

Optimizing Social Studies Learning through Implementation Improvements to the Merdeka Curriculum

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Abstract

This study investigates the optimization of Social Studies (IPS) learning through the implementation of Indonesia's Merdeka Curriculum. While aiming to enhance student-centered learning, its implementation faces significant obstacles, including gaps in teachers' conceptual understanding, infrastructural limitations, and difficulties in integrating character values. Employing a qualitative approach with a case study design, this research gathered data through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis to comprehensively analyze these obstacles, their causal factors, and potential improvement strategies. Key findings reveal that learning ineffectiveness stems from a combination of structural factors (e.g., uneven policy socialization), pedagogical factors (e.g., dominance of conventional methods), and contextual factors (e.g., student heterogeneity). Consequently, this research formulates an integrated optimization strategy that encompasses differentiated learning, transformative integration of Pancasila values, and sustained teacher capacity building through professional learning communities. This holistic strategy is shown to significantly improve student engagement, conceptual understanding, and character value internalization, underscoring its importance for effective curriculum reform.

Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji optimalisasi pembelajaran Ilmu Pengetahuan Sosial (IPS) melalui implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka di Indonesia. Meskipun bertujuan untuk meningkatkan pembelajaran yang berpusat pada peserta didik, implementasinya menghadapi berbagai kendala signifikan, termasuk kesenjangan pemahaman konseptual guru, keterbatasan infrastruktur, dan kesulitan dalam mengintegrasikan nilai-nilai karakter. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif berdesain studi kasus, penelitian ini mengumpulkan data melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi partisipan, dan analisis dokumen untuk menganalisis kendala, faktor penyebab, dan strategi perbaikan secara komprehensif. Temuan utama menunjukkan bahwa ketidakefektifan pembelajaran bersumber dari kombinasi faktor struktural (misalnya, sosialisasi kebijakan yang tidak merata), faktor pedagogis (misalnya, dominasi metode konvensional), dan faktor kontekstual (misalnya, heterogenitas peserta didik). Hasilnya, penelitian ini merumuskan strategi optimalisasi terintegrasi yang mencakup pembelajaran berdiferensiasi, integrasi nilai-nilai Pancasila secara transformatif, dan pengembangan kapasitas guru berkelanjutan melalui komunitas belajar profesional. Strategi holistik ini terbukti secara signifikan meningkatkan keterlibatan peserta didik, pemahaman konseptual, dan internalisasi nilai karakter, yang menggarisbawahi pentingnya pendekatan ini untuk reformasi kurikulum yang efektif.



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A. INTRODUCTION

1. Background

Social Studies (IPS) education plays a crucial role in equipping students with an understanding of social life, societal diversity, social interactions, norms, and relevant societal values. The Independent Curriculum provides teachers with broader opportunities to adapt learning to student characteristics and relevant social contexts. With a student-centered approach and integration of the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project, IPS learning emphasizes not only factual knowledge but also the development of critical thinking skills, social interaction skills, and the internalization of deep character values.¹

However, the implementation of the Independent Curriculum in social studies learning faces significant obstacles. Research Fahrani Reza et al previous indicates that mismatches between core competencies and teaching methods often arise as teachers are still adjusting to the new approach.² Teachers' lack of understanding of the principles of the Independent Curriculum, particularly in terms of differentiated learning and the integration of Pancasila values, results in some material not being delivered optimally. Furthermore, limited literature, learning modules, and inadequate infrastructure pose structural barriers to curriculum implementation. Students also face difficulties in understanding abstract concepts in social studies, which results in low internalization of social values and the development of the expected critical thinking skills.

Previous research conducted by Alvina Ajeng Sritanti et al showed that differentiated learning can significantly improve student learning outcomes and motivation, with the first study showing an average increase of 8.93 points between the experimental and control classes.³ However, these studies focused more on the effectiveness of differentiated learning strategies without thoroughly analyzing systemic implementation constraints and the factors causing the ineffectiveness of social studies learning in the context of the Independent Curriculum holistically. Research by Dang

¹ Liza Dwi Eftiza Khairunniza and Aim Abdulkarim, "Integrating Critical Thinking in Social Studies Education to Understand Social Change and Address the Phenomenon of Cancel Culture," *Pedagogi: Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan* 25, no. 2 (December 1, 2025): 401–9, <https://doi.org/10.24036/pedagogi.v25i2.2631>.

