Social Studies Education Responding to the Challenges of the 21st Century: A Critique of Learning Practices in Elementary Education

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Abstract

21st Century Education is inseparable from technology and information. Technology and Information are the most important components and have always been the needs of the increasingly rapid era, especially in the environment of elementary school children (SD/MI). Writing this article aims to see the relevance of social studies learning in SD/MI with 21st Century skills and find out what skills are acquired through social studies learning in SD/MI so that they can master the skills needed in the 21st century. This research is a conceptual (empirical) study that is library research. This was done because the researcher used a synthetic analysis of various Sinta accredited articles and books related to social studies education in the 21st century. The results of the study illustrate that social studies learning in SD/MI is still in line with the needs and demands of the 21st century because social study learning in SD/MI requires 4 capabilities: social skills, communication skills, networking or collaboration skills, and communication skills. The 21st century itself provides demands for skills that must develop in the social studies learning process. So that in the social studies teaching process innovation is needed in various models and learning methods.

Keywords: 21st Century, Social Studies Learning in SD/MI, Skills.

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INTRODUCTION

Social studies (IPS) education has been taught to students for a long time in Indonesia. Social studies education in Indonesia was first introduced in 1975 (Widodo, et.al., 2020). The development of social studies education in Indonesia has essentially adopted and adapted social studies thinking from the NCSS. Over time, changes have occurred in social studies education. The last change in social studies education was felt with the passing of the 2013 curriculum. The biggest change lies in how the composition of social studies education is presented. All fields of study are presented in an integrated thematic manner, including social studies education.

Social studies education in its teaching practice does require innovation. Moreover, in facing the challenges of the 21st century, social studies learning must adapt (Susanto, 2021). Social studies education is one of the compulsory subjects at the elementary school level. However, so far, many people view social studies education with one eye. Social studies subjects are considered second-grade subjects. This can be seen from the provision of social studies lesson hours less than other subjects. Not only that social studies lessons are always given in the last hours when the condition of students is tired and tired. There are still many people who think that social studies education in elementary school is not very important. Not to mention facing the perspective of students who think that social studies lessons are boring lessons (Widodo, et.al., 2020). Therefore, the reconstruction of social studies education is feasible.

Society in general still assumes that the needs that must be mastered by students in facing the 21st century are only the ability to technology and information. The fields of science that are in great demand are only those related to the exact sciences. Social sciences are only studied to the extent of aborting obligations (Ulum, 2019). Herefore, lately, social studies education and other social sciences are often heard to be removed from the curriculum, whereas, social science is the basis in forming social skills. Social skills are one of the most important elements in communicating, collaborating, and establishing relationships in 21st-century society (Ramdhany, et.al., 2020). Putting aside the values of social skills can result in students becoming more individualistic and unable to socialize properly. Many students no longer have social sensitivity so they no longer care about the surrounding environment. This condition is exacerbated by the use of technology that is not wise. One of them is the excessive use of social media among students (Luthfi, 2018).

The use of social media that is not wise causes conflicts in social life. Not infrequently through the use of social media, users get caught in legal problems. This can happen because ethics in social relations are no longer considered. This problem indicates that the understanding of social concepts in everyday life is still lacking. This is inseparable from the assumption of various groups that social studies education is not important. It is undeniable that putting aside social values can have a bad effect on students' social behavior (Rifai, et.al., 2021).

Indeed, studies on social education in responding to the challenges of the 21st century have been studied by previous researchers. These include discussing aspects of critical thinking and problem-solving in social studies learning (Indraswati, et.al., 2020), active learning design in social studies education (Pernantah, 2019), educational curriculum design that prioritizes social skills for children (Ghofur, 2021), social education and 21st-century skills (Aslamiah, et.al., 2021), reorientation of the main objectives of social studies learning (Setiawan, 2013), as well as studies on strengthening literacy in social learning in addressing the 21st century (Muliastri, 2019).

