

# The Role of Social Science Education in Shaping Student Understanding of Society

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## Abstract

*This study investigates the impact of reinstating high school tracking for the 2025/2026 academic year on social science education in Indonesia. Amidst digital saturation and declining PISA 2022 scores, the research employs a qualitative meta-synthesis of recent educational policies and literacy indices. Findings indicate that while tracking addresses academic continuity, it fails to inherently resolve crises in critical thinking or misinformation vulnerability. The study proposes a framework integrating digital citizenship and critical pedagogy, leveraging the Indonesian guyub culture through the Collective Resonance Communication Model (CRCM). This approach transforms social science from rote memorization into a mechanism for navigating the post-truth public sphere. Ultimately, the effectiveness of social science education depends on fostering social intelligence and ethical agency. By bridging national identity with global digital engagement, this framework equips students to address complex social problems. The research concludes that systemic pedagogical shifts are vital for achieving the visionary Golden Indonesia 2045.*

## Abstrak

Penelitian ini menyelidiki dampak pemberlakuan kembali penjurusan SMA tahun akademik 2025/2026 terhadap pendidikan IPS di Indonesia. Di tengah saturasi digital dan penurunan skor PISA 2022, penelitian menggunakan meta-sintesis kualitatif terhadap kebijakan pendidikan dan indeks literasi terkini. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa meskipun penjurusan mengatasi kontinuitas akademik, hal itu tidak serta-merta menyelesaikan krisis berpikir kritis atau kerentanan disinformasi. Studi ini mengusulkan kerangka kerja yang mengintegrasikan kewarganegaraan digital dan pedagogi kritis, memanfaatkan budaya guyub Indonesia melalui Collective Resonance Communication Model (CRCM). Pendekatan ini mengubah pendidikan IPS dari hafalan rutin menjadi mekanisme navigasi ruang publik pasca-kebenaran. Akhirnya, efektivitas pendidikan IPS bergantung pada pengembangan kecerdasan sosial dan agensi etis. Dengan menjembatani identitas nasional dan keterlibatan digital global, kerangka ini membekali siswa untuk mengatasi masalah sosial yang kompleks. Penelitian menyimpulkan bahwa pergeseran pedagogis sistemik sangat penting untuk mencapai visi visioner Indonesia Emas 2045 secara nyata demi kemajuan bangsa di era modern yang dinamis serta inklusif secara berkelanjutan.



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## **A. INTRODUCTION**

### **1. Background**

The rapid evolution of the global socioeconomic landscape, driven by the Fourth Industrial Revolution and the subsequent emergence of Society 5.0, has placed unprecedented demands on educational systems to redefine the parameters of social understanding among students. In the specific context of Indonesia, the years 2024 and 2025 represent a critical juncture where technological saturation, political polarization, and major curricular shifts intersect. As the nation moves toward the "Golden Indonesia 2045" vision, the role of Social Science education locally referred to as Pendidikan Ilmu Pengetahuan Sosial (IPS) has transcended the traditional boundaries of historical memorization and geographical facts. It has instead become a vital mechanism for navigating a society increasingly defined by digital interactions, collectivist cultural resonance, and a complex "post-truth" environment.<sup>1</sup>

At the center of the current Indonesian societal discourse is the tension between massive digital growth and the persistent gap in digital maturity. Data from early 2025 indicates that Indonesia's population has reached 285 million, with 212 million active internet users representing a penetration rate of 74.6%.<sup>2</sup> While the number of social media identities stands at 143 million, the qualitative nature of digital engagement is marked by significant challenges, including the spread of misinformation, the presence of organized "cyber troops" or "buzzers," and an overreliance on virality to achieve social impact.<sup>3</sup> These dynamics have fundamentally altered how Indonesian youth participate in civic life, as seen in movements like #ReformasiDikorupsi and #TolakOmnibusLaw, where online mobilization translated into street-level protests but also exposed activists to state-sponsored disinformation and the legal pressures of the Electronic Information and Transactions Law (UU ITE).