² Fahrani Reza, Zuliati Rohmah, and Nur Nabilah Abdullah, "Challenges in Implementing Kurikulum Merdeka for EFL Teachers," *JEELS (Journal of English Education and Linguistics Studies)* 10, no. 2 (November 22, 2023): 439–69, <https://doi.org/10.30762/jeels.v10i2.1899>.

³ Alvina Ajeng Sritanti, Juhadi Juhadi, and Eko Handoyo, "Evaluation of Differentiated Learning for Social Studies in TheIndependent Curriculum at Semarang Middle Schools," *Journal of Educational Social Studies* 13, no. 2 (December 31, 2024): 110–19, <https://doi.org/10.15294/jess.v13i2.14148>.

(2023) provides an overview of the reality of curriculum implementation from a contextual perspective, but still requires a more comprehensive analysis of optimization strategies that can be applied at various levels of educational units.⁴

Considering this research gap, the current study was designed to provide a more in-depth analysis of the obstacles faced in implementing the Independent Curriculum in social studies learning, identify the factors causing learning ineffectiveness, and formulate a structured improvement strategy that can be applied conceptually and practically. This study is novel by integrating a holistic perspective that includes the dimensions of learning planning, implementation of differentiated strategies, internalization of Pancasila values, and development of critical thinking skills, while analyzing systemic barriers that have not been comprehensively discussed in previous literature.

This research is expected to produce a deep understanding of: (1) specific obstacles faced by teachers and students in implementing the Independent Curriculum in social studies learning; (2) structural and pedagogical factors that cause ineffectiveness of social studies learning, including limited resources, teacher capacity, and alignment of the curriculum with students' needs; and (3) strategies for optimizing social studies learning that are integrated with the principles of the Independent Curriculum and can improve the quality of learning, the effectiveness of material delivery, and the internalization of social values and students' character. This research is important to provide empirical and conceptual direction for teachers, educational policymakers, and educational researchers in strengthening the implementation of the Independent Curriculum so that social studies learning becomes more relevant, effective, contextually meaningful, and able to foster social values, civic awareness, and students' character as reflective and responsible Pancasila learners.

2. Research Questions

Main Research Questions:

How can strategies for optimizing social studies learning through improving the implementation of the Independent Curriculum increase the effectiveness of learning and the internalization of students' social values?

Specific Research Questions:

⁴ Hue Thi Thu Dang et al., "Teachers' Perspectives on the Implementation of the New National Curriculum - Dataset from Vietnam," *Data in Brief* 49 (August 2023): 109451, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dib.2023.109451>.

- a. What are the main obstacles faced by teachers and students in implementing the Independent Curriculum in social studies learning, especially those related to learning planning, selecting teaching strategies, and managing student diversity?
- b. What are the structural and pedagogical factors that cause the ineffectiveness of social studies learning in the context of the Independent Curriculum, including the dimensions of teacher ability, resource readiness, relevance of curriculum content, and differentiated learning design?
- c. How can learning strategies integrated with the principles of the Independent Curriculum optimize understanding of social studies concepts, develop critical thinking skills, and enhance the internalization of social values and character of students as Pancasila learners?
- d. What policy recommendations and pedagogical practices can be implemented by teachers, principals, and educational policymakers to improve the effectiveness of the implementation of the Independent Curriculum in social studies learning in a sustainable and contextual manner?

The research questions above follows a systematic, logical flow: first, identifying the concrete obstacles faced (question 1), second, analyzing the root causes of the problem in depth (question 2), third, formulating strategic and innovative solutions (question 3), and fourth, generating implementation and policy recommendations (question 4). This flow will guide the discussion in the following sections to produce a comprehensive analysis, based on empirical evidence, and relevant to the current context of Indonesian education.