Observing the literature review above, it is known that social education has been studied from various aspects and is also connected as an effort to answer the challenges of the 21st century. Likewise, there is an "empty side" that needs to be studied and investigated further, which is related to the learning aspect. How can social studies learning to be practiced well, to raise awareness of children from an early age about the importance of social interaction to build social networks (relationships) in responding to future challenges, especially in the study of responding to the challenges of the 21st century.
Based on the background above, it is important to conduct a study, is it true that social studies education is not so important? Is social studies education still relevant to 21st-century skills? What skills do you get from studying social studies in elementary school? How should social studies be taught so that 21st-century skills can be mastered? Through this study, it is hoped that it can be an additional reference for teachers in the development of social studies learning in elementary schools. For policymakers, this study is expected to be a consideration in the preparation of the social studies learning curriculum, especially in elementary schools.

**METHOD**

This study uses a qualitative approach with a literature study method (Fatmawati, 2020; Assingkily, 2021). The object of the study is reading books and scientific articles that are relevant to social studies education and the demands of the 21st century. The books and articles in question are up-to-date (5-10 years), then articles are obtained from Google Scholar, DOAJ, and some have been accredited by SINTA (Science and Technology Index). Data analysis was carried out by examining the substance and material of social studies education in learning practice, as well as its role in responding to the challenges of the 21st-century. Thus, this research can find the relevance of social science education to 21st century skills, the value of 21st century skills in social studies learning in elementary schools, orientation social studies learning, social studies learning practices in responding to the challenges of the 21st-century. For this reason, checking the data in this study was carried out using reference materials (Prastowo, 2014).

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

**Relevance of Social Studies Education to 21st Century Skills**

The discussion about 21st-century skills is not new. Even the American education commission has discussed it in 1983. Now the 21st century has come before our eyes. The 21st century presents a world of unlimited life. The development of technology is growing rapidly. The challenges of life ahead are getting tougher. Those who are unable to compete will be lost in time. In facing these challenges, students need to be equipped with 21st-century skills to ensure their competitiveness against the global world (Mahanal, 2014).

Through the skills possessed, students are expected to be able to go through life’s challenges independently in the future. Furthermore, stated that the 21st-century skills needed consist of four things, namely digital literacy, innovative thinking, effective communication, and high productivity (Mardliyah, 2019). There is also a study that confirms the importance of using the 4Cs in education; Critical thinking, Communication, Collaboration, and Creativity, especially to train students to have social skills and have a global perspective (Warli, et.al., 2019). It was further revealed that globalization is related to all aspects of life, including the social field (Priatmoko, 2018). This statement indicates that social studies education in a globalized world is still needed. Education oriented to global social thinking can encourage intellectual curiosity that transcends national and cultural boundaries (Nata, 2018).

The 21st century which is full of developments in information technology is closely related to aspects of literacy, especially digital iteration. However, mastery of technology is not the only field that must be mastered in the 21st-century era. There are research results that state that there is a difference between digital literacy and 21st-century skills. In the 21st century skills are not always related to information and communication technology (Hanik, 2020). The most important thing is to master core skills and contextual skills. Core skills consist of technical ability, information management, communication, collaboration, creativity, critical thinking, and problem-solving. Contextual skills consist of ethnic awareness, culture, flexibility, self-direction, and lifelong learning (Widodo, et.al., 2020). This statement is in line with the opinion of Kaufman (2013) that mastery of technology is important but more life skills must be mastered, one of which is self-control and social responsibility (Santika, 2020). This means that the skills that must be possessed by someone must be complex. What this means is that you can't just rely on one skill to the exclusion of other skills.
Likewise, facing the 21st century requires not only sophistication in information technology but also must pay attention to other aspects such as social skills. Skills related to social aspects are critical thinking skills. These skills are needed to help students adapt to new situations, be flexible, and be able to analyze the information obtained well (Zubaidah, 2016). Creativity and innovation have an undoubted influence on people's lives and economic development (Azizah & Muhfiatun, 2018). Therefore, every learning activity should be directed to the development of creative, imaginative, and innovative thinking (Oktaria, 2021). 21st-century economic development has been controlled by the power of information technology. These changes require individuals who can innovate, adapt, and think at a higher level (Wijaya, et.al., 2016). He further emphasized that although schools have committed to responding to global changes, the programs carried out are not yet clear.