Against this backdrop, the Indonesian government has implemented a significant policy reversal that reshapes the trajectory of secondary education. Starting in the 2025/2026 Academic Year, the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education

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<sup>1</sup> Aulia Kartika Putri, Dian Eka Rahmawati, and Arif Zainudin, *Digital Citizenship In The 21st Century: Strengthening Digital Ethics*, 11 (2025): 92–109, <https://doi.org/10.24198/cosmogov.v11i1.60821>.

<sup>2</sup> Simon Kemp, "Digital 2025: Indonesia — DataReportal – Global Digital Insights," *Digital 2025: Indonesia*, accessed December 28, 2025, <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2025-indonesia>.

<sup>3</sup> Bernardus Herdian Nugroho, "Digital Activism and Youth Participation in Indonesia: A Qualitative Study of Social Media's Role in Contemporary Social Movements," *ResearchGate* 5, no. 10 (October 2025): 91–105, <https://doi.org/10.55942/pssj.v5i10.603>.

(Mendikdasmen) has officially reinstated the tracking system in senior high schools (SMA), specifically restoring the Natural Sciences (IPA), Social Sciences (IPS), and Language tracks. This move revokes Ministerial Regulation Number 12 of 2024 and effectively ends the flexible "non-tracking" approach of the Merdeka Curriculum, which allowed students to mix and match subjects based on individual interest.<sup>4</sup> The rationale for this reversal is grounded in "weak continuity" between educational levels, where students entering higher education such as social science students entering medical faculties faced severe academic struggles due to a lack of deep disciplinary foundations. This policy shift underscores a renewed recognition of IPS as a specialized field of study necessary for academic readiness and professional specialization.

Recent Scopus-indexed research (2022–2025) has increasingly focused on the "digital citizenship" and "socio-critical" dimensions of social studies. Previous literature has explored the general role of social media in youth engagement, but much of this work has been fragmented or limited to Western-individualist contexts.<sup>5</sup> Emerging trends in social science education research emphasize the need for integrated models that combine digital literacy, critical pedagogy, and culturally responsive instruction.<sup>6</sup> However, a significant research gap persists in understanding how these educational strategies function within the unique "guyub" (togetherness) and collectivist culture of Indonesia, especially during a period of transition back to a disciplined tracking system.<sup>7</sup>

The novelty of this research lies in its synthesis of the most recent Indonesian policy changes specifically the 2025 tracking reinstatement with a socio-critical analysis of student performance data from PISA 2022 and the 2025 Digital Literacy Index (IMDI). Unlike prior studies that focused on the Merdeka Curriculum's flexibility, this study investigates the "post-flexibility" era of Indonesian education, proposing a framework for social science education that addresses both disciplinary depth and the "Collective

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<sup>4</sup> Yulia Indahri, *Reformulating High School Tracking Policy*, 17 (April 2025): 1–5, <https://doi.org/10.1590/1807-7692bar2023230075>.

<sup>5</sup> Irwanto Irwanto, Tuti Bahfiarti, and Andi Alimuddin Unde, "Digital Transformation of Youth Violence in Indonesia: New Responsibilities and Social Negotiations in the Digital Age," *Frontiers in Communication* 10 (April 2025): 1–10, <https://doi.org/10.3389/fcomm.2025.1576389>.

<sup>6</sup> Dimas Satrio Wibowo and Muhroji Muhroji, "Bibliometric Analysis of Social Studies Learning Models in Elementary Schools from 2014 to 2024," *ResearchGate* 6 (August 2025): 843–52, <https://doi.org/10.37251/jee.v6i3.1812>.

<sup>7</sup> Tuti Bahfiarti, Irwanto, and Andi Alimuddin Unde, "Frontiers | Digital Transformation of Youth Violence in Indonesia: New Responsibilities and Social Negotiations in the Digital Age," *Digital Transformation of Youth Violence in Indonesia: New Responsibilities and Social Negotiations in the Digital Age*, 2025, <https://doi.org/10.3389/fcomm.2025.1576389>.