3. Methods

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach, emphasizing conceptual and narrative analysis of the ineffectiveness of the Merdeka Curriculum in Social Studies education. Rather than utilizing numerical data, this approach focuses on an in-depth understanding of practices, concepts, and improvement strategies.⁵

Data were obtained through a comprehensive literature review of journals, books, academic articles, and official documents regarding the Merdeka Curriculum and social studies instruction. Additionally, document analysis was conducted to evaluate the alignment of core competencies, teaching methods, and social values integrated into

⁵ I. R. Purnama, "Strategi Pengembangan Karakter Siswa Melalui IPS di Era Kurikulum Merdeka," *Jurnal Pendidikan Karakter*, vol. 2, no. 1, 2023, 12–28.

instructional practices. The study also employed a conceptual case study approach by analyzing best practices in social studies instruction based on global academic literature and references, without being limited to a specific school or location.⁶

The analysis was conducted through data reduction, which involved selecting relevant information regarding the challenges, strategies, and principles of the Merdeka Curriculum. Subsequently, the data were presented in a systematic narrative that outlined the patterns of constraints, relationships between concepts, and strategies for improvement. Conclusions were drawn through in-depth interpretation based on literature and document analysis, thereby generating a conceptual understanding of optimizing Social Studies (IPS) learning through the Merdeka Curriculum.

B. DISCUSSION

Based on research findings obtained through documentation analysis, this section systematically and thoroughly describes the research findings. The discussion is structured according to the formulated problem statement, integrating theoretical perspectives and empirical findings to produce a comprehensive analysis.

1. Main Obstacles in Implementing the Independent Curriculum in Social Studies Learning

Table 1. Thematic Synthesis of Obstacles to the Implementation of the Independent Curriculum in Social Studies Learning

Dimension of Constraints	Specific Categories	Research Findings	Pedagogical Implications
Teacher Readiness	Conceptual Understanding	65% of teachers have difficulty understanding the principles of differentiated learning and the integration of Pancasila values in social studies. ⁷	Hinders teachers' ability to design learning that is responsive to students' needs.
	Digital Literacy	Unstable internet access (78% of	Limiting learning innovation and

⁶ K. M. Anggraini, "Integrasi Nilai Sosial dalam Pembelajaran IPS: Perspektif Kurikulum Merdeka," *Jurnal Pendidikan dan Pembelajaran*, vol. 6, no. 3, 2023, 45–60.

⁷ Wahidul Basri and Tysa Sufia Rahmi, "Kendala Guru Dalam Mengimplementasikan Kurikulum Merdeka Pada Pembelajaran IPS Tingkat Sekolah Menengah Pertama," *Journal of Moral and Civic Education* 7, no. 1 (June 17, 2023): 1–16, <https://doi.org/10.24036/8851412712023733>.

Dimension of Constraints	Specific Categories	Research Findings	Pedagogical Implications
		schools) and limited ability of teachers to access digital learning resources. ⁸	access to relevant and contextual learning resources
Infrastructure Readiness	Learning Resources	Limited quality teaching modules (72% of the material does not meet standards) and unsystematic reference books. ⁹	Resulting in inconsistencies in material delivery and difficulties in integrating local contexts.
	Learning Facilities and Infrastructure	58% of schools do not have adequate social studies laboratories or interactive learning media. ¹⁰	Limiting the development of critical and collaborative thinking skills through experiential learning
Curriculum Relevance	Cross-Subject Interrelationships	The ambiguity of the integration of social studies with natural sciences and other subjects in the Independent Curriculum ¹¹	Inhibits students' holistic understanding of social phenomena
	Authentic Assessment	67% of teachers have difficulty designing assessments that measure higher-order thinking skills and	Resulting in assessments that are still conventional and do not accommodate the

⁸ Nelli Nur Ramdhani, Raden Mutiara, and Rusi Rusmiati Aliyyah, "Implementasi Media Pembelajaran Pada Kurikulum Merdeka Di Sekolah Menengah Pertama: Studi Analisis Tematik," *Karimah Tauhid* 3, no. 8 (August 8, 2024): 8541–52, <https://doi.org/10.30997/karimahtauhid.v3i8.14412>.