21st Century Skills Values in Social Studies Learning in Elementary Schools

Social studies or IPS education is essentially a collection of simplified social sciences (Hati, 2018). Referring to Somantri's understanding, social studies education at the elementary school level is a simplification of the social sciences and humanities that are packaged in such a way for educational purposes (Rochgiyanti, 2015). Social sciences include Sociology, History, Economics, and Geography. Through these sciences, there are many social science concepts that are useful for students' skills. In sociology, we learn about social relations and how to work well together. These two concepts are one of the social skills needed to face the 21st century. In history, there is an inspirational value for those who study it.

Through history, students can learn from previous people who have been successful. If this inspiration is developed, it can stimulate students to always be creative and innovative. These two ways of thinking are included in critical thinking. This is in accordance with one of the results of research which states that to answer the challenges of the 21st century in social studies learning in elementary schools is to apply critical thinking and problem solving (Indraswati, et.al., 2020). Character and culture are expected to be achieved (Widodo, et.al., 2020).

The existence of social science when viewed from the attitude competencies that must be mastered by students is actually available from basic education to higher education. Referring to the Minister of Education and Culture, (2018) the curriculum aims to achieve four competencies, namely the competence of spiritual attitudes, social attitudes, knowledge, and skills. The four competencies have been listed for each subject. Especially at the elementary school level, there are slight differences between the social competencies that students must master at each grade level.

The formulation of social competence for grades I and II is "Showing honest, disciplined, responsible, polite, caring, and confident behavior in interacting with family, friends, and teachers". The formulation of social competence for grades III and IV is added with "neighbors", while for grades V and VI it is added "neighbors and love of the homeland". The Minister of Education and Culture also emphasizes that social attitude competence along with spiritual attitude competence can be achieved through indirect learning, including example, habituation, and school culture (Lubis & Harahap, 2021).

The learning of these two attitude competencies should pay attention to the situation and conditions of each school. The two attitude competencies are a means of character learning for students. Based on the formulation of social competence, it can be seen that the values of cooperation and collaboration as a form of social interaction are highly prioritized. This proves that social studies education in elementary schools has provided 21st-century skills, namely collaboration (Alim, et.al., 2021).

Knowledge competency (KI 3) and skill competency (KI) are different for each subject. KI 3 and KI 4 are then described in the form of basic competencies (KD). In social studies subjects in elementary schools, basic competencies are developed based on scientific disciplines, but the presentation is done thematically so that the boundaries of each field of science are not visible. Although social studies material is presented
thematically, each field of science can still be recognized from the basic competencies that have been presented (Widodo, et.al., 2020).

The field of geography in grade IV can be identified with the KD "Identifying the characteristics of space and the use of natural resources for the welfare of the community from the city/district level to the provincial level". The field of sociology and anthropology in grade IV can be identified by looking at the KD which contains “Identifying social, economic, cultural, ethnic, and religious diversity in the local province as the identity of the Indonesian nation; and its relationship to the characteristics of space”. The field of economics in grade IV can be identified by looking at the KD "Identifying economic activities and their relationship to various fields of work, as well as social and cultural life in the surrounding environment to the province". The field of history in grade IV can be identified by looking at the KD which contains "Identifying the Hindu and/or Buddhist and/or Islamic kingdoms in the local area, and their influence on the life of today's society" (Angi, et.al., 2017).

The field of geography in class V can be identified through the KD "Identifying the geographical characteristics of Indonesia as an archipelagic/maritime and agrarian country and their influence on economic, social, cultural, communication, and transportation life". The field of sociology and anthropology can be seen from the KD "Analyzing the forms of human interaction with the environment and their influence on the social, cultural, and economic development of the Indonesian people". The field of Economics can be identified through the KD "Analyzing the role of the economy in an effort to improve the welfare of people's lives in the social and cultural fields to strengthen the unity and integrity of the nation". The field of history can be seen from the KD "Identifying important factors causing the colonization of the Indonesian people and the efforts of the Indonesian people in defending their sovereignty" (Karitas, 2017).