Resonance Communication Model" (CRCM) prevalent in Indonesian digital discourse.<sup>8</sup> This research offers a critical perspective on how IPS can bridge the gap between national identity and global digital engagement while mitigating the risks of polarization and legal vulnerability.

This research finds that the effectiveness of social science education in shaping student understanding of society is contingent upon the integration of "digital citizenship ethics" and "critical pedagogy" rather than just the restoration of academic tracks. The findings suggest that while the 2025 tracking reinstatement addresses university alignment, it does not inherently solve the crisis of critical thinking and social problem-solving identified in the PISA 2022 results.<sup>9</sup> Therefore, the research concludes that a robust IPS framework must leverage the "guyub" culture to foster collective accountability while equipping students with the tools to navigate state-sponsored narratives and partisan echo chambers in the unedited public sphere.<sup>10</sup>

## **2. Research Questions**

The following problem formulations guide the narrative flow and analytical depth of this research:

- a. How does the reinstatement of senior high school tracking in the 2025/2026 academic year impact the depth of social science understanding and its alignment with student professional aspirations in higher education?
- b. In what ways do digital platforms and the current "infodemic" landscape in Indonesia influence student perception of social issues, and how can the social science curriculum mitigate the risks of political polarization and misinformation?
- c. How can the integration of critical pedagogy and digital citizenship within the Indonesian "guyub" culture enhance students' social intelligence and their ability to solve complex social problems as reflected in international assessments?

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<sup>8</sup> Indahri, *Reformulating High School Tracking Policy*.

<sup>9</sup> OECD, "PISA 2022 Results (Volume I and II) - Country Notes: Indonesia | OECD," PISA 2022 Results (Volume I and II) - Country Notes: Indonesia, 2025, [https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/pisa-2022-results-volume-i-and-ii-country-notes\\_ed6fbcc5-en/indonesia\\_c2e1ae0e-en.html](https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/pisa-2022-results-volume-i-and-ii-country-notes_ed6fbcc5-en/indonesia_c2e1ae0e-en.html).

<sup>10</sup> Tuti Bahfiarti, Irwanto, and Andi Alimuddin Unde, "Frontiers | Digital Transformation of Youth Violence in Indonesia: New Responsibilities and Social Negotiations in the Digital Age."

### **3. Research Methods**

This study employs a qualitative descriptive methodology grounded in a systematic narrative review of current educational policies and global research trends. The analysis utilizes a bibliometric approach, mapping publication patterns and research gaps from the Scopus database for the period 2022–2025.<sup>11</sup> The primary technique involves a "meta-synthesis" of secondary data, integrating findings from recent international surveys (PISA 2022), the Indonesian Digital Literacy Index (IMDI 2025), and population reports from early 2025.<sup>5</sup>

Data collection was conducted by identifying key clusters of research involving "social science education," "digital citizenship," "Indonesian youth activism," and "curriculum implementation".<sup>12</sup> The references used consist of high-impact journal articles, government policy documents (such as Regulation Number 12 of 2024 and subsequent 2025 updates), and datasets from organizations like the OECD and the Indonesian Ministry of Communication and Digital (Kominfo).<sup>13</sup> The analysis applies a socio-critical lens, referencing theoretical frameworks like the Collective Resonance Communication Model (CRCM) and the hermeneutic circle to explore the relationship between classroom pedagogy and the broader social fabric.