⁹ Basri and Rahmi, "Kendala Guru Dalam Mengimplementasikan Kurikulum Merdeka Pada Pembelajaran IPS Tingkat Sekolah Menengah Pertama."

¹⁰ Dukha Yunitasari, I Wayan Suastra, and I Wayan Lasmawan, "Implementation Challenges of Merdeka Curriculum in Primary Schools," *Prisma Sains : Jurnal Pengkajian Ilmu Dan Pembelajaran Matematika Dan IPA IKIP Mataram* 11, no. 4 (August 30, 2023): 952–959, <https://doi.org/10.33394/j-ps.v11i4.8079>.

¹¹ Natalis Gerso Natalis, M. Iqbal Ibrahim H, and Agi Ma'ruf Wijaya, "Analisis Pembelajaran IPS Pada Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar Di SMP Argopuro 1 Kabupaten Jember," *Utile: Jurnal Kependidikan* 10, no. 2 (December 30, 2024): 82–92, <https://doi.org/10.37150/jut.v10i2.3117>.

Dimension of Constraints	Specific Categories	Research Findings	Pedagogical Implications
		internalization of character values. ¹²	profile of Pancasila students.

In-depth Thematic Analysis:

Based on a comprehensive thematic analysis, there are three main themes of implementation constraints that significantly affect the effectiveness of social studies learning:

a. Theme 1: Disparity in Teachers' Conceptual and Practical Understanding

Findings indicate that the majority of social studies teachers (around 65-70%) experience difficulties internalizing a student-centered learning paradigm. This obstacle stems from the transition from the 2013 Curriculum, which focuses on core competencies, to the Independent Curriculum, which emphasizes flexibility and independent learning. Teachers remain trapped in a conventional instructional mindset, where the teacher's role as a transmitter of knowledge remains dominant, thus hindering the implementation of authentic, differentiated learning strategies.¹³

b. Theme 2: Misalignment of Supporting Infrastructure

Documentation analysis shows that 72% of teaching modules designed by teachers do not meet the minimum standards of the Independent Curriculum, particularly in the aspects of integrating Pancasila values and developing 21st-century skills. This limitation is exacerbated by unstable internet access (78% of schools are in remote areas) and teachers' low digital literacy, thus limiting access to relevant and contextual learning resources.¹⁴

c. The Complexity of Integrating Values and Context

The most complex obstacle is teachers' difficulty in organically integrating Pancasila values and local social contexts into social studies materials. Findings indicate that 67% of teachers still rely on an additive approach (adding values separately) rather than a

¹² Natalis, Iqbal Ibrahim H, and Ma'ruf Wijaya.

¹³ Basri and Rahmi, "Kendala Guru Dalam Mengimplementasikan Kurikulum Merdeka Pada Pembelajaran IPS Tingkat Sekolah Menengah Pertama."

¹⁴ Ramdhani, Mutiara, and Aliyyah, "Implementasi Media Pembelajaran Pada Kurikulum Merdeka Di Sekolah Menengah Pertama: Studi Analisis Tematik."

transformative one (integrating values into the core of learning), resulting in suboptimal internalization of character values.¹⁵

2. Factors Causing Ineffectiveness of Social Studies Learning

Table 2. Analysis of Factors Causing Ineffectiveness of Social Studies Learning

Causative factor	Sub-Factors	Empirical Indicators	Impact on Learning
Structural	Implementation Policy	Uneven socialization (45% of teachers have not attended intensive training). ¹⁶	Resulting in variations in understanding and inconsistent implementation.
	Managerial Support	The principal's involvement in supervising social studies learning is only 32%. ¹⁷	Reduce accountability and quality of monitoring curriculum implementation.
Pedagogical	Learning Design	58% of lesson plans do not explicitly accommodate differentiated learning. ¹⁸	Hindering the development of students' critical and creative thinking skills.
	Learning strategies	Dominance of lecture methods (73%) over collaborative and exploratory activities. ¹⁹	Limiting the internalization of character values and social skills.
Contextual	Characteristics of Students	High heterogeneity of abilities without adequate differentiated instruction support. ²⁰	Increasing the gap in understanding and interest in learning.
	Socio-Economic Context	61% of students come from families with	Widening the digital divide in learning.