The field of geography in grade IV can be seen from the KD "Identifying geographical characteristics and socio-cultural, economic, political life in the ASEAN region". The field of Sociology and Anthropology can be seen from the KD "Analyzing socio-cultural changes in the context of modernizing the Indonesian nation". The field of Economics can be seen from the KD "Analyzing the position and role of Indonesia in cooperation in the economic, political, social, cultural, technological, and educational fields within ASEAN". The field of History can be seen from the KD "Understanding the meaning of the proclamation of independence, efforts to maintain independence, and efforts to develop a prosperous national life".

Students have been facilitated to develop critical thinking, collaboration, and communication in solving problems. These skills are already in the social sciences as the forerunner of social studies education. The problem is that often the contents of 21st century skills contained in social science concepts are not conveyed properly in learning. The implication is that social studies learning is bland without social values which are the most important needs in facing the challenges of the 21st-century.

IPS Learning Oriented 21st Century Skills

IPS learning in the 21st-century era is facing formidable challenges. This is inseparable from the demand that the purpose of social studies education is to form good citizens. At the ideal level, students who have studied social studies should have good attitudes and behavior. However, in reality, there are many students who behave badly, like to break the rules, and do not have social skills. Many behavioral deviations are found that are contrary to social values (Winataputra & Saripudin, 2011).

The attitude of not wanting to respect differences, individualism, and intolerance are common among young people. Whereas tolerance is a very important attitude in maintaining national unity and integrity (Mukani, 2018). Social studies education as value education is not able to give meaning to students' lives (Surahman & Mukminan, 2017). This indicates that the social studies teaching mission to form good citizens can be said to have failed. One of the causes of social studies learning failure is caused by a less innovative learning model. It is difficult to change the paradigm of social studies education as a boring subject among
students. This is inseparable from the use of learning methods and ways of presenting social studies material in class which tends to be rote without meaning (Sudirman, 2019).

There is a study that states that the use of technology is one solution to increase student motivation in social studies subjects (Sunadi, 2013). Therefore, innovation is needed so that social studies learning in class is not boring, one of which is the use of technology. This is in line with the statement which emphasizes that social studies teachers must effectively integrate technology in learning and learning activities appropriately (Maryani & Syamsudin, 2009). Through the use of technology, the way social studies teachers teach must change so that students can explore their abilities.

The paradigm shift in the 21st century demands educational and learning innovations, including social studies education. Innovation in social studies learning must be carried out in order to adapt to various challenges and changes in the 21st century (Ridwan, 2014). Starting from this, it can be understood that the role of the teacher in preparing students for the challenges of the 21st century is very important. Moreover, in the 21st century, Indonesia will welcome a golden generation that is expected to be able to think critically, creatively, innovatively, collaboratively, and globally (Santika, 2021). School failures in influencing school programs are caused by the neglect of values in school social processes (Widodo, et.al., 2020).

Furthermore, stated that in this social process there is a hidden curriculum (Nurhalim, 2014). The hidden curriculum can be born from example and habituation through school culture (Lestari, 2016). Therefore changes for the sake of change must be made so that the process of developing social values as a provision for students in welcoming the 21st century. Change has started from universities. In welcoming the 21st century, universities began to develop more intensive relationships with the surrounding community (Tilaar, 1998). This shows that in the process of research and dissemination of knowledge social aspects have been considered. In this case, universities do not only think about their own interests but more importantly serve the community (Tilaar, 1998). This aspect of collaboration is very important so that the mission of education can be achieved, especially in facing the challenges of the 21st century.

Argues that one of the 21st-century learning models is to use a critical thinking model (Dewi, 2015). The learning model is considered effective in increasing the learning efficiency of the students' knowledge preparation process. This learning model can monitor students' develop thinking skills, find the root of the problem, solve problems logically in preparation for complex global competition. It was further said that towards global competition, students emphasized being communicative, collaborative, creative, innovative, thinking critically analytically, and being able to solve problems in the real world (Sani, 2019).