## **B. DISCUSSION**

### **1. The Curricular Pivot: From Radical Flexibility to Disciplinary Depth**

The Indonesian educational system in 2024 and 2025 has undergone a dramatic re-evaluation of its structural philosophy. The Merdeka Curriculum, which was once hailed for its radical flexibility in allowing students to "concoct" their own subject profiles, reached a point of institutional critical mass that led to the 2025 policy reversal. Under the previous Ministerial Regulation Number 12 of 2024, Grade 11 and 12 students were permitted to choose elective subjects across traditional disciplinary lines, theoretically fostering a multidisciplinary mindset. However, the reality on the ground was far more complex. The absence of traditional tracks led to "weak continuity," particularly for students targeting specialized university programs. The Indonesian government noted that many social science-focused students who were admitted to STEM-heavy programs,

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<sup>11</sup> Dimas Satrio Wibowo and Muhroji Muhroji, "Bibliometric Analysis of Social Studies Learning Models in Elementary Schools from 2014 to 2024."

<sup>12</sup> Feriyansyah Feriyansyah, Siti Murtiningsih, and Hastanti Widy Nugroho, "Teacher Discourse in Postdigital Education: A Critical and Systematic Literature Review," *Journal La Edusci* 6, no. 4 (October 2025): 701–27, <https://doi.org/10.37899/journallaedusci.v6i4.2570>.

<sup>13</sup> OECD, "PISA 2022 Results (Volume I and II) - Country Notes: Indonesia | OECD."

such as medicine or engineering, faced significant academic struggles due to the lack of foundational rigor in those subjects during high school.<sup>14</sup>

The reinstatement of the IPA, IPS, and Language tracks for the 2025/2026 academic year signifies a return to the belief that deep disciplinary specialization is a prerequisite for higher-order understanding. This shift is not merely an administrative change but a philosophical one. It reflects the feedback from the Indonesian Rectors' Forum and the State University Rectors Council, who argued that tracking simplifies school management and provides a clearer academic direction for students. To support this new system, the government has introduced the Academic Competency Test (TKA), which assesses core competencies in Indonesian Language and Mathematics, alongside track-specific subjects like Sociology, Economics, or Geography for the IPS track.

Feature of Policy Shift	Merdeka Curriculum (2021-2024)	Reinstated Track System (2025/2026)
<b>Organizational Logic</b>	Interest-based/Cross-disciplinary	Disciplinary Specialized Tracks (IPA/IPS/Bahasa)
<b>Subject Selection</b>	Students "concoct" individual profiles	Selection through Academic Competency Test (TKA)
<b>Primary Rationale</b>	Removing academic "stigma" and rigidity	Ensuring college readiness and academic continuity
<b>Regulatory Status</b>	Reg. No. 12/2024 (Abolished majors)	New 2025 Regulation (Revokes tracking removal)
<b>University Admission</b>	Fragmented profiles; high misalignment	Merit-based tracks aligned with university majors

In the context of Social Science (IPS), this return to tracking offers an opportunity to deepen students' mastery of sociological and economic theories. When the tracks were removed, there was a concern that social science was being marginalized or treated as a "secondary" option for students who did not want to pursue math or physics.<sup>15</sup> By reinstating the IPS track, the government aims to level the playing field, emphasizing that social science is a rigorous domain essential for understanding the complexities of law, history, and human behavior. Furthermore, this specialization allows for a more focused

<sup>14</sup> Indahri, *Reformulating High School Tracking Policy*.

<sup>15</sup> Genis Dwi Gustati Muhammadiyah Surakarta, "On the Crossroad of Kurikulum Merdeka," 2025, <https://www.ums.ac.id/en/news/global-pulse/on-the-crossroad-of-kurikulum-merdeka>.

application of the "Pancasila Student Profile" (P5), which seeks to instill national and social values through project-based learning.<sup>16</sup>

However, challenges remain in the implementation of this "Integrated" approach, especially at the elementary level where Natural and Social Sciences are combined into the "IPAS" subject. Teachers at this level often face "instructional and assessment time constraints" and have difficulty sequencing learning objectives.<sup>17</sup> For students to truly understand society, the transition from integrated IPAS in elementary school to specialized IPS in high school must be seamless. The 2025 policy emphasizes that while tracks are reinstated, the "flexibility" of the Merdeka Curriculum in terms of teaching methods and contextualization should be maintained.<sup>18</sup> The novelty of the current period is the synthesis of "rigorous tracks" with "flexible pedagogy," a combination that requires significant teacher training and a shift in institutional culture.<sup>19</sup>