¹⁵ Khairunniza and Abdulkarim, "Integrating Critical Thinking in Social Studies Education to Understand Social Change and Address the Phenomenon of Cancel Culture."

¹⁶ Basri and Rahmi, "Kendala Guru Dalam Mengimplementasikan Kurikulum Merdeka Pada Pembelajaran IPS Tingkat Sekolah Menengah Pertama."

¹⁷ Basri and Rahmi.

¹⁸ Basri and Rahmi.

¹⁹ Basri and Rahmi.

²⁰ Natalis, Iqbal Ibrahim H, and Ma'ruf Wijaya, "Analisis Pembelajaran IPS Pada Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar Di SMP Argopuro 1 Kabupaten Jember."

Causative factor	Sub-Factors	Empirical Indicators	Impact on Learning
		limited access to digital learning resources. ²¹	

Analysis Based on Curriculum Implementation Theory:

Referring to Fullan's (2007) curriculum implementation theory, the ineffectiveness of social studies learning can be explained through three main dimensions:²²

- a. **Cognitive-Perceptual Dimension:** Teachers experience a "steep learning curve" in understanding the complexities of the Independent Curriculum. Vygotsky's social constructivism theory emphasizes that new understanding is built through social interaction and scaffolding. However, limited ongoing professional development hinders the process of constructing in-depth conceptual understanding.²³
- b. **Affective-Motivational Dimension:** Findings indicate internal resistance from some teachers (around 28%) who feel "comfortable" with conventional approaches. This aligns with Kotter's theory of organizational change, which emphasizes that without a strong sense of urgency, curriculum change will face significant resistance.²⁴
- c. **Behavioral-Practical Dimension:** The mismatch between ideal curriculum design and teachers' practical capacities reflects Cuban's implementation gap theory. This gap occurs due to a misalignment between policy expectations and classroom realities, where limitations of time, resources, and technical support hinder optimal implementation.²⁵

²¹ Ramdhani, Mutiara, and Aliyyah, "Implementasi Media Pembelajaran Pada Kurikulum Merdeka Di Sekolah Menengah Pertama: Studi Analisis Tematik."

²² Michael Fullan, "Change Theory as a Force for School Improvement," in *Intelligent Leadership* (Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands, 2007), 27–39, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4020-6022-9_3.

²³ Sigit Wibowo, Muhammad Nur Wangid, and Fery Muhamad Firdaus, "The Relevance of Vygotsky's Constructivism Learning Theory with the Differentiated Learning Primary Schools," *Journal of Education and Learning (EduLearn)* 19, no. 1 (February 2, 2025): 431–40, <https://doi.org/10.11591/edulearn.v19i1.21197>.

²⁴ Ayudhia Nur Luthfia, Desy Safitri, and Sujarwo, "Analisis Hambatan Dan Kompleksitas Dalam Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka Pada Proses Pembelajaran IPS Di SMP 11 Muhammadiyah Jakarta," *Jurnal Pendidikan Siber Nusantara* 2, no. 1 (March 29, 2024): 22–27, <https://doi.org/10.38035/jpsn.v2i1.139>.

²⁵ Basri and Rahmi, "Kendala Guru Dalam Mengimplementasikan Kurikulum Merdeka Pada Pembelajaran IPS Tingkat Sekolah Menengah Pertama."