Learning is directed towards higher-order thinking skills. Through these skills students are able to communicate effectively, are critical and dynamic thinkers, are able to solve problems, and have certain skills as experts (Rustaman, 2011). Learning innovation is needed to support learning activities that involve students actively participating. This is in accordance with the opinion that innovative strategies in media-based science education can help students achieve 21st-century skills and knowledge (Sofyan & Komariah, 2016).

Technology can no longer be separated in the world of education. Moreover, in social studies the use of technology is indispensable. Innovations related to 21st-century skills and teaching must be carried out. The main indicators include aspects of information, computing, automation, and communication (Hijriyani & Astuti, 2020). It was further explained that the integration of technology in social studies learning has reflected learning innovation in the digital global era. This is in line with the vision of the National Council for Social Studies (NCSS) which is meaningful, strong, values-based, challenging, and active. This vision has also supported the core skills of the 21st century including innovation, learning skills, information technology literacy, and life skills (Siska, 2018). Slightly different from a study in a developing country which stated that computer-based learning strategies did not significantly affect the social skills of schoolchildren (Maryani & Syamsudin, 2009).

However, the use of computer-based learning media can still be used to complement traditional learning. If social studies are linked to citizenship, a study in the United States argues for the need for curriculum.
reconstruction. Curriculum reconstruction is especially related to a sense of patriotism and nationalism from a global perspective.

**Social Studies Learning in Responding to the Challenges of the 21st Century**

The 21st century is not only concerned with progress in the field of information technology. The social aspect is one of the things that must be considered (Dewi, 2019). Globalization and technological advances have significantly changed the social and cultural fabric of humans. The challenge of social change must be prepared (Hidayat, 2017). Social studies education is one of the bulls in understanding this phenomenon. Through social studies education, you can learn how to socialize, adapt, collaborate, communicate, build relationships, think analytically, and think critically (Mahardika & Ramadhan, 2021). This shows that social studies still need to be studied and are still relevant to the 21st century. It's just that social studies teachers should not be anti-change. In this case, social studies education must keep up with the times.

In the context of learning, the method must be updated and more importantly, the content of the lesson must be more contextual in accordance with the needs of students. This shows that social studies education in schools is still relevant to 21st-century learning. There are several suggestions that can be given to teachers to be more creative and innovative in delivering social studies education materials to students. To policymakers, in this case, the formulators of the curriculum, KI, and KD of social studies education must always be updated according to the needs of the times.

Social education is very relevant to the times because the interaction between individuals has always been the world's main concern (Kuntari, 2019; Ridwan, 2014). How come? The shift in time and technological sophistication has changed the pattern of human interaction, which was originally face-to-face, now it can be done remotely via the internet. Thus, learning should not be stagnant from the aspect of curriculum and teaching materials, because human needs also continue to develop and are adaptive to advances and technological sophistication (Hasni, 2017; Guchi, 2021). Furthermore, the relevance of social studies learning to technological advances in the 21st century is in four areas, including communication, interaction, socialization, and social relations (networks) (Putra, 2021).

Thus, it is understood that social studies learning is a discipline that is relevant to the progress of the times. It is based on the human need to live interdependence with each other. In addition, humans are also categorized as individuals who need each other, so that no matter how sophisticated the technology in an era, humans still interact with each other, both online and offline.

**CONCLUSION**

Based on the presentation of the results and discussion sections in this study, it can be concluded that social studies learning practiced by primary education institutions at the MI/SD level is in line with or in accordance with the demands of the 21st century. This is characterized by 4 (four) aspects, namely (1) social skills, (2) the ability to communicate, (3) the ability to build networks or cooperation, and (4) the ability to interact. Likewise, this research also suggests that creative and innovative steps are needed from social studies education stakeholders, so that social learning practices are adaptive to the times.

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