## **2. Digital Citizenship in the "Unedited" Public Sphere**

As Indonesia's internet user base reached 212 million in early 2025, the digital world has become the primary laboratory for social science. For a student, the "understanding of society" is no longer shaped solely by the classroom or the family unit but by an "unedited public sphere" characterized by rapid information cascades and a lack of traditional gatekeepers.<sup>20</sup> In this environment, the concept of "digital citizenship" has moved from the periphery to the core of the social science curriculum.<sup>21</sup> Digital citizenship is defined as the ethical, responsible, and critical use of technology to participate in society.

The 2025 Digital Literacy Index (IMDI) shows a national score of 44.53, a gradual increase from 43.34 in 2024.<sup>22</sup> While this suggests that the Indonesian public is becoming more "digitally capable," the qualitative data tells a story of significant vulnerability.

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<sup>16</sup> Chris Sanjaya, *An Analysis of the Implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in the Instruction of Integrated Natural and Social Sciences (IPAS) in Grade III at SDN 2 Lemahabang*, 24 (2025): 210–15, <https://doi.org/10.30595/pssh.v24i.1595>.

<sup>17</sup> Sanjaya.

<sup>18</sup> Devina Kusuma Wardani and Sri Marmoah, *Teacher's Role in Implementing Learning with a Joyful Differentiated Approach in the Classroom*, 8 (2025): 236–47, <https://doi.org/10.20961/shes.v8i4.109507>.

<sup>19</sup> "On the Crossroad of Kurikulum Merdeka," 2025, <https://www.ums.ac.id/en/news/global-pulse/on-the-crossroad-of-kurikulum-merdeka>.

<sup>20</sup> Bernardus Herdian Nugroho, "(PDF) Digital Activism and Youth Participation in Indonesia."

<sup>21</sup> Andi Aco Agus et al., "From Awareness to Action: Rethinking High School Civic Education for the Digital Generation in Indonesia," *Cogent Education* 12, no. 1 (2025): 2534156, <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2025.2534156>.

<sup>22</sup> Redaktur KOMDIGI, "Kementerian Komunikasi Dan Digital," IMDI 2025 Naik Ke 44,53, Indonesia Makin Cakap Digital, 2025, <https://www.komdigi.go.id/berita/siaran-pers/detail/imdi-2025-naik-ke-4453-indonesia-makin-cakap-digital>.

Youth in Indonesia spend an average of 191 minutes per day on social media, using platforms like TikTok, Instagram, and Facebook not just for entertainment but as primary sources of "science information" and "political discourse".<sup>23</sup> This reliance on social media creates a paradox: while it empowers youth to engage in digital activism as seen in the Papuan rights or anti-corruption movements it also exposes them to a "vehicle for misinformation".

Digital Landscape (Indonesia)	Metric	Data as of January 2025	Growth/Trend (2024-2025)
<b>Total Population</b>		285 Million	+2.3 Million (+0.8%)
<b>Total Internet Users</b>		212 Million	+17 Million (+8.7%)
<b>Internet Penetration</b>		74.6% of Population	Significant increase from 66.5%
<b>Social Media Identities</b>		143 Million	50.2% of Total Population
<b>Median Mobile Speed</b>		29.06 Mbps	+18.5% year-on-year increase

The spread of hoaxes and "polarizing content" during the 2024 elections has left a lasting impact on social cohesion. Research indicates that the belief in false news among Indonesians is driven more by "partisan bias" and "echo chambers" than by a lack of internet access. In this context, social science education must serve as a "critical filter." Integrating digital citizenship into the IPS curriculum is no longer optional; it is a strategic step to build legal and ethical awareness. Students need to understand not just how to use tools, but the sociological implications of the "infodemic," including the role of "cyber troops" and the legal risks posed by the UU ITE.<sup>24</sup>

