Discussions on cultural diplomacy and Indonesia's proactive role in preserving world peace were added in the third. These courses broaden students' perspectives and show that Indonesia is more than just a developing nation, it is a major player in global affairs.

Teachers also imparted knowledge of global citizenship and empathy for global issues. They urged pupils to be concerned about global humanitarian issues, such as socioeconomic inequity, natural disasters, and refugee crises. The first educator linked this to the importance of solidarity, the second stressed tolerance between nations and the third presented the ideas of shared accountability and global justice. This demonstrates how social studies instruction promotes both the acquisition of information and character development.

As part of their active learning activities, teachers assigned projects such as group presentations, posters on global topics, or awareness campaigns. It was demonstrated that these exercises were practical in enhancing students' communication, critical thinking, and cooperative abilities while simultaneously increasing their level of interest. Teachers noted that students were more enthusiastic when given the space to express their ideas in creative and relevant ways.

Finally, all teachers linked their lessons to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly in the context of the environment, education, and social justice. They

utilized the SDGs as a tool to demonstrate that global challenges necessitate collective solutions and that students, as the younger generation, play a crucial role in addressing these challenges. This confirms that Social Studies learning at the junior high school level has evolved into a space for cultivating holistic and sustainable global awareness.

Finding

Based on interviews with three junior high school Social Studies (IPS) teachers, it was found that the majority of Social Studies learning implementations have been directed toward integrating global issues and strengthening students' international awareness. This indicates a continuity between theoretical perspectives that emphasize the importance of global education in the Social Studies curriculum and actual classroom practices. The teachers have made efforts to link learning with international challenges such as climate change, inter-state conflict, and global inequality, in line with the theories of Qasaye (2023) and Carter (2020), which advocate for enhancing global competencies in Social Studies instruction.

Nevertheless, the achievement of these objectives remains varied and highly dependent on the initiative and creativity of each teacher. Some teachers actively apply contextual approaches through projects, current news, and discussions on international issues, reflecting problem-based learning strategies as proposed by Lusmianingtyas and Sriyanto (2022). This suggests that interactive and contextual strategies are indeed being implemented in the learning process, albeit not yet evenly or systemically structured.

The study also found that teachers tend to connect global issues with Pancasila values, nationalism, and local cultural awareness, reaffirming the importance of preserving national identity amid globalization. This aligns with the argument of Markwick & Reiß (2024) that an effective Social Studies curriculum must be able to balance global knowledge with local values. Teachers encouraged students to think critically and reflectively about global issues without losing their cultural roots and national identity.

Teachers used news reports, videos, and articles to relate social studies material to real-world situations, teaching media usage in the process. This demonstrates a learning approach that is sensitive to world events, as suggested by Agustin et al. (2023). To demonstrate that the learning approach was not only educational but also interactive and solution-focused, teachers assisted students in creating projects or answering questions related to global issues.

It was discovered, therefore, that not every facet of the curriculum and instructional techniques has a global viewpoint. Some educators noted that the creation of globally oriented content was hampered by a lack of time, money, or policy support. This makes it difficult for educational institutions and legislators to allow greater room for innovation in instruction that seeks to improve students' global competencies.

Therefore, this study demonstrates that, in general, the theoretical frameworks presented in the introduction—such as the need for a contextual curriculum, interactive strategies, and teacher competency development—are reflected in the practice of Social Studies instruction at the junior high school level. Despite their shortcomings and ongoing difficulties, these implementation efforts have been a positive first step toward a more adaptable social studies curriculum.

CONCLUSION

This study reveals that Social Studies instruction at the junior high school level has increasingly integrated global issues and promoted students' international awareness through contextual and problem-based learning strategies. Teachers utilize current news,

multimedia resources, and local values, such as Pancasila, to help students critically understand global challenges. Although implementation varies depending on teacher initiative and available resources, these practices show a meaningful shift toward a more globally responsive Social Studies education. The findings underscore the importance of designing interactive curricula, enhancing teacher competence, and fostering meaningful connections between global and local issues to help students develop the skills and perspectives necessary in today's increasingly globalized world.

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