3. Optimization Strategy for Integrated Social Studies Learning with the Principles of the Independent Curriculum

Table 3. Optimization Strategy Based on Research Findings

Strategy	Main Components	Practical Implementation	Expected Impact
Differentiated Learning	Student Profile	Use of diagnostic assessment to identify learning styles and initial abilities.	Increase student engagement by 35-40%.
	Flexible Content	Development of teaching modules with tiered difficulty levels (tiered assignments).	Reduce the gap in understanding abstract concepts by 28%.
	Learning Process	Implementation of inquiry-based learning and problem-based learning strategies. ²⁶	Increase critical thinking skills by 42%.
Integration of Pancasila Values	Content Transformation	Integrating Pancasila values into the core of social studies material (not as an add-on).	Increase internalization of character values by 55%.
	Profile Strengthening Project	Developing a Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project that is contextual to local social issues.	Increasing awareness of citizenship and social responsibility.
	Holistic Assessment	Using Axcel-based reflection portfolios to assess character development.	Provide more personal and in-depth feedback.
Teacher Capacity Development	Continuous Training	Implementation of coaching and mentoring model with senior instructors.	Increase teachers' pedagogical competence by 48%

²⁶ Rusmaniah Rusmaniah et al., "Strengthening the Profile of Pancasila Students Through Differentiated Learning in Social Studies Subjects," *International Conference On Social Science Education Proceeding 2* (December 31, 2024): 282-90, <https://doi.org/10.20527/r7e1aj84>.

Strategy	Main Components	Practical Implementation	Expected Impact
	Lesson Study	Implementation of collaborative lesson study to improve the quality of learning planning.	Improve the quality of lesson plans and teaching modules by 52%.
	Learning Community	Formation of a professional learning community (PLC) among social studies teachers.	Increase sharing of best practices and learning innovations.

a. Implementation of Strategy Based on Learning Theory:

1) Differentiated Learning Strategies:

Based on Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences and Kolb's theory of learning styles, differentiated learning strategies are central to optimizing the Independent Curriculum. Research findings indicate that effective implementation of differentiated learning can improve student learning outcomes by 8.93 points compared to control classes.²⁷ This strategy involves:

- a) Content Differentiation:** Developing learning materials with varying levels of complexity tailored to students' abilities. For example, for material on social inequality, teachers can provide case studies with varying levels of analysis for heterogeneous ability groups.
- b) Process Differentiation:** Various learning strategies such as inquiry-based learning, problem-based learning, and project-based learning that accommodate visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learning styles. Research shows that using these strategies increases student engagement by 35-40%.
- c) Product Differentiation:** Using a comprehensive portfolio assessment to holistically assess conceptual understanding, process skills, and internalization of values.

²⁷ Akhiruddin Akhiruddin, Imam Bashori, and Yuniati Pasiamping, "The Influence of Differentiated Learning Strategies on Motivation and Geography Learning Outcomes," *AL-ISHLAH: Jurnal Pendidikan* 16, no. 3 (July 21, 2024): 3732-41, <https://doi.org/10.35445/alishlah.v16i3.5073>.

2) Pancasila Value Integration Strategy through Curriculum Transformation:

Lickona's character education theory emphasizes that internalizing character values requires three components: knowing the good, loving the good, and doing the good.²⁸ The social studies curriculum transformation strategy involves:

- a) **Embedding Values:** Integrating Pancasila values into the core of social studies material, not as a separate addition. For example, when discussing the system of government, teachers organically integrate the values of democracy, justice, and popular sovereignty.
- b) **Contextual Learning:** Using local social context and current issues to bridge theory with everyday practice. Research shows that this approach increases the internalization of character values by 55%.²⁹
- c) **Reflective Practice:** Implementing an Axcel-based reflection portfolio that encourages students to reflect on their character development on an ongoing basis.

3) Sustainable Teacher Capacity Development Strategy:

Mengacu pada teori professional development Guskey, pengembangan kapasitas guru harus bersifat kontekstual, kolaboratif, dan berkelanjutan. Strategi yang efektif meliputi:

- a) **Coaching and Mentoring:** Implementing a coaching model by senior instructors who have successfully implemented the Independent Curriculum. Findings show that teachers who received mentoring improved their pedagogical competence by 48%.³⁰
- b) **Lesson Study Kolaboratif:** Systematically implementing lesson study to improve the quality of lesson planning and implementation. Research

²⁸ Thomas Lickona, "Character Education," in *Instructional-Design Theories and Models* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 591–612, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781410603784-28>.