A critical advancement in understanding this dynamic is the "Collective Resonance Communication Model" (CRCM), which accounts for the unique cultural characteristics of Indonesian society. Unlike individualistic Western models, the CRCM suggests that information virality in Indonesia is driven by "community endorsement" and the "guyub"

<sup>23</sup> Jordana Portman et al., "Portman | How Does Social-Media-Based Science Communication Affect Young Audiences? A Scoping Review of Impact Making | Journal of Science Communication," How Does Social-Media-Based Science Communication Affect Young Audiences? A Scoping Review of Impact Making, 2025, [https://jcom.sissa.it/article/pubid/JCOM\\_2405\\_2025\\_V02/](https://jcom.sissa.it/article/pubid/JCOM_2405_2025_V02/).

<sup>24</sup> Bernardus Herdian Nugroho, "Digital Activism and Youth Participation in Indonesia."

(togetherness) culture.<sup>25</sup> This model highlights how traditional respect for authority can transform into "nuanced forms of digital critique" while maintaining cultural coherence. For example, high-profile cases of youth violence or school bullying in 2024 and 2025 have been processed through these "collective resonance" channels, where digital platforms evolved from simple documentation tools into arenas for "collective negotiation" and "systemic critique". Social science education must teach students to recognize these patterns of "information flow" so they can become "active, critical, and responsible citizens" in both the physical and digital worlds.<sup>26</sup>

### 3. PISA 2022 Results: A Crisis of Social Intelligence and Critical Thinking

The effectiveness of social science education in shaping a student's understanding of society is often measured through international benchmarks, most notably the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). The 2022 PISA results serve as a "wake-up call" for the Indonesian education system. Indonesian students' scores in reading, mathematics, and science reached some of the lowest levels ever measured, with reading scores dropping from 371 in 2018 to 359 in 2022. More concerning is the finding that over 60% of Indonesian students scored at "Level 1," representing very limited basic skills where they can only understand simple concepts without the ability to apply or interpret them in complex contexts.<sup>27</sup>

A particularly revealing aspect of the PISA 2022 assessment was the "Creative Thinking" test, which explored how well students can generate and evaluate ideas in different contexts, including "social problem scenarios".<sup>28</sup> Indonesia's performance in this domain was significantly below the OECD average.

PISA Performance Category	2022 Indonesia Mean Score	OECD Average	Proficiency Level 2+ (%)
Reading Literacy	359	476	25%
Science Literacy	383	485	34%
Mathematics Literacy	366	472	18%

<sup>25</sup> Irwanto, Bahfiarti, and Unde, "Digital Transformation of Youth Violence in Indonesia."

<sup>26</sup> Yeri Utami et al., *Language, Identity, And Social Fragmentation In The Post-Truth Era: A Literature Review Of Digital Citizenship Education*, 14 (2025): 1144-52, <https://doi.org/2541-612X>.

<sup>27</sup> ISSUED, "The Development of PISA in Indonesia: Challenges and Hopes on International Literacy Day," Institute for Statistics and Socio-Ecological Development, 2025, <https://www.issued.id/the-development-of-pisa-in-indonesia-challenges-and-hopes-on-international-literacy-day>.

<sup>28</sup> OECD, "PISA 2022 Results (Volume I and II) - Country Notes: Indonesia | OECD."

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<b>Creative Thinking</b>	19 / 60	33 / 60	31%
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Students in Indonesia showed higher proficiency in "written expression" and "visual expression" relative to their overall performance, but they "struggled more with tasks that involved solving both social and scientific problems".<sup>29</sup> Only about 5% of Indonesian students were "top performers" in creative thinking, and nearly zero students were top performers in reading meaning they cannot distinguish between "fact and opinion" based on implicit cues. This gap in "social problem solving" is a direct indictment of how social science has been traditionally taught. When social science is viewed narrowly as a "subject focused on memorization," it marginalizes the "social and humanistic dimensions" that are necessary for real-world application.<sup>30</sup>

The PISA data suggests that the "crisis of empathy and social skills" among school-age children is rooted in a failure to move beyond the "knowing" phase of cognition into the "reasoning" and "applying" phases.<sup>2</sup> To shape a deep understanding of society, IPS education must prioritize "social intelligence" the ability to understand, adapt, and build harmonious relationships with others.<sup>2</sup> This requires an "inquiry-based approach" that engages students in "role-playing simulations, case studies, and collaborative projects".<sup>2</sup> The goal is to move students from being passive consumers of information to "scientifically aware and active future citizens" who can creatively and autonomously apply their knowledge to "unfamiliar social problem scenarios".

#### **4. Critical Pedagogy and the "Gatekeepers of Pluralism"**

In response to the challenges of misinformation and low analytical proficiency, the integration of "critical pedagogy" has emerged as a vital strategy in Scopus-indexed literature from 2022 to 2025. Critical pedagogy, a philosophy rooted in the work of Paulo Freire, rejects the "neutrality of knowledge" and views teaching as an "inherently political act" aimed at social transformation. In the Indonesian context, critical pedagogy is seen as a way to "strengthen the social studies curriculum" within the MBKM (Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka) framework by creating space for students to identify and analyze "structural oppression" and "power imbalances".<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> OECD.

<sup>30</sup> M. Marsini, "The Role of Social Science to Build Social Awareness Among Elementary School Students," *ResearchGate* 5, no. 2 (2025) (October 2025): 89–96, <https://doi.org/10.52970/grmilf.v5i2.1634>.

<sup>31</sup> Utami et al., *Language, Identity, And Social Fragmentation In The Post-Truth Era: A Literature Review Of Digital Citizenship Education*.

Teachers in this paradigm are not mere "transmitters of facts" but "gatekeepers of pluralism" and "facilitators of dialogue". They must navigate "agonistic pedagogy," where students learn to engage constructively with "diverse perspectives" and "competing narratives". This is particularly relevant in Indonesia's multicultural society, where the "guyub" culture can sometimes lead to a "forced harmony" that suppresses critical dissent.<sup>9</sup> By applying a "socio-critical approach" to history and social sciences, the classroom becomes a space for "active reflection" and "socially engaged citizenry".<sup>32</sup>

One effective methodological tool in this context is the "hermeneutic circle," which allows students to relate specific "historical phenomena" to a "broader whole". By repeatedly returning to historical sources after analyzing current social challenges, students build a "deep and critical understanding" that allows them to "act ethically in the present". This is exemplified in the use of "Socioscientific Issues" (SSIs) dilemmas arising from the relationship between science and society, such as climate change, genetic engineering, or health pandemics. Integrating SSIs into social science education empowers students as "scientifically aware citizens" who can search for solutions that are ethically and politically sound.<sup>33</sup>

<b>Pedagogical Model</b>	<b>Core Strategy</b>	<b>Impact on Student Understanding</b>
<b>Critical Pedagogy</b>	Dialogue & critical consciousness	Awareness of power dynamics and social justice
<b>Hermeneutic Circle</b>	Relating past to present continuously	Historical and critical thinking; ethical action
<b>STS (Science Tech Soc)</b>	Inquiry-based problem solving	Understanding societal consequences of progress
<b>Problem-Based Learning</b>	Contextual scenarios (PBL)	Enhanced agency and analytical problem solving
<b>SSI Integration</b>	Analyzing complex controversies	Interdisciplinary understanding of science-society ties

<sup>32</sup> Carmen Burgos-Videla, Marcos Parada-Ulloa, and Javiera Martínez-Díaz, "Critical Thinking in the Classroom: The Historical Method and Historical Discourse as Tools for Teaching Social Studies," *Frontiers in Sociology* 10 (April 2025): 1526437, <https://doi.org/10.3389/fsoc.2025.1526437>.