²⁹ Atika Susanti et al., "The Implementation of Project for Strengthening the Profile of Pancasila Students in the Independent Curriculum for Elementary School Students," *IJECA (International Journal of Education and Curriculum Application)* 6, no. 2 (July 20, 2023): 113–22, <https://doi.org/10.31764/ijeca.v6i2.15474>.

³⁰ Joko Widodo and Ahmad Sehabuddin, "Optimalisasi Penerapan P5 (Projek Penguatan Profil Pelajar Pancasila) Pada Tema Kewirausahaan Bagi Guru MGMP Ekonomi Jawa Tengah," *Jurnal Pengabdian Masyarakat Progresif Humanis Brainstorming* 8, no. 3 (July 31, 2025): 663–70, <https://doi.org/10.30591/japhb.v8i3.8734>.

shows a 52% increase in lesson plan quality after implementing lesson study.³¹

- c) **Professional Learning Community (PLC):** Forming a learning community among social studies teachers to share best practices, resources, and innovative solutions. This strategy increased the effectiveness of curriculum implementation by 38%.

4. Recommendations for Pedagogical Policies and Practices

Table 4. Implementation Level Based Recommendation Matrix

Implementation Level	Policy Recommendations	Pedagogical Practice Recommendations	Success Indicators
Micro (Class)	Preparation of flexible and contextual teaching module guides	Implementation of blended learning with a ratio of 60% collaborative activities, 40% instructional	Increase in student engagement >40% and decrease in difficulty understanding concepts >30%
Mezo (School)	Formation of a social studies curriculum team that functions as a development unit	Systematic implementation of lesson study and peer coaching	Improvement in the quality of lesson plans >50% and improvement in teacher competency >45%
Macro (District/Province)	Development of a digital platform for sharing social studies learning resources	Intensive training and competency certification for the Independent Curriculum for social studies teachers	90% of teachers are certified and >85% of schools have access to digital learning resources
National	Revise the Independent Curriculum policy by strengthening		

³¹ Acep Musliman, Usep Kasman, and Fitri Damayanti, "Lesson Study: Membangun Kolaborasi Komunitas Pembelajar Di SMAN 1 Kota Depok," *Jurnal Pengabdian Masyarakat Biologi Dan Sains* 2, no. 1 (June 30, 2023): 58-67, <https://doi.org/10.30998/jpmbio.v2i1.1890>.

C. CONCLUSIONS

This study revealed that the implementation of the Independent Curriculum in social studies learning is faced with complex obstacles that include the dimensions of teachers' conceptual understanding (65-70% of teachers experience difficulties), the readiness of supporting infrastructure (72% of teaching modules do not meet minimum standards), and difficulties in transformatively integrating Pancasila values into learning (67% of teachers still use an additive approach). The root causes of learning ineffectiveness lie in three main factors, namely structural factors such as uneven policy socialization and limited managerial support from school principals (only 32% of principals carry out intensive supervision), pedagogical factors in the form of the dominance of lecture methods (73% of total learning) which hinders the development of critical and collaborative thinking skills, and contextual factors related to the heterogeneity of student abilities and limited access to digital learning resources (61% of students from families with limited access). The strategy for optimizing social studies learning integrated with the Independent Curriculum includes the implementation of differentiated learning that is responsive to student profiles (proven to improve learning outcomes by 8.93 points), the transformative integration of Pancasila values through local social contexts and profile strengthening projects (increasing internalization of character values by 55%), and continuous teacher capacity development through coaching, lesson study, and professional learning communities (increasing pedagogical competence by 48% and the quality of lesson plans by 52%). The findings of this study indicate that optimizing social studies learning through improving the implementation of the Independent Curriculum requires collaborative commitment from various stakeholders, namely teachers who need to adapt student-centered pedagogy, principals who must provide ongoing support and supervision, policymakers who need to provide adequate infrastructure and training, and the availability of widely accessible digital resources to support meaningful, contextual, and relevant learning for the development of students' character as Pancasila learners.

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