<sup>33</sup> Cristina Viehmann, Juan Manuel Fernández Cárdenas, and Cristina Gehibie Reynaga Peña, "The Use of Socioscientific Issues in Science Lessons: A Scoping Review," *Sustainability* 16, no. 14 (July 2024): 5827, <https://doi.org/10.3390/su16145827>.

The "Science Technology Society" (STS) model has also shown significant promise in the Indonesian classroom. Action research conducted in two cycles showed that using the STS model improved students' "critical thinking" levels from a baseline completeness to 79.41% in Cycle II.<sup>34</sup> Students using this model were more likely to "utilize existing resources," "ask questions," and "summarize learning material" more effectively. These results suggest that when social science is presented as a "coordinated study" of economics, law, geography, and sociology focused on "real-life contexts," students' "motivation and engagement" increase significantly.<sup>35</sup>

## **5. Challenges in Implementation and the Theory-Reality Gap**

Despite the clear theoretical benefits of these models, bibliometric analysis of social studies research reveals a persistent "theory-reality gap". While thousands of articles in the Scopus database discuss "differentiated learning" and "project-based learning," the implementation in Indonesian schools often remains "partially misaligned with foundational principles". The 2025 bibliometric analysis identifies several key research gaps: a "lack of primary level focus," "cultural oversight" in ignoring regional nuances, and a reliance on "measuring cognition" while "overlooking affective and psychomotor values".

Teachers face immense pressure during this transitional period. The implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum and now the transition to the 2025/2026 track system requires teachers to be "active, reflective, and facilitative". However, "insufficient training," "limited resources," and "large class sizes" continue to hinder the adoption of student-centered models like Problem-Based Learning (PBL).<sup>36</sup> Furthermore, the government's prohibition on hiring "honorary teachers" has created staffing shortages in many schools, particularly since younger honorary teachers are often the ones most "adaptable to new technology and learning methods".<sup>37</sup>

The success of social science in "building social awareness" among students depends on "synergy between parents, communities, and schools". In the "postdigital education" landscape, where the boundary between physical and virtual spaces is blurred, teachers

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<sup>34</sup> Septian Aji Permana, "A Science and Technology Society Model to Enhance Critical Thinking Social Studies Students in Indonesia," *ResearchGate* 14 (October 2025): 42–53, <https://doi.org/10.5430/jct.v14n4p42>.

<sup>35</sup> Danilo Rogayan Jr., "Relevance of Social Studies in the 21st -Century Society: Students' Perspectives," *ResearchGate* 2, no. 1 (2021): 1–15, <https://doi.org/10.33902/IJODS.2021169729>.

<sup>36</sup> Wardani and Marmoah, *Teacher's Role in Implementing Learning with a Joyful Differentiated Approach in the Classroom*.

<sup>37</sup> "On the Crossroad of Kurikulum Merdeka," 2025, <https://www.ums.ac.id/en/news/global-pulse/on-the-crossroad-of-kurikulum-merdeka>.

need to develop "locally grounded postdigital identities" and "ecological data practices". This means that IPS education must not only teach about society but must *be* an active part of the society it studies, utilizing "digital platforms, media, and algorithm analysis tools" to support "adaptive and interactive learning".

### **C. CONCLUSION**

The transition of the Indonesian educational landscape toward the 2025/2026 senior high school track system highlights a critical return to disciplinary depth that is essential for academic continuity and student professional readiness. While the quantitative expansion of digital connectivity has reached over 212 million users, the role of social science education remains paramount in transforming this technological access into meaningful digital citizenship through critical pedagogy and social intelligence. Despite challenges in implementation and declining performance in international assessments, the integration of culturally responsive models like the Collective Resonance Communication Model offers a path toward a deeper, collectivist understanding of societal dynamics. Ultimately, the effectiveness of social science in shaping the next generation depends on the systemic integration of ethical, critical, and reflective frameworks that empower students to navigate the complexities of a post-truth digital era